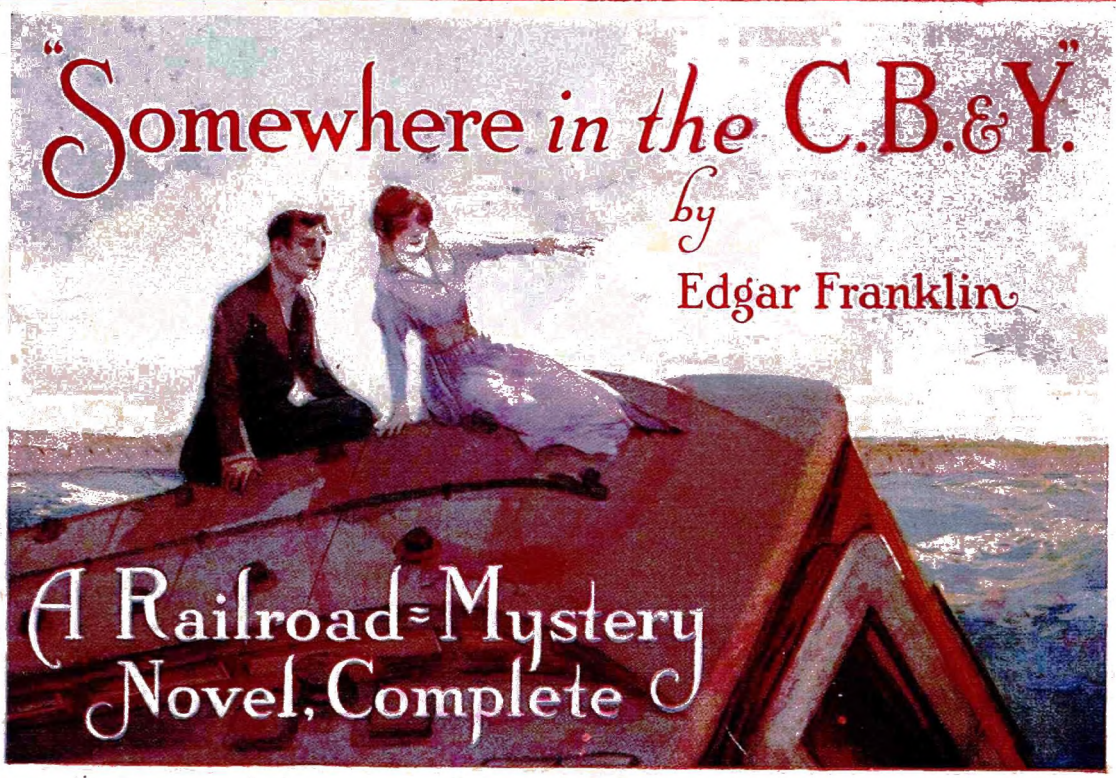
RAILROAD MAN'S MAGAZINE



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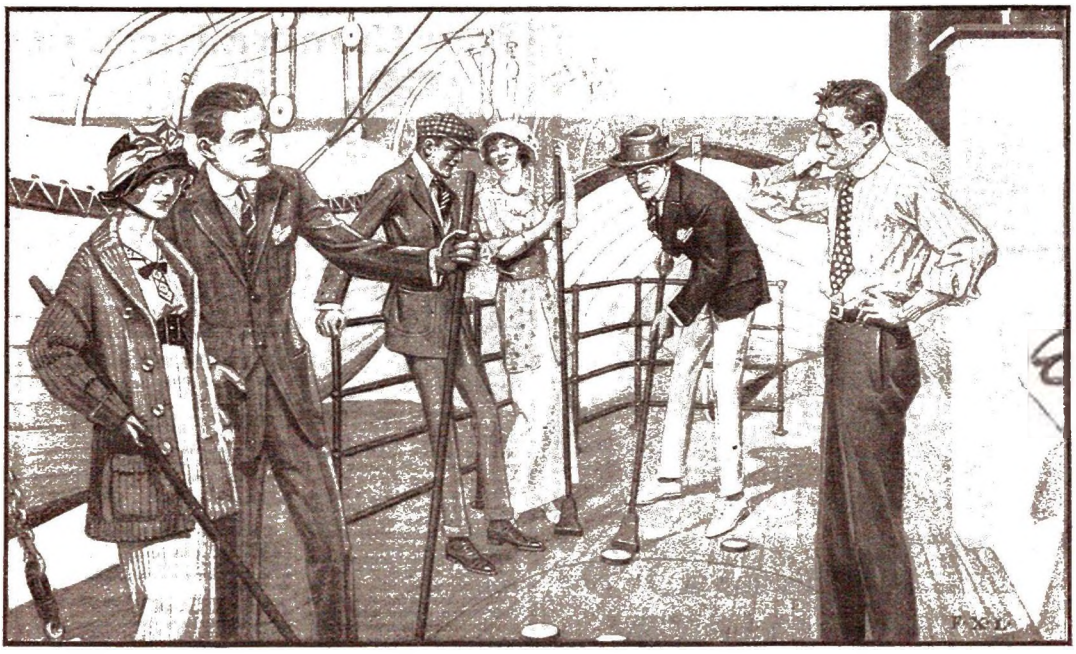

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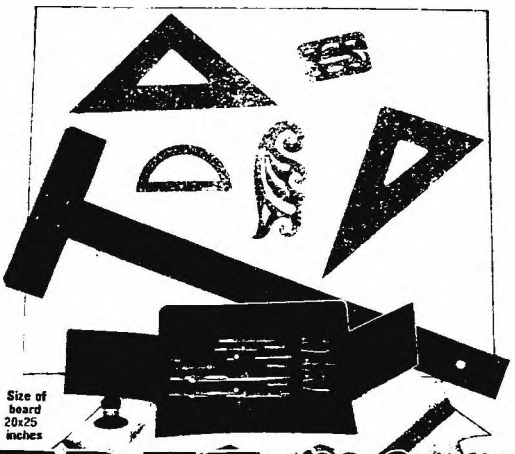

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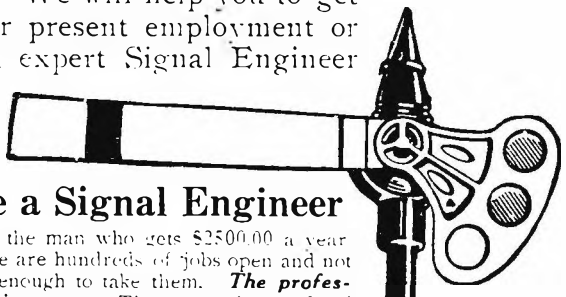

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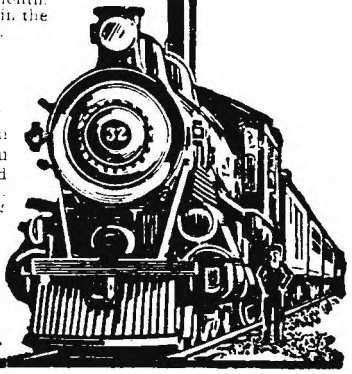

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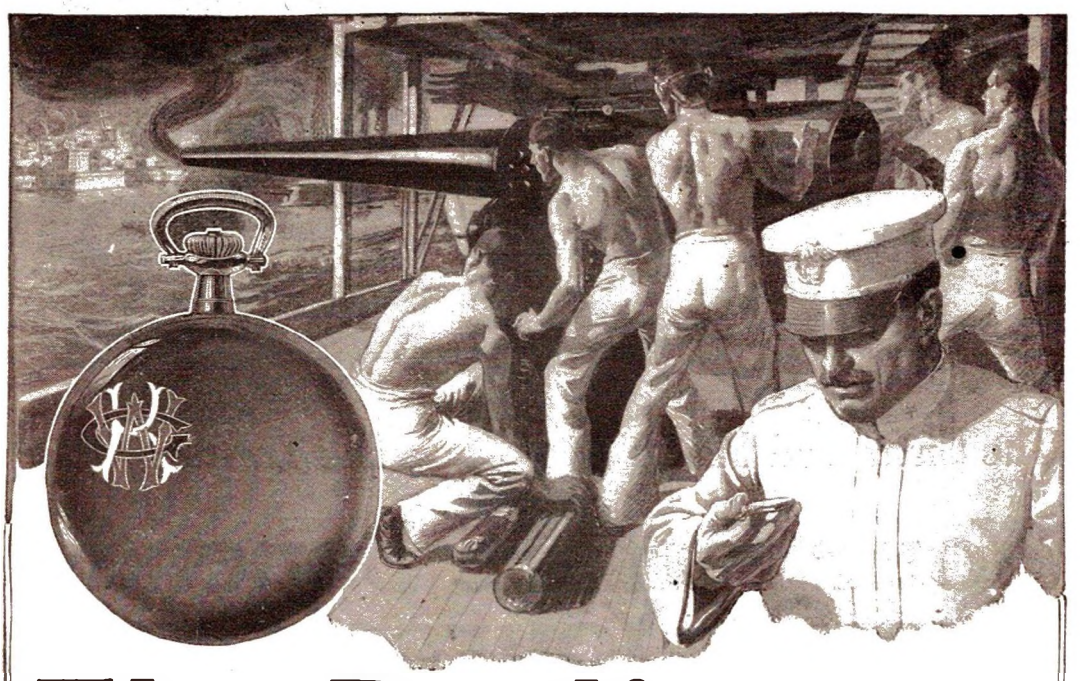

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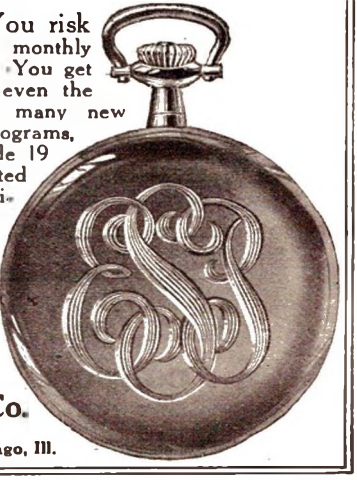

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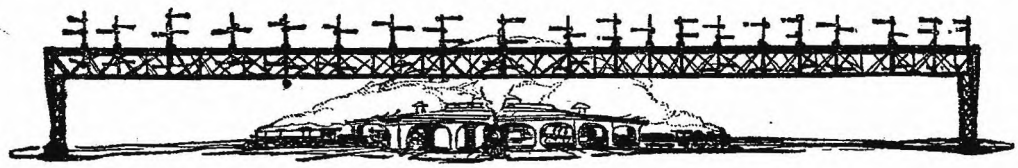


The Fatal Groove.

BY LUTHER FRAME,

Author of "The Flight of the Cattle Trains."

JA Tower Has a Midnight Mystery Which the Accused Man Unwittingly Clears Up.

I WAS startled out of sleep by a great banging. I jumped out of bed to find the moon flooding the room with light and old Pete Logberry calling my name.

"There's suthing wrong out at the tower," he bellowed. "The night marshal says they telephoned fer you to come out right away."

My brother Ben, State interlock inspector for the Railroad and Warehouse Commission, happened to be with me over night before officially visiting JA tower, where I worked a day-trick. He blinked when I shook him. The word "trouble" to him was like "rats" to a terrier. In an instant he was alert.

We crawled out and shivered into our clothes. As we left the boarding-house the mantel clock struck four sharply. It was damp and windy outside. Long, jagged streaks of cloud raced across the sky, behind which the moon, just in her decline, dodged and cavorted.

"This way," I directed finally, diving down a narrow side street where the L. and St. X. cut through the town. We climbed the embankment and struck down the track against the wind.

"It's a mile from here," I said. "You'll be able to see the lamp in the tower in a minute; that is, if there's any tower left. These night-calls generally mean destruction of one kind or another."

"You're breaking in a 'ham'?" Ben inferred.

"Tolerating a boomer," I corrected. "Locker has gathered Morse in every State in the Union. He's a good tower-man, but he's a boomer. He's unsteady.

Here one minute and there the next, like a flea. I saw him dawdling around town early last night with some bundled-up girl. That isn't exactly the style around here, either."

We pushed on silently. On both sides of us ragged fields of corn, newly shocked, faded away into black timber lines. A huddle of buildings appeared on our right and Lawler's old hound made a plaintive challenge. A little farther on Ben hesitated.

"Your south distant signal is out," he informed me loudly. I was, perhaps, a trifle irritated by the early morning call and the distant signals had always been a source of trouble. Only the day before, however, they had been repaired and a bulletin had been issued by the road ordering their use without fail.

"What if it is out?" I retorted, feeling that I was being criticised. "You can't think of anything but distant signals—distant signals from morning until night." He laughed good-naturedly.

"The railroad officials don't like to talk about distant signals, either," he said, "because they know that the 'distants' don't work. The State is busy. When I finish my investigation the Railroad and Warehouse Commission will have enough data to replace the old-timers with electrics."

"You expect to add to your data here, I suppose," I said, confident in the knowledge of the repair of our signals.

"If your plant is anything like the rest, I do," he rejoined. "Fifteen hundred feet of iron wire and a hundred dry pulleys don't pull easy. It's too much to ask towermen to make the attempt twenty times a night."

"Well, I'll show you that ours work," I asserted.

"Maybe they do," he replied.

We took the artificial grade leading to the overhead bridge at the tower and began to look down on the surrounding country. The spot of yellow light at the left of the track suddenly began to spread out into a fine haze and the solid outlines of the shaftlike structure thrust themselves before our eyes. Along the tracks of my own road, thirty feet below, the green-eyed pot-signals glared at us, and the high-perched semaphore lamps to the east peeked out from the edges of their lenses.

There was no flaring of torches down on the home road right of way, and the puzzle gleamed fitfully in the shuddering moonlight like strips of silver ribbon. There was no shouting of orders, no disturbance of any kind proclaiming a smash-up.

I stepped on the trestle and peered into the darkly lighted tower below, but nobody was visible. The whole vast neighborhood was as quiet as death.

We half-slid down the steep clay embankment and jumped heavily over on the porch of the tower, rattling the windows at each thud. I pushed open the door with the feeling possessing me that something dire had happened.

The heavily browed eyes of Louis Papas, a Greek section hand, confronted me, and they carried horror. The place was as hot as an oven and the air stifling.

"What's the matter, Macey? Where's Locker?" I demanded, gluing my eyes on the section foreman—a small hard-faced man with a big red mustache who stood limber-kneed in the corner.

"He's dead!" wailed the foreman, pointing to a covered object on the bench against the wall.

"Dead!" I exclaimed, experiencing a tremor to my very toes. "What has happened?"

"Nobody knows," stammered the little fellow. "Conductor Cogdill had to stop with a bad journal at—at three o'clock. He found him there dead—"

My brother Ben stepped over quickly and lifted the cloth from the face of the dead man, revealing a cruelly set mouth half-open and white staring eye-balls. Macey rushed at him.

"You daresn't touch him! You

daresn't touch him till the coroner comes!" he cried. "I don't want you to touch him!"

Evidently Conductor Cogdill's train was the last to pass JA tower, for the track and signals, 3—6—14—21—32, were still set. I threw back the signal-levers and removed from the telegraph table the coffee urn and the scraps of sandwiches which Locker had left before reporting for wire duty. When I took the wire the despatcher flashed:

"I've waited an hour for you. Is that club there in the tower?" I informed him that I knew nothing of any club, and he seemed disturbed.

"Is this Williams?" he asked after a pause.

"Yes," I said.

"Why, don't you know?" he demanded.

I explained that Macey, whom Conductor Cogdill had left in charge, was very much frightened, and that he refused to explain or even to let us look at the body. The despatcher then said that Cogdill had reported from Sheean's Corners that Locker had been killed with a club.

"Do you see a club around there?" queried the despatcher.

I looked instinctively for the thick poker which we used on the big drum-stove and found it half under the bench on which lay the body of Locker.

"That's it," affirmed the despatcher. "Keep hold of it."

The morning passengers, westbound, coming straight through from the East, shot by at intervals until five-thirty o'clock. When they were gone and affairs quieted down, I felt wofully depressed. It seemed that the officers of the law would never come, yet Macey had said they were notified.

The wrangling of the sounders distressed me until I weighed them down. Then the relays whispered so fretfully that I removed the weights and the instruments broke out again like a pack in full cry. Every operator on the short-line was clamoring for news of the tragedy.

NS tower began sending the regular batch of advice messages to section foremen from the road master, and finally called me. I reached up into the order-case for a piece of message-clip and dislodged a block of company letter-head. Locker had written on it.

"Friend Art," it began, "this is a hell of a hole! I hate the place—"

There was no address nor any other word to it; but the pasted end of the block of clip held a couple of scraps that indicated sheets torn off roughly above the surface sheet. I spoke to Ben, and he left the window and, on examining the scrap, drew out the waste-basket of his own initiative and began poking around in it. A sheet of the letter paper with a blot of green ink on it came to view.

"He uses green ink in his fountain-pen," I said, watching the search. Another sheet, torn from the same block of paper, was crumpled into a tight ball. Ben opened it hurriedly and displayed half a dozen lines in Locker's script. It bore the date of the very morning and was begun about as before. It said:

> FRIEND ART:
> This is a hell of a hole! Did want to leave here to-morrow and meet you Wednesday, but the chief despatcher says he can't spare me right away and won't let me go—

There the letter ended. A coffee spot, from the urn on the table, explained its fate.

"Did you know he was planning to leave?" Ben asked of me.

"No," I said; "I had no intimation of it."

Then my eyes fell for the first time upon a long company envelope from headquarters, typed Claud H. Locker. It was torn open. I shook the contents on the table. A letter to Locker from the chief despatcher advised that relief would be sent "to-morrow," which was to-day with us. There was also transportation to the end of the division.

"Isn't it queer?" I said to Ben, reading again the letter to Locker discovered in the waste-basket, which stated to the friend that the despatcher would not let him go. "Something must have come over him, for this certainly releases him."

I shook the envelope again. A piece of clip fell out. It was a message to the chief despatcher, signed by Locker and filed 2 A.M., canceling his resignation and stating that a letter of explanation would follow.

Evidently he had changed his mind very suddenly. Both men and I were thinking absently. Suddenly Ben straightened up and leaned toward me.

"Didn't you say as we came out that Locker was with a bundled-up girl in town last night?" he demanded in low voice.

"Yes," I replied, "I did say that."

"That's why he changed his mind," Ben whispered, so that Macey and the Greek could not hear. "The girl was the cause. Who was she?"

I hadn't cared enough about the matter at the time I noticed the two on the night before, but as I began to think seriously her identity came to me.

"It was Rose Miller, a town girl," I replied, and involuntarily looked out the window toward a light that was twinkling at the breakfast table in the nearest farmhouse. Ben observed my action quizzically.

"Why did you do that?" he queried insistently.

"Do what?" I asked.

"Why did you look out the window that way?" he repeated.

"What do you want to know that for?" I questioned.

"I want to know," he urged.

"Why," I complied lightly, "I merely thought of Frank Anderson. He lives over there, or works over there, rather—"

"And he is interested in Rose Miller," Ben coughed out cynically. The trend of his thought struck me violently. It angered me.

"You don't mean to insinuate that Frank Anderson killed Locker!" I exploded under my breath.

At that instant heavy steps struck the creaky stairs and two men blustered in. It was the sheriff—a great bull of a man with a tough gray beard—and a physician, the antithesis of the officer, with thin lips and nervous eyes. A single evil-looking deputy followed.

"That trouble was out here?" glowered the sheriff. "They told me here."

"Yes," I said, pointing to the bench against the wall. "The body is there."

Macey, the section foreman, with seeming confidence in the officer, broke out in explanation and rattled away incoherently.

"You weren't here then when the thing happened?" the sheriff asked me.

I reported to him that Ben and I had been at the tower only a short time. At that the men walked to the bench. The sheriff was trying hard to be gruff, but, with all his bluff, his gray eyes bulged unpleasantly and the movements of his big hands were, I imagined, a little too quick.

The room suddenly seemed to become chokingly hot again. Ben stood like a statue, holding the bracket-lamp so that the sickly, yellow rays fell over the body as the doctor lifted the handkerchief from the face.

The doctor tore away the garments from the throat and bared the breast. From the top part of the heart downward, across the body, stretched a long, red and black bruise.

The sheriff picked up the thick poker. Mopping his red face with his handkerchief he examined the charred end and placed the cudgel on the table.

"How long has he been dead, doc?" he puffed.

"About three hours," the other replied quickly.

"Then it was done about three o'clock," mused the officer, glancing at the clock, which was not running. He turned to me:

"Does the night man ever nap on this bench?" he asked.

I admitted that such was a common custom.

"How was the track and the signals when you arrived?"

"They were set for a through run," I told him.

"And the towerman expects that the train will wake him when it passes?"

"Yes," I said.

The sheriff gazed hard at the prone body.

"I say it's murder!" he enunciated with spasmodic inflection. The explosive utterance sent shivers through me. I stepped backward impulsively and knocked over a chair. The officer turned his severe eyes on me and I must have appeared somewhat stirred.

"What do you know about this?" he glowered.

I was hot with anger in an instant.

"I told you I don't know anything!" I retorted brazenly. "I wasn't here."

Ben saw that I was about to throw myself under suspicion and spoke to the sheriff.

"We were both in bed when the word came," he asserted. "Here is some stuff that may offer a clue. Read these."

The sheriff grabbed the letters and read them in the order that Ben offered them. He fumbled them over and over before looking up. Finally he spoke.

"There's something there," he announced decisively, slapping his big red hand against the letters like one who is forced to find a solution for some baffling problem. He stood examining the letters and twisting at his tough, gray mustache.

Ben was noticeably uneasy. I felt sure that Frank Anderson would be dragged into the desperate affair. I wanted to shield him, and Ben knew it. Many a long winter day Anderson had been company for me after the farm chores were done. He hadn't been around much during the summer, but I saw him often on the way to town or heard him whistling in the fields.

The sheriff fixed his insolent eyes on me again and said gruffly:

"And so you don't know very much about this?" Ben saw that I was on the verge of answering, and he feared what my hot head might prompt me to say.

"My brother doesn't know anything about it," he conciliated, "except that Locker was with a girl in town last night, who has been the sweetheart of a farm-hand near here."

The sheriff grew insulting at this, demanding a full recital of everything bearing on the case.

"You'll find yourself behind the bars if you begin a funny game," he threatened. "Now come across with the story."

I realized that it would be foolhardy to withhold anything, as matters had become so serious, and I told him I had nothing to conceal.

"The girl's name is Rose Miller, and the man works over there," I confessed, pointing to the light in the farmhouse still twinkling in the gray of the morning. When I had finished the sheriff turned to Ben.

"Is that all he knows?" he demanded gruffly. We both assured him that it was, and he frowned for a long time, apparently thinking. Finally he pulled on his mittens and turned toward the door.

"Enk," he blustered, addressing the deputy. "You stay here and don't let nobody in or out. I'm going over there. Doc, you'll have to be here for the inquest. I'll get Coroner Sullivan as soon as he comes back from Condon—maybe nine o'clock. He went out with the physician and gave Ben and me an opportuntiy to think.

"I would hate to believe that Frank Anderson did it," I said to Ben in a whisper. "Why, he's a great, careful fellow — liked by the whole countryside."

"But you've got to be careful," he admonished. "Wasn't Anderson the man who broke a fellow's collar-bone last summer for beating a horse?

Didn't you tell us that when you were at home?"

"That's just the kind of a man he is," I said.

Ben toyed with his watch-chain. "And was he very much in love with the girl?" he asked.

I felt Anderson's quiet, sympathetic temperament coming over me in response to the question. There appeared before my mind's eye the familiar picture of the man and the girl walking together distractedly in the edge of town. I had seen them very often walking thus when I returned from work Sunday evenings during the summer. Anderson had never said anything to me about Rose Miller when he visited me in the tower; but I knew that he was living for her, and I knew—lately, too—that her parents were seeking means to rid her of him.

"Yes," I said in answer to Ben's interrogation; "and he is still infatuated. But it would be an awful shock to find him guilty of this crime."

We ceased talking and waited. It was half an hour before the sheriff returned in a bluster.

"I phoned town, and they tell me Anderson is under arrest at Hogland," he roared. "They're holding him fer me. I'm going to fetch him here fer a confession. You stay here, Enk. I'm flagging this here plug that's coming—"

He rushed through the door, cleared the porch, and scrambled up the embankment in time to flag the stubby passenger on the L. and St. X., and the little kettle went squealing away as if it had done something worth while.

When the sun had come well up above the tops of the timber lines to the east Ben went over to the Sorley farm, where Anderson had been employed, and returned with a basket of fried-ham sandwiches and a pail of steaming coffee.

"The womenfolk have been crying over there. They fear for him," he reported. "They say he talked in his sleep all Tuesday night and sneaked away right after dinner yesterday. They have been afraid to look for him. He must have been almost like a son to them, the way they talked."

I couldn't throw off the distress that settled over me when I realized that probably Frank Anderson was guilty. I drank quantities of strong coffee, and Ben tried to eat heartily of the sandwiches; but most of the stuff went down the throat of the deputy.

"These little killin's don't git my appetite," he boasted, showing his yellow teeth. "When you git accustomed to 'em they ain't much bother."

We ignored the fellow, and he sat down behind the stove in the far corner of the room.

The north-bound passenger on the L. and St. X. was ten minutes late when it came snorting across the high bridge above us and stopped with much ado a little after eight o'clock. We could make out two men moving through the rear coach, attended by a general flutter of excitement among the passengers. It was the sheriff and Anderson chained to the officer.

The two lumberingly descended the embankment and circled the tower to mount the stairs. As they passed the west window I caught a glimpse of Anderson. He was almost groggy in his gait and I saw unspeakable horror in his face. When he came through the outer door he resembled a man who had not slept for nights because of some awful nightmare.

He didn't seem to see me or to be conscious of his surroundings. Instantly and unavoidably I associated him with the crime; but his face began to change from its blankness into such a puzzle of emotions that I gave up attempting to hazard an opinion.

He steadied himself against the trainmen's fence as the sheriff urged him through the gate, staring straight

ahead. Perhaps he did not dare look around for fear of what he might see. I pitied him because he was about to go through an ordeal—he was about to confront the features of the dead man.

The sheriff jostled Anderson before the bench where the dead man lay and jerked the cloth from Locker's face.

"Did you do that?" he demanded loudly.

The big fellow stared, horrified, drawing his head deep between his shoulders. He was gazing as though hypnotized and a heavy tremor shook his body.

"Did you do that?" the officer cried, shaking his charge. "You killed that man. I know you did, and you better confess."

Suddenly the big fellow came to himself and bent toward the door, dragging the sheriff after him, cutting his hand-cuffed wrist and uttering the single denial:

"I didn't do it! I didn't do it!"

The officer called for help. Ben, who stood near the door, threw himself against the terrified man, scolding him sharply.

"Brace up, man!" Ben upbraided. "Don't act like a baby! It isn't all over yet!"

Anderson wilted and his head fell dejectedly. The sheriff was breathing hard.

"The coroner won't be here for an hour," he said unpleasantly, "and I don't want to keep this man here—"

They were starting to the house of the section-foreman when the door burst open and a girl rushed in. It was Rose Miller. Her coming hurt me keenly. She seemed strangely out of place in this distressing scene.

Evidently she had been snatched from household duties, for she wore a flaming scarlet kimono under her coat, and her black, curly hair fell in wind-blown disorder about her face. Her father stood against the door-casing with a scowl of hard displeasure on his face, as if to say: "I have come to see that she does not disgrace me utterly."

The girl saw Frank Anderson locked to the sheriff. She cast a lightning glance around the tower. Her eyes fell and rested momentarily on the covered bench against the wall. She uttered a little choking cry and tottered unsteadily; but before any one could reach her Anderson had caught her in his free arm.

She thrust her face in his rough coat and sobbed bitterly. The sheriff stood as if posing for a photograph. He was plainly embarrassed, burning up with the heat of his own blood. Perspiration came out on his forehead drop by drop as he waited.

"This doesn't help things," he apologized finally. "Take your girl away, Miller. She seems to know something about this, and that means she must be here for the inquest."

"She doesn't know a thing," retorted Miller angrily.

The sheriff reached in his pocket.

"Is this her watch?" he said dryly, extracting a small timepiece.

The man blanched.

"I—I—I don't know.

"Will you bring her then at nine o'clock to find out? If you are not here you will be brought here."

The hour of nine came finally, and the tower was packed with people. It was nearer ten o'clock when the coroner had gathered his witnesses, arranged his testimony, sworn the jury, and was ready to proceed with the inquest.

Rose Miller had returned with her father. She was dressed in a gray suit and sat nervously biting the tips of her gloves.

Anderson sat with bent body, his head resting in his hands.

"Can you plug up a few of those telegraph instruments? They make too much noise," spoke the coroner—a tall, lean man, with a lean face.

I stuck styluses into the relays.

The coroner introduced the case,

looking at the jurymen who stood on this side and on that with their backs against the wall, and asked the sheriff to present his part of the evidence.

The sheriff arose from a chair and began to speak a bit pompously:

"Gentlemen of the jury," he droned, "if you will first step this way—"

He displayed the discoloration across the breast of the dead man, and brandished the charred poker, which he said fitted the bruise and which, he told them, was found at the side of the bench.

He explained why and how suicide was impossible by such a blow, and informed them that the stroke must have been given while Locker was lying asleep awaiting the next train, for which the signals were properly set. He mentioned the fact that the assaultant did not strike the towerman's head, because it was visibly protected by the edge of the telegraph-table.

"These letters," he continued, "were found by the day man there," pointing to me. "It seems that the deceased asked for release. This first letter gives full release and furnishes transportation to Camberd.

"Now, listen! Last night the deceased suddenly canceled his resignation by wire, apparently changing his mind for some cause."

The sheriff waited to allow the evidence thus far to sink in, and then turned to me.

"Did you see Mr. Locker, the deceased, yesterday night in town?" he asked.

"I did," I said

"Who with?" continued the sheriff.

"I am not certain," I said.

"Was he with this young lady?" he queried, extending his hand in the direction of Rose Miller without looking that way.

I glanced at the girl. She was pale and apparently on the verge of collapse; but I felt constrained to answer straightforwardly.

"I think so," I said.

The sheriff turned to her. "Miss Miller," he said as kindly as he could, "were you with the deceased, Claud Locker, last night?"

She was agitated beyond measure.

"Yes," she faltered, bursting into tears.

"And you let him have your watch to use last night because he said the clock here wasn't running, didn't you?" She did not reply. "I must ask for an answer," spoke the sheriff firmly.

"Yes," she said, sobbing in her handkerchief.

The sheriff smiled faintly and held up a tiny lady's timepiece.

"I took this watch from this man here," he said, indicating Anderson by a nod of the head. "It is attached to a fob engraved with the initials of Mr. Locker, the deceased."

He passed the watch and attachment around for inspection and the men whispered together as they turned it in their big hands.

Anderson did not look at the sheriff. The jurymen kept glancing shyly at the accused man with increasing suspicion in their eyes. The officer waited purposely for a moment, exhibiting a smug satisfaction at the evidence thus far, and then continued:

"I arrested this man in Hogland this morning and brought him here myself. He was taken from a freight that, according to records in town, passed this tower about the time the deceased died. This high point in the grade is positively the only place that he could have boarded the train."

Anderson seemed to take no interest in the convicting evidence. He was looking out of the window into the bare fields that he might never cultivate again.

The sheriff cleared his throat and took a new tack. His confidence in himself seemed to increase with each word, until he imagined that he was complete master of the situation.

"You, gentlemen of the jury, are

acquainted around here," he insinuated, "and you know why this man would resent having Locker pay attention to this here young lady—"

Anderson was on his feet.

"Don't say the rest of that," he warned, his fair skin suddenly crimson, his eyes snapping fire. "If you're going to fix me, do it; but leave her out!"

He was pushed and pulled roughly into his chair by half a dozen men.

The coroner, who stood in the floor, grew warm across his neck. He walked out from his position.

"This is not a time for sentiment," he spoke with severity, nodding his head jerkily at Anderson. "You are certainly aware that things look bad for you. If you've got anything to say for yourself, say it now. There's enough evidence."

A painful focus of attention assailed the accused man. He sat very still for an instant with his eyes on the floor, then arose and brushed the shock of light hair back from his forehead.

"I have been a fool until now," he began in a strong, steady voice that won him instant sympathy. "I was here last night—about three o'clock, as you say. I was jealous of this girl. I came to have an understanding with the man who is dead, because I knew he was playing with her. When I came in that door I saw him lying there, and I thought he was asleep.

"I saw the little watch on the table and recognized it. That finished me. I thought she had turned me down for him. What else was there for me here? I stole the watch with the fob and caught the freight, as you have said. My actions are against me. I suppose I will be held to trial, and I may be convicted, but—I swear before Almighty God—I am innocent of this man's blood."

The big fellow sat down quickly, just as a long freight rushed and bumped wildly over the plant.

I looked around and noticed my brother Ben sitting on the edge of the interlocking key-bank. He was smiling in a peculiar, absent way. Suddenly, while the freight was passing, he left the tower, climbed up the L. and St. X. fill, and waved his arms toward the west.

It was impossible to be heard in the tower while the freight-train was banging past, and the inquest was at a standstill. Every juror and every other person had watched Ben leave the place and go through his strange maneuver.

The next moment he returned to the tower and sat down again in his place.

"What in the world were you doing?" I whispered as he passed me.

"Don't bother me," he returned.

The caboose of the freight-train hurried away with a little group of trainmen on the rear platform, staring up into the tower to read there some secret of the crime of the night.

I entered the train's time on my train-sheet and started over to set the signals at normal as the coroner cleared his throat to conclude the inquest.

"Gentlemen of the jury," he began slowly and solemnly, addressing the jurymen, who were growing a little uneasy, "you have heard the statement of this man and you have also heard the startling chain of evidence."

At this instant I was unable to reverse the yellow, distant signal-lever controlling the movements of the freight that had just passed. Anderson, powerful man that he was, jumped up to assist me, as he had often done.

The sheriff at first misunderstood his quick movement, and lunged toward him, disturbing the proceedings, but made no objection when he saw that the lever was badly choked and required the effort of both Anderson and myself to latch it back. As the coroner was about to continue, Ben interrupted.

"Before you go on," he said as one who does not expect to be refused, "may I ask a question?"

"If it is very important," replied the coroner.

Ben looked around the room.

"I want to ask who placed Locker's feet from the floor to that bench where they are now resting?" he spoke evenly.

There was no answer.

"Who placed Locker's feet up on that bench?" he demanded more severely. "Somebody did it."

The coroner scowled.

"That's unimportant," he said.

Then a strained voice from the corner of the tower drew all eyes there.

"I did," the little section-foreman broke out. "I didn't think it would hurt."

"Never mind," Ben said. "It's all right." He walked around behind the row of polished steels projecting up through the floor and stopped near the end. "Now," he spoke sharply and, with the flat of his hand, struck the latch on the fractious, yellow, distant signal-lever.

Bang! The bar of glistening steel shot into reverse like a streak of lightning, striking a blow that would have felled an ox.

The men stared and looked back at the bench where the body of the night towerman lay, and their faces cleared.

"Come down on the track, gentlemen," Ben said, "and I'll explain how the wire on that fractious distant signal happened to catch. I'm a signalman. The fatal groove is away down there where you see that man. I arranged with him to slip the wire in when I signaled. That's why it required both my brother and Mr. Anderson a moment ago to unlatch the lever. One man could have done it with a foot leverage from the rear side. There is a terrible lot of give and spring, gentlemen, in one thousand five hundred feet of iron wire."

AN ERROR IN DEDUCTION.

BY LYDIA M. DUNHAM O'NEIL.

'TWAS his very first trip as a brakeman,
And he showed us how smart he could be;
A regular Hawkshaw detective—
A mystery solver, was he.
He trotted right up to the hoghead,
And said, "You're an unmarried man!"
"Well, now, I declare! You're a wonder!
Explain how you know—if you can."

"Why, of course," said the braky, delighted;
"Black button, sewed on with white thread.
No woman's work, that, so I'm certain
That you're living alone and unwed.
And you, sir," he turned to the tallow,
"You, too, are an unmarried man!
And how do I know it? I noticed
Two pieces of pie in your can.

"For women, when once safely married,
Go slow on the dainties they make;
They'd rather be dancing a tango
Than baking a pie or a cake.
Somewhere there's a girlie who loves you.
Oh, subtle her way and her plan!
Who, simply to show her affection,
Puts two chunks of pie in your can."

"You're wrong!" said the tallow. "To-morrow
Is pay day, and surely you know
How the women, God bless 'em! can coax us
For an extra two dollars or so.
And this is the one single reason
There are two chunks of pie in my can:
My wife wants a new pair of slippers,
And she'll have 'em, as I am a man!"

PATIENCE SHUNTED ON A SIDING

Railroad Men Start With Amiable Dispositions, But the Public Is Like Constant Drops of Water.

HARD TO KEEP ONE'S TEMPER BALANCED.

The Night Yardmaster and the Third Trick Man Engage in a High-Brow Discussion on "Misfits in Soul Windows," and Decide that All They See in Life Does Not Glitter Like Pure Gold.

BY ROY O'TOOLE.

"THE eyes," stated the Night Yardmaster impressively, "are the windows of the soul." After a brief pause, principally for effect, he continued: "When this metaphorical truth first came to my attention I fully believed it; but since then it has occurred to me that there are many different kinds of windows for the convenience of imprisoned souls.

"Some are tiny apertures through which only a narrow line of vision may be obtained of the outside world, others are larger, and the display gradually increases in size and breadth of vision until the magnificent bay window is attained which grants an excellent view in almost any direction. The result of my observation has been that windows of the soul are conconstructed on pretty much the same lines as are the more material ones of the architect and builder."

As the Third Trick Man gave no sign of hostile demonstration, the N. Y. M. inflated his chest and rambled on:

"It may be that years of railroad experience has prejudiced my own vision and reduced it to the minimum breadth of view, or, perhaps, it was stunted in its infancy and never had a chance to reach the larger and more desirable proportions; but it has been borne upon my conviction that tiny apertures are in the majority as windows of the soul in about the same proportion that they are in the architectural world."

"Your lamp's smokin'," said Third Trick irrelevantly. "Better put it out."

"As I was about to say," continued the N. Y. M., ignoring the interruption, "it strikes me that broad, expansive windows of the soul are scarce, and the cause, I believe, is principally lack of development. When they do appear, they are usually found in human habitations where least expected, for the gaudy glitter and pomp of Fifth Avenue has no more claim to

these commodious observatories than the inhabitants of frozen Greenland."

"Would you mind bringing your aeroplane down to earth a moment?" suggested Third Trick. "You're away above the clouds."

"Pardon me, Steve," apologized the N. Y. M. "I overlooked your mental limitations when I began to soar. In order to make my meaning clearer, I'll present a comparison between two of our mutual acquaintances which will help you to understand.

"You are aware," he continued, "that the superintendent on this division never retains a man in the service unless his record proves absolutely faultless. The super hews close to the line of rectitude, making no allowances for the hereditary and constitutional weaknesses of human nature. In his estimation, a man who once overlooks the book of rules will do so again. Possible and more than probable future adherence does not enter into his calculations, or, if it does, he feels that the percentage is against him and refuses to take a chance.

The Section Boss's Philosophy.

"Our section boss, on the other hand, never turns a hungry man away from the little red shanty a few hundred yards below the depot, no matter how unstable his plea of distress.

"'If ye feed one that's desarvin' out of a dozen that ain't,' says Mike Mulcahey, 'y're ahid of the game, for Charity is worth its weight in gold. The practise of it tones up the system, elevates the moind, and puts one at peace with all the wurld,' and then he adds by way of final vindication of his system, 'Shure, 'tis only the good feller that goes busted and hungry; niver the tightwad.'

"He employs the same broad point of view when hiring men for section 41. The more like a hobo the specimen appears who applies for a job, the more likely is Mike to find room for him.

"'A few days' wurk,' says Mike, 'at even a dollar forty, has given many a tramp a start on the road to indipindince.'

"In comparing the size of Mike's windows of the soul with those of the super, I should say that Mike gazes through an aperture of goodly proportions on a bright vista which it must be gratifying to contemplate, while the super squints through an exceedingly small opening on a narrow and unadorned landscape, though his opportunities for developing a large bay window, unfolding a beautiful panorama of kindly deeds, is much greater than Mike's."

"I'm beginning to see your headlight now, I think," said Third Trick. "You mean to suggest that the practise of charity, officially or otherwise, is a good way to develop the window of the soul?"

"Not only the practise of charity," replied the N. Y. M. "There are several other good reliable virtues which will do the work as well. Many of us are not in a position to give food to the hungry or jobs to the unemployed, but we can all at least afford a little consideration, patience and amiability toward our fellow man. A bit of forbearance now and then, especially when the temptation comes upon us to speak harshly or unkindly, helps a whole lot. Even plain, ordinary politeness strikes a responsive chord in the other fellow and is never entirely lost.

Thanks and Grunts.

"We will say, for instance, that a traveler presents a smiling countenance at the ticket window and says, 'Give me a ticket to Jonesville, please.' You are very likely to pass out the ticket courteously and say, 'Thank you,' when he hands you the legal tender in payment; but if his expression is surly and he simply grunts 'Jonesville,' you slam the coin in the cash box and toss him the ticket in anything but a courteous manner.

"Right there is where you lose an opportunity for development; a chance to prove that your window of the soul is a full size larger than the other fellow's. Do you grasp my meaning?" queried the N. Y. M.

"Easy," assured Third Trick. "Proceed. I'm all attention."

"If you are really interested," declared the N. Y. M. suspiciously, "I shall be glad to continue. While we are on the subject of politeness and courtesy it may be well to remind you that various bulletins are scattered over the pike in all available space recommending and even commanding politeness to the patrons of the road regardless of their attitude toward the company's representative.

"Politeness, therefore, is not a voluntary contribution on your part. It is exacted as one of your necessary qualifications and embodies to a certain extent the other virtues of which I have spoken.

"However, if a gentleman calls for a package of express at seven o'clock in the morning, it is perfectly within your rights to inform him politely and firmly that you do not deliver express and insist that he wait until the agent arrives.

When Patience Is Tested.

"However, if you wish to exercise a little accomodating amiability, you could step into the warehouse, secure his package, and deliver it without any great inconvenience to yourself and at the same time enjoy the gratification of knowing that you had saved the gentleman an hour of what might be his busy day.

"Patience, in its relative attitude toward politeness, has certain limitations which can be enlarged at will. It is very trying, I'll admit, when an elderly and anything but handsome spinster, after dickernig with you for thirty minutes relative to the purchase of a round-trip ticket which only increases the company's gross earnings by two dollars and eighty cents, and also unburdens on you her fluttering fears and misgivings regarding the dangers of a railroad journey.

"It is not unnatural that you should show traces of impatience when she begins to unfold the various and sundry reasons which have necessitated this extraordinary departure from her hitherto uneventful routine. You may not be able to fully sympathize when she coyly enthuses over possible romance or adventure while mingling with the great big world outside of Bingville.

"Still, by assuming a sympathetic attitude and feigning an interest which you do not feel, you prove yourself capable of a more liberal outlook on life than that possessed by the ordinary human who peeps through an aperture of confining limits.

Open to Caustic Rebuke.

"Forbearance among men is a virtue which ordinarily is practised by no fixed rule and depends largely on the size of the man who may be its object. It is much easier to practise it on a large, athletic fellow mortal than on a runt. A very small man gets few applications of this virtue, even from his wife.

"When a bespectacled and acrimonious suffragette approaches the ticket window with a volley of questions and criticism about the train service, forbearance does not enter your calculations. You do not even muster up sufficient courage for the 'retort courteous.' However, a meek, though nervous and excitable female who rushes up every time she hears an engine whistle and inquires in trembling tones, 'Mister, is that my train?' is liable to a caustic rebuke about the sixth time up, which forbearance suggests is unmerited.

"It is easy to understand, therefore, that the little fellows and the meek though excitable feminine travelers open up a field to the man a grade above the ordinary for the practise of forbearance.

"Consideration can be extended a trifle beyond politeness in a very simple manner. Foolish and unnecessary questions are often asked by the traveler which, as a rule, are met by the company's representative without a proper conception of the other fellow's position.

"It must be remembered that he is in an atmosphere foreign to his daily routine. It is possible that if he had the same amount of training in the railroad world as the agent or operator he is addressing, he would be superintendent. It is also possible that if you ventured into the territory with which he is familiar, you might put forth a few queries which would sound as inane to him as those he propounds to you.

"Therefore, don't conclude that a passing mortal who does not know as much about railroading as you do is stunted in intellect or deficient in intelligence. You merely have the advantage of training, but not, perhaps, of keener perception.

Satisfy a Traveler's Curiosity.

"When the inexperienced traveler expresses curiosity, or even suspicion, as you tear the agent's stub from his ticket and place it on file, don't look superciliously over his head at the accumulating line behind him and yell 'Next!' as if you were working in a barber shop.

"A few words of explanation would satisfy his curiosity and reassure him to the extent that he would not be expecting the conductor to throw him off the train because part of his ticket is missing.

"I should say, therefore, under circumstances of this kind, that a momentary pause and a mental transfer of *yourself* to the other fellow's point of view would aid materially in adjusting many trifles which, I have noticed, have not been handled by *you* as diplomatically or considerately as they might have been."

"Been shooting at me right along, haven't you?" ejaculated Third Trick. "And all the time I thought you were rehearsing a lecture for the Railroad Y. M. C. A. Strange what beautiful broad lines of conduct most people can figure out for others, but we seldom meet the guide upon the same road he points out.

"Of course, when you cuss out the entire switching crew as a bunch of boneheads just because one of them has mistaken a car number and coupled a load of sewer pipe into a stock train, you are displaying an attractive brand of consideration and forbearance.

When the Dead Freight Arrives.

"When a dead freight comes scurrying along about a minute ahead of the limited schedule and dives into the first siding which looks clear enough to hold him, you almost throw a fit because he didn't head in somewhere else, and your caustic arraignment of his style of railroading would indicate that all the smoke he makes backing out and heading in again came out of your own coal shed.

"If a half a dozen cars with hot-boxes and busted draw-bars have to be set out of a merchandise train, you hop around like a Comanche doing a war dance because all of that switching can't be done in thirty minutes. Then, when you've created a panic and thrown everybody in the yard into a deep-sea grouch, you amble up here and unload on me a pipe dream about amiability, patience, consideration, and politeness.

"If I didn't possess a liberal supply of all these virtues you have enumerated I might lose my temper, but, as it is, I shall only endeavor to prove that whatever may be the size of the aperture through which my imprisoned soul glimpses the outside world, it is plenty large enough to serve the purpose.

"I should like to state also that if you think any of the bunch who stick their lamps up against that ticket

window are peeping through bay windows of their soul, you're away off the main line, because you can take it from me that most of them only see the railroad and the railroader through a crack in the fence.

"Amiability, coupled with a spirit of accommodation, is an excellent beautifier of the character; but this combination brings less returns when exploited in the depot than at any other place I know.

"You suggest delivering express at unseasonable hours as one means of gaining a few merit marks. Well, without any outside recommendation, but simply from the impulse of a naturally amiable temperament, I tried that—once—but never again!

"Between six and eight o'clock in the morning are the two hours of my trick during which I earn all of my sixty-five per. There are half a dozen regular trains prowling along about that time with an extra sandwiched in between each of them, to say nothing of a bunch of mine run and work trains, all of which must have orders.

"Naturally during the two hours I have mentioned I have little time for development of the soul window.

Reducing the Supply of Amiability.

"One morning, just at the beginning of the berry season, Jorgens, the grocer, phoned me at six-thirty.

"'I have an express shipment of berries from the valley down there that I'd like to get hold of,' he said. 'You probably have a number of the same kind of consignments for other local merchants, and I'd like to score a scoop if possible by having mine in the store window a bit earlier than the rest. Can you deliver them if I come down at once?'

"I always did have a good deal of admiration for astute business methods, and told him to come along. He thanked me profusely when I delivered the goods, and I complimented him on his alert and progressive enterprise and considered the incident closed.

"Next morning, about six, without any previous intimation of the visit, Jorgen's delivery wagon came dashing around the corner at breakneck speed, closely followed by several others belonging to local merchants, all apparently in a mad race for the depot.

"Some real wild-west maneuvers were pulled off as the procession turned about on two wheels and backed to the platform in a neck-and-neck finish. Jorgens turned a back handspring over the seat and landed at the ticket window a fraction of a second ahead of the rest.

"'Beat 'em to it again!' he announced triumphantly. 'And I was last out of the barn at that. Guess I get my berries first!'

"In a mental picture I could see this same procession augmented from day to day far into the distant future unless I put my foot down firmly on amiable accommodation.

"'Gentlemen,' I announced, 'you all know the rules of this depot regarding express. If you will assemble for another race about eight o'clock, the agent will be glad to accommodate you in the order of your arrival; but as far as I'm concerned there's nothing doing.'

"'Jorgens got his berries yesterday morning before the agent came down! If you can deliver express once you can do it again! I want my berries right now!' declared one.

"'Me too!' chimed in another.

"'The rest of us are as good as Jorgens,' piped a weak-chested scarecrow. 'You can't slip anything over on us.'

"I got exceedingly busy on the wire and, though I wasn't exceedingly busy, I pretended to be and in this way managed to hold the fort until the agent's arrival without receding from my position.

"In the mean time the delegation of town merchants raked me over the coals in audible criticism for an hour and forty-five minutes, all of which had the effect of reducing my supply

of amiable accommodation almost to zero.

"Speaking about politeness, I always try to conform to the rules of the company in this respect; but don't attempt a groveling or obsequious attitude. When I accept the fare for a ticket I always say 'Thank you,' and usually shoot the pasteboard close enough to the purchaser for him to reach it without any undue physical effort.

Matters of Circumstance.

"Sometimes when I say 'Thank you' the unappreciative gentleman grunts 'Huh!' but I always repeat it patiently at least once, and don't take any particular credit for so doing.

"As you intimate, the practise of forbearance is largely a matter of circumstances. I employ it automatically on athletes and professional strong men. On the other hand, I take no satisfaction in bulldozing the masculine weakling or the timid female; so it may be said that I also employ it automatically on that division.

"In the middle section of humanity I give and take and feel well-satisfied if I break even. A man has a right to expect that much in any kind of a game, for I never met a human being yet who was willing to give the percentage to the other fellow if he was able to hold it for himself.

"Patience, that rarest of all virtues, has been nearly chased off the railroad entirely. Many operators, agents, conductors, station masters and other railroad representatives have brought large slabs of this excellent virtue into the depot, the chair-car and the smoker, only to be despoiled of the entire stock in a short engagement with the traveling and unappreciative public, most of whom seem to approach the railroad equipped with misfit appliances which in no way resemble windows of the soul.

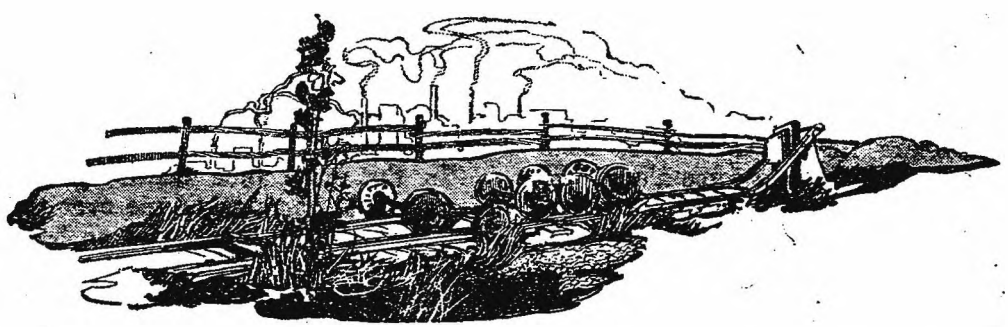
"Foolish questions fly about a depot and aboard a train very much like chips in a poker game, and, as in that absorbing pastime, one calls two; two calls five and so on—*ad infinitum.*

"As the constant drops of water wear away the stone, so do the unceasing demands on a railroader's patience eventually wear it threadbare; and if he is able to maintain out of the several virtues you have mentioned a scant supply of plain politeness sufficient to hold his job, he is doing very well. Just how many of the great brotherhood of railroaders have developed grand bay-windows of the soul for their outlook on life I am not prepared to say; but it is my impression that not many see through them very long, because they soon get shattered beyond repair by contact with the traveling public."

"There comes that red-ball," interrupted the N. Y. M. as a piercing station whistle was borne to his ears.

"Don't rush off," said Third Trick hospitably.

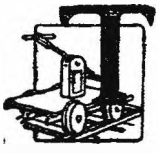
"The rest of that will keep until some other time, I hope," said the N. Y. M. as he made for the door. "If it won't, tell it to the car knocker."



Mrs. Tim's Blue Silk.

BY LADD PLUMLEY.

Whenever the Brave Woman Expressed a Wish for Anything She Was Gratified.



TIMOTHY FLINN glanced from his cabin at the end of the bridge. The dusk was beginning to gather, and the fireflies glinted in the bushes on both sides of the shriveled stream. It was almost time for his wife to bring his supper. He pulled out his watch and noted that it was a quarter of eight. Twice a week his hours as watchman at the bridge ran from two in the afternoon until four the next morning.

Timothy had been a watchman for the railroad company for many years. He was a contented man, and this night there was really only one thing that troubled him, and that not overmuch. His wife wanted a blue silk dress. When a man's wife has even decided on the color of a new gown, it behooves the man to figure on his resources.

Mrs. Tim had never been in the habit of making unreasonable requisitions. She had not even spoken of her costume for many years. Timothy looked on her as one who is clothed somewhat after the manner of the lilies of the field; in ways of mystery she was always neatly garbed, and if Timothy had not known the facts he would have wondered at her desire for the blue silk.

As Mrs. Tim had put it that morning:

"An' ye knows well enough, Tim Flinn, that I'd be after wearin' a dishclout if it wasn't th' weddin' of me own daughter. Ye know that, Tim Flinn! 'Tis years an' years since I've had more than Eve whin Adam yanked her from the gyarden. I'll have ye to know if it wasn't fer Ellen I'd reform me black alpaca an' let th' tongues wag to a stump. An' as I must have th' gown, it might just ez well be what's been in me mind since yer brought me out ter this land o' sand an' weeds. There's thim ez keeps a light blue silk in th' back closets of their expectations and wid niver a word. I've hankered after a light blue silk come now fer twinty years. An' I'll remind ye of anither thing; 'tis not much ez I've asked ye, an' ef ye don't stir yer bones lively 'tis th' blessed Providence ez will. Ye knows well enough that I've niver expressed me wish fer somethin' that it hasn't been so reasonable that somehow it's come. Tim, me bye, 'tis yerself ag'in' Providence!"

Flinn thought a little ruefully that the five dollars in his pocket would not go far in paying the other expenses of the wedding, let alone any thought of silk dresses. And pay-day had just passed. Timothy was behind in financial matters. He could never remember a time when he was not behind. It is difficult to bring up a family of six and not get behind and stay there.

"Here's yer supper," said Mrs. Tim, placing a pail on the bench before the door of the cabin. "An', Tim, I'm sorry I give ye words this mornin'

about th' blue silk dress. I'm sorry—that I am. I did set me heart on it, as ye well know; but we'll let it go. I'll just be wearin' th' black alpaca, though 'tis more becomin' fer a funeral than a weddin'."

"I'm thinkin' th' black alpaca'll be lookin' foine," said Flinn as he seated himself and began his supper.

"I didn't say ez it'll be lookin' fine," said Mrs. Tim. "I say I'll be wearin' it, if worse comes ter worse, which I ain't niver expectin'. Look at it, Tim; I wore it through th' dust and all just ter show yer. Ye can't hurt th' old thing!"

Mrs. Tim stepped into the cabin and brought out a lantern, which she lighted with matches which she produced from a dingy hand-satchel.

"It's Mrs. Tim ez always has matches with her," she remarked. "Now, look at th' old rag!"

Between his bites Flinn inspected the garment.

"If yer could git out that spot near th' patched place it'll be lookin' foine!"

Mrs. Flinn sighed. What she had in mind was to prove to her husband that the dress could never be worn at the wedding of her daughter.

"I took a chance," said Mrs. Tim. "Sure it be that men have eyes like bats! But this night we'll say nothin' more about th' blue silk; only if Providence should fer oncet provide fer th' needs of yer wife, ye needn't rear up wid jealousy. An' I has it on me mind ter tell yer, Tim, ez I saw two strangers ahead of me on th' gulch road. They must have slipped inter th' bushes, for whin I come ter th' crossroads I didn't git anither sight of them."

"Loike 'tis they're th' same ez was prowlin' along th' edge of th' creek whin Finley wint home. Said he: 'Flinn, moind yer kape yer pistol handy. Ye well knows there's been bad doin's on th' road.' An', woman, I'm hatin' ter have ye goin' back ter th' town by yer lonesome!"

"They holds up trains an' th' like of that, but I've niver heard that a lone woman wasn't safe in this miserable land of sagebush and dust," replied Mrs. Flinn. "'Tis th' silk gown ez is worryin' me sick, but we'll let it go."

"She's like 'em all," growled Flinn to himself after his wife's heavy figure had disappeared down the path that led to the cabin from the highway. "If a woman gits her mind fixed on anything it takes more'n a wreckin'-crew an' a hundred-ton derrick ter hist it out!"

Mrs. Tim's mind was certainly fixed on the blue silk. As she trudged along the lonely road she gave her thoughts utterance in a monologue.

"Eyes sure like bats has men. It's meself hoped ez he would see how careless I was wid th' black rag. If I was wan of them military suffragettes I would smash old man Doodle's winder an' lift a gown. But let th' wicked thought perish; 'tis not meself for th' lock-up! No; 'tis on th' blessed Providence that Mrs. Tim must hang her hope. Now, ef I was a widder!—widders seem favored. More'n likely ef I was a widder th' blue silk would be comin' in th' beak of a crow. Perish th' thought! Tim has his faults, but 'tis not Mrs. Tim ez is wantin' ter be a widder."

Mrs. Tim roused herself from her reverie and began to look about her. On dark nights her husband provided her with a lantern, and she always carried matches in case the wick was blown out. But to-night there was a pale new moon, which with the stars gave sufficient light so that she could see the turnpike very plainly, twisting here and there before her like a whitish ribbon.

She had gone about half-way of the distance to the town when above the bordering bushes of the roadside, and within twenty feet of her, she distinctly saw a man's head, the face turned in her direction.

Mrs. Flinn was middle-aged, with the bravery that is frequently found in women of her class and nationality. But she was certainly startled by the

sight of the man's head. She turned her face, however, in the direction that she was going and walked steadily onward.

And she calmly considered, as she continued her way, why a man should be at the side of the road and evidently watching for her passing. And it seemed clear to her that the only object that the man could have was to make certain that she was continuing her journey toward the town. And of course she connected the prowler in the bushes with the men that she had seen earlier that evening and with those whom her husband had mentioned. And if the man at the roadside wished to know that she had left her husband and was well on her way homeward, it was pretty certain that something out of the usual was afoot.

What that something was she had no idea, but it seemed likely that it must have to do with the watchman and the railroad.

"'Tis no tale to rout out th' sheriff wid!" whispered Mrs. Tim. "This wicked land o' train-robbers an' guns is no place fer a woman ter tell of seein' heads over bushes by moonlight. Though I did see a head—and ef these fellers is plannin' somethin' ter harm Tim—sure 'tis I'm goin' back. If I can't do nothin' else, I kin yell like a coyote—though there's no one ter hear me in this desolation. But I'm goin' back. This ain't no time fer Mrs. Tim ter go home ter her childer and bed. An' I'll git back so that th' galloot won't have a chancet ter see me. An', Heaven be praised! I've got on me rag of a black alpaca. Fer sneakin' round at night, 'tis surely a most convenient garmint!"

Mrs. Tim trudged onward until she had put a good half-mile between herself and the place where she had seen the man. Then she pushed into the tangle at the side of the road and crawled under a wire fence. And when well away from the turnpike she turned back in the direction of the railroad and Flinn's cabin.

It was a toilsome tramp through sage-brush and loose sand toward the bridge. Several times the hastening woman had to drop on her knees and crawl under wire fences. When she silently and almost breathlessly slipped down the low sandy bank to the railroad, the black alpaca had a bad rip in the front fore and was otherwise seriously injured.

"'Tis a new gown, Mr. Tim Flinn!" she gasped. "'Tis that much, anyway, fer this night's work—an' ye kin just bet on it!"

If any violence were intended to the watchman it would be better to keep as much as possible in the shadows.

At the side of the track near the place where Mrs. Tim had slipped down the bank was a pile of railroad ties. Behind the ties the panting woman seated herself until she had regained her breath; then she rose and slowly made her way toward the bridge, taking the precaution to keep in the sandy ditch under the shadow of the bank.

Before her she could see the signal at the bridge, and she knew that the white light high in the air meant a clear track for the next train—the evening express which would pass in less than an hour. She could also see the lighted rectangular doorway of her husband's cabin, and saw him pass and repass the opening several times.

"He's all right," whispered Mrs. Tim. "Maybe it's meself as let me fears throttle me senses. Still—'twas a man's head, and he was watchin' me. An' as reg'lar as th' paper comes, 'tis weekly there's a black head-line tellin' of anither hold-up. 'Tis sure a lawless an' sandy country!"

Suddenly Mrs. Tim ceased her whispers. She crouched low in the shadows of the bank. She had reason to be thankful that she was clothed in black.

A man had come quietly out from a patch of scrub not fifty feet in advance, and had slipped down the bank and had taken his place in the middle of the track.

Mrs. Tim thought that she began to

understand something of the reason why the man had taken this position. Doubtless there was to be an attack on the express. But here was only one man. Surely one man would not hold up a train; and, besides, it was understood among the railroad men that since the last hold-up trains carrying money or valuables also carried guards armed with rifles. But while the woman in the ditch wondered what would be the nature of the attack—if an attack were planned—the thing began to clear up with amazing quickness.

Three more figures appeared from nowhere near the bridge and beyond the man who still stood motionless in the middle of the track. At the same instant she saw her husband dive into his cabin. Then one of the three shouted out something that Mrs. Tim could not understand. And following Timothy's reply, which again his wife could not comprehend, there came a spurt of fire from the cabin door.

Following the flash came the crack of a pistol. Instantly other flashes burned into red lines the dimness and other shots rang out.

Mrs. Tim sprang to her feet. But she crouched quickly again and hugged the shadows. With difficulty she suppressed the scream that had fairly forced open her mouth.

"I'm 'shamed fer yer, I sure am, Kate Flinn," she whispered. "Ye've go' no weapon. Me screeches 'll only make things worse. An' there may be work comin' fer me. An' God be kind to yer, yer wicked woman, wid yer foolish talkin' of widders! An' may th' holy saints back ye in yer fight, Tim Flinn!"

The unequal fight leaped to its conclusion. Flashes at the end of the bridge burned the air, and with each flash Mrs. Tim shuddered and whispered prayers for her husband's safety. As yet, however, she did not think that he had been injured. And after he had fired the last cartridge of his pistol he retreated into his cabin and closed the door.

What happened after the retreat Mrs. Tim could not make out. The three near the cabin raced to it and forced in the door. And for a moment, and only for a moment, there seemed to be a savage hand-to-hand encounter.

Mrs. Tim shook her fist toward the struggling shadows at the doorway.

"Ye cowards!" she whispered. "Ah, but 'tis a terrible night! Ye cowards!—ye murderin' cowards!"

What had happened to her husband? She could not tell. The three who had taken possession of the cabin appeared again at the door. A moment later the white disk of safety that glowed above the bridge changed to red.

The red signal told Mrs. Tim, even in her terror over the fate of her husband, that the mechanism which controlled the draw had been put into operation and that the bridge had been thrown open. But at the end of twenty seconds the red disk paled back once more into white.

It was perfectly clear to the watchman's wife that after the bridge had been opened the signals had been tampered with and the white light of safety had been substituted for the red of danger. This explained everything. The robbers were planning to wreck the express by throwing it into the shallow ravine.

During the summer there was generally but a trickle of water in the stream. The bridge had been constructed with a draw because during the spring months the swollen stream was used for the company's scows that carried ties and ballast to points on the road to the south. Hence it was that during most of the year the draw was never used and the derailment of a train at this place would offer every opportunity for plunder.

Mrs. Tim's mind surged from the possible fate of her husband to the fiendish plan of dropping a train, with its men, women, and children, into a ravine. It seemed to her that the work

was the work of devils. She could not see how she could help her husband. but perhaps there was something that she could do to prevent these demons from a completion of their plan.

During the next five minutes. that seemed to her almost as many hours. Mrs. Tim remained crouched in the ditch. For many years she had been a railroad man's wife, and she had heard tale after tale of people who at night had managed to stop trains.

But her brain seemed demented. The only story that at first jumped into her consciousness was one where a man danced before the locomotive until it was too late to jump. The train was stopped and the railroad company paid for the man's funeral.

"Ah, me poor Timothy!" whispered Mrs. Tim. "But even if 'tis a widder that I am, I'll not be makin' a double wake! 'Tis not Mrs. Tim ez is lookin' fer monumints of commimoration!"

It seemed to the distracted woman that her brain took delight in torturing her with impossibilities and absurdities. She actually recalled the strange tale that some train-hand had told her of an ingenious fellow that in the night found a steer and drove the animal up a single track to its death. Mrs. Tim knew that there were cattle near her, but she had doubts of the truth of the tale.

Then her active mind recalled the story of the man who of a dark night set fire with matches to his farmer's straw hat. In her satchel she had matches. But what could she do with the matches? She had no lantern, no straw hat; nothing but a little cap of wool.

"Ah!" at length whispered Mrs. Tim. "Ah, Timothy, if Mrs. Tim is a widder, 'tis not th' black alpaca ez will be worn. Wo is me, but if Mrs. Tim is a widder 'tis th' railroad company'll provide th' black. An' th' alpaca'll burn like th' rag it is, an' ez if it was dipped in kerosene!"

Carefully but hastily Mrs. Tim wormed herself away from the man who still stood in the middle of the track. Back and back she crawled until she found herself at the side of the pile of railroad ties where she had sat when she came down the bank. Behind this five-foot bulwark she slipped.

When she had put the pile of ties between herself and the man on the track she quickly removed the alpaca gown. Hunting here and there in the dim light, she found a stout stick. To the end of the stick she securely tied her gown and added her white-cotton underskirt.

"If I only knew about Tim!" she sorrowed. "An' what in th' world an' all I'll do fer clothin'!" she added as she made all secure to the end of the stick. "But 'tis a hot night. Perhaps I can slip back to th' convenience of this pile of ties. An' if Mrs. Tim is a widder, nothin' much can matter!"

By peering around her shelter she could just make out the motionless figure between her and the bridge. Beyond glowed the white signal.

Mrs. Tim talked aloud, alternately condoling with herself as to her possible widowhood and then telling herself that very likely Timothy had in some way escaped all injury. Twenty minutes drew themselves on endlessly.

Then there began a slight humming sound. It was the vibration of the rails; and Mrs. Tim knew that the train was not very far away. As yet, however, and because of a curve a half-mile to the north, she could not see the locomotive headlight. And now came the puzzling question that must be decided as to the proper moment when to apply a match to her torch.

The humming increased. Mrs. Tim crouched low against the ground and lighted one of her matches, shielding the flame with the folds of black cloth. But before it caught the cotton skirt the match flickered and went out. With the second, the cloth began to burn. The excited woman bunched both underskirt and gown well around the portion that had caught the flame.

If she had known it, she need not

have feared that the man nearest her would see the glow. When he had first heard the locomotive he had turned toward the bridge and had raced to join his companions.

The throb of the locomotive became louder and louder, and the glare of the headlight swung around the curve and broadened with every fraction of a second. Mrs. Tim's torch was well alight. She seized the stick and, waving her flag of flame, sprang to the middle of the ties.

The engineer of the express said afterward that he was stopped by a "dancing ghost waving a burning sheet."

The express was running fast. Fifteen seconds after Mrs. Tim had leaped into the middle of the track she leaped back to the ditch again. But she continued to wave her flaming banner until the train had come to a stop directly in front of her. And it was not until then that she took refuge on the farther side of the pile of timbers.

From over the top of the ties Mrs. Tim beheld the faces of a group of railroad men and passengers that had gathered almost before the wheels had ceased to revolve. She blurted out her story. And before she had finished four men with rifles raced down the track toward the bridge. But the train-wreckers had disappeared. They evidently knew that the express carried a large amount of money; but men who are ready to ditch a passenger-train are seldom ready for a fight with their equals.

Flinn was found bound hand and foot in his cabin, and a slight flesh-wound of the forearm was his only injury.

"An' Timothy Flinn," said his wife, as she examined the arm, "a Pullman lady supplied me deficiencies wid this rain-coat. They're all askin' what they kin do fer me. 'Tis a subscription th' Pullman lady's takin' before th' train goes on. She says 'tis fer gowns. An', Tim, as I said before, 'twas you ag'in' Providence!"

ENGLISH RAILROADS INSURE BAGGAGE.

PASSENGERS by rail in England can now insure baggage with the Travelers' Baggage Insurance Association. Insurance tickets are sold at the principal ticket-offices of a number of prominent railways. The baggage may be insured for $100, $200, $300 or $500, and for periods of fifteen, thirty or sixty days. For a shilling, twenty-five cents, the passenger can buy a ticket which insures his baggage for fifteen days for $100; and the policy covers all places, not only railroad trains and stations, but also hotels, steamers, and all situations, apparently, except the passenger's own home. No declaration is required in applying for tickets. Among the conditions of insurance, those peculiar to this kind of insurance read, in substance, as follows:

That insurance shall apply to the whole of the baggage of the assured and not to any particular part, and should the total value of such baggage be greater than the sum insured, then claims shall be paid only in proportion to the amount insured.

That valuables such as jewelry, watches, articles of gold and silver, field-glasses, cameras and articles of vertu (precious material of fine workmanship, antiquity, rarity and extreme value), are only covered to the extent of one-fourth part of the total amount of the insurance effected, and that no claim is recoverable in respect to any one article of the description mentioned in this paragraph for a greater sum than ten pounds.

That cash, notes, tickets, bonds or securities of any kind are not covered, or loose articles such as sticks, umbrellas, rugs or straps, or any property while being worn on the person. No claim is recoverable for delay in transit and loss shall not be presumed in respect to missing baggage until after the lapse of a period of thirty days.

Insurance does not cover damage to any trunk or package itself, or breakage of any articles unless the same is caused by fire, or by accident to the conveyance by which the property insured is being conveyed. The assured shall observe ordinary and proper care in the supervision of his or her baggage. No claim is recoverable for a lesser sum than ten shillings.—*Railway Age Gazette.*

The Man-Arrow.

BY GEORGE VAN SCHAICK,

Author of "A Heart of the North," "At Big Loon Post," "Sweetapple Cove," etc.

Why Pete Legrande Shaped a Feathered Shaft with a Head Like That of a Poison-Fanged Reptile.

PETE LEGRAND was nearing the end of a big day's work. Twenty-eight miles up-stream, including ten of hard poling and about four of assorted portages, over which he had lugged his canoe and a good four hundred pounds of duffle, was no child's play. But he sang cheerfully as he plied his paddle, his deep, resonant voice carrying far up the river.

To-morrow Father Picheteau would come to Bear Portage on the Nipishish. The missionary had promised he would be there to tie the knot. While some of the stuff that Pete was bringing was for the coming winter's housekeeping, the balance represented a present to Mitsheshu, the girl's old father. It was called a present; yet those fond of calling a spade by its proper name would have said it was part of the price paid for Shouatsou, whose Indian name signified "the hovering bird."

Pete had built a log house at Bear Portage and had cleared about a quarter of an acre of ground, some of which could be planted with potatoes. When a fellow marries it behooves him to settle down and provide a home, wherefore he had taken an ax and a hoe and made one.

By this time he could see the smoke rising thin and straight above the firs and spruces beyond the bend in the dead water. A few strokes more revealed the first of the white tents. Then he saw a man looking toward him, shading his eyes with his hands. At once he recognized the old Indian.

It was a scared and contrite face that met him at the landing. Other Montagnais were gathered in small knots, pretending they were not looking toward him. Some women stared, half hidden by the flaps of their tents.

Though Pete's curiosity was aroused, he said nothing and began to unload his canoe. Then he straightened his back and looked sharply into the old man's eyes.

"Well?" he inquired.

"She has gone," said the old man tremulously. Everywhere I have sought. Her clothing is not in the tent. Yesterday Grey Wolf was here. In all the tents he sought to buy a gun, for his own was lost in the upsetting of his canoe; but no one could spare a gun, as all were starting for the winter's hunt. Then he left again in his canoe, going down-stream. Soon after Shouatsou said she was going to attend to snares and went into the woods. We have sought, but she is no longer here."

Pete's eyes had narrowed. The muscles of his great square jaw contracted and a darker color seemed to suffuse his strong half-breed features. A single word ripped out of his mouth, explosive and shrill, like the

spit of a rifle-shot. Then he quieted down. He carried all his stuff to the new log house, the only one at Bear Portage, and the old man apologetically offered to help him until sharply rebuffed.

The big fellow looked about the moss-chinked walls of his house. His keen eyes took in every detail. There was the little cast-iron stove he had toiled so hard to bring into the wilderness, also the blankets, the shiny pots and pans, and the enameled ware. But suddenly those eyes blazed again. When he had left the morning before his rifle, in its woolen sheath, lay on two pegs driven in the wall. Now it was gone, with all the cartridges.

That night the ~~old~~ Indian came to the door of the shack rather timidly. He had already received many blankets and other things as a price for his daughter, and knew he must now return them. He faintly hoped to save something from the disaster, but Big Pete was a terrible man, whose silence at the receipt of the news—broken but by that one tremendous oath—held something uncanny and portentous.

For a moment the old man stood at the open door. Pete's back was turned toward him. The half-breed was sitting at a rough-hewn table, on which burned a couple of candles, minutely occupied with some delicate work.

Old Mitsheshu finally took courage to walk in. Pete turned his head and struck the bowl of his pipe on a corner of the table. Then he resumed his work. The Indian's eyes began to stare wildly, but he did not speak.

With the delicate touch of an artist Pete was feathering a slender shaft that he had scraped smooth with knife and broken glass. This was soon finished. Next began the subtle job of fitting on the steel arrow-head, and the man's big fingers toiled with surprising dexterity, after which he seemed to caress the sharp edges with a pocket-hone. Mitsheshu was looking on, silent and fascinated, for the triangular head was like that of a snake with poison-fangs. Finally he could contain himself no longer.

"It is a man-arrow!" he exclaimed, noting that the flat of the blade would lie horizontally when the shaft was fitted to the bow, as do the spaces between a standing man's ribs; whereas in a game arrow the flat would be vertical to allow for the up and down ribs of four-footed beasts.

"Sure thing," answered Pete, putting the shaft aside and taking up another.

"About those blankets," began Mitsheshu, "and the bags of flour and the keg of powder, besides the bars of lead—"

"Shut up!" snarled Big Pete in a voice that carried terror; but it was comforting also because it seemed to postpone the evil moment of parting with the price of Shouatsou, that had been a heavy one, as Pete was generous and the girl very beautiful.

The old man sank on a stool, sucking feebly at an empty pipe. His ancient semiheathen notions recognized the right of Pete to slay the man who had stolen his promised bride. It was even justifiable, in such a case, to kill the woman.

The talk of the priest did not really count, though it was good medicine, especially as to the blessings; and since the big man had paid the price the woman really belonged to him, to spare or to kill, according to usages current for years innumerable before ever white men or priests had come. Yet the old man's heart felt very heavy; for indeed he loved his child in a vague way, and a keen desire entered his soul that Pete might fail to find them.

Mitsheshu knew that the half-breed —owing, perhaps, to the greater perseverance and obstinacy of white blood —in early days had always beaten other Indian boys chasing birds or striking targets with blunt arrows. Later he had often pitted himself against and defeated men who thought they could still use the bow, an art moribund

from the time that the company had exchanged guns for their height in piled-up beaver pelts.

The big man kept at work swiftly long after the tent-dwellers had hushed all whispering and gone to sleep. Finally he finished, and Mitsheshu expected him to go to bed. But the moon was shinging brightly, and Pete quickly made up a big pack, stuck his ax-handle in his belt, picked up the strong bow and the arrows done up in buckskin, and went down to the water's edge, followed by Mitsheshu.

The half-breed lifted up his canoe as if it had been a feather and pushed it afloat, with the bow resting lightly on the sand. Then he loaded his pack well forward to balance his own weight in the stern.

Mitsheshu was struggling with words that trembled on his lips.

"Not the woman!" he finally cried. "Not the woman!"

"You go to the devil!" raged Big Pete, who shoved off and was soon lost in the black shadow of great trees near the bank. The old man, much bent, staggered back to his tent. A sense of great sorrow, like a pain, was gnawing at his heart.

II.

AS a piece of tracking, it was marvelous. There were delays, of course, when the scent of the quarry was utterly lost. Some Indians, primed by the fugitives, gave wrong directions; but, as they were palpably false, they helped rather than otherwise.

In one place a tiny camp-fire; in another, drops of gum spilled on a rock where a leak had been mended; in the bushes, evidence of a tiny blaze whereon the gum-pot had boiled. These proved luminous tracks. The man made up for the delays by working fiercely from earliest light till nightfall. He traveled with little weight, whereas Grey Wolf carried a winter's provisions.

Came a day when a river divided, one branch coming from the north, whereas the other flowed from the west. He was about to take the western branch when some queer instinct bade him change his mind. He had not gone a mile before a tiny bit of wood, floating on the water, caught his eyes. It was a burned match.

"By this time he thinks he's safe," sneered Big Pete.

Then he came to a portage, but noticed a little brook that rippled into the river. Around this he nosed for a moment, and was rewarded by finding a twig of alder hanging, broken, from the bough. Careful inspection showed tracks in the bed of the brook.

"Now I've got 'em," he decided.

He rested for a moment, lighting his pipe and wiping his sweating forehead.

He returned for his canoe and followed up the brook. Soon the marks were clear where the heavy canoe had been dragged on the bottom. A mossy place on shore revealed the track of a small moccasin he knew.

"Fresh this morning," he told himself, and counted the days he had spent on his hunt. There were nine of them.

A little farther he saw that they had pulled the canoe ashore. Following the trail he found the canoe itself, abandoned and carefully covered with slabs of bark. His own he hid a few hundred yards away. Then he camped for the night and ate cold food, for Indians have a keen nose for smoke.

In the morning he awoke to find four inches of snow on the ground. He had been expecting it, but it disturbed him, for it would hide all old tracks, while he would have to make a lot himself.

The hunt which followed brought out every wild instinct of his Indian parentage, mingled with the shrewder reasoning power and keen determination of his white forebears. The combination made him a savage beast, fierce and untiring, but faintly equaled by the weasel on the rabbit's track.

Two days later he was lying on his stomach, peering at the little dingy tent. They evidently had a sheet-iron

stove, for smoke curled from a little pipe.

On the next morning he saw Grey Wolf sally forth, but could not follow, for there was a space of open, burned land he would have to cross. There was no hurry. His rage deepened as he saw that the Indian carried a rifle. It was easy to make out at a distance, owing to the apparent thickness of the barrel. It was Pete's own 45-70.

For three days more the man watched, biding his time, like a cat watching a hole in the flooring. Heavy rains had fallen that cleaned away the snow, though high hills to the west were still clad in white.

Finally came a morning when Grey Wolf sallied forth from his tent, carrying a pack and a large bundle of traps. Pete watched him as he spoke to Shouatsou, who stood before the tent, lithe and erect as a sapling of fir, graceful in every motion like some wild thing of the forest.

They spoke for some time, and the Indian pointed, evidently showing a large territory over which he was going to set out a line of traps. For nearly an hour the half-breed waited, confident that this time Grey Wolf was off on a long trip. Then Pete sneaked along, his great form hidden by every advantage of tree and rock.

Very soon he was in sight of his quarry. The man had stopped and was making a marten set, piling fir branches on a stump to keep the snow from covering the trap below.

Once, noiseless as a mink, Pete came so close that he felt confident the man was well in range of the bow, but the pack covered his back.

At this time Pete came across a fresh bear-track, to which he paid little heed. Grey Wolf, who was not over a hundred yards ahead of him, took off his pack and placed it on the ground. Then he started off, carrying only the gun.

"Guess he's got a bear-trap already set," Pete told himself. "He's going to look at it. Then he'll come back for his pack and go on, 'less he gets the bear."

The half-breed at this time was crawling on the ground. It was marvelous that in all this time the Indian had caught no inkling of his presence. However, Pete had always kept at some distance of the man's trail and picked his way through places a journeying trapper would avoid.

Then, suddenly, there fell on his ear a short, sharp, raging sound that was grunt and roar and squeal all rolled into one. It was instantly followed by a cry of distress.

"Bear's dragged his log, by thunder! Got him, too!" exclaimed the half-breed.

No longer did he crawl. For a second or two he had stood expectantly, waiting for a gun-shot; but the rifle was silent.

Then he dashed on to where the sound of fierce squealing grunts and crashing branches betrayed the savage struggle. When he reached the place the primal brutality of nature held him spellbound as he watched the struggle.

As he had surmised, it was evident that the chain-log had proved too light. The bear must have dragged it and hidden in the thick bushes by the trail. Then, when the man passed near, going to the supposed site of his trap, the animal, infuriated by the pain of steel teeth gnawing at a foreleg, had leaped upon the man.

A blow of the huge paw, armed with the sixteen-pound trap, had flung the gun away and opened a huge cut on the Indian's cheek. He had fallen, nearly out of reach; but one of the bear's claws had entered the heavy moccasin, and he dragged the man toward him.

The leather tore, and Grey Wolf, clinging desperately to roots and stones, dragged himself away. Yet, in his fury, the animal no longer heeded the pain of the trap; a raging effort dragged the log a foot or two forward, and the man was again struck down.

For several moments there was a turmoil of struggling legs and huge

paws, a bearing of long, sharp teeth, a flash of a knife, and the man tore himself away.

But he staggered and fell again, and the brute came on, slowly dragging the log. Again, as by a miracle, the man found his feet, but he stumbled, blinded by the blood that filled his eyes. Once more, for the instant, the bear stood upright, and the huge paw, with its great club of steel, was uplifted.

"If the bear don't get him I will," had been Pete's first thought.

Yet, something that came from the cleaner depths of manhood had kept the long man-arrow from its intended flight. Now there was a sudden twang of the cord released and the whizzing flight of the straight shaft.

Through the heavy fur it struck, splitting its way between the ribs of the upstanding bear; then through thick muscles and into the vessels at the top of the great, panting heart—and the bear was dead!

Now upon the half-breed came the lust of the great killing.

"One big, fine shot!" he said.

Grey Wolf had weakly passed a torn sleeve through the blood that plastered his face. For a moment he stared foolishly at the animal before him. Then his eyes turned and he saw Pete.

The awful fear that had already been his was nothing to the present extremity of his terror. He dropped, senseless, to the ground.

III.

THE sun was nearing the tops of the far snowy hills and steeping them in gaudy tints. Hovering Bird sat before the tent thinking she must wait at least another day for the coming of her chosen man. Then she gasped, for she beheld a huge creature coming toward her, bearing a great load.

The fear in her soul stopped the inflow of her breath; but the man continued to approach, bearing the pack that belonged to Grey Wolf, above which a human body was insecurely poised. In one hand of the big man was a bundle that was a great, dripping bear-hide.

"*Quey! Quey!*" He saluted her and entered the tent. The young woman's teeth began to chatter. Then he knelt down slowly and deposited the man on the blankets that were on the bed of fir-boughs, handling him tenderly.

But the spirit of the woman was aroused and vindictive.

"Thou hast killed my man!" she shrieked.

"No, he is not dead," answered Pete kindly. "I think he will recover. Put water to boil. Also make hot tea."

She obeyed meekly, while Pete undressed the man and, as best he knew, attended to his many wounds.

Then for some days he watched Grey Wolf in patient silence until the man was nearly well.

"Listen," he told the girl one morning. "In a few days now he will be able to tend traps again. I leave the gun with you, for you might starve without it. But I take the bear-hide. That is surely mine."

"God bless thee!" cried the girl.

For a moment he held her hand, and passed a big paw over her head in the fashion of a clumsy blessing. Then he swung away lustily, bearing the hide and his great bow to where his pack and canoe were cached.

Some days later old Mitsheshu, who had been very desolate, heard a loud, deep voice gravely singing a song of *voyageurs*. But when he looked into the face of the man he was happy again.

Told by Our Readers

WE will pay promptly for railroad and telegraph stories for the RAILROAD MAN'S MAGAZINE — stories of danger and daring; of mystery, romance, and wonder in the big world of railroading. We want to publish these stories in "Told by Our Readers," and we want our readers to write them. Just sit down and tell the story as it happened—as if you were telling it to a smoking compartment full of good fellows and had them "all ears" to catch every word. Tell it as if you were telling it to your wife and children at home. We want just such stories — true ones, with names, dates, and places, and running from one thousand to two thousand words in length. Checks will be mailed on acceptance.—THE EDITOR.

THE TAIL LIGHTS IN THE STORM.

Johnson Jumped When He Saw the Red, But He Hit Something Softer Than the Right-of-Way.

BY J. W. FRASER, Davenport, Iowa.

IT was a memorable night on the Rock Island in the winter of 1912. For six hours a steady pour of snow and sleet, the tail of a destructive Western blizzard, swept over the whole of the middle West, from the Missouri River to the Great Lakes.

Out on the line the heavy, frozen pellets clung inseparably to the telegraph wires, adding weight each minute to the weary wires until one after one they snapped. Traffic was at a standstill, for everything was stalled on the main or hung up on sidings. Fast passengers were compelled to flag ahead, creeping slowly.

The rails, thickly coated with ice, afforded poor footing for the heavily laden Mikadoes, as they sought empty sidings after vain attempts to keep rolling. Invariably they presented the same appearance with fires plastered against the flue-sheet and flues leaking water.

In the despatcher's office pandemonium reigned. As wire after wire parted the white-faced despatcher worked faster and faster, clearing the main of freights and drawing the passengers ahead, a station at a time, fully intent on pulling everything through as close on the shattered schedule as possible.

Somewhere back on the Illinois division, No. 5, the fast Western mail, was valiently fighting and losing, plunging deeper and deeper into the gale as she sped westward. When she pulled into Rock Island, the first division point, she was one hour and fifteen minutes "in the hole." The despatcher had been trying vainly to get a line on Extra 1649, which left Rock Island some hours before and had not been reported since.

With the conductor's warning ringing in their ears as they climbed into the cab that morning, engineer "Dad" Johnson and his fireman, Andy Homer, realized fully their chances of meeting the extra stalled on the main and with rails like glass, their poor chances of escape if they did.

After clearing Davenport, Johnson pulled her open for a run up Dutch Hill, a ten mile incline with treacherous curves. Despite their flying start, the big Pacific slipped and roared outrageously as she struggled over the hill, losing steadily. When she had finally gained the top, she had dropped fifteen more precious minutes. Peeved at his ill-fortune, the engineer "tore her loose" and sped over the level ground in a frenzy of speed.

As they roared on, mile after mile, the nerves of the watching men became more and more strained. Somewhere ahead of them, they knew, was the extra. Even with a warning, they might not stop in time to avoid the crash.

At last it came. Johnson discovered it directly ahead. Two fiery red eyes gleaming treacherously near in the darkness.

Without a second glance, he reversed, jammed the throttle shut and applied the air. Then with a wild cry of, "There she is, Andy," he leaped through the window, carrying the frame with him.

The little Scotchman was on the deck when the warning came. All the pent-up anxiety of the last few hours relapsed in the next few moments. He dropped his full scoop in the center of the cab floor and made a dash for the gangway. He was prevented in reaching his goal, however, by the scoop-handle, which in some inexplicable manner swung between his legs and stretched him none too gently on the cab floor.

Before he could arise he forsook the idea of jumping and lay nervously awaiting the crash. After a few minutes he could stand the suspense no longer and rose unsteadily to his feet. Shaking in every limb, he anxiously peered ahead.

The bright headlight cut a path ahead, but the astonished fireman saw nothing in the flier's path. On the right, however, standing silent and peacefully on the siding, was the lost extra.

The flier came to a stop almost abreast of the freight engine. The extra's engine-crew, brakeman and conductor scrambled out to learn the cause of the stop. Andy hastily explained, and with the others aboard he started back to find Johnson.

All were again silent, peering anxiously to the rear to catch sight of the passenger engineer, probably killed or injured by his jump from the cab window.

The freight conductor was the first to spot him. He was buried head downward in a snow drift, kicking gingerly, with the broken window still encircling his body. They sprang to the ground and ran forward, meeting, as the passenger conductor and brakeman came running up.

The seven reached the engineer simultaneously, then, by the same impulse, they burst into uproarious laughter as they dragged the unfortunate hogger out of the snow.

He stood, spluttering and blowing for fully five minutes before he found his voice. Then he gave vent.

"That's right, laugh, you pin-headed parcel of ignorant farmers. Laugh, will you, you—" he spluttered hopelessly in his anger.

He kicked the window-frame wrathfully and walked slowly toward the engine, then turned to the freight conductor.

"And you—you fat-headed stiff," he said; "it's a wonder you wouldn't watch that green, lace-curtain salesman called a flagman instead of warming your feet in the cab. Why didn't you duck your tail-lights?"

WHILE THE OPERATOR WAS IN THE HAY.

A Deep Mystery of the C. P. that Was Solved When the Brass Pounder Awoke.

BY D. J. CLARK, Hurdsfield, North Dakota.

WHEN I arrived at the little station on the Canadian Pacific Railroad where I was doomed to pass many long days with no company but the section-boss and a few hands, I carried with me two hundred dollars with which to pay the section-crew. I had many fears as to about what would happen to me if any one knew I had it. As I was putting it into the safe that stood in the corner I looked over my shoulder. Some one was looking at me through the window.

As I turned the face disappeared. I went out instantly and I beheld a heavily built man walking down the track. I went back and thought no more of the matter. Soon it grew dark and I began to prepare for bed. As I blew out the lights I thought I heard a slight noise at the door, but I thought it was the rising wind.

I was very tired after my long ride, so I soon fell asleep. About twelve o'clock I awoke with a start to find myself sitting up in bed. I made a thorough search, and

finding nothing wrong, went to bed again. The next morning when I went to the safe the money was gone. I did not know what to do. I soon found they had a constable in the town, however, and I reported the loss to him.

He promised to do everything he could to trace the man I had seen looking in the window. After I had wired to headquarters I faced a restless forenoon. I simply could not work.

That night I went to bed at half past eight after a trying day. No signs of the man had been found. I slept poorly, for I dreamed of robbers and square-shouldered men gazing at me from every nook and corner. In the morning I was surprised to find that seventy-five dollars of my own money was missing. I had put it behind the large clock, because I had thought it would be safe there.

I told the constable. He shook his head, for he was greatly puzzled.

The road detective came to my station to take the case in hand. He had several bloodhounds to trail the man I had seen. The first day he found no trace of the man. He returned to the hotel for the night.

After he had gone I thought that perhaps there was a cellar below the depot. There was a trap-door in the floor, so I went down with a lantern. To my disappointment there was nothing but some old lumber. That night my watch and revolver were taken.

In the morning I reported it to the detective. He did not know what to think of it.

No one had been around the depot since the man I had seen, and the case was indeed strange. The next night the detective hid himself in a large tool-box in the corner where he could see everything that went on in the room.

Falling asleep, I dreamed of a man going to the safe; I followed; he opened the safe and took the money.

When he saw me he seized me, he was shaking me vigorously when I awoke. I was standing in the middle of the waiting-room with the detective at my side laughing.

I gazed at him in wonderment.

"Well," he said, "the mystery is solved. You are a sleep-walker."

I could hardly believe my ears as I heard this, but nevertheless it was so. I found everything in the morning. The money and other effects were in an old drinking-fountain in the corner.

WITH "JINX" KELLEY IN THE CAB.

The Hoodoo Rode with the Pile-Driver Crew When They Sped Through a Fire-Swept Country.

BY E. J. O'CONNOR, Sioux City, Iowa.

IT was during the devastating forest fires of 1896 that we made the wild run from Pipestone, Minnesota, to Ashland Junction, Wisconsin, with a pile-driver to replace several bridges that had been destroyed in northern Wisconsin. I had been in the employ of the C., St. P., M. and O. as pile-driver engineer for about fourteen years, and was then working in the vicinity.

"Jinx," we called our hogger Kelley, for he was constantly facing the many emergencies that make a railroad man's life one of uncertainty. There were about fourteen of us in the working-crew of the driver.

On a Sunday evening a message ordered us to take the driver to St. Paul with all the speed we could with safety. Kelley was at the throttle, and was living up to his reputation as a man who runs by instinct. The track from Pipestone to Heron Lake was very rough, but Kelley was "pulling her wide open."

Nearing Slayton, the fastenings which held the pile-driver in its proper place on its car jarred loose, and the pile-driver swung across the car. This brought the engine-house of the driver squarely in front of the caboose door, and the trainmen could neither go forward on the train nor signal to Kelley. Aldrich, the conductor, went on top of the caboose to get above the engine-house, but Kelley was busy seeing how fast he could make the "drivers" turn.

The pile-driver was fifty feet long and stuck out about fifteen feet from the rail on one side. It bounced and teetered along over that rough track for several miles. How its car ever held the track is more than I can explain. We all expected to go into the ditch any minute.

Coming into Slayton the driver mowed down a couple of switch stands and missed the depot by a hair. Suddenly Kelley looked back, got the signal, and brought the train to a stop.

After jacking up the driver and getting it back on its car properly, we started on. Things went well until we were turning the curve approaching the bridge at Windom. As we came in sight of the town, and Kelley saw a street light near the bridge, he mistook it for an engine headlight, put on the emergency air, and piled us all in one end of the caboose.

Arriving at St. James, we changed engine and train-crews, and proceeded at a fast clip. Having lost the "jinx," we thought perhaps we would have no more trouble.

Passing through the timber near Minneopa, there are many short curves. Going around these curves a brace on the side of the driver car became loose and swung out. It struck a man who was walking beside the track and killed him instantly. At Mankato I swung this brace into its proper place and made it fast, not knowing that it had hurt any one.

Nearing Kasota our engine broke a side rod and demolished a part of the cab, but did not injure the enginemen. We procured another engine here and proceeded. By this time we had heard of the killing of the man near Minneopa, and were very uneasy.

We ran all right till we reached the high bluff near Mendota, and here our engine jumped an open switch. Some of the pile-driver crew proposed to desert the train here, but they were prevailed upon to stick.

We arrived safely in St. Paul before daylight, and after changing crews and getting a northern division engine, we started for Spooner, Wisconsin. After a fast run we arrived at Spooner early in the forenoon, and picking up nine carloads of piling and five cabooses filled with men, we started on the last leg of our journey.

A few miles out from Spooner we entered the fire district. For forty miles there was fire and smoke on both sides of us. We ran over burning bridges, warped rails, and rails with the ties burned out from under them. The smoke and heat was suffocating.

We arrived at the site of the burned Barronett at about noon Monday. The town had been completely burned Saturday night. The people had been lying in a slough in which there were from six to ten inches of water. They had left the slough and were gathered about the spot where the depot had stood. Their clothing and hair were matted with the red mud, and their eyes highly inflamed by the heat and smoke. Only one man was burned to death. If it had not been for the slough, every one would have perished.

The town of Hinckly had burned on Friday, and all of the people in it perished in a gravel pit, where they gathered and tried to save themselves from the heat by burrowing in the sand.

A five-hundred-foot bridge was burned out completely within six miles of Ashland Junction, near a little town called Benoit. Here we stopped and went to work that evening at nine o'clock. We worked night and day, and although the bridge was five hundred feet long and thirty feet high, we had trains crossing on the fourth day.

CHITWOOD SENIOR MADE SOME BEFITTING CLASSICAL ALLUSION TO THE BEAUTIFUL AND SATISFYING SPLENDIFEROUSNESS OF TRUE FRATERNAL AFFECTION.

Honk and Horace.

BY EMMET F. HARTE.

Our Old Friends Take Active Part in a Genuine Drama d'Amour, as 'Twere.

WHEN Honk and I foregathered in the Medicine House for our regular evening meal I noticed that he had the look in his eyes of one who bulges with interesting if not sensational gossip. I poured the Adam's ale ingratiatingly, for it had been a dull day withal.

"Ah, anything new or startling in town?" I asked.

Honk cracked an egg on the corner of the table. "Well, no," he replied, "except—that is—I've been getting the inside facts regarding a most interesting love affair this afternoon. Most interesting, indeed. Genuine drama *d'amour*, as 'twere."

"No, you don't say," I murmured, all agog. "Who 'tis is it? Do I know 'em?"

"Sure. The lady in the case is Miss Jessamine Finley."

"And the ardent swain?"

"Clarence Chitwood," he said sententiously.

My face fell and hit the floor with a dull thud. Clarence Chitwood forsooth. That hazelnut-brained ninny? "Humph!" I grunted.

"Yes," continued Honk sonorously, "Clancy, poor chap, is hard hit. Told me all about the matter this afternoon. Unbosomed himself, you know, as a friend to a friend. He's anxious for me to advise him, so I've promised to formulate a plan whereby—"

"Plan whereby what?" I interrupted impatiently. "Explain yourself.

Why beat around the shrubbery. Get down to brass tacks. You talk like a whirligig, and say nothing."

"My dear Horace, don't get snippy! You know I fear you not. Pass the oleo. The point is, our good friend Clancy especially desires to form a matrimonial alliance with J. Carter Finley's only daughter. She's an heiress; and he, being the sole scion of the house of Chitwood, will one day come into a nice competence himself. The match, therefore, would be highly desirable, viewed from a purely pecuniary point of view. I gather that the families of both parties are more than willing. I understand that they would be gratified almost to the point of ecstatic hilarity. Until quite recently, Clancy tells me, the thing appeared to be all settled. I thankee for the bread. But Miss Finley has lately acquired a lot of highly colored and far-fetched notions as regards love and marriage complicated by such things as chivalry and romance. She swears—er, that is, she declares that Clancy's manner of wooing is about as romantic as a man filing a saw, or something of that sort; I take it, in fact, that he's making headway backward rapidly."

"Her head's level like a billiard-table," I commented. "She has a good eye."

"Oh, but my dear boy," Honk objected, "I've promised Clancy to lend my assistance to the prosecution of his suit. I'm already committed to his cause; and I counted on your hearty cooperation. Between us I felt sure we'd evolve a scheme to unite these two fond and loving hearts. I don't mind saying that I have the greatest confidence in your capacity for grasping a problem almost instantly."

I beamed beatifically. If he looked at it in that light, why, of course, naturally I— "Oh, very well," said I with an assumption of airy unconcern, "that's right. If you get up a stump you may always depend upon me to help out, assuredly."

"And your idea would be to—"

"You say the parents are urging this alliance?" I asked. He nodded affirmatively. "Then it's no wonder the girl has lost interest," I mused. "The thing for the old folks to do is to openly and belligerently oppose the match. I'd suggest that Colonel Chitwood and Carter Finley quarrel—it wouldn't be a bad move for them to actually fight—and then become, temporarily, to all intents and purposes, bitter enemies. Then it would be well for Finley to kick Clancy off his premises the first time he calls, and forbid him to even pass along the street in front of the house. Then, if Jessamine even deigns to pucker her brows about it, a thing she may be expected to do, of course, her father must lock her in the ruined tower, on a diet of bread and water, until she agrees to give up Clancy forever—"

Honk smiled upon me in undisguised admiration. "My boy," he said feelingly, "you are undoubtedly a wonder. You've put your finger on the exact solution, in the twinkling of an eye. We will then have Clancy establish communication with her, plan a hazardous rescue, after which they will fly to the nearest parson, be married, and live happy ever after."

"Just so," I assented. "He can shoot arrows with notes concealed in 'em, over the battlements; and at the proper time, of course, we will introduce the rope-ladder, swords, pistols, long cloaks, and a closed carriage waiting back of a coppice, and all that. We might arrange to pull off an abduction, having the girl spirited away and held for ransom in a cave by a band of bushy-whiskered brigands—with Clancy to the rescue, to add to the romanticness, if that's what she's hungering for."

"Great!" agreed Honk. "It's a scheme among a thousand. Leave the dish-washing go. Get into your tuxedo, and we'll drop up to the club for an hour. I promised Clancy I'd meet him there this evening."

The All-Nighters Club is purely social and convivial in character. Honk affiliated himself with the All-Nighters mainly because everybody of social consequence at all belonged thereto, and I, after a good deal of persuasion, allowed my name to be presented in order to put an end to the continual wrangle and discussion. I've since decided that it was my sixty-two dollars and a quarter they were after most of all, for nobody pays much attention to it now if I don't show up for a week.

Being full-fledged members, we sauntered in, nodded civilly to Jenkins when he checked our lids and sticks, and then proceeded to ensconce ourselves in a couple of easy chairs while we glanced over the war news, here and there. Just before Killarney fell, and Villa captured the Gulf of California, Colonel Chitwood accompanied by his son Clarence descended upon us.

I've often wondered how Clancy Chitwood, with his ancestry, chanced to be such a trivial person. For in the colonel, his father, one saw a fine, upstanding, dignified, distinguished, old gentleman of polished manner and good sense. Clancy's mother, too, was a dear little white-haired lady, the embodiment of every womanly grace and charm, at the turn of life's afternoon.

Clancy well nigh melted and inundated us in the warmth of his outward esteem.

"You know," he impressed upon his father, "Honk and Horace are my two most intimate friends. We're the best chums ever."

Chitwood senior made some befitting classical allusion to the beautiful and satisfying splendiferousness of true fraternal affection, its rarity, its profound poetic — ahem! — er — suggesting, in conclusion, that we repair to the smoking-room, to offer up a little incense, as was not unbecoming in gentlemen and philosophers, to Habana, the god of curling vapors.

Seated at a table, with the necessary paraphernalia of such ceremonials in front of us, conversation touched on topics of the usual dull and uninteresting character, at the outset. As a matter of fact, neither Honk nor I had the monumental assurance to broach the subject of Clancy's all but bungled love affair; no more could one expect the colonel to plunge pell-mell into a recital of intimate family affairs, laying bare the private annals of his household on the dissecting-table, as it were, for us to pry into.

However, it happened that Clancy wasn't muzzled by any ideas of false modesty. He took a high dive into the very midstream of the proposition shortly. And once the ice was broken, the rest waded in, and soon were splashing around quite merrily.

Colonel Chitwood admitted that the prospective marriage of his son to the fair daughter of his best friend had long been a consummation devoutly to be desired. In fact, both pairs of parents had planned and abetted that very thing pretty considerably. And then Honk unlimbered his silver tongue, and outlined our scheme in detail.

It was a good scheme withal, and Colonel Chitwood waxed enthusiastic; he went so far as to hammer his approval on the table as Honk unfolded the strategic moves, one after another —the pseudo-quarrel, the pseudo-feud, the near-violence and ejection of Clancy, the incarceration of the maiden fair, and finally the gallant rescue.

"Gad, sir!" declared the old gentleman. "It will be as good as a play. We'll make a regular jamboree of it."

A cup-bearer having appeared in the mean time, the colonel bespoke a libation to *Leander* the hero, who, I believe he said, swam the Atlantic, and ran a foot-race with *Venus* for a prize of three golden apples. "And, by the way," he said to our attendant, "if Carter Finley has put in an appearance, bid him come hither."

The gentleman named, having come in, joined us. There were more elucidations, dissertations, and libations. And pretty soon I began to get terribly bored. At best Clancy gave me a pain, and J. Carter Finley made me weary, so I manufactured a pressing engagement, excused myself, and hotfooted it for my favorite nickelodeon.

What had the tiresome twee-deedle of a lot of Chitwoods and Finleys to do with the throbbing, sobbing, sen-

"So-ho!" he said. "There you are, eh? I'll trouble you for a small chew, please. Well, we got our plans all perfected."

"Plans—what plans?" I asked dully.

"Don't go having one of your dumbheaded spells now," he said. "You know very well what I refer to. The colonel is to call on Finley in the morning, and they're to fall out over politics; then Clancy will drop in later

THE TEMPTATION TO JUMP OUT WITH A SNARL AND A GROWL WAS TOO STRONG.

tient romance of real life? What knew they of the sordid struggle, the cruel strangle-holds of poverty, hunger, sorrow, and pain? What wotted they of the smiles, the tears, the breathless ecstasy of love, the burning bitterness of hate? Poof! Romance! Oh, me; oh, my! Even after I'd gone home I scoffed to myself.

In this frame of mind I sat with feet elevated in an open window of the Medicine House to get the breeze, while I expanded my soul along with D'Artagnan and company, true exponents of romance as she is writ. Honk swashbucklered in, after a while.

and get thrown out bodily; and so on—" At which point I resumed my reading, thereby losing track of what he was saying.

I heard his voice at intervals, droning musically in my unheeding ears, and at certain points I said "Uh-huh" and "Ye-eh" mechanically, as a sort of concession to common civility. And what do you think? Honk had the bald-faced nerve afterward to assert that I had positively promised to personally assist Clancy in all ways possible, to make a monkey out of myself snooping around Carter Finley's domicil after night, and I don't know what

all besides. The idea! But that's what one gets for trying to be polite.

Beginning with the following afternoon, Clancy established headquarters at our office, inflicting himself upon us at all hours of the day and night. He burst in, somewhere about three o'clock, all suffused with excitement, reporting that Finley had booted him down the piazza steps, as agreed, even chasing him to the front gate in the bargain. He said that the row between his father and Finley in the morning had been frightfully realistic; in fact, the colonel had come home just a little bit ruffled at his treatment. Clancy himself seemed to harbor a sneaking notion that Finley, as leading heavy, somewhat leaned toward the knock-'em-down and drag-'em-out school of histrionics, but Honk said the rougher the better. His theory was that parlor theatricals, like faint hearts, would never cop out a fair lady.

The two of them, then, after considerable brain-straining, cobbled up a rude missive couched in the melodramatic drivel of "Ishmael, or in the Depths," vowing undying devotion, and pleading for a clandestine meeting, down by the postern-gate, at moonrise. This was despatched by unhasty messenger, it being previously cut and dried, of course, for Finley to mess in at the psychological moment, confiscate the note, blow up in a pandemonium of loud yells, and throw the innocent and probably dumfounded young woman into durance vile on the third floor front of the east wing.

All of which—savoring as it did of the kerosene circuit—was duly accomplished. Finley telephoned that he'd performed his part of the program in a manner that was no less than an artistic triumph, considering that he'd gnashed two twenty-five-dollar gold fillings from his teeth and torn out several tufts of perfectly good hair, in his great emotional scene, that nature might not see fit to restore in a jiffy. He further reported that Jessamine was safely under lock and key, in such and such a room fronting on the lawn, that she seemed to be quite a lot stirred up—even moderately vexed, as 'twere—over things, and that it was up to Clancy to get busy with his "Rudolph of Zenda" stunts.

Honk, as self-appointed stage-manager, joyfully assumed charge of matters thenceforward. With *Romeo* in tow, he set off at a gallop to secure bow and arrows and other miscellaneous "props." They failed to find an archery outfit in the city, so they bought an air-gun in lieu thereof—an erratic weapon that shot a variety of missiles—marbles, tenpenny nails, lead pencils, and such like.

Honk then agitated the inventive faculties of his high-power brain for a few minutes, and evolved a denatured minie-ball made of putty, to which a letter could be attached by a string. In order to demonstrate the absolute harmlessness of these projectiles in case they collided with a human being, Honk shot the fireman of our yard-engine as that unsuspecting person stooped to chuck in a modicum of coal while passing the station.

No fatality resulted, but the thing might have turned out differently if the victim had learned positively who shot him.

Clancy dined with us, and soon after night had dropped her sable pinions over the surrounding scenery—*i. e.*, it got dark—he and Honk lit out for Finley's with their note-shooter. I am not of an inordinately curious or prying disposition. Far from it. I cared nothing for their silly play-acting; still, there was a bare possibility that something interesting or ridiculous might happen, and—well, I grabbed my cap and followed along behind 'em stealthily.

The Finley place is a large brick and granite mansion sequestered in a grove of trees, with a hedge around the outer edge. Honk and Clancy found a thin spot after a little searching, and scratched through, I followed suit

circumspectly. The two dusky musketeers presently paused, reconnoitering, beneath certain windows in which a light glowed. I squatted behind a convenient bush. They indulged in some whispering and pointing, and then Clancy raised his blunderbuss.

K'thud! 'Twas the opening gun of the campaign. A faint spat sounded from above. "You hit the building, at all events," muttered Honk. "Attach another note and try'm again." I judged by that that they'd prepared several copies of the billy doo.

Clancy aimed again, long and breathlessly. This shot must have entered the window as intended, or else missed the house entirely, for nothing was heard of it. Presently, however, there was a stir within the room, and a figure appeared in the square of light. It was Jessamine Finley; she paused unconcernedly; raised her arms in a gesture of weariness, and gave a fine profile silhouette of a yawn.

"Gimme the gun," whispered Honk as she passed from view. "Now's our chance."

At the thud of the gun

CLANCY WAS ABOUT AS EXPERT AS A MUD-TURTLE. HAVING ATTAINED A DIZZY HEIGHT OF MAYBE TEN FEET, OF COURSE HE MADE A MESS OF IT.

"HOW SWEET OF YOU!" SHE MURMURED RAPTUROUSLY.

there came the sound of a tinkling crash from within the room. The sharpshooter had evidently winged something, all right. And then Jessamine's head and shoulders appeared in the open window. She leaned out.

"Who's throwing stones into this room?" she demanded.

"Tell her it's you," directed Honk in a husky whisper.

"It's me," quavered Clancy.

"And who is 'me,' for goodness' sake?"

"Me is Clarence. Don't you recognize my voice, Min?"

"Oh, fudge!" she remarked with more feeling than elegance. "Well, you've broken my best cloisonné vase, Clarence Chitwood. What do you want, please?"

"Why—why—" Clancy stammered while Honk whispered in his ear, "we—I was trying to send you a note," he burbled. "I wanted you to know that I'm still faithful."

"H-m," she said, melting a little. "That's nice of yo'. But don't let papa catch yo' on ouah lawn. He's been having regular tantrums all aftahnoon. Gracious! You must go, at once. Good night," and she closed the window. It hadn't been a very lengthy or loverlike interview withal.

Honk and Clancy lingered aimlessly a minute, then moseyed toward the street. The impulse to jump out with a snarl and growl as they passed my place of concealment was too strong to be resisted. I caught up with them when they got tangled in the hedge. Honk became quite austere upon finding that the dog he had so nimbly eluded had been only an impersonation. The campaign was called off for that night.

Finley and Colonel Chitwood came down during the following forenoon in Mrs. Finley's electric to exchange a few inanities. Finley was disposed to criticise the methods of the evening before. He'd been hidden in the darkened library at the time, I believe. He said Clancy needed to ginger up somewhat—his work was half-hearted. He recommended the bold, burglarious entry style of action. Close quarters, he said, was the best bet, be the game war, love, football, or finance.

I accompanied the storming party that evening, mainly because I had an open date. Under the balcony of the presumably languishing *Juliet* we stopped to palaver. I suggested that Clancy ascend by shinning up the network of English ivy that covered the wall. After several attempts to attract the lady's attention by flinging pebbles and guarded yodeling, Clancy decided to climb the vines. By wrenching the imagination slightly one

might've called it romantic. The summer night, the sighing breeze, the sentinel stars, the fragrance of honeysuckle up one's nose—yes, 'twas right romantic, after all.

As a vine-climber Clancy was about as expert as a mud-turtle, and, having attained a dizzy height of maybe ten feet, of course he made a mess of it. Something gave. He grabbed at a star-beam to steady himself, lost his aplomb, and down he came, bringing the vine with him. Having lit, he lay with his legs pointing skyward, whining like a calf. Miss Finley didn't appear.

However, some one else did. From the uniform of this person I took him to be the butler. He wore an expression of hauteur and dignity.

"What's happened here?" he demanded somewhat arbitrarily. "What does this mean?"

I explanified. "A slight inadvertence, old top," said I.. "Chitwood, while essaying to keep a tryst with his inamorata, slipped—"

"Lud!" the other returned. "Mr. Finley has spent two years training that vine, gentlemen. As for the young lady, sirs, she isn't even at home. She has gone, some hours since, to spend the week-end at the Parkinson-Crowleys' country place."

There didn't seem to be anything to keep us after that, so we took our departure, leaving the vine where it lay. Clancy thought he'd received internal injuries when he fell, but in clinic later we were unable to discover any symptoms that soapsuds and a bath-towel wouldn't remove. I felt like cuffing him, he seemed so lacking in initiative.

I unbosomed myself to Honk at an early opportunity. "Speaking as an expert," I remarked, "I get it that this romance business so far is a flash in the pan. The girl is either lukewarm or else she has cold feet. Besides, I thought she was to be kept strictly in durance vile, or at least in durance. What does Finley mean letting her go off jaunting to Parkinson-Crowleys', huh? Does he think Saturday and Sunday are off days when Romance isn't working? Makes me tired."

"I thought it a funny thing myself," confessed Honk. "I called him up about it. He was quite put out. Said Jessamine had bribed the maid, or the hall-boy, or somebody, and made her escape; he tells me his chauffeur is her slave, and would double-cross his own mother if Jessamine crooked her finger. Finley assures me she'll be back Sunday eve—"

A perfectly clever idea popped into my mental induction-coil with that, and, uttering no word, I dashed from Honk's presence. He was still sitting in a daze when I got back. I removed the wrappings from a parcel in my hand, disclosing an array of wigs, whiskers, false eyebrows, and other villainous stage "props."

"Wha-what's up?" asked Honk, gulping.

"I've got the thing figured out," I answered easily; "pay attention closely. You and I will disguise ourselves as Black Handers, have Clancy drive us out in the Catapult to some dark, gloomy spot in the road, where we'll flag the Finley car, board it, and kidnap both car and girl. Then we'll beat it for the mountains, supposedly to hold the lady for ransom, see? Meanwhile she must be scared within an inch of her life. A nervous shock'll do her good, I'm thinking."

"Um — ah," considered Honk. "Only we mustn't overdo it, you know. But after that?"

"Why, Clancy rescues her, of course. Gee! Can't you see the moving-picture pos—"

Honk waved that phase of it aside. But the plan itself, with a few minor alterations he suggested, seemed feasible. So we worked out the details, and put the proposition up to Clancy. That devoted young blade was almost overcome with admiration. He voted the scheme an inspiration.

Thus it was on Sunday evening at the appointed hour (Finley telephoned us when to start in order to preclude a hitch) we whisked out in Clancy's wagon to the scene of action. We'd chosen a dark dip in the road where a small bridge spanned a lone rivulet for our ambush. Setting the catapult obliquely at the roadside where a kick of the clutch-pedal would send it forward and block the approach to the bridge, we left Clancy in charge, and, arrayed in our pirates' togs, concealed ourselves in the weeds.

There came the purr of an approaching motor. Posted a hundred yards down the line, I made sure that it was the one we sought, and gave the signal—the note of a whippoorwill I think, or maybe the hoot of an owl. Clancy promptly blocked the road and killed his engine. All went well.

Finley's chauffeur, a broad-shouldered young giant named Frank Fleming, got down, went forward, and offered his assistance. Honk and I, moving in concert, got busy.

With a single lightning movement Honk took the wheel, reversed, backed the car, headed it the other way, and went from low to intermediate to high while I slipped into the tonneau, pressed the muzzle of a brass faucet from a water-cooler against Miss Finley's temple, and bade her keep quiet if she valued her life.

"Stoppa da noise!" I hissed through my bristling whiskers. "You maka da one squawk and zippa! Out goes da light!"

For a young woman suffering from nervous shock she seemed cool enough. One thing, though, she dropped her affected Southern accent when she spoke. "Why, goodness me," she she cooed. "You aren't really, truly, Italian brigands, are you?"

"Gooda guess!" I said. "We steala you for da coin. Tenna thousand dol'! Papa no coma t'rough, we killa you lika da rat!"

"How sweet of you!" she murmured rapturously.

Then, without warning, she inflated her lungs and let out a succession of ear-splitting shrieks that could have been heard a mile. It scared both Honk and me almost out of our make-up, 'twas so sudden. For a minute I feared the car was about to climb a telephone-pole, but Honk got it turned in time.

"P-please don't do that again!" he begged piteously over his shoulder. Miss Finley laughed in a silvery peal of undoubted enjoyment.

"I did that to let Frank know which way we were heading," she said sweetly. "You had better open your throttle if you expect to get very far, Mr. Brigand." And to me: "Sir, you're mussing my hair. Put that silly pistol, or whatever it is, away before I—" But the sputtering roar of the engine drowned the rest of her speech. Conversation was resumed a little later when we stopped in a secluded spot at the foot of Sunset Mountain. The rendezvous already agreed upon was an old cabin thereon, reached by a footpath.

"Hop down," I ordered briefly, forgetting my dago brogue in my hurry. "You're in our power. Resistance is useless."

"Oh," she chirped. "You're taking me to the old cabin. How perfectly romantic! But aren't you going to blindfold me? Captives are always blindfolded, aren't they?"

"Come, get a move on," snarled Honk, trying to appear very savage and brutal. "Tickle her with your stiletto, Tony." Which only served to throw Miss Jessamine into another paroxysm of laughter. She also flatly refused to budge unless blindfolded.

We humored her whim finally, and led her up the mountainside as best we could in the darkness. Meanwhile she prattled freely.

"Oh, Mr. Freebooters, do you think the newspapers will have an account of my being held for ransom? I want you to phone my maid, please. Tell her to give the reporters my picture

—um, let's see. The one taken in my lace and white chiffon. You aren't going to kidnap any of the other girls, are you? I hope not, really. They'll all be so envious, as it is, they'll—"

"Stow the guff!" I growled menacingly.

"Yes, and it'll take them by new-fangled, automatic six-shooters that work like you point your finger.

She smiled at me pleasantly, and replaced it in the pocket of her dust-coat.

"Hist!" whispered Honk, who had been reconnoitering at the door betimes.

"OH, MR. SIMPSON!" THE GIRL GIGGLED AMUSEDLY. "YOU'RE LOSING YOUR WHISKERS!"

surprise completely," she continued. "Gracious, I wouldn't have missed this for anything. How much did you say you were going to ask papa to pay—" *et cetera, et cetera.* In this manner we reached the cabin. I lit a piece of candle I'd brought along in my pocket. Miss Finley removed her blindfold, primped her hair a bit, and dusted her nose with a small powder-puff. Then I got quite a start when I noticed in her hand one of those

"Oh, Mr. Simpson!" the girl giggled amusedly. "You're losing your whiskers."

Zounds! So she knew us, after all. The whole carefully laid plan was a fiasco. I sat down in a limp heap, while our victim went off in another spasm of merriment.

"How'd you discover who we were?" I asked presently.

"I recognized you by those funny little wrinkles on your forehead," she

said, "and of course one would know that the man with you was Mr. Simpson, naturally. Listen! Some one is coming—"

And so they were. The door was wrenched open or off its hinges, and a raging, wild man burst in upon us. Jessamine at once began to scream and, with hands imploring the charging giant, cried: "Save me, Frank, save me!" At that Fleming, for he it was, made a grab at me, missed me, caught Honk, and with a mighty heave flung that unfortunate bodily through a window. By that time I was just leaving via the rear portal, where I got a fleeting glimpse of Jessamine being gathered into Fleming's arms just as Clancy Chitwood appeared in the front door. I paused to rubber.

"Where are you, Min?" gurgled Clancy. "Min, darling, it is I, Clarence, come to save you." "Min, darling," peeped over the powerful arm of her protector.

"Oh, fiddle," she said. "Frank, it's that simpleton of a Clarence Chitwood."

"Ha, what's this I see?" continued Clancy, staring. "Isn't this fellow rather—er—"

"Rather what?" exclaimed the girl. "Rather good-looking and brave and splendid, were you about to say? He is—and more than that. He is my own, truly married husband since more than a month ago. Now will you take the hint and run a race with yourself?"

With that I set out to look for my friend and comrade. Like the mountaineer who, when they proved him a liar on the witness-stand, I might easily have said:

"Oh, well, I don't give a durn about this case, anyhow."

TOO SOON FOR SISTER.

JUST as the train was steaming away a woman dashed through the waiting-room and out on the platform toward the moving coaches.

A trainman was standing near; and, sizing up the situation with rare presence of mind, he seized the hurrying dame, assisted her on the car, and then jumped back to the platform.

The next stop was thirty miles up the road, and many of them had been traversed before the conductor came through to mutilate the tickets.

"You hadn't a second to spare, madam," said he on recognizing the belated passenger, who still seemed greatly agitated.

"I thought for a moment you would certainly miss it."

"Just wait till I get a chance to speak to that trainman!" exclaimed the woman with some violence. "What right had he to grab me and throw me on the train like that?"

"Why, madam," returned the surprised conductor, "if it hadn't been for that trainman you wouldn't have got aboard this train."

"I had no intention of getting aboard," heatedly returned the woman. "I thought it was the down train and was hurrying out to meet my sister." — *Christian Endeavor World.*

ORIGIN OF "DEADHEAD."

THERE is no authentic origin of the word "deadhead" which is so frequently used in connection with transportation, but the following version is an interesting one:

Many years ago the principal avenue of a town passed close to the entrance of a road leading to the cemetery. As this cemetery had been laid out some time previous to the construction of the road, it was arranged that all funeral processions should be allowed to pass along free of toll.

One day, as a well-known physician who was driving along this road stopped to pay his toll, he observed to the keeper:

"Considering the benevolent character of our profession, I think you ought to let us pass free of charge."

"No, no, doctor," said the gatekeeper, "we can't afford that; you send too many deadheads through as it is."

The story traveled around the country, and the word deadhead was eventually applied to those who obtained free courtesies.—*Santa Fe Employees Magazine.*

LOCOMOTIVES DIM-EYED GIANTS

This Great Cyclopean Single-Eye Has Long Been in the Hands of the Railroads' Mechanical Doctors.

THE LONG-DRAWN HEADLIGHT QUESTION.

With His Enormous Power and Speed, Shall This Roaring Giant Go It Nearsighted, Blind, or Shall He See Far and Clearly? How Much Light Ahead Do You Need, Mr. Railroad Man and Mr. Traveler?

BY ROBERT FULKERSON HOFFMAN,

Author of "Mark Enderby: Engineer," "A Patch of Blue," a Total of About Fifty Stories and Special Articles for the "Railroad Man's Magazine."

AFETY devices and safety rules are costing much time and money. Both on the railroad and off, their use and rigid enforcement are paying rich returns on the care and money thus invested.

"Safety first," a slogan first voiced by the railroads, has a quality of ringing human appeal which caught the public imagination and quickly swept the movement into an irresistible crusade.

Those who, from the inside of railroad operation, look back understandingly through the years of railroad development are well aware that this ringing new cry, "Safety first! Safety first!" is only the old, old cry "Excelsior! Excelsior!" brought down to date.

It is the heroic cry which has always led the railroads pioneering into the waste places, and they have followed, led, according to their means and as they were given to see the light, "still higher—ever upward."

Just now the railroads are coming more fully into their own. That is all. Coming more fully into close accord with the big, human purpose for which they exist, and coming into the fuller understanding and laggard appreciation of the hurrying public which they serve.

In that spirit, and with whatever breadth of vision may come of having put a shoulder to the big railroad wheel, the writer approaches that which seems to him and to many others the strangest thing in modern railroad development: the headlight question.

Steel itself, automatic safety couplers, air-brakes, block-signals, standard time, manifold train-orders, have each proven their worth against sometimes bitter opposition, and each has

been adopted as indispensable to safety and successful operation.

The Track at Night.

The locomotive headlight, actually leading all transportation movements at night, for some obscure reason remains pretty much what it was in the days of link-and-pin couplings and other crude and dangerous devices. Although the first requirement would seem to be that men should be able to see where they are going with engines, the track is lighted at night only for about four engine-lengths ahead of the average oil headlight, with enough clearness to show a man definitely what is there.

Beyond that lies the black uncertainty into which he must go with his train, trusting to the track-walker, luck, and his own experience. Fixed signals guard fixed points, it is true; but in the many miles of darkness that lie between, the sole dependence for safety of crew and train is the ability of the men at the front to see clearly, to understand, and to act in time to avert trouble.

This measure of safety the oil-headlight, in most common use as to the whole railroad field, cannot guarantee. Running at a speed of eighty, sixty, or even forty miles an hour, the time allowed a man by what he sees from behind an oil-headlight is but a very few seconds, a dozen heart-beats or such a matter, in which to identify the solid obstruction suddenly thrust out of the shadows, to reason, to decide, and to act. If in emergency he hesitates for only an instant, as most of us are prone to do, ruin is upon him and his train.

For Better Lights.

The full history of what has been done for and against the use of better than oil-lights would more than fill this magazine from cover to cover. There is room here for only the briefest outline.

In 1895 a combined steam turbine and dynamo, weighing about 260 pounds, was brought out. It was located on top of the locomotive boiler, not far back of the stack, and supplied an arc-headlight with twenty-five amperes at thirty volts, when running 1,900 revolutions per minute. It lighted the track brilliantly for some thousands of feet ahead of the engine, and had a candle-power of from 2,000 to 6,000.

In 1899 another design, having an estimated strength of 6,000 candle-power, introduced the special feature of projecting a vertical ray of light from a supplementary reflector within the headlight casing, and sending this shaft of light straight upward some two thousand feet into the air — the idea being to warn trains of each other's approach where mountains stood between. Some of these lights were used in regular locomotive service.

In 1901 an acetylene apparatus demonstrated its ability to light the track 1,000 to 1,600 feet ahead of the engine at a cost, it was said, of one-half cent an hour. A number of these lights were put in regular service. There was reported some difficulty of control, with particular regard to freezing or flow of water used on the carbide. A rather large installation was at one time contemplated by a Western road then experimenting, but of late years acetylene headlights have not been so much spoken of as then for locomotives.

Objections to Strong Lights.

In the nearly twenty years since the first high-power headlights were used, organized bodies of railroad men have been steadily pressing for the use of better than oil-headlights. Operating officials of a good many railroads have been steadily resisting the proposed change.

The advantages of the headlight of higher power are plain and require no further vouching than that they raise the well-nigh perfect vision required

of all trainmen to its highest efficiency at night.

The objections urged against the high-powered light are cost of equipment and maintenance, dimming signal-lights ahead, and blinding men or dimming signals when the glare is oncoming.

The first objection, if there is enough real difference of cost to make it considerable, seems to fall before the plain need of greater safety.

The second objection, in the experience of the writer during many nights behind both the oil and the electric headlight, is not well taken or worthy of lengthy debate. To reduce the matter to its least dimensions, before any signal-light is seriously dimmed by the close approach of a powerful headlight, the day-signal which accompanies that night-signal will be clearly seen, and therefore readable. At greater distance the optical effect, as a whole, is to emphasize the presence of colored lights ahead. Carefully repeated observations leave no doubt of this in the mind of the writer, and plain-spoken confirmation of the fact has been received from others who are well acquainted with the actual conditions.

The last objection, the facing glare, is perhaps the most serious and therefore worth most consideration, except for the simple fact that this feature of objection is as easily under control as is the use of the injector valve-handle, the whistle-rod, or any other thing in the engine-cab which is controlled by a single move of the engineer's hand.

The light can be dimmed at will and controlled on approach by rules as simple as the covering of a headlight or the turning of tail-lights when in side-track. The "dimmer" long ago met that objection, but even with a light undimmed and stronger than is pleasant to loiter in, the immeasurable value of its warning power on level, curving, or mountainous track, filled with great ground-swells, has been demonstrated over and over again. That value should weigh heavily against the most serious objection.

The Present Status.

After years of argument, experiment, and practical tests the high-powered light is not numerous in Eastern railroad operation; it is more numerous in Western operation, and is greatly in the minority of use on locomotives the country over.

Reports of physical laboratory and shop tests have condemned it as harmful and dangerous. Some reports from road tests or accidents have seemed to strengthen this position. Reports of other road tests and observations have indorsed the use of the high-powered light in emphatic terms, and said that signal-lights are not made less efficient in any practical sense by its use.

Some of the strongest opposition to the high-powered headlight comes from railroads having double tracks or more as main line. The main objection there urged is that the oncoming and passing of many trains having strong headlights has a tendency to confuse and blind trainmen.

Against that contention is urged the unquestionable fact that, where trains are passing at speed unchecked, the danger of side-swiping from loose freight-car doors, overhanging long materials, and overhang at cross-overs or passing-points is most to be expected.

This, with the not uncommon experience of trains buckling or spilling from wreck, and so covering adjacent tracks with debris, would seem to indicate a great need that men at the front should be enabled to see to the utmost limit of practicable length along passing trains. Whatever that limit may be, or how it may best be assured, is a seeming part of the open question. The main purpose of this article is a plain and unbiased presentation of the known facts.

State Legislatures, several of them,

have passed laws requiring in some particulars a greater light than is commonly produced by oil headlights.

About four years ago the Missouri Legislature passed a headlight law, which was vetoed by the Governor. A very similar law, we are informed, was passed by the Missouri Legislature of 1913, was approved by the Governor, and is now being litigated in the courts by the railroad companies.

The Georgia Legislature passed a headlight law, the Governor approved, and the question of its enforcement, we are told, is now before the Supreme Court of the United States on appeal.

The Illinois Legislature passed a somewhat similar law, the enforcement of which, we have lately been advised, awaits the outcome of the "Georgia case."

Our understanding of the situation in Illinois is "that a tentative agreement was reached between the representatives of the railroad brotherhood —who were instrumental in securing the passage of this act—and the representatives of the railroad companies, together with the commission (Public Utilities)—that no prosecutions under this statute would be commenced by the commission pending a decision in" the "Georgia case," above referred to. And "the railroad companies, however, pledging themselves to make preparations for a compliance with the statute during the pendency of the proceedings before the Supreme Court."

Because this Illinois law is typical of what the rank and file of railroad men are asking for, and so very long have patiently asked for—"a little light in time"—the law is printed here in full:

HEADLIGHTS ON LOCOMOTIVE ENGINES.

§ 1. Headlights on locomotive engines —exception—specifications.
§ 2. Penalty for violations.

(Senate Bill No. 473. Approved June 26, 1913.)

An Act *in relation to the equipment of locomotive engines with headlights and providing penalty for violation of same.*

SECTION 1. *Be it enacted by the People of the State of Illinois, represented in the General Assembly:* That all common carriers by railroad, operating or doing business in this State, shall be required to equip and maintain and use on all locomotives used by them in passenger service (except suburban passenger service) a headlight of sufficient candle power, measured with the aid of a reflector, to throw a light in clear weather that will enable the operator of same to plainly discern an object the size of a man, upon the track, at a distance of eight hundred feet from the headlight; and upon all locomotive engines used by them in freight service, exclusive of engines in switching, and transfer service, with a headlight of sufficient candle power, measured with the aid of a reflector to throw a light in clear weather that will enable the operator, of same, to plainly discern an object the size of a man upon the track, at a distance of four hundred and fifty feet from the headlight; and upon all engines used by them in switching, transfer, and suburban passenger service, with a headlight of sufficient candle power, measured with the aid of a reflector, to throw a light, in clear weather, that will enable the operator to plainly discern an object the size of a man upon the track, at a distance of two hundred and fifty feet from the headlight: *Provided*, this Act shall not apply to any locomotive engines running between sunup and sundown, or to any locomotive engine, the equipment of which has failed during the trip, providing it is shown that the equipment was in efficient and effective working condition when the trip was begun.

§ 2. That any common carrier by railroad violating any of the provisions of this Act, shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and shall be subject to a fine of not less than one hundred dollars ($100.00), nor more than five hundred dollars ($500.00) for each offense.

Approved June 26, 1913.

A Moderate Requirement.

To any one who has gone the night through in the cab of a main-line loco-

motive, or who will take the trouble to do so, the human appeal which lies back of that law's enactment will seem as moderate and as living as "deliver us from evil."

No man who will not take the trouble to inform himself, as far as possible at first hand of this subject, should be permitted to dabble in it. It is too big with human welfare to permit of mere dabbling or endless discussion. Evasion of it is a crime against life.

The writer of this article, now trying fairly to summarize the headlight question as a whole, has no desire to assume the rôle of him who rushes in where railroad operating or mechanical "angels fear to tread." He has traveled some thousands of miles in locomotive cabs behind oil headlights, met more than one close call, and cheerfully taken his chances with other men who rode there.

He has gone many miles through the night, both back of and, again, facing electric headlight; and, in a pinch for time, has taken indicator cards from an engine cylinder plowing along behind an electric headlight at speed touching eighty miles an hour, supporting to that extent his faith and judgment with his life. That is the ultimate test required of railroad men at the front, each day and each night: that they back their judgment with their lives. In the judgment of many, high-powered headlights are needed.

Out of things such as these, and out of the things which must lie unwritten between those extremes, there comes the clear conviction that if the headlight question is being made to revolve endlessly upon the continued sale of enormous totals of headlight oil, or upon the urgence of any commercial device or consideration whatever, it should be brought definitely to an early closure.

Close to the Heart of It.

For the purpose of this article, there remains only to include some expression from sources close to the heart of the subject:

Warren S. Stone, Grand Chief Engineer, Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, meets the issue squarely and in a way that must command the most serious consideration. In his letter dated April 15, 1914, Mr. Stone says:

> By an action of the Grand International Division of the B. of L. E. in Convention assembled, our Organization went on record as favoring high power headlights, and I know of no accidents resulting from too much light, but do know of many resulting from not enough or no light at all. There are many cases on record where high power headlights have prevented serious wrecks and loss of life.
>
> You ask, "Is the oil headlight the locomotive's weakest spot?" It is undoubtedly one of its weak spots, but it is hard to say just what is the weakest spot of a modern locomotive.

Under date of March 13, 1914, the Interstate Commerce Commission, by its chief inspector of safety appliances, says:

> In response to your first inquiry this is to advise that since the Commission actively undertook the investigation of railroad accidents, July 1, 1911, only two accidents have been investigated wherein any of the employees involved claimed that their vision was blinded by the electric headlight used by the opposing train.
>
> In response to your second inquiry the Commission has no definite information in its possession as to how many of the accidents investigated by it could have been prevented had the locomotives involved been equipped with high power headlights.

The Public Service Commission, State of Missouri, through its chairman, says under date of March 13, 1914:

> The Public Service Commission was created by an act of the Legislature of 1913, and was organized on April 15th of that year. No case has been presented to this Commission of a collision or other fatal accident caused by too much headlight. As I remember

> no collision so far has been called to the attention of this Commission caused by any headlight of any nature. As the work of the Commission progresses and accidents are investigated, in all probability we will have valuable information on the subject in the course of the next few years, and shall be glad to furnish you same at any time.

The State Public Utilities Commission of Illinois, through its acting secretary, as of February 20, 1914, says:

> I know of no case where any testimony was presented before the Commission charging accident due to the use of electric headlights on locomotives.

If there are material or mechanical difficulties now standing in the way of better light for locomotives, the genius and precision which made the railroad what it is can solve those difficulties at will.

It has been solemnly proposed—perhaps as a solemn "bluff"—to do away with the locomotive headlight, as a headlight, and to put in place of it a small marker-light. In short, to make the Giant "go it" blind.

It has been proposed, and to some extent carried into effect, to give him an eye that will see far and clearly—an electric or other high powered headlight.

It is proposed, and is now being strongly urged, that the commonly used oil headlight shall remain what it is and shall lead the Giant plunging nearsighted through the night, while you take your chances in that perilous riot of speed and power.

Therefore, Mr. Railroad Man—Mr. Traveler, the question still is yours: How much light ahead do you need at night?

The real headlight question is not a question of expediency. It is the plain question: "Do men and women die for want of a little light in time, and are little children so made desolate?"

When you, Mr. Traveler, Mr. Railroad Man, have counseled together, have decided, and have spoken, the high powered headlight, in whatever measure is really safest and best, will take its permanent place in the forefront of "Safety First."

How much light do you need ahead of your train at night?

WHY THE HOT WEATHER CREATES THIRST

IN hot weather you notice that you are constantly thirsty. Often you feel that you simply can't get enough to drink. You needn't worry about the feeling. It merely means that the machine of your body is working normally.

This mechanism is driven by a heat engine. The food you eat has a heat value just the same as coal. Its combustion keeps the heat of the body day and night at about 98 2-5 degrees, says *The Erie Railroad Employees Magazine.* Temperatures in the neighborhood of 100 degrees put something of a strain on the mechanism regulating the heat of the body, for then the body must be cooled below the temperature of the surrounding air. This is done by the sweating process. Evaporation keeps the temperature down.

It can be worked out as a problem in physics that the food eaten in a day by a workman with an average appetite would produce enough heat to evaporate about six quarts of water at the temperature of the body. An English medical officer stationed in India, where the temperature for months at a time does not fall below 100, reports that a daily consumption of about six quarts of water was required for a person taking a considerable amount of exercise.

It is necessary to drink plenty of water to supply the body with enough material for evaporation to keep cool.

Regret is as useless as backing up to look at the last mile-post of opportunity. Keep your eye open for the next one.

Trapped by Telegraph.

BY CHARLES WESLEY SANDERS,

Author of "O. K., Mo.," "Jack o' Lantern Hagan," "Britton Flags the Flimsies," "Sleuth 'Morse' Plugs a Circuit," "A Punch on the Jaw," and Others.

A RAILROAD NOVELETTE COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE.

CHAPTER I.

The G. M.'s Daughter.

S soon as Ruth Bennett caught sight of Dick Bacon's face through the station window she knew that something extraordinary had happened. To her Dick's face was an open book. She could read it at a glance. Of the millions of men who go to and fro on this earth she believed Dick was the kindest, the best, and the truest. The words are her own.

She opened the station door, crossed the waiting-room and entered the telegraph office. Dick relinquished his hold on the key and whirled about in his chair.

"What is it?" Ruth asked as she took off her straw hat and fluffed up her—well, her hair was not red exactly, but it came mighty close to being so. There was a lot of it, and it was very soft. When she fluffed it, as she did now, it glinted as if she had stirred a pile of gold shavings.

"There is something doing on this railroad," said Dick with unction.

Ruth hung her hat behind the door and straightened the collar of her dress. Then she glanced at the transfer book and started to read the left-over orders that lay on the table.

"Don't you want to know what it is?" Dick asked disappointedly.

"Not unless you want to tell me," said Ruth coolly. "I'll probably pick it up from some of the boys along the line before the night is over."

"Graham's daughter is missing from home," said Dick.

"What!" Ruth exclaimed, her brown eyes lighting up. "Tell me about it, Dick."

She leaned against the table and gazed down at the day-operator in a manner which he had never been able to resist. A slow flush mounted to Dick's cheeks. The girl colored also. For a moment, in a flash of emotion which was purely personal, they forgot Graham's daughter.

Dick was only waiting for promotion to ask Ruth to marry him. Ruth knew it. Eyes had long ago told what lips had left unspoken. But because there was no word passing between them there were many moments of embarrassment when their secret lay bare before them.

"Well," said Dick slowly at last, "there isn't anything very definite about it so far. But the G. M. has been keeping the wires hot since morning. Conductors have orders to watch for Miss Graham. Descriptions of her have been telegraphed all along the line. That last book under the pile has ours. We're to deliver it to all conductors who haven't a copy. Look at it."

Ruth pulled the book of flimsy from

beneath the orders. Resting both palms on the table she bent to read:

"Gertrude Graham, 19 years old, five feet four inches in height, weighs about 110 pounds, blue eyes and light hair, regular features. When last seen wore a navy-blue suit, blue hat with small blue feather."

"I've seen her," Ruth said. "She came through here with her father one night when the G. M. was going south on the D. N. and G. They had to wait fifteen minutes for a passenger train. She's a pretty girl."

The color in the face of the night-operator at Spion Kop deepened a little more. Romance still shed its mellow light over all things for her, and here undoubtedly was a romance of the liveliest kind. Ruth's nimble mind leaped from peak to peak of speculation. At last it poised for a moment on one peak a little higher than the rest.

"I'll just bet you a cooky that there's a man mixed up in this," she informed Dick.

"Sure, there's a man mixed up in it," said Dick, a little more stolidly than she had spoken. "You don't suppose a girl could be missing without a man being mixed up in it, do you?"

"It means," said Ruth, "that it's probably a love affair."

Dick's right hand made an involuntary movement along the table toward Ruth's left hand. But he remembered his vow that he would be silent until he had something more than he had at present to offer Ruth. He drew the hand back.

Ruth bit the inside of her under lip. She had seen the movement. Sometimes she thought Dick was rather foolish about waiting. She thought he might speak and let her play the waiting game with him. Other times she admired him for thinking she was worth more than he had to offer.

"You think she's run away with a man?" Dick asked.

"Shouldn't be surprised. She's one of your vivacious girls, Dick. Almost any man would fall in love with her. You know the old G. M. He thinks he's a kind of a king himself. A man would have to measure up pretty high to get the G. M.'s consent. See?"

"I see," said Dick. "But she might have been kidnaped or drowned herself or something like that."

"Nonsense. Pretty girls whose dads are general managers of railroads don't commit suicide. Of course she might have been kidnaped. Have you cut-in on the press wire, Dick?"

"You know I couldn't read it if I had," Dick replied. "Suppose you cut-in and see if anything's going on?"

Ruth was a better operator than he was. The girl was one of those rare beings born to the touch of the key and the clatter of the sounder. In addition to a good ear and deft fingers she had a gift of penmanship. So her copy was gilt-edged. It is a combination not to be beaten where the typewriter is not in use.

At odd moments Ruth had studied the code, and during the long nights she frequently cut-in on the press wire. The press wire had been run into Spion Kop station, together with a few other stations, for testing purposes. By now Ruth was sufficiently proficient to be able to pick off the world's news as it was sped over this wire to newspapers at Osgood, the big city which was the terminal of the Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Western Railroad.

She cut out the way-wire and inserted the two plugs in the press-wire strip. Then she pulled the plug at the bottom of the strip. She had to draw up the relay a little to get into adjustment for the heavier circuit. Then the sounder began to clatter with that clipped sending which speaks of the code-operator at the key.

"Nothing but stocks," she said. "It's too early for the regular report to start, Dick. You'd better run along to supper."

"I'll work for you this evening if you want me to," Dick said.

That was a standing offer from him. If Ruth had liked, she could have had

every night off. Dick would have stood an eighteen-hour trick regularly for her.

When she had first come to work at Spion Kop Dick had shuddered to think of such a delicate, sweet, soft-spoken, warm-eyed young woman working the night-trick at a station like Spion Kop. He thought Nicholson, the chief-despatcher, was a brute for sending Ruth there. But Ruth had said briefly that she expected to take her turn with the men on the road. She didn't ask odds because she was a girl. It made no difference to her.

"I've nothing to do," Ruth said now. "Some other night, perhaps."

"I'll drop in to-night to see if they get any track of the girl," Dick said as he started for the door.

"All right," said Ruth with a smile, for Dick usually dropped in some time before he went to bed.

Left alone in the station the girl put away the transfer-book, tidied the table to her liking, and glanced over the orders. Then she went to the window and looked up at the big hill at whose foot the station nestled.

It was mid-August of a very hot summer, and the big hill was garbed in brown. Long ago a facetious brakeman had changed the name of the station from Kellogsville to Spion Kop. And Spion Kop it was now called except on the time-tables. Even the call had been changed to "SK" to conform to the new designation.

Spion Kop was no place for a nervous young woman at night. Indeed, there were times when Ruth had shivery sensations along toward midnight. Spion Kop seemed to be the result of a convulsion of nature before the time of railroads.

The big hill lifted itself serenely to the west of the station. Two hundred rods to the east was a valley, with a ribbon of river at the bottom of it. A long, old-fashioned wooden bridge spanned the river. One hundred rods this side of the west bluff was the D. N. and G. station.

D. N. and G. trains used the P. O. and W. tracks from Osgood to Spion Kop, and then struck off south on their own tracks. The tracks of the P. O. and W. crossed the bridge and wound away to the east.

The romance of the situation appealed to the girl. There were nights when a spell of beauty lay over the place under the moonlight. And there were other nights when the storm king howled up the valley and raged around the imperturbable hill. To all of these moods of nature the girl yielded. Old Spion Kop made his big presence felt to one who was emotional and imaginative.

The girl was at the moment mentally and spiritually ripe for what was to happen.

As she stood by the window, watching the day die, her ear was subconsciously attuned to the sounder on the press wire. Suddenly one word brought her keen attention. On tiptoe she sprang to a position in front of the instruments.

"Flash!"

The operator at Osgood had spat out the word which is the signal for a brief important message over a press wire. The very sound of the word telegraphically makes it more impressive than the older "bulletin."

Osgood snapped off the name of his town and the date, and then this:

> General Manager Graham to-night was in communication over the telephone with his daughter, who has been missing since last night. She said she was alive and well. Before her father could question her, she hung up her receiver.

Ruth Bennett's eyes danced. There was no sound in the office save the clicking of the sounder of the press wire and the train wire. The girl had a shivery feeling that, isolated as she was, she moved in the midst of alarums.

"I'll bet that girl has run away with a man her father objected to," said Ruth to herself. And she added:

"More power to her, if the man is a good man."

Ruth was romantic.

CHAPTER II.

Two Travelers.

THE correspondents at Osgood, lacking anything definite in the mystery, early began to dope their stories. Highly colored reports of all kinds, even if they did conflict with earlier reports, were ticked out on the press-wire sounder at Spion Kop. Ruth drank in the reports.

Presently her own call on the train wire drew her away from the more interesting reading. The despatcher began an order for 24. This was a way-freight that picked up milk-cans at night and brought them back in the morning. A passenger-coach ornamented its tail end.

In the morning this coach was filled with city workers who had little places in the country along the road. These workers were dribbled from the coach at night as the local meandered down the line. No regulars came to Spion Kop. Once in a while there was a passenger who wanted to make connections with the D. N. and G.'s evening train. The coach was set off at Spion Kop and lay there till the local picked it up in the morning.

Ruth finished the order, repeated it, and put it at her elbow. In a few minutes the local whistled the other side of the hill, and presently her headlight showed. The engine pulled down past the station, a brakeman threw a switch, and the coach was kicked back on the siding. The engineer and the conductor signed for their orders and the local pulled away.

The moon was well up and the track was flooded with light. Ruth glanced down it and then rose and closed and locked the door between the waiting-room and her office. She always took this precaution when there were passengers from the local.

Two of them had descended when the coach came to a standstill on the siding. They were coming down the track toward the station.

Ruth sat looking out the window as they passed it. One was a man; one a woman. The man, nearest the window, smiled in at the girl operator. She flushed and bit her lip. She had flushed and bitten her lip many times for just that reason.

Because of the liberty the man had taken she was in no hurry to go to the ticket-window when she knew the two had entered the waiting-room.

As she leisurely turned about she saw that the man who had smiled was leaning against the window-ledge and regarding her intently. He was a big man, with a broad, florid face, pink-skinned and smooth-shaven. He was still smiling.

"What is it, please?" the girl asked with a touch of impatience.

"I understood the train we just got off made connections here with a train south on the D. N. and G. I hope the train hasn't gone. We seemed to have been a long time getting here."

Ruth glanced at the clock. It marked seven-thirty.

"That train isn't due for ten minutes," she said. "I'll see how it is." She broke in on the train wire. "How is 6 on the D. N. and G.?" she asked.

"Fifteen minutes late," the despatcher ticked back.

"Much obliged," the man said.

Ruth gave him a quick scrutiny.

"Oh, I'm in your line of business," he said with one of his ready laughs. "We'll have two tickets to Twinsburg, please."

She took two tickets from the rack and handed them to him. He drew a roll of bills from his pocket and peeled off a ten. The girl made change. As she laid it on the window-ledge the man picked it up rather mechanically.

Trained operator as she was, the girl perceived that he was intently listening to something. She "reached out" and centered her own powers of

hearing on the press wire. A long "dope" story was being sent from Osgood.

The man lifted his eyes. His smile faded.

She saw now that the eyes were too small for his big face and that they had a hard glint in them.

"Cut in on the press wire, are you?" he asked steadily. "Anything special doing in the newspaper line tonight?"

"Oh, the wire is crowded with reports of the disappearance of Miss Graham."

Ruth heard a sound like a little stifled gasp from the outer room. She tried to make out the woman, but the latter stood back against the wall in the shadow. The girl's quick curiosity was piqued.

"Miss Graham?" the man said, still in his steady voice. "Who's she?"

"The daughter of our general manager," Ruth answered.

"Missing?"

"Since last night."

"Got any trace of her yet?"

There was the faintest relaxation from that steadiness in the man's tone. Ruth's quick ear detected it. She saw that his interest was something more than casual.

"None."

"Ah," said the man.

As he breathed the word the operator at Osgood stopped sending for an instant. Then he began to make the merged dashes and the close "I's" which denoted that his attention had been drawn away from the copy in hand. Then:

"Flash!"

Ruth half turned toward the sounder. She was conscious that the man came to an erect position, without attempt to disguise the fact that his ears were on the sounder.

> General Manager Graham has just offered a reward of five thousand dollars for information leading to the finding of his daughter.

Ruth turned swiftly back to the man. He held his erect position for an instant, and then his shoulders slouched down. A sneer came to his thick lips.

"Five thousand isn't much to pay for your only child, is it?" he asked.

Ruth caught at the exactness of his statement. He had professed ignorance of the identity of Miss Graham. Yet he suddenly knew that she was Graham's only child.

"I didn't know she was all he had," she said.

The man's smile slipped up to his lips again. If her probing in the dark had touched anything in him he gave no sign.

"It was in the dope they were sending just before the bulletin," he said easily. "I guess you don't get that coded stuff, do you? A man sending with a 'bug' wouldn't get much information to you, would he?"

"I suppose not," Ruth said.

She was without motive in concealing her ability to read the code. But she felt that the man was playing double, for there had been nothing about Miss Graham's position in the Graham household in the matter he had spoken about.

The man pulled out his watch.

"That train stops at the other station, does it?" he asked.

"It pulls down slowly while a man runs ahead and throws the switch," Ruth answered. "It stops at the station on signal only. You'll have to take a lantern and flag it. Just leave the lantern on the platform."

"That's good," he said with more satisfaction than passengers required to do their own flagging usually showed. "We'll wait till you get your 'OS' from the first station beyond the hill. We'll just sit down out here."

He walked over to the bench and spoke in an undertone to the woman. Ruth heard them begin to talk in voices too low to carry to her.

After a while the train was "OS'd" from the station the other side of Spion Kop. Ruth opened her lips to tell the man, but she heard him rise.

He came to the window and smiled in at her.

"If you'll just let me have your lantern," he said, "we'll be getting over there. About ten minutes run, isn't it?"

"About that," she said.

She crossed the office and picked up a red lantern from a corner. The man stood at the window as if he expected her to hand it to him there. Instead, she opened the door and stood in the doorway.

The man stepped quickly toward her. As if to turn the light a trifle higher she lifted the lantern. Its light shone on the face of the man's companion.

As she handed the lantern to the man her hand trembled a little.

"All right," he said.

His companion rose and followed him through the door. Ruth walked to the door after it had closed on them, opened it, and peered outside. The two were hurrying down the track. The moonlight fell full upon them.

When they reached the station platform the man glanced back at the door where the girl stood. Though she was sure he could not descry her, Ruth drew back further into the shadow of the dimly lighted room.

She stood watching till the D. N. and G. train crept past her own office. The man waved his lantern and the engine-whistle replied. The man put the lantern down on the platform. The train slid between the girl and the couple. Apparently they sprang nimbly aboard, for the train hardly stopped.

As the coaches glided into the south the girl saw the two passengers enter one of the coaches midway of the train. The man glanced up and down. Just as the coach was lost to her sight Ruth saw them sink into a seat half-way down the aisle. The man sat on the outside, while the woman turned her back to the interior of the car and steadily fixed her gaze on the night outside.

When the train had gone Ruth stood a moment, leaning against the door jamb. She was trembling all through her body. At last she took a deep breath and sped back into her office.

First she snapped open the key on the press-wire, holding it closed with her forefinger. She thought deeply for a moment, and then she snapped the key shut. Crossing to the train-wire, she went through the same performance with that key as with the other. Then she stood a full minute with both hands resting on the table. Doubt seemed to rule her.

At the end of the minute she gathered herself together, the doubt gone. She ran to the telephone and called a number.

"Is that you, Dick?" she asked excitedly. "Come down to the office right away. I want to see you. Something important."

She hung up the receiver amid a volley of questions from the startled day-operator. When fifteen minutes later he rushed in at the door she met him there.

"Good gracious, Ruth!" he broke out, "what's the matter? Anything wrong with you? Your voice sounded as if something had piled up all over the right-of-way and you were responsible."

His agitation helped her to control her own. She laughed with a little catch in her throat.

"Come in here," she said. "I want to tell you something."

They went inside, and he sank into the operator's chair. She stood beside him. Speaking rapidly she told him about the two passengers.

"Well, what of it?" he asked. "Did the man insult you—make any breaks? If he did—"

"No, he didn't make any breaks," she said. "It's about the woman. She stood outside in the shadow and I didn't see her till I raised the lantern."

"What about her?"

"If she wasn't Miss Graham, she must have been her twin."

"Chris'mus!" Dick breathed.

"The reason why I called you,"

Ruth went on, "was because the G. M. has offered five thousand dollars to anybody who will bring his daughter back to him."

"Five thousand," said Dick. "K-e-e-ris'mus!"

CHAPTER III.

The Fugitives.

"THE only thing I feel sorry about is that she is eloping with a man like that fat man," said Ruth after she had let him get his breath.

"Do you mean just because he's an operator?" Dick challenged. "Don't you think he's good enough for her?"

"Foolish!" said Ruth. "It's because I don't think he's a good man. If he was good, I wouldn't care if he hadn't a cent. But you didn't see him smile."

"Evil smile, eh?"

"Yes—with cruelty back of it!"

"You're sure they're eloping?"

"Well, at this period of civilization a girl doesn't go running around the country with a man if she doesn't want to, does she?"

"Maybe he hypnotized her the way Svengali did What's-Her-Name!" Dick suggested.

"Hypnotized nothing. She was going of her own free will, I tell you. One woman can't fool another in a love—in an affair like this."

"Can't she?" Dick asked. "Well, what's to be done?"

Ruth looked out at Spion Kop in the moonlight. She had a moment of embarrassment. Then she gathered courage.

"I'd like to see you get that five thousand, Dick. You have as much right to it as the next one."

"Oh, it belongs to you," Dick said. "What do you want me to do?"

"The bulletin said the G. M. offered the money for information leading to the finding of his daughter," said Ruth. "If we told him what has happened that would be information 'leading to.' That ought to bring the reward."

"Shall I call him up?" Dick asked.

"Go ahead."

Dick cut out the press wire and cut the way wire in on that sounder. He broke in and found Osgood was working with some one down the line.

"Is the G. M. there?" he asked.

"In his office," Osgood answered. "What you got?"

"Important message about his daughter."

Apparently the G. M. had communicated his excitement to everybody else in the general offices. The operator at Osgood made a series of dots and held his key open. Then he said:

"Here he is at the wire. He says to rush it."

Dick turned to Ruth.

"You know the details better than I do," he said. "You better sit in and send 'em."

The girl sat down and put her hand on the key. The hand, for the first time in her telegraphic career, shook a little as she started to send. But she presently calmed down and sent the G. M. all the details of what had occurred in her office.

Then ensued a series of questions and answers. The G. M. wanted the last jot of information. When Ruth had finished the Osgood operator told her to wait a minute.

The sounder lay closed while a conference went on between the general manager and those about him. The operators along the line forbore to break in with routine business. They seemed to be waiting to see what move Graham would make.

It was the first time anybody on the road had seen the grizzled veteran hesitate in the face of an emergency. This was no mere railroad problem, to be worked out mathematically. At last a message was started. Ruth did not put it on paper. She and Dick hung over the sounder, drinking it in.

The message ordered Dick to break into the D. N. and G. depot and wire

the conductor of the train on which the man and the girl had fled to apprehend them. Ruth gave her O. K.

"Come on," Dick said. "I want you to get in on this."

On the way to the other depot they got a crowbar from the section-foreman's shanty. With this Dick pried open the door of the depot. They groped their way to the door of the telegraph office and forced that also.

The moonlight was flooding the room, and Dick studied the switchboard with its numbered strips.

"No. 1," he said. "Guess that must be their train wire. I've never been in this shanty before."

He plugged in on No. 1 and listened. A train-order was being repeated in the lazy way for which the D. N. and G. was noted. When it had been completed Dick broke in and explained his wants to the despatcher.

"Our 5 is due at Twinsburg in fifteen minutes," the despatcher said. "Better tell the operator there to watch out for your elopers."

He closed his key, leaving the wire to Dick. Dick began to call Twinsburg. It was ten minutes before he got a sleepy response from an operator who seemed to have been industriously pounding his ear, though he had a passenger-train soon due. Dick woke him up by a brief recital of what was wanted.

"All right," the operator said. "I'll lay for 'em. If they get off I'll nail 'em. There's a husky cab-driver outside that I'll swear in as a deputy."

"He seems to think it's funny," Ruth said.

She moved nervously about the room as the minutes passed. To her now was coming a kind of regret that she had told the G. M. She began to feel that she wasn't being fair to Miss Graham. After all, it was her elopement. She was being true to the man she loved, the man whom she would have married in church but for parental objection, she supposed. She couldn't help but admire Miss Graham's daring in what she was doing.

Dick sat with his hand on the key. Twelve minutes had gone when Ruth went back and stood beside him.

"GS. BG."

It was Twinsburg calling them. Dick answered. Ruth leaned over his shoulder, her eyes wide and her cheeks pink. She had a picture of Miss Graham in tears at her capture.

"Your people left the train at Valley City," said Twinsburg.

"But they had tickets for BG," Ruth snapped out, shoving Dick's hand aside and taking the key herself.

"Can't help it," the operator said. "Con says he stopped at VC to let 'em off. Sorry."

"Did they tell the con where they were going?" Dick asked in his turn.

The wire was open for a minute.

"They asked him if there was a trolley-line out of VC. That was all."

"Is there a trolley?" Ruth asked.

"Surest thing. Couple of them. One south. One west."

"Any night operator at VC?"

"Nope."

Dick opened the key and he and Ruth looked at each other.

"I guess that's all, isn't it?" Dick asked.

"I guess so," Ruth answered, and Dick said "I. I. O. K." on the wire.

They cut out and returned to their own office. Again Dick asked for Graham on the way wire, and reported results. Again there was that pause, with the open wire.

"Mr. Graham wants to know if there is an automobile in the village," the operator at Osgood then said.

"The mayor has one," Ruth said, and Dick repeated that to Graham.

"Mr. Graham says to go to the mayor and explain the situation to him," the operator said. "Get his machine and procure the services of a couple of policemen or constables.

Start for Valley City at once. Make inquiries along the way. Report to him at Spion Kop as soon as you reach Valley City."

"O. K.," said Dick.

He rose from his seat. Ruth had been standing at his elbow. As he rose they were close to each other, face to face. Dick suddenly took the girl's hands in his.

"I'm going after that five thousand," he said. "If I get it, Ruth—" Suddenly he remembered his resolution and he finished lamely: "If I get it, Ruth, I'll divvy it with you." He caught up his hat and started for the door. "Good-by," he called over his shoulder as he stepped out into the moonlight.

"Good-by, Dick," Ruth said. "Take care of yourself."

She watched him till he reached the approach to the bridge and started down the hill to the street. He paused a moment and waved his hand. She waved back at him.

As she turned into the room her call sounded on the way wire. She answered.

"Got a bunch of stuff for you," the operator said.

He sent steadily for twenty minutes. All the messages were signed by Graham. They were addressed to officers of the D. N. and G. The situation was outlined to them, and Graham asked that all trains and connections be watched.

He also asked the division superintendents of the D. N. and G. to wire connecting roads to have their trains watched. Graham was fast throwing out a net for his daughter and her companion.

"He wants you to take those over to the D. N. and G. and get them off right away," the operator said.

She had finished sending the messages and was about to leave the D. N. and G. office when the call was sounded from VC. With an exclamation she snapped an answer.

"This is DK," the sounder clicked out, and she knew Dick had reached Valley City. For a moment she was poised between hope that he had succeeded and pity for Miss Graham. Then Dick went on:

"There's nothing doing. They have left here, but how nobody seems to know. They didn't go out on either trolley line. There's only half a dozen houses here, you know, and we've been to all of them. Guess I'd better come back."

Ruth agreed with him. She went back down the track again and entered her own office. The sounder on the train wire was repeating her call angrily. She answered.

"Copy three," said the despatcher.

He put out an order for a freight-train to wait at the first station beyond for an extra.

When Ruth had repeated the order Osgood yards OS'd the extra.

"Engine 734 with car 99 D. 11.06 P.M."

Ruth understood that General Manager Graham was speeding toward her office in his private car. She sat back in her chair and listened as the various offices reported the special "by." Ruth looked at the card on the wall and did some figuring. The special was making such time as no train had ever made on that railroad.

She called Osgood yards on the way wire.

"Where's the 99 going?" she asked.

"To SK," the operator answered.

And Ruth knew that General Manager Graham was tearing through the night toward Spion Kop in search of his runaway daughter.

CHAPTER IV.

The Girl.

RUTH sat in front of the train wire and "watched" the special speed toward her. The despatcher did not figure. He put everything in to clear

for the special. He knew that there would be no questions asked as to delays to other trains. Freight and passenger alike panted on sidings while the special sped past them.

Now it was half a dozen stations away; now three; now two. Then the first station beyond Spion Kop OS'd it.

Ruth got up and took a turn about the room. Her nerves were at extreme tension. She knew Graham for a gruff man, who scarcely noticed underlings in the course of the day's work. He might now be a raging hyena for all she knew.

It was all very well for the boys to boast that they didn't kotow to any officials. She couldn't keep her pulse normal when the G. M. was likely to burst through her office-door at any minute, demanding any sort of information. He might even blame her for not detaining his daughter, though how she could have done that she didn't know.

When she heard the special engine scream beyond the hill she sat down and put her finger on the key of the train-wire. Through the window she saw the glare of the headlight mingle with the moonlight that was flooding the track.

The short train creaked and slid, and the engine slipped past the window. The 99, fully lighted within, came to a stop just in front of her. She saw two men spring down from the steps and hurry toward the office. As the door opened she still sat with her hand on the key, though every sense was alert.

"Heard anything from Bacon?"

She turned at the question. The G. M. stood at the window, glaring in at her. His bushy gray brows were drawn together in a frown, and his lips were tight about the end of a big cigar. She rose.

"Yes," she answered. "He is on his way back."

"With no results?"

"None."

"Come in, doctor," said the G. M. to a man at his elbow.

Ruth unlocked the door, and they stepped into the telegraph-office. The doctor was a little, thin man; but whereas Graham was excited, the doctor was calm. He sat down on one of the chairs and lit a cigarette. Graham stood before the girl. All the bulldog tenacity, the hardness, the determination which had made him what he was, were written large on his face.

"I want to ask you a few questions," he said bitterly. "I'm not given to discussing my personal affairs with strangers, but the whole world is aware that my daughter is missing. I have only one theory. She has been led away against her will. Hypnotized, maybe."

Out of the corner of her eye Ruth saw a slow smile slightly curl the doctor's lips. She liked the little man for his sense of humor, even in this serious situation. She was perfectly sure that Miss Graham had not been hypnotized, except possibly by Cupid.

"Now, tell me," Graham went on, "how did she act? Was there anything unnatural in her actions or her speech?"

"I had only a glimpse of her," Ruth answered. "I did not hear her speak at all."

The G. M. whirled to the doctor.

"You see," he cried, "she was under restraint! She wouldn't be going about like a woman stricken dumb, would she?"

"If she wanted to escape notice, I don't imagine she would chatter, would she?" the doctor asked in his turn. "Look here, Graham! You're muddling things in your own mind. To me the thing's as plain as one of the red signals on your railroad.

"Your daughter and your chief clerk want to marry. You forbid them to do so. You threaten to fire your clerk if he as much as says 'How d'ye do?' to your daughter. They love exceedingly, as the poets say, and they elope. I have no doubt that in a

few hours you will get a message saying they are safely wed and asking your blessing."

"Well, they won't get it," Graham said smartly. "I'll separate them. But here, if they are eloping, what in the world is my daughter doing running around the country with a perfect stranger?"

The doctor turned his attention to Ruth.

"What sort of man was it who bought the tickets from you?"

Ruth described the man in detail, adding that he was a telegraph-operator.

"An operator?" Graham broke out. "Why, he's a perfect stranger to my daughter, and to Baldwin, my clerk, as well. I am sure my daughter never saw the man in her life before he lured her away. If Baldwin knew him, I surely would have seen them together at some time or other.

"Baldwin has been in my employ for seven years. I think I know everybody he knows. He led a very simple life. He had no bad habits. He wouldn't have a questionable character like this for an intimate. He wouldn't trust the girl he loved to such a man, would he?"

"That's the weak link in my chain of theory," the doctor assented. "If Baldwin were not such an estimable young man now—"

Graham made a wry face.

"I have never questioned his integrity," he said. "That wasn't the reason I didn't want him to marry my daughter."

"Oh, I know!" said the doctor. "You thought he wasn't good enough. She thought differently, perhaps because she is aware that her daddy once shoveled coal into a railroad engine."

"Well, we won't go over that ground," Graham said, flushing. "This is no time for argument. I want action. Young woman, I wish you'd come over to the other station and get orders from the despatcher to carry my car down the road. Doctor, will you kindly tell the conductor to cross over to the other track after he has put flags out both ways?"

"Sure!" said the little doctor, and he left the office.

Graham turned to Ruth a face which had grown haggard in a moment. She saw that the old man had been "putting up a front" in the doctor's presence. Now his heartache showed in every deepened line. His hands trembled.

"You're a woman," he said abruptly. "What do you think about this whole affair?"

"I didn't know till just now that your daughter was in love," Ruth said gently. "That makes a difference."

"Would love lead a gently reared young woman away from her father and her home?" Graham asked. "Would it send a girl who had never been unprotected on a wild adventure like this?"

"It might," said the girl.

Graham sighed. For a moment he stood in the middle of the room, his big shoulders sagging. Then he suddenly squared them, as if he were ashamed of his moment of weakness.

"Well, come along," he said. "This won't get me anywhere. I must have action."

Ruth saw that he was his gruff, contained self again. His employment of the personal pronoun showed that.

She was sorry for him, because she knew that he was suffering as only a man who depends on himself must suffer when he finds himself inadequate to the task in hand.

They passed behind the private car as it was pulled down to cross over to the D. N. and G. tracks. Graham preceded the girl into the office, shoving the doors open and slamming them behind her as she passed him.

He scratched a match and lit a lamp with a hand that was entirely steady. He had become the G. M. in harness again.

"Tell the despatcher I want the right-of-way," he said.

She repeated the order over the train-wire. Her sounder clicked. Graham leaned over her shoulder.

"What?" he demanded.

"He says you will have to get an order from the division superintendent."

"That's what I thought he'd say," Graham said.

He seized a pad of clip and wrote rapidly a few brief sentences. He handed the message to Ruth. She repeated it to the despatcher. It was a demand, not a request.

Graham knew that the D. N. and G. was too dependent on his own road to refuse him anything he wanted. It was his way to take boldly when there was no need for diplomacy.

They waited for the reply while the despatcher had the message telephoned to the division superintendent at his home.

"Is this man Bacon a forceful sort of chap, or is he easy-going?" Graham asked in the interval.

"Oh, he's forceful!" Ruth said with a flush. "He would have found them if it had been possible."

"Well, there's five thousand dollars waiting for whoever does find them."

Her sounder clicked and she answered.

"Copy three," said the despatcher.

"Oh, he's going to put out the order, is he?" Graham said as she reached for a book of flimsy.

"Yes, sir," she said.

"I want you people to keep a sharp lookout for that man and my daughter," Graham said.

He started for the door.

"If you hear anything let me know wherever I am. I don't know how far I'll go over this road. Depends on what turns up. Tell your Mr. Bacon to bear that five thousand in mind."

"Yes, sir," Ruth said.

As she put her stylus to the flimsy Graham went out and climbed aboard his car. She delivered the orders to the conductor and the engineer, and the special started south on the D. N. and G. Ruth returned to her office.

It was now two o'clock. Spion Kop's shadow was lengthening as the moon went down in the sky. Soon the first heralds of dawn would appear.

She listened for a moment on the train-wire and the way-wire, and then cut the press-wire in on the way-wire sounder again. A long, dull political story was droning over the wire. The newspapers had about gone to press and the sending operator was taking things easy. The story was "dope," and there was no hurry about it.

Ruth felt a little reaction from the night of excitement. She sat down before the train-wire and dropped her head to her hand. Her eyes closed and she slept lightly, her mind subconsciously on the sounder before her. Her call, she had known, would awaken her.

An automobile drew up under the bridge approach and a man and a girl descended from it. The man paid the driver, and he turned his machine and sped away.

The man and the girl climbed to the D. N. and G. platform. For a moment they stood in earnest conversation. Then the man drew back into the shadow of the station and the girl went rapidly down the track.

Ruth, in her sleep, was aware of something striking her ear. She lifted her head, her ears attuned to the sounder. But the despatcher was sending an order. Her call had not been sounded. She shook her head and rubbed her eyes.

"I beg your pardon," a voice at the window said.

At the sound of it the girl operator whirled in her chair. A girl was looking in at her—a pale-faced girl whom fatigue and anxiety made star-eyed.

"May I speak to you?" this girl asked.

Ruth rose and crossed swiftly to the door. She threw it open. The girl stepped to it.

"Come in," Ruth said.

The girl entered. Ruth stared at her for an instant, noting every detail of her appearance. At last she said in a whisper:

"You are Miss Graham, aren't you?"

"Yes," the girl whispered back, "I am Miss Graham. And I want you to be kind to me. I want you to help me. I am in great distress."

CHAPTER V.

Ruth in the Plot.

"WERE you kidnaped? Did that man hypnotize you? Do you want to go home? Shall I let your father know you are here?"

Ruth volleyed her questions. Miss Graham shrank back a step. She seemed to pale even more. Ruth dragged a chair to her.

"Sit down," she said kindly. "But you must hasten. The day-operator, Mr. Bacon, is looking for you and that man. He will be here soon."

"I haven't been kidnaped and I haven't been hypnotized," the girl said as she sank into the seat. "I ran away. I am to meet the—the man I want to marry. I left home of my own free will. My father is opposed to our marriage, but I can't live without Mr. Baldwin."

Ruth made a sound of compassion in her throat. A swift color surged up into the girl's cheeks.

Ruth saw how much she needed aid. The nerve which, in the name of her love, had carried her thus far seemed to have reached the breaking point.

"You will help me, won't you?" she asked.

"I will, indeed, if that is your situation," Ruth said.

"I knew you would. You seemed kind. A woman needs a woman when she is as helpless as I am. I have never been away from home alone before. My father—"

"Yes, I know," Ruth said. "Your father has been here."

"My father here?" the girl exclaimed, with a touch of wildness in her tone. "Was he very angry?"

"Well, he wasn't pleased exactly—you must hasten, Miss Graham. What do you want me to do?"

"Shelter me," the girl said. "Mr. Black, Mr. Baldwin's friend, who was here with me, says my father has thrown out such a net that we shall soon be caught unless we can find a place to stay where they will not think of looking. That was why we left the train when we did. The conductor was watching us. I think he almost suspected who I was.

"It has been that way ever since the newspapers got hold of the story. Mr. Black was at a loss where to go. When every one is watching for you it is difficult to hide. We didn't know my father had so many people he could enlist to aid him."

"You trust this Mr. Black?" Ruth said.

"Oh, implicitly! He is Mr. Baldwin's friend, as I say. He brought a note from Mr. Baldwin. I could not be deceived in the handwriting. We had waited long enough, and we had talked of running away together. Mr. Baldwin must have come to a decision suddenly and sent for me. What shall I do?"

Ruth pondered with her eyes on the floor. Spion Kop, with its handful of buildings, was a poor hiding-place. Besides, Graham and Dick would be back—Dick soon, and Graham before long when his present quest proved futile.

Suddenly Ruth looked up.

"I could take you home with me," she said.

"Oh, if you only could!" Miss Graham breathed. "Home!" Her lips quivered, but she tried to laugh. "You don't know how homesick I am. And how tired. But you wouldn't have me quit now, would you?"

"No," Ruth said. "Where is Mr. Black?"

"Waiting at the station."

"Well, we must hurry," Ruth said.

She opened her key and held it closed with her forefinger till an order being repeated to the despatcher was finished. Then she asked:

"Out twenty minutes?"

The despatcher held his own key open while he debated.

"I don't need you for thirty minutes," he said. "But I don't know when the 99 will be showing up there. The G. M. may want you when he gets back."

"DK will be here soon," Ruth said. "I'm just going over to the D. N. and G. station. I'll watch for the 99."

"O. K.," the despatcher agreed.

"Come," said Ruth, and she led Miss Graham from the office.

"I don't want you to get into any trouble," Miss Graham said as they went down the track. "You might lose your place if my father learned what you are doing."

"I will have to chance that and trust to you to protect me after your adventure is ended," Ruth said.

"My father may never forgive me," Miss Graham sighed.

Black stepped out of the shadow of the station to meet them.

"Have you hit on a plan?" he asked eagerly.

The man's jelly face was quite gray by now. The strain was telling on him as much as on the girl. His fat hands trembled and he wiped sweat from his forehead.

"She is going to take us home with her," Miss Graham said.

"Fine!" the man ejaculated. "That man Graham is a relentless pursuer. I had no idea he could stir up the State the way he has. I guess everybody has read the story in the papers."

Ruth's dislike of the man grew. He seemed a poor, weak thing to have to appeal to a girl for assistance in his critical moment.

But she put the dislike away. It was not the man she was helping; it was a girl trying to meet the man she loved. Ruth had a sisterly feeling for all girls in love.

"I'll have to find out where the 99 is," Ruth said. "Mr. Graham's private car," she added more explicitly.

"Where is Graham?" the man demanded with a glance over his shoulder as if he expected the bulldog face of the general manager to materialize out of the night.

"He went south extra on the D. N. and G. a while ago," Ruth answered. "He did not know how far he would go. I'll ask the despatcher."

They went into the D. N. and G. telegraph-office. Ruth broke in on the wire, taking the privilege because she knew that anything which concerned Graham would now be respectfully listened to. She asked where the 99 was.

"Coming back," the despatcher answered. "They went to Twinsburg. Ought to be there in half an hour or less."

"Your father is coming here," Black said to Miss Graham before Ruth could speak. "We must hasten."

A look of soft regret came to Miss Graham's face.

"Poor father," she said. "He must be frightened nearly to death." Her face brightened. "Couldn't I get word to him that I am well?" she asked.

"That'd be dangerous," Black said. "We'd better get under cover."

But Miss Graham showed a sudden obstinacy.

"I must think of him a little," she said. She turned to Ruth. "Couldn't I send a message over the wire?"

"Yes, you could," Ruth answered. "But it would reveal your whereabouts to him. He will be here soon. If he questioned me closely he might see that I knew where you were. He is angry, and he is never very gentle with the employees."

"But couldn't a message be sent

without any one knowing where it came from?" Miss Graham insisted.

"If we could get the operator at Gregg to take it without a date line that would be possible," Ruth said.

"Please try."

Ruth cut out the train wire and cut in on the way wire. Gregg answered sleepily after half a dozen calls. Ruth held the key open.

"What do you want to say?" Ruth asked.

"Just tell father I am well and in no danger," said Miss Graham.

Ruth reached for the open key. Black interposed his own hand between hers and it.

"Better let me send it," he said. "Somebody might recognize your sending. Nobody along this pike knows mine."

He took the key.

"To G," he said. "Please hand this on to the 99."

He started the message without a date-line, simply saying to General Manager Graham.

Gregg broke in with a snappy "wr fm?"

"Oh, it's just a note," Black said, and he proceeded.

Ruth listened breathlessly for "G's" break again, but the operator copied the message to the end. As Black gave him the signature, he opened his key and asked again, "wr fm?"

Black made no answer and he and Ruth stood before the sounder, waiting to hear what the astonished operator would say next. The operator repeated his query. Getting no answer he began excitedly to call the despatcher's office. The operator there answered leisurely.

"Did you hear that?" Gregg asked.

"No," the operator answered. "I was working on 4."

Gregg explained his receipt of the note. For a moment they theorized over the wire as to whom the sender could have been. The operator in the despatcher's office called half a dozen stations along the line, but all the operators disclaimed any knowledge of the mysterious message.

"What'll I do with it?" Gregg finally asked the despatcher's office.

"Hand it on to 'em," the despatcher's office answered.

"Your father will get it all right," Ruth said.

"I guess nobody will have recognized my sending," Black said with an attempt at humor. "I'm as heavy as a freight car when I try to send without a bug."

Ruth had noticed a peculiar rolling quality to Black's Morse. She had never heard sending quite like it before. She figured Black was a press operator whom the "bug" had saved from being shoved into the discard. For key sending his hand was practically gone.

They stepped out upon the station platform. As they did so an automobile horn sounded under the bridge.

"We'll have to run for it," Ruth said. "There's Mr. Bacon, the day operator, come back."

They sped along the platform, down the D. N. and G track, and up a street. Ruth stopped presently before a cottage.

"This isn't very pretentious, Miss Graham," she said. "But no one will ever look for you here. Come in."

She opened the front door and led her strange guests into the parlor.

"I'll tell my mother," she said.

Her mother, a semi-invalid since her father's death, was aghast at what Ruth was doing, but Ruth persuaded her into acquiescence as she usually was able to do.

Ruth took Miss Graham to a room where she could rest. Black nervously said he would remain in the parlor and smoke if Ruth didn't mind.

"We can depend on you?" he asked at the door.

"I have given my promise to Miss Graham," Ruth said coldly.

Something like a leer that had come to his face died away.

"All right," he mumbled.

Ruth retraced her steps rapidly. At the base of Spion Kop she paused and looked through the window of her office. Dick was not there. She went in and sat down. She was unconcernedly reading a newspaper when Dick burst in at the door.

"There's something doing," he cried. "The despatcher was calling as I came by and I went in and answered. Had to take an order for 7 to let the 99 in. The G. M. is coming back. He got a message at Gregg from his daughter. Nobody knows where it came from.

"The operator at Gregg said the wire worked as if it came from some place near-by. The G. M. is bringing the operator along with him. The operator says he would know the other operator's sending. First thing we know they'll be suspecting us."

CHAPTER VI.

Baldwin Appears.

GRAHAM strode into the office, followed by the little doctor and the operator from Gregg. Graham had got himself under complete control. He might have been seething inside, but his face did not betray his feelings. It was like a gray mask in which deep lines had been furrowed. Only his eyes were alive, intensely so.

They glittered as he fixed them on Dick.

"You know I got a message at Gregg from my daughter, do you not?" he asked in a low, colorless voice.

"I heard about it; yes, sir," Dick answered.

"Who sent it?"

"I haven't the least idea. I haven't touched a key since I left here except to repeat an order for 7 over at the other station."

Graham wheeled about abruptly and turned those eyes on Ruth. The girl felt a quiver run through her. The man was brutal in his purpose to get at the bottom of the latest development of his mystery.

"Who sent it?" he again shot his question.

Dick took a step toward the general manager. Graham might ask him what he liked, might insinuate as much as he pleased, but he mustn't browbeat Ruth.

"Mr. Graham—" he began.

"Keep silent," Graham hissed. "The girl can answer for herself, can't she?"

"But she is a woman," said Dick in a voice that was low but as hard as Graham's own. "I won't have her spoken to like that."

Graham stared at him a moment, a red flush pulsing up into the gray of his face. He started to speak to Dick but changed his mind.

When he again addressed Ruth his voice was a trifle gentler:

"Did you send that message?"

Ruth gave a gasp of relief. If he had kept to the form of his first question she must have told him. She could not lie even to shield a lovesick girl.

"I did not," she answered quickly. "I have done no telegraphing to-night except what had to do with the company's business and your personal business."

"You're sure you didn't send it?" Graham insisted.

"I did not."

The G. M. was not satisfied. He took a turn across the room. Then he came back and faced the operator from Gregg.

"Would you know the sending of the operator whom you took that message from?" he asked.

"I sure would," said the operator from Gregg.

"Break in on the way wire and tell them I want to use it," Graham ordered Dick.

Dick obeyed. Graham thrust a newspaper in front of him.

"Send from that," he said.

Dick sent rather nervously for two

minutes. Graham looked inquiringly at the operator from Gregg. The operator shook his head.

"Now you," Graham ordered Ruth.

Dick again seemed about to protest, but Ruth silenced him with a glance.

He rose from the chair, and she sat down. She sent from the newspaper as Dick had done. Again the operator shook his head.

"Damnation!" Graham exploded. "Who could have sent that message?"

"The man who was with Miss Graham was an operator," Dick said.

"That's right," Graham said. "Young woman, would you know that man's sending if you heard it?"

"I—" Ruth began.

"She didn't hear him send," said Dick. "This operator did."

"I'd know it," said the operator again. "He had the cramp all right. Been a good man in his day, but he sweat when he sent that message to me."

Silence fell upon them, while Graham pondered. Ruth, to escape further questions for the moment, walked to the window and stood looking out.

The darkness that precedes the dawn had fallen over Spion Kop. The big hill lost itself in the shadows. The moon had gone. Soon the east would be tinged with the coming of the summer day.

Ruth looked toward the bridge. She could not make it out, but somewhere out upon it she discerned a speck of bobbing light. At first she watched it without interest, her mind was so full of other things. But slowly it forced itself upon her comprehension. She studied it.

What it came from mystified her, It was too small for a lantern, being but a speck, and yet there was some motive power back of it, for it seemed to be coming toward her as it swayed from side to side. She turned into the room.

"What is that light on the bridge?" she asked.

They gathered round her at the window with that exaggerated interest which their strained mental states gave to trifles. For some time they stood so in silence.

"What is it?" Graham asked the doctor.

"I can think of only one thing," the doctor answered. "A man crossing the bridge with a lighted cigar in his mouth."

"Who could it be?" Graham asked Dick.

"Can't say," Dick answered. "It's not time for the agent to come to the D. N. and G. station. We don't have many strangers here."

"He stoops over every now and then to light the bridge with his cigar-end," the doctor went on. "You can see the glow of it increase as he bends over."

They did not speak again for a moment. The tiny glow came toward them slowly, then more rapidly.

"He's left the bridge now," the doctor said. "By George, he's running! There! He's tossed his cigar away."

In a moment there was the sound of running feet on the cinders. Then a bareheaded man came into view in the light from the station window. He stopped for an instant, seeking the door.

When his eyes found it he ran to it. He threw it open and tore into the waiting-room and up to the window. Breathless, he stood there, staring at them. His eyes were wide and his hair was disheveled as if he had been in a fight.

Ruth noticed that his collar had been torn from its button in front.

"Good God!" Graham broke out. "It's Baldwin!"

He ran to the door of the waiting-room and wrenched it open as if he would tear it from the hinges. Baldwin took a step to meet him. Graham threw himself upon his clerk, shouting madly:

"Where is my girl? What have you done with my daughter?"

Baldwin was as big a man as Graham and younger, but he appeared to

have spent himself before his arrival. He could only fend off Graham's hands as the general manager strained at him, seeking his throat.

The doctor leaped to their sides and laid his hand on Graham's shoulder. Graham tried, like a huge dog, to shake the doctor off. But though the doctor was a little man there was steel in his muscles. He wrestled with the big man, calling on him to desist.

All the rage and the anxiety which Graham had suffered from had welled up to his brain. He was beside himself. He forced Baldwin back to the bench which ran along the wall. Baldwin sank down on this, still evading Graham's efforts to clutch his throat.

The doctor, as a last resort, seized one of Graham's hands and pulled with all his strength. Graham was puffing from his unaccustomed exertion. Slowly the doctor bent his arm back and then started to shove it toward his opposite shoulder. Graham winced and then cried out from the pain. At last the doctor forced him to let go his hold of Baldwin.

Graham whirled about and the doctor pushed him back against the wall.

"What are you trying to do?" Graham cried.

"Trying to prevent you from shutting that man's wind off," the doctor panted good-naturedly. "A man can't live if you shut off his wind, you know."

Graham's better sense came to his rescue. He turned on Baldwin. Though he was still very angry, he could speak without bellowing.

"What have you done with my daughter?" he demanded.

Baldwin lifted his head and looked at the general manager. Twice he tried to answer him, but his voice was lost in his throat.

Dick brought him a drink of water. He gulped it.

"I haven't seen your daughter," he said. "I was lured away on the pretence that I was to meet her. I just got free a while back and walked over here. It was the nearest telegraph-office. I wanted to get into communication with you."

CHAPTER VII.

The Escape.

THAT gray look came into Graham's face again. He turned on the doctor.

"I told you she was taken away by force," he said bitterly. "Or, worse yet, possibly lured away. My God, what do you suppose has happened to her by this time?"

The self-control which years of hard work and industrial leadership had given him was breaking. The one person in the world for whom he had a human affection was in peril. He was reduced to the commonest terms of stricken manhood.

"Tell us what they did to you, Baldwin," the doctor said gravely; for he, too, was at last convinced that Miss Graham was not figuring in an elopement.

"I received a telephone call purporting to come from Miss Graham," Baldwin said.

He looked at Graham with mounting color.

"You know, of course, that there has been something between Miss Graham and me. Mr. Graham frowned on my suit, but Miss Graham was determined that nothing should come between us. We had talked of running away together. I had been in correspondence with some Western railroad people, trying to get a place out there. Miss Graham was becoming impatient and worried.

"When I got the telephone message I supposed she had decided to wait no longer. I went to meet her at a drug store where we sometimes saw each other."

"A pretty way to treat my daughter," said Graham bitterly.

"Well, we had to meet each other,"

Baldwin said with a touch of sullenness. "There was no other way. I was met at the drug store by a man I had never seen before. He said Miss Graham had gone an hour before to Aldrich, the first town beyond here. She wanted me to meet her there.

"I was at a loss what to do at first. I didn't see why she hadn't waited for me, but the man said she had thought it safest for us to leave Osgood separately. That sounded reasonable in view of the opposition to our seeing each other at all."

"You needn't harp on that," Graham broke in.

"I took the precaution to call Miss Graham's house," Baldwin went on. "They said she was not there. So I went with this man. When we got to Aldrich the man went into a telephone booth and talked for a few minutes. When he came out he said Miss Graham was waiting for us. He said another man would come for us in a cab.

"I suppose I should have been more cautious, but I could only think of Miss Graham. We got into the cab when it came, and the other man was there. We rode to the suburbs. As we passed from the built-up section of the town the two men suddenly threw themselves upon me and put a handkerchief over my face.

"I didn't know anything till some time to-night. I was in a deserted house. It was quite dark. The door of the room I was in was locked. I pounded on the door. A man came and opened it and told me to be quiet. He stood in the doorway and he held a revolver at his side. I was sick from the drug they had used, but I was wild. I thought perhaps Miss Graham had been treated as I had been.

"I jumped for the man and got him before he could use his gun. We struggled and rolled down the stairs. I was stronger than he and I landed on top. He lay still at the bottom of the stairs. I waited to see if any one else was in the house, but everything was quiet. I got out through a cellar window when I found all the other doors and windows nailed shut. I came here as quickly as I could."

"Did you ever see any of these men before?"

"Never. They were plug-uglies, I decided, though the first two I met were well dressed. They didn't talk any more than they had to. I was so excited and off my guard that I didn't think to question them as to how they came to bear a message from Miss Graham or to represent her. Do you know where Miss Graham is, Mr. Graham?"

"I haven't the slightest idea now," Graham said with a sound like a moan.

Ruth Bennett had been the most attentive listener to what Baldwin had to say. She was stricken with horror now at what she had done. Instead of helping a girl bring about the culmination of her romance, she had played into the hands of the girl's enemies.

She did not know what Graham would do to her, or what he would say, but she saw that there was only one thing for her to do.

"Mr. Graham—" she began, and at the odd catch in her voice they all turned to her.

She paled when she found herself the object of their attention, but she bravely concluded:

"Your daughter and that man came back here while you were coming up on the D. N. and G."

Graham leaned over and clutched her shoulder.

"Are you playing in with them?" he demanded fiercely.

"No, I—your daughter said she was trying to meet Mr. Baldwin, whom she loved. She said you were opposed to her marrying him. I thought I could help her. She appealed to me to be kind to her. I was sorry for two young people who—"

Graham's grip on her shoulder tightened till she winced.

"Where is she now?" he hissed.

"I left her and that man at my house just a little while ago."

Graham was the first to recover from the stunned silence into which her announcement threw them. He became at once the man of action again. Blame of the girl operator, question as to her motives, everything that was not concerned with his meeting his child again, he brushed aside as matters to be taken up later.

"Show us where you live, quick," he ordered.

Ruth reached for the key to get the customary "out for a while" from the despatcher, but Graham, his hand still on her shoulder, started her toward the door.

"Never mind about that," he said. "Show us where you live."

She led the way over the route she had taken when she had thought she was taking Miss Graham to a haven. When they came to the door of her home, Graham thrust her aside and ran up the steps.

He threw open the front door and burst into the sitting-room. Only the odor of stale tobacco-smoke greeted him.

"There is no one here," he said.

"Miss Graham was up-stairs," Ruth faltered.

Graham went up the stairs two at a time. Ruth, Dick, and the doctor followed him. Graham stopped before a closed door.

"Here?" he asked.

Ruth nodded.

With bent head thrust forward so that he might listen, Graham tapped on the door. There was no sound from the inside.

"Gertrude," he called.

There was no answer. He stepped back.

"Open the door," he ordered.

Ruth opened the door and glanced inside.

"She is not there," she said.

Graham stepped to her side and his haggard eyes swept the interior of the room.

"Gone!" he said hopelessly.

They went slowly down the stairs. Graham's shoulders sagged again. He seemed to be aging perceptibly.

They came to the sitting-room.

Ruth glanced about the familiar place. Her eyes rested on an envelope on a table in the center of the room. She moved to the table and took up the letter. Then she started and held it out to Graham.

"A letter for you," she gasped.

Graham seized the letter from her hand, and without looking at the writing tore the envelope open with trembling hands. They grouped themselves about him as he read. As he finished his hand dropped to his side and crushed the paper.

"She's been kidnaped, doctor, just as I told you," he said.

The doctor held out his hand in silence and Graham handed the letter to him. The doctor smoothed it out and read it slowly.

DEAR GRAHAM:

You are getting a bit too hot on the trail. I didn't think any one man had so many people to call to his assistance. By now you have seen Baldwin, and you have an idea of what has happened. I lured your daughter away because I wanted money. I meant no harm to her in the beginning, but I am getting desperate. If we stay together for long you will capture us. You will have to be prompt if you want to prevent harm coming to her.

If you will pay ten thousand dollars for her safe return she will be back in Osgood by night. If you will not pay, you'll not see her again. This is no idle threat. I've made myself a candidate for a prison cell and I may as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb.

Tell the Osgood papers you have received this letter and what you are going to do about it. Then I will let you know how to get the money to me. I shall not write you again. This is your only chance to see your daughter alive.

"It's not signed," said the doctor, turning the paper over in his hand. "Well, it's a worse business than I thought, Graham."

He frowned and regarded Ruth.

"This man, what sort of fellow is he—desperate?" he asked.

"I didn't like him," Ruth answered. "I do not think he is brave, but he has an evil face. I shouldn't want to trust him."

"Do you think he would have nerve enough to carry out his threat?"

"If he thought he might escape punishment, he might," she said.

"What do you think we had better do, Graham?" the doctor asked.

"Do?" Graham flamed out. "Why, I shall have to pay, and then I shall spend the rest of my life making that scoundrel pay. Let's go back to the office so that I can telegraph to the Osgood papers."

CHAPTER VIII.

The Rescue.

GRAHAM telegraphed to the newspapers at Osgood that ten thousand dollars was demanded for the safe return of his daughter, and that he would pay that sum.

Then he had Dick take charge of the way wire, and he began to send messages. When, an hour later, Dick had finished sending, Graham had forwarded messages of appeal to every official within a hundred miles.

These, in turn, were asked to enlist the services of all officers of the law. With each message was a description of Miss Graham and of the man who called himself Black. In every town, village, and hamlet men were on the lookout for the couple.

"I'm going to my car," said Graham out of his fatigue, when the last message had been ticked off. "If anything turns up, let me know."

He and the doctor started for the car. The operator from Gregg went over to the D. N. and G. station.

"You'd better come with us," Graham said to Baldwin none too invitingly. "I may need you later."

Baldwin followed in silence. Dick and Ruth were left alone.

"Well, what do you think of me?" Ruth asked miserably.

"Think of you?" Dick said. "You know what I think of you, Ruth. You're the best little girl ever, and I want you to marry me. Will you?"

His sudden declaration took Ruth off her feet. Her lips began to quiver, and she closed her eyes. As she swayed a little, Dick steadied her with a hand under her elbow.

"Never mind," he said gently. "You run along home and go to bed. You must be dead. Don't come to work till you feel like it. I'm good for twenty-four hours more."

"But I feel as if I ought to stay," Ruth said with a wan smile. "I feel as if Miss Graham's present peril were all my fault. If—"

"Never mind the 'ifs,'" Dick said. "You thought you were helping out a forlorn sister. You weren't to blame."

"You're mighty good, Dick," Ruth said, but he did not take advantage of that to press his suit.

Ruth put on her hat and started for the door.

"Take all the time you want, now," Dick said.

She opened the door and looked out into the dazzling morning sunlight. It half blinded her, and she stood in the doorway a moment to get used to it.

Suddenly she exclaimed over her shoulder. At her tone Dick came to the door.

"Something's happened," she said. "The D. N. and G. agent is running over here."

They watched the man as he ran toward them down the track. He was bareheaded, and he carried a piece of clip in his hand.

"Where's Graham?" he asked when he was within speaking distance.

"Over in his car," Dick said. "What's up?"

"They've found Miss Graham," the agent answered. "She's over at Gregg, waiting for her dad to come. She and that man showed up in a machine on the road near there and a constable stopped 'em."

He started for Graham's car. The

G. M. had been sitting moodily at a window. He had seen the excited agent with the message in his hand. Hoping and fearing, he ran to the rear platform and waited for the agent, with Dick at his heels.

The agent handed the message up to Graham. Graham read it rapidly.

"Oh, doctor," he called over his shoulder, "Gertrude has been found! My girl has been found!" The doctor ran out. "That scoundrel has got away, but we'll land him, all right. Tell your despatcher I want to get over to Gregg right away," he directed the agent. "Send a message to your superintendent in my name, telling him for God's sake to give me the right-of-way just once more! Come up here, young man!"

He seized Dick by the arm and half pulled him up on the platform.

"You go back to your station and tell that young woman—what's her name? Miss Bennett?—that I want her to go over to Gregg with me. The sight of another woman will help my daughter wonderfully just now."

Dick sprang down and hastened back to the office. Ruth went out to the car, and Graham assisted her aboard. He led her to a seat near a window, and she sank into it. Her heart was going pit-a-pat. This was the first time she had ever been in anybody's private car.

Baldwin came from the other end of the car. Graham looked at him, and some of the hostility died out of his face.

"I'll soon have my girl back, Baldwin," the G. M. said.

"Thank God!" said Baldwin.

The car, with her engine, had lain on the siding. A brakeman now threw the switch, and she went out on the main line of the D. N. and G. A moment later the conductor climbed up on the rear platform of the car with his flimsies in his hand.

"Got the right-of-way," he said to Graham. "They're even putting their passengers in for us."

"Good enough," said Graham, walking about the car and rubbing his hands. "Tell the engineer to open her up."

The engineer needed no bidding. As soon as he had got his own orders he had climbed into his cab. The car was drawn away from the station and moved into the south. In five minutes the telegraph-poles were flitting by, and the country swam outside the car window.

They pulled into Gregg with a roar. Graham stood on the rear platform, leaning out. As the car stopped he sprang down. A young woman came to the door of the station.

Graham started for her with open arms. With a little cry she sprang for that safety and leaned her head on his shoulder and cried.

Presently she lifted her head and saw Baldwin just behind her father. She freed herself from Graham's hug and extended both hands to the young man.

Baldwin took the hands with a quick glance at the G. M. The G. M. did not seem so very fierce or formidable just at that moment. His right hand was fumbling in the breast pocket of his coat. Baldwin bent to the girl and their lips met.

The engineer of the special drew his head in at the window and looked at the fireman with wide eyes.

"I'll be cussed if the old man ain't sheddin' real tears!" he said.

He looked out at the strange sight again incredulously.

"It don't seem possible," he murmured. "Nobody ever suspected that old boy was a reg'lar human bein'."

CHAPTER IX.

The Trap.

"WHERE'S the constable who found you?" Graham demanded after a moment.

"Here I am," said a voice behind him.

Graham turned, expecting to face a rural minion of the law, but he found only a quiet young man of good address.

"I received a message from the superintendent of the D. N. and G. to be on the lookout for your daughter and that man," the constable said, without waiting to be questioned. "I have been on the lookout for them since last night. This morning I was watching the main road leading into the village. I saw a machine coming.

"We have been having trouble with autos hereabouts, and most of the owners of cars in the vicinity have begun to observe the speed laws. This fellow was making the dust fly. I stepped into the middle of the road and stopped him with a gun.

"I recognized your daughter from the description. She and the man you want were in the back seat. I guess he must have given the driver of the car a good-sized piece of money. He did his work a little too well to suit me.

"I told your daughter to get down and then ordered the man to follow her. He put his foot on the step, and then he leaned over and hit me on the head. I think he must have used a gas-pipe. Anyway, the machine was gone when I woke up."

"They went straight through the village as fast as they could go," Miss Graham said. "Oh, daddy, I was so afraid till I heard Harry was with you and you were coming for me."

"And when you get ready to divide the reward you offered, I'll take my share," said the constable.

Graham handed him a card. The G. M. was in a dispensing mood.

"Come to see me at my office day after to-morrow," he said.

The sleuth put the card in his pocket and turned away. Graham went to the telegraph window. The operator whom he had taken to Spion Kop leaned out.

"Have you sent messages for everybody to be on the lookout for that man?" Graham asked.

"Yes, sir," the operator said.

"And now for Spion Kop again," Graham said.

It was a joyous ride back. Graham sat holding his daughter's hand and patting it. He asked her so many questions that she must have taken a day to answer them.

Miss Graham suddenly turned to Ruth.

"I am sorry I left your house so unceremoniously," she said. "But that man said he had been watching, and he had seen signs of suspicious activity at the station. He said we must leave at once. He called for a machine and gave the driver a big bill —the last he had. He had been gone for half an hour, and he was very much excited when he came back."

"He probably saw Mr. Baldwin come to the station," Ruth hazarded.

Graham fell into a silence which they all observed. The G. M. was trying to figure out what move to make to capture his daughter's abductor. He was as keen for this capture as he had been for his daughter's recovery.

Dick was waiting for them at S K, and Graham at once took charge of the way wire again and deluged the operator at Osgood with messages. Soon the country was aware that Black was seeking shelter alone.

At Graham's request, Dick cut in on the press wire when all the messages had been sent.

"What're they saying?" Graham asked.

"Miss Bennett will have to read that for you," Dick said with a flush.

Ruth sat down before the wire and read off the stories that were being flashed to the newspapers. There was nothing in them that Graham did not already know.

Their topic was the story of the recovery of Miss Graham and the escape of Black.

They sat thus for an hour. The business of the road went on about them as if there had been no interruption. Train-crews came and went from the Spion Kop office, with a

stare for the G. M., the doctor, and the G. M.'s pretty daughter.

Graham at last gave up trying to evolve any plan. He looked at the little doctor, who was slouched down in his chair, smoking more cigarettes than he would have allowed a patient to smoke.

"What do you advise, doctor?" Graham asked.

"Seems to me the first question is, where would this man Black go?" the doctor said.

"Where do you think he would go?" Graham asked.

"You said, Miss Graham, that he gave his last bill to the driver of the machine?" the doctor asked the girl.

"He said it was his last," the girl answered.

"Then he's broke," said the doctor to Graham.

"Apparently," Graham conceded.

"A fleeing man with no money is in a bad way, especially with the whole countryside, looking for him—eh?"

"In a decidedly bad way."

"The man's an operator," the doctor said.

"Yes."

"He must have had a job somewhere. He must have been working recently or he wouldn't have had the money he has spent for railroad tickets and automobiles."

"He had considerable money when we started," Miss Graham said. "By the way, I haven't shown you the note he gave me when he said Mr. Baldwin was to meet me."

"The note?" the doctor and Graham said together.

She drew a piece of paper from the bosom of her dress and handed it to Graham. Graham stared down at it a moment and then passed it over to Baldwin.

"That looks like your writing," the G. M. said.

Baldwin examined the paper.

"It looks like mine, but it isn't," Baldwin said. "Most operators write like that. I carried my penmanship over from my telegraphic days. This man must have seen my writing at some time or other."

Miss Graham leaned over his shoulder and stared at the writing as her father had done.

This is what she and Baldwin read together:

> GERTRUDE:
> Mr. Black will bring you to meet me. You may trust him as you would myself. Something has happened which makes prompt action imperative.
> HARRY.

"Those curlycues are what made me think it was your writing," Miss Graham said.

"There are hundreds of men in the United States who could have written that note," said Baldwin. "We'll keep it. It may come in useful later—Doctor, you hadn't finished."

"My conclusion would be that Black has gone back to his key and sounder at whatever place he had been working when he evolved the plan to kidnap Miss Graham."

"But that might be anywhere in the country," Graham said.

"Hardly. The man must have known of you. He must have known of the relations between your daughter and Mr. Baldwin. Pardon me, but he must have known of your objections to Mr. Baldwin."

"From all that, you would infer that he is working near by?"

"Within a radius of a hundred miles, I'll bet," the doctor concluded.

"Well, I'll have every operator within that radius under observation by night," Graham declared.

Dick turned away from his key. He had been repeating an order, but he had listened to the doctor's hypothesis with one ear.

"Miss Bennett would know that man's sending, Mr. Graham," he said.

"Well, what of that?" Graham asked.

"If you had sufficient influence with the W. U. wire chief at Osgood, you could get him to stick us in on the

press wires one by one. We could sit here and listen to every operator in the State working. If this man Black had any occasion to send, Miss Bennett would recognize his sending."

"By George," said Graham, "that's a good idea! I can call the W. U. superintendent and have that done. I don't know the wire chief. How can I get into touch with the superintendent?"

"He has a seat in this office," Dick said. "I hit him for a job once and I noticed it. Wait a minute."

He called Osgood on the way wire.

"Ring GO in here," he said.

In a few minutes GO, the W. U. office at Osgood, came in on the way wire.

"Mr. Graham wants to talk to the chief," Dick said.

There was a moment's further delay, and then from the board at GO came the personal sign of the wire chief.

"Mr. Graham, our general manager, would like to talk to your superintendent," Dick said.

"Minute," the chief abbreviated. And then, after he had had the wire open long enough to plug the superintendent's loop in, he told Dick to call SU.

Dick remembered that there was but one instrument in the superintendent's office, and that it was at the official's elbow. He called SU once and signed his own call. A slow "I. I. SU," ticked off by a man whose hand had stiffened long ago, came over the wire.

"Here he is," Dick said to Graham.

"You tell him what we want," Graham directed.

Dick explained Graham's request.

"When do you want to begin?" the superintendent asked.

"Right away," said Dick. "We will let you know when we are through. Give us ten minutes on each wire, and when we have been in on all of them, begin over again."

"O. K.," said the superintendent.

Ruth now sat down in front of the way wire. The others grouped themselves about her. For ten minutes they listened to some one sending to Osgood. Then there was a click as another wire was switched in. Cleveland was sending a pony report down the State.

In the next two hours Ruth listened to Cincinnati, Columbus, Dayton, and other towns. Then New York was cut in, and Cleveland and places west took the day stock report.

There was only the occasional break that is heard on a press wire, and from these breaks Ruth gained nothing.

"We are starting all over again," Ruth said.

"And not a clue," said Graham disappointedly.

"Nothing," the girl said. "But, Mr. Graham, this man may be a night operator. We may have to wait till to-night before we learn anything."

"You must be getting tired," Graham said. "You were up all night, weren't you?"

"I am not tired," Ruth answered. "I shall be glad to do what I can."

The day wore away and the shadows of night began to climb up Spion Kop. The moon sailed into the sky, and still they sat listening to the various senders. Once or twice GO came in on the way wire to ask if they had finished.

"All these senders are using bugs," Ruth said toward nine o'clock. "If this man uses a bug I may not recognize his sending."

"A bug?" Graham asked.

"A sending machine," Ruth answered. "All press operators, or very nearly all, use sending machines nowadays. They make a big difference."

"Oh!" said Graham. "Well, we can only hope."

They fell silent again. Ruth's eyelids began to droop. She was becoming intolerably sleepy. Nothing was due at Spion Kop for some time, and the silence of the summer night lulled her.

She caught herself almost nodding.

Then her head sank. And then, all at once, a sound on the way wire startled her wide awake.

"Book, PR."

An operator somewhere along the line was opening his key to get a "book" adjusted in his machine.

"What is it?" Graham demanded.

"Dick, ring in GO on the train wire."

GO soon came in.

"Ask him where PR is on this wire we're in on now."

"He says it's Peru," said Dick presently.

"Ask him not to cut us out here till we tell him," Ruth then said; and Dick repeated the request to the wire-chief.

"He says O. K.," Dick said.

"For Heaven's sake, what is it?" Graham demanded.

The G. M. did not like this working in the dark. He stared at the sounder, and strained his ears in its direction as if he would force it to become intelligible to him.

"That man at Peru just broke with his key to stop the sending operator," Ruth explained. "His sending has a peculiar quality. He makes six dots for a p, and the last dot trails a little after the first necessary five. A good many operators do that, and it may mean nothing. On the other hand, it may mean a good deal."

The wire was open longer than it usually takes an operator to handle a stubborn book. Then it clicked shut, and the sending operator took up the story again. In a few minutes Peru broke once more. Ruth hung on the bobbing sounder.

Peru broke five times in the next twenty minutes.

"There's something the matter with that man," Ruth said. "He's nervous. He can't get that stuff. The operator has been taking it pretty easy, but it's too fast for PR— There he goes again. The sending operator wants to know what's the matter with him. He's answering. They are having an argument. PR is talking now. Oh, Mr. Graham, that man Black is at Peru. I'm sure of it. I'd know that sending anywhere."

CHAPTER X.

Caught.

THE man who called himself Black looked up from his typewriter to find Ruth standing in the doorway of his office. Back of her were Graham, Miss Graham, the doctor, Baldwin, and a square-shouldered man.

Black rose from his seat unsteadily, without opening his key to stop the sending operator. The smile which Ruth disliked was trembling on his lips.

"Why, I—how d'ye do?" he said, and his eyes roamed the room. But the only door from it was effectually blocked.

The stockily built man crossed to the operator.

"You're under arrest, Dilley," he said.

"On what charge?" the operator faltered.

"Abduction."

"Why, you're crazy," Dilley said, but there was no force back of his words.

"Ever see this young woman before?" the man asked.

Dilley tried to look at Miss Graham, but his eyelids wavered down. He drew a deep breath.

"Well, I guess it's all off," he said. "I thought I could pick up a little easy money. My fist was going back on me, and it won't be long before I'll have to quit telegraphing. Sometimes I can't even work a bug. I didn't know what was going to become of me. I hired a couple of men to help me out with Baldwin. You needn't ask who they were. I won't tell on them."

"How did you happen to choose my daughter for abduction?" Graham asked curiously.

"Oh, everybody knew your chief clerk wanted to marry her and that you

objected," Dilley answered cynically. "It looked the easiest job to put through. Baldwin had been an operator, I knew. I went up to your general offices and got a glimpse of his writing. He threw the same kind of copy most of us throw. I knew it wouldn't be hard to imitate. I also knew your daughter was so mad about him that a note would fetch her.

"I was trying to get over to the place where they were holding Baldwin, but I was afraid of the train-crew of the local, and we dropped off at Spion Kop. I might have pulled off if Baldwin hadn't escaped and if everybody hadn't been sizing us up. I took your daughter to this young woman's house because I thought I could conduct negotiations from there.

"I'd have got away afterward, too, if you hadn't got the whole State on my track, Graham." He smiled forlornly. "I've made my living telegraphing for a good many years. I guess it's what you might call poetic justice that I was trapped by old man Morse's invention. I suppose I shouldn't have come back to work, but I figured that nobody around here would think I have nerve enough to pull off a stunt like that."

The man's tone was so hopeless that Ruth was sorry for him. She could see how one who would soon be forced from the ranks might become desperate.

"I'll ask for a relief from the W. U.," Dilley went on. "Then you can take me along, mister."

He went back to his seat, rang in the wire-chief, and began mechanically to take the report again.

"We'll leave you in charge," Graham said to the stocky man. "The rest of us may as well be going."

At the bottom of the stairs Graham turned to Ruth.

"You had better come home with us," he said, "and get a good rest."

"I must get back to Spion Kop," she said with a blush.

"We'll take you to the station and have the special carry you back," Graham said.

They left her in the private car.

"You tell that young man at Spion Kop to come to see me to-morrow—to-morrow as early as he can get relieved," Graham said. "I owe somebody five thousand dollars. I suppose he can act as your agent as well as in his own interest."

Ruth watched them cross the station platform. Old Graham stalked ahead, looking neither to right nor to left. Baldwin walked at Miss Graham's side.

"I think this has done our general manager considerable good," said Ruth to herself.

When the special pulled in at Spion Kop, she was on the rear platform of the 99. She jumped down. It was rather dark, and she was unaware that Dick was there till she felt his arms about her. Dick held her for a moment and they did not speak.

"As soon as I can get the special started back, I'll take you home," Dick said at last.

"Oh, it won't be necessary," she objected. "I had better work the rest of the night. You must be tired, too."

"You're going home and to bed," Dick said with a new tone of authority.

Ten minutes later they started down the track toward her home. The headlight of the special was disappearing around the hill as it backed away toward Osgood.

"Graham wants to see you to-morrow," Ruth said.

"That's luck for us," said Dick. "I wonder if they can get a new night operator for SK right away?"

"There are plenty of extra men," she said, her face rosy.

They were at the base of the big hill. He put his hand on her arm and detained her. Then he drew her to him.

Only Spion Kop knows what they said to each other, and Spion Kop always maintains a dignified silence.

FLASHLIGHTS TO GUARD TRAINS

Unique Safety Signal System Being Introduced in Europe to Preserve Safety of Passengers and Equipment.

CONTROLS TRAFFIC IN BUSY SECTIONS.

Evolved and Perfected by a Swedish Scientist, the New Code of Warnings Claims Many Advantages Because Flashes Are Discernible at a Great Distance. Tests Are Now Being Made to Standardize the Lights for Instruction of Railroad Men.

BY FREDERICK A. TALBOT,

Author of "The Railway Conquest of the World," "The Making of a Great Canadian Railway," etc.

O other phase of railroad development in Europe is arousing such keen attention as the new flashlight signaling, which promises to revolutionize the problem of protecting trains, so far as the crack fliers are concerned. In Europe it is making great headway. Many of the trunk lines, after elaborate and searching experiments having concluded that it is a decided step in the right direction. They are attracted to its installation because of its efficiency, reliability, and economy in cost.

It is a new development. The first signal was placed in service as an experiment only six years ago. It is working to this day. It has become standardized, and events have proved that it can be adapted to the prevailing requirements of any signaling system with the utmost facility.

It is an independent but complete unit, capable of combination with an automatic or cab control. It appeals to the engineer by reducing the strain on his nerves and enabling him to maintain speed with complete safety through the most congested areas of his road.

To a navigator, the easiest signal to pick up at sea is that of a flashing character. It intrudes upon vision, and is seldom illusory. It cannot be mistaken for a ship's light, a brilliant twinkling star or any foreign light. Its warning is definite and distinctive. The system of marine lights which has received the widest universal approbation is that evolved and perfected by Gustaf Dalen, the eminent Swedish physicist, whose work has received due acknowledgment by the bestowal of the Nobel Peace Prize.

This method is being utilized for the

lighting of the Panama Canal in combination with Dr. Dàlen's other wonderful invention, the sun-valve, whereby the beacon is lighted and extinguished at dusk and dawn by the action of daylight alone. It can be left unattended for months with perfect safety.

Some seven years ago Dr. Dàlen received a letter from the engineer of one of the Swedish private railways asking if he could supply a modified type of the flashing light suited to railroads. The engineer, aware of its utility and high efficiency at sea, considered that it would be an ideal system for the great steel way.

But never a thought had been given by the Swedish scientist to such an application. However, it made him think, and he replied to the effect that while no such adaptation had been made, he would make experiments at once to ascertain what could be done. Inwardly, however, he concluded that the possible application was so limited that it would scarcely warrant an assiduous development.

He summoned Berggren, one of his lieutenants, handed him the engineer's inquiry, and told him to proceed on the lines indicated. A lamp was contrived and sent to the railroad in question, where it was installed at a busy point. Its operation was followed with the closest attention. In the course of a few weeks Berggren became convinced that flashing signals could be made to play an important part in railroad operation.

He communicated his impressions to his chief. Dr. Dàlen still was somewhat skeptical of the commercial aspect of the development, but not wishing to discourage initiative and enterprise, extended the widest powers to his lieutenant to consummate the end in view.

Railway Requests a Lamp.

At this juncture quite a new aspect became revealed suddenly. The engineers of the Swedish State Railways heard of the installation of the experimental lamp. Fully cognizant of the success of the idea in connection with coast lighting, they requested a similar lamp.

It was installed at Liljeholmen station upon the trunk road of the southern section of the government system, where it could be submitted to exhaustive tests under all climatic changes and conditions of railroad operation. The light is still in service, and has been the object of thorough examination by railroad engineers from all parts of the world.

Within a few days of the installation of the two experimental lights their many advantages were revealed. The strain on the engineer in watching for signals became materially reduced. The engineers reported that they could not help observing the signals and were able to realize the conditions of the track in an instant.

This is natural. Advertising enterprise has demonstrated the fact that a flashing sky-sign will arrest attention far more effectively than one which is burning continuously. The eye is drawn unconsciously and irresistibly to the announcement. It is the same with flashing signals. The engineer sights the flash from a far greater distance than he can pick up a steadily burning light under similar conditions.

Fixing the Number of Flashes.

But it was realized when the problem was attacked that the light characteristic which suited marine traffic was not necessarily adapted to railroad conditions. The eye is extremely sensitive to interruptions in light impressions, but unless these interruptions are timed to a nicety, and are regular in their occurrence, physical strain instead of being eased becomes somewhat accentuated.

The questions arose: How many flashes should be given within a stated period of time, such as a minute. What is the most effective duration of light and darkness respectively?

To determine this factor a prolonged and interesting series of experiments was carried out. A committee, formed of engineers, scientific investigators, and also the men who handle the fast trains, who, after all, are the most to be considered, as they have to be given protection, carried out an elaborate series of tests to standardize the flash.

Each member of the party was given a calibrated chart on which he set out his individual impressions and remarks. The flashes were altered within very wide limits, the scope of the investigation primarily being the number of flashes required in a minute and the length of the light and dark periods. Careful analysis of these elaborate reports resulted in the establishment of a standard which has been generally accepted.

Question of Standard Lights.

The settlement of this issue proved no easy matter. Everything turns upon the length of the flash and the duration of the immediately following dark period. All those concerned in the investigations agreed that a comparatively short flash produces the most characteristic signal, but within certain limits the length of the light period is of secondary importance.

It is the dark interval which is the crux to the problem. If this exceeds a second in length the engineer of the approaching express is likely to lose his bearings, or, at all events, to develop feelings of uncertainty. A second appears to be a brief unit of time measurement, but in that interval a train, traveling at a mile a minute, covers 88 feet. On the other hand it matters little whether the flash is of one tenth or two-tenths of a second duration. The average individual scarcely would observe the difference.

The inquiries demonstrated the fact that a standard of sixty flashes a second produces the most satisfactory all-round effect. If 120 flashes a second are given the effect is extremely jerky or "nervous," while forty flashes a minute produces feelings of anxiety. But where exceptional high speeds are the rule, it is advisable owing to the velocity of the train to increase the rate from sixty to seventy and eighty flashes a minute, more particularly when the character of the road might prevent the engineer from picking up the signal at a long distance.

Giving Engineers Full Warning.

The dark period must be longer than the flash, otherwise the signal is not characteristic or distinctive, because the effect is somewhat analogous to that produced with an oil-burning lamp during very windy weather when the flame is blown about by the gusts.

It was proved also that two flash-light signals must not be given too closely together. They should be separated by a signal burning a steady light, so as to avoid confusion or uncertainty. This is particularly the case when two lights are mounted upon a common post.

On the other hand, if the conditions demand that such an arrangement should be made by giving the lights a different flashing character, they may be picked out with ease. For instance, an express engineer can detect instantly the difference between a light giving 50 flashes per minute and one emitting 90 flashes in an equal period.

In perfecting a flash signal it is imperative that the flash character should be such as to convey sufficient conviction to the engineer. Consequently an adequate number of flashes must be given between the instant when the signal is first picked up and when it is passed. From three to five flashes are quite sufficient to impress the engineer that the signal refers to him.

Sweden Has Standard Lights.

So far as the Swedish railways are concerned the flash character has become standardized into one-tenth of a second followed by nine-tenths seconds of darkness, which is equivalent

to sixty flashes per minute. This applies to distant signals. For home signals on the Liljeholmen station, several different flash characters have been tested to determine whether those with comparatively long light periods distinguish themselves with adequate effectiveness from short flashes of the distant signals.

The flashing characteristic has varied from forty-six flashes a minute—a light period of five-tenths of a second followed by eight-tenths of a second darkness—to four-tenths of a second light followed by eight-tenths of a second darkness. With equal periods of light and darkness, this is equivalent to sixty flashes a minute.

Another question arises. To what description of service should the flash be confined? Obviously it cannot be applied to all signals and to every class of traffic, otherwise, especially in congested districts such as a busy junction, the engineer would be confronted by a huge battery of flashing lights, each having a distinctive number of flashes a minute. Under such circumstances hopeless confusion would prevail.

Best for Express Traffic.

Practise has proved that flashlight signaling should be confined to one class of traffic only—the express. Owing to the speed of the train greater strain is thrown on the engineer of the "limited" than on the engineer of the freight or local.

Taken all around it is recommended that the flashlight signal should be confined to the protection exclusively of express traffic. Experience has proved that in this direction it possesses incalculable advantages. The engineer of the limited is the one upon whom extreme physical strain is imposed, and anything which is able to reduce this stress should be brought into operation.

Only those who have accompanied an engineer during his run are able to appreciate the tremendous strain imposed by the search for signals. In many cases half a second counts. The engineer is forced to make up his mind the moment he sights his protective light. On the long, open stretch of straight he is assisted by the distance between the signals, but it is approaching and running through the busy junction that taxes his faculties to the utmost.

The signal gauntries may show a hundred different lights, from which maze he is required to select his particular signal. If the approach is on a curve these lights displace themselves relatively as the curve is rounded, so that what at the first glance may have been to the right, subsequently swings to the left.

Simple Mechanism Produces Light.

The mechanism by which the flash is produced is of the simplest character, being in fact a modification of the Dalen flasher which constitutes the vital part of the automatic marine light. The flasher is contained in the lamp, together with a pilot light. The length of a flash and the duration of the dark interval can be altered as required.

Dissolved acetylene stored in small, convenient accumulators is the illuminant employed. The cylinder is accommodated in a small, longitudinal box provided at the base of the signal post with a pipe connected to the lamp above. Each lamp is a self-contained unit.

No other alterations whatever in the signaling system are necessary, the usual semaphore or other device being utilized. The lamp itself is an inexpensive apparatus, light, and convenient to handle. There is no risk of the flasher failing owing to the character of its design, and because it is operated by the gas itself.

50,000 Flashes for a Cent.

The great advantage of the system, apart from its efficiency, regularity, and durability is low cost. A single cylinder of gas will last for several

weeks or months and the signal requires no attention whatever during this period. When the accumulator is changed the flasher and lamp may be examined, but not necessarily. There is no chance of the lamp being frozen in the coldest winter as experience on the Swedish railways has proved, neither is it affected by rain.

When short flashes are used the cost of operation is extremely low, over 50,000 flashes being emitted for the outlay of one cent. In other words, this means a cost of one cent for fourteen hours approximately, the flash continuing both day and night. But the consumption of gas being so low, the apparent waste during the hours of daylight is a negligible quantity.

The benefits of the flashing system were soon revealed on the Swedish railways. The engineers of the express trains through Liljeholmen expressed their preference for such a light, and at a meeting of their members, proposed a recommendation to the government that the system should be extended throughout Swedish railways.

May Be Introduced in America.

The government, appreciating the advantages of the system and its low cost of operation, and impressed by the opinion of the engineers, has decided to carry out the recommendation. Conversion is in progress.

The Russian, Danish, Finnish, Italian, German and British railways are also contemplating its adoption. Experimental installations have been in operation on the European roads for some months past and have given every satisfaction. The British railroads have investigated the problem and have likewise extended the opinion that for the protection of fast traffic it is to be recommended.

Many American railroad engineers have followed its development, and during the coming year installations are to be effected on some of our roads. South American lines will follow.

The fact that it can be applied to any existing signaling system, without inflating cost to any appreciable degree—the initial cost is retrieved within a few weeks—constitutes one of the greatest recommendations in its favor.

Considering that the automatic block semaphore system which is coming into vogue involves an outlay of $750 a signal, and entails a maintenance outlay of $150 a year, the flashing system possesses an overwhelming advantage, since the maintenance charges may be reduced fifty or more per cent. The consumption of acetylene averages only $6.50 per signal per annum.

True-Story Series

No. 82.

Nearly Lost by a Lynching.

BY R. E. SHERWOOD.

THE facts related in the subjoined story have been brought to the attention of the Carnegie Hero Commission, which will present to Mr. Sherwood, on June 15, a medal fittingly inscribed in honor of Mr. Sherwood's courage and fortitude in time of severe stress. Later, the incidents will be vivified in a moving-picture play for which Mr. Sherwood will personally pose with appropriate settings and necessary characters.—THE EDITOR.

THROUGH a peculiar combination of circumstances I had a series of adventures which will cause me to remember the night of March 30, 1886, until the day of my death. Whenever memory temporarily lapses, I have only to glance at some well-defined scars on my hands and arms to freshen it.

As a young man I learned telegraphy while assisting the station agent at Mansfield, Missouri, which is located on the railway then known as the K. C., S. and M. The agent, G. S. Burney, is still in charge of the same station, and has been continuously since 1885.

After serving my apprenticeship I was assigned to the station at Willow Springs, Missouri, about seventy-five miles down the line, as night operator. I acted as ticket-agent, bill-clerk, freight-agent, *et cetera*. For fear that I might suffer ennui from idleness, I slept in the freight-room to report the night trains to the division office.

The town was not very old at the time. The principal industry consisted of sawing, planing, and shipping virgin pine timber, in the center of which the village stood. Directly across the main line and side track the planing-mill stood, its drowsy hum whiling away many a lonesome hour between trains.

On the night of March 30, tired after a busy day with the hundred little duties, I lay down, fully dressed, on the couch in the freight-room and soon dropped into a dreamless sleep.

Of a sudden I awoke, sitting bolt upright on the couch. For a moment I was quite bewildered as to the cause of my awakening, for I was a reasonably sound sleeper; but after rubbing my eyes a while I glanced at the little window and discovered a glaring light shining in.

"Hello!" I thought to myself, "I must have overslept, failed to hear No. 3 come up the hill, and that reflection is her headlight."

I sprang up, seized the mail-bags on the floor, and made a rapid dash for the door. Imagine my surprise instead of a train pulling into the station I saw the big mill across the tracks totally enveloped in flames.

I dropped the bags, dashed around the corner of the station to the one main street, and aroused the townspeople. Then I returned to the sta-

tion, assured myself that the safe was shut and locked, and went out to lend what assistance I could.

I saw at a glance that the main building of the mill was doomed and that nothing short of Providence would save the town. The section-men, under orders and unknown to me, pushed some four or five cars loaded with lumber from the side track to the main line.

To my horror, they rolled to the bottom of a two-mile hill which ended in a sharp curve on a steep embankment of rocks. Only prompt action would prevent the passenger-train, No. 3, from striking the cars head on and tumbling down the embankment if she was not stopped at the station above. She was due in forty-five minutes.

Blown Through Station Window.

Leaving the others, I ran to the station, which was already afire, jerked open the key and commenced to call the "ds" at the division office in a hurried manner, "breaking" my call with that well-known tattoo on the key indicative of haste and impatience.

"Bn," the next station below me, cut in to ask what the trouble was. In a few short sentences I told him and asked him to call the despatcher on his through wire. It was not cut in to my station.

For at least ten minutes I hammered that key, accomplishing nothing. Suddenly something happened. Two kegs of powder stored in the freight-house blew up.

The next thing I knew I was outside a very dilapidated structure—as a matter of fact, I was blown through the window—badly burned about the face and hands.

Quickly gathering my scattered senses, I secured an ax, chopped a hole in the box station big enough to crawl through, and by working myself along on my stomach I finally reached and rescued my relay and key.

Laying them on the ground, I climbed a pole, brought down the wire, tied on, grounded, and again had a closed circuit west of me. Once more I started to call the "ds" and station "ba" just above me. No. 3 was nearly due at that point if she was on time.

Answered Just in Time.

It was quite a task to hear the click of the relay in the roar of the flames, and I was placed under an additional handicap, in that I was working the key with my forearm on account of the burned condition of my hands.

Time and time again while I was pounding the brass I fancied half a dozen times that I heard No. 3 crash head on into those box cars and careen down the bank into the ditch, the escaping steam singing a requiem for the dead and dying.

Valuable seconds stretched into minutes, and still no answer. I had but little hope of getting "ba" office in time to be of any use, as I knew the operator slept at the section boarding-house, nearly a hundred yards from the station.

He did not go into the station to report the arrival and departure of No. 3 until she was gone. Then, of course, it would be too late, as there was not a night station between us. Just as I was on the point of giving up in despair "ba" broke in with "I—I—'ba.'"

I fired at him as quickly as a man could when working with a forearm: "Let down your flag and hold No. 3."

"Then I told him the trouble. Most of my message, I learned afterward, fell on deaf ears. Being an alert fellow and seeing that No. 3 had pulled about half-way out of his station, he dropped the key, rushed out in time to grab the last platform, swung aboard, and had the conductor back his train up to the station.

Where Was the Despatcher?

He received a full report from me, and the impending accident was averted. Had that operator waited to hear the balance of the message there would

have been a different story to tell. I have since tried to remember his name, but cannot.

Where was the despatcher—where was the steel-nerved, steady-handed autocrat of the wire, who nightly sits entering on a sheet with his right hand the times of arrival and departure of a dozen trains on his division, while with his left he o.k's the O. S's of the operators?

It is not often that a lynching bee is a prominent factor in a railway wreck, but such is the case in this instance. Some months before a man murdered his wife and threw her body into an old well on his farm, a few miles from Springfield, Missouri.

When confronted with the evidence he made a complete confession, whereat his former neighbors, in order to save the county the expense of a public execution, quietly rode into town on the night of March 30, 1886, took the man from the county jail, and hanged him to a telegraph-pole near the railroad station.

The despatcher's office was close by, and the brass-pounder was assisting the mob while I was frantically trying to get him on the wire.

When No. 3 finally reached "W. S," Willow Springs station, I was warmly congratulated by the passengers. A salesman traveling for chewing tobacco presented me with the entire contents of his sample-case. I gratefully accepted, as I was addicted to its use at that time. Another salesman for a whisky house pressed his private bottle on me.

The company gave me two weeks in which to recover from the burns I received, deducting the amount paid my substitute from my monthly pay of forty dollars. Six weeks later I was summarily dismissed for calling on a young lady one Sunday evening and permitting an extra freight to pass through without being O. S'd.

UNCLE SAM AS A RAILROAD BUILDER.

IN the bill for the construction of a government railroad in Alaska, which is now a law, we encounter once more, and for the last time, we hope, the proposition to use any material or equipment no longer needed at Panama for railway construction in Alaska.

The principal usefulness of this clause is to illustrate the difficulty of getting out of the Congressmen's minds the idea that the machinery which has been used at Panama will be of great advantage in building the Alaska railroad, notwithstanding Colonel Goethals's explanation recently given that that machinery has been for the most part practically worn out by its long and severe service at Panama.

This is the first time in the history of the United States that the government has itself embarked in the work of railway construction. It is noteworthy that there has been substantially no public opposition and little public criticism of the proposal for government railway construction in Alaska. It has been generally recognized that under the peculiar conditions existing there, the only practical means by which the Alaska coal deposits can be opened and made available to the world is by having the government itself construct the transportation lines.

That the railway will prove a source of direct profit to the government—that is to say, that it will return a fair rate of interest on the capital invested in it—seems very doubtful. The cost of Alaska railway construction and operation is bound to be excessive from the high prevailing rate of wages if for no other reason. So far as can be judged at present, the only possibilities of a profit-earning traffic are from the coal mines. If there should eventually develop a heavy traffic of this sort, sufficient to enable the railway to earn a dividend on its cost, there would at once be agitation to reduce the freight rates so as to enable the coal miners better to compete with their commercial rivals on the ground that the railway was built by the government not to earn profits but to develop Alaska.

On the whole, it will be generally agreed that if the experiment of government railway construction is to be tried, Alaska is as good a place as any in which to try.—*Engineering News.*

FAST POUNDING ON THE RELAYS

How Speedy Knights of the Key Rush the Country's Deluge of Telegrams to Their Destinations.

FAULTY WIRES DEMAND KEEN "GUESSERS"

When Duty Calls Operators Stick to Their Posts Under the Most Trying Conditions. Heroes of the Wire Worked Sleepless Until Exhausted, to Help a Stricken City. Each Day Calls for Heavy Loss of Nervous Vitality.

BY F. B. LOVETT.

IN a general way the public recognizes the telegraph-operator as a useful and necessary individual in our vast business and industrial organization, but personally he is little known. The public comes into direct contact with him only in the railroad station or the city branch office. It is the usual impression that by a magic "tapping of the wire" he can direct his electrical flashes to any spot on the map in much the same manner as an astronomer directs his telescope.

It would perhaps surprise the man who files his message with the young lady in the hotel branch office to know that when she taps the key his message goes only so far as the "main," a few blocks away. It is true, however, that she has hardly hung it upon the "sent" hook when the copy received by the main-office operator has been flashed to its destination.

The man filing a message at a lonely wayside station in Kansas or Nebraska finds great satisfaction in standing by while the operator taps off his message destined to New York, to Kansas City, the nearest relay office. The gentleman feels at the conclusion of the Kansas operator's performance that a messenger-boy is even then dashing down Broadway or Wall Street to deliver his message.

He is not far wrong in his calculations at that, for when the Kansas operator has dropped his message into the relay office at Kansas City it is snapped up by a hurrying check-boy, who places it upon the New York wire after a delay which need only be computed in seconds. The service is substantially as if the Kansas operator had sent it direct.

As a convincing example of speedy relaying, I recall an incident of my experience while working in the Cotton Exchange in Houston, Texas. A cable cotton order of extraordinary importance was filed with me one morning with a special request for speed.

"Clear the track for this one," was all I said to the operator in New Orleans, for all market orders are handled with the utmost expedition. New Orleans sent the table to New York, New York relaying it to Liverpool. The confirmation came *via* the same route.

The order was delivered in Liverpool, executed on the exchange, and the confirmation received by me in exactly twelve minutes from the time the message had been filed in Houston. That was a remarkable record.

It happened eight years ago, and the aim of the commercial companies from year to year has been to minimize the delay in relaying until at the present time it is a matter which has but little influence on the speedy delivery of messages.

I merely mentioned the conditions in order to introduce the relay operator — the man behind the gun, as it were, situated on an upper floor of a sky-scraper down among the tall buildings — who, with several hundred or perhaps a thousand associates, dependent on the size of the city and its importance as a relay point, bears the telegraph burden of the country.

As a comparison between the amount of work handled by the city branch office and railroad operators, with whom the public is acquainted, and the relay operator, whom the public does not know at all, I submit an example.

Woods Wire Man Never Clear.

Except in very heavy branch offices, the operator hardly ever handles more than fifty messages a day; the railroad operator, one to twenty-five. If a railroad office develops more business than twenty-five messages a day the commercial companies establish a city office, because the railroad operator cannot always give commercial business the necessary attention on account of his other and more imperative duties connected with the handling of trains.

The relay operator, working in the woods and moving about continually from one wire to another, will handle about two hundred messages a day; from that department the averages increase swiftly, according to the speed of the circuit, until the fast-wire limit of between six and eight hundred messages is reached during the nine-hour working-day.

The relay operator in the woods, while seldom urged to extraordinary speed, is never clear. As long as there is an unsent message in his division he must be on the job calling, if he can find nothing else to do.

Wires in the quad division which are not fast are either very long or poorly constructed circuits, over which signals come imperfectly. Such circuits call for the operator of superior judgment and education, whose knowledge of cipher and diction enables him to supply the missing dots and dashes which fall by the wayside.

How "Guessers" Make Good.

For instance, the seasoned "guesser" might receive signals forming the following letters — "adsording" or perhaps "absoibim." He would have little difficulty in doping out the word "absorbing." In either case but two dots are missing, but such a combination would throw the inexperienced operator into a state of hopeless bewilderment. It is needless to say that on such circuits ingenuity and constant attention must be applied.

The fast-wire man, with the exception of a thirty-minute lunch relief and a short relief of fifteen minutes in the morning and afternoon, strains every nerve and mental quality to the utmost throughout the day, regardless of his personal inclinations or physical condition. He may be oppressed with "that tired feeling," he may be ill, or he may have laid awake half the night with a racking toothache or other form of affliction, but the man on the other end has slept well, feels excellent, and sets a pace which must be met.

Short respites, sought by the unconditioned operator, if not questioned by his immediate superior, the traffic chief, will be criticised by the distant office. Moreover, each circuit has a certain hourly average, which must be maintained, and the only acceptable excuse for failure to do this is "wire trouble."

Advantages of Extra Man.

Brief social exchanges between the operators, while not exactly tabooed, are certainly not encouraged, and in some offices the rules forbid talking "except upon business necessity." The staff is divided as follows: Day force, 8 A.M. until 5.30; split trick, 10 A.M. until 2 P.M., 5.30 P.M. until 9 P.M.; night force, 5.30 P.M. until 1.30 A.M., and the "graveyard shift" from midnight until 7 A.M.

These different tricks are subject to extension to "overtime" whenever congestion, short force, or an unusually heavy file of business appears, though these conditions are largely met by the "extra man." He, above all others, is the "goat" of telegraph contingencies, though, as a rule, he bears the extraordinary demands with smiling fortitude.

One advantage is that he is more or less a free lance. He is not tied down to any regular hours and has no regular wire. He is supposed to report any time in the forenoon between 8 A.M. and 11.30. In conjunction with the "split-trick" man, he makes the lunch reliefs, and then, if there is nothing else to hold him, he is off for the afternoon.

Doesn't Want Regular Job.

He reports again at 5.30, and may be released at 8 P.M., or he may be held until three in the morning, or even until the arrival of the day force. He, naturally, has no regular hours of eating or sleeping, and his whole scheme of life must be laid out on the principles of the extra list. One hour he may be working in the "woods," the next two or three on a fast wire; to-day we find him in Chicago, and next week in New Orleans or Jacksonville.

He soon reaches a stage in which he does not aspire to a regular job; but prefers the freedom of the extra list, which permits him to absent himself without excuse more frequently than the regular man and to take various other liberties.

When business is light he may be obliged to wait two or three hours each day before catching on. A very short period of this "waiting stuff" stirs the spirit of wanderlust in the extra man, and he "bunches" that particular job and travels to some other office where he hears business is better.

He remains there until discouraged by a few dull days, then moves again. He is regarded as a convenient necessity by the officials of the company, as indeed he is, and his whimsical excuses for resigning on short notice are usually accepted by the chief operator in tolerant good humor.

Seldom "Make a Sneak."

As I have intimated, the services of any operator of the regular or extra force are pressed into overtime employment whenever emergencies necessitate. An operator must be relieved before he is at liberty to leave the office, and in the absence of relief at such time as he may be off he remains at his wire. No matter how pressing his outside engagements may be, the relay operator seldom violates this particular feature of office discipline.

"Making a sneak" is sometimes accomplished during the confusion of a change from day to night force, but deliberately refusing to work longer when one's time is up, or "walking out," as it is regarded, is one of the unpardonable offenses in a telegraph-office, and is almost unknown.

The same conditions apply to lunch reliefs and short reliefs. In a word,

an operator must be replaced or released by his chief before he can leave his division for any purpose whatever.

In all great catastrophes of the last few decades the relay operator has been called on for trying endurance, but none perhaps made such stupendous demands on his vitality as the San Francisco earthquake.

Worked 20 to 40 Hours.

As the news of that startling and overwhelming catastrophe to the fairest city on the Pacific coast was flashed around the world, hundreds of thousands of cables and telegrams of frenzied anxiety were directed to the homeless and bewildered populace of the stricken city.

San Francisco, so far as telegraph or telephone communication was concerned, was isolated from the outside world. The telegraph-offices and telephone exchanges were abandoned because of wrecked facilities.

In hours almost the vast number of wires and cables across the bay were picked up at Oakland Pier, a barnlike structure of an office, erected with about the same celerity that a circus-tent arises, and in this uncomfortable, unheated structure, hanging partly over the chilling waters, all the available telegraph-operators of San Francisco and Oakland worked stretches of from twenty to forty hours without sleep and with only such food as they ate while they worked.

"Keep Working at Any Cost."

A general order emanated from New York to "keep the men working at any cost," and the men met the situation with uncomplaining cooperation. Hot coffee was distributed at frequent intervals — even whisky was permitted as a stimulant to outraged nature—and when, despite these, complete exhaustion overcame a victim he was marked off for eight or ten hours' rest, only to return for another grind of thirty to forty hours until he "keeled over" again.

This condition at Oakland Pier lasted not for days, but months after the earthquake. Many men were sent from other offices, even as far away as Boston and New York, but they barely filled up the gaps left by those undergoing repairs. The flood of telegraph business brought forth by the earthquake and subsequent business reconstruction of San Francisco affected not only Oakland and the other coast offices, but strained telegraph facilities all over the United States.

Chicago perhaps felt the stress of the situation more keenly than any of the Eastern offices, and there lunches were also served at the key and "double time" was the common lot of the entire force for weeks. In self-protection the companies were obliged to hold men all over the country in an attempt at equal distribution. Only a small number, on the whole, could be spared for the relief of Oakland Pier.

Hears of Fever Scourge.

During the day of yellow-fever epidemics in the South the telegraph-operator, above all others, sacrificed his vitality, risked, and in many cases gave up his life that reassuring and uncontaminated messages might be flashed to loved ones in the North, South, East, and West.

When the iron hand of quarantine fell upon such cities as Memphis, New Orleans, or Jacksonville, and their portals bore the warning legend: "You may enter, but not depart," bulletins appeared upon the boards of all telegraph relay offices, requesting volunteers for service in the infested district. Hundreds of operators responded. Many arrived, only to be grasped by the hideous and destroying hand of the epidemic: all to enter upon loathsome and repulsive working conditions.

Some were stricken at the key, others left the office apparently in robust health, only to be overtaken in the street and find their berths in consuming limestone before morning.

Still others came to replace them, for the bulletin-boards of the North still called for volunteers that the intelligent cooperation of the outside world with those within the pestilential zone might be maintained through the telegraph.

Night Letters Increase Labors.

Aside from catastrophes and epidemics, other conditions arise from time to time which call upon the relay man for fortitude and endurance. The advent of the night letter will never be forgotten by the commercial relay man of that particular period. As a popular innovation nothing was never more enthusiastically received by the public. The night letter filled a long-felt want in many respects.

For ordinary business communication it did away with much of the laborious cipher composition and subsequent translation necessitated by the brevity of the ten-word message rate. This preparation and translation usually occupied more time than the transmission of the message. Business men almost unanimously discarded the code-book and embraced the night letter.

To the traveling man it proved an inestimable boon in replacing the tardy and oft-neglected letter to his wife. Many people who had not written to each other for months rehabilitated their correspondence by dashing off night letters, assuring their neglected friends that they were still on deck.

He Called Them "Nightmares."

Jokes, witticisms, reproaches, and blandishments were all freely circulated about the country through the medium of the night letter, and far out of sight beneath this mountainous heap of appreciative recognition the relay operator strove to tunnel his way to the surface.

At first the night letters were all long. Everybody took the limit of fifty words at least, from that up to several hundred. The operator found them hard to count as he received them and discouraging to send, for they were stacked in front of him in hundreds, and he could only move from fifteen to twenty an hour.

I was working in San Francisco at the time. The office force was short before the introduction of the night letter and hopelessly swamped after its arrival. The night letter impressed the operator as one long eternity of sending and receiving, with no hope of ever being clear. My own restless slumbers and that of others of the fraternity we found by comparison were filled with visions of night letters of interminable length and undecipherable "copy."

"Night letters?" said one of the overworked knights of the key. "Nightmares, I call 'em. I can see 'em in my sleep. The walls of my room are covered with 'em, and throughout my slumbers my downy couch is littered with 'em. Me for an 'OS' job till I get back in my right mind for a while."

"Old Heads" Monopolize Day Tricks.

The conditions at San Francisco were no different than in any other large office. The operators all over the country met the situation, as they meet all other unusual conditions, with endurance.

The toll paid in nervous vitality and physical destruction during such periods can only be conjectured, but my own observation has taught me that it is large. Operators came out of the strenuous days succeeding the 'Frisco earthquake with paralyzed arms, serious spinal complications, and not a few bound for sanatoriums to restore their shattered nerves.

Socially the relay man is practically "nil," as they say in Canada. The day trick in commercial offices calls for nine working hours against seven and a half on the split trick or night force, which naturally inclines the operator to the amenities if he has any choice in the matter.

Moreover, the day tricks are mostly monopolized by the "old heads"—married men of family—so that the new arrival of social accomplishments or aspirations cannot always land a day job, even if he is willing to work the additional hour and a half for the privilege of mingling with his friends in the evening.

Again, we are now living in the day of the "automatic," and, as the majority of the machines are operated only between 8 A.M. and 5.30 P.M., the day force has suffered reduction much more than the night force.

Romances of the Relay.

Romance in a relay office, though the force be sprinkled with a fair percentage of the fair sex, does not seem to flourish. There is a general impression that on account of the nervous temperament, undoubtedly produced by the working conditions of the craft, operators do not mate well. Occasionally a diffident youth and blushing maiden are assigned to the same duplex, and eventually become necessary to each other through daily association.

Now and then a "wire romance" springs up between two different points, which eventually culminates in matrimony. An instance will give a fair idea of how they develop.

WW was a tall, young fellow, handsome, and a splendid operator. His regular assignment was in the "southwest" division at 195 Broadway, New York. One evening, when he was working overtime in the "western ways," he stumbled quite by accident upon the Yonkers local. He sent a half dozen messages to the young lady operator in Yonkers, and when he had finished she said:

"I think I can guess what you look like. You must be tall and strong and handsome, your sending is so clear and firm."

"I'm tall and husky enough, little girl," he replied; "but my looks have not been passed by the board of censorship yet, so I don't know whether I'm handsome or not."

Brought Back Mrs. WW.

The subtle flattery conveyed by the young lady's remarks, however, made a much deeper impression upon WW than the smiling encouragement he received from many other girls in the New York office, and after five-thirty in the evening he could be found quite frequently tapping off soft nothings on the Yonkers local until accumulating business forced him to desist.

Later he spent many of his evenings in Yonkers, and very soon, in order to avoid the inconvenience of long-distance courtship, he brought the young lady to Gotham as Mrs. WW.

The reformation of an inveterate wanderer was brought about in this manner:

Miss MK was a young lady operator of exceptional ability, and as a reward of merit was assigned to the Charleston, South Carolina, local at the New York end. For the first month she found the assignment very trying on account of the inferior ability of the operator at the Charleston end, and was about to ask for a transfer to some other circuit.

After sending her first message one morning she asked, as is the necessary custom, who the receiver was.

"OK SP., good morning," flashed brightly from Charleston.

She Asked Him to Stay.

Though the characters made were few, there was snap and ginger in their formation, which marks the high-class telegrapher.

"Where from?" queried Miss MK, for the "sine" was strange, and she knew that he must be a late arrival.

"Tampa," replied SP. "Been over in Cuba for a while, but got homesick."

"Serves you right," pertly rejoined Miss MK. "How long are you going to stay in Charleston?"

"Two pay-days," promptly re-

sponded SP; "then I'm off for San Francisco."

"You're quite a globe-trotter, are you not?" queried Miss MK.

During their leisure moments SP regaled his fair and distant coworker with many yarns of interest and doubtless she found them entertaining for occasional days when SP absented himself from the Charleston end of the wire, found Miss MK lonesome.

One morning SP announced:

"I gave 'his nibs' ten days' notice this morning, and that will let me out for 'Frisco on the fifteenth."

"Oh, please don't go" entreated Miss MK after a tremulous pause. "Please withdraw your resignation and stay. I'll miss you terribly if you go."

"Say, deary," responded SP, and MK told us afterward that his sending was a trifle shaky, "I won't promise to withdraw my resignation for your sake, but I'll change my route, make it New York instead of Frisco. How would that do?"

"It would be just splendid," acquiesced Miss MK and their long distance romance ended happily.

WHEN THE FLIER BUMPED A BULL.

BY OSCAR A. BROWN.

THE old-time method of bull-fighting has been revolutionized. If the Spaniards and Mexicans are longer to promote that sport they must keep pace with the times and give the bull a fast train as his opponent. The more modern form of the sport was introduced in one of our Western States when an ugly bull was said to have stopped a train on a small railroad and held it up for several hours.

We, of Rhode Island, had hardly received this news as a joke when our own bull, in a scarcely less phenomenal manner, rushed into one of the fastest trains on the New Haven Railroad and inflicted such damages on the engine of the limited that it had to go back to the shop.

I will tell of the encounter just as the engineer related it to me.

"I was about an hour late," he said, "and, although going at high speed, I was using every precaution, for the fog lay thick in front of me. I had just blown the whistle at the post below your gate, and had pulled her wide open, when suddenly an indistinct object rushed down the bank onto the track. When I first saw it through the mist and approaching darkness it looked like a man with a basket.

"I closed the throttle and threw on the emergency, but it was too late. What I had taken to be a man with a basket was a bull with a white face. He struck the engine a head-on blow, and after being dragged along by the cow-catcher about five rails' length, he at last worked loose and slid out to one side.

"The engine shot past him, and in going by it lost its big iron step. The step of the baggage car also hit him, and was broken off like a pipe-stem. The bull was hurled about forty feet into a near-by bog.

"After picking up the broken pieces of pilot, and the steps that had been torn away from the engine and baggage car, I took account of the injuries that we had received and proceeded very slowly on my way, leaving the bull where he had been thrown, dead, as I supposed."

This is the engineer's account of the accident, but it does not complete the story. That night a track-walker who had been sent to the scene of the accident to inspect the condition of the track informed us that our bull had been killed.

The news came as a sad surprise, but as the only value of a dead bull is in his hide, my father and I, each with knife in hand, set out to skin the unfortunate animal. We were spared this disagreeable work, however, for we met the bull returning.

In order to avoid the gruesomeness of a description, let it suffice to say that after we had washed him he shook his head and bellowed his triumph.

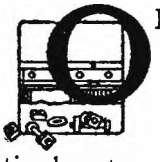
Aside from a broken horn and a few bruises here and there about the body, the bull was apparently as robust as ever.

With One Eye Open.

BY J. JOSEPH-RENAUD,

Member of the Committee of the Society of Men of Letters. Chevalier of the Legion of Honor.

The Story of a Night Ride from Havre to Paris Based on a Tragedy that Actually Happened.



NE bitterly cold night in February I was making the journey from Le Havre to Paris by the last train. Thoroughly tired out and alone in a second-class carriage, I was dozing by fits and starts in my corner, when at Vernon the door opened and a big hulking individual of the navy type entered, bringing with him a rank and disgusting odor of dirt and tobacco that even the cold night air could not sterilize.

Brushing roughly past me, he sat down in the far corner and scowled furtively about him from under a villainous cap slouched low over his eyes.

It may have been my fancy, but he seemed to show special anxiety concerning the door of the compartment which he had closed firmly after him. A ragged coat gaped here and there to show beneath an old woolen jersey of the same blue tint as his heavy, unshaven jaw. His trousers were of an age and condition unspeakable, and his bare feet were thrust into old, shabby boots.

Yet not for a moment did his poverty call for pity, for under the rags it was plain to see that he carried a powerful and well-fed frame, while his aggressive not to say malignant air and his dirty condition repulsed any feeling but disgust.

He was certainly a most uninviting specimen of humanity, and it did not require any very great stretch of imagination to picture him in the dock between two policemen—the kind of man to be given ten years on the evidence of his face. But his large, grimy hands looked as though they might make short work even of prison-bars!

When, without any further addition to our company, the train began to move on the relief plainly visible on the features of my fellow passenger was certainly not shared by me.

His first move did not serve to reassure me. He got up and looked through the tiny window between our carriage and the next, which I already knew to be empty; then, instead of returning to his seat, took the corner directly opposite me.

There, with his cap slouched still lower over his eyes, he commenced a deliberate survey of me and my baggage. I reflected uneasily that my two neat portmanteaus were in the rack.

My well-cut clothes and my gloves might easily give him the impression that my circumstances were easy and my purse far fuller than was really the case. In my profession it is always judicious to convey this impression to the world at large, for it pays.

Never in my career had I found cause to regret the habit; but at that moment I certainly wished that in some way other than absolutely announcing the fact I could make known to whoever might be interested that I was only a poor actor who had just finished a provincial tour, and, with a few francs in hand, was making for Paris to look for a further engagement.

It was impossible, however, to think of entering into any kind of conversation with the surly looking scoundrel opposite. Just as impossible to think of trying to sleep again. With eyes almost as furtive as his own, I began to glance about the carriage and consider my situation in case of an attack, rapidly weighing my chances of escape.

But, indeed, there were none to weigh! The rain was beating against the windows, and this, coupled with the noise of the train, completely isolated us.

To shout would be useless. The alarm-signal was at the other end of the carriage. If it came to a struggle, there could only be one issue. At my best, I am no athlete; and, at the time of this story, worn out with work, travel, and poor nourishment, I was certainly not at my best.

The humiliating and terrifying conclusion was that I must inevitably fall an easy victim to this scoundrel unless help came.

And what help could come? There was no further stop until we reached Paris.

While I sat pondering these disquieting facts the fellow lit up a cigarette end and began spitting on the floor in every direction, regardless of my legs. Disgust and indignation burned in me, but discretion prevailed and I said nothing. My eyes were glued to his hands—his enormous, dirty, hairy hands. Suddenly, in gruff tones, he addressed himself to me.

"*Eh bien!* What are you looking at, imbecile?"

Swallowing with rage, I answered him curtly, "Imbecile yourself!"

"Camel!" he muttered beneath his breath, embellishing the word with a peculiarly horrible glare.

Indeed, the fixed and brutelike quality of his gaze struck me suddenly with such fresh emphasis that in spite of my rage I gulped down the insult and sat silently.

No—it was not because I was afraid of an ordinary brute, though, of course, I was no match for the man; but there was certainly something special in the glare of his eye.

Could it be that I was in the company of a madman?

Later he settled down in his corner, as if intending to sleep, threw away his cigarette, and closed his eyes.

Rooted to my seat, I stared at him as a fascinated bird stares at a snake; but in time the horrid feeling wore off. He was so quiet and seemed so naturally asleep that my apprehensions began to die.

Had I been deceiving myself all the time? Was the fellow merely a rough lout, uncivil, but of no real villainy? After all, honest people sometimes look like villains, and certainly dirt and rags aid in a realistic make-up! My nerves began to resume their normal condition. I was a little inclined to laugh at myself.

The idea at first entertained of changing my seat as soon as he slept was abandoned. For one thing, I clung to a stubborn vestige of pride—it would look as if I was afraid of him. Besides, it might disturb him! It would not be kind to disturb the poor fellow, I decided—most unkind, in fact. I began to feel almost benevolent toward him.

Time slipped by. The rain had ceased, and through the windows, in the pale moonlight, I could see the country as we rushed by, hidden now and then by puffs of smoke from the engine. From time to time a brightly lighted station would flash past and vanish into the night. At length the monotonous, ceaseless, rocking motion had its usual effect. I fell asleep.

Suddenly, as if at a spoken warning, I was aroused. Opening my eyes, I looked straight before me without moving. The man had slightly changed his position and was glaring at me steadily with one eye—the right one—the other he kept closed.

The sinister impression of this fixed, silent stare in the loneliness of the dimly lit carriage while the train swayed madly through the night held something of nightmare horror.

All my apprehensions came rushing on me once more; but I strove with them, frowning at the fellow with an air of firmness I was far from feeling.

Still in the shadow of the cap the eye preserved its rigid glare. What could the brute mean? Was he trying to terrorize or hypnotize me?

When at length he stirred, it was to move his leg and give me a violent kick. That was too much.

"Stop that, you blackguard!" I cried furiously, my anger for the moment getting the better of my fear. He threw himself forward in a ferocious manner, his hands ready to strike, his jaw thrust out.

"What is the matter with you, pig?" he shouted.

In the dim, flickering light of the lamp his gorillalike jaw looked so terrifying that I found myself stammering out excuses. With a pretense of being pacified, but muttering to himself, he presently settled down again and closed his eyes as if in sleep. But I knew very well that he was only feigning—that he was, in fact, waiting for me to sleep—and then—

No further stop until we reached Paris! The train's speed had increased, and its din was greater than ever.

Who was this man? A madman? A criminal? Why had he chosen me as his victim?

I might have known from the first that a desperate-looking loafer would only get into a second-class carriage with evil intent. A good haul from the baggage of his victim would well repay the extra outlay on his fare! Once more my eye wildly sought the alarm-signal; but it was as far from me as contentment, and I dared not move!

If he were indeed a madman a move would surely exasperate him and precipitate the tragedy. Better wait. But what torture! How could I live through it?

My only weapon was a penknife, which I stealthily opened in my pocket and kept ready in my hand.

I, too, fell to feigning sleep, but through my lashes I watched for the slightest stir or movement in my enemy's position. He should at least not take me by surprise.

How the train seemed to crawl! An eternity lay between me and the moment of arrival in Paris!

Mon Dieu! There it was again! Slowly the eye had reopened and turned on me its silent, baleful stare. As I sat paralyzed under its spell, it seemed to me that I felt my nerves straining and snapping one after the other, like the strings of a violin under a sharp instrument. My legs trembled. In my pocket the knife cut into the hand tightly clenched on it.

Ah! that eye! In nightmare dreams I still see it and wake in a cold sweat of terror. I hear again the clang of the train on the metals—the night wind rushing by — count the buttons sunk in the dirty buff cloth of the opposite seat — recall the ghostly chase of the moonlight and the trees past the windows, the rise and fall of the telegraph lines, and everything with which I tried to distract and extricate myself from the deadly spell of that cold, watching eye comes back to me.

The man altered his position. His head gradually leaned further forward, his right hand slyly drew nearer to the pocket of his filthy coat, from which protruded an object.

Without doubt it was a dagger, a knuckle-duster or a revolver! Slowly and stealthily he was moving toward me with the fixed purpose of a tiger

about to spring. And all the time he feigned sleep. He even snored softly.

As for me, though I could scarcely breathe and my tongue was dry as a bone, I prepared for the shock. I took a firmer clench on the knife in my pocket. From the chaos of my mind I strove to disentangle some words of advice once given me by a friend who was an expert in the art of self-defense.

The carotid artery. Yes, that was it! Strike at the carotid artery with the point of the knife. Very little strength would suffice. But when—when must I do it?

If he would only strike! Anything would be better than this torture of waiting. Should I ever see my friends again? Why should this man kill me? A bitter hatred of him filled my veins. If I could only kill him instead!

But if it would only end! If he would only make a move! I felt my strength ebbing, but with a last effort strove to prepare my cramped and tortured muscles for the struggle.

He moved. Instantly, desperate in my despair I was on him. Seizing his grizzly chin and uttering a long-drawn cry, I frantically struck at his neck. I saw the other eye open in bewilderment. Then something warm spurted into my face, blinding me and filling my mouth with an acrid taste. Then I fainted.

When next my eyes opened it was to look on some anxious faces bending over me, while at my nostrils I felt the biting sting of ether. I had regained consciousness in a waiting-room of the Gare St. Lazare.

My feeble questions were eagerly answered. The man was dead. Where did he come from? No one knew. There was no ticket in his pockets, but papers were found on him which showed that he was a tramp. As I was well-dressed, they had concluded I had acted in self-defense, and I was congratulated on my lucky escape.

"What a dreadful expression had this rascal with his glass eye!" I heard some one saying.

The horror which these words caused me must have been clearly expressed in my features, for the doctor soothingly said: "Calmn yourself."

And he added, in a low voice, for the benefit of a deputy station-master:

"It is the reaction."

I closed my eyes and lived through the worst moments of my life. Light had broken in on my mind. This tramp had only wanted a free journey to Paris. As soon as he fell asleep his eyelid opened over his glass eye. I have since learned that this is often the case with one-eyed people. Although in reality fast asleep, he appeared to be watching. The kick he gave me and his various movements were the unconscious gestures of a sleeper.

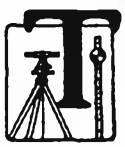
Through my foolish fear I had killed a harmless being!

THE "BAT 'EM OUTS."

Some Railroad Stories Heard While the Bunch Was Perched on the Injector Bench in the Roundhouse.

BY JOHN C. RUSSELL,

Author of the "Spike Malone" Stories.



HE Bat 'em Out bunch had just settled on the injector bench in the roundhouse preparatory to their usual talk-fest when in strolled the old hoghead with an unusually large-sized grin spread over his face.

"Hello, boys!" he said. "All ready for the anvil chorus? If you are I'll start her going with the best yet."

"Fly to it, old head," said the boomer brakeman, "you've got the board!"

"This is one on Country Bill," remarked the old hoghead as he pared off a generous chunk of chewing.

"Who?" asked the repair man.

"Country Bill?" remarked the old hoghead, eying the repair man with marked surprise. "Now, for the love of six bits, don't tell me that you don't know who Country Bill is. Bill Contraman, you sabe?"

"G'wan, I gotcher. Shure I know who he is. What stunt has he pulled off now?"

"Well," said the hoghead, "if I don't get this so dad-blamed straight I'm free to confess that I sure doubts her a heap. But John Hiram Menzie tells me. He's Bill's son-in-law, you know, and is firing for Bill on the Bowie helper at the time. Knowing Bill like I do, I'm banking on its being the straight goods, especially as Bill denies it most vehement."

"Git along with the yarn," put in the tallow, "you're worse getting started than Barney Moffitt leaving town. Speed up some!"

"Keep your pop down, tallow. We're getting there in our own way, as Tom Collins said when he pulled a drag in four parts at Wellton. According to John Hiram, Bill and he is coming down the hill from Dragoon after helping a fellow up the hump. They had to head in at Luzena, so, of course, John Hiram immediately folds his feet up on the firing-valve and hunts the hay.

"'Bout that time Bill gits to projecting round hunting trouble, and from all accounts he sure found it.

"Bill discovers the middle gage-cock stopped up so he 'lows he'll loosen it up a heap. He opens her up good and wide and proceeds to go a tapping thereon with a hammer to loosen up the scale. That's what disturbed John Hiram's dreams of Dolly. Then Bill proceeds to take the valve-spindle plumb out!"

"No!" the gang shouted incredulous.

"Fact!" insisted the old hoghead. "John Hiram sat there too blamed

astonished to move. Next, Bill goes a tapping with his hammer on the valve again, squinting into the hole like a fox-terrier eying up a promising rat hole. Think of it! Here's that four-ply old idiot with his eye screwed up against that gage-cock, with nothing between him and two hundred pounds of steam but a little piece of scale, and him doing his durndest to loosen that up!

"John Hiram he sits there half paralyzed.

"Bill stoops down to the tool-box, fishing for a piece of wire, most likely, when, *bam!* she lets go, and that's the last Menzie sees of Country Bill until he comes peeking round the left side of the pilot to see if the cab is still there!

"Of course John Hiram decamps from the cab with expedition and despatch, and leaves it up to Bill complete to repair damages. Bill searches out the water-hose connections from the tank, and after wrestling round in the cab a piece finally gets her wired up with one end over the open gage-cock and the other end sticking out over the tank. Then here they go for Bowie with a tail of steam stuck out behind the tank most festive and gala.

"Bill reports to the roundhouse foreman at Bowie that this here spindle has blowed out, and after she gets cold the foreman goes to prowling round the cab to see why-for said spindle pulls off this stunt.

"Looking round on the deck he spys the spindle where Bill drops her when he makes his exit, and being as there ain't a thread stripped nor burred, he smells a mice right away. He just screwed her back in, fires up the mill, and then proceeds to give old Bill the roast of his life. What he told Bill was sure a heap.

"He must have let the cat out of the bag, for Sam Glass got hold of it and now the whole division is giving Bill the hoot. Next time you see him just holler, 'Hi, there, Gage-Cock Bill!' and then duck!"

"Speaking of feeble-minded people," began the roundhouse foreman, "I—

"Whatcher hooting at? You-all was talking of Country Bill, wasn't you? Well, then!

"'Member when Shallabarger was general foreman here in Tucson? Before he was master maniac at Bakersfield, 'twere! I see a stunt pulled off right here in this roundhouse that sure give me the laugh of my career. Used to burn coal in those days, they did, and we had a Mex named Juan that fired up the bullgines in the house with wood. Sort of feeble-minded, he were; not clean loco, y'understand, but just loose in the head. Superstitious to the limit, of course.

"Well, one day Shallabarger up and tells this here peon to fire up the 1416, a little passenger mill, and do it in a hurry, cause there was a short call out on her, so Juan he swarms up into her cab where there is a pile of wood already stacked up on the apron.

"Juan he grabs a four-foot chunk of cordwood and heaves her into the fire-box. Just as he turns around to pick up another, the stick he just heaved into the fire-box slides out onto the deck again.

"Juan stops and sizes up the situation. He scratches his head a bit and then grabs hold of the stick and heaves her back in again. Bingo! Out she comes, and not a sound from the fire-box! Right there Juan he departs.

"Pretty soon Shallabarger spots him mooning round the turntable-pit.

"'Got the 61 fired up yet, Juan?' he asks.

"'No can do!' says Juan.

"'You can't, eh?' yells Shall; 'what the dash-blanked minutely-particularized blazes do you mean you can't? What's eating you?'

"'Mucho diablo!' says Juan.

"'You get the thunder out of here and fire up that engine!' says Shall. 'And you do it quick, too! Vamose!'

"'No can do!' insists Juan, and Shall froths at the mouth.

"'You can't? Why not?'

"'Wood no stay in!' says Juan.

"'Wood no— Well, can you beat that! Won't stay in, eh? You come on with me and we'll look into this!'

"They hikes for the 61 and swarms up into the cab.

"'Go ahead,' says Shallabarger.

"Juan heaves in the same old stick of wood again and then hops nimbly into the far gangway. Sure enough, out slides the stick with never a sound.

"'Sancta Maria!' screeches Juan, and slipping on the high-speed he leaves out.

"Shallabarger roars, then he steps down on the deck and reaching into the fire-box drags out by the ear a grinning boiler-maker's apprentice.

"'Wood no stay in!' muses Shallabarger. 'Well, I should guess not.' With that he hands the kid a wallop and departs for some one to fire up the mill.

"But I've often wondered what in the name of the Sam Hill the Mexican thought had happened to the 61!"

"THAT reminds me of a stunt somewhat similar," said the boomer brakeman. "Happened right here, too. Old man Oman gets into it one day and spread 'em all over the ground. They took the old man, the tallow and some mail clerks out of the pile-up deader than a mackerel and laid 'em out in a row under a sheet of canvas.

"As usual, they had all the Mexican section-hands near the scene to help clean up the mess; and while they were waiting for the wrecker and the doctors, the *cholos* were sitting near the wreck jabbering among themselves.

"Old man Oman was to all appearances too dead to skin, and, of course, the gang was handing out the usual line of bull about him. He was a good old scout, and some engineman, too! You all know the line.

"'Bout that time the old man concluded to come to life and sat up under the canvas. One of the peons happened to look around and spotted him. The Mex never said a word, but the way he lit out for somewheres else was a fright. The whole dusky crew rubbers round to see what stampedes their coffee-colored compatriot and gentlemen, hush!

"Talk about folding your tents like the Arabs and silently stealing away! There was simply a whiz and no Mexicans. That's the best way I can describe it!"

"YOU chaps have been narrating of yarns concerning *hombres* who ain't all there mentally," put in the tallow. "Now let me bust forth with the following true and authentic account of how a man otherwise all O. K. in the upper story, was made a shivering, shuddering wreck all on account of Biddy Doyle. You-all sure sabes Biddy? No?

"Well, up on the Santa Fe, Doyle is nothing short of an institution. Talk about your heathen Chinee! 'For ways that were dark and tricks that were vain,' Biddy has the slant-eyed highbinder faded to a frazzle.

"To be certainly he's Irish; one of these here roly-poly, number-two size, with a pug nose, blue eyes, freckles, and an upper lip like a blacksmith's apron. And he's got a smile that is childlike and bland.

"As a practical joker, Doyle is away up in G; yes, sir, he is four aces and a king up the sleeve!

"The stunt comes up like this.

"Up to Winslow, y'know, all the regular men have their regular engines. "It's not like this here S. P., style of pooling the mills. Then Mike Webber, or, maybe, it's old Bill Daze, has a brainstorm and has the carpenter make up a bunch of nice large toolboxes for the noble pig-head to carry his tools around in. Nobody ever uses 'em, it being a whole lot handier to stow the tools in the tank-box of

your own particular bullgine and let 'em lay.

"There's an old stiff out in the lamp-room whose got to lug these boxes around, take 'em off the mills when they come in, and put 'em on again when the engines are called. His name, as far as we sabe, is Old Mizzou. And, gentlemen, he's sure a prize bird! He's about six foot three, and built jest like one of these here bullfrogs; long spindly legs, like Whitt Mote, and fatter than blazes from the waist up—bout on the order of Fats Simmons.

"He's sure a beaut. Moreover, the sense of humor is left plumb out of his cosmos which same hands him a mess of grief one time and another.

"These tool-boxes is the bane of Old Mizzou's existence. He beefs around most strenuous 'bout the no-good collection of hoggers he has to contend with. Seems that Old Mizzou thinks that the boxes contain all the tools that the hoggers own, and the scandalous light weight of the most of them lead him to thinking scornful thoughts of the enginemen.

"Can't convince him at all that the men own tools enough for almost any purpose. Just cause they ain't noticeable in the weight of the tool-box there ain't no tools, cording to Old Mizzou.

"Well, sir, one day Old Piston Travel Pearson lays off and Biddy Doyle catches the 'Queen of the Rail' for a trip or so. The bunch was in the lamp-room when the hostler brings out the mill. When he gets her spotted in front of the door, here comes Old Mizzou with Biddy Doyle's tool-box, and, believe me, he was all crippled down on one side with the weight thereof. Seeing us giving him the merry 'once over,' he sets the box down, mops his brow, and proceeds to hand us a little lecture.

"'Gentlemen,' says he, 'this here Doyle person is all right. He ain't no hoghead, he ain't; he's a real locomotive engineer; he's got some tools. If this here Doyle ever breaks down on the pike he's got a heap enough tools to make his repairs without sitting on the end of a tie and whooping for the wrecker. Yes, sir, he's got some tools!'

"Course we hands him the laugh, like a rough-neck bunch naturally would, while he's sweating the box up into the gangway. Finally he gets balanced on the step and crawls around into the cab.

"Right there he stops again to tell us how much he didn't mind lugging around Doyle's tool-box and a lot more of the same. Then he bends over, gets a good grip on the box to hoist her up into the cab—and the box slipped!

"But Old Mizzou never turned loose until he hit the ground. Out he comes on his head onto the cinders, with the box a close second. Old Mizzou peels off an inch or so of hide and the box lights on one corner and busts plumb open. Old Mizzou painfully heaves himself to his number tens, wipes the blood off'n his mug, and turns around for a look at the box. And, right there, school was out!

"The box busts open! What Mizzou sees when he looks around was that Doyle's tool-box contains nothin' but *three big driver brake-shoes!*

"If ever you heard a man rave!"

"SPEAKING of burning wood," began Varnon, "reminds me of an incident to which I am a witness down on the Gulf lines when wood was the fuel there."

The tallow pot swarmed down from off the bench.

"Varnon," said he, "with tears in my voice and from the heart out, I warn you not to spring another of those scandalous yarns of yours on this unsuspecting bunch. I can't stand another of 'em, and I won't answer for the result. Your diction is all to the good, but the wierd substance of those narratives of yours sure calls for gore. So be careful!"

"Nothing like that!" said Varnon. "This story is a real happening that I myself witnesses in the carefree days of my youth. Somewhat remarkable, to be sure, but far from being what you call weird.

"As I say, it happened down on the Gulf lines, when we were burning wood. Seems like there was a fellow from up on the C. and E. I., came down and hit the master maniac for a job o' running, which he gets. He catches a cotton run out of Galveston, with one of these here little eight-wheel, American type 'gines, the same being the standard class of power down there.

"Well, this hogger was fond of the bright white lights, and the night before he goes out on this trip he indulges in a prolonged séance of poker with some kindred spirits, and, as a result, is in arrears for sleep. So, as soon as he has her hitting the rails at a good clip, he folds his feet up on the Johnson bar and hunts the hay.

"By and by the fire-boy hits him on the shoulder.

"'What's up?' growls the hogger.

"'We wood-up here, buddy!' says the tallow.

"The hogger pinches 'em down and whistles for the train crew. Up they come.

"'Whatcher want?' asks the head shack.

"'Fire-boy says we'll wood-up here,' answers Mr. Hogger, and promptly proceeds to roll over into the feathers again while the crew piles the cordwood into the tender.

"When they are ready to go the tallow shakes the hogger's shoulder and bawls into his ear. The eagle-eye comes out of it long enough to horse the throttle wide open and pile back into dreamland once more. The fireman gets down and proceeds to hump his back as per usual.

"Pretty soon here's the tallow back at the hogger again.

"When he gets the hogger awake enough to know what's doing he tells him it's time to wood-up again, so Mr. Hogger shuts off and whistles for the shacks again.

"'What you fellows want now?' demands the head shack.

"'Why, this here is my first trip over this pike, so you'll have to take it out on the fireman,' says our bold and fearless eagle-eye. 'He says we wood-up here again.'

"'What!' yells the shack; 'why, you muttonhead! we wooded you up here an hour ago. What's eating you?'

"At that the hogger climbs down and takes a look around. You would never guess what had happened! He had been standing in one place slipping that hog for the best part of an hour, and, being asleep, he didn't know the difference any more than the fireman, who was deaf to everything but the needs of the fire-box!"

The old hogger climbed painfully down from the bench and walked out of the door, shaking his head.

The roundhouse foreman sat down heavily on a box, muttering to himself.

"Happy days!" yelled the tallow as he ducked out of the door and made a bee-line for the nearest life-saving station.

Varnon smiled.

"They act as if they didn't believe me!" he remarked pleasantly to the boomer brakeman.

"Varnon," said that worthy, "if you was as good an engineer as you are one monumental liar, I'd love to work behind you!"

And he blew.

The man who ties the whistle cord to the first person, singular, does nothing but annoy others. Boasting is not effective conversation.

Plain Plogger.

BY R. GILE.

An Incident in His Career as a "Hind Shack," as Described by Shag, a Fellow Brakeman.

HY it should be "Plogger," I don't make a report. There must have been a reason, though. No guy ever goes over the road with that number stenciled on his mortgage-plate without cause. Of course Plogger was not the way he was marked and carded on the property list at headquarters. When he came to sign for his envelope it was under the family monaker of John Hays; but he was plain, unadorned Plogger at all times and other places.

He was one of these easy-goin', soft pedalin' guys you'd never suspect of bein' the next of kin to a brake-stick. You'd more likely confuse him with the call-boy on the sub-rosy game in the back room at Fox's; or, maybe, if you didn't see his hands or face before it was scoured you'd think him a Sunday-school instructor, or accuse him of bein' one of the free dispensers of tracts in front of the R. R. Y. M. C. A. No rough stuff or profanity escaped Plogger's innocent lips.

He wasn't of the goody-goody species, understand. Oh, no! Plogger had friends. He was liked all along the division, and no guy that's carryin' a tonnage of the better-than-thou merchandise gets far without bein' flagged at a distant signal and held there for further runnin' orders.

Plogger was just a clean-cut, self-respectin' lad, who made you regard him for that reason and made you like him without knowin' exactly why.

No, he was a good-natured, fine-tempered guy, was Plogger. Never let anything or anybody cause him to pop off till the pressure forced the safety-valve on the steam dome at the point it was set on. So when he comes to the road fresh from the fields of wavin' corn, and not all the clover-seeds combed from his hair — which was pasted down over his forehead in a perfect half-circle, lookin' as if it was held in place with a coatin' of shellac—every guy along the line, from Bat Noland, the roundhouse foreman, to Snubbs, the superintendent of the lone two-wheel truck at Produce Sidin', took turns in runnin' "sandies" on Plogger.

He was put through a course that included each old lesson anybody had ever taken before, with an added list of studies that had their trial trip with him.

If a tallow-pot had a questionable joke or a doubtful conundrum to explode, he kept it under his cap till he met Plogger.

If a hoghead was lookin' for a guy to send to the division superintendent's office for a couplin' link for the injector, he sought Plogger.

If either of them guys wanted the use of a "ten-case note" without havin' to attach the usual trimmin's on

transfer day, they laid in wait for Plogger.

If a new brakie showed signs of intelligence, and a disposition to accumulate useful information by makin' inquiries, he was referred to Plogger.

If a guy was compelled to whisper into a sympathetic ear a list of his grievances with the management or against the brotherhood, he just stuck around and waited for Plogger.

And under it all, from first to last—and last meant longer for him than any guy that ever come green to our division—he never complained, didn't get angry, took all the joshin' as if it was a part of the hazards he assumed, and for which he drew down his eighty-two bucks monthly.

Plogger "white-leaded" the booze-burner long before it was discarded and sent to the scrap-heap by Section 6, Article 4, of the rule book. Fact is, he was a buttermilk steamer when he made his student trip with me; but he never caused any D. B. R's to be posted on the other guys by talkin' about the brand of beverage they gave preference to when off duty.

I said he never got angry. Well, he didn't, though I saw him real peeved on one occasion I can now recall. It was like this:

We had been out for fourteen hours on a run scheduled to be made in less than seven, on one of them ill-nature producin' trips where everything goes wrong from burnin' a brass to the engine steamin' poorly; with layin' on the sidin' at nearly every station to let some crew that hadn't been called, possibly, till eight hours after we got our train, go round us; gettin' stuck at each stretch of narrow gage—I mean single track—where we were compelled to lay up to meet an eastbound that had the block closed on us.

Finally, with only eighteen miles between us and the bunk-house, the engine goes cold, with us on the main westbound rails and not enough steam to carry us to the passin' track.

It was 11.10 P.M. by my watch when the locomotive weakly signaled to protect the rear. The rain was comin' down in that even, businesslike way when it's not blowin' and beatin' about like it's searchin' out the unjust, but is runnin' smooth and regular, takin' the curves and crossin' the frogs without a jar, as if it knows it must fall on the heads of the just alike with the rest of us mortals; and I says to myself:

"If that guy's got any anger or bad temper hid about him, he'll dig it up right now."

Plogger jerks his slicker off a hook, grabs a red lantern and tube of torpedoes from the locker, climbs down the rear stairway without flashin' anything that can fairly be said to resemble ill-humor, and starts up the tracks whistlin'. It ditches me.

Of course he knows he'll have to go back the full distance—and the way he handled like situations we knew he'd go further—to signal the train followin', because the hill comes down fast east of DY, and the boys pick 'em to go through the dip and over the hill on the west. The rails were wet, and we were haulin' our capacity right up to the third gage, with nothin' light on the road.

It should be twenty minutes we stood there, though I never consulted my watch; but the way the blower on our hog was workin' I could tell that she'd begun puttin' life in the indicator on the dial, and it takes a good quarter-hour to resurrect one of them round faces when it's sleepin' for lack of nourishment.

And then one string of battle-ships had gone east, with another waitin' for the block; and them babies seldom get closer than twelve to fifteen minutes of each other. Then we hear 585, about a half mile back, acknowledge the red with two shorts, and in four or five seconds we hear the report of the torpedoes some distance nearer.

What was goin' on back there with Plogger we could see as well as if we had a search-light focused on him.

The air on 585 was workin' perfect, and the hoghead knew it. She comes on down the hill a full quarter of a mile before it's applied. Then she shuts off, the air goes through like it has been sent into the emergency, the wheels begin to grab and grind the rails, the gravity dies away slow, and the train drifts to within a car's length of our rear before stoppin'.

In about fifteen minutes me havin' made the sidin' let 585 and its string of despatches around us, and called Plogger in. He comes, stuccoed with mud half up his body, and climbs aboard the car. He goes quiet in puttin' his slicker, lantern, and torpedoes away, and then sits down and buries his head in his hands without once openin' his face.

The captain quits his wheel-reports, looks over toward me, winks, and coughs a couple of times. You know what he meant. Then he gets up, walks out in front of Plogger, and after lookin' him over from head to foot, the cap asks casual and half interested like:

"Did you fail to make the couplin' with the rear steps? Get ditched? Or was she walkin' too fast for you, buddy?"

Plogger looks up, and after forcin' a sickly, counterfeit smile, replies:

"I guess she was walkin' too fast to hop on this dark and stormy night. Who was pullin' 585 anyway?" he asks, blowin' out more and larger sparks with his voice than I had ever seen him emit up to that time.

"You would know it was John Cross by him not stoppin' to pick up a flag in this rain and mud," says the cap.

"That guy's been clamorin' for his preference rights to be known as the meanest hoghead on the system ever since I've been on the road. I've never complained about him not pickin' me up, and I'm not kickin' now. Fact is, I don't mind walkin' in decent weather if it don't hold us up; but a night like this — well, I'm some sore, I guess," says Plogger, relievin' his chest of the longest and most dangerous speech I ever hear him make.

"This is the favorite kind of a night for Cross to turn that trick. He's in the roundhouse over at Clinton now tellin' them roughnecks how he left a fresh flagman that went back a mile for him, and gloatin' over the way the boob had to walk in through the mud and rain that distance. He's soft on the ease with which he kills a train down. He boasts he can make a stop with the heaviest in its length," says the cap.

"He's also color-blind on signals. I'm goin' to teach him a red light in a brakeman's hand means the same it does on a semaphore," says Plogger in his quiet, determined way that left so little doubt as to the accomplishment of its purpose.

"What you goin' to hand him?" inquires the cap.

"I haven't got the schedule made out yet, but it'll be a run on which he'll see red and be sorry he didn't stop for it," says Plogger as we begun to get our grub-boxes and other valuables together, the many switch lights tellin' us we were pullin' into the yards at Clinton.

On the next trip east Plogger comes down to the car all armed with a straight-edge and a rule; and while the train's bein' made up, he sets about takin' measurements around the markers and makin' memorandums in his day-book.

I watch the switchin' in silence for a time. Then my curiosity steams up and I inquire:

"Goin' to quit the wheels and go to the wood-yard?" says I.

"Nope! Just doin' a little investigatin' for private information," says Plogger.

He stops and looks me in the searchlight for a full minute as if he wanted to ask a loan and was uncertain he should, or I would make it if he did. Then he comes across with the entire order.

"Say, Shag"—Shag bein' my *nom-du-railroad,* my full title before marriage bein' Tom Henley. "Say, Shag," says Plogger, "I'm goin' to car old Cross's goat. I want you to close the door when I get the animal aboard. Do you make the assist?"

"Sure I do, buddy! But these specials ain't on no schedule, you know. You'll have to give me runnin' orders or slip me a red card," says I.

"You're assigned to my crew, old pal. I'll give you the instructions when the car moves," says Plogger.

On the trip over to Carterville—Carterville bein' the east end of the division—Plogger maps out his plans, goin' into details in his careful, convincin', methodical way. Of course I made objections here and suggestions there, but in the end I usually yielded, and in the long run the thing was agreed on about as he had worked it out before consultin' me.

We laid it before the cap, who agreed it was O. K., only he thought we might work out a scheme that could be pulled earlier.

"It listens like one of them staff-workin' machines. It'll take you guys a long time to get the combination so's to operate it without derailin' a train," says the cap.

"Sure! I know it. It's worth takin' time on. It'll pay expenses for the delay, though," says Plogger.

As soon as we reach Carterville we set about coalin' up with fuel necessary for Cross to make the run for which Plogger had planned to call the hoghead, and on the return trip we had the tender so well filled it was shakin' down a few lumps along the tracks.

The cap was right. The combination to that machine held us a long time. It was near eight months before we picked up the staff to throw it; and durin' all that time we carried our fuel and Plogger consulted the board at each end to see who was due to follow us.

And whenever Cross stood for the next engine Plogger got busy and inquired at every block how far our trailer was in the rear. If we had to put out a flag at night, that guy took a delight in shoulderin' his two rods and a pair of rear markers in addition to his lantern, and performin' his duty.

It seemed, though, we were never goin' to throw the levers in the locks on that machine. The combination was puzzlin' all right. It had to be eased up to the nicety of a hair-line before the switch would open. It required a fairly dark night, with Cross at the throttle of the engine followin' us, when we would get caught on the main line and have to hold our trailer with a flag.

Several times we thought we could hear the ball droppin' and the bolts movin', but we were disappointed. I begun to lose heart and interest.

Finally, one night as we were takin' water at BX at the top of the hill on North Mountain, the "trick" comes out and hands us a string of wire.

"You guys'll have to step some goin' down the hill or 99'll burn your tail-lights. She's comin' through the block now, and the old man's cardin' her all the way."

"Who's pullin' her, do you know?" asks Plogger, all eager and expectant like, he havin' for the first time neglected to consult the board in these eight months.

"Cross, I think I hear the trick at Machen say," replies the guy.

"Thanks! So-long! I've got a Form 36 to make out," says Plogger as the slack jerks and we begin to roll down the hill.

We got busy. I guess it's the only time a crew was anxious for a lay-out. We actually prayed for it, if you can believe that.

When we come in sight of the distant signal at Faro, she's set on us, and we drift on slow to the block. We knew the order as well as if we had read it. The next block west was the longest on the division—an office cut between Faro and Bell—and the old

man was holdin' us till 4 went east, when he would put us on the other track and send 99 around; there bein' no sidin' with our car capacity there at the time.

The combination was goin' to work —the machine was about to throw the switch.

Plogger seizes his outfit and goes on the run to protect the rear. I forget the rules and follow, the cap havin' agreed to do my switchin' if necessary.

When I get back to the first curve near a half mile up the track, Plogger has the wires strung and the lights turned on. The rods are planted on either side of the rails, with the markers swingin' from 'em at about the height and distance apart they show on the rear of a caboose, and it makes a noise like a fair imitation of the red tail-lights on our car.

Plogger, with his blood lantern, is up the tracks the exact distance required by the book, so I learn afterwards. I climb the bank, roll a pill, set the blower goin', and await developments.

I don't have long to smoke. Old Cross was some rambler. In four or five minutes I hear him see the signal Plogger flashes; but that's all the recognition he acknowledges of a flagman's rights. He don't ease back a notch or twist a brake. On he comes down the grade at about forty per, only drawin' up the reverse and applyin' the air as he takes the curve. He shoots round that hill at fully twenty miles.

Then he sees Plogger's light about fifty yards ahead. He also imagines he discerns our train reachin' out in front of the markers. He calls for help, reverses, goes into the emergency and exhausts the sand dome in an effort to save that phoney rear.

His drivers begin to back-pedal. The boxes make frantic efforts to do the flyin'-machine stunt, showin' their intention by attemptin' to use the runnin'-board of the car in front as an aviation field. The tender shows signs of mountin' to the cab. As the pilot tosses the rods to the side and sends the false markers to the ditch, Cross throws out his cushion and goes to *terra firma*.

No. 99 drifts down the hill about a hundred feet and comes to a stop as gentle as a paper balloon makin' a landin'.

Cross climbs out of the hole he drove himself into and yells to the pot, who hadn't deserted and had righted matters in a jiffy.

"Did they hit," yells Cross as the pot shows at the steps.

I remain in the shadows.

The pot runs up and inquires in one breath:

"Are you hurt? What'd you jump for? What's the matter with you?"

He was wised up, all right, but he wasn't wigwaggin' anything to Cross.

"Did she hit?" I asked.

"No, I ain't hurt. She'd almost stopped when I stepped off. I was afraid of splinters," says Cross.

"What the 'ell, Bill! What—you seein' things, Cross?" asks the pot.

"Seein' nothin! Where'd that string of cars go that was right ahead of us. I saw the markers on the rear of 77 not fifty feet in front," says Cross as he climbs the cab steps. Follow'in' at his heels, the pot says:

"You better turn your lamps in at the shop before you pile up a train on this mountain. There wasn't nothin' on the rails."

I took a sneak for the car. On the way I side-wiped Plogger who had come down on the north side of 99.

"Buddy," says I, "that guy can count. He knows the difference between one and two as well as any of us. Also, he has wings."

"Shag," says Plogger, "Cross'll know what it all means. He'll see red and look for glass for a month when he passes that spot back there; and he'll never fail to pick up another flag, even if he has to back up for it—take it from muh."

Observations of a Country Station-Agent.

BY J. E. SMITH.

No. 74.—How Bill Gilkins and His Grouch Formed a Combination to Block the Progress of Railroading.

DOWN in the southern part of the State there once lived a farmer by name of Bill Gilkins, who "beareth ye ancient grudge."

The skin has its eruptions; the bones have their aches; the muscles have their pains. Even down in the far-away remoteness of the most distant toe there may be touches and twinges to make one wince; but the grouch is of the mind and does not bear its outward and visible spot. Nevertheless it may be touched by a word or sign, and the grouchee will emit the usual yelp.

"Grouch" has been analyzed as sixty per cent pure cussedness and forty per cent digestive disorders. Sudden grouches that pass quickly, followed by clearing weather and sunshine, are stomach grouches. The grouch that is always present, that never varies, that grows with age and time, is pure cussedness. The rule is to be charitable of the first and follow your own fiendish impulses toward the latter.

Bill Gilkins's grouch was fundamental and constitutional. He always had it. He was born on a cloudy day, Friday, the 13th, in the dark of the moon, in the dead of winter, and, perhaps, is not to be blamed for his growling disposition; but he never made any effort to lose it or tone down its rasp.

No one paid any particular attention to Gilkins. He was "ag'in'" everybody and everything. As his attitude on all questions was easy to forecast, he became of no particular consequence.

Now, one of this unreasonable and irascible kind must have some one particular object for his dislike and abomination. Of course, in a general way, everything is wrong; but hating everything spreads the material over too thin a surface to produce exhilaration.

Churches and schools were particularly offensive to Gilkins, but the thing that gave him the greatest affront and outrage was the A. A. Railroad, which trespassed his land. It was both his jinx and his nemesis.

It passed in a sweeping curve through the upper half of his eighty, and impudently and tenaciously possessed itself of a hundred-foot right of way which, in its virgin state, had belonged to Gilkins's grandfather.

The grandfather had never deeded

it to any railroad, and, so far as could be ascertained from records and tradition, not one penny had even been paid for it by the railroad.

Getting back to the basis of this story: There was Bill Gilkins, fifty or more, born with a grouch and a grouch importer and producer—a sort of Edison or Burbank grouch wizard—finding fresh combinations and working out crosses for new and improved varieties.

Whether about the barn lot or chasing a recalcitrant Holstein, whether eating his dinner or reposing in a state of near peace under the shade of the white oak in his front yard, there was the constant reminder by the railroad through the upper end of his place.

Take the situation to yourself. Suppose you harbored a particular ill-will toward a certain person, and every day he would pass you many times, and every time he would banter and scoff at you with two long and two short *h-o-o-t, h-o-o-t, hoot, hoots*—wouldn't it rather provoke you—or at least nettle you some?

Anyway, it is safe to say your hostility would not abate to any noticeable extent. This was Gilkins's situation. He was hostile to the railroad, and every day of the year trains rumbled through his place—on the very ground that was his—and whistled in long blasts, now shrill, now coarse, that were aimed directly at him.

It taunted him. It seemed to be a challenge. Every blast was a sentence calling out, "Hi, there, Gilkins! Here we are again! What are you going to do about it?"

There wasn't anything, in fact, that Gilkins could do. It is no trifling undertaking to pull up a railroad by the roots and lug it off the farm. He went to law—as a matter of course. He sued the railroad company to compel payment for the land it had taken from his ancestors.

The company had no trouble in showing the benevolent intent of the grandfather to contribute that much to encourage the building of the road for the development of the country and the general enhancement of all land. It established, furthermore, that it had had undisputed possession for more than forty years. Thus on the basis of eminent domain and long possession it beat Bill Gilkins, who had to pay the costs.

Then Bill went home and pondered. And while he was thinking of the deep injustice, ill-treatment, and insolence of the world, there came a series of staccato *toots*. Bill looked around the house just in time to see his prize spotted calf collide with the limited and land in a heap by aviation over in the timothy meadow. It was a sad spectacle, but the limited did not stop to take a second look.

Bill wanted big pay, but as his own hired man had carelessly left the gate open and all fences were intact, he failed to cash in; and that was another grievance.

Bill's life went on in sadness and disappointment. He never publicly scored against the railroad. It is bad enough to nurse a grudge, but doubly worse to have the grudge and find no outlet nor means to satisfy it.

A philosopher once remarked that it was a goodish stretch that fails to deviate from the straight line. What he had in mind was that if Bill Gilkins lived long enough the chance would finally come for him to put one over on the A. A. Railway.

Bill was always ready and willing to serve on the jury where a railroad case was involved, but the corporation's attorney always saw that Gilkins's agricultural pursuits were not interrupted.

Likewise, Bill was always ready to serve as an appraiser where damages or benefits were to be assessed or stock or property valued. In this capacity he got in an undercut jab from time to time on the railroad, but not often enough or radical enough to afford him any particular gratification.

The turn in the long lane came when he was about to move to the Dakotas.

Gilkins could not stand the *toot-toot* of the engines any longer. The neighborhood was all against him. Everything was getting worse and worse; so he decided to chuck the whole miserable outfit by moving to another State. It was a thousand miles to the Northwest. No convenient touch or short-range reminiscence for Bill.

Out there the people were better, the farm-land was better, and the nearest railroad was six miles away. He could have bought as good a farm and cheaper twelve miles away, and another for even less per acre twenty miles away, but Bill, in spite of his deep-rooted antipathy for railroads, chose the six-mile location.

That makes a worthy paragraph: Bill needed the railroad.

His son remained on the home place. Bill enjoined him to keep an eye on the railroad and to oppose and thwart it wherever he could. Between times he was to watch the neighbors and see that they did not get the best of him. These were the parting injunctions on leaving the scenes of his childhood and in severing the home ties of fifty years.

There were five prospective passengers in Bill Gilkins's party—Bill and his wife, his wife's mother, and the two children. A party of five passengers for a journey of one thousand miles is worth looking after by the passenger department of any railroad, and it brought the traveling passenger agent out to Bill's house.

"How are you, Mr. Gilkins?" exclaimed the T. P. A., extending a cordial hand.

"I ain't none too well," returned Gilkins, giving a dead-fish clasp in response. "No, sir, I ain't very well. This climate is none the best."

Gilkins had successfully weather-beaten it for fifty years and appeared to suddenly discover that the climate was objectionable.

"It may be colder up in Dekoty, but it's a stiddy cold and ain't so bad when you gets used to it. Here it's hot and it's cold, and it's wet and it's dry, and you can't tell what's a comin' next. I ain't felt real well for a good many years — and the old woman ain't, niether. Then our neighbors ain't the best, none of 'em, and there's that pesky railroad."

The depth of feeling at this point drowned further words. So on the pause and gulp the traveling passenger agent cut in. A traveling passenger agent is never particular to exhaust the entire repertoire of a complaining patron.

"So you have decided to go to Dakota. We understood you were going. Our road sent me out to see you."

That always has a good sound. A great railroad taking note of an humble citizen and sending its representative to see him and advise him of its time and connections, and to inform him of its comforts and conveniences.

The phrase was put that way to please the man. All commercial life has these little thoughts and words to placate, palliate, and propitiate.

"What did they send you here for?" asked Bill Gilkins bluntly.

The T. P. A. at once got down to business. He opened his grip and got out the necessary guide and folders. He explained to Bill Gilkins just what it would cost him—what train to take, what connections he would make at Chicago and St. Paul, and the very minute he would land at his destination. He figured exactly how much baggage he could take along free and gave him a hint of what he could take in the coach with him.

Then Bill Gilkins thought hard. He rounded up from the pastures and the byways of the past the whole herd of his grievances.

"I'll tell you, mister," he said, laying hold of the oldest, "that railroad of yourn owes me two hundred dollars for the ground through my farm where it runs its track; and two hundred is dirt cheap, now ain't it?"

The T. P. A. did not offer any opinion on real-estate values.

"I ain't stubborn, understand," continued Bill. "All I want's what's right. Now if your road will give me five tickets to Dekoty, I'll deed them the land they're runnin' over. Ain't that fair now?"

The T. P. A. endeavored to explain that railroads have their various departments and that the passenger department did not have anything to do with the road's real-estate affairs.

To Bill Gilkins an octopus was just a plain octopus.

"You represent the road, don't you?" quizzed Bill shrewdly. "You give me five tickets and I give you a deed. How could anything be any simpler than that?"

Of course, the T. P. A. made an effort to explain how he could not trade transportation for land, baled hay, goose eggs, or fancy poultry. Legally, he explained, he could not accept anything but real money in the exchange.

"Well," asserted Bill stoutly, "your road don't get one cent of my money until they pay for the land they took from my grandfather."

This discouraging ultimatum did not entirely suppress the T. P. A. He went on to explain what his line had to offer that would get Gilkins to Dakota. He left the folder of his company's service and other time-tables. The A. A. Railroad appearing on the maps therein, stood out as a bright red line, short and straight and without a kink or bend from end to end; or, speaking with finer railroad precision, from terminus to terminus.

To me it has always been a delight to see the red line of a railroad as it is made to appear on its own folder. It is always straighter than a crow ever flew. All other lines are in thin, black, cobwebby effect.

At one glance the folder shows conclusively that there is but one railroad running from one great gateway to the other. A great many imitations are shown attempting to trail across, but losing themselves in the general network scheme and apparently bringing up at Crabville, Wisconsin, or Peach Orchard, Michigan.

Bill Gilkins could have seen all this at one glance from the maps the T. P. A. handed him. He could have noted that if he got on any other line than the one indicated in red, with Cincinnati, Chicago, and St. Paul standing out like arclights along a street, he was likely to wind around and finally bring up at Bird Center, Illinois.

No fault of the map Bill did not get the layout fixed in his mind. The only trouble was that he would not look. He took the pamphlet and the folder the T. P. A. handed him, tore them to pieces before the astonished passenger man, and gave the fragments a contemptuous toss over the barnyard fence.

"You tell that road of yourn," he added as a final ultimatum, "that when it cracks down two hundred dollars for the land it's holdin' that belongs to me, I'll buy five tickets to Dekoty off you! And, hold on a minute, there—" The T. P. A. was moving toward the gate. "Tell 'em a little more! If they'll come across with another fifty for that spotted calf your passenger train killed, I'll ship my household goods and four head of stock over your road!"

There was nothing for the passenger man to do but keep on going.

He was cheerful about it.

"Good-by, Mr. Gilkins," he called out. "Hope you will get out there safely and have good luck. Don't forget that we can handle you better than any one else."

That final bid for business never touched Bill Gilkins. He ran true to form. When it came time to move he actually hauled his family and outfit fifteen miles to embark on another railroad.

When the traveling passenger agent was at Bill Gilkins's place urging the claims of his road for Bill's patronage, he cast his eye about him and made a few minor discoveries.

He noted that the foundation of a corn-crib was made up of a number of good ties and four steel rails. He also observed that the understructure of a private bridge across a ditch just beyond the barn lot was his company's rails.

He wondered how Gilkins came by all this building material which was railroad property.

You cannot beat a traveling passenger man. When it came to paying for the right of way his company had used continuously for more than forty years, or settling a claim for a spotted calf that by a foolish intimacy with a locomotive had been suddenly delivered hence, the T. P. A. had insisted that there were other departments that looked after these details and that he was helpless. But when it came to making full report of the quantity of railroad structural material he had seen in use on the farm of a certain farmer, the traveling passenger agent found it a very easy matter to communicate with the proper department.

He withheld the information for a time. He wanted to give Bill Gilkins time to buy his tickets and ship his car of "movables" before he injected this new and complicating feature into the case. He did not want to further prejudice Bill against the road until he was ticketed and shipped. When he saw that his efforts to get the business were hopeless, he turned in a report stating that there was a quantity of railroad material in use on the Gilkins farm.

The maintenance-of-way department took notice. First, it secured a statement from the old section foreman that he had never presented Gilkins with any rails and ties, neither, to his knowledge, had any ever been purchased.

The passenger man felt he had done his duty in reporting the matter. He was, to be sure, somewhat chagrined that he failed to ticket Gilkins.

I find that when a man has these twin emotions he can do his duty promptly and cheerfully. It is a backhand swipe at the offending party under the guise of respectful service. He is able to give a kick and score a credit at the same time. We railroaders see examples of this sort in the railroad service from time to time. In the parlance it is known as "putting one over" or "getting even."

The section foreman was instructed to go over to Bill Gilkins's farm at some convenient time under some ulterior pretext, and make a rough calculation of what belonged to the railroad. It was some months before he did so.

In the meantime Bill Gilkins had arrived in Dakota and moved out on his new farm. The first week he was there he got into a dispute with his nearest neighbor over some live stock. In a month more he was against the whole country, which he dubbed as "furrin," and quite unworthy a native-born American.

There was one compensating thing—he was six miles from the nearest railroad. He was not annoyed by trains, nor rankled by the injustice of the road holding his land and killing his stock.

In the spring the community was seized with a great commotion. The trunk line north projected a branch line down that way. It aimed as straight at Bill Gilkins as a boy can draw on a bald head with a bean-shooter.

The entire neighborhood was jubilant. A township meeting was called to boost the project and arrange for subsidies. The sentiment for the new road would have been unanimous had not Bill Gilkins arose and emitted a howl of protest. It enraged the other farmers, and they hooted him out of their councils.

A gang of surveyors ran a line. They pierced Gilkins's farm at the northeast corner and came out at the southwest, making two equal triangles with one hypotenuse. Bill ordered them off the place, but they did not appear to understand his language.

They admonished him to "hie hither" and "hike hence," and cast other ribald remarks and irreverent insinuations his way.

Bill wanted to fight, but the fellow with the tripod told him to get in training first and then sign up the necessary articles, but that he, the tripod man, would reserve the moving-picture rights. Bill saw there was nothing in argument, so he rushed to the house for a gun.

He came out with his army musket. The field force never stopped. A mild-mannered man with the gang met Bill as he emerged, took his gun away from him, and shooed him back under cover.

A little later the railroad real estate man came along to buy the right of way. Under the outrages of three generations Bill was adamant.

Not for ten thousand dollars would any railroad go through his place! No! No! Never! He would fight 'em and law 'em as long as he had breath and one cent to rub against another. He let it be known he was no sucker and no weakling—that he had inalienable rights!

With one interview the railroad passed him up. Condemnation proceedings were at once begun against him. One day three of his neighbors appeared and set an appraisement on the strip of land the railroad wanted. Bill demanded ten thousand dollars, but was awarded something like three hundred, and construction work was at once commenced.

Bill did not remain to see the finish or join the gladsome gathering that welcomed the first train.

He rigged out a prairie schooner and departed overnight in the general direction of his old home. He moved overland, to spite the railroads.

Never—never in the future would they get one cent of his money. It might be a long, slow, and tiresome trip in a covered wagon, and it might be rough and expensive, but Bill Gilkins had the grim satisfaction of knowing he had beaten the railroads out of five passenger fares and one car of movables.

After a long time Bill got back. He halted his caravan before the old homestead. Bill crawled down from the wagon. As he did so the rural free delivery man came along and delivered a letter addressed to Bill himself. Bill opened it before proceeding with greetings.

It was from the railroad company.

It apprised Gilkins of the fact that he had in his possession on his farm 15 steel rails; 28 oak ties; 6 angle bars (in use as gate weights); 1 pick; 1 claw-bar.

The company was in position to positively identify these articles, all of which he was courteously requested to return to the road's right-of-way within the next thirty days or serious charges would be preferred against him.

"Land sakes!" exclaimed a voice of discovery from the farmhouse, "it's pap! What—"

But "pap" was smarting under this fresh insult of the railroad.

"Them robbers has writ me to return everything we got on the place that's theirs and they hold onto the land that's mine. Is that right? Is that justice?"

The old man waved the letter over his head and appealed to the country wide.

"I'll never return 'em anything!"

He climbed back into the covered wagon.

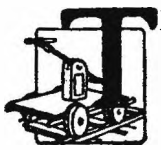
"Why, pap!" exclaimed the woman from the house, "ain't you going to stop?"

"No, I ain't, Amy. I'm goin' right on! We've moved from Dekoty, Amy!" he exclaimed in a loud, hot voice. "We thought we'd drive by and say howdy and see how everything looks. I'm goin' to Perry County, Kentucky. To Viper, Perry County, Kentucky. They ain't a railroad in fifty miles of Viper, an' they won't ever be 'cause of the hills. They can't build 'em. Good-by. Gid up—gid up!"

The Girl from Home.

BY GEORGE BARON HUBBARD.

Violet Hope Knocks at the Door of the Wrong Mr. Jones and Starts a "Revolution" in China.



HE hot rays of the morning sun streamed brightly down between the rows of houses. Mopping his perspiring brow with his handkerchief, Robert Bessemer Jones turned the corner and stopped in front of the fantastically shaped and colored building in which he made his headquarters.

The door was on the latch. Pushing it open, he stepped inside without knocking; but for a moment his eyes, accustomed to the heat and glare without, refused to adjust themselves to the cool semidarkness of the room.

Gradually, however, various objects began to take shape and form. On the open balcony which overhung the street he discerned the gaily clad figure of his Chinese servant, Wong, leaning on a small bamboo tabouret and staring out over the railing.

The Chinese was engaged in the fascinating occupation of watching the activities of a number of his fellow countrymen in the street below. So absorbed was he that he was entirely oblivious to the presence of any one in the room until a heavy hand fell upon his shoulder, and he was spun around with a jerk that almost swept his feet from under him.

"You lazy chink! How many times have I told you to have breakfast ready when I came in?" demanded Bob angrily. "If you don't do as I tell you hereafter I'll skin you alive and nail your yellow hide to the door!"

Wong recovered his balance with an effort and made a respectful bow, glancing sidewise at the irate face above him.

"Misser Bob hour early," he pleaded in extenuation. "Wong just watchin' Chinese celeblatin' Lepublic Day. All flee men now, all samee Melican. Celeblate!"

Bob snorted.

"Is that so? Well, *you* won't do much of it to-day; believe me — not for an hour, anyway. After that, if you want to Fourth of July, you can go out in the street and yell and shoot off firecrackers with the rest of the maniacs. But my breakfast has got to put in an appearance first."

Wong's unlovely features distorted themselves into what was meant for an ingratiating smile.

"Palade! Fireworks!" he observed with evident relish. "Make heap lot noise! Misser Bob no mind?"

"Not if you get my meals on time. Now hustle! This getting up at shriek of dawn gives me an appetite like a whale. And see if you can do a decent job for once in your life! The stuff you've been serving me is too close to poison for comfort."

He slipped his revolver from its holster, and, unbuckling his cartridge-belt, laid them both upon the tabouret.

"Is there any mail for me?" he inquired.

"One," Wong told him cheerfully, producing a thick envelope from the folds of his voluminous blue sleeve and holding it out.

Bob took the letter and glanced at the address.

"This isn't for me!" he exclaimed in disappointment. "It's for the Rev. Algernon Jones, that hypocrite missionary!"

He flung the letter on the floor and glared at Wong, as if he considered him personally responsible for the mistake.

"All lite! His name like yours," observed Wong, with the air of one who has made a great discovery. "You have same ancestors maybe?"

"I should say not! If I had I wouldn't admit it. Thank Heaven, Algy's no relative of mine! If he were I'd feel obliged to assassinate him for the honor of the family.

"And when I think of the real missionaries out here, the earnest workers who are doing good, hampered by that spineless dub of a grafter, I'm tempted to kill him, anyway!

"And I'll bet the people that sent him out think he's a tin saint! Gee, he's a slick one! He'd pull the wool over the eyes of the sheep that grew it! I may be a wild and sinful character, but I'm hanged if I'd stoop to the things he does!"

Wong listened attentively. He had a great respect for any one who could utter such curious-sounding words and apparently understand them.

"Soldiers palade to-day?" he inquired deferentially.

"They do *not!*" returned Bob emphatically. "The regiment stays in barracks. Captain Casey says there'll be enough noise without 'em."

He turned to the door leading to his bedroom; then, as his eyes fell on the letter on the floor at his feet, he stooped and picked it up. Wong watched him pensively for a moment, then turned and began to set out the breakfast service on the tabouret.

"A girl's handwriting — and post-marked San Francisco—home!" murmured Bob in a reminiscent tone. "Heigh ho!" he sighed half aloud. "I wish some of the girls I used to know back there would write to me, but I dare say they've forgotten my existence by this time.

"I've been buried in this hole so long that no one could be expected to remember; but I'd give a year's pay to see just one girl from home—just one pretty girl with blue eyes and light hair and a pretty, soft skin."

There was a half-wistful, half-melancholy expression on his face as he stood looking down at the dainty feminine handwriting. Then with a start he recovered himself, dropped the letter as if it were a hot coal, and whirled on Wong with a stentorian shout that sent the cup and saucer the startled Celestial was setting on the table spinning to the floor in fragments.

"Wong! What are you doing? Confound you! You've broken my best cup!"

"Wong velly solly." He stooped and picked up the pieces, a comical expression of dismay on his face.

"You want to be more careful," advised Bob. "But—I guess I made you jump, eh? Never mind. Just throw it away and I'll get some more.

"I'm going to get cleaned up now," he added, "and after breakfast you take that letter over to *Algy*"—with ironic emphasis on the despised name. "Get busy now."

He turned on his heel and strode from the room.

Robert Bessemer Jones was not in the most tranquil of moods. To begin with, building a railroad between two of the principal cities of the newly born republic, still in a turbulent and unsettled state, was not the easiest thing in the world. There were times when he felt inclined to abandon his share of the work and let the native engineers work out their own salvation.

There was continued dissatisfaction

and grumbling among the coolies, repeated infractions of discipline, and numerous cases of insubordination which kept the American busy from dawn until dark.

Had conditions been different no one would have enjoyed the struggle against big odds more than he, or would have been more enthusiastic at the undoubted progress that was being made in the surveying and construction of the road-bed.

But the plain fact of the matter was that Bob Jones was lonely, and even the work which he loved better than anything else in the world could not altogether compensate for the solitary monotony of his life.

Back home he had been popular. Here he was practically buried in a Chinese military camp, for the city was the headquarters of the Army of the Republic.

There were a few Americans in the city, but they were not of the sort to appeal to Bob, who sadly missed the gay and jolly crowd of young people who had been his boon companions in San Francisco.

The Rev. Algernon Jones he especially disliked, and if the unfortunate missionary deserved all the opprobrious epithets Bob was wont to apply to him the engineer's enmity would surely have been amply justified.

They had both come from the Golden State, and chance had decreed that they should meet in China.

If the heathen Chinee were not especially grateful for such ministrations and cordially disliked and distrusted the Reverend Algernon, it was because, as Bob Jones declared, that gentleman had a "yellow streak" somewhere in his make-up.

And yet this hopeless incompetent could get a woman to write him letters—long letters, if one were to judge by the thickness of the envelope. It must be pretty fine to have somebody care enough for one to write pages and pages.

"Oh, pshaw! What's the use?" Bob thrust his face into a basin of cold water and splashed viciously about. "I haven't got time to bother reading letters, anyway," which would not have been especially consoling even had it been true.

Wong, left to himself, had set about making preparations for breakfast, and was crooning a weird song as he brought out the dishes and set them on the table.

A timid knock sounded on the street door, but he did not hear it. The clatter of the cups and saucers as he took them from the shelf drowned the sound.

Another knock, this time louder; but he had gone out the door to get a tray. A third knock just as he reentered, and still he heard nothing.

The door opened.

"Is any one at home?" a sweet, girlish voice asked.

Wong's head pivoted slowly around as the tones came melodiously to his ears. His eyes opened wide, and he set a pile of plates on the table with a clatter.

Standing just inside the doorway was a slender figure, all in white from the little canvas shoes to the big picture hat, framing the loveliest face he had ever beheld.

The outline was a little hazy, but surely she was too beautiful to be human—she must be a goddess! Hark! She was speaking again!

"You must be Mr. Jones's boy—the one he writes about," she said with a winning smile. "Is he in?"

Wong shuffled slowly toward her, blinking his almond eyes and swaying a little from side to side. When he reached the center of the room he stopped and made an obeisance, so low that his long cue swept the floor, and he regained his balance with difficulty.

"Gennel dlessing," he managed to utter, awe-stricken.

"Then please tell him I'm here."

"Who I tell him, hey?"

"Miss Hope. Hasn't he told you

about me?" answered the goddess with another radiant smile. "He's going to marry me, you know."

A mystified look spread slowly over the yellow face as Wong's bewildered brain assimilated this statement.

"No"—with a sad shake of the head, as if deploring the fact that no confidence had been reposed in him—"no, he no tell Wong nothing."

"Well, tell him I'm here, please." She turned and walked slowly about the room, examining it with interest.

Wong looked after her with an expression of grieved reproach. He felt that he had been cheated. This was no goddess, after all; merely an American young lady come to marry his master and make more work about the house.

Such being the case, breakfast must be prepared for two. He picked up the tray and started for the door, but stopped again as Violet Hope began to speak.

"Why, here's my letter—and unopened!" cried the girl. "That must be the reason he didn't meet me." She had caught sight of the thick white envelope still lying where Bob had dropped it. "But I'm here now. As long as he has me he won't care about the letter."

She picked up the neglected epistle and tucked it into the bosom of her gown.

"Haven't you gone yet?" she went on impatiently to Wong. "I told you to announce me to Mr. Jones."

She bent her pretty brows in a frown that she fondly supposed was stern and reproving, and the Chinese hastily shambled toward the door.

"Dear, dear boy!" murmured Miss Hope softly. "Out here all alone and working so hard. Poor fellow! How lonely he must have been. And he is so gentle, so uncomplaining, so quiet—"

"*Wong!*" came a vociferous yell from somewhere in the house. "You yellow devil, where are you?"

Miss Hope's eyes widened and she stood still. There was nothing conspicuously gentle or quiet about that loud-voiced summons.

"Wong here. You no get mad," whimpered the Chinese, making an unsuccessful attempt to accelerate his progress toward the door. "Wong come."

"I'll attend to your case, you—Why, what the— I beg your pardon, I had no idea any one was here."

Bob had appeared in the doorway, dressed in white ducks, and drying his hands on a towel, which he flung behind him as he perceived the visitor.

"Yes, here I am," said Violet. "He-e-er I am." She took a hesitating step forward.

"So—so I see," stammered Bob, utterly taken aback. "Yes. Of course. It's—it's very nice, and all that, you know."

Inwardly he cursed himself for a fool. Where had he seen the girl before? Somewhere, surely. No man could look more than once into those wonderful brown eyes and not remember their owner forever.

"Don't you know me?" Violet asked appealingly.

"Know you?"

Of course he knew her! But—what the deuce was her name? Where had she come from?

"Know you? I should say I do!" His manner was cordiality itself.

"And aren't you glad to see me?"

"You bet your life I am!" he declared with great and unassumed enthusiasm. "I never was so glad to see anybody in my life!"

"You—you don't act as if you were!" There was a shade of reproach in the big, dark eyes, and the rosebud mouth dropped a little.

"Well, you see," Bob began, wildly searching his treacherous memory with no appreciable result—"you see, I—er—I don't exactly know *how* to act. What would you do if you were in my place?"

An adorable flush crept over her face.

"Why—I—I—if you'll turn your head I'll show you."

Filled with amazement, he acted on the suggestion.

Two smooth, round arms stole about his neck and two soft lips pressed his cheek. A thrill of surprised delight ran through him.

"How stupid of me not to know that was the thing to do," he said. His arms swiftly encircled her.

"I'm so glad I'm here at last," she sighed. "I'm so very, very glad!"

She was blushing furiously as she drew away and straightened her hat.

Scarcely able to believe the evidence of his senses, Bob watched her. Who under the sun was she? And what did her extraordinary actions mean? Not every day in the week did a beautiful girl drop from the clouds, as it were, and invite him to welcome her in so agreeable a fashion; and the phenomenon was sufficiently pleasant to drive away the last trace of his ill humor.

But, try as he would, he could not place her. It was quite evident that she knew him, evident also that she thought he knew her. Well, he must be very careful, must do nothing to undeceive her. It would never do for her to find out that he had forgotten her.

She had put her hair to rights and was plainly waiting for him to make the next move.

"You must be hungry," he said. "I'll have breakfast brought in. Do sit down. I'm sure you're tired."

"Oh, I'm not in the least hungry; but I believe I am a little tired." She sank into the chair he drew out for her and leaned back against the cushion with a little sigh of content.

"I had breakfast at the station while I was waiting for you; but the cars were not very comfortable, and I just guess I wore myself out with impatience to get here and see you."

"Did you now!"

His remark was not brilliant, but it was the only thing he could think of to say. She had been impatient to get to him. To him! Oh, but the gods were kind! All the time he had been bewailing his lonely fate this blessing had been in store for him. The only drawback was that he could not remember the blessing's name, nor even where he had seen her before. And yet—she had come on the train, impatient to see him! His chest expanded with gratified pride.

Suddenly he became aware that he was staring rather rudely, and that the tinge of pink in the girl's cheeks was deepening under his ardent gaze. Hastily he turned his eyes away, but almost automatically they returned to the feast.

"Do tell me about your work," she said, striving to cover her confusion. "Do you give talks every day?"

"I have to, or the lazy beggars would never accomplish anything."

"Oh, how dreadful! It must be so discouraging! But surely they're not all so bad? You must have some promising material, haven't you?"

At least, here was something he could talk about without fear of betraying himself.

"I should say I have," he returned enthusiastically. "I've got one foreman that can drive 'em and swear at 'em like a Yankee!"

"He *swears?*" she asked in horror.

"First English they learn," said Bob cheerfully. "I expect they get it from me."

"From *you?* Surely you don't use profanity?"

He laughed.

"Don't I, though? Why, it's the only way to make these chinks obey orders. But I'll make good workers of 'em yet if I don't kill 'em first."

"That is so different from the methods at home," she said doubtfully. "But then you have to be more stern with the heathen, I suppose. Oh"—clasping her hands earnestly—"I'm so anxious to help you! I want to stand at your side and assist you in everything you do."

"What?" he almost shouted. "You—you want to help me? Are you a militant suffragette?"

"Oh, no—no, indeed! But I had a class in the mission Sunday-school."

Bob looked at her blankly for an instant, then burst into a roar of laughter.

"Well, believe me, this is no Sunday-school job! But, I say, haven't we talked enough about me? Suppose we select some more interesting subject—*you*, for instance? Do you know you look mighty good to me?" He was edging his chair a little closer.

"I try to be," she said primly.

"Try to be what?"

"Good. But I feel so useless—as if I were not doing my duty as I should. I want to be of some help, to do some real good in the world."

"You've done me a lot of good already," he declared warmly. "But tell me—how did you happen to find the way here?"

"They directed me from the station."

"Well, they sure sent you to the right place."

"Of course they did. Every one seemed to know Mr. Jones, and I had no trouble at all. But"—and again the color crept over her face—"when—when is the ceremony to be?"

"What ceremony?"

"Our wedding ceremony." She almost whispered the words.

"Suffering cats!" ejaculated Bob. For a moment his eyes seemed in imminent danger of popping out of his head. He stared at her with open mouth and dropped jaw, unable to convince himself that he had heard aright.

Wedding ceremony! She was actually proposing! She expected him to accept her! Why, she must be crazy! Of course she knew him, and he must have been well acquainted with her some time, somewhere—but marry her? After a ten minutes' talk?

By imperceptible degrees his chair slid along the floor in a direction opposite to that which it had recently traveled.

And yet—was there anything so awful in the prospect of marrying a wonderfully pretty girl of undoubted breeding and education? It was so lonely for him. He had pined for companionship, and here was one of the loveliest girls he had ever seen asking when he was going to marry her! Perhaps she was joking, but she didn't look so. And, after all, he rather hoped she wasn't. He resolved to find out.

"I'm game *now*—if you are," he said.

"Game?" she queried. "What game?"

"The matrimonial game, of course!" Now that the die was actually cast, he wondered why he had hesitated. "I'll send Wong for the Rev. Algernon—"

"The Rev. Algernon what?"

"Jones. The Rev. Algernon Jones, and he—"

"Why, his name is the same as yours, isn't it?" she cried.

"What? Me, Algernon? Do I look as if I owned a name like that?"

She lifted distressed brown eyes to his while the color fled from her cheeks.

"But—why—why, you're my Algy, aren't you?" she faltered.

"I'm yours, all right; but *Algy!*" He held up his hands. "My dear girl, I—"

"Aren't you the Rev. Algernon Jones? Isn't that your name?"

"No, of course not. My name is Robert Bessemer Jones, but I want to hear you call me—"

She uttered a wild scream of dismay. She sprang to her feet and backed away from him, her hands held out before her, as if to keep him from following.

"Oh, you horrid, hateful man! You've deceived me! You told me a lie! You—"

"I did nothing of the kind!" he interrupted indignantly. "You came here and said you were going to marry

me, and"—with determination, as he realized that the prize was slipping from his grasp—"I shall certainly insist on your doing it. I won't let you throw me over like this. I insist—"

"But I sha'n't—I—I can't!" wailed Miss Hope. "I came out here to marry Algy!"

"What made you insist on marrying me, then?" he demanded wrathfully.

"I didn't," she protested.

"You certainly did!"

"But—but I thought you were Algy"—with tremulous lips. "I thought you were my Algy!"

"Great Scott! Don't you know him when you see him?"

"No-o! I haven't seen him since I was a little girl in San Francisco. We've just written to each other."

"You mean he made love to you—proposed to you—in his letters?"

"Yes."

"Well, isn't that just like Algy?" Bob wanted to know. "Well, believe me, little girl, I've got that method beat a city block. Just let me show you." He took a step toward her, but she retreated with a cry of terror.

"Oh, no, no! Keep away from me!"

"You didn't run away and scream a little while ago," he reproached her.

"But I thought you were Algy," she whimpered.

"Algy be— Look here, you haven't *seen* Algy. When you do you'll scream louder and run farther. Now, I—"

"Algy is a good man—a noble man!" she cried. "I won't let you slander him."

"Oh, but his *face!* Now, I'm no prize-contest beauty, and I'm certainly not good or noble; but I believe in personally conducted love-affairs, and I—"

"Mr. Jones," she interrupted with great dignity, "I cannot listen to you. I am a stranger in the city. I do not know where to find the Rev. Algernon Jones, but I must ask that you send for him at once."

"What!" exclaimed Bob in consternation. "Me send for him? Why, look here, little girl, I don't want to! I want you to marry me. I'm not such a bad sort of chap. And you liked me well enough until you found out my name wasn't Algy.

"Great Heavens!"—with increasing earnestness, as she gave no sign of having heard him—"I'll change it, and be ashamed of it all the rest of my life—if you'll agree to change your mind."

"Will you send for Mr. Jones?"

"But—"

"If you refuse I shall go myself." She turned her back upon him and began to gather up her belongings from the table.

"I can't let her go to that boob!" Bob scowled as he thought of the unfortunate termination of his romance. He was not the man she had been so anxious to see! And she was going away from him now, just as he had discovered how much he wanted her to stay. "I can't let her go," he repeated to himself. "He won't appreciate her—he isn't fit to look after her. But how am I going to make her stay?"

Of a sudden a hideous uproar arose in the street outside. The air was filled with shouts and cries, the explosions of firecrackers, sharp reports of revolvers, and the clang of metal. The celebration had begun.

"What is it? Oh, what has happened?" Miss Hope had run to the window and was looking down in terror at the surging throng that crowded the street.

A light of inspiration broke over Bob's frowning brow. The gods had not deserted him, after all! If he could only induce her to believe the city was in revolt he might be able to keep her with him a little longer; if he could impress her with an idea of his bravery and courage she might even— Vast possibilities opened before him.

"It's a mob! You can't go now!

Come away from the window quickly before any one sees you! I'll fasten the door." He rushed across the room and turned the key in the lock.

"Oh, save me, save me!" She ran to him, holding out supplicating hands.

"Have no fear. They shall not harm you," he assured her, suppressing the grin that threatened to become too evident.

"You won't let them kill me, will you?" she implored.

"No one shall touch you except over my dead body!" he declared heroically. "We're in a tight place, but I will save you."

"Oh, you're so brave!" Admiration for a moment overcame her fears. "But what shall we do? What shall we do?"

"Let me think a moment." He cudgeled his brains. "Hang it!" he ejaculated mentally. "What *shall* I do? I've got to make this bluff good. Ah!" A brilliant idea flashed across his mind. "If I can only get a message to the troops, telling them we are in danger!"

He moved toward the door as if to go out, a piece of strategy which met with instant and ample reward. Miss Hope flung both her arms around his neck and hung on.

"Don't go!" she pleaded hysterically. "Oh, please don't leave me!"

"You bet your sweet life I won't!" he announced, forgetting for the moment his rôle as deliverer and enfolding her in an ecstatic hug. "I mean"—recollecting that this was a speech no hero of melodrama would make to a distressed damsel—"never—so long as we both live! I'll send my servant with a message. *Wong!* Wait, I must write."

Regretfully he disengaged himself and scribbled this hasty note:

> CAPTAIN CASEY, Barracks:
>
> For Heaven's sake parade a company of troops past my house quick and help me out of a hole.
>
> BOB.

"Wong!" he called again.

Down the passage came the sound of shuffling footsteps, followed by the appearance of Wong in the doorway. The Chinese blinked up at his master with anxious eyes as he babbled:

"Misser Bob call?"

"Now, listen!" Bob seized him by the shoulder and spoke in an undertone. "Go out and send a coolie to Captain Casey with this note, and then"—dropping his voice still lower and pointing to the door leading to the street—"go around the other way and pound like blazes on that door *until you hear the bugles!* Do you understand? Bang as hard as you can yell! Don't stop for anything—*anything*—until the troops come along."

"Wong un'stand. No stop till soldiers come, all lite."

"Will he do it?" gasped Miss Hope, as, assisted by a vigorous shove, Wong departed on his errand. "Will he carry the message?"

"I don't know," he muttered. "He may be one of the rioters, but we must hope for the best."

A flurry of fluffy skirts enveloped him as Violet cast herself into his arms.

"But I will save you," he went on majestically. "Keep close to me. See—I will defend you with my life!" He picked up the revolver from the tabouret and flourished it in the air. Outside in the street the noise was becoming louder and louder as the loyal Republicans ardently demonstrated their fondness for the new government.

"Oh, I'm so frightened!" murmured Miss Hope, burrowing her face into the manly shoulder on which her head rested.

"Courage!" exhorted Bob. "I am here."

"Oh, you're so brave, so noble! Oh, oh! What's that?"

A violent hammering had begun upon the door.

"The mob—they're trying to get in! But be brave—I will hold them off!"

He tightened his arms around her and smiled beautifully over the top of her head.

"Beware! I am armed!" he shouted to the imaginary rioters outside. The noise increased. Suddenly he became aware that some one was using a heavy instrument on the woodwork of the door.

"Oh! Don't let them in!" moaned Violet.

"Courage!" He put her into a chair and strode to the door.

"Easy, Wong!" he admonished softly. "You'll have the door down! That's enough!"

The clamor subsided and he returned to the weeping girl, who rose and flung herself into his arms as if she were becoming quite used to the process.

"Oh, can't you drive them away?" she wanted to know.

"I'll do my best. If we can only hold out until the troops come!" A thunderous crash on the door interrupted him. "The first man in this room dies like a dog!" he shouted above the clamor. Then, lowering his voice: "Wong, you fool, cut it out, I tell you. You'll have the door down!" But Wong was bent upon carrying out orders, and the hubbub went on.

"Oh, save me! Save me!"

"Sweetheart, don't be frightened! I am here with you!" He glared at the door, which was beginning to quiver under the assault from outside.

"Yes, you are here!" she sobbed. "I am not afraid while I am with you."

"And you'll always stay with me? Say you will!" His face was wreathed in smiles. "Say you will!"

"Oh, I—Help! Can't you stop it?" The din was deafening.

"No, counfound it, I can't!" savagely. Admonitions, cautions, threats were of no avail. The battering went on. He longed to get his hands on Wong. A panel of the door splintered, and Miss Hope shrieked loudly. In disgust Bob flung his revolver to the floor and ran toward the door.

Forgotten was his rôle of knight errant; forgotten his desire to impress the young lady with his courage; forgotten everything except an insane desire to wring the neck of a certain Chinese who was obeying instructions too literally.

He had reached the center of the room when the door trembled, swayed, and came in with a crash. Simultaneously a revolver barked and a cloud of white smoke swirled upward. On top of the shattered débris of the door lay Wong, a heavy hammer clutched in one hand and an ax in the other.

Violet rushed forward, the still smoking revolver falling to the floor whence she had picked it up.

"Oh, I've killed him! I've killed him!" she wailed. "But I've saved your life!"

Outside a bugle-call echoed through the street.

"The troops! We are saved!" cried the girl. "And I owe my life to you!"

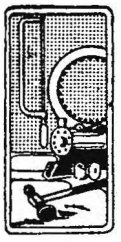
"And I owe mine to you!" It was with a perfectly grave face that Bob made this statement, although a blackened hole in the ceiling showed where the bullet intended for the "mob" at the door had actually gone.

"We owe our lives to each other," he went on dramatically, "and so—and so—"

"Hooray for lepublic!" Waves of joyous shouting came through the open door—but Mr. Robert Bessemer Jones was far too busy to pay any attention to anything just then.

And such a wedding breakfast as Wong cooked!

Debt is surplus tonnage that ties up the pocketbook.



What the INVENTORS Are Doing

BY LESTER L. SARGENT.

NEW cinder-deflector for car windows has been invented by David A. Cox, Carrollton, Georgia. It consists of two plates attached to the outer walls between windows and arranged to present a V-shape when viewed from the top or end. Louis A. Wood, Carrollton, owns a half interest in the patent.

CHARLES E. BROOKS, St. Louis, an ex-locomotive engineer, is now utilizing some of his experience as a railroad man in the invention and construction of engines for automobiles. He has devised, patented and is using a compound piston-valve engine requiring only thirteen moving parts. While now in use only on automobiles, the inventor contemplates the construction of this internal combustion engine in larger units and its possible use for suburban railway car service. An interesting feature of the operation of the engine, in connection with the scavenging of the engine cylinder is described thus:

"The new charge is forced into the working cylinder, directed upward and strikes the top of the cylinder head and the spark plug, blowing the deposits of the last explosion off, and scavenging the cylinder of all burned gases, by the time the exhaust port is closed. By this system the cylinders are automatically cleaned without losing any of the fresh charge, and at the same time all carbon is blown off after each explosion, not giving it any time to accumulate."

Working parts of the engine are automatically lubricated. Independent crank cases are provided with an oil container below each. Between each of the oil containers are oil distributing devices. Adjacent crank cases are connected by intercommunicating oil passages, and all surplus oil is conducted back to the oil chambers. If one chamber becomes empty it is quickly supplied by oil from a communicating chamber, and the system operates as long as there is oil in any chamber.

JULIUS J. PLANK, Kansas City, Missouri, has devised an auxiliary steam generator, adapted for temporary location in the fire-box of a locomotive for a period of time necessary for the quick generation of steam in the boiler of the engine. Thus the usual method of firing direct to the boiler is unnecessary when it is desired to generate steam in a much shorter time than would otherwise be required.

The device is particularly adapted for oil-burning locomotives. It comprises a plurality of heating tubes, a superheating tube and a drum, and means for conducting steam from the generator to the burner. In use, the device is inserted through the fire-door and placed in an upright position on the floor of the fire-box and connected by pipes with the water and oil supply. Waste is thrown into the fire-box in the immediate proximity of the generator, and lighted. After a short period the water in the tubes is converted into steam.

A FLUID-PRESSURE Device, the invention of the late George Westinghouse and patented to that eminently successful inventor of railway devices shortly after his death, is of interest. It is a spring or resilient support in which the resiliency is afforded by fluids—water, air, gas or oil, or a combination of oil and compressed air—contained within telescoping upper and lower cylinders, relatively movable, in combination with a charging inlet passage for the lower member, and

internal concentric cylinders and openings for transferring the elastic fluid from one chamber to another under pressure.

The device is of wide possible application and might be used to serve all the purposes of steel springs without some of their undesirable features. By reason of the arrangement of cylinders and compression space, it is explained, the entire spring may be shortened several inches without decreasing its total possible expansion and compression when in use.

A WIRELESS Receiving Apparatus for use in small stations, trains, aeroplanes and boats, has recently been patented by Robert R. Goldthorp, Hartford, Connecticut, which State leads in the number of inventors proportionate to population. Incidentally, too, the inventor contemplates the use of his device also in connection with wireless telephony.

The striking feature of the apparatus is its compact arrangement. All operative parts are inclosed within the tuning coil, which in turn is contained within a substantially rectangular case. The rotary condenser is located at one end of the tuning coil with nothing but its operating knob showing on the outside of the casing.

Detector, condenser, buzzer and circuit connections are inclosed in the other end of the coil with nothing showing except the detector switch buttons, telephone binding-posts and the aerial and ground binding-posts. The slides are fitted in curved side-plates extending lengthwise of the casing and the operating buttons conform closely to the contour of the casing.

The slides are arranged to move longitudinally, relative to the coil, and their supports, are in electrical connection with it, electrically connecting the condenser with the detector and ground terminals.

A WATER-TIGHT, sanitary floor for cars has been devised by John Emory Meek, New York City, and the patent rights in the invention acquired by the H. W. Johns-Manville Company, New York City. The structure is built up of a layer of waterproofing cement, courses of asbestos or other insulating felts saturated with asphalt or other bituminous composition. On top is a thick layer of reinforced mastic composed of asphalt or bituminous composition, sand and limestone dust with a metal reinforcement embedded in it. The top surface is finished with fine sand which produces a hard surface on which racks may be laid without indenting. Being water tight, the flooring protects the sills and stringers of the car beneath it from the rotting effects of water produced by melting ice, *et cetera*, making the structure an especially useful one for refrigerator cars.

A CHILD'S crib or berth attachment for railroad cars, invented and patented by Louis W. Geerekey, Douglas, Arizona, solves the problem, "What Shall We Do With the Baby?" Simply pull down the crib, which is supported by a vertical supporting hanger at the side of the car adjacent to a window, bestow the baby in the crib and raise the crib again to its former position, or to the desired height, for it is adjustably supported.

The inventor has carefully worked out all the necessary mechanical details for the successful operation of the crib. These include horizontal rails, forming in effect a track extending lengthwise of the car, on which the vertical hanger or carriage which supports the crib is mounted, so that the crib may be moved along to any desired part of the car.

A NEW Uncoupling Mechanism for cars, invented by Arthur J. Bazeley, Cleveland, for operating the lock-lifting and knuckle-throwing elements of a bottom-operating coupling from the side of the car. A substantially L-shaped lever is pivoted to lugs depending from the bottom of the coupler. Its upwardly extending finger or pusher portion is arranged to operate the lock-lifting and knuckle-throwing elements of the coupler. An uncoupling rod suitably supported on the end sill of the car is operatively connected with an actuating rod bent to hook on an eye depending from the under side of the coupler head. The rotation of the uncoupling rod lifts the actuating rod, which then lifts the L-shaped lever and unlocks the coupler. The patent rights have been acquired by the National Malleable Castings Company, Cleveland, Ohio.

A LOCOMOTIVE Acetylene Gas Headlight, the invention of William R. Thurston, Hammond, Indiana, affords a brilliant illumination. A communicating carbid receptacle and water reservoir are provided for the production of the gas. The burner is located within the contour of the reflector, heated air passing through a pipe that opens into the reflector above the burner and extends through the water receptacle, the heat thus being utilized to prevent freezing of the water in the reservoir which forms a part

of the lighting apparatus. A movable shield which may be operated from the cab is a further feature of the device. When a light is not required, the flame at the burner may be turned down to a considerable degree and the shield raised to direct the relatively small amount of heat to the pipe that passes through the water reservoir to prevent freezing of water in cold weather.

AN Air Purifier for use by street cars and railroad trains in subways and tunnels, the invention of Edward L. Gross, Chicago, has recently been patented under assignments from the inventor to Joseph I. Kopperl and Charles F. Eiker of that city. It is a spraying apparatus located at the rear end of a car for spraying water or a suitable disinfectant into the tunnel for the purification of the stagnant, smoke-filled or dust-laden air.

In the ordinary application of the apparatus it disinfects the subway for the succeeding car, where there are a great number of cars moving in the subway or tunnel. A receptacle containing the liquid to be sprayed is carried at one (or both) ends of the car.

A pipe leads from this receptacle to the outside of the car, terminating in a spraying nozzle. Another pipe connects the receptacle with a compressed-air storage-tank, the cleansing or disinfecting liquid being forced from the receptacle by means of compressed air. A valve arranged in the pipe, but which can be operated from the platform of the car, affords convenient means for turning the spray off and on when desired.

AUTOMATIC Railway Signaling Apparatus in which gas is used to operate and light the signals has been invented by Clyde J. Coleman, New York City. The invention is necessarily intricate. It generates gas, stores it, rectifies it before it reaches burners or motors, and utilizes the exhaust gas from the gas motor for lighting the signals. The signal or semaphore is connected by a rod to the piston of a gas-motor and is operated by it. The signal is illuminated by a strong light from a gas-burner, which is supplied with gas from a reservoir, the reservoir being in turn supplied with gas from the motor, so that the same gas that operates the motor may be used for lighting the signals.

Means are further provided for supplying gas to the burner from the reservoir, independent of the motor or the generator. An electromagnet which is energized by a circuit passing through the rails normally keeps the semaphore in "safety" position. The deenergizing of the magnet occurs when a train is on the block. This permits a valve to drop on its seat, shutting off the supply of gas to the motor and opening an exhaust-valve connected with the motor, with the result that the motor-piston drops by gravity and the semaphore is raised to "danger."

The patent rights in the invention have been acquired by the Hall Switch and Signal Company, New York City.

ONE of the simpler inventions of recent date is the Locomotive Grate-Lever and Handle, devised by Charles W. Gregory, Goodland, Kansas. It aims primarily to prevent the handle from accidentally dropping off or being lost, as sometimes happens, occasionally resulting in a wreck or other damage. The novel feature is the means for locking the handle in engagement with the lever. The inner end of the socket of the handle socket is slipped over the outer end of the lever, and pins in the socket are engaged with bayonet slots in the lever, the handle being rotated slightly to secure it in locked position. The handle socket is tapered so as to preclude the rocking or shaking of the lever until the device is locked in position. Accidental detachment or loss of the handle is consequently precluded.

A FLAGGING Device, invented by Robert C. Keene, Frankfort, Indiana, presents the combination of flag-case and torpedo-box removably attached to the case, the flag-case having a hook for hanging the device over the back of a car for immediate and convenient use.

HARRY J. WARTHEN, Washington, District of Columbia, has taken out several patents recently on an Apparatus for Controlling the Speed of Railroad Trains. A governor geared to a driven shaft of the train, and which may be arranged to operate electric switches or to operate a valve for the application of air-brakes is the striking feature of the Warthen inventions.

BENJAMIN WILLIAMS, Fair Haven, Vermont, is the inventor of an improved metallic safety mail-crane. "The old-style, wooden crane," says the inventor, "has been a bitter experience to railroad men, being in a rigid position and projecting too close to cab windows of locomotives, vestibules and car platforms. The object of my invention is the provi-

sion of arms or hangers that clear all obstructions after delivery of the mail. As soon as the mail has been delivered, a properly adjusted counterweight pulls the arms of my crane upward even with the staff."

A MONORAIL Car, invented by George T. Lewis, Seattle, Washington, is an unusual type of invention. The weight of the car is borne by a single central rail, but on each side of this central rail the car has downwardly extending portions, or legs, with side-bearing wheels and fluid-controlled pistons connected with these wheels to oppose the side-tipping tendencies of the car. In this way the balance or level position of the car is automatically maintained.

A LOCOMOTIVE fireman's coal-shoveling recorder is the invention of George G. Weston, St. Louis, Missouri. It is intended to induce the fireman to fire in a more economical manner by inducing him to keep the fire-door closed as much as possible. The recorder is operated by electrical connections with the fire-door, which cause a pencil to move longitudinally on a cylinder-mounted record sheet, making a short mark on the sheet each time the door is opened.

In fact, the marking operation is very similar to that of a phonograph recorder on a phonograph cylinder. For instance, should the pencil make a dash one-half inch long on the record sheet, that would indicate that the fire-door had remained open about sixty seconds, while a mere dot would indicate that the fire-door had remained open but five or six seconds, and that the fireman was doing his work in an expert manner.

A REAR-END Search-light for trains is the subject of a recent patent procured by James D. Perkins, Washington, District of Columbia, the object being to throw an upwardly directed beam of light so that when the train enters a cut its presence there will be apparent from distant points.

AN automatic emergency flagging machine, invented by Leonard L. Brown, Clifton Forge, Virginia, is designed to be applied to a railroad rail by a flagman in emergencies when sent back to warn an approaching train. It is a track instrument which may be attached to the rail and picked up from the rail as soon as an instrument carried by the pilot of a locomotive strikes the signaling device. The instrument is adapted to automatically throw the brakes of a train, provided the engineer should disregard or fail to distinguish other signals of the brakeman.

JAMES A. LAIDLAW, Sacramento, California, is the inventor of a car-door operating mechanism which may be operated from either end of the car. It is primarily designed for street-cars. The door-operating mechanism may be thrown out of engagement with the doors when desired, leaving them free to be opened or closed by hand.

A NEW freight-car door-track and door-operating handle operatively connected with the car door and track supports for the door has been invented by Joseph Toney, Leavenworth, Kansas. It is impossible for the door to leave its track when opened, for the door-track members have closed ends.

A SAFETY attachment for railway cars invented by Benjamin Hoover, Meridian, Mississippi, is a brake-applying means carried by the car body and arranged to automatically set the brakes and check the train in the event of an abnormal or excessive movement of the truck relative to the car body.

RICHARD A. PHILBRICK, Fredonia, Kansas, has made an improvement in fluid-pressure brake mechanism. A spring-controlled valve device is interposed between the exhaust of the triple-valve and the auxiliary reservoir. The result, our scientific readers will be pleased to learn, is that the discharge from the triple-valve may be closed independently of an adjustment of the triple-valve; and the auxiliary reservoir may be recharged without the necessity of releasing the brakes. The position of the valve-member is created by the pressure within the auxiliary reservoir.

A NEW Car Wrench has been invented by Harry L. Flack, of Dayton, Ohio. It is particularly designed to operate the winding drums or the like which control the doors of dumping-cars. Its novelty consists in the method of adjusting its opposed jaw members by having a plurality of recesses in which the trunnions or supports of the outer or movable jaw member may engage, there being no screw threads in connection with this wrench.

The Battle at Las Palomas.

BY BARRY LAMONT.

Only One Shot Was Fired, but It Marked the Beginning and End of a War.

"SLACK back a little, Jim, will you? Darn that knuckle!"

"What's the matter, Jack? What's eatin' you now?"

"That C. M. car has been making trouble ever since it came on the division. When you want to make a coupling you've got to back and fill and coax it along. When you want to cut off you have to do the same thing over again, only more so."

"Never mind, Jack. It's all in the day's work and helps you earn your pay-check."

"You don't say so? But the company don't pay me for time lost monkeying with foreign cars. Some of the cars on these Mexican roads could be set up for veneration and worship, for they're like nothing 'on the earth, in the heavens above, or in the waters under the earth.'"

"Well, you needn't spring the decalogue on a fellow, anyhow. That's the limit. And it don't go in Mexico—see?"

"Humph. You didn't have to leave the States to find that out. What did you leave the States for, anyhow? You're too good an engine-runner for this country. Did you leave the country for the country's good?"

"Seeing that we came down here together, you ought to know. But as you ask me, I came down here to enjoy the delightful life they tell us about that people enjoy in the tropics. Have plenty of bananas, oranges, and tropical fruits to eat; pretty, dark-eyed girls to anticipate your every wish and enjoy life as it ought to be enjoyed far from the turmoil and rush of business."

"And you lit in a desert that a crow could fly over for three days without finding enough to fill his craw; work for ninety or a hundred 'dobe dollars a month; have *tortillas, frijoles,* and *huevas* for breakfast; *frijoles, huevas,* and *tortillas* for dinner; *huevas, tortillas,* and *frijoles* for supper. The only decent thing you get is coffee. And the only thing you get in the shape of a decent meal is at Hop Sing's restaurant at the end of the division. If I should get up to-morrow morning and find anything but *tortillas,* beans, and eggs for breakfast, I'd drop dead."

"Don't you ever think of anything but eating? When that fellow lifted our leathers at San Antonio and left us two dollars between us, we thought coffee and sinkers was pretty good eating. If you paid less attention to your stomach and more to your waybills you'd be pulling the string on the varnished cars instead of banging over the road in a little red caboose at the tail-end of a freight-train."

"Is that so? And if you'd pay more attention to your engine instead

of ogling every *señorita* you see, you would be riding on the right side of one of those new, big ten-wheelers, pulling varnished cars instead of a string of dilapidated brownies on a railroad running through the most God-forsaken country on earth."

"Oh, well, keep your grouch. Cheer up, old man. It might be worse. We might be wearing the brass collars, you know."

"Go soak your head, Jim. You are the limit. If it wasn't that you are the only English-speaking member of this crew I wouldn't waste breath talking to you."

Just then the board swung to hold, and the operator came out with the yellow flimsies. Jack and Jim read:

> Dennis, conductor; Carson, engineer, No. 16, will wait at Dolores for 15, and will double back on 15, reporting to general manager immediately upon arrival.
>
> NOMIS, Despatcher.

"Now, wouldn't that rattle your slats," said Jack. "What's up now?"

"I told you a while ago that it might be worse; that we might be wearing brass collars."

"Looks to me like a plain case of carpet," said Jack.

"Never mind, Jack. We've got one pay coming, anyhow."

The whistle of 15 put an end to the conversation. On arrival its crew had an order to double back on 16. The conductor was a Mexican and the engineer was an American. They speculated as to the meaning of this sudden calling into headquarters, but the quartet finally gave it up as hopeless. Sixteen went on to the north with 15's crew and 15 continued on to the south.

Hop Sing was somewhat surprised to see Dennis and Carson straddling a stool at the depot lunch-counter, as they had been there for breakfast, but it was none of his business if they made the round trip over the division in one day instead of two.

Their hunger satisfied, they debated whether it was not too late to go to the general manager's office, but upon reading the order again they concluded that it meant what it said, and if there was no one in the general manager's office at eight o'clock at night they were not to blame. Leaving the lunch-counter, they went up-stairs and were surprised to see it lighted up and the chief clerk at his desk.

"Good evening, gentlemen," he said; "walk right in. Mr. Henderson is waiting for you."

Pushing open a door he motioned them to enter. The door closed softly behind them and they were on the carpet. Mr. Henderson, a portly, middle-aged man whose dark hair was showing the frost-mark, swung round in his swivel-chair and eyed them for a moment.

"Be seated, gentlemen. Mr. Dennis and Mr. Carson, you are doubtless somewhat surprised, but you have been railroading long enough to know that the unexpected always happens. I have selected you for positions that will 'harrow up your souls' because I have thoroughly investigated your records previous to coming to this road, as I do with all men in the service.

"That report is that you are well-educated, sober, nervy, and cool and quick to act in emergencies. Your ability as railroaders has been demonstrated to my complete satisfaction during your service on this road. The proposition I am about to offer you is not arbitrary. Should you choose to reject it you will resume your runs as if nothing had been said, and your refusal will not be held against you.

"Briefly the situation is this: Two hundred and odd miles of road was recently taken over by this company and is now operated as the Isthmus Division. Early to-day the superintendent and the master mechanic of that division were assassinated by bandits calling themselves revolutionists, but having no connection as far as can be learned with any of the lead-

ing revolutionary parties. In fact, we have reason to believe that the party is headed by a Mexican named Manuel Mendosa, who was storekeeper at Las Palomas, the division headquarters as well as terminus.

"Mendosa was discharged a few months ago for grafting, but he had been so crafty that we could not find evidence to convict him, though having abundant proof to our own satisfaction. Now, if you accept you will leave in the morning for Las Palomas and take charge.

"You, Dennis, will have the title of assistant general manager, and you will have plenary powers over that division. You will handle this division as in your judgment seems best, referring nothing to me that you can decide yourself. Your powers on this division are the same as mine over the entire road. It's up to you; all I want is results. Your salary will be six thousand pesos a year and expenses.

"Mr. Carson, you will accompany Mr. Dennis as assistant superintendent of motive-power and equipment. Your salary will be four thousand five hundred pesos a year and expenses.

"You will operate this road as if it were an independent line. I know that you two men will work smoothly together. For that reason I chose you and because of my belief in you I give you my entire confidence."

"May we have half an hour to consider the matter?" Dennis asked.

"Certainly, and I sincerely trust your decision will be in my favor."

The two men walked down the stairs and along the platform to where a truck was standing near the deserted baggage-room. Here they seated themselves on the truck.

"What about the brass collars now, Jack?" was Jim's query. "Who dares say I'm not a prophet?"

"We haven't got them yet," Jack replied.

"No? Why not? All we have to do is to put them on and see how they fit our necks."

"That's true enough, Jim; but so far as I am concerned I doubt my ability to fill my collar."

"The old man is the best judge as to that. As for me, if he thinks that I can hold the job down I'll give it a whirl anyhow. Time enough to doubt your ability when you get fired."

"So you say to try it on?"

"I certainly do. If you are not game enough to tackle it, why, you're not the Jack Dennis I went to school with!"

"All right, old man. I'm with you if we lose. I know that you will stay with me till the last day in the morning. Shall we go up-stairs now?"

Mr. Henderson wore a pleased smile as he glanced at the clock. Whatever the decision such promptness argued well for the men before him.

"Well, gentlemen, what is your decision?"

"We accept, Mr. Henderson," said Dennis.

"Thank you, gentlemen. Now, a word more. You must bend every effort to eliminate Mendosa and his crowd. The bulk of the securities of this road is held by British and American capital. You will fly the British and American flags over all the company's buildings as well as the Mexican flag. It might be well for you to fly these flags on all trains as well.

"Mendosa is outlawed by the Mexican government, but he would hardly dare fire on the American and British flags. There are war-ships of both nations in the harbor. If necessary, call on them for assistance, though I would prefer, if possible, that you handle the elimination process alone.

"I have here the authority of the Mexican government for you to arm all the railroad's employees, if you deem it advisable. That's all, I believe. You will find a service car on No. 2 in the morning which you are to retain for use on your division."

"We will bid you good night and good-by," said Jack, "and if mortal men can win out we'll do it."

"I believe you, gentlemen. Good-by and good luck!"

As the two men descended the stairs Jim asked:

"How does your brass collar feel now, Jack?"

"Pretty comfortable, thank you. A wee bit tight, but I'll get used to it. How's your own?"

"Mine's all right! Only think of it. At noon to-day we were dining sumptuously on *tortillas, frijoles* and eggs. To-morrow morning we breakfast in our private car. If that porter dares to mention *tortillas, frijoles* or *huevas* to me, I'll dump him overboard."

"Who's talking about the eats now? Seems to me it hasn't been so long ago that you called me down good and proper for that same thing."

"I plead guilty. But I move that we hit the hay. It's after ten o'clock and No. 2 leaves at 5.45 A.M.

Neither man spoke of the matter as they prepared to retire. The bodies of the men whose places they were going to fill were hardly cold, but they did not give this a thought. They were soldiers of the rail and content with whatever fate lay upon the knees of the gods.

At seven o'clock the next morning the porter announced that breakfast was served, and the men entered the dining compartment of the car. There they found a breakfast of fruit, rolls, coffee, bacon and eggs and fresh, crisp salad.

Jim called the porter.

"What's your name?"

"Sam, sah."

"You're from the States?"

"Yessah. Yessah, I'se from Mobile, in good ole Alabam, I is."

"How did not get on this car?"

"Dis car am de Sylph, sah. She was Mr. Henderson's car, but he's done got a new one. He told me to stay with the Sylph, and that two Americans would have her who weren't afraid of de debble himself, and that if I stuck to you I'd wear diamonds."

"You're more apt to die in the poorhouse," said Jim.

But Sam did not seem to be worried about that. He went about his work blithely, glad that it was his fate to serve Americans instead of Mexicans.

By nine o'clock the desertlike plain was giving way to broken country, and at Miraflores Junction the Isthmus division began. Broad valleys, glistening between the brown hills like emeralds, came into view as the train wound slowly down the tortuous track and the change in temperature soon made itself felt. Accustomed to the rarer atmosphere of the high plateau country, they began to realize that now, indeed, they were in the tropics.

By noon the train was passing through Cafetals, the bright leaves of the coffee trees contrasting vividly with the bright, red coffee berry. Then they were in the forest primeval. Great trees towered above them in their dress of vivid green; *lianas* ran from tree to tree, bearing flaming orchids of scarlet, white, and gold. A climbing vine had covered the face of a rocky cliff and a mass of scarlet bloom stood out from its background of emerald green with a boldness that was startling.

Toward evening the blue waters of the Pacific came into view, and at five o'clock the train rolled into the station at Las Palomas. The station was a two-story structure, built of stone, the second floor, formerly the general offices, was now used as division offices.

Dennis and Carson slowly climbed the stone steps to the second floor. Immediately at the right was a door bearing the word "Superintendent." They entered and were greeted by a young American.

"My name is Dennis. I have come to take charge of this division."

"Glad to meet you, Mr. Dennis. Mr. Henderson wired you were coming. Will you walk into the private office?"

This apartment they found was very similar to that occupied by Mr. Henderson in point of furnishing. Dennis seated himself in the swivel chair at

the desk and signed to Carson and the clerk to be seated.

"What is your name?" he asked the clerk.

"Hoxie."

"That's a good name. Where from?"

"Texas."

"How long have you been here?"

"Since the road was opened."

"Railroad any before coming here?"

"Yes. On the Texas and Pacific."

"That's good. You are an American railroader, anyhow. Now tell me about the office forces."

"All heads of departments and the chief clerks are mostly Americans. Only the subordinate clerical positions are filled by Mexicans."

"Very well, Mr. Hoxie. I will be on hand in the morning. You will retain your position and pass the word all along that there will be no changes as long as the force gives satisfactory service. By the way, this is Mr. Carson, assistant superintendent of motive power. I wish you to take him over to the shops in the morning and introduce him to the men. What is the best hotel here?"

"You can't say that there is any best. The Tivoli is probably a little better than the others. I thank you for your confidence in me and will try my best to merit it fully. With few exceptions you will find a pretty clever crowd of fellows in all the offices."

The following day both Jack and Jim were busy as bees going over their various departments, and when they met that evening at the Tivoli each had a pretty fair grasp of his work.

"How goes the battle, old man?" Jack asked.

"Fine. I find the power in much better shape than I had expected. Light repairs have been well kept up, and we have nothing due for the back shop. Some of the passenger and freight equipment needs overhauling."

The men sat in front of the hotel for some time, enjoying the excellent cigars they had found in the hotel office cigar stand, and watching the passing throng. With the going down of the sun had come a fall in temperature and the evening was delightfully cool.

They noticed that the people were better looking, appeared better fed and in every way superior to the natives they had met in the plateau country. During the evening they formed the acquaintance of the American, British, German, and French consuls, and found them to be a light-hearted, jovial, genial quartet, and when they parted each felt that he was glad to have met.

About noon the next day Hoxie brought in a sealed note which had been found in the mail-box, addressed to "El Señor Superintendente."

It was poorly written and badly spelled, but when deciphered was found to be a sort of ultimatum from Mendosa, who warned them to leave, saying he would not tolerate any more gringoes in Las Palomas, and if they did not leave and take all other gringoes with them, he should attack the town the next day.

Hoxie watched Dennis closely as he translated the note and seemed relieved when Jack crumpled it up and threw it into the waste-basket. Then he reached down and, picking it up, smoothed it carefully, folded it and stuck it in a pigeon-hole.

"You will at once raise the American, British, and Mexican flags over all the company buildings. Keep the gates to the station and shop *patios* closed, and allow none to enter except known employees of the company. You will fly these flags on all outgoing trains. Call all the shop and yard forces and give them the Mausers, revolvers, and ammunition that you will find in the storerooms. Arrange to feed the men in the office, yards and shops, and provide cots for them to sleep. Allow none to leave, and pass the word that on the first shot from the attacking party they are to shoot, and shoot to kill!"

Hoxie's eyes snapped. Here was no weak-kneed chief who feared to resist because of possible damage to company property. He was a red-blooded American and a scrapper at that.

Hoxie flew out the door and down the stairs three steps at a jump. The great iron gates of the patio clanged shut, and like a fire in prairie grass the word spread through the station yard, general yard and shops, and the men came pouring in from all directions to the store-house, where the arms and ammunition were served out.

The men were wildly enthusiastic. Jack could not know that everybody in Las Palomas hated and detested Mendosa and were ready at the first offer of competent leadership to resist to the death, and when he raised the window and stepped out on the little balcony Hoxie saw him and snapped out an order.

Quickly the men fell into line and dressed to the right, then, eyes to the front brought their arms in admirable precision to a salute, which Jack acknowledged by raising his hat.

The air was rent with shouts and *vivas*, lasting fully five minutes. Hoxie snapped out another order. The men shouldered arms, formed in twos and marched away to the supper tables, stepping like veteran troopers.

Then Hoxie came in with his confession. Unknown to his former chief he had secretly drilled the station, shop and yard men until they were a fairly competent armed body. In a few words he made Jack acquainted with the feeling against Mendosa in the town, and that without exception he was regarded as a bandit pure and simple.

Jack met Jim at supper at the Tivoli, and though they met the consuls there, they said no word of Mendosa's threat, for deep down in his heart Jack believed he was too great a coward to attempt to make his threat good.

After supper Jack and Jim went over to the station and called Hoxie into consultation. Hoxie was positive that Mendosa would attack, for he had been merely waiting for a protest which the change of officers gave him.

Jack decided to sleep on the lounge in his room; Jim went to his office at the shops, and Hoxie went down to the storeroom. Hoxie believed the attack would come about daybreak—about four o'clock in the morning—but he was uncertain whether Mendosa would attack the station or the town first.

He surmised it would be the station, for there was a considerable amount of money in the railroad safes and the express office.

Events showed that Hoxie was right. It was just getting light when Jack was aroused by a touch from Hoxie, who said that a number of men were massing in front of the two *patio* gates. He had formed his men so they were hidden from view of any one at either gate, but could sweep both with their rifles. No move was to be made or shot fired until an attempt was made to force the gates, when they were to fire low.

Jack got Jim on the telephone, and found that he was awake and ready. Men were massing in front of the shop gates. There was no way of gaging the number, but there could not be over four hundred. Day was breaking with the swiftness peculiar to the tropics when this cry arose:

"*Viva Mexico! Los gringoes a muerto!*"

As if this were a signal, a concerted rush was made at the gates, that was met by a sheet of flame from the volleying Mausers, while the bullets swept through the iron grille-work and cut a bloody swath through the massed crowd of men, followed by shrieks of pain and yells of anger.

The attacking party drew off a little as if for consultation. Jack was standing on the little balcony in front of his office window when he found Hoxie at his side.

"That is Mendosa," Hoxie said; "that fellow with the big silver-bordered sombrero in the *ranchero* suit."

"That is Señor Mendosa, is it? Give me your gun."

Praying that his skill as a sharpshooter which he had acquired in a militia company back home might stand him in good stead now, he brought up the rifle and glanced along its sights. So deliberate was he that Hoxie was in a fever of impatience and longing to get the gun himself.

Suddenly the Mauser cracked, Mendosa threw up his hands, turned partly around and sank in a crumpled heap.

"Got him through the head," Jack calmly stated as he handed the gun back to Hoxie.

What more he might have said was muttered. A company of American marines deployed into line opposite the west gate, while a body of British marines deployed at the east gate. Almost simultaneously both bodies of troops fired a volley, and the few bandits who were left hastily broke and ran in every direction, only to be picked up by the gendarmes, who, alarmed by the firing, were rushing toward the spot from their various beats.

The *patio* gates were thrown open and the first to enter was the commander of the American marines.

"Who shot Mendosa?" he asked.

"I did," said Jack.

"And who are you?"

"My name is Dennis. I am an American and general manager of this road. I shot Mendosa, as I would a snake!"

"Good enough. Was that flag flying when Mendosa attacked?"

"All three flags were flying. The securities of this road are owned by American and British capital, and I flew the flags to show the ownership of this property."

"You did right."

PROMOTED!

BY GEORGE WILDEY.

TO-DAY I lived and breathed anew;
Enchanted seemed my cabin seat,
As down the line she blithely flew—
My courser of the winged feet!

A myriad charms that, heretofore,
My dullard's soul had not observed,
The old familiar journey wore
As straight away it stretched and curved.

A fairy loom—the engine's stack
Reeled forth a silvery skein of smoke
Adown the fast receding track,
From where it upward curled and broke.

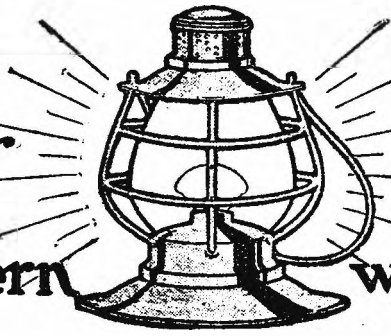
So sweet the rush of air and clean;
So fair and fresh the country seemed;
So bright the distant woodland's green
Where age-old giants slept and dreamed.

Across the burnished mountain ridge
A shaft from out the sunset glow
Shot slantly through the steel-hung bridge
And splashed the dimpling stream below.

The twilight shadows, here and there,
Grotesquely danced from rail to rail;
As one by one, with twinkling flare,
The yellow stars peeped down the trail.

The oft-repeated run, of yore,
Had not so throbbed with heart'ning cheer:
A fireman I had been before—
To-day I am the engineer!

By the Light of the Lantern



Ask us what you want to know

WE want to be as useful as possible to our readers, but, because of the great popularity of this department, we are obliged to impose certain restrictions. It is limited to the answering of questions of an informative, technical, or historical nature only. We cannot answer requests for positions or give information regarding employment. All letters should be signed with the full name of the writer, as an indication of his good faith. We will print only his initials. The editor begs that readers sending in questions will not be disappointed if the answers do not appear as easly as expected. It frequently takes weeks to secure correct answers, owing to the complexity of the questions. All questions are answered free of charge.

W. M. H., Sparkill, New York, and others.—The heaviest and most powerful locomotive in the world is the Triplex compound locomotive, built by the Baldwin Locomotive Works for the Erie Railroad. The general dimensions are as follows:

Gage—4 feet 8½ inches. Cylinders—high-pressure, two, 36 inches x 32 inches; valves, piston, 16 inches diameter. Boiler—type, conical; diameter, 94 inches; thickness of sheets, 15-16 inch and 1 inch; working pressure, 210 pounds; fuel, coal; staying, radial. Fire-box—material, steel; length, 162 inches; width, 108 inches; depth, front, 87¼ inches; depth, back, 68 inches; thickness of sheets, sides, ⅜ inch; crown, ⅜ inch; tube, ⅝ inch. Water space—front, 6 inches; sides, 5 inches; back, 5 inches. Tubes—material, steel; diameter, 5½ inches and 2¼ inches; thickness, 5½ inches No. 9 W. G.; 2¼ inches No. 11 W. G.; number 5½ inches, 53; 2¼ inches, 326; length, 24 feet.

Heating surface — Fire-box, 272 square feet; combustion chamber, 108 square feet; tubes, 6,418 square feet; fire-brick tubes, 88 square feet; total, 6,886 square feet; grate area, 90 square feet.

Driving-wheels — Diameter, outside, 63 inches; center, 56 inches; journals, 11 inches x 13 1-16 inches. Truck wheels—diameter, front, 33½ inches; journals, 6 inches x 12 inches; diameter, back, 42 inches; journals, 9 inches x 14 inches. Wheel-base—rigid, each group, 16 feet 6 inches; driving, 71 feet 6 inches; total, 90 feet. Tank—water capacity, 10,000 gallons; coal capacity, 16 tons.

Weight estimated — On all driving-wheels, 743,000 pounds; on truck, front, 30,000 pounds; back, 57,000 pounds; total, 830,000 pounds. Service—Heavy pushing. Tender section driven by steam. Locomotive equipped with Schmidt superheater. Superheating surface, 1,584 square feet. Tractive-force, 160,000 pounds.

F. E. W., Port Morris, New Jersey, and others. — The letters P., McK. and Y., as you state, refer to the Pittsburgh, McKeesport and Youghiogheny Railroad. The road was leased to the Pittsburgh and Lake Erie Railroad Company on January 1, 1884, for a period of 999 years, and is now, properly speaking, a portion of that road.

R. W. F., Hoopeston, Illinois.—No contrivance has so far come into use for preventing what is known as the "slip of the link," either in the Stephenson or Walschaerts valve-gearing. In common with other wearing parts of mechanical appliances, the keeping of the parts in perfect condition and the avoidance of lost motion, is all that can reasonably be expected to be done. For this purpose means are frequently provided for closing the link by reducing the blocks at the ends of the links. New blocks are also applied to fit the increased opening in the link. The commercial value of an appliance that

would prevent any slip in the link could not be estimated in advance, but it would surely be profitable, as the slip of the link is a decided drawback leading to irregularities in the motion, especially in the case of the Stephenson or shifting link.

W. W. S., Irving, Kansas.—Motormen on gasoline motor-cars are generally graduated from workmen in the mechanical department, who show a special aptitude for such work. In all cases there is a course of special instructions through which the applicant must successfully pass before he is entrusted with the care of so complex a machine as the gasoline motor. It is not necessary to be a machinist or engineman, although such men have a preference over brakemen, guards, or others.

A. C., Findlay, Ohio.—As we have frequently stated, firemen are engaged at the offices of the division master mechanic or superintendent. Application-blanks with full particulars are usually on hand, but generally may be had only on personal application. On the Nickel Plate Road—that is, the New York, Chicago and St. Louis—E. A. Miller is superintendent of motive-power, with offices at Cleveland, Ohio; W. G. Black is division master mechanic at the South Station, Chicago, and H. A. Macbeth is division master mechanic at Conneaut, Ohio.

R. S. T., Coalingo, California.—The highest speed claimed to have been made by a steam locomotive was at Crittenden, May, 1893, by the Empire State Express, one mile in 32 seconds, equal to 112 miles an hour. Automobile—The Blitzen-Benz, at Daytona, Florida, April 23, 1911, 1 kilo or 0.62137 of a mile in 15.88 seconds. Motorcycle—By H. Cissae, at Blackpool, England, July 27, 1905, 1 kilo or 0.62137 of a mile in 25.3 seconds.

C. D. M., Hendricks, West Virginia.—The Western Maryland Railway has 662 miles in operation, 180 passenger cars and 10,042 freight and miscellaneous cars.

Mallet type locomotives are not only used on grades. On account of its distinctive characteristics the Mallet articulated compound locomotive has proved a very efficient type in both pusher and road service. In road service it offers the possibility of increasing the capacity of a division and of hauling the maximum amount of traffic over the line at the least operating cost. On roads having long and steep grades and sharp curves, it is often necessary on these hills to employ several helping engines in order to haul a train of a tonnage equal to the rating of the road locomotive over the remainder of the division. The Mallet articulated compound locomotive provides, in a single engine, under control of a single crew, the necessary power to meet these requirements.

I AM in charge of five Baldwin engines and when setting and squaring the valves I use two methods: (1) After getting the dead centers I set the valves line and line for forward and back motions for both sides and then square the valves for indirect motions. (2) After getting the dead centers I set the valves 1-16 of an inch lead for forward and back motions and then square the valves for indirect motions. Which method is advisable?—A. F. C., Waipalu, Oahu, T. H.

Indirect motion, so called, is applied to all engines having a rocker. Squaring the valves for indirect motion has no kind of meaning whatever. Almost all modern locomotives are indirect in regard to the motion of the valve-gear. Assuming that the locomotives referred to are equipped with the Stephenson valve-gear, the point at which the valve opens should be marked with a suitable tram on the valve-rod, then find the dead centers, and with the reverse-lever in the extreme forward notch, ascertain if the eccentric-rods are the right length. This will be shown by the tram at each dead center. Assuming that the opening of the valve is 1-32 of an inch in the front end and 5-32 of an inch at the back, the rod will have to be shortened 1-16 of an inch, the difference between the two openings.

This should be gone over again carefully, so that the valve opening, whatever it is, is identical at both ends of the piston-stroke. The same method should be applied with the reverse lever in the extreme back notch, in order to ascertain if the back eccentric-rods are the proper length. This should also be repeated, and then the forward motion should be reexamined be-

cause the changing of one rod has an appreciable effect on the action of the other rod. Assuming that this has been done, and that the valve openings are 3-32 of an inch in the forward motion and 1-32 of an inch in the backward motion, the forward eccentric will then require to be moved toward the crank 1-32 of an inch, and the back eccentric will require to be moved 1-32 of an inch further away from the crank, and the result will be that the valves have openings of 1-16 of an inch at all four points.

It may be added that after adjusting the valve-gear with the reverse-lever in full gear, it is good practise to place the lever at some point near the center of the quadrant so that the valve will close or cut off at the point where the greatest amount of work required by the locomotive is usually performed. This point is usually at six or eight inches of the piston-stroke; that is, after the piston has advanced about one-third of its stroke. This cut-off point should be compared on all four points of the forward running motion, and any material variation should be equalized by slightly sacrificing the correct adjustment at the extreme ends of the stroke.

There are a number of excellent books that more fully describe these operations. See the subjoined answer to F. M. J., New Orleans, Louisiana, in this issue.

F. M. J., New Orleans, Louisiana.—We could not use the space in this limited department to produce a complete set of drawings showing the details of the Walschaerts valve-gearing, sometimes knows as the "monkey motion." There are two books that we can confidently recommend to all seeking information on the subject: "The Walschaerts and Other Radial Valve Gears for Locomotives," by W. W. Wood, and "The Valve-Setters Guide," by James Kennedy. Both books are sold by the Angus Sinclair Company, 114 Liberty Street, New York City.

WILL you give the formula worked out in detail to enable one to find the actual tonnage an engine should haul, given certain conditions as to speed, grades, curves, *et cetera*. For this purpose assume an engine with cylinders 20 x 26 inches; steam-pressure, 200 pounds; diameter of driving-wheels, 48 inches. The engine would be engaged in heavy freight service, and would be required to maintain a speed of eight miles per hour on a one per cent grade, the road being comparatively free from curves.—G. J. C., Watrous, Saskatchewan.

The hauling capacity of a locomotive is determined by the relation between the tractive-force developed and the resistance of the train, and both of these factors are dependent on the speed. At starting speeds a locomotive will usually develop, at the rim of the driving-wheels, the rated tractive-force, which is calculated from the dimensions of the engine by the formula:

$$\frac{0.85P \times C^2 \times S}{D} = T$$

T represents the rated tractive-force at the rim of the driving-wheels.

P represents the boiler pressure in pounds per square inch.

C represents the diameter of the cylinders in inches.

S represents the stroke in inches.

D represents the diameter of the driving-wheels in inches.

In the engine mentioned the steam-pressure being 200 pounds, 85 per cent of this amount is 170, which multiplied by the square of the diameter of the cylinders, 400=68,000, which multiplied by the length of the stroke, 26=1,768,000, which divided by 48, the diameter of the wheels, leaves a quotient of 36,833, representing the tractive-power of the locomotive in pounds.

When a train is hauled up a grade, the resistance due to friction is increased by lifting the train against gravity. The amount of this increased resistance is determined as follows: One mile equals 5,280 feet, and if the grade as stated is one per cent of 53 feet per mile, the pull necessary to lift a ton of 2,240 pounds, the standard British ton, will be 2,240 x 53=118,720. This amount divided by 5,280 amounts to 22.5. Now the resistance per ton of 2,240 pounds, according to the best authorities, amounts to about 6 pounds per ton on a straight, level track on a calm day at less than 10 miles per hour. To 6 pounds must be added 22.5, making 28.5 pounds necessary to pull the train up a grade of 53 feet per mile. Hence 36,833 pounds, the tractive-power of the engine, divided by 28.5, amounts to 1,292, the amount in tons which the locomotive is capable of hauling up such a grade.

Curves increase the train resistance to an extent that depends very much on the physical condition of the curve and on the length of the train that is on it. The allowance generally, made for the resistance of curves is 2½ pounds per ton for each degree of curve. It may be added that a great many experiments have shown that the resistance varies greatly according to the load per axle. A train of heavily loaded freight cars weighing 940 tons gave an average resistance of 6 pounds per ton while running nearly twenty miles an hour on a straight, level track. A train of empty freight cars weighing 340 tons showed a resistance of 13 pounds per ton while running on the same track. A passenger-train weighing 363 tons showed 8 pounds per ton resistance at a speed of thirty miles per hour.

The resistance, of course, increases as the speed increases. At 10 miles per hour the resistance may be placed at 6 pounds per ton. At 30 miles per hour the resistance will be increased to 10 pounds per ton. At 50 miles it will require 16 pounds per ton. At 80 miles per hour 24 pounds per ton will be required to keep the train in motion at that speed. These calculations are based on experiments made under the most favorable conditions, and it is safe to add 10 per cent loss due to friction and other causes.

C. G., Barnes City, Iowa.—The membership of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and Enginemen is about 83,000. In regard to the rates of pay for firemen and engineers see answer to A. S. W., Rox, Massachusetts, in this issue.

WHAT is the difference between a dot and a dash in telegraphy and how is each made?

(2) Will you kindly print the Morse code?

(3) How is the key connected in the circuit with the sounder, and how does it operate?—A. L. S., Weeping Water, Nebraska.

(1) A dot is made by a single instantaneous downward stroke of the key. A short dash is made by holding the key down as long as it takes to make three dots. A long dash is made by holding down as long as required to make five dots. A cipher is prolonged so as to occupy about the time required for seven dots. The intervals between dots or dashes in the same letter are called breaks. A space in letters should occupy the time required for a dot and break. The space between letters should occupy the time required for two dots and breaks. The space between words should occupy the time required for three dots and breaks.

The Morse Code.

A . —	N — .
B — . . .	O . .
C . . .	P . . . . .
D — . .	Q . . — .
E .	R . . .
F . . — .	S . . .
G — — .	T —
H	U . . —
I . .	V . . . —
J — . — .	W . — —
K — . —	X . — . .
L — —	Y . . . .
M — —	Z . . . .

Italics U X before and U J after word

1 . — — —	. Period . . — — . .
2 . . — . .	: Colon K O
3 . . . — .	; Semicolon S 1
4 . . . . —	; Comma . — . —
5 — — —	? Interrogation — . . — .
6	! Exclamation — — — .
7 — — . .	$ Dollar Mark S X
8 —	£ Pound P X
	% Mark OUTO
9 — . . —	′ Shilling U T
	Per cent P C
o — —	d Pence — — — D
&	Paragraph — — — —
- Hyphen H X	' Apostrophe is also Q X
Decimal "dot"	Fraction Line — — — — .
( ) Parenthesis	(P N before enclosure) P Y after enclosure
" " Quotation	(Q N before the words) Q J after the words
" ' ' " Quotation within a quotation	(Q X before the words) Q Y after the words
Capital letter C X	

(3) In the simple Morse closed-circuit system used most extensively throughout the United States, the key, battery, and sounder are arranged in circuit. One wire from the battery is connected with the earth and another wire with the sounder. Another wire goes from the sounder to one leg of the key so as to make the brass base of the key part of the circuit. The other leg of the key is insulated. On the other end of the line the key battery and sounder are connected in the same way and the ends of the wire are connected to the insulated leg of the keys on both ends of the line. As the transmitter keys are closed the electricity passes to the sounder, which is held in position against the pull

of a spring. By opening and closing the transmitter key the sounder is made to vibrate, thus delivering the message.

A. S. W., Rox, Massachusetts, and others.—The pay of locomotive firemen varies according to the size and kind of locomotive and also the kind of service performed by the locomotive. On the principal roads in the East the rates of pay are based on a minimum of ten hours a day or 100 miles as follows:

Freight service—

On locomotives less than 80,000 pounds	$2.75
80,000 to 100,000 pounds	2.85
100,000 to 140,000 "	3.00
140,000 to 160,000 "	3.10
170,000 to 200,000 "	3.20
200,000 to 250,000 "	3.30
250,000 to 300,000 "	3.55
All engines over 300,000 pounds on drivers	4.00
Mallet engines, regardless of weight on drivers	4.00

Passenger service—

Weights of locomotives in pounds on drivers:

Less than 80,000 pounds	$2.45
80,000 to 100,000 pounds	2.50
100,000 to 140,000 "	2.60
140,000 to 170,000 "	2.70
170,000 to 200,000 "	2.85
200,000 to 250,000 "	3.00
250,000 to 300,000 "	3.20
300,000 to 350,000 "	3.40
All engines over 350,000 pounds on drivers	3.60
Mallet engines regardless of weight on drivers	4.00

Where two firemen are employed on a locomotive as a result of the application of Article 6 hereinafter, the rates of pay to each fireman shall be as follows:

Weight on drivers, 100,000 up to 250,000 pounds	$2.75
Weight on drivers over 250,000 pounds	3.00

Switching service—

Switch engine firemen on locomotives weighing less than 140,000 pounds on drivers, per day of ten (10) hours or less	2.50
Switch-engine firemen on engines weighing 140,000 pounds or over on drivers, per day of ten (10) hours or less (excluding Mallets, $4.00)	2.60

On the principal roads in the East the rates of pay for locomotive engineers is as follows:

Through passenger service—

One hundred miles or less, or 5 hours or less to constitute a day overtime on a basis of 20 miles per hour.

Per Day.	Overtime per Hour.	Overmiles per Mile.
$4.25	$.50	$.0425

Local passenger service—

One hundred miles or less, or 10 hours or less to constitute a day's pay. Overtime on a basis of 10 miles per hour.

Per Day.	Overtime per Hour.	Overmiles per Mile.
$4.25	$.50	$.0425

Through freight—

One hundred miles or less, or ten hours or less to constitute a day overtime on a basis of 10 miles per hour.

Per Day.	Overtime per Hour.	Overmiles per Mile.
$4.75	$4.75	$.0475

Local freight—

Seventy-five miles or less, or 10 hours or less to constitute a day overtime on a basis of 10 miles per hour.

Per Day.	Overtime per Hour.	Overmiles per Mile.
$5.00	$.667	$.0667

Switching service—

Ten hours to constitute a day.

Consolidation type, per day, $4.75.

Overtime, per hour, $.0475.

Other classes, per day, $4.10.

Overtime, per hour, $.41.

J. S. W., New York City.—A limited train is one accommodating a limited number or class of passengers, as a limited mail or express train. A limited train is usually a fast express train carrying besides baggage and mail cars, only sleeping, parlor, dining, observation, and similar cars on which an extra fare is charged.

J. D. S., Ottawa, Kansas.—Marine engines are reversed the same as a stationary engine on a locomotive; that is, by changing the position of the valve in relation to the piston, usually by reverse-lever or screw. Reversing the motion of a shaft is also accomplished by the application of belting, one pulley running with straight belting and another with cross belting as in the case of planing and other

machines. Reversing is also accomplished by movable clutches attached to variable gearing. Reversing of propeller blades could be done in this way, but we doubt if any advantage would be gained, as the reversing of the engine is an easy matter. The real difficulty is in overcoming the momentum of the moving mass of the vessel.

DESCRIBE the principle on which an injector works.—J. D., Hoboken, New Jersey.

The principle on which an injector works is a combination of forces velocity and an induced current of water passing through suitably proportioned tubes designated as steam-nozzle, combining-tube, and delivery-nozzle. Under a given pressure the velocity of escaping steam is much greater than that of water, which would be ejected were a hole opened in the boiler below the water line. The reduced orifice in the steam-nozzle naturally increases the velocity of the escaping steam as it enters the combining tube where it entrains the feed water and condensers. As the escaping steam is being condensed it has lost none of its velocity except that due to friction of the pipes through which it passes, consequently it has a vastly greater penetrating force after condensation than the resistance in the boiler. Leaving the combining tube, the condensed steam and feed water now pass through the delivery-nozzle into the branch-pipe, where the ramlike force imparted to the water by the velocity of the escaping steam unseats the boiler-check and permits the free flow of water to the boiler.

G. S. S., Lawrenceville, New Jersey.—The principal dimensions of locomotive No. 3395, a Pacific or 4-6-2 type of the Pennsylvania Railroad are as follows: total weight of engine, 317,000 pounds; weight on drivers, 197,800 pounds; diameter of drivers, 80 inches; boiler pressure, 200 pounds; cylinders, 27 x 28 inches; maximum tractive-power, 43,300 pounds. This locomotive exerts a greater tractive-force than any other Pacific type locomotive yet constructed.

The principal dimensions of the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad Pacific type No. 1346 are as follows: total weight of engine, 251,500 pounds; weight on drivers, 154,000 pounds; diameter of drivers, 73 inches; boiler pressure, 200 pounds; cylinders, 24 x 28 inches; maximum tractive-power, 37,700 pounds.

J. G. C., Belle Vernon, Pennsylvania.—We could not venture to place a value on a pump that would deliver water regardless of temperature up to the boiling point. In the matter of packing, which is the most likely to be affected by high temperatures, there are a number of makers of high-class packing which successfully resists a much higher temperature than that of boiling water.

M. A. B., Macomb, Illinois.—The plating of metal surfaces is accomplished in four different ways: by oxidation, usually involving dipping in an acid bath; (2) by electrodeposition, involving suspension in a metallic solution through which an electric current is passed; (3) by applying a paste that is fixed, as by burning in; (4) by pouring on molten plating metal and rolling. The methods of plating are classified under a number of headings, such as gilding and gold-plating, bronzing, coloring metals, silver and silver-plating, platinizing, oxidizing, timed lead-plating, *et cetera*. If you will give us further particulars in regard to the material and the kind of plating you wish to do, we will endeavor to give you further information on the subject.

H. L. R., East Toledo, Ohio.—Placing the headlight on the smoke-box on many of the larger modern locomotives has several advantages, among them the fact that it is more convenient. In some cases there is not quite room on top of the boiler for the largest kinds of headlights, the extreme limit of height from the rails being about sixteen feet, for passing clear of many bridges and tunnels.

On account of the curved form of solid truck wheels it is claimed that there is a greater degree of resiliency and durability in this type of wheel than in the cases of the more rigid spoked wheels.

V. E. P., Kingsville, Missouri.—The dimensions of the Missouri Pacific Railway locomotive No. 6433, Pacific type, are: total weight of engine, 259,000

pounds; weight on drivers, 165,500 pounds; diameter of drivers, 73 inches; boiler-pressure, 180 pounds; cylinders, 26 x 26 inches; maximum tractive-power, 36,800 pounds.

The trucks commonly used under freight cars have four wheels, but six-wheel trucks are used in special cases. Passenger cars used either four or six wheel trucks, six wheels being used under very heavy equipment.

R. P., Madisonville, Kentucky.—San Francisco Bay between Oakland and San Francisco is not bridged, but trains run on a long trestle known as Oakland Mole, which extends some distance into the bay. Passengers are then transferred by ferry-boats to the San Francisco side. The reason why San Francisco Bay has never been bridged, as you suggest, is owing, probably, to the interference of deep-sea shipping, San Francisco being a very large seaport.

Besides the Southern Pacific the Santa Fe and the Western Pacific run to Oakland. It would probably take up more space than we could spare to give you a list of all the railroads that run mail trains. A mail train may carry mail only or both mail and passengers.

J. M. R., Larson, Washington—Packing —A device or arrangement for making a steam-tight fitting on the piston-rod and valve-stem where they pass through their stuffing-boxes on cylinder and steam-chest, respectively. It is also used on air-pump piston-rods and throttle-rods. Metallic packing, generally employed, consists of a set of soft metal rings, each cut in one place so as to take up the wear of a rod, and is held in place by a spring. Asbestos, hemp, and other packings are also used. Packing is also applied to the rings used on pistons.

Packing Ring (air-brake) — A soft metal ring set in a groove in the pistons of the steam and air cylinders of an air-pump, and in the triple-valve and engineer's brake-valve to make a steam-tight or air-tight fit in the respective cylinders. The rings are turned slightly larger than the cylinder and are cut apart diagonally at one point so that when compressed they will tend to spring open.

Piston Ring—A cast-iron, brass or soft alloy ring made slightly larger and cut at one place so as to spring outward and fit snugly against the cylinder, thus making an air or steam-tight joint. Two such rings are commonly used.

Piston T-Ring—A cast-iron ring of T-section, usually shrunk on a piston to hold the packing rings. It is called also a bull-ring.

Piston—A metal disk with packing, *et cetera*, made to fit air or steam tight and work back and forth in a cylinder. The piston consists of a piston-head attached to a piston-rod. The piston follower or follower-plate lies at the back of the piston-head, enclosing between them the piston packing rings, or, as in the Westinghouse brake-cylinders, the piston-packing leather which is provided with a packing-leather expander. The follower-plate is secured to the piston with follower-bolts.

TOLD IN TABLOID.

Brief Answers to Questions that Puzzle Our Readers. What Do You Want to Know?

MALLET locomotives were not built for speed. Their limit is about 18 miles an hour. They can be run faster but to their detriment.

Pompeii was destroyed by an eruption of Vesuvius, A. D. 79.

There are about 38,000 station-agents employed in the United States.

The University of Paris is the largest in the world. It has enrolled over 17,000 students.

North of Twenty-Third Street, the average width of Manhattan Island (New York City) is 2½ miles.

The Mississippi River at maximum discharge empties 138,000,000 cubic feet of water into the Gulf of Mexico per minute.

There is no fixed amount of pay for beginners in the railroad telegraph service. The amount paid ranges from $20 to $50 a month.

The value of the lumber and timber products of the United States is $1,156,129,000. There are 784,989 persons engaged in this industry.

From 1902 to 1912 the output of locomotives in the United States increased 51.1 per cent. In 1902 there were 41,225 locomotives in operation. In 1912 there were 62,291.

The total value of all railroad cars constructed in all establishments in the United States in 1909 (latest figures) was $102,137,396. The value of the steam-railroad cars was $94,827,287.

All calculations of time are based on a fictitious sun—*not the real sun*. The fictitious sun keeps better time. See "How Time is Made," by C. H. Claudy, RAILROAD MAN'S MAGAZINE, October, 1912.

Nearly 30,000 miles of railroad in the United States are now operated by the use of fuel oil. About 30,000,000 barrels of oil are consumed as fuel. In 1911 the average number of miles traveled per barrel was 3.75.

The Norfolk and Northwestern Railway has six-wheel-truck freight cars with a capacity of 180,000 pounds each. They carry coal from the mines to tide-water. You will find a description on page 657 of our magazine for September, 1913.

The British Empire has more passenger cars than the United States. John Bull owns 51,846; Germany, 48,255; the United States ranks third with 45,292, and France fourth with 30,993. Great Britain carries 1,240,000,000 passengers yearly and the United States 890,000,000.

On May 19, 1893, a train on the New York Central and Hudson River Railroad ran from Looneyville to Grimesville, New York, a distance of five miles, in three minutes. This was at a speed of one hundred miles an hour. Ten days previous to that record the same train made one mile over the same run in thirty-five seconds, or 102.8 miles an hour.

COUNTRY-WIDE MOVEMENT FOR STATION-AGENTS' ORGANIZATION.

By EARL H. MORTON, President, Order of Railroad Station Agents.

THE Order of Railroad Station Agents was organized at Lawrence, Massachusetts, in 1906. This organization has been very successful from its beginning. It has done more for the station, freight, ticket-agents and bonded employees in the way of securing better conditions and wage increases than any other labor body in existence.

Since the biennial convention of the organization, held at Boston last February, hundreds of inquiries for information concerning the organization, and requests for applications have been received at 53 State Street, Boston, the headquarters of the organization. Agents from all over the country seem to be desirous of joining an exclusive agents' organization. They are beginning to realize that the only way they can be legislated for, and properly represented, is through an agents' organization. At the biennial convention it was decided to carry on a campaign of education and organization.

The grand division stands ready to supply organizers and organize a division wherever there seems to be a sufficient number of agents or bonded employees who wish to affiliate with the organization.

For the past five years the Order of Railroad Station Agents and the Brotherhood of Railroad Signalmen have worked more or less in concert, although no formal agreement exists between them. These two classes of employment include the best in the telegraph profession, and are a powerful combination.

Ever since the great railway strike in England two years ago, which brought about one of the greatest railroad labor federations that ever existed, the Order of Railroad Station Agents has been very much interested in federation. Consequently the grand division of the organization secured the services of Harry Phillips, former deputy mayor of London, and one of the honorary secretaries of the English Railway Workers Federation, to conduct a campaign of education and deliver a series of lectures on the subject of federation to the various local divisions.

This campaign has been effective. Other organizations have become interested. At the biennial convention a committee was appointed by the grand division to devise a plan by which all railroad labor bodies could cooperate in some form of a labor council, each organization at the same time retaining its individual identity.

The committee invited all of the railroad labor bodies to send delegates to attend a meeting to discuss cooperation. A successful and enthusiastic meeting was held at the Quincy House, Boston, April 26.

Somewhere in the C. B. and Y.

BY EDGAR FRANKLIN,

Author of "The Run for the Rotary."

A FULL BOOK-LENGTH RAILROAD-MYSTERY NOVEL COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE

CHAPTER I.

Rumors and One Fact.

USUALLY, confronting his well-favored self in the mirror, and thinking his own pleasant thoughts, Mr. John Phelps smiled as he tied his afternoon cravat. He did not smile to-day.

And this was odd, because at twenty-six smiles still come easily, and in oases of luxury like the Rexnore Apartments the average of good cheer is higher than elsewhere. Only young gentlemen of very ample income have bachelor quarters amid the carven panels and the stained glass of the Rexnore—young men, most of them, who keep older, graver men to look after their wardrobes.

Of the latter was Brown, who stood waiting with the gray silk vest, watching his employer's profile the while, and wondering slightly at its sober and rather nervous lines. Far from curving upward, the corners of Mr. Phelps's mouth pointed toward the wonderful piece of Oriental weaving beneath his feet; and the lazy deftness was all gone from his fingers, too, for he merely twitched the necktie into shape and turned from the glass to wriggle into the vest as Brown asked:

"You're going down-town, sir?"

Mr. Phelps started oddly and rewarded his valet with a glance that was almost furtive.

"Of course!"

"I'll order the taxicab around now, sir?"

"Yes," said Phelps, and added: "No!"

"I beg pardon, sir."

"I'll ride down in the subway."

"It'll be very warm and uncomfortable there on a day like this, sir," Brown objected.

His employer smiled in a grim and cryptic fashion.

"It may not be the only warm and uncomfortable place in New York this afternoon, Brown," he muttered. "No, I don't want that light stick—it's too giddy. I don't want any stick, in fact. What the devil's the matter with this coat, anyway, Brown? It fit well enough the last time I wore it."

His valet surveyed critically the ideal specimen of America's most expensive tailoring. A microscope might possibly have detected a wrinkle, a micrometer might have measured a misplaced bit of stitching; to the unaided senses the thing was perfect—wherefore, veering from the impolitic business of contradicting his employer, Mr. Brown merely cleared his throat and said:

"Oh—as to the summer hangings, sir. The man was here with the estimate this morning. Two hundred and seventeen dollars and—"

"You didn't tell him to go ahead with 'em, Brown?" Phelps asked quickly.

"No, sir."

"Then, if he comes again, tell him I'll drop him a line when I want them. I—I don't know whether I'll close up the place over summer or—or—"

His voice trailed off. Mr. Phelps, in fact, looking out of the open window with eyes narrowed, was biting his lips; and since that was a trick which Brown had never watched before, and which irritated him strangely, he coughed again and murmured:

"The champagne, Mr. Phelps—"

"What about it?"

"We're down to four quarts. I'd better order—"

"You'd better not!" his employer said flatly, with a tart little smile. "I don't drink a pint of that stuff in a year."

"But the gentlemen who come here—" escaped the valet.

"Any gentleman bringing a champagne thirst into these rooms will have to satisfy it with beer—or ice-water. For to-night, at any rate, Brown. And for that matter, if any one calls up and announces that he's going to drop in this evening, I do not expect to be at home."

"Very well, sir."

"I may not be, either. I may—well, don't stand there like that, Brown! Get my hat!" the usually genial Mr. Phelps concluded irritably.

He sighed aloud as the valet vanished. He filled his cigar-case and sighed more heavily at the sight of the six survivors that remained in the bottom of the box. That was the last hundred of that particular brand, he recalled suddenly; and possibly, before he enjoyed the almost incomparable aroma of other thousands of their like—

"What in Heaven's name was that?" asked Mr. Phelps.

"Only the telephone, sir," his valet said soothingly from invisible reaches beyond the curtains.

"Well, if it happens to be any one named Murley—I've told him repeatedly never to call me up—but if it is Murley's office, Brown, don't try to take the message, because I—" chattered Mr. Phelps, and stopped short at the sound of his own words.

The receiver clicked back into place and Brown faced his employer almost sternly.

"It's your sister, Mrs. Dedham, sir, that's come to call on you, and I've told her that you're at home," he said. "She's coming up now, sir."

"And you'd like to suggest that I have her take me to see the old family doctor, eh?" laughed Phelps, and his lips shook with sheer, strange relief.

"Possibly not that, sir—but a member of your own family, sir—" murmured Brown.

For a moment the relation of employer and employee dropped away. Mr. Phelps laid a startled hand on his valet's arm and peered anxiously at him as he demanded:

"Brown, on the level, do I look as crazy as all that?"

"Well, I may say, sir, that you seem very nervous indeed, Mr. Phelps, and—strange, sir. And knowing your perfect health as I have these last six or seven years, and the very regular life you live, it is really very distressing to see—"

The lord of the apartment straightened up angrily.

"All right, Brown," he said. "Let Mrs. Dedham in. I'll be there in a moment."

After which, quite alone, he laid strong hands upon the chiffonier, gripped until his knuckles were white, looked straight at his reflection and smiled; it was nothing like his usual cheery expression, and he tried again; and at the third attempt, a person distinctly like the everyday John Phelps smiled back—and he turned away with a grunt.

Because he was an ass! He was all right—perfectly all right in every respect. Everything in the whole world was quite as it should be; he looked at the rug and confided the fact to the bright red spot. He bit the end from

a cigar and nodded reassurance at the flickering match; he swallowed, rather noisily, and inhaled deeply.

And then, since Brown had shuffled through the next room, carrying the very faintest hint of a delicate, familiar perfume in the air about him, Mr. Phelps contrived his smile again, examined it in one last, flitting glance, and sauntered down his little hallway, humming blithely.

In his packed, luxurious little living-room, the extremely pretty woman of thirty waited for his brief kiss and continued her inspection of him. Mr. Phelps ignored it, albeit he was vaguely aware of the inspection.

There was a big chair in a shadowy corner, where the light did not strike; and for some reason he preferred shadowy corners this afternoon. He sauntered to the big chair and dropped into it; and the voice that came from the shadows was distinctly lazy:

"It's nearly a year since you last honored this humble establishment, sis!"

Mrs. Dedham's smile was very preoccupied.

"I have three kids, Jacky," she said.

"How are they, by the way?"

"Fine! They—"

There seemed no end to that particular sentence, save the dimpling, absent smile that flickered for a moment and vanished altogether.

"The roses must be blooming all about the humble Dedham mansion by this time?" Phelps suggested with a grin.

His sister faced him with a little frown.

"The first of them appeared this week," she said. "Why not come and pick a few yourself? Westchester isn't across the world, you know. We haven't seen you for a month."

"A man of my vast activities and countless connections—" Phelps began blandly.

"And if you had found time to come and see the only sister you'll ever have, you might have spared me the—why, the deliberate aspect of this!"

She flushed faintly with annoyance, and Mr. Phelps sat bolt upright.

"What on earth is it, Sallie? It isn't possible that you've collided with trouble?"

"Not exactly, but—" She shook her head resignedly, and beautiful, earnest eyes settled on John Phelps. "This is a business call, Jacky!"

Mr. Phelps laughed outright.

"There is no such thing as business, Sallie," he stated.

"Are you sure of that?" his sister inquired curiously.

"Has the stain of trade ever soiled these fair hands?" asked Mr. Phelps as he extended two large, reasonably hard palms.

"Johnny, you'll have to stop the nonsense," Mrs. Dedham said sternly. "This is business. I don't like the job—you know perfectly well that I've never meddled with your affairs since you grew too big to spank; but I've taken it and—"

"Well?" asked the tenant, and there was tense, lively interest in his tone.

"Mr. Peters came to see me yesterday."

"The old family lawyer, Sallie?" Phelps exclaimed.

"The same, Jacky. He wanted to talk about you."

"Then why the deuce didn't he come to me to do his talking?"

"Because, as he said, you are several years beyond your majority, a free and independent citizen, with full power to kick him down-stairs if you chose to take exception to what he said," Mrs. Dedham said quietly, but firmly. "Also, he fancies that you think him a rather stuffy old person, several decades behind the times."

"He's right!" said Phelps with undue warmth. "I do!"

Mrs. Dedham studied her brother with rather sad interest.

"You seem to have a grim suspi-

cion of what he wanted to talk about, boy?" she said gently.

"Possibly," grunted Phelps. "Go on!"

"The whole idea was that rumors have been reaching him, Jack. He said that he had heard the same thing from a dozen quarters, and that it seemed to be authentic in every case, and—"

"In short," said Mr. Phelps, "he said that when dad's estate was split up, a year ago, you received one million and showed your good judgment by dropping it into Dedham's ten million dollar concern; while I received another million and—"

"Showed your — er — bad judgment—" his sister suggested.

"By taking the management of it out of Peters's hands!" concluded the man in the big chair. "All right. I did. What then?"

"Then, according to his rumors, you spent it!"

"How much did he know and how much did he guess?" Phelps asked flatly.

"Johnny, is there really so much to know?" his visitor asked, with very real concern. "I thought that he—"

"There's nothing at all to know, Sallie!" her brother said harshly. "I'm entirely capable of looking after myself and my affairs. I—"

He stopped, for somehow the words lacked a thoroughly convincing ring; he pursed his lips and played with the fountain pen in his fingers; and curiously, his ostensible calm considered, the cap split in two. He dropped the pieces covertly to the floor behind him, and Mrs. Dedham sighed lightly and smiled.

"Then I needn't make the impassioned plea he suggested? I need not fall on my knees and beg you to save yourself before it is too late?"

"Sallie, you need not!" Phelps said shortly. "Here! I'll confess, if you like—what there is to confess. It's perfectly true that I have converted some of the gilt-edged securities into cash; it is also true that I have carried that cash into Wall Street and—er—lost some of it. But as for—um—plunging heavily, you know—"

"You haven't?" Mrs. Dedham asked with marked relief.

"You see, Sallie, I'm not the type that hangs over the ticker with a temperature of one hundred and five and a clammy perspiration on my brow," Phelps pursued with somewhat hasty irrelevance. "When I started what little fun I've had with the stock market, I made a cast-iron rule never even to look at a ticker; for that matter, I don't even buy the Wall Street editions of the papers! I give my orders — my small trading orders—in the morning, and then forget it until late afternoon."

"And then?"

"Then I go down and — ah — find out how much I've won."

"Or lost?"

"As the case may be, of course," said Mr. Phelps. "I'm going down in a few minutes. That's really all."

He managed a really creditable laugh, yet it brought no enthusiastic echo from across the room. Mrs. Dedham fell silent for a little.

"Jacky," she said presently, "if things were not—all right, you'd come to me? You'd let Herbert pull you out, wouldn't you? That husband of mine is the greatest little puller-out in the world for people in financial trouble, and he likes you tremendously."

"And I appreciate his kindness and reciprocate his deep regard," Phelps chuckled; "but I don't need him."

The subject seemed to have reached its logical end. Mrs. Dedham twice opened her pretty lips for further speech and changed her mind each time. Her brother, waiting with a defensive compression of his own lips, relaxed suddenly at her light:

"Coming home with me to-night? I motored down."

"Hardly to-night, Sallie."

"Shall I run you down to Wall Street now?"

"No, I—I have several things to do before I start," Phelps said hastily. "I'm just as much obliged, but—"

His bland smile came readily enough this time. Mrs. Dedham, rising lazily, glanced at her reflection in the mirror, and, coming to his side, dropped a plump arm across his shoulders and rumpled his hair.

"Jacky," she sighed, "sometimes I wish that you'd grown up a molly-coddle or that I'd turned into one of the mannish women. You're so beastly cocky, and I'm so essentially a female, that there has been no real confidence between us for years."

Mr. Phelps laughed rather too heartily as he dragged her down and kissed the end of a nose carefully powdered against the June heat.

"Go home and worry about your kids, Sallie," he said. "Financial matters—"

He ceased just there, for Mrs. Dedham had wriggled away. Further, Mrs. Dedham was staring with parted lips at the top of the little curio cabinet in the corner; and now she reached forth and acquired a picture-frame and stared at it. It was, Heaven knew! a sufficiently ornate affair; of solid, dull-chaste gold, a dozen diamonds studded the sides, and at the top, worked in small rubies, the single letter "M" glittered.

"Well, *who,*" Mrs. Dedham asked breathlessly, "is the lady that deserves *that?*"

"She—" Phelps flushed a deep brick-red.

"Johnny, did you have that frame made for that picture?" his sister demanded.

"I did," agreed Phelps.

There was a certain wicked grin which for twenty years had lurked behind Mrs. Dedham's reposeful features; it appeared suddenly now.

"Well, bless his little heart, he must be hard hit to do a thing like that!" she chuckled. "Who is she?"

"Pretty?" her brother queried with heavy unconcern.

"She's a little peach, Jacky," Mrs. Dedham said candidly, "but I don't know her."

"There are probably several million other little peaches in the same unhappy condition," said Mr. Phelps. "And now, if you're going to do the usual shopping, you'll have to hurry."

"My shopping's all done, thanks," his sister said cheerfully, tapping the remarkable frame. "So—who is she?"

"Well, her name is Miriam."

"Miriam what?"

"I don't know," Mr. Phelps admitted rather astonishingly. "I met her at one of those idiotic afternoon things of Mrs. Rowley's six weeks ago, and I didn't catch her last name. Two or three of the girls were calling her—Miriam. And—my things happened to be up in Bill Rowley's room—and I went up alone later to get them and—well, that picture happened to be standing on somebody's dressing-table and somebody wasn't in their room and the door was open."

"And you stole it?" Mrs. Dedham asked breathlessly.

"I did. That's all."

"And you brought it home here, measured it, and then spent two or three thousand dollars on that frame!" murmured his wondering sister. "And you've never tried to find out who or what she was—"

"Sallie, that'll do," said John Phelps. "Before I permit myself any better acquaintance with that particular girl I'm going to tuck away millions enough to—well, I'm going down-town now."

Mrs. Dedham replaced the frame slowly and found her little hand-bag; the grin was still there as she moved toward the door.

"I never thought it would happen—not like that!" she breathed. "I hope she's as nice as she looks."

"She's considerably nicer," stated Mr. Phelps as he laid a hand on the knob.

And then he was alone once more,

holding the picture in both hands and looking at it. There rested upon his features a smile that tilted on the border-line between deep, almost overpowering, sentiment and congenital imbecility. He sighed—and the clock struck half past four.

Mr. Phelps started so violently that the astonishing frame all but slipped to the floor. He put it carefully back upon the cabinet and squared his shoulders. Turning, he drew in one long breath and stared out of the high window and into the deep blue of the sky, while Brown stood just behind, waiting with his hat.

He might just as well face it; when he left those rooms and steered downtown each little second would be taking him that much nearer to considerable wealth or — *absolute ruin!* Evasive statements to an easy-going sister were well enough in their way; but they lay behind him now and he was about to confront solid fact, and to confront it with the knowledge that, silly or otherwise as he might be, positively his final collection of patrimonial dollars had been wagered on this day's market.

Up to the moment he had not admitted quite so much even to himself: now, alone with Brown, his hat, and possibly his conscience, he shut his teeth and fully realized that yesterday's check had taken his last bank balance from the books of the institution; that the uncounted roll of money in his pocket might be all that stood between his august self and plain, old-fashioned pennilessness!

And *if*—Mr. Phelps turned suddenly and snatched his hat. Ten seconds more of this meditation and he'd land in a sanatorium rather than in Wall Street!

Outside the apartment people seemed to notice no change in him. The elevator-boy executed the same salaam for which each Christmas Day he received a crisp fifty-dollar bill; the ornate person at the door down-stairs bowed him to the street quite as if he might not be tottering on his throne. For some strange reason even the man in the subway ticket-office failed to note that this was a distinctly trying day for John Phelps.

And to some extent the indifference of the community steadied him. He realized vaguely that the gray-haired man across the aisle might possibly have troubles of his own; that the tired little blond woman, managing all at once two small children, a disputed stick of candy, and four bundles, was even more wrapped in her own concerns. Climbing to the open air, he felt that possibly things might not be so bad as he feared; and almost simultaneously he realized that they must be.

And it wouldn't do. Mr. Phelps shook himself together as he crossed Broadway and scowled down Wall Street—he was actually trembling all over. He was in the first real spasm of nervous terror in all his life, and it should be his last. His hands might have turned to ice, his feet to stone, and his blood to water, but he declined to show it. He favored a passing policeman with a ghastly smile and turned into the office-building where, if you look over the little names on the big directory, you will find Murley & Co. listed.

The lettering on the door told him superfluously that Murley & Co. were brokers; the stillness of the building told him that the day's work was about done down here. No typewriters clattered behind that corrugated pane, no hurrying feet crossed the familiar parquet floor. And he was as well satisfied, for this particular interview with Henry Murley were better private. He swallowed thrice and turned the knob, hoping from the bottom of his being that the door was locked.

Instead of which it opened with a loud squeak and drew the attention of the big, harsh-looking man in the open private office beyond. The large man, who chanced to be the surviving

Murley, glanced at Mr. Phelps. Mr. Phelps, with eyes that protruded from their very sockets, focused his whole soul on the large man as he asked chokily:

"Well—where—do—I—stand?"

"*You're smashed!*" said Mr. Murley, and picked up a new bundle of papers.

CHAPTER II.

Missions.

FAR above an elevator-gate clanged. The sound floated down, almost inaudibly; yet it penetrated to the consciousness of John Phelps, standing petrified in the middle of the customers' room. He turned slowly and blinked at the open doorway; then on tiptoe he moved to the door and closed it—and looked at it numbly for an instant—and then turned back to Mr. Murley. That gentleman was still writing busily. It occurred to Phelps that in all probability he had not even spoken; that this was all the incredible trick of a disordered, overstrained imagination.

"Did you—er—say—" he began.

Murley glanced up.

"I said that you were smashed, Mr. Phelps. Sorry! Tell you about it in a moment." He pointed with his pencil. "Chair."

And he glanced down again and ran up a column of figures that might have represented the aggregate wealth of the world, while Mr. Phelps, drifting as one drifts in a nightmare, located the leather chair beside the desk and settled into it. There for a little while he sat, passive and insensate as any bowl of jelly, while Murley figured and murmured.

It could not have happened, of course. And still it had happened. Reared from the cradle in the pleasing belief that a spare million or two is as much a conventional necessity to the well-regulated citizen as his dining-table, Mr. Phelps, in the very condition of having acquired a yearly income of nothing at all, was simply incapable of recognizing the thing as a human possibility.

Bits of understanding were filtering into his stunned brain even now, however. He looked dazedly at Murley and groped for a properly coherent question—and just then Mr. Murley laid aside his figures and whirled into cold facts with:

"Don't look like that, Mr. Phelps. You're not the first man to lose money in this part of town."

"I—know it. I—"

"And you won't be the last," the broker said cheerfully, as he leaned back and drew at his splendid cigar. "Well—you figured that she was due for a considerable rise to-day or to-morrow, didn't you?"

"C. B. and Y.—yes," Phelps said mechanically.

"Precisely—C. B. and Y.," echoed his broker. "She dropped."

"How far?"

"Below the point where you were interested, Mr. Phelps."

"That means that my—my margins—"

Murley smiled his bland sympathy.

"My dear sir," he said, "you and that margin proposition parted company, to the best of my recollection, about quarter past eleven this morning. I rather expected that you'd be watching the market to-day, at any rate, and that we'd hear from you, but—"

He extended his pink palms and shrugged his shoulders. Phelps clacked a dry tongue and leaned forward.

"I'm—ruined?" he asked.

"You've lost every cent you dropped yesterday—yes," Murley answered. "The confounded thing began to recover, toward the close of the market. To-morrow, possibly, it'll take another of its flights."

And he started a little, for the fog was blowing from Phelps's brain at last, and his expression was growing distinctly unpleasant.

"It's at liberty to go up to a billion dollars a single share, so far as I'm concerned!" he said. "I'm done with it!"

"You're not contemplating any further C. B. and Y. fliers, eh?"

"Nor any other kind!" the client exploded. "I'm broke—smashed— I haven't a thousand dollars left on earth!"

"Well—bless my soul!" exclaimed Murley. "Is that a fact?"

Even with the last word or two, a new note had seemed to creep into his voice. Mr. Phelps, as a customer, appeared to have passed out of the running these last few seconds; and while Murley, perhaps, was no more calloused than the average, he still did not remain after hours in the office for his health.

"Then - your—er—operations are over?" he muttered.

"If this were the year five thousand, my operations wouldn't be any more thoroughly over than they are at this minute!" Phelps said bitterly. "C. B. and Y.—"

"That's the point of the whole thing, Phelps!" the other said abruptly. "*Why* C. B. and Y.?"

"I don't know what you mean?"

"Just this, my dear boy," said Murley, and leaned back comfortably —for, after all, advice delivered when it can no longer possibly do either good or harm is a cheap commodity. "To the best of my observation, you have felt yourself burdened with a divine mission to make several million dollars on the stock of that one, specific railroad? You have stuck to it with a bulldog tenacity that beat anything I ever saw."

"Well?"

"When, according to your judgment, C. B. and Y. was due for a rise, it has, invariably, taken a tumble. When you felt that it was due for a sharp drop, it has climbed. On the one occasion when you bought a big block outright and held it, the stuff stood almost stock still, month on end, dropping just enough that each month represented a rather heavy loss to you —and finally, you sold out in sheer disgust. Every time you've taken a shot at it, some one moved the target. Why did you stick?"

"Because I set out to make some money on C. B. and Y.!" Phelps stated doggedly.

"Instead of which, C. B. and Y.— probably the crookedest little railroad in existence—has made all the money you have!"

"Crooked?"

"Crooked enough to make a corkscrew look like a plumb-line!" Mr. Murley said heartily. "Everybody under the sun knows that, except you, Phelps—my office boy, the newsman down-stairs, the clerks in the department stores up-town! That road is owned by half a dozen men, all capitalists of one sort or another—Peter Myton, Richard Hemingway, Dwight Pinkton, Howell, of Howell & Glaston, and three or four more. They're stockholders, directorate and everything else practically. They've got an absolute monopoly on a little chunk of country that has to have a railroad and they take a small mint out of the actual operation of the thing. And when people like you come along—"

"They take another small mint out of them, eh?" asked Mr. Phelps with rising color.

The head of the deserted office blew a puff of smoke through the open window and watched it vanish in the light breeze.

"Shall I tell you that for a year one of the minor jokes of this section has been the deliberate manner in which that collection of banditti has been taking money away from *you?*" he asked. "It's a fact, Phelps. I didn't believe it until a couple of months back, but I took to watching them. They haven't done it because they need an extra million to divide; they don't. They've done it largely for amusement and some spare thousands and—"

"Because I was such a darned easy mark?" Phelps suggested.

"Let us say that they have manipulated things so as to catch whatever you dropped," smiled the broker. "Why, I'd venture to say that, barring your own ill-fated purchase, there hasn't been a legitimate sale of C. B. and Y.—of any importance—in five years!"

"And yet, you never took the trouble—"

"Yes, I did—twice!" Murley said sharply. "And each time you froze me solid before I'd fairly begun, with that aristocratic arrogance. You knew what you wanted, Phelps."

The gentleman beside the desk no more than heard him. A very peculiar little panorama of the last year was moving before his mental vision—the first dabble in C. B. and Y., which had cost him some fifty thousand dollars—his subsequent anger and his return, to recoup, which had cost him another fifty thousand! After that came a series of dabbles, each quite as expensive as its predecessor—and then the sixty thousand he had managed to lose on the single block—and finally this vast, culminating idiocy of betting nearly one hundred thousand dollars that the accursed stuff would rise and enable him to go forth in search of a certain Miriam, last name deliberately unknown as yet, and offer her, on a little better acquaintance—

"Ho—ho—ho—hum!" yawned Mr. Murley.

Mr. Phelps awoke, almost with a crash! His panorama was gone, and there was a queer, savage light in his eye; his color had turned to a dangerous purple, and Murley started at the new voice which croaked:

"Is there any legal way of getting at them?"

"Plenty, I suppose, if you have the evidence."

"Can I get it?"

"Neither you nor any man living, I fancy," the broker said serenely.

"Then I've simply been trimmed by the gang, eh?" Phelps thundered suddenly. "I assumed that I was dealing in a legitimate security, and instead I've been manhandled by a gang of financial thugs! And so far as I'm concerned, there's no come-back! I—"

"There is not not, and I wouldn't shout like that," Murley suggested tartly.

"I'll shout as much as I please, and there'll be a come-back on that crew, too!" Mr. Phelps vociferated insanely! "I'll get every cent out of them that they've taken from me! I'll go out and put that C. B. and Y. outfit out of business! I'll tear up their rails and burn their ties! D'ye hear? I'll spend the rest of my life burning their stations and cutting through their bridges! I'll mine that Bidford tunnel of theirs and dynamite the first crowded train that runs through it! I mean that, too! I may not be able to make any money out of C. B. and Y., but, if I'm spared long enough I'll cost them the million they've cost me, and half a dozen more on top of it, and before I'm done with their directors, there'll be enough real blood on my hands to float a—"

His high-pitched voice cracked altogether! The conscious part of John Phelps understood that some one had reached out into the swirling ether and gripped his shoulders with powerful hands; and in another second or two he realized that the shoulders were being shaken by Murley and that the broker, glaring at him, was snorting:

"Shut up, you idiot! Do you hear? I won't allow you or any one else to sit around my office screaming that sort of poppycock! You're making a clown of yourself and—"

"All—right! I beg your pardon," Phelps said weakly.

Suddenly as it had arrived, his cerebral cyclone had passed. He was himself again, minus a million dollars, plus a quantity of experience, several problems and an assortment of new sensations, somewhere deep within him, which resembled criminal impulses

more nearly than anything else. His head, he suspected, had been caught in a giant vise and his hands were cold and clammy; but his brain had cleared sufficiently to catch Murley's:

"It's all too bad, of course, but that rumpus will never get you anything. Go home now and take a grip on yourself, Phelps. I'm closing up the office here in a few minutes."

The C. B. and Y. victim arose with mechanical alacrity.

"Far be it from me to detain you!" he said, with grotesque semblance of his wonted hauteur in that particular office. "Good night!"

"Night!" said Mr. Murley, and he acquired his pencil again and a new column of figures.

Very plainly, as concerned one member at least, the entire episode was closed. The other side of the case moved out of the office on legs that seemed to work without instruction or feeling and found the elevator. And he found himself in the vestibule of the building, staring across Wall Street and mercifully or otherwise, thinking again.

He might feast his eyes on the thoroughfare this time; it would be long enough before he saw it again—unless, come to think of it, some friend of his late father's offered him a job down this way.

Mr. Phelps winced: it amounted to just that!

He'd have to take whatever little post he could get, to keep body and soul together. He might even have to disappear and do it under an assumed name, because, once the dread truth leaked out, Sallie and her excellent husband would insist on providing for him—starting him up in some safe business perhaps; possibly tucking him away in a neat, well-regulated home for incompetents, to pine away his days among others of his kind.

Mr. Phelps smiled, and the smile was sick to the core. Somewhat to his astonishment, he found that to save his life he couldn't take a penny from his beloved sister; he'd have to work it out himself—*to-morrow!*

It was by no means a Spanish to-morrow, but no man can reasonably be expected to start life afresh after five in the afternoon. Jobs of this magnitude need morning sunshine and a clear head; for the rest of to-day he would remain the ordinary John Phelps.

He'd go home—or would he? The sick smile appeared again and Phelps shook his head. He couldn't face Brown, knowing that to-morrow that faithful citizen would have to be dismissed; he couldn't look at the mass of furnishings just yet, knowing that the return from their auctioning would have to keep him in bread and butter until he found work.

Instead, he would dine out somewhere, possibly telephoning for three or four chosen spirits to join him—if he had the price. Mr. Phelps dived into his trousers pocket and started pleasantly, for the roll was far larger than he had suspected.

He brought it to light and counted absorbedly, and he all but chuckled. That roll contained eight or ten dollars over four hundred! He'd invest about one hundred in a farewell dinner that would be worth remembering and—

"Darned bondholder!" said a voice from the sidewalk.

Mr. Phelps glanced up—and grinned. It was little Bill Garford, the impoverished artist—ever impecunious, ever crammed with enthusiasm, ever on the verge of starvation and a masterpiece! He liked Bill immensely; Bill had permitted himself to be cast off by a wealthy father rather than forsake art, and had since consistently refused to accept a penny's worth of aid from any friend. Some day Bill would succeed.

Although he didn't look success just now. Worn camera in hand, Bill's tidy clothes shone sadly, and there were stiff, white whiskers on the edges of his immaculate linen. His

hair had needed cutting, at an offhand guess, for about two months — although that may have been a matter of personal preference — and his slouch-hat was battered and disreputable enough to belong to a busy millionaire.

But he grinned as Phelps stepped down to his side and said:

"What is it, Jack—dividends?"

Mr. Phelps laid a hand on the artistic shoulder.

"Bill," he said gravely, "it's all the rest, residue, and remainder of an ill-spent fortune."

"What?"

"It's a fact! I've lost every cent I own!"

"Well, where on earth did you lose it?" queried the artist.

"Somewhere in the C. B. and Y."

Mr. Garford removed his hat and fanned himself as he stretched away from the saw-tooth collar. He looked earnestly at Phelps for a little and perceived that he was not jesting; and then he shrugged his shoulders and dismissed the unimportant subject altogether with:

"That's too bad, Jack. You'll get used to it, though. Anybody can. I did. Jack!"

"Well?"

"I've got the big idea at last," the little artist said solemnly.

"You always have, Bill," smiled his friend.

"Nothing like this ever penetrated my skull before," Garford informed him with deep conviction. "This is the greatest piece of composition that ever struck me; it's the sort of thing that doesn't come more than twice in any man's life; seashore—rocks—spray—fisherman's wife watching the fleet trying to come in through a terrific storm—two boats missing—"

"How do you paint the two that aren't there?" Phelps asked rather flippantly.

"Husband's a great, drunken brute, who went on a spree instead of going to work—see? He's reeling back now—steadies himself on the side of their little cabin and sees her— Get it?"

"I guess so."

"Well, since you're so blamed worked up over it, I won't try explaining the finer idea or the treatment of the scheme," Garford said tartly as he tucked his coiffure under the hat again and took a new grip on his elderly camera. "I'm out now after the ideal model for that husband. Good-by!"

"Going to look for him in the fish-market?" hazarded Mr. Phelps.

"I've combed over the whole West Side water-front, trying to find him among the longshoremen. He wasn't there. Now I'm going to look on the East Side of town. Will you come?"

"Where?"

"Down through the East River saloons, of course. You'll see things there you never saw before."

Mr. Phelps considered. After all, from the general outlook, he was about to see a number of things he had never seen before. It might be as well to begin at the bottom and work up, as it were; and watching Bill Garford capturing a model should furnish a reasonable amount of entertainment at a moment when, if ever in his life, Phelps needed entertaining. Dinner arrangements could wait over for an hour and—

"I'm on!" the recent millionaire said simply as he fell into step beside the artist.

For a while he listened to Garford's enthusiastic chattering as they hurried along; later, listening, he took to thinking his own thoughts as well, so that he rather lost track of their wanderings. They made for the water-front, of course, and turned up-town, when Garford had cast about the immediate neighborhood. They strode along between lounging lines of men who cast glances of lively curiosity of Mr. Phelps's elegance; and then, abruptly, Garford's hand was on his arm, and the artist was saying:

"This den looks like the place."

Mr. Phelps aroused and stared at it.

"Den," he imagined, was far too mild. Every store on this block, apparently, was a saloon, but this one seemed far and away the most sinister of the lot. Rough green paint on the inner side rendered the aged glass doors opaque; the broken beer-sign hinted at battles past, as did the inverted half of the gas fixture in the south window; and the aroma that floated from the place was pungent and powerful enough to rise to the high heavens and start a panic among the gods themselves.

But, with his eye aglow, Garford was entering, and Phelps followed. At the bar a line turned to look them over —an unshaven line of humanity very nearly at the bottom of the pile. Caps and shirts, both ragged, seemed to be *en règle* here; whiskers were worn at the quarter-inch length, untrimmed; and eyes ran rather to red than to any other definite color. On the grimy planking that was the bar stood foaming vessels of a size that needed but a spring-board and a bath-house to be quite complete.

And beyond—as a shudder ran through Mr. Phelps—lay a sitting-room with dreadful bare tables, about which sat further denizens of the region, and Garford was hurrying toward it. Other bloodshot eyes looked wonder at them as their owners awoke to the visitation; yet Mr. Garford recked not of these. He was a man of one idea; and, having concluded that the company was too large and too complex for a cursory inspection, he led his friend to one of the few unoccupied tables on the far side of the room, set his camera on the only unpuddled spot, and sighed pleasantly.

"Great bunch, John!" he observed.

"They are, indeed!"

"We'll order a couple of schooners and drink them slowly," the artist said softly. "You can't afford to be conspicuous in a place like this, you know. Don't mind the way they look at you, either; and don't bother me for a while, John. I want to take in every one of these fellows carefully."

A frightful person with a smoke-gray apron loitered beside them and heard their order. He shuffled away, and Mr. Garford, squinting and humming meditatively, began at the far corner and looked, looked, eternally looked!

It was quite absorbing, doubtless, if one leaned to that sort of thing. Mr. Phelps, after the first frightened stare into the amber depths that had been set before him, concluded that he himself leaned in some other direction. He would never make a student of the submerged section; having overcome the first repulsion and another two minutes of genuine uneasiness at the glances that were directed toward them, the company came near to boring him.

It was interesting in its way, though. Certainly, while the majority of the men were, likely enough, honest, hard-working citizens, the very air in here reeked with crime and violence. Hazy notions of smugglers, thugs, river pirates floated through Mr. Phelps's tired head, and presently another notion came and caused him to smile acidly. How pleasant it would be to herd the C. B. and Y. directorate in here, inform the genial company that each gentleman had a pocketful of real money, and then lock the doors and get the police out of the neighborhood. It was a cheery, whimsical little conceit, but it began to fade after a minute or two, and Phelps smiled sadly. That directorate was as safe from him as—he started violently!

Out of the dull, rumbling hum of voices a harsher tone in the immediate neighborhood had spoken the accursed initials—C. B. and Y. The victim of that interesting railroad sat bolt upright and listened, and after a time relaxed. It had been fancy, of course. Down here they hardly worried about Wall Street affairs.

And having quite relaxed, a galvanic shock brought Mr. Phelps up again; for, clear and low, he caught:

"If he hadn't gone back on us, we

stood to cost that C. B. and Y. road an easy sixty thousand!"

"Or more!" croaked a thinner, even deadlier voice.

CHAPTER III.

The Path to Vengeance.

UP Mr. Phelps's spinal column ran a series of electric prickles. They seemed to reach his well-barbered head and distribute themselves among the hair-roots, and they were prickles of pure joy. And evil joy, as well, for they thrilled Mr. Phelps with thunderstruck satisfaction for a moment: down here, at the end of the world, another human being wished to cost C. B. and Y. something.

It was in every sense an amazing little episode; only with difficulty did Mr. Phelps restrain the impulse to leap from his chair and make the acquaintance of that unknown other. But some strange instinct held him to his place for the time; his ears strained for whatever might be coming next, and strained in vain; for, across the room, somebody had cracked a joke, and the deafening roar of merriment drowned every other sound. It died out slowly, albeit Mr. Phelps barely noticed the fact, for a new tangle of strange thoughts was forming in his brain; some powerful, invisible force was drawing him to that table just behind; some hot traces of his madness in Murley's office were shaping anew—

"*That* is the man!" muttered Garford excitedly.

"Eh?"

"The fellow over there with the reddish hair and the broken nose," the artist said swiftly. "You saw him when he laughed?"

"No."

"But I did, and he's the one man in a million, Jack. That's the one face into which I can paint an awakening soul—see it? Bad all through just now, but somewhere behind it lies—Come on!"

"Where?"

"Over to see how a perfectly wild model is snared by a really determined artist," smiled his friend as he picked up his camera. "There's no deception about it; it's done with the bare hands and without the aid of assistants. I'll have that fellow locked up in my studio before I go to bed. Come!"

"I'll stay here!" Mr. Phelps said suddenly.

"You'd better—"

"I'll watch from here," said the artist's friend with queer determination.

"Have it your own way," grinned Mr. Garford. "I want to get to him while he's still in a good humor."

And he moved off across the reeking, cluttered hole of a place, and in a matter of three seconds, if the truth be told, Mr. Phelps had quite forgotten his friend.

Because, in those seconds and the few preceding, the new idea had grown to a positive obsession. Mr. Phelps, be it remembered, had received a considerable shock within the hour; he had assimilated a lesson in man's duplicity and wickedness several times larger than any other similar lesson in all his life. He was, doubtless, temporarily warped; but, whatever his exact mental condition, his whole being was centered on the occupants of that next table—and very slowly, very indifferently, he turned to look them over.

They were two. And they were the right two, he felt, after listening a moment. Their talk just now was too low pitched for understanding, but here and there he caught the harsh note that had anchored his attention, while now and again the thinner voice came to him.

The harsh note hailed from the vocal organs of a man of forty or thereabouts—a vast, broad-shouldered man in shabby clothes. His wide chin, his broad nose, his quick eyes, and the fact that he had been shaved within the week marked him for something of a character at first glance. He was shab-

by as the rest of them, but he wore a coat; and his hands absolved him from any suspicion of honest work in the past. Large, white somewhere beneath the grime, they were visibly soft and pudgy.

His companion was smaller and younger. Not more than twenty-five, however, the viciousness of several centuries had been crammed into his unprepossessing countenance. There was a straight scar across one cheek that meant a knife-cut and a round one on the other that suggested a bullet-hole; his hawk nose and thin mouth might have been a deliberate piece of make-up to suggest crime; and his little dark eyes shot about like snake-fangs in search of a victim.

All in all, somewhere in the world there might have been a more ill-favored pair, but no man of judgment would have bargained to find it in less than a decade. An hour ago the sight of them would have shocked Mr. Phelps and set him to wondering what sort of social conditions could have contributed to the making of such malformations; now the two gentlemen merely warmed him through and through.

He turned and looked squarely at them and thought rapidly. Obviously, to scrape an acquaintance, he must be one of them; the owners of those two faces would tolerate no assumption of superiority. Mr. Phelps hesitated for a moment, and with good reason—and then the realization surged over him again that these were perhaps the only two criminals in all the world with a grudge against the C. B. and Y.

He rose with a lazy ease that would have been rather more in place in the smoke-room of one of his clubs. They ceased speaking and glanced warily at him, waiting until he had passed. He paused beside them and smiled benignly, and for an instant they stared straight at him. He took the third chair and sat down with them.

"You've no objection to company?" he queried easily.

The pair stared blank, warranted wonder at one another. They stared then at Mr. Phelps—and back at one another.

"Salvation Army?" muttered the big man.

His small companion laughed quick, brief derision and darted his eyes at Mr. Phelps.

"Temperance guy?" he hazarded.

"Me? Hardly!" grinned Mr. Phelps.

"Some settlement swell bringin' the uplift!" the big man muttered again.

"You have another guess," their visitor said cheerfully.

The little man's eyes narrowed and darted thrice at Mr. Phelps; suspicion was rising in the smaller member.

"You're no newspaper guy?" he demanded.

"I am not."

"Bull?" grunted the big man angrily.

"What's that?" Mr. Phelps asked blankly.

"Well — a dee-tective, mister," the other chuckled.

"Not by any manner of means!" their uninvited guest said hastily and glanced about in a manner that was meant to be furtive and succeeded in being very puzzling to the pair.

They faced each other again; very slightly the big man shrugged his shoulders by way of indicating that there was, at least, nothing to fear. Yet the smaller person was not satisfied, for he turned directly to Mr. Phelps and asked:

"Well, say, bo—what's the idea?"

"My sitting here?"

"Yes."

The owner of the only gray silk vest that had ever entered the back room leaned forward earnestly and dropped his voice.

"I heard you talking about the C. B. and Y.," he began.

"Huh?" Panic sounded on the instant in the little man's tone and he started back. "This is the guy that owns the road, Joe! This—"

"I don't own the road," Mr. Phelps assured him, with a bitterness so genuine as to carry reassurance. "I've nothing whatever to do with it, except a longing to take some money from it. I heard you say—"

"What?"

"Something about costing them sixty thousand dollars."

"That was just a little joke," the large man explained.

"Then let me in on the joke," urged Mr. Phelps. "Who went back on you?"

"Oh—a guy—mebbe," murmured the big man.

"What were you going to do when he went back on you?"

"I was going to buy a tin dicky-bird to sing me t' sleep," the other said lucidly, and pushed back his chair an inch or two. "I gotter go back to the docks now, mister. I'm a hard-working man, and down here they make us fellers put in fifteen hours for the pay o' eight."

He sighed feelingly and would have risen, but the smaller member, having studied Mr. Phelps intently, held up a restraining hand.

"Wait a second, Joe," he said. "This might be something. *Who are you,* mister?"

"I'm a crook!" Mr. Phelps confessed, almost too readily. "I'm pretty near down and out, and if there's anything coming out of that railroad I want to belong."

"You've got no money at all?"

"How much does this need?" their visitor asked keenly.

"Um—" The large man glanced about on his own account. "Two hundred."

"I've got it. Go on."

Yet, instead of encouraging them, he seemed to have stricken them dumb! As one man, they started at his simple statement. A full minute they looked straight at one another, and new animation was in each unlovely face. And as a hearing, thinking being, Mr. Phelps seemed quite to have dropped out of the proposition when the little man said:

"He might be right, Joe. He might be from one of them swell mobs. Y' can't tell."

"If he is, what's he doing down here?" croaked the big man.

"He's looking for the big money, and he understands that this is the place to find it!" answered Mr. Phelps with an excellent imitation of the croak. "Now go on and tell me how you're going to cost 'em sixty thousand dollars."

"Lemme see that two hundred!" directed the other. "Stick it here under the edge of the table."

He glanced casually downward as Mr. Phelps obeyed, and the latter gentleman's heart throbbed. He was on the trail of vengeance, for the big man was smiling and nodding as he said:

"It looks good. Stick it out of sight again."

The smaller member's thin brows arched for an instant; the other nodded briefly.

"He's taking all the chances down here, Snapper!" he said laconically. "Come with us, mister."

"Er—where?"

"Little bunk inside where every hick in New York can't hear us," explained the big man as he rose and sauntered toward a pair of steps and a door at the rear that might have led to perdition itself.

A moment the gentle hand of sanity reached forth and rested upon John Phelps's shoulder, invisible, soothing, restraining. A moment he heeded the touch and then shook it off. The madness of revenge was upon him again—that same old madness that has landed men in jails and electric chairs, at ropes' ends and in unmarked graves. Mr. Phelps, in fine, lighted a cigar quite jauntily and, with the small, evil person at his elbow, moved toward the door.

Beyond it lay two disreputable tables, half a dozen wooden chairs, a barred window, a ten-foot square of

dirty floor, and four filthy walls. There were broken spots in the latter, with bare and grimy laths; there were pipe ashes and cigarette ends everywhere, but at least the unpolluted breeze came in through the broken pane—and Mr. Phelps could stand it for a little while.

Indications were that it would be but a little while, too; the big man, who owned the name of Joe, had turned to business with a rush. A click of the lock and he was in a chair and waiting impatiently for Phelps to follow suit; and that gentleman had barely settled when he heard:

"Listen, mister! This is the big stuff, and there's only a few in it. If you're on the level, all right. If you ain't, *we'll get you!* You know that?"

"I'm on the level," Mr. Phelps stated with an unconcern that astonished him.

"Well, in the start, Harry got cold feet," the big man said. "Harry was the boy with the roll that was going to stake us to the two hundred—see? He wanted a fifty-fifty split. I wouldn't see him get more'n a quarter. Is that enough for you?"

"Plenty."

"This is it, then," pursued the other with visible pleasure. "D'ye know where Silton Junction is?"

"I never heard of it."

"No more did I, before I got this tip yesterday," confessed the big man; "but it's up on the Connecticut shore of the sound—away up—and they tell me any one that knows the water can find it. Anyhow, as near as I get it, they're starting some kind of freight junction there. See?"

"I see."

"They've got a dock there, where they tie up car-floats, coming from all over, as I get it—and it saves time somehow," the large member continued vaguely. "Then they run 'em on shore, y' know, and hitch an engine on 'em and take 'em wherever they're going. Anyway, that's all we have to know about the place: *it's there!* To-night a C. B. and Y. float is going to tie up at that dock!"

"Yes?" said Mr. Phelps, and quickened.

"And here's where the joke comes in," said the big man with a fleeting grin. "I don't know how many other cars there are, or where they came from, or where's they're going, but there's one C. B. and Y. box car that's all we need, mister. As near as I got this tip—and it's a straight tip, because the guy that gave it to me knows he'd never give another if it wasn't—some big manufacturing jewelry people ship a couple of cars of silverware over the C. B. and Y. every week.

"This week they had a little bundle of sixty thousand dollars' worth of gold table stuff, and it was going by express—but there was a plot to pinch it if it went by express! As I heard it, they got to talking it over with some big party in the C. B. and Y., and he stuck to it that freight over their lines was safer'n express—and the jewelry people called the bluff and asked 'em to carry it and carry the responsibility too. They done it!" smiled the large gentleman. "Now there's a plot to pinch it, anyway."

"Don't stop!" said the avenger.

"There ain't a soul knows about this, mister," the other said naively. "That float's just about tying up now, and before noon to-morrow they'll have the cars run off and on their way again. Anything that happens has to happen to-night—see? What I figured on doing was to get a tug that's got some speed—I know where it lives—and get up there about three in the morning, put the watchman t' sleep, pull their float out a couple o' miles—"

"And loot her, eh?"

"Something like that."

"What happens to the float?" inquired Mr. Phelps.

"We cut it adrift."

"Why not scuttle it?" the avenger asked intelligently. "Those things must cost like the dickens, and it'll be out of the way."

The large man regarded him with growing interest.

"We could do that, too, if there's water enough," he muttered, "but—"

"You'll have to do it if I come in on this!" Mr. Phelps said fiercely. "I'll let you cut down my share of the stuff, but that float has to go to the bottom!"

"What for?"

"Because I say so!" growled the gentleman of the gray silk vest, and wondered hazily at the trickle of perspiration that dripped into his left eye. "Well?"

It was, apparently, a new puzzle for the pair—yet not one of great importance. The little man considered Mr. Phelps with some curiosity; but after the first minute or so of mediation the larger member rose abruptly.

"We can do it," he said briefly. "Gimme the coin!"

"You're going to—start things now?" Phelps asked breathlessly.

"This joint's somewhere away beyond New Haven, as I heard it, mister. I can get a fast tug, but at that we have to move. Come on!"

He snapped his fingers with quite a startling pistol-shot effect; and, almost automatically, the foolishly segregated two hundred dollars in Mr. Phelps's fingers popped into view. Nor had they more than popped when the big man acquired them and tucked them in his trousers-pocket; after which he leaned on the table and stared quite impressively at the recent millionaire and that person realized fully for the first time what a thoroughly devilish stare he had.

"You stick right here with Snapper—see?" he said in a quick undertone.

"I—see," said the avenger.

"Right here with Snapper," repeated the large man, "till I get back!" Cold, hard authority rang in his tone. "Don't start out for no walks and don't drink nothing. Stick right here with Snapper!"

And he turned and scuffed quickly to the door—clicked the key and opened it—passed through and closed it behind him so soundlessly that it is doubtful if a single man in the outer room noted his going.

In a manner that quite astonished himself, Mr. Phelps relaxed suddenly with his going. The sensation, in many ways, was like the awakening from a peculiarly vivid dream, save that the wickedly smiling Snapper was rather too substantial for dream stuff.

An odd giddiness lingered on his wits for some seconds. He was quite conscious of what he had done without quite believing that he had done it. Also, since the training of several generations of righteous ancestors cannot be shaken off in ten minutes, he was distinctly sorry.

Or was he? Mr. Phelps sat up so suddenly that Snapper's eyes opened wide, and dabbed an unaccountable flood of perspiration from his high and well-formed forehead. Why should he be sorry? For looting a corporation that had looted him? For grasping a perfectly providential chance, the one chance in the world for revenge.

Mr. Phelps, be it said, tried to grit his teeth savagely and emulate Snapper's evil smile. He knew not what car-floats cost or what other valuable property was slated to sink on this one; but it was certain that through his humble agency the C. B. and Y. band of iniquity was about to feel substantial loss. And he rejoiced! He rejoiced so astonishingly that his mouth turned dry and a momentary tremor ran through his knees, and the hands that held his dead cigar were as the hands of a corpse! In spite of which, he insisted frantically, he did rejoice at what he had done and—

"Great card, Joe, ain't he?" Snapper said sociably.

"What?" asked Mr. Phelps.

"Joe Garrigan—Bad Joe!"

"Do they call him Bad Joe?" Phelps asked.

"Why not?"

"Why?"

Snapper laughed, a low and sinister sound.

"Take it from me, mister, he earned that monniker!" he said dryly. "I was born right on Cherry Hill, and we thought we had some live ones but—Joe! Why, that guy'd dump off his best friend!"

"You mean — kill him?" Mr. Phelps inquired, and his voice came from some region out near the Dog Star.

"Sure I mean kill him," Snapper said genially. "I tell you, mister, if you're on the level with Joe, he's the best guy in the world. Why, Joe'd give you his last cent and go hungry himself. That's right; I seen him do it. Only once let Joe get the idea you're trying to hand him a mean one and—*good night!*"

"Er—uh?" said Phelps throatily.

Snapper grinned meditatively and acquired the extinguished cigar from the table. A critical sniff and he lighted it and settled back. A whif or two and he expanded, pointing further the absent Joseph's strong character by a specific example.

"Take yourself," he said amiably, with a wave of Mr. Phelps's cigar. "You 'n him and me and the rest o' the boys are working together now. Only from the second we start till we finish, Joe's the big boss—see? He gives the orders and we do the obeying stuff, every little minute—and he's got eyes in the back of his head to see that it's done. As I was saying, take yourself," Snapper said confidentially, and leaned a little nearer. "Why, if Joe was to think for a second that you wanted to back out o' this, or start anything, he'd make you look like a sieve!"

CHAPTER IV.

Sticking with Snapper.

IN the large outer room another joke must have been born. Thunderous laughter roared faintly through the door and into Mr. Phelps's consciousness—wicked laughter that chilled him, but was warmer than the smiling eye of Snapper, just across the table.

That narrow eye, in fact, was the most murderous thing Mr. Phelps had ever viewed, now that he came to examine it; it slashed at his taut nerves and left them vibrating; it harmonized so exquisitely with the young man's words that, involuntarily, Mr. Phelps found himself smiling in a strained, ghastly way that pulled his features.

"Er — yes! Yes, indeed!" the avenger agreed thinly.

Mercifully Snapper's eyes darted toward the window for a little.

"So, y'see, you wanter be careful o' Joe," he said earnestly. "You might say or do something that didn't mean anything, and at the same time he might think it meant something and drill you, mister."

"I — shall not!" Mr. Phelps assured him throatily.

"And nothing gets him so sore as having a thing like that happen in the middle of a job, either," the pleasing young person went on reflectively. "There's no living with him afterward—not for days. Why, once we was pulling off a little thing over in South Brooklyn; this is two or three years ago.

"Some purser on a steamship got fired and he was near crazy about it; he fixed things with Joe to crack her safe, and there was a bunch of diamonds in that safe, I remember. Well, he got cold feet at the last minute, this purser I'm speaking about, and that when Joe'd spent two days getting everything ready. Well, Joe just—"

Snapper shuddered. Mr. Phelps gulped. Somewhere in the black past something sufficiently horrible had happened as to make *that* shudder!

"Nobody got pinched, but I hate to think about it," the young man said hoarsely as he stared out of the window.

Obviously, however, he was think-

ing about it, for silence claimed the thin, vicious lips. Watching him fascinatedly, Mr. Phelps was quite at liberty to think his own thoughts for a little.

And he thought them swiftly enough and with a candor he had not permitted himself a few minutes back. The mere fact of his being here was bad enough; the thought of what he had actually done verged on the incredible, but the proposition of spending another five minutes in this company was simply beyond consideration.

The madness of vengeance was all gone from him, stripped in a clean, wonderful fashion by Snapper's simple confidences. Unquestionably, he *had* been insane for a while, and it had cost him two hundred dollars—which, by the way, would probably go for liquor down here instead of toward injuring the C. B. and Y. But wherever it went, money was of small concern to Mr. Phelps just now. He had become as much a man of one idea as little Bill Garford himself, catching models in the room beyond; but Mr. Phelps's one idea was to leave this place — the water-front — the city, if need be, before the incredible Garrigan found him again.

Because Snapper was not lying. Whatever his name, record, or general character, there had been a ring of genuineness to his words beyond any mistake. If Mr. Garrigan *did* return—if he actually *did* mean to steal a C. B. and Y. float — Mr. Phelps steadied himself with an angry effort. His thinking apparatus had been stricken with panic; but it was a good, sound piece of machinery, and he himself had always controlled it perfectly before.

And, having reached this simple stage of reasoning, the rest was easy enough. Returning logic showed the path: the way to leave any given spot is to leave it.

"I'll have to speak to my friend out there," he said suddenly.

"For what?"

"He'll wait for me if I don't," said the avenger with a convincing leer.

Snapper scratched his head.

"Beat it back here as quick as you've told him," he said uneasily. "Joe might be coming in. Y'see, he's sorter depending on me to keep you here, I take it."

"Leave the beating to me," smiled Mr. Phelps as he arose.

There was no protest, which really thrilled him. Snapper sighed and, the cigar adjusted in the corner of his mouth, settled back comfortably with:

"All right! Don't try to take yer fr'en' on, mister. Joe wouldn't stand for a guy he didn't know."

The late millionaire nodded easy acquiescence and moved further toward the door. He laid his hand upon the knob and turned it, and the beads were rising to his forehead again. Apparently he was to leave the place alive, which was more than he had dared hope for two minutes ago.

The door then opened easily, and a certain sheepishness came to Mr. Phelps. His nerves were all askew. No one darted forward to slay him. The strange company, having once inspected him, hardly looked up at his second appearance. After all, the place was nothing more than a vile saloon, filled with poor wretches whose lives held nothing more than the liquor that made them forget whatever little they did not choose to remember. In all probability he had stumbled idiotically upon the only criminal element in the place — and now he was walking straight away from it with his customary dignity.

He would get Garford and hurry away. Or — no! Garford and his model had already disappeared, which was so much the better. Little Bill was wholly capable of looking out for himself in this or any other assemblage; Mr. Phelps smiled relief at the pause that was not to come and walked straight to the barroom and down the unoccupied alley.

The door was just fifteen feet away.

Beyond it lay the open street of New York, with vehicles passing, with the docks of big, wealthy, conventional steamship companies just across the way; with large, uniformed policemen whose sticks and whistles could summon a whole army of other large, uniformed policemen in a minute whenever need arose. The thought was strangely comforting. So was the fact that the door just now was barely eight feet away.

"Just a second!" said the large, deep voice in Mr. Phelps's ear.

The recent millionaire started and turned. Then he paused, because the large owner of the voice had stepped in front of him. He was a well-clad person, with a broad, rather good-humored face; he smiled, too, but there was a wealth of determination in the smile.

"Well?" Mr. Phelps asked coldly.

"Where you going?" inquired the total stranger.

"Out," said the avenger.

"Nix!" said the stranger, even more firmly.

"Why—not?"

A heavy hand rested on his arm; Mr. Phelps just caught the impulse to shrink away as the other whispered in the most matter-of-fact way:

"Joe passed me the word that you was to stay."

"And who the devil are you that Joe should pass you—" Mr. Phelps began warmly.

The smile vanished magically. The hand tightened its grip.

"Now, can that—can that!" the stranger said dangerously. "I'm the owner of this place, and Joe's kind of a—a' power down this way. I don't know what a fashion-plate like you has to do with him, and I don't ask no question; but he put it up to me to keep you here till he got back—see? What's the use o' starting anything?"

Be it not said that Mr. Phelps's nerve failed him. Rather the nerve sagged slightly and prevented the very thing he contemplated for a wild instant, which was to push the dive-keeper haughtily aside and stride out.

Mr. Phelps, indeed, looked straight at the individual and felt suddenly that he spoke words of great truth. There was, as a matter of fact, no use at all in starting anything. If they so elected, this crowd, which had turned to watch him again, could fall on him and noiselessly quench that spark of life he had so lately learned to cherish.

"All right!" Mr. Phelps said coldly and turned back.

And, having turned, there was plainly nothing to do but go on. The proprietor was watching him narrowly; so much he could see in the netting-covered mirror from the corner of his eye. He would have to return to the unspeakable little cubbyhole beyond—and sit down with Snapper again and—after that?

Mr. Phelps cast around wildly. There was a door at the left, and the grimy transom over it suggested outer daylight. He glanced back at the proprietor; the gentleman nodded—and Mr. Phelps entered the inner room and closed the door.

"You shook him quick!" Snapper observed approvingly.

"He—yes."

"Could we sneak a drink before Joe gets back?"

"No," said Mr. Phelps.

"Well, sit down and—"

"I'm going to stand by the window; the air's better," the avenger said tartly.

Out of it he stared through bars at the free, blue sky. He was reasonably scared, as any lone, unarmed gentleman of judgment must have been. The mark of genuineness was upon the whole thing. It was no mere scheme to get his two hundred dollars; Mr. Garrigan meant to return and he desired to find Mr. Phelps there, according to instructions.

Nor did there seem great likelihood that Mr. Garrigan was to be disappointed. The recent millionaire found that his breathing was growing more

rapid; leaving the grim hole by the obvious exit would be impossible without a fight, and, while not averse to battle under sane conditions, the idea of suicide had always been distasteful. He would indeed "stick here with Snapper" or—he would take a long shot at that side door!

"Pah!" Mr. Phelps said explosively.

"Huh?" His companion started.

"I forgot to tell him about— Wait here," muttered the avenger impatiently, moving toward the door so naturally that the snake-eyed young man merely glanced up and offered no protest. "Something I forgot to say to my friend out there. I'll be back in a moment."

"Well—don't say too much to yer fr'en'," cautioned the other.

Mr. Phelps merely nodded and opened the door once more, and this time the gathering did not even look up. And his heart pounded suddenly at the sight of the large proprietor, standing in a cloud of cigar-smoke by the door, with his back this way. Still more, there was a perfectly clear path to the side door; and, as if fortune meant to show him that she could smile as well as frown, even the husky bartender was engaged in a violent, absorbing argument with a patron over a certain plugged nickel.

Senses abnormally alert centered upon the grimy little side door. It was not locked, Mr. Phelps observed with the second quiet stride; it was not even latched. Another five feet and some stray puff of wind even blew it open for an inviting inch or two — and Mr. John Phelps had whisked straight through it and drawn the door after him, and neither shout nor astonished cry came from behind to speed him on his way.

His gaze darted about as swiftly as Snapper's own. He was in an alley—a long, narrow affair, well decorated with battered ash-cans and the assorted refuse of ages. To the right was a brick wall with tiers of windows above; to the left lay a high board fence, and, since the way ran parallel to the river, the narrow gate at the far end must give upon the side street.

In any event, it led to some sort of street, for there was visible just a glimpse of building-fronts beyond — and, having seen so much, an impalpable ten-ton weight rose from Mr. Phelps! He had broken out.

And he wasted no precious seconds doing dance-steps of rejoicing in the alley. Delivered from the most amazing mess of his life, no speed could be too great in getting him away from its scene; he stifled a whoop of exultation and stretched his long legs down the stone pavements. Ashes fluttered on him; he slid crazily on a stray banana-peel; a stealthy nail, reaching out from the fence, ruined a shoulder of the perfect coat—yet he moved straight on to the blessed little gateway.

He attained it, too, and snatched it open.

And then he stopped, petrified, for not only was Mr. Garrigan staring at him, but three of Mr. Garrigan's dearest friends, if appearances went for anything, were just behind. They filled the little way to overflowing, bulging through the gateway, moving large, deep-tinted hands that seemed to clutch at him; but in the center of the picture the eyes of Mr. Garrigan himself nailed the avenger's whole attention.

They were large, wide open, suspicious, and accusing; they cut open Mr. Phelps's soul and pried ruthlessly around in the darker corners; and they did not find just what they sought, for their owner demanded:

"What are you doing out here?"

"I was — looking for you," stammered Mr. Phelps, to his own surprise.

"Snapper send you?"

"No."

"Didn't I tell you to stick with Snapper?"

"I thought—"

"It cuts no ice what you thought," snapped Mr. Garrigan, and turned him back. "Beat it in there again, you! We've got no time to stand here!"

All four of them were in the alley now, between himself and the gate to freedom, and it was distinctly a single-file alley. A little instant it occurred to Mr. Phelps that he might brace solidly on either side and shriek for help until they battered him into silence; yet even before the instant had passed he was moving briskly back toward the saloon, with Mr. Garrigan's persuasive palm in the small of his back. Just one astounded gasp left his lips, and he had been propelled blindly through the side door—through the room—up the two steps and into the vile, little cubbyhole beyond, where Snapper glanced up and nodded greeting.

The returned Joseph heaved a long breath and smiled satisfaction.

"It's fixed," he said crisply. "I fixed it all quick. Pete and Larry's gone already."

"Up there?" Snapper queried.

"Sure! The tug's waiting!" chuckled the capable Mr. Garrigan. "We'll start now."

Four of them nodded. Mr. Phelps had been vouchsafed another minute for thought.

"I'm not going, of course," he said calmly enough.

"Why not?" Mr. Garrigan inquired without great interest.

"A number of things here I—have to attend to," said the avenger. "Now, look sharp to the details when you get there and—"

The Garrigan brand of eye had measured him again, and there seemed to be a wealth of psychological knowledge behind it. Mr. Garrigan merely smiled as he said:

"Forget it! You belong, bo!"

"But I'm not coming with you," Phelps said hastily, and to save him the panicky note would not quite stay out of his voice. "I—"

"One second, young feller," smiled the czar. "I might be wrong, but I guess I got your number. This is cold feet. We've got no use for 'em. You don't want that block knocked off in here?"

The avenger could no more than shake the threatened block.

"And don't make them faces at me, either, kid!" Garrigan snapped. "I don't stand for that stuff! Move!"

He wheeled to the door again. The rest of them clustered automatically about Mr. Phelps. They were moving rapidly again—straight through the tabled room, straight through the bar and—he was going with them!

But he realized swiftly that they were making for the open street, and until they reached it, he might better hold his peace. Afterward, there would be another story, for they would have to walk somewhere to the accursed tug and on the way they were bound to pass at least one police officer; and when they passed him, Mr. Phelps would open his lungs and shut his fists at the same second.

When the argument was over his well-dressed effect might have been obliterated, but if a sturdy policeman and his own clean, well-trained muscles couldn't best these five besotted hulks, he would deserve whatever came. It was far the sanest and most cheering idea that had come to him since the Murley interview; he straightened up and even smiled. He felt, in fact, almost himself again as they passed into the outer air.

Yet apparently their walk was to be neither up-town nor down-town. They were going directly across the street, and there was not a policeman in sight anywhere. Two or three late, empty trucks were passing, to be sure, but their drivers looked far too much on the Garrigan order themselves. An automobile was coming briskly up-town, too; they paused to let it pass.

On the front seat sat a little chauffeur and an elderly man—too elderly to be of use in battle. For the mo-

ment he had turned backward, but now he faced forward again, and a startled cry escaped Mr. Phelps and he jumped a full inch. All too well, by sight and otherwise, did he know that elderly man. That was Peter Myton himself, high in the C. B. and Y. ownership. There could be no doubt of it at all—keen blue eyes, thin nose, iron-gray hair, all were familiar.

And now he was bowling past, and Mr. Phelps's gaze moved to the occupants of the rear seat—and Mr. Phelps, reeling suddenly, brought up against Garrigan with a force that elicited an able-bodied curse. There, in that rear seat, was the lovely face that had haunted him, day and night, for six solid weeks—the face for which his unpretentious little gold-diamond-ruby frame had seemed all too cheap. *There, in fine, was Miriam!*

She had seen him, too, and recognized him! Her lips were parted in blank amazement, her eyes round and unbelieving. Her gloved hand dropped to the arm of the round-shouldered, white-haired gentleman beside her and twitched, and he looked up vaguely and blinked through thick glasses at nothing at all.

It seemed to Phelps—turning from red to white and back to red again—that a very small, very startled cry came from the adored throat. He was fumbling at his hat and chattering to himself; and she was looking at his companions and shrinking back; she had not even nodded to him—and she was gone!

But she had seen him! She had seen him, trudging along in the center of a group of citizens beside whom so many Digger Indians would have looked attractive! What would she, could she think?

A blinding red haze came before Mr. Phelps's burning eyes. He sought to peer after the rapidly moving car and could not see it; he sought to speak to Garrigan and could find no voice. A series of odd little squeaking sounds, to be sure, earned him:

"What's wrong, bo—got de pip?" from Mr. Garrigan.

And he was stumbling on again toward the boarded front of a dock, toward the yawning black of its entrance. He was stumbling through shadowy stretches, already claimed by approaching evening, and toward another, lighter square in the side. Indistinctly he sensed the presence of the big, dingy tug-boat partly revealed; and then Mr. Garrigan had gripped his arm and was snapping:

"Say, I want you to cut out that gurgling—d'ye hear? Some guy around here'll think you're drugged and yell for the bulls and—get on board there!"

He pointed across two feet of murky green water and pushed. Violent protest stilled suddenly on Mr. Phelps's lips; he jumped, because there was nothing under the sun to do save jump. He landed on a slippery, dubious deck and all but pitched through a doorway in which stood a savage-looking, oily person. He steadied himself against the deck-house and turned again to protest.

Yet, having been delivered aboard the craft of his own hiring, he seemed to have ceased to exist as concerned the rest of them. They surged over the side with never a glance in his direction. Some one on the dock threw a hawser and Mr. Garrigan caught it, standing on the little after deck; some one else threw another and it plumped noisily up forward.

And the deck under him shook violently and the whistle blew; and even before the impulse came to jump back and run, the little vessel was surging, stern first, out into the river!

CHAPTER V.

Passing to Piracy.

IN the Garden of Eden, according to some of our best information, the original occupant was having a rather comfortable, simple time of it at first;

later, things changed markedly. Vary the details to fit the individual case, and they have been changing in much the same fashion ever since.

Consider, as he himself did not, Mr. John Phelps. Not two months ago he had been a normal young man, very startled and very angry at the amount of money he had succeeded in losing —without six people knowing of it— and also very thoughtful. Further, he had been a sensible young man, for one raw, unoccupied spring evening he had smoked for five solid hours before his blazing fire and thought matters out to a really proper conclusion.

He had lost, in eight or ten months, more than he would recover in eight or ten years; he would have to cut down living expenses, eschew Wall Street and—which really pleased him —set up somewhere in his chosen and neglected profession of electrical engineer. Before that fire he had visualized great power-houses and trolley lines through new country; he had even risen and smiled at the impressive backs of his perfectly brand new technical library, modestly secreted in an inner room. A career lay before him that night.

Enter, innocently, Miriam, last name unknown — a saccharine fragment of twenty, slim and delicately round, quivering young animation, radiating a fresh beauty that struck into Mr. Phelps and left him weak and bewildered. Alone, even before he had stolen her picture, Mr. Phelps meditated upon her; and within five minutes a bright, new section had been laid and cemented down, in the region where they pave exclusively with good resolutions.

Professions are all right for lone, ambitious young men—they are not all right for young men with the temerity that aspires to Miriams. Such gems may be preserved only in the setting of millions; Mr. Phelps knew it. Therefore, he would gather the sorry remnants of his fortune and again assail C. B. and Y., for this time the luck must turn! Every instinct, every fiber in Mr. Phelps told him that it must and should turn!

So he had gathered his remnant and gone forth with a certain suppressed notion of knightly adventure in modern dress—and instincts, fibers, and his own calculations had lied him into this.

Bad Joseph Garrigan, who looked the part more fully now, with his hat off, his scraggly hair exposed and his arms folded quite in pirate fashion, peered at Mr. Phelps and felt relief. The swell was glaring toward the shore, grinding his fine teeth and wearing a far better expression for this particular job than any Mr. Garrigan had noted up to the moment.

Mr. Garrigan, indeed, had not believed his financial aid to be in any sense a criminal; yet, looking at that face, he owned himself probably mistaken in the first estimate. Murder glittered in that eye just now; the new acquisition was thinking of the work ahead with genuine gusto.

In which Mr. Garrigan was utterly wrong, because Phelps was thinking, suddenly, of Myton. *What was Myton doing with that pearl of young womanhood?* Were the black powers of the C. B. and Y. Railroad not only to steal his money, but to take as well the only woman he had ever loved? Why was Myton riding her around in an automobile? Why, come to think of it, had he been looking back at her, with that hellish, ingratiating smile? A deep, hoarse cry from Mr. Phelps's agonized throat floated half-way across the East River and back to the docks. There was a grim, sinister look to the affair which maddened him beyond human endurance. Or—er—was there?

He found himself cooling abruptly. Now that he recalled it, Myton and his lovely wife were the most notoriously affectionate couple in the upper social stratum; also, they possessed no less than six beautiful daughters, most of them grown. Better sense, struggling

successfully above more primitive emotions, informed him rather convincingly that it was unlikely that Mr. Myton had taken to high-handed abduction this early evening.

In fact—and Phelps turned weak as he realized it—his own mere jumping at the unpleasant conclusion probably proved its entire fallacy. This was his day for faulty reasoning and ill-judged acts; he looked about and understood it more thoroughly every second. For the time, he might well try to forget Miriam and all else save the absorbing proposition of leaving this particular boat.

In sight were half a dozen thugs, the exterior of one cabin, a wheelhouse in which stood a lineal descendant of Sir Henry Morgan; somewhere out of sight was a very astonishing amount of power — because the boat seemed to be plunging ahead with more the speed of a revenue cutter than of a tug. Dirty, unpainted, unlovely as her present crew, she was as eminently strong and well fitted for crime of any marine variety.

Mr. Phelps looked hard at the hurrying water-front and pondered. It was not so very far away. He could swim it. Indeed, he would swim it. He glanced around casually to make sure that no restraining hand could catch him before the initial dive—and he glanced directly into the wicked eyes of Snapper, not one yard distant, who seemed to have approached for a purpose. The darting eyes were oddly friendly, though, as was the soiled hand which tapped Mr. Phelps's elbow as Snapper said softly:

"I wanter tip you off, bo!"

"What?"

"Joe—he ain't dead sure o' you. See?" the smaller person said in an earnest undertone. "I know you're all right; you know you're all right; but Joe's a suspicious guy. He thinks ye're scared—see? He's got it in his head now that you might try taking a tumble over the side and swimming out. Get me?"

Mr. Phelps started violently. As a long-distance mind-reader, Mr. Garrigan seemed a glowing success, but—

"Now, I don't say you'd do anything like that, but I wanted t' tip you off, in case you might get the idea later—see? You'd never go three yards before Joe got you."

"Got—me?"

Snapper glanced about and spoke behind his hand.

"He has them smokeless cartridges in his cannon, bo, and they only make a little crack. See? It's getting dark now, and when a guy gets shot in the water like that he goes down at first like a hunk o' lead, usually." He hitched away as Mr. Garrigan lounged into sight. "Ye're wise!" he observed from one corner of his mouth.

Mr. Phelps smiled bitterly. He was indeed wise. For almost thirty seconds he had seen the way clear to an escape from the consequences of his temporary madness; now the way was closed and he might think up new means. Because, if Mr. Garrigan had not hesitated to risk hustling him across an open, public street, there was no good reason to think that Mr. Garrigan would hesitate at murdering him out here in the gathering twilight of the river.

And in any event, perhaps it was better so. Swimming ashore, he might have been run down—might have been recognized in landing and exploited in the papers as befitted his prominence and that of his various connections—might have cramped and sunk, to reappear lifeless and furnish a nine days' sensation and mystery. It was as well to feel that he had been spared and to dismiss the subject. He did so, and resumed his thoughtful contemplation of the water-front.

One great trouble, as he saw clearly, was that hitherto he had permitted Garrigan, an illiterate animal, to overwhelm him. And therein lay the answer to the whole ridiculous muddle. That Murley interview had stunned him so thoroughly that, for the time,

he had lost all sense of proportion, all idea of relative values; but be this great land class-free as it may, your man of station, culture and blood must inevitably dominate the untutored savage of the Garrigan type.

The revelation had come. A vail was gone from Mr. Phelps's vision. In the smallest fragment of time he was himself again—smiling coldly, shoulders square once more, contempt curling his lips. The most humiliating experience of his lifetime was all behind him now, and permanently. He turned to find the untutored savage and curl him up with a few sharp words that would send the tug to the nearest dock as soon as the curling had been completed.

He discovered Mr. Garrigan almost at his elbow. He looked at the person and snapped his fingers as he said:

"Come here!"

"Huh?" asked the untutored savage wonderingly.

"Here, you!"

"What's got you?" Mr. Garrigan demanded with sudden heat. "D'ye think you're talking to a dog?"

"I think I'm talking to you, and this time you'll pay a little more attention," Mr. Phelps said, crisply and incisively. "Garrigan, put this boat about and dock her, immediately."

The evil man's brow wrinkled in utter perplexity.

"What?"

"Turn in to the New York shore and tie up this boat until I can leave her, at any rate. After that you're at liberty to go to the devil in your own way. You hear me, don't you? Move!"

He transfixed Mr. Garrigan with a cold, aristocratic eye and waited for the inevitable part to work out. It seemed a considerable time in coming. Mr. Garrigan, indeed, even appeared unaware that he was being dominated. He snorted and scratched his head; his puzzled eyes wandered from Mr. Phelps to the shore; he spat over the side.

"It ain't here—it's 'way up on the Connecticut shore," he explained.

"I understand that," said Mr. Phelps. "I have no idea of accompanying you, my man. I'm going ashore here. Have your captain put about—or I'll give the order myself and—"

He turned toward the pilot house, and turned back almost instantly, for Mr. Garrigan had reached for him and twisted him about and all but thrown him.

"Don't go bothering him," he said briefly, "he's got his own work cut out, steering this boat. And cut out that fiddling around and sniffing, mister, because I'm sick of it. Listen!" said Mr. Garrigan with forced patience. "I'll be honest with you; I dunno what's wrong with you. First off I thought you were kind o' simple—and after that I thought you might be a crook, the way you said—and about now I'll make a guess and say you're just a plain nut that's got away from his keeper."

"My man—"

"Aw, dry up and listen, or I'll smash you up against the pilot-house and hold your mouth shut!" Mr. Garrigan shouted in sheer exasperation. "Whatever you are, you're here! Get it? I won't say I'd 'a' taken on a lunatic if I'd known it; but we let you in and took your money, and as quick as this is over you'll get your split—and the next time we pass on the street, you won't know me and I won't know you. What I started to say was that you're here and you're going to stay here! You ain't going over the side and you ain't going ashore. You're going to stay here! You can understand that all right, can't you?" Mr. Garrigan asked with real anxiety.

He glowered. Some queer thing in Mr. Phelps's throat clicked.

"I can—understand it—" he said.

"We're going to eat now. Come on," Mr. Garrigan told him.

"I don't care to—eat!"

"Well, I want to eat, and you're

coming with me!" roared the cowed, untutored savage as patience snapped altogether. "And by the blankety-blank-blank-blank you'll eat, too!" he added in substance. "There's just so much any guy can put over on me, and you're about three jumps ahead o' the limit. I'm gettin' sick o' you! In there!"

He indicated the bare, soiled little cabin. And Mr. Phelps entered.

Although reason directed the move, rather than any particular terror just now, which at least was comforting. Palpably, in Mr. Garrigan domineering brutality amounted to an insanity; crossing him just now, as Snapper had pointed out in advance, was equivalent to inviting sudden death; and, while obeying him might furnish no balm to a proud soul, it bade fair to advance the date on the proud soul's tombstone by many long years.

The band had foregathered in here, and it appeared that the vessel had been provisioned for them. On the mattress of a narrow bunk an unnamed desperado was grunting over packages, and Mr. Phelps watched him with acid interest. There was bologna sausage by the yard, and there were onions in quantity; several loaves of dubious bread and an endless chain of warm beer-bottles seemed to complete the list. Case-knives appeared and drove murderously into the stuff; he himself accepted the grudging courtesy of Garrigan's and rather deftly sent divers pieces of food over his shoulder and into the river unnoticed, the while he chewed rhythmically, listened to a disjointed general conversation in a jargon he could not understand, and watched islands whereon stood city and county institutions sailing by in the dusk.

Happy islands, they were, too, where, by the simple process of smashing a store-front or snatching a purse, the authorities would accept one as a guest and keep one safe from all harm. Mr. Phelps came near to sighing as he looked at them and compared the lot of the inmates to his own just now.

The meal ended, the talk went on. For a little it struck the financier of the band that, while their taste in food might be vile, their choice of cigars was excellent; he sniffed pleasantly and regretted his own emptiness. Later he rose and stepped to the outer air again, and there was no objection from Mr. Garrigan when he had glanced out at the stretch of black water between themselves and the shore.

Well—here he was! And now evidently he might sit down if he chose and cast through the mistakes of his whole life. He poked about for a little and unearthed a pair of ragged camp-stools from a niche; he set them up on the windless side of the deck-house and bestowed himself as comfortably as might be in the gloom; and there, chin down and collar turned up, he revolved the situation at leisure and, strangely enough, found the element of humor at last. A grim, tired smile came to his lips; he even chuckled.

There was no course for him under heaven but to wait his chance and then escape — which would be when the sinful job was quite accomplished. He'd get off alive and well, of course, if he kept a civil tongue in his head and used it as little as possible. And afterward—he chuckled again. This crowd would make a perfectly sure and safe getaway, however it might be accomplished, and he would accompany them—as far as land; the C. B. and Y. Railroad might reach into its depths and make good the loss of their float and other property with some of Mr. Phelps's million, all unaware forever and ever that he had cost them some of his own money.

For no one would ever know of his connection with the mad crime. That, considered in the soft night calm, was almost the greatest consolation: the villainous crew had him with them, but they possessed no inkling of his

identity, nor ever would. Ashore and cleaned up, he would resume his own good name and personality and get at the sad job of reshaping his life. In fact, he would make doubly sure of things by tearing up immediately his cards and any letters that might be in his pocket and—

"Phelps!" Garrigan's voice said crisply.

"*Hey?*" cried the owner of the name, and his hair stood on end.

"What're you doing there?" the czar demanded roughly.

"Er—sitting here, but—"

"All right! I don't care where you sit. Listen!" snapped the other. "I want you to know your job when we get up there. Your job's to do nothing at all—see? Once we get a line on that float all you have to do is to sit back and hold fast. You wouldn't know how to work, and you'd be in the way. Don't try it."

It was the sharp, unwilling, perfunctory report of a capable subordinate to his incompetent chief. Having delivered it, Mr. Garrigan turned on his heel and rejoined his associates—and Mr. Phelps leaned against the vibrating deck-house and gasped aloud.

Could he not frame one optimistic thought but this uncouth demon must needs loom up and tear it out by the roots? How had Garrigan gleaned his precious name? How — Mr. Phelps's hands slapped to his pockets and the gasp came again. His card-case was gone and his letters, his watch was gone and his cigar-case—which gave him sudden, dizzy understanding of the excellent tobacco within. His gold match-box had journeyed with them and — a terrified spasm shook the hand that went into Mr. Phelps's trouser-pocket: all the money he owned in the world! Yes, that was gone, too! They had even picked his pockets.

Now, a number of untoward things had shaken young Mr. Phelps during these last few startling hours, yet from each happening he had rebounded, as it were. But this was different. Literally he was without a penny. His identity was known to perhaps the worst band of criminals in the country—and the names of several friends as well, since the band had acquired his letters. Blackmail of the liveliest brand might well be expected to follow him if ever he gained another fortune; ruin would hang over his head so long as one of these ruffians lived.

Or at least so it seemed, and he was too thoroughly staggered to controvert the notion with any new optimistic thoughts. He sagged against the deck-house and stared into the inky night, dotted here and there by a light, red or green or white. A big Sound liner plowed along, far off to starboard; he watched its windows until his eyes ached and danced and his head ached with them. He closed the eyes and groaned, not once and softly, but a dozen times and from an overflowing heart.

Only this morning he had stood upon the verge of winning everything the mind of man could desire — restored wealth, Miriam if he had great good fortune, all that both carries with them. Now everything, absolutely everything, hope included, had been snatched away from him.

Time ceased to exist. He huddled into a stricken heap and sat motionless and limp, numb and waiting for the next blow, if such a thing could come. Hours were passing—he took no account of them. They might be planning his murder in there—it mattered not at all. Mr. Phelps, in short, was done, and the lower he slipped on the camp-stools the less he cared.

He did not sleep perhaps; but after a long, long time he roused with a strange sense of something in the air and a rather rested feeling in his unhappy bones. He looked around quickly, and at first saw nothing at all. He rose and stretched stiffly, and his quickening brain noted that there was not a light aboard the tug.

Nor was there any sound or more than a hint of motion. The engines had not stopped, but they were turning so slowly and easily that the hull barely slipped its silent way through the water. He fumbled along the side of the deck-house and tried in vain to see what might be afoot—and the gentlest bump shuddered through the little craft.

They had struck something very lightly; now they were grating against it and quite as lightly. In the infernal blackness a bulky shape collided with him for an instant, vouchsafed him a whispered malediction, and receded. He thrust out his hands, startled; they met other hands, which slapped them aside. A palm caught Mr. Phelps on the chest and shoved him against the deck-house—and puffed out of existence again.

And there was a swish, almost inaudible, and what he knew instinctively to be hawser of some sort was running past his feet along the deck. Some one grunted a dozen feet away, some one else grunted at a slightly greater distance. The grunt seemed to return, echoed successively in half a dozen voices, until the owner of the last opened a door, revealed for an instant the countenance of Garrigan in the reflection of the engine-room fire, and, having grunted into the red depths, ceased to exist as the one sound.

On the instant the engines were turning faster, it seemed. Oddly, Mr. Phelps sensed their pulling, heard the creaking of cables, and — understood. Not only had they reached the C. B. and Y. float; they had captured it and were towing it out into the impenetrable gloom of Long Island Sound.

They were plowing along violently now, with the little vessel shaking from end to end. Ashore Mr. Phelps discerned half a dozen points of light, defining uncertainly a dock of considerable size. Minute after minute he watched the lights, and they fell behind with astonishing speed.

Evidently they were making straight for deep water again to finish the fiendish job, and the tension was relaxing. Men moved here and there with far less caution than they had used ten minutes ago. His ear caught more than one hoarse, excited laugh of pleasure; more than once did he start at the hushed flow of pleased profanity, coming from somewhere near at hand.

Leaning against the flimsy deck-house, he strove hard to realize it all: the first crime he had ever financed was an accomplished fact. He, John Phelps, with family and position and everything else but wealth, had contributed the two hundred dollars which made possible—he straightened up and peered intently through the terrific night. Mr. Garrigan's countenance alone had come oddly into view.

He was carrying a lantern under his coat, for the glow struck his features from underneath, showing them lined with wicked joy. He moved directly past Mr. Phelps and to the side of the tug, and there the small lantern came into sight and was set upon the deck. It flickered for a moment in the wind and revealed the dull-red side of a box car, not half a dozen feet away, with a dusky white "C. B. and Y." also visible. It revealed Mr. Garrigan, too, as he leaned over and spoke sharply to some one on the float.

And something startled Mr. Garrigan. He leaned farther forward and Mr. Phelps caught a new note in his voice, although he could distinguish no words. That he was unpleasantly astonished seemed clear enough, but after a moment he grunted, cursed more fluently, and extended both hands.

Other hands appeared mistily from the float and gripped them; and even the startled mind of John Phelps comprehended that at least one member of the criminal organization owned fairly clean digits. These that appeared were actually white and — yes, their owner wore white cuffs as well.

Very suddenly the recent millionaire felt that he understood: here, doubtless, was the master mind, the gentleman criminal who controlled the band. Mr. Phelps had heard of such people without ever having made the acquaintance of one. Curiosity rose within him; he started forward quickly for a sight of the character who could keep the whip-hand over this collection of savages.

The person was jumping for the tug now in an unaccustomed, floundering fashion that was almost funny. Mr. Garrigan, cursing afresh, wrenched at him and brought him bodily to the deck and set him upon his feet with a vicious slam—and his face came into the light just then and John Phelps's mouth opened wide.

He could not cry out; he could not even move. That person of the white cuffs was Bill Garford, artist—somewhat breathless, somewhat haggard, somewhat soiled, yet undeniably Bill.

CHAPTER VI.

The Wages of Sin.

ITS owner had suffered less than Mr. Phelps; Bill Garford's intrepid spirit, therefore, was in rather better working order. The small artist shook himself and gasped a little as he demanded:

"Why not tear a man in two while you're about it?"

"Djewanta drown?" snapped Garrigan.

"No, but—"

Garrigan was no longer listening. His lantern had swung over the side and Mr. Garford was standing back, adjusting his neat, shabby toilet and looking around vaguely in the gloom—yet even now motion would not come to Mr. Phelps.

Was *this* how Bill lived? Were art and his perennial camera and his bubbling enthusiasm all humbug? Was Bill actually a criminal? It couldn't be, and yet—it must be, for how else could he have come here? A man chronically down to his last penny does not ride half the length of Connecticut and appear mystically at night on a stolen car-float just by chance. A low, hollow groan escaped John Phelps at the incredible thing that had been revealed.

And Bill had not been alone on the float, by the way. A great hulk of a man, unwieldly and brutish as Garrigan himself, was lumbering over the side, talking in a quick, hoarse undertone. He indicated the float with a jerk of the thumb, and Garrigan leaned over and snapped an order of some sort. In the gloom a third passenger stumbled and snarled savagely—and Garford's broken-nosed model loomed up abruptly and tripped to the deck, while Garford started forward to catch him, a look of half-maternal concern illuminating his honest features and—

"Bill!" burst from Mr. Phelps in a great, glad cry of partial understanding.

The artist jumped a good two inches from the deck.

"Is that—is that—Jack?" he cried.

One of Mr. Garrigan's hands caught his arms; the other pointed straight at the section of night that masked John Phelps. Satan himself echoed in Mr. Garrigan's voice as he hissed:

"Just one more yell like that and I'll cut you two up and feed you to them fish down there!" He shook Mr. Garford's arm violently. "*You* get away from here!"

He spun the artist as he might have spun a top, and John Phelps caught him. He looked after the pair, too, and Mr. Phelps drew his friend along, fumbling the superstructure as he went, working around the side of the deck-house until—

"Johnny, you—you—" Garford whispered thickly.

"I'm here, yes."

"But—"

"It's all my own work, too," Phelps confessed bitterly.

"Your—what?"

Mr. Phelps laughed queerly.

"You—won't understand, Bill. No sane man could, I suppose. I can't understand it myself now. But I heard 'em talking about stealing that C. B. and Y. float, and it looked like the only chance I'd ever have to get back at the railroad. I had a brainstorm for a few minutes and put up the money."

"And came to see that the job was done right?" Garford asked incredulously.

"I had nothing to say about the coming. They brought me," said Phelps, and was silent for a minute. "But you—you—"

Mr. Garford chuckled queerly.

"I came with my model, Jack."

"He's on this job?"

"He's on it. If I'd ever suspected what he was on, or how much he was on it, I'd be dreaming sweetly on my humble little cot in the studio," the artist said bitterly. "Why, I had him started for that studio inside of five minutes. I turned around to get you, and you'd disappeared—so I walked him out while he was in the mood."

"And—"

"We didn't even get to the corner before that beast who hauled me aboard just now came hurrying after. He got Mac aside—"

"Who?"

"McNab—Peter McNab's his name," Garford said drearily. "Well, he got Mac aside and talked to him, and then left; and Mac said that he'd have to pose some other time for me, because he'd been sent out of town on an important job. I'd been looking for him for one solid week, and I couldn't lose him," sighed the artist. "I told him I'd go along; then we met that other brute and—I dunno. I think they forgot mostly about me, but I went along. There was nothing else to do, was there?"

"Except not go."

"But I tell you I wasted a week finding him, and you're never able to depend on a fellow like that. Well, we rode up-town and they bought tickets for some spot up this way. I bought one, too. We caught a train and rode in the dirtiest smoker I ever saw, hour after hour, stopping everywhere. Then we got off at a water-tank and began to walk along the tracks—somewhere about midnight. After a while we stumbled off the main line and down some new tracks, I think, through the wilderness. Anyhow, there was a lonely locomotive that came around a corner and nearly made hash of us—and there was a trestle that just missed robbing America of her greatest artist! That was where I wanted to quit!" the artist stated with profound feeling.

"Then why—"

"They wouldn't hear of it, Jack. They must have taken a fancy to me. When we were over that trestle alive I concluded that I didn't need that particular model after all, and told 'em I was through and going home. They didn't say much—indeed, I can't recall that they said anything at all. They just took me between them, one on each side, and we stumbled right ahead as if nothing had happened. Until we got to the dock, or in sight of it!" shuddered Mr. Garford.

"That was where—"

"Don't talk about it!" the artist said hurriedly. "We found some bushes and crouched down behind them for two hours at the very least, and I knew that something awful was in the air. Then this tug heaved into sight, away off, and pretty soon her lights began to go out one by one. After that we sneaked for the dock, and they promised me that if I didn't sneak as efficiently as they themselves, there'd be three murders instead of two. I didn't catch the sense of it until they'd interviewed the watchmen, but I sneaked."

"Did you kill the watchmen?" Phelps gasped.

"I think not, because they looked 'em over after they'd sandbagged them

and they seemed rather disappointed. Come to think of it, there was a little talk about dropping them overboard before they woke up—but the tug was getting in pretty close and they slammed me down to the confounded float there, cut her loose, got a couple of lines from this craft and—I guess that's all."

In the gloom, Mr. Phelps shook his head.

"And for the sake of a fool model, you got into this!" he muttered.

"There's nothing 'fool' about him!" Mr. Garford said. "He's the type I've hunted high and low, and I'll paint him now if I die for it."

"But to stick to him through a jaunt like that—"

"And, as I understand things, there'd be no 'this,' if you hadn't financed it!" the artist added tartly.

"What?"

"You put up the money for the expedition, you said. If there had been no expedition, my McNab would be locked up now, safe and sound, and I'd have been spared about three dozen of the worst scares I ever knew! Nor would I be standing here in a fifty-mile wind—"

His words amazed Mr. Phelps and stung him to reflections of his own.

"And if it hadn't been for your idiotic nosing around waterfront dives neither of us would be here!" he interrupted with much acerbity. "Get that? This whole cussed business is *your* fault! I've lived in New York all my life and never been down that street before, and I'd have died without seeing it if you hadn't dragged me there. Taking a half-dazed man down there—"

His own words had a rather strange sound, just then and there; he permitted them to trail away in the wind and Garford laughed drearily.

"This is no place to argue it," he said. "Where are we going, Johnny—England?"

"I've no idea," confessed Mr. Phelps. "They're going to loot one of the cars on that float and then scuttle it, I believe, but what happens after that I can't even guess."

"Well, you leave too much to subordinates ever to succeed in crime," the artist muttered. "I'll go and ask."

"We'll both go and look matters over before we ask anything," the late millionaire suggested more cautiously.

They were apparently returning to the region where lights were safe and necessary. The side lanterns and the toplights were in sight again and there was a small illumination in the pilot house. Along the rail, almost against which the big float was lashed, lanterns twinkled upon as active a scene as either man had witnessed in some time.

Mr. Garrigan was altogether in charge. He stepped back and forth, barking an order here, lending a hand there, while the rest of them worked; and he paid no attention to the more refined element aboard, save to wave it impatiently from the picture even as it approached the edge of the lighter zone. Men were moving on the float, out of sight; other men were hanging over the rail. Dragging creaks came from the dark form of the prize now and then, and eager hands stretched over from the tug—and results were indicated at regular intervals by a dull thud on the narrow deck and the appearance.

Deftly as they came each was pried open by Snapper. Excelsior flew to the four-winds—pasteboard boxes, brown paper, tissue paper. Silver flashed dimly and was rattled unceremoniously to the deck, where loving hands reached from the engine-room door and gathered it in, disappearing for a little and reappearing for more.

And then, when the last case seemed to have taxed their united strength, Snapper's yell of joy rang out and work slowed down. They clustered about that last case, and in the light of Garrigan's lantern Phelps and Garford caught the burnished yellow glint of somebody's beautiful gold service. It was bulky, heavy stuff, and the case

seemed to be filled with it; and now a larger, even heavier case came from the float, and when further yellow metal had been disclosed on the top layer operations ceased altogether and the fascinated gentlemen caught:

"Two boxes—that's all. Tell Mike!"

Garrigan's genial tone gave the order. Some ten good minutes Mr. Garrigan worked over the final case, until at last he hitched the desecrated container on edge and dumped out the last of the packing. His lantern flashed about the interior; and they dragged the thing away. Mr. Garrigan stood erect and scratched his head as he said:

"I dunno where the guy dreamed there was sixty thousand dollars' worth in that, but we ain't losing money, anyway. Well—"

He turned and looked thoughtfully toward Mr. Phelps and Mr. Garford—two mere murky shapes as they must have been; yet there was something in Garrigan's expression, clearly revealed in the lantern light, that passed through the gloom as a drill passes through a tooth, swiftly, and leaving one with the full consciousness that it has passed.

It was a weird, indefinable quality, and before they could analyze it the gaze had been turned away again. Mr. Garrigan motioned with his head, and his older and more congenial friends gathered around him in a compact little knot. Also, Mr. Garrigan spoke.

"Johnny," said Garford, "there is something about that man's face I don't like. He looks as if murder were too tame for him and he was trying to think up something better. I want to go home!"

"You've nothing on me in that desire," said his friend. "I'd give five years of my life to be out of it."

"Because no man living could ever explain away his presence in company with that face," the artist pursued with deep conviction. "Putting aside all the other pleasant possibilities, when the police-boats or destroyers—or whatever they send after us—come up, I want to be somewhere else."

"Eh?"

"Those two watchmen aren't Christians enough to forgive and forget the belting they got, Johnny. Even now they may have come around, and there are telephones and telegraphs and all that sort of thing, you know. It's close to half an hour since we pulled out of that dock; I've been looking for a search-light and a ten-inch shell across our bows this last fifteen minutes."

"I wonder where we are?" Mr. Phelps muttered.

"Miles from land and getting farther away every minute. It isn't where we are so much as where we're going to be an hour from now," Garford said earnestly.

The recent millionaire squared his shoulders.

"I guess I can settle that part of it," he muttered.

"How?"

"I'm going to order Garrigan to put us ashore, and I may be able to get away with it at this stage of the game. I don't know why not. I did finance the infernal thing, after all, and I didn't contract to spend the rest of my life with him."

"But will he—"

"He may, if I go at him in the one way I haven't tried so far," Phelps said thoughtfully. "This time I'll treat the whole affair as a matter of business that has been wound up. I'll tell him I want my share and want to be put ashore immediately."

"With me?"

"With you."

"And what'll you do with all that gold stuff if you get your share?" the artist asked curiously.

"Drop it and run like blazes as soon as we're on solid ground, of course," Mr. Phelps said briefly. "Coming?"

He started for the interesting group at the most unconcerned saunter, and Garford's camera bumped rather reassuringly into his side as he walked. Visible haste, emotion of any sort, in fact, was altogether out of the question now. He would come upon Garrigan

this time, neither as an aristocrat nor as a stunned human; he would speak to Garrigan as an equal and find ways to emphasize that equality as he talked. If it failed—

"What's that little gunman coming here for?" Garford asked suddenly.

"Which one?"

"They were calling him Snapper a little while ago, and—"

They were calling him nothing just now; his friends seemed even to have forgotten Snapper's existence. Gathered about Garrigan, their whole attention was upon him. Yet Snapper had detached himself and was approaching; he paused for a moment at the rail and, as one of the band came lightly from the float, breathless and with an ax in one hand, they heard:

"Ready, Mike?"

The other dashed perspiration from his brow.

"She ain't going to float more'n half an hour, Snapper. I'll tell Joe to cast her off."

And again Snapper was approaching Mr. Phelps and Mr. Garford. Lithely he came, with darting eyes and a puzzling smile. Six feet away he stopped and addressed Mr. Phelps with:

"Looking for Joe?"

"I want to speak to him."

"I'll—tell you—about Joe," said Snapper, and glanced over his shoulder. "You see, Joe—"

And there he stopped short. From his lips came a blood-curdling shriek of agony—and a hoarse shout and another scream! Stricken down apparently from the black skies above the young man spun about and fell headlong; and as he crashed to the deck he dumfounded at least two members of the company by screaming:

"Yuh big brute! Yuh big coward, soakin' a little guy like me!"

"Doing what?" gasped the recent millionaire.

The astounding figure writhed at his feet; its hands waved and thrashed the deck; its feet kicked noisily.

"Joe! Hey, Joe!" shrieked the fallen one.

Neither Mr. Phelps nor Mr. Garford moved; they could not move; sheer lack of comprehension, for the moment, held them as marble statues. But there was no marmoreal quality to the group about Mr. Garrigan. With that interesting criminal in the lead, they whirled about as one man, shouting angrily and waving fists. They came straight to the wallowing form and jerked it to its feet; and the pitiful whine of a whipped animal rang out in:

"I only started to speak to him, Joe, and he soaked me with his fist, and that other guy—"

"Did you hit him?" thundered Mr. Garrigan.

"Hit him?" choked Mr. Phelps. "Why, in Heaven's name, should I—"

"He says you soaked him?"

"He did soak me, the big—" shrilled the little man.

And it began to happen. For the first few terrible seconds neither gentleman understood just what it was. Dynamite seemed to have exploded somewhere aboard, to be sure, and blown men all about them. The air was full of fists. Feet were tramping closer and closer. Vicious faces shouted at them and snarled and—some one hit Mr. Phelps. Some one seemed to have hit Mr. Garford, too, for a battle-cry went up at the side of the millionaire that had been, and, his mouth wide open with amazement, at least one member of the band went down before the artistic fist.

It was a fight, fast enough, and all nicely prearranged. And since it had come to this, Mr. Phelps resolved it should be an excellent fight, because it would, in all probability, be his last. One fleeting instant he cast about the gloom by way of selecting the likeliest victim—and the fight was over.

The whole crowd had closed in suddenly. They were jammed around him now too tightly to permit of any thrashing about—and now he was off

his feet and moving into the air—and somewhere very near at hand he caught Garford's voice, squawking breathlessly.

And he was still rising; and now—by all that was unmerciful — he had been thrown bodily over the side. Mr. Phelps's eyes closed. Another billionth of a second and his whole past life would begin to flash before him. Yet in a space of time hardly longer he realized that it might not flash quite yet—he had struck something very near at hand, very spacious and very solid, that was not the deck of the infernal tug-boat.

Mr. Phelps's arms sprawled out wildly, his fingers clawing for a grip; and those of the right hand found it very readily indeed, for they closed over a cold steel rail. He tugged at the thing and it remained quite fast, and he understood—they had dropped him to the sinking float.

And they must have worked like lightning, too, for the tug had cut away, even in these few moments. The swirl of her came to his ear as he sat upright and tried to look about; her few lights flashing back cheerily at him, the wicked little vessel was bounding away over black water like an unleashed greyhound.

Well, considering the mentality that had plotted it, the whole thing had been an exquisitely efficient piece of work. Mr. Phelps's share of the loot would not leave the general fund now. Mr. Phelps himself—

"Hey, Joe!" a terrific voice shouted, almost beside him. "Joe, I'm here!"

"In the name of—" left Mr. Phelps lips.

"Hey, Joe! Come back! Joe! The little guy dragged me over wit' him!" the unfamiliar voice bellowed, and then cracked pitifully: "Joe! Y' left me—"

"You might just as well shut up, McNab," said Mr. Garford's welcome tones. "He's making thirty miles an hour out there."

"Well, if he's making a hundred miles an hour, does that give him any right t' leave me here?" the other asked frantically. "Ain't I stood in wit' Joe this fifteen years and taken all he wanted t' hand me? Couldn't he 'a' looked an' seen who he was kickin' over the side?" The sharp crack came again. "What did he ever want t' try that for, anyway? I didn't want to see you get chucked over here, Mr. Garford. On the level, I didn't. When Joe put us wise to what he was going to do I said t' throw the big guy over and let you stick!"

Mr. Phelps swallowed and rose.

"Meaning me?" he asked.

"Are you there, Johnny? Are you really there?" Garford cried in a suddenly overjoyed burst.

"I'm really here."

"Is this thing actually sinking?" the astonishingly calm tones of the artist asked.

"You bet she's sinkin'!" contributed the invisible McNab with no calm at all. "It was Mike Cassidy that cut through her, and when Mike gets an ax in his hands—she's going down this end first, too!"

In the impenetrable night, then, matches flared out suddenly. They were Mr. McNab's matches, and they revealed that perturbed ruffian with neck stretched to peer about. Also, did they reveal Mr. Phelps and Mr. Garford, standing out ten feet apart, on the end of the big float.

But more than all, they flamed almost against the end of the dull red freight-car and showed an iron ladder; and even before they had flickered out McNab had relieved himself of much wisdom in:

"Hike up here, gents! There's a string o' these cars, and we can get along the roofs to the other end. This part's going down first; the other end might stay out of water a little longer unless she goes all at once."

He was already ascending. Mr. Phelps and Mr. Garford fumbled wildly at the ladder and followed him. They gained the roof of the box car and, marking its upward tilt, chattered

frenziedly to each other about it; she was indeed sinking at that end! They stood erect and steadied themselves with some difficulty and the uncanny suspicion that a fatal tumble lay not more than one inch to the right or to the left; and while chills ran through them at the possibilities, they plodded grimly, swiftly onward—until further matches of Mr. McNab showed them where to step across to the next roof.

They stepped and walked again and stepped once more. Again they walked; for a moment their companion's last match fluttered over a further gap, and as they crossed it blindly Mr. McNab's hoarse voice announced:

"This is the last!"

He sat upon its roof, panting. Mr. Phelps's own knees seemed no more anxious to support him. He, too, sat down rather suddenly, and Garford muttered and slid to his side and muttered further—not sane words, to be sure, but the very things that Mr. Phelps was thinking.

It was indeed "the last"—the last of everything, this time! Ten minutes, perhaps — possibly even an hour —and ths C. B. and Y. float would have probed the depths of Long Island Sound, which in most places are considerable. There was no way out of it, no life-boats to swing down from davits, no reasonable hope that any craft would wander past and pick them up, since none was in sight now.

And, after all, what did it matter? Calming somewhat, hunching more securely on the precarious perch, the recent millionaire was inclined to think that it mattered very little. They might still be rescued; but, after that —what? He had not a cent in the world. He had no expectation of making a cent—now! Let them be taken off within five minutes, and it could only be by the authorities looking for the stolen float and the guilty people.

Then, too, supposing them to be captured as well, gentlemen of the Garrigan and McNab type have a way of turning State's evidence on small provocation. If they turned and told the mere truth, and stuck to it, Mr. Phelps suspected a good ten or twenty years in jail was in store for himself.

Oh, he had made a thorough job of his own ruination, and whether he cared to live for the finish would give him food for thought these next few minutes. It was too bad, of course, to see Bill Garford go, too, but—

"This ain't no box car!" McNab said breathlessly.

"What is it?" Phelps's listless voice asked.

"Pullman!"

"Eh?" Garford asked with more animation. "What should a Pullman car—"

"I don't know what she's doing here, but I tell you this is a Pullman," his cherished model persisted. "I been all over this country, mister, from one end to the other, and what I don't know about car-roofs ain't been discovered yet. This is a Pullman, and there's people inside it!"

"People?"

"Live ones, and they're awake and scared stiff!" McNab went on after a little pause and a scratching about in his section of the gloom. "I thought I heard 'em talking a minute ago, and just now somebody turned on a light. Bend over here. See it?"

"Well—by thunder! I hear them myself!" the artist said amazedly. "Out there toward the end of the car. Hear it, John?"

Mr. Phelps's speech was strangely occluded.

"I — fancied I heard a voice then, Bill—a certain voice, but—"

He hitched about and faced the last gap they had crossed. He strained his eyes, too, for voices seemed to come from that space between their own car and the box car. And as he strained them a little white light flashed through the gloom, flickered an instant, and vanished—flickered again and shone this time upon the ladder of the next car.

And a hand was reaching for the

upper rung—a long, lean, elderly hand which, for no obvious reason, sent cool thrills through Mr. Phelps and his artist friend. Light left the ghostly thing for a moment; when it puffed into being again two hands were there and the top of a white head.

Many seconds the strange tableau remained unchanged. Quick voices reached them as they sat petrified; the white head moved upward — and upward—and there was something in the curved shoulders of its owner that struck a faintly familiar chord within Mr. Phelps. He started to his hands and knees—and the light went out.

And then, after a small pause, it reappeared. An utterly dumfounded gasp came from Mr. Phelps; he collapsed limply against his friend; he understood, bitterly enough, that the end was at hand—that they were sinking below the black waters and that this was his last filmy vision of earthly affairs.

Because there at the top of the ladder, with the white circle of the pocket flash-light framing her most brilliantly, stood *Miriam!*

CHAPTER VII.

Sinking.

OUR complex human brain, despite a quantity of irresponsible adverse criticism, is a fairly reliable piece of automatic machinery. To a certain point it accepts and assimilates and analyzes; then, coming to the purely incredible, it rejects without heating bearings or straining its emotional rods.

Mr. Phelps, therefore, understanding that delirium was upon him, experienced no excitement at all. He merely sat and stared—a faint, sad, fond smile upon his tired lips—at the impalpable vision of one who might have been Mrs. John Phelps. Odd it was, of course, that she should stand out with such astounding definition in the sharp, white light—yet not so very odd, either, because that adored face had flitted before him for weeks and weeks. He rejoiced, too, that she should have appeared thus mysteriously to cheer his last—

"That's a darned pretty girl!" Garford choked from the depths of his own astonishment.

"*Huh?*" came from Phelps.

"Nose isn't what it might be—cheek-bones just a shade higher would go better with that particular type," whispered the artist, "but—"

"Bill! Do you see her, too?" the recent millionaire asked throatily.

"What? Of course I see her. Why—"

"Then she is here! She *is* here!" Mr. Phelps gibbered, so strangely that Garford clutched his arm. "She—no, she isn't, either. She's gone!"

Mr. Garford's fingers tightened.

"Say, what the devil's the matter with you?" he asked. "She's only gone because somebody got tired of holding his thumb on the button of his flash-light. Stop that gurgling and gulping!"

"I'm not—"

"And there she is again!" the artist observed. "By thunder! There's three of 'em now. That car must be packed with people, and the whole crowd's due to sink with us!"

Sharp horror sounded in his voice, the echo of the sudden realization that had not come during the first few startled minutes of their predicament. Mr. Garford rose to his knees with the vague intention of doing something helpful and not the most remote idea of what it was to be, and almost as quickly he sat down again, because his old friend just at that instant seemed to need care more acutely than any one else in the neighborhood.

Mr. Phelps, in fact, had caught his friend's knee and was driving his nails almost to the bone as he croaked:

"Bill! Look! Look! Is that—"

He was talking wildly, of course. He clutched himself with some effort and released his spasmodic grip on

Garford. Also, he sat quite still and counted ten—and looked again. The flash-light, which had been passed to the white-haired gentleman, still rested steadily upon the girl and on that other man of later middle-age and—

"*That's Myton!*" Mr. Phelps said.

"Who?"

"One of the owners of this road, Bill."

"Know him?"

"No, but—"

"Does he know anything about these floats—whether they have watertight compartments or bulkheads or—"

The artist ceased and blinked; the little light, a decidedly powerful affair for its size, had been snatched by Mr. Myton and was turned directly upon them. For a moment they caught his astonished muttering and heard a bland negative uttered by a clear, cutting voice—and then Myton had crossed the gap with a bound and, stepping along with quite astonishing agility, was walking directly down upon Mr. Phelps along the car-roof!

Two yards away he stopped and stood stock still. His light turned on Mr. Garford for one short flash—and turned away again to Mr. Phelps, whose lips were just opening. But before words came Mr. Myton had spoken:

"*You!*" He crouched and examined the recent millionaire more closely and much as one might have inspected a rare ape in the zoo. "It *is* you!" he stated.

"I—"

"You're John Phelps?"

"I am. I—"

Myton had straightened up again. Standing behind the flash-light, his face, of course, was all unseen; yet something of its expression seemed carried along with his words as he said:

"Well—*you*—well, upon my soul and honor! I—I—*I'll be damned!*"

There was a wealth of hard, practical sense in Garford's head; he leaned forward and, by way of making all due allowance for the probably tangled mental state of the one man who might possess needed information, said slowly and incisively:

"Sir, can you tell us how these floats are built? Whether—"

The C. B. and Y. magnate was not even aware of his voice. Crouching again, he came very close to Mr. Phelps, and in the faint rays that reached his countenance the recent millionaire discerned savage anger and —no fear at all!

"Phelps," said Mr. Myton tensely, "you're evidently a good sight more dangerous man that any one ever supposed. I'll have to give you credit for that eh? *You and I will talk later.*"

And he rose and turned on his heel. He meant something, of course; Garford understood that. Myton and Phelps knew what it was, too, but it had no bearing on this immediate situation, and it was distracting their minds from danger that grew greater every second. So Garford raised his voice with:

"You, sir! You're connected with this road?"

"What?" Myton paused for a moment.

"How are these floats built? Are they nonsinkable or—"

"How the devil should I know? I didn't build them, sir!"

"But—I think you don't quite understand," the artist urged. "We're sinking now! This float has been scuttled!"

"Bah!" said the capitalist.

"But we are!" Garford persisted wildly. "There's a hole in the bottom of this thing and we're filling fast and—"

"Don't be an ass, sir!" Mr. Myton snapped and turned away again. "You're in no danger, whatever *he* may have led you to believe. That—that type's too infernally choice of its own skin to take any risks. You'll be rescued at the proper moment."

"Er—how?" Mr. Garford asked.

One snort escaped the C. B. and Y. magnate.

"Ask the person beside you, sir," he rasped. "His information is more complete than mine."

And he had stamped back and stepped to the freight-car once more, where his light played on the girl and the older man again. Mr. Garford passed a hand over his dazed brow. There had been no fear, no perturbation in that tone. So far as any terror went, Myton might have been in his own office—wherever that was. There was some sort of secret between Myton and Phelps evidently, but—

"Johnny," said the artist thinly, "how are we going to be rescued?"

"What?"

"You heard him."

"I heard him, and he must have gone mad!" said Mr. Phelps grimly and without great interest, for a new, fearful idea was taking shape in his head. "I—give it up."

"Well, confound it! Are *your* wits gone, too?" the artist demanded hotly. "Don't *you* understand that we're going to the bottom in a few minutes? What's the idea of this lethargic stuff, anyway? Am I the only sane person on this hulk?"

"I guess you are, Bill," conceded his friend.

"There's me, too," suggested McNab's voice, just behind them, with just a tinge of acerbity. "You'n me's gotter get busy, boss."

"What?"

"Doors," said his model briefly. "Mebbe we can tear 'em off, if we don't drown first. Mebbe if we did we could float around on 'em till after daylight and get picked up. I dunno."

"It's worth trying, Mac!" snapped the artist, and hitched to his feet.

Side by side the pair hurried to the end of the Pullman, stooped and, to the accompaniment of a grunted comment or two from Mr. Myton, dropped out of sight. Mr. Phelps sighed. Removing the door of a freight-car with one's bare hands might be possible—he doubted it very much. But, in any case, they'd hardly get doors enough loose to float this company; some of them, at least, were going to the bottom, and he would be one—but before he went there was one thing to be done.

Mr. Phelps rose quite suddenly and walked to the gap between the cars; he eyed it and stepped across—and he was beside *her*. She held the light just now, and, in its momentary sweep, he caught sight of Myton's back, two cars along, and still moving, evidently on an investigating tour of his own. And his heart thumped for an instant, until the light showed clearly the presence of the white-haired gentleman of the stooping shoulders; and then it passed to himself and he heard:

"It *is* Mr. Phelps!"

It was the same voice. Willy-nilly, he paused to dwell upon the wonder of the thing for an instant before his own throaty:

"You—remembered my name?"

The charming young woman behind the flash-light caught her breath audibly.

"Why — why shouldn't I have remembered it?" she asked blankly.

An unpleasantly cool wave swept over Mr. Phelps's spirit; he was indeed making himself ridiculous! Yet even as he understood it, even as he sensed the impression of utter idiocy, he must be conveying to the cool young woman the ill-mannered light slipped—all but fell from her hand—and was caught again and trained on him. But it had rested squarely upon her for one instant and her cheeks had shone fiery red.

"Why—father—Mr. Phelps!" said the girl of the gold frame from the blackness.

Queerly, perhaps, a quantity of calm had come to Mr. Phelps these last few seconds. He was not only himself again, but even more than himself.

"I should—like to shake your hand, sir," he said with gusty lightness, "but I can't see it."

"It is immaterial, sir; both hands

are occupied at the moment," came from the edge of the box-car roof. "I am glad to know you, sir. My daughter spoke several times of meeting you —eleven times, in fact."

"She—" escaped Mr. Phelps.

"My case, my dear, my case," the clear, precise voice said. "Will you be good enough to turn the light this way. It is slipping."

The illuminating circle slid mercifully from Mr. Phelps and rested on the roof for a little. A case was there, surely enough—a black affair of leather, perhaps one foot square, which would have been flat had it not been stuffed very nearly to spherical shape. There was a tan strap about it, to which the thin hand clung, and a black one; and, having gathered the thing to himself again and laid it across his knees, the gentleman smiled vaguely in Phelps's direction.

"My papers," he exclaimed—"the fruit of thirty-seven years of incessant labor!"

So, he, too, was mad! And he was her father! Mr. Phelps winced—yet ceased to wince before he had fairly begun, because the girl was speaking, and there was a mechanical, patient note in her voice that struck him oddly:

"Father's book, Mr. Phelps. His work on—"

"'The Latent Hydraulic Horsepower of the Earth'!" the white-haired man took up, with plain pleasure. "I am compiling, sir, a treatise upon the almost infinite power furnished by nature, and almost entirely ignored by what we choose to call our engineering talent—the term, of course, being a misnomer, as I have pointed out in—"

"But just here and now, dad, need we—" said the girl.

"—with an appendix, I hope, dealing exclusively with the utilization of tides," pursued her father evenly. "Indeed, I sometimes fear that the appendix will rank in importance with the body of the work itself.

"To handle the subject properly, Mr. Phelps, will demand at last two hundred thousand words, most of which matter I have drafted in the rough—forty-one chapters of which, in fact, have been written and are waiting revision. I have studied tides —and I feel justified in making the statement without qualification of any nature—more thoroughly than any man—"

He stopped. Not, perhaps, because he wished to stop, but because Mr. Myton was returning. Mr. Phelps's breath ceased altogether; there could be but one reason for that frantic pounding along car-roofs. They were going down with a rush, and Myton had come to report it and they'd have to jump. He moved quickly to the girl's side—and he was jerked away so viciously that he all but pitched to the fathomless blackness below.

"I said that we'd talk, did I not?" Mr. Myton asked him fiercely.

"You said—"

"I said just that, and I meant it and still mean it, and you understand me perfectly! But, by gad, sir, if you try sneaking up the instant my back is turned I'll—" The remarkable magnate ceased, too, for his voice was rising above the first burning, metallic whisper. He turned abruptly from Mr. Phelps and bent low, and when he spoke again his tones dripped honey. "Doctor!" he said distinctly. "Dr. Vining!"

"Ah?" queried the expert on tides.

"On the other car—the farther car —on the roof of my private car, which we left, it is far more comfortable than here. I will assist you across immediately," said Mr. Myton, with a firm emphasis past any understanding.

So that was her full name—Miriam Vining! It struck musically upon Mr. Phelps's somewhat prejudiced ear; it thrilled him anew. He came a little closer to the holder of the flash-light and watched the odd scene in its bright little circle.

Dr. Vining, it seemed, had risen, as-

sisted in part by Myton. Nor did there seem any need at all for the careful, lifting hands Mr. Myton had tucked into either armpit, because the white-haired gentleman shook him off impatiently and, peering downward for an instant, stepped across to the Pullman roof and sat down once more, all without effort.

The inordinately preoccupied eyes blinked back toward the box car; Dr. Vining, in fact, was seeking to recall what he had left there—which chanced to be his daughter, and the black case slipped, and with a little cry he caught at it.

The light went out.

"I can't hold that button down another second, and the catch is broken," said the voice of all voices quite conventionally.

"If you'll let me take it—" suggested Mr. Phelps.

"You're very welcome to it," said Miriam, and something hard was passed to him—and a soft, warm hand brushed his own for an instant and was gone again. "Is dad all right over there?"

"As much—all right as any of us," the recent millionaire confessed.

"What did you mean by that, Mr. Phelps?" the girl asked anxiously.

"Only that—"

"There *is* some danger, isn't there? Mr. Myton said that there was none at all!"

"But—why?" Phelps asked amazedly.

"I don't know. When the noise woke us and father told me to dress, Mr. Myton said that the float had broken loose and we were drifting, and that wasn't very dangerous. And then, when we heard you and knew that there was some one else aboard, he said that we must have been drifting for some time and that we had run into something — that's why we hurried from the car, you know, because we could feel the slant of the floor and hear the water so plainly. But just a minute ago he seemed to have changed his mind altogether. He came back here and said that there was no danger at all, and he seemed angry at something."

"What?"

"I have no idea, but—he must have been wrong, Mr. Phelps. That end is going deeper all the time. We're not swinging about so much as at first, I think, but—"

The words trembled a little. Mr. Phelps drew a long breath and came nearer.

"There is some danger—I don't know just how much," he said, "but they're trying to rig a life-raft that should keep you and your father afloat at least. If they don't succeed, I can swim around with you for an hour or two, when this infernal thing does founder."

"But—"

"But, however remote it may be, there's always the chance that we may not get out of it alive—some of us, anyway. And if I'm going to shift to another world, I can't go without telling you one thing," Mr. Phelps hurried on—and paused again.

The faintest vibration had run through the roof beneath them, and it could mean but one thing: the float was breaking up! Somewhere below a mighty air compression might have formed to tear her apart; perhaps she was rotten as everything else connected with the C. B. and Y., and coming to pieces of her own accord because Mr. Phelps was depending on her for a few pitiful minutes of life. But in any case the dull shade had gone through her again, and Mr. Phelps exploded, in an undertone tense as a fiddle-string, yet so low that it no more than reached the girl.

"And that one thing is this," he said. "You remember the—day we met at the Rowley's? Well, I just looked at you and—after that, there was no one there but you! After a while you hurried away, and there seemed no reason for my staying any longer. My coat and hat were up in

Bill's den, and I trotted off on my own hook to find them, in some sort of dream, I think. I knew that something or other had happened—something so blessedly beautiful that nothing like it ever happened before or ever could again! I stood around that upper hallway for a while, trying to find the answer, I remember, and there was a door open—I think it was Aggie's room—and your picture stood in there."

"You—if you—" the girl began, rather faintly.

"Telling you now can't do much harm; it's all done for!" the astonishing young man hurried on. "I went in and stole that picture and left the house as if the whole police force was after me. I got it home and I had a little gold frame made for it, and every day of my life since then—fifty times, five hundred times a day!—I've picked up that picture and looked at it and—oh, told myself about how I was going to find you, just as soon as—" He broke off sharply. "Well, that's what I did," said Mr. Phelps, "and if you come out of this beastly mess alive, as you will, and I don't—I want you to get that picture and keep it, Miriam. And I want you to keep it, *please,* because—"

The shudder ran through the float once more. Mr. Phelps straightened very suddenly and shook his head, by way of dislodging certain highly sentimental cobwebs.

"You'll—forgive that recital?" he asked, rather thickly.

"I—I—"

There was a catch in her voice which he did not understand at all, and which, in any event, had no bearing on the immediate situation. That blood-curdling thud had rumbled through the hulk even again, and this time so energetically as to rouse audible comment on the next car.

"I fear," said Mr. Phelps, "that that life-raft is going to be a little too late in delivery. Can you swim?"

"Yes."

"Then—don't. Because there's no telling how long you may have to swim by yourself after—after you begin," said the recent millionaire. "Heaven only knows where we are, girl, or how many miles from shore, but it can't help being daylight pretty soon now, and there are all sorts of boats running up and down here. Just stick close to me, you know, and keep one hand on me and—why, maybe when dawn gets here we'll be near enough land to swim it, anyway."

"But father—"

"I'll ask Garford to take care of him," Phelps said quietly; "he swims like a fish and— Great Scott!"

The thud had come again, with so much force that Mr. Phelps all but lost his footing. He caught at the girl, for the time had come to jump. Only her hand met his own, but for an instant the fingers tightened—and darted away again and—

"Phelps!" thundered Mr. Myton's voice from the edge of the Pullman roof!

That was one of the people who had looted him and brought Miriam to this!

"You do your own swimming, Myton!" Mr. Phelps said viciously. "Keep clear of me!"

"Are you deaf or are you dead?" snarled the magnate. "Where in blazes is that light?"

"Light?" asked Mr. Phelps intelligently.

"My pocket light—the flashlight—the light I've asked you for five times already! Give it to me, confound you!"

He snatched it from the unconscious fingers that extended the little lantern automatically. He pushed the button and the flare of light struck Mr. Phelps for an instant and then went out over the water.

"—perfectly unquestionable!" Dr. Vining's voice said clearly. "I can identify the characteristic oscillation of ebbing tide over shoal by watching

the movement of a single chip through a field-glass, and I have done it, sir! When I made the statement that we were practically grounded, it was with full—"

"Well, you were right, Vining! You were right!" said Myton.

They were startling words, indeed! They sent Mr. Phelps's eyes after the white beam of light. Also, they brought a big groan of relief from the chest he had been expanding for a deep plunge and a long swim; because, not fifty feet distant, hard sand beach appeared in Myton's light; scrubby growth was visible just beyond, and in the very, very faint grayness that seemed to have come over things these last few minutes he discerned the hinted outline of rising ground that must be dry land.

CHAPTER VIII.

Mystery and a Trust.

IN some ways the trick of snatching back a man almost resigned to death is unkind.

Not thirty seconds ago Mr. Phelps's mental frame had been calm and brave; the proposition of swimming about with Miriam until he could swim no more, then to sink, if need be, with the consciousness that she was fresh and ready for another long period in the water had afforded him a grim kind of pleasure. He would have wound up a not very useful career with one good piece of work to his credit at least.

But now, how fearfully everything had altered. The realization came over him suddenly and with an exquisite clarity that was nothing less than devilish. For what, in the name of all that was sensible, had he been spared?

He had, indeed, cost the C. B. and Y. some of the money they had taken from him: now, red-handed, he was in the grip of one of the C. B. and Y. owners. And some, although not all, of Mr. Myton's remarks grew clear. Mr. Myton, in fine, understood precisely what Mr. Phelps had done and why he had done it; according to Murley, the C. B. and Y. band had taken some interest in the personality of their rash young contributor. And the "talk," to which Myton had referred so darkly — Mr. Phelps shuddered for an instant.

That talk would indeed take place now, in the presence of magistrate, policemen, court attendants and reporters, and when it was over the Phelps name would be a thing for all God-fearing people to mention in hushed whispers.

There was no way of avoiding it. Given even a few dollars in real money and he might have essayed a quick drop over the side—a wallow to shore —a dash for the railroad or any other means of quick conveyance—and then a pell-mell escape from the country and a fresh start in life, somewhere, say, in Turkestan or Manchuria.

But without a cent, without even a watch to pawn, he was here to stay. As in every other instance in which he had been sufficiently absurd to try conclusions with the C. B. and Y., that unpleasant. railroad had him exactly where it wanted him.

Dawn was coming rapidly now, and the tide racing out; another twenty minutes or so and the sun would be peeping over that eastern sky-line and they would be able to walk dry-shod to shore. It seemed very near at hand now, and it was a deserted stretch of country — rocky fields, for the most part, with poor fencing and woods in the distance, and here and there the roof of a farmhouse.

He turned and looked behind, to the waters that stretched away: far off there was Long Island. Just quarter of a mile ahead lay a barren point of land which the tug must almost have hit in racing away, and with which, in any event, they would have collided very shortly. It was fate.

He glanced at Miriam and a twinge of fright ran through him. In that idolized quarter, too, he had probably sealed his own doom. It is only to the exceptional girl that one can speak one's insane thoughts as had Mr. Phelps, and thereafter hope to speak any thoughts at all. Not that it mattered very much now, but—

"Forsaken spot, isn't it?" the girl asked easily, although she did not face him.

She seemed to be the exceptional girl. Mr. Phelps swallowed and peered at her; she was studying the shore.

"That is—er—ah—Connecticut," he observed brightly.

"I had guessed that much," said Dr. Vining's daughter, and a queer, rich little laugh rippled from her neighborhood. "Where's the Silton Junction place?"

"Miles from here, I think." He gathered himself and cleared his throat vigorously. "Miss Vining!" he hazarded. "I—I—that is to say, I—"

And this time she faced him squarely enough, albeit a faint flush crept into her cheeks.

"I think that we were all a—little unstrung, you know," she said quietly. And her eyes dropped suddenly as she added: "Is—dad all right over there?"

The recent millionaire relaxed strangely and looked across. Dr. Vining was crouched uncomfortably, his case on his knees, his glance wandering impatiently to the brightening sky as he fumbled papers that seemed to have come from his bulging pockets. He glanced at Myton, himself watching the shore intently, and sniffed causeless but visible contempt, and he took to adjusting heavy glasses on the bridge of his nose.

"He's quite all right," Phelps reported. "And now—"

"But he isn't at all," the girl sighed helplessly. "He has no tie and no collar, and—is there any further need of our standing up here, Mr. Phelps?"

"Eh? I suppose not."

"Then won't you help me get dad down that ladder and into the car?"

The most breath-taking smile in the world flashed appeal at him for an instant; Mr. Phelps, turning with a galvanic jerk, landed upon the roof of the Pullman and steadied himself—and Myton started violently and whirled on him.

"You let him—" he began.

"I'm going to help him down to get the rest of his clothes on!" Mr. Phelps snapped with undue ferocity. "His daughter—"

"You let his daughter attend to him—d'ye hear?" snarled the magnate, who really did seem the one unquestionably demented member just now. "You go in that car of mine with him and I'll—"

The recent millionaire lost track of his ridiculous words. He had his mission and he performed it, setting the preoccupied Dr. Vining into motion with an exquisite gentleness that would have been wasted on the finest china. Down the ladder, then, went Dr. Vining, to the vestibuled platform of the Pullman, where his daughter waited—and into it with her. The door closed on them and Phelps turned away.

On the ladder Mr. Myton was poising like a wildcat ready to spring. He glared at Mr. Phelps as that gentleman jumped to the slanting deck of the float, solid as any sidewalk just now, and he popped back, to sit on the roof of the box car and stare at the shore again, his trim gray trousers and spatted feet dangling.

Some little time the recent millionaire stood in a brown study. It was light now, and not a dozen feet of shallow water separated them from hard sand; he thought for a time, and then turned to the voices on the end of the float.

That was Garford talking to his model, who listened and nodded an understanding that was obviously only partial. Mr. Garford's camera re-

mained with him and, so it seemed, did Mr. Garford's enthusiasm; for the little artist faced his friend suddenly and then approached with eye aglow and lips parted.

"Johnny," he said, "he's the most wonderful thing of his kind that ever happened!"

"Is he?"

"It was his face that I wanted at first, but that anatomy's the most perfect type of pure brute development I ever struck! I've just been looking at his back and shoulders. That shirt's all that covers him, and when it's off the muscles—"

"Well, you keep his confounded shirt on! There are ladies on this float!" snapped Mr. Phelps. "And—"

"And the best part is that he's as unspoiled as if I'd fished him out of the middle of the Sahara!" the artist enthused further. "Nobody ever discovered him; every pose he strikes is instinctive and primitive as a Congo savage! Have you watched him stoop over?"

"No."

"See him stoop, then!" said Mr. Garford, and awed joy rendered him almost breathless. "As soon as that blasted sun makes up its mind to rise I'm going to snapshot him in a dozen different poses—not tell him to pose, you know, but suggest things and get him while he's doing them. And before I'm through, boy, believe me, I'll have a series of studies that'll knock—"

"Bill," Mr. Phelps said moodily, "have you got ten dollars?"

"What?" The artist caught himself and came to earth with a thud.

"In your pocket, I mean?"

"Well—neither there nor anywhere else," confessed Mr. Garford. "Why?"

"How much have you, here?"

"Oh, I'm not broke by any means. Seventy-five or eighty cents—seventy-three, evidently. Want it, John?"

"No, I—guess not," sighed Mr. Phelps rather bitterly.

Mr. Garford glanced back toward his model.

"You had a big roll," he said absently.

"They took that."

"They did?" asked the artist with perfunctory sympathy, and turned away. "Say! *See him scratch his neck*, John!"

"Darn his neck!" said Mr. Phelps with deep feeling, and returned to his brown study.

That one little momentary hope had departed. Just for half a minute or so he had turned over the notion of borrowing a few dollars from Bill and fleeing through the few inches of water. It would have been a sorry enough chance of escape, to be sure, but it would have been a chance, nevertheless.

It was gone now; Mr. Phelps bowed his head and permitted the brown study to continue and deepen in tint until it was a deep, dull black, with a sinister, smoky effect around the edges. There was nothing for it but to wait and take what was coming; his final jab at the C. B. and Y.—well, if he spent one more minute glooming on C. B. and Y. just now he'd be trying suicide in the soup-plate depths of salt water just below. Mr. Phelps brought up his head with a jerk, observed that the sun had fairly risen now, and turned angrily down the little aisle between cars to the spot that had held Garford and his cheery enthusiasms a little while ago.

And something so odd seemed afoot that, for a minute, he merely stared at it, unable to grasp the details.

There was McNab, who had been leaning over the side; there was Garford, on the opposite edge of the float, and Garford appeared just to have photographed his wonder, for the camera was still poised. And between them, Mr. Myton and Dr. Vining formed a peculiar tableau. The magnate was just turning from the white-haired gentleman, and the latter was

pushing the magnate away, with exasperated anger in every line of his finely cut countenance.

Only an instant it lasted, though, before Mr. Myton strode straight to one William Garford and demanded:

"You took a picture then, did you?"

"I did!" Mr. Garford stared at him with some warrant.

"Of me? Of him?"

"I'm afraid both of you were in it."

"Then, by the—" Mr. Myton exploded with a fury past any understanding, and shut his teeth with a click. "Give me that film, young man!"

"Hey?" inquired Mr. Garford.

"Give me that film or I'll wring your neck, you little hound!" said the railroad owner.

"You're welcome to that film if you're able to take it," the artist said pleasantly, "and before you begin that business of wringing my neck you'd better say good-by to your friends, by the way. You're twenty years older than I am, but you're a good fifty pounds heavier and a head taller, and you look strong as a bull—too strong to call me names and get away with it, anyway! Hold this camera for a minute or two, Johnny!"

He eyed Mr. Myton and Mr. Myton eyed him; further, he eyed Phelps. Yet, instead of rushing madly at them, Mr. Myton only emitted a strange little cry, like that of a tortured animal. His hands went to his head and clutched that evidently disordered member for an instant; his teeth gritted audibly—and he had regained some sort of self control.

"When I—" he began.

And he caught Miss Vining's voice, for the girl had appeared, too, and was speaking to her father. The remarkable Mr. Myton glanced back at her very swiftly indeed, and in his glance were rage and positive fear. He smiled—the smile of a demon—and spoke loudly and blandly.

"There is no further need of remaining here," he said, and it was addressed to all. "I'll see that this float is pulled off and patched up later in the day, and your things can be taken off then, doctor."

"I have no 'thing' except—" Dr. Vining began coldly, roused from the papers to which even now he had returned.

"And we can walk ashore now without even damping our soles," the magnate pursued with a sort of ghastly, overdone geniality. "Better than that, even, I'm almost sure that I know where we are. That strip is Colgan's Point, as they call it. Look up there and you'll see a farm wagon—and that's the road. I've been over it several times." He stepped back to Dr. Vining and rubbed his hands. "There's a secluded little inn up there, too," he concluded pleasantly, "with the best cook on earth, and it's not more than half a mile, walking, I fancy. Breakfast, eh, doctor?"

Dr. Vining's pencil merely poised for an instant above his closely scribbled sheet.

"Two hundred and fifteen thousand, four hundred and sixty-four and eighty-eight one-hundredths," he said lucidly.

Mr. Myton's teeth bared, and were covered as quickly; and while, for a startled instant, Phelps had fancied that Mr. Myton had meant to bite the unconscious gentleman, the magnate laughed aloud as he cried:

"Undoubtedly you're right, my dear doctor! Who's first over the side?"

Attaining shore was the simplest thing that had happened to Mr. Phelps in many long hours. He leaped lightly to the moist sand and was rather astonished to find Myton leaping as lightly after him; side by side, they gave to the others what assistance was needed in descending to solid ground—and thereafter began as odd and silent a march as Mr. Phelps could remember.

For one thing, his own position

seemed to have been settled in advance; he belonged on Mr. Myton's right, and he was anchored there by an iron grip on his coat-sleeve. Just as evidently Dr. Vining's one place was upon Mr. Myton's left, and he plodded along there, similarly secured, with black case tucked under his free arm and eyes that looked a hundred thousand miles beyond the landscape.

The recent millionaire smiled tartly once or twice; he was not to escape. He understood that, and had no intention of trying; he said as much to Mr. Myton, and that outraged railroad owner merely compressed his lips the tighter and growled as he settled his grip more grimly.

A rod or two behind was Miriam, Garford at her side and talking, to the best of Mr. Phelps's hearing, in a queer, disjointed fashion. Mr. Garford, in fact, seemed far more interested in the lumbering, broken-nosed hulk that shambled just behind him; and after a time, when they had found the road and were plodding along its dusty stretch, conversation behind Mr. Phelps died out entirely. He looked back repeatedly and felt anger rising within him; the girl was tired and disgusted, if expression went for anything, and—

"They have! They've got one!" shrilled suddenly from Mr. Myton.

"They—upon my word! They—" Dr. Vining faltered.

"Nothing at all," said the magnate. "They have a telephone; that's what I've been wondering, and there's the sign. That is the inn, doctor. See it? The inn where we're going to have a comfortable little breakfast."

He pointed and quickened the pace, and Mr. Phelps looked with mild anticipation on the place. It was a rare little place—old as the hills and of graystone, with signs outside that swung with a perfectly unstudied creak. Behind were woods, at a very little distance, and a lane and a barn; and under other circumstances it is quite possible that Mr. Phelps's own artistic sensibilities would have sharpened and the beauty of the place would have seeped into his soul.

But just now, stumbling along with an insane capitalist just at his side and a poor, bewildered old man who was *her* father beyond him—with the one girl in the world plodding behind like any beggar, and with jail and disgrace ahead—the attractions of the place failed for the recent millionaire. He looked gloomily about the big, cool office, with its aged desk and modern telephone-booth and wide fireplace. He said not a word as Mr. Myton rattled orders to a somewhat thunderstruck proprietor just out of bed; he hardly heard the still, small voice that told him he had not dined last night and that real food seemed to be on the way.

It came very briskly indeed, and found them waiting in the dining-room with the big windows and the little panes, and it was a meal quite as unusual as the march.

Mr. Garford, for example, having watched his captive settle to business, rose hastily and removed him to a small table in the far corner; from which, after a time, they wandered forth to the open air. Mr. Myton, also, gave a demonstration of the number of times a man can rise and reseat himself during any given breakfast. He fluttered to his chair as a wild bird flutters to a bough, snatched a mouthful, and fluttered back to the telephone-booth where, his sharp face almost against the glass door, he watched the dining-room and talked from the remote corner of his mouth.

He was sending, of course, for the authorities; yet it mattered very little indeed to Mr. Phelps. Sitting beside Miriam Vining, in fact, nothing mattered at all; yet his heart smote him, for she was very, very tired. The little mouth drooped, and there was the hint of a dark shadow beneath her eyes and—

"You're done out," said Mr. Phelps.

"I'm tired," she confessed.

"You've been through enough to kill a strong man. You—"

"I have to look after dad, Mr. Phelps."

"Why?"

The eyes that rested for an instant on the white head and then met Mr. Phelps's were very soft and very sweet.

"Because he's almost incapable of taking care of himself," the girl said with a fleeting smile. "Really, that's true. Dad is utterly lost, somewhere among his waterfalls and things, and has been for eight or nine years now; and will be, I suppose, until his wretched book is finished. He's as likely to stop in front of a fire-engine or a locomotive, if it is necessary to jot down some particularly intricate thing. I go nearly everywhere with him, but this—this ridiculous—"

She ended with a tired little sigh.

"You haven't told me about it," suggested Mr. Phelps.

"Don't you know?"

"I know that I saw you yesterday down-town in New York, when I was — er — being kidnaped," said Mr. Phelps, and, as she started, added hastily: "Oh, that's another story and not very interesting. And the next time I saw you you were climbing to the roof of a freight-car, having come from a Pullman."

"Mr. Myton's private car."

"He's a friend of your father's?"

"Father never saw the man before yesterday afternoon!" Miss Vining astonished him by saying.

"He—"

"Or he had seen him, I believe, somewhere or other—I don't know. They were not friends and not even acquainted; he spent fifteen minutes explaining his identity to father. Then father announced that he must go out."

"And—"

The girl laughed helplessly.

"You can't understand, Mr. Phelps—but I'm not raving, really. I wait around, you know, most of my life, waiting for father to say that he must go out, and then I tear into some clothes and go with him. I did that yesterday, of course. Mr. Myton's car was outside. We rode over every inch of New York City."

"But why?"

"I don't know; a business matter of some sort that has to be talked over in corners when I'm not near enough to hear. Father explained carefully that women are mentally incapable of—Well, after we'd finished inspecting the city we rushed to the depot and aboard that beastly car, all of us. It started out almost instantly, and they went into Mr. Myton's room, I suppose it was, and talked on; and we must have ridden hundreds and hundreds of miles, away up New York State somewhere, and then back and around until we came in sight of the Sound again, and went on and on. I stuck it out till ten o'clock or so and then went to bed." The beautiful eyes had a wild, pleading light in them for a moment. "And the next thing I knew, dad said that the float — no, I don't know when we went aboard or why—was drifting and—"

The tremble in her voice brought hot blood to Mr. Phelps's cheeks. Further, Mr. Phelps laid a strong hand upon a smaller one that rested upon Miss Vining's knee and patted it reassuringly.

"Never mind the rest of it," he said soothingly. "It's an infernal, wicked shame that you were ever dragged into a muddle like that, whatever it's all about, and—tell me just what you want to do now, and what will make you happy and comfortable in the shortest time, and I'll see that it's *done!*" Mr. Phelps wound up rather fiercely.

Miss Vining smiled wearily.

"There is just one thing in the world that I want just now," she said, "and that is a chance to see mother and—and feel that I'm home and—"

"Home you go, then," said Mr. Phelps.

"Dad—"

"He'll go with you. I'll—"

"But he will not. He intends to stay with Mr. Myton until something or other has been settled and I—"

The recent millionaire smiled serenely.

"Leave him with me!" he said.

And for words so simple, their effect was surprising. Tired, startled eyes looked straight into his own; fascinatedly he read sudden hope in them, and doubt and an overjoyed relief that half feared to be.

"Mr. Phelps," breathed the girl, "*do* you suppose it would be all right?"

"Why not? I'm more capable of steering a grown man than—"

"I know that and—oh, I do want to go home! But I wanted to get him home to-day, whether this absurd thing is settled or not, and Mr. Myton wouldn't even say when we were going back to the city. I—don't know what to do. Mother's long-suffering, and I managed to telephone her before we left yesterday, but—"

The distressed words trailed away uncertainly. Mr. Phelps put an end to all uncertainty. His fingers tightened over the hand within for a moment, and he smiled in a fashion that would have calmed the storm-tossed ocean.

"You leave your dad to me and go straight home, young woman," he said. "I'll look after him and bring him back to you before night, safe and sound. I haven't the most remote idea of where we are, but I'll find out inside of three minutes and arrange to get you to a train. Just pick up and walk out, and I give you my word that I'll attend to everything."

He rose and hurried away. Mr. Myton he glimpsed for just an instant in the vague way one passes a person while wondering where he has seen that face before; Mr. Myton, shrouded in the rose-colored mist that tinted everything else, was crowded close to the instrument in his booth, wholly intent on his own words.

Nor was the proprietor of the place in sight. Mr. Phelps caught voices on the side veranda, however, and turned his steps thither, and the large, bland person came forward to learn his wishes. There was a carryall out in the barn which could be hooked up in two minutes. There was also a railroad station and a morning train, the former five miles distant and the latter to be caught if every one concerned moved like lightning.

The proprietor then caressed his tufty whiskers and waddled quickly to the barn, where a sandy-haired boy was performing his morning ablutions in the watering tub — and an elderly carriage came into view, and the boy, waving his towel in one hand, led out a capable-looking, mild-eyed bay horse with the other and took his own side of the harnessing.

It had all worked out with pleasant speed, apparently; Mr. Phelps smiled complacent satisfaction and returned to the dining-room as the wheels began to grate in his direction.

"You're going to run for it!" he beamed.

"There's a train soon?" Miriam rose doubtfully and considered her father.

"So soon that you'll have to say good-by to your dad and—tear!" smiled Mr. Phelps.

Dr. Vining's daughter hesitated one last instant. Then, having glided quickly around the table, she kissed the top of the preoccupied white head, murmured a word or two, and hurried back. The owner of the head looked up and smiled vaguely—and looking down again at his papers, tidily spread on a yielding bed of toast and eggs.

And then Miriam was at Phelps's side again, and they were stepping to the veranda. Blinking still, the sandy-haired bay sat with reins in one hand and whip in the other. He viewed the approaching Miss Vining and expanded with a smile not fully toothed; and Mr. Phelps was tucking her in and shaking hands, and she was saying:

"You'll be sure—"

"I'll be very sure to see that no harm comes to him," promised the recent millionaire.

"Glang thar, if we're goin' t' catch that train!" said the sandy-haired youth and shook the reins.

Well, she was gone! In his semi-trance state, Mr. Phelps watched the progress and thrilled. Whatever else had happened to him, he had met her again, and they were riper in acquaintance than any conventional six mouths could have made them. He watched the bay horse stepping along at high speed and kicking up the dust, and smiled very softly. When he took her blessed old dad home to-night—

Mr. Phelps ceased smiling almost instantly. *Would* he take home her dad? His mouth opened wide and a puff of very startled breath left it. As a matter of fact, it was most highly probable that he would do nothing of the sort. Unless every indication—of which he had wholly lost track this last half-hour—failed, he would not even be burdened with his own care by the time Myton finished telephoning.

Long before this, rushing from the county town in answer to the magnate's summons, a husky sheriff and a pair of deputies were on their way to the inn. They would, gently but firmly, acquire the person of John Phelps and place it behind strong steel bars, charged with grand larceny, assault and battery, the wrecking of railroad floats with malice aforethought and—Heaven knew what else! And what of Dr. Vining, the trust he had assumed so cheerfully?

It was a very startling thought, indeed. When it had quite shaped itself, Mr. Phelps stared the harder toward the rocking carriage, galloping up-hill now and due to vanish within another two or three minutes, and shouted fruitlessly. Rather naturally, the occupants heard him not. He started down the two steps and—he ducked aside, for another form had fairly hurtled down behind him.

A hand gripped him. Mr. Myton's face peered into his own with the stare of a madman!

"That girl—she—you—" Mr. Myton explained in a gasping shout.

"She's—gone," Mr. Phelps began. "And you—"

And he said no more, for Mr. Myton had left him, saying quick, disjointed things of a character that no man of civilized instinct could even have thought. Fearful, hair-raising things they were, applied to nobody in particular; and having said them, Mr. Myton furnished the recent millionaire with further diversion.

He hurled aside one hundred dollars' worth of panama hat. He poised one second, as if gaging the distance to the hurrying vehicle and estimating the chance of covering it at a single jump. And then, elbows tightly at his sides, Mr. Myton streaked to the road and down it—and the dust-cloud behind him was even as the dust-cloud behind the large bay horse!

CHAPTER IX.

Flight and the Principle.

SO it was Miriam, after all!

Ghastly and incredible it might be, but the grim evidence stood before Mr. Phelps's suddenly burning eyes. Myton's insane infatuation for the girl was the cause of it all; and if he doubted that he had but to look at Myton now, pursuing her—nothing else on earth could draw such speed from a man of his age and build.

And, while he might possibly overtake her, it would be his last trick of the kind in this world. Thus Mr. Phelps decided as he stepped finally to the ground. He would get that beast and wind his fingers about its neck; he would choke and choke until—he paused again.

Because, come to think of it, that same notion had engulfed him briefly once before, and had been crushed out of existence on far less evidence.

Some three or four seconds and it was again committing hara-kiri. For one thing, Miriam had not mentioned anything about being pursued by an elderly and encumbered swain; for another, she had never seen him before yesterday. And for a third, up to this last amazing minute Mr. Myton had been no more than aware of her existence.

But he was aware of it now, violently aware of it! Mr. Phelps leaned against a great maple and stared after him again and tried in vain to find the answer. Why, the man might even catch the carriage at that rate. Indeed, after another terrific minute it was perfectly plain that he would catch it. Miriam had looked back at him, and so had the sandy-haired boy. And the carriage was pulling in.

There was much dust about them and the distance was considerable; yet Mr. Phelps discerned the laboring Myton as he came near. He was almost winded, but still making time. He reached the side of the carriage and spoke, gesticulating with one hand.

Miriam shook her head repeatedly and in firm negation, which was puzzling and rather disquieting. Mr. Myton came nearer the wheel and spoke further, gesticulating with both hands — and this time there was so much violence to him that Miriam shrank visibly to the far side of the seat, and Mr. Phelps growled aloud and prepared for a spectacular run of his own.

But Myton was standing away again, and he seemed to be delivering an impassioned oration, pointing back toward the inn now, now standing with palms outstretched. He ended by waving his hands high in air and leaning forward in an odd, pleading way; and as he leaned, Miriam leaned, too —toward him and shaking one finger as she spoke briefly.

After which she faced forward and the bay horse started with a great leap, while Mr. Myton stood limply in the center of the road and watched the carriage vanish over the hilltop.

With no words furnished, it was a sufficiently perplexing picture. The recent millionaire looked on and chuckled; she seemed to have taken the best end of it if he read Myton's droop correctly. She seemed — Mr. Phelps's eyes opened again, for the railroad magnate was providing him with a new picture.

Garford was in this one, and Garford seemed to have appeared magically from the roadside. Also was Mr. McNab among those present, just by the far fence, as the dust cleared; and the unlovely gem was once more bare from the waist up and holding aloft a boulder that never weighed an ounce less than three hundred pounds.

He lowered it suddenly as Mr. Phelps looked, and himself took interest in the little scene in the center of the road. Obviously Mr. Myton's emotions were boiling again for whatever reason. He spoke to Mr. Garford and shook his fist. It seemed that Garford was replying with real, crisp force, too.

And now, while neither gentleman —to the best of Mr. Phelps's belief— had ever seen the other before this morning, there had grown between them an issue so acute as to bring them face to face with not a foot of kindly air between, with both lower jaws working violently and Mr. McNab in the background, hands on hips and grinning his innocent pleasure.

At the distance they resembled a pair of well-grown young pullets on the very verge of feather-scattering battle, and Phelps waited breathlessly for the initial joint flight into air. It failed to come. They talked again, and Mr. Myton snatched at something —and Mr. Garford snatched something back.

After which Mr. Myton doubled his fist and struck at Mr. Garford. It meant, of course, that the C. B. and Y. magnate was due for a thrashing because Bill—what was the matter with

Bill, anyway? He seemed to be giving ground; one protesting hand was up. And so were Myton's fists, doubled.

Yes, and Bill was running. He had turned and ducked a blow; he had leaped a ditch and poised briefly on a stone wall; and now he had jumped to the far side and left Mr. Phelps's field of vision altogether. One last swing of the elderly camera he caught —and Myton was in pursuit. He, too, leaped ditch and wall; he, too, landed in the field and raced out of sight, while McNab, resuming his simple garment hurriedly, lumbered after lazily.

For half a minute Mr. Phelps considered a trip to view the finish of the strange encounter. He relinquished the idea almost immediately, however. After all, it was no concern of his just now; other responsibilities rested upon him and he had best attend to them.

He looked up and down the road and thought hard. No speeding posse was in sight; they moved slowly hereabouts. And Myton was gone for the moment, too. But for Dr. Vining he would have struck off in the opposite direction and risked making whatever kind of escape might present itself. Dr. Vining, however, was with him—and he turned to the proprietor of the place on the veranda with:

"This highway the only way of getting to the station?"

The worthy gentleman scratched his head meditatively.

"You mean ridin'?"

"Any way."

"You kin cut through them woods back thar and strike the tracks two miles over—mebbe a little more. It's another mile on the tracks."

"There's a path?"

"Pretty good path—yes. Ain't used much."

"And how about trains?"

"They ain't many stop to our station, mister," smiled the innkeeper. "They might flag the ten-sixteen fer ye. That's the New York train."

"That's the one I want, thank you," smiled Mr. Phelps.

A hideous fear crossed his mind that the gentleman was about to ask pay for breakfast; he stepped swiftly into the dining-room and tapped Dr. Vining's bowed shoulder, and the savant glanced up absently at his:

"We're going to start now."

"Er—where, please?"

"Home."

"Miriam—"

"She has gone home."

"Mr. Myton—I believe—" the savant hazarded vaguely.

"He has moved along, too, and it's time that we started, sir," Phelps said feverishly. "You're good for a three-mile walk?"

"Perfectly," said the doctor, and he sighed as he gathered up his papers and bestowed them carefully, some in one pocket, some in another, some in his black case, while the minutes flitted along and Mr. Phelps's ears ached with the tension of listening for hoof-beats or the sound of Myton's voice.

The tucking-away process was finally finished, however. Dr. Vining arose and recovered the felt hat upon which he had been sitting; he looked expectantly at Mr. Phelps with the patient docility of an elderly lamb—and the recent millionaire slipped an arm through the thinner one and, head erect and a prayer racing through his heart that they might make the open air before a bill could be presented, headed for the door.

They met no one. They emerged to the sweet stillness of an early June morning to meet no more disturbing sounds than the twittering of the birds and the occasional clatter of a distant dish. There was a path to the barn and past it, and Mr. Phelps laid his course down the path; there was another path beyond the barn, and he took that, too, for it led up-hill over the two pasture-lots and into the woods at the far side.

A little time his brain wrestled with the explanations that must be made to

the preoccupied gentleman beside him. Five hundred feet of walking and he became pleasantly aware that no explanations were necessary. Dr. Vining apparently was quite accustomed to being moved from place to place, as one might move a bit of furniture; the great thoughts within his fine, white head merely worked on and on, accumulating results and holding them in suspension until such time as the thinker should be deposited safely in a new spot.

He was, surely enough, the most remarkable example of utter concentration that one could have conceived. Mr. Phelps looked at him and wondered; now and then he dropped a perfunctory word or two by way of making conversation; but, while the answers were coherent enough, they came from vast distances and unwillingly.

It mattered very little. The good, old gentleman was safe and in motion, and apparently capable of a three-mile or a ten-mile walk with no bad effects. And, more to the point, Mr. Phelps was in motion, and that pleased him immensely. He would be taken, sooner or later, of course; but Dr. Vining must have money with him—enough at least to pay their fares if they reached the train without incident. In the sweet silences of the woodland, as they climbed the irregular path, the chances of that last seemed brighter and brighter. They would get to New York and he would deliver the doctor—and after that, when he had had just one heartening glimpse of Miriam, Mr. Phelps would make one frantic dive for the office of Lemuel Peters, lawyer. He would confess, from one end to the other; he would throw himself on the mercy of the old family adviser, who was really a very eminent legal person indeed, and depend on Peters's kindness to keep him out of jail at least.

In short, jogging along at this pace, the general outlook was far better than he had dared hope. He hitched Dr. Vining out of the way of a huge rock—and the doctor stopped short.

"I'm not accustomed to this sort of jaunt, sir," he said apologetically.

"You're not tired?" Phelps's lips parted with horror.

"Not at all, sir; but every step of this confounded path is endangering one portion or another of my work," the elder man said testily. "My pockets, sir, are inconveniently crammed as it is, and every stumble may dislodge—" He paused and looked earnestly at Mr. Phelps. "You are a careful person, sir?"

"I—hope so."

"Extremely careful—you don't drop things from your pockets or leave your coat lying about? Shall I be safe in asking you to care for some of these papers?"

The recent millionaire glanced back and listened.

"Anything that you wish to entrust to me will be guarded with the utmost care, sir," he said hastily. "Now, if you'll just give me whatever it is—"

"This, then, for one," said Dr. Vining, floating back to his pleasantly vague state and extending a roll of typewritten paper, neatly bound with tape. "May I suggest the coat-pocket for that—the inner, upper pocket?"

"It is there."

"Does it protrude, Mr. Phelps?"

"Not more than an inch," Mr. Phelps said patiently.

"Then—these for the outer pockets, if you will be so kind," the elder gentleman pursued after a careful examination of his possessions that used all of a precious five minutes. "They are not too bulky?"

"They might have been made to fit," said his companion with a heartiness that was somewhat forced. "That train, you know—you might give these to me while we walk."

Dr. Vining laughed softly.

"Dropping these along the road is the one thing I am seeking to avoid," he explained tolerantly. "I prefer to

miss a dozen trains, sir. Let me see. Hip-pockets. Will they take these?"

"They will," agreed Mr. Phelps from between clenched teeth.

"Then put them there, please. Or —no! These small, fat envelopes will be rather better, will they not? Quite so. And now, let me see," murmured Dr. Vining, as he settled carefully and comfortably upon the rock and sighed contentedly. "Let me see."

Mr. Phelps just caught the rasping groan that rose from the bottom of his heart. The savant patted his coat-pockets thoughtfully and began bringing further papers to light—and the pockets might have been the files of a library. There were thin envelopes and thick ones—red, blue, and white envelopes and several of manila paper; there were long, legal envelopes, all showing much the same signs of handling and all neatly inscribed in a fine, clear hand that could have belonged only to their owner.

Dr. Vining considered them lovingly and, sorting carefully through them, selected three—and then a fourth and a fifth; and, after a great deal of meditation, even a sixth of the long ones. And he smiled vaguely at Mr. Phelps as he asked:

"These, sir—will they be too many for the inner vest-pockets?"

"They will not!" shouted Mr. Phelps, and snatched them.

The shout passed many furlongs from the doctor's consciousness.

"You will button the vest most securely, sir?" he queried earnestly. "Those, I think, are the documents for which I shall have no immediate use. You appreciate their importance, do you not, Mr. Phelps? You are carrying, sir, the most exhaustive data ever compiled of the tributaries of the Amazon, the Orinoco, the seventeen hundred and eighty-five minor streams of the northern part of South America."

"I see," said Mr. Phelps, breathing heavily, "and now—"

"Most of them, you know, are reference bits; but they represent a quantity of research and calculation such as—" The clear, incisive voice, contrasting so strongly with the vague eyes and the tremendous abstraction of the man, trailed away gently. Dr. Vining looked through the woods and smiled softly. "It is very pleasant in here."

"It's as pleasant a patch of woods as I ever saw," the recent millionaire said energetically, "but unfortunately we can't dally around here this morning and enjoy it. We—have—train—to—catch."

Dr. Vining started and frowned in astonishment.

"God bless my soul, sir! Have we?" he said and rose reluctantly. "We must make it, of course."

He smiled patiently at Mr. Phelps, and that gentleman, narrow though the path might be, slid his arm through the doctor's once more. He was up and ready to move at least. For a minute or two Mr. Phelps had fancied that he meant to sit there all day. But he was up now and—

"We'll have to step along briskly, sir!" said Mr. Phelps.

There was no reply at all. Dr. Vining, whose attention had settled suddenly upon the earth, muttered and stared on.

"We'll—have—to—" his custodian tried again, and frantically.

And this time he caught the gentleman's attention, for Dr. Vining stared straight at him and blinked—not with the abstracted stare of a moment back, but with a nameless fire kindling in his eye.

"It is sound, sir! *Sound as a dollar, sir!*" he stated.

"It's—"

"Not only sound, but amounts to a new mathematical principle," the doctor pursued, with some excitement of his own. "Upon my word, sir, that's the most astonishing experience of my whole life! My foot was raised to step forward and—"

"And now, if you'll raise it a little

higher and actually step?" Mr. Phelps pleaded desperately.

"And at that very instant the thought came to me that—it *is* a new mathematical and a new hydraulic principle, Mr. Phelps!" said Dr. Vining and sat down hurriedly on his rock again and opened his black case. "The most astounding circumstance of my entire—"

It was evidently all he cared to say on the subject—whatever the subject might be. A huge note-book came from the black case and a pencil, and Phelps observed, with a sudden, sick giddiness, that the note-book was almost wholly blank pages as yet.

And he sighed bitterly, for he was gaining an instinctive knowledge of Dr. Vining's habits: before they moved on again that book would have to be filled with—what? He neither knew no cared a continental! He leaned against a tree and, hands in pockets, glared helplessly at the picture.

The good doctor was altogether absent now. His pencil fairly flew as his lips worked; figures appeared upon the clean page, and strange characters, some of which Mr. Phelps identified hazily as having appeared somewhere in his college days: there were scribbled abbreviations, too, and little regiments of algebraic letters which marched out of the nowhere and camped directly in the path to Mr. Phelps's freedom.

Because this idiotic stop couldn't last much longer without disaster, of course! Whatever little trouble had risen between Myton and Garford was settled by this time: Myton had returned to look for him long ago and found him missing from the inn; only blind luck had prevented Myton's overtaking him before this, and probably with a stern-faced band of country constables at his heels to do the rough work.

The accursed black case had disgorged a bulky book of logarithms now, and the professor's pencil ran down the endless columns of figures—selected a string here and jotted it down—selected another there and chuckled softly. He inscribed an encircled "8" at the new page's top and wrote on; and Mr. Phelps's fingernails began to dig into his palms.

There were two ways out, of course. The one lay in deserting the absorbed gentleman, which was impossible. The other was to pick him up bodily, shoulder him, and let him figure on as Mr. Phelps plodded through the woods—and he more than half suspected that, far from losing a single figure, the doctor would be unaware of what was happening! It was a weird enough notion, to be sure, yet with Myton behind—Mr. Phelps grinned savagely at the landscape and tucked back his cuffs: he'd have to play Sindbad or be caught!

"Doctor!" he said tentatively.

"My dear Mr. Phelps," said Dr. Vining, with astonishing promptness, as his pencil paused an instant, "I have stumbled upon what is, perhaps, the most astounding principle ever discovered in all the history of mathematics. Until I have recorded the essential details, as they appear to me, I would not accept the wealth of the world as compensation for one minute's interruption. Pray be silent—wholly silent!"

"But—"

The pencil was racing again. Mr. Phelps, with dilating eyes and heaving chest, stepped nearer to the good doctor and prepared for the initial hoist. And having prepared, he turned, for something had crackled very near at hand. Eyes narrowed, he peered about quickly—and a sad, shaky sigh escaped him and he relaxed altogether!

Because, not fifty feet away, Myton himself was hurrying to them, his color high, his breathing difficult from much exertion, grim determination and hard joy written in his every line.

And still, peculiarly enough, there was nothing fierce about Mr. Myton. He stopped and stared hard at Dr. Vining, even bending forward to in-

spect the growing maze in his note-book. He stood erect again and faced Mr. Phelps; and to his profound amazement that disgusted person met a smile that was even more than friendly.

"Phelps," said the magnate very softly, "come over here with me!"

"Eh?"

"Right over here!" purred Mr. Myton, as he caught at the other's arm and dragged him half a dozen yards down the path. "Can he hear us from here? No, he can't! Fine! Phelps, you're a bright young man!"

"I—"

"A lot brighter than I suspected—than any one ever suspected. But so long as you are just as bright as you are and have put over just what you have put over, so long as I understand you and you understand me, and all that sort of thing—"

He paused, smiling brilliantly, and glanced back at Dr. Vining. He looked at Mr. Phelps and chuckled flatly, and he even went so far as to nudge Mr. Phelps in the ribs. It was plain, of course, that the Myton reason had stepped down from its throne and gone far away upon a doubtless well-earned-vacation; because now Mr. Myton was producing a great, bulging wallet and sliding his fingers within; and now he came very close to Mr. Phelps and whispered:

"So long as everything is as it is, take this, my son, and—*beat it!*"

"What—is that?" inquired Mr. Phelps, as something soft pressed against his hand.

"That is ten thousand dollars in cash," said the demented capitalist, "and the path leads right down that way!"

CHAPTER X.

Easing Money.

FOR the intelligent handling of any given proposition one leans eternally upon precedent.

Given the knowledge that the first apple fell downward from its tree and that subsequent millions of billions of apples have also been falling downward, there is not even food for comment in the one that tumbles from its bough and rolls to your feet. But if the next apple happened to fall upward, to jerk loose its stem and rise briskly and vanish in the sky above, that would indeed be astonishing—because, of course, it would present a phenomenon without precedent.

Thus with the powers of the C. B. and Y. and John Phelps. Consistently, up to this incredible second, the C. B and Y. had removed money from Mr. Phelps, until there was not one penny left to remove. Now, Myton was offering — Mr. Phelps laughed shortly because he understood.

Poor old Myton had played the conventional American business man trick, overloading the engines of brain and nerve, paying scant attention to the oil-cups or the bearings; and now the engines were gone to smash! Money-mad ever, his mania had taken a unique twist which identified it as a real mania.

And being a rather decent citizen in most ways, the first thing that impressed Mr. Phelps, when the initial shock had passed, was the need of getting Myton to competent medical aid, for whatever else he might be, he was a human. Indeed, he had the two of them on his shoulders now—and he glanced back at the busy gentleman on the rock and then glanced pityingly at Mr. Myton.

And the pity went up in smoke, because never in this world was that man crazy.

The very key-note of high intelligence was in that hard eye, and more puzzling qualities were there as well. The eye should have been savage—and it was too friendly; it should have threatened—and it actually seemed to plead. But withal it was the eye of a sane man; and Mr. Phelps stiffened and said uncertainly.

"What the—"

"It's all right, Phelps—quite all right."

"But I—" Phelps hazarded again.

"You take it and get out, kid!" Mr. Myton said genially and thrust the astonishing collection of yellow notes upon him. "You've done all that could be expected of you." The smile broadened and grew dry. "You need not have any conscience about the thing, either, Phelps. It's C. B. and Y. money, you know."

He laughed aloud, and warm blood rushed to Mr. Phelps's cheeks for a moment. That, at least, was true: he need have no conscience at all, whatever the answer to the riddle itself might be.

"C. B. and Y.—" he snarled.

"Fortunes of war, sonny, and no real reason for hard feelings now, eh?" observed Myton, and settled things, in his own mind at least, by cramming the yellow bundle into Mr. Phelps's side pocket. "And it's a sight more than you ever got out of Hemingway, I'll venture!"

He chuckled again and turned to inspect the professor on his own account, and Phelps started again. Hemingway! That was another of the C. B. and Y. banditti! That indeed was the head devil of the whole corporation, he fancied. And what had Hemingway to do with this particular affair? Why should he have had anything from Hemingway? Why in the name of common sense—

"The path," Myton repeated, "is there!"

Mr. Phelps's pulses were quickening. Somewhere behind it all there lay a black mystery, of course. He couldn't guess at it now; he might never know it. But the dumfounding certainty remained that the money tide had turned—that ten thousand dollars were actually in his pocket. Mr. Phelps smiled a smile of his own.

"For the third time," said Mr. Myton, "may I call your attention to that path?"

"What shall I do with it?"

"Walk it!"

"Where?"

"The inn—the road—after that New York or Timbuctoo or the Straits of Magellan—I don't care where you go, only—go!"

The recent millionaire shook his head.

"I think not," he said.

"What?"

"The gentleman on the rock is in my care, as it happens. I can't very well leave him."

"Oh, but you can, my dear boy!" Myton assured him suavely. "I'm paying you ten thousand dollars to do it. Any man could leave any scientist on earth for that price."

"If you'll tell me just what you want to do with him — or why you want me out of the way—" Phelps began easily enough.

Mr. Myton's smile vanished. He snorted impatiently and lowered his voice.

"I want to saw the top off his confounded head and dump out the figures!" he snapped. "Don't be an ass, Phelps! Clear out!"

"Why?" Mr. Phelps asked blandly and with honest curiosity.

"Because— See here, I'm not going to raise that ante, you know!" Myton informed him warningly. "I know where you stand, and you know where I stand: don't fool yourself for a moment into thinking that that ten thousand's going to be doubled, because it's not. And now, suppose we call off the nonsense and you—get out!"

"I can't do that."

"Listen to me, Phelps," the confusing capitalist broke in, and his voice grew rather dangerous. "I'll give you credit for a quantity of ingenuity and a capacity for quick action that not one of us ever suspected. If we had, we might have taken you in, instead of cleaning you out. But there's one thing you *do* lose sight of!"

"What is it?"

"This," Myton said impressively and with an evil smile of triumph—"it *might* be possible to make a good case against you and *jail* you for that float episode! *And that never occurred to you!*"

They faced each other steadily, and Mr. Phelps felt that he was improving with each new minute! He knew that not a muscle of his countenance was twitching, and that despite Myton's words. Without visible emotion he had heard the bald statement that the one great, urgent reason for his unsuccessful flight had not even entered his mind. It is at such moments that wise men seek to appear even wiser; Mr. Phelps frowned silently—and Mr. Myton turned genial again, all in a twinkling!

"However, we'll forget that part of it!" he stated. "We'll charge it up to profit and loss and write it down in the joke-book as the biggest thing any one ever handed the road. As a matter of fact, I may as well tell you that I've arranged to have the thing pulled off and towed back—and no questions asked! So now, my dear boy," and he patted Mr. Phelps's arm —"*git!*"

"I'm not going!" said his victim of the last year.

They considered each other again. They were deadlocked, and at least one of them had not the glimmer of a suspicion of how or why they were deadlocked. But it was so, and it angered Mr. Myton immensely.

He glared at the younger man and permitted two low rumbles to wander up from the depths of his chest; he threw back his head and would have spoken. He changed his mind for a moment—and he ended by snapping:

"You go to blazes! I'll—"

And he turned on his heel and hurried in the direction of Dr. Vining, while Mr. Phelps looked after him and strove in vain to piece two and two together. It was at best an abortive process, for neither of the twos seemed to exist. Perhaps it was pure conscience? Perhaps Myton, understanding everything that had happened to the unfortunate Mr. Phelps, sought to make trifling restitution and mask it in this ridiculous muddle of words and act? It was far-fetched to a degree, that idea; and still it might be philanthropy.

But the tense form which bent over Dr. Vining did not appear philanthropic at all; that tapping finger on the savant's shoulder meant business, and of a kind that was annoying Dr. Vining very much. He looked up as Mr. Phelps drew nearer and even laid aside his pencil; he ran the fingers of the free hand through his abundant white locks and spoke, and while all his words did not carry to Mr. Phelps's ears, that gentleman heard:

"—until—consulted Mr. Hemingway!"

"But, doctor—my dear doctor—" began the C. B. and Y. capitalist.

"And that, sir, is final!" cried Dr. Vining. "I have explained that repeatedly!"

His head lowered again with a resolute jerk and the pencil hurried on with its endless work. Mr. Myton, standing erect, peered sharply at Phelps and glowered; and then, since the latter merely waited for the next happening, Mr. Myton turned away, snarling. His color was coming up again, too, and one foot tapped angrily. He bit his lips for a moment —until, wincing at a particularly sharp bite, his hand came up to them and he ended by biting his nails.

It was an exhibition of extreme perturbation which rather pleased Mr. Phelps without in any way enlightening him. On several occasions he, too, had reached the nail-gnawing stage, and it was comforting to find one of its direct causes at the same trick. He even smiled, as Mr. Myton whirled about and came striding down on him again.

"See here, Phelps!" he said, bitterly. "Whatever I may be able to do otherwise, I can't do anything while

you're here — as you understand perfectly. I had no idea that you wouldn't quit for that ten thousand, all things considered, but since you seem to—"

Lips parted, he stopped! His head was thrust forward and he squinted through the trees, and from some distance Mr. Phelps caught the hum of an automobile engine. It was a sound which, ten minutes back, would have startled him extremely; just now he grew absorbed in watching Myton's further performance. For the queer capitalist had left the path now and was thrusting aside the young growth with both arms, thrashing it from before his face, neck ever craning the harder!

He was seeking a clear view of the road, apparently, and somewhat to Mr. Phelps's astonishment, he attained it very shortly; for he located a thin spot and tore at saplings with one hand while with the other he jammed an extra pair of glasses upon his nose.

A scant five seconds his gaze centered upon the distant, dusty highway, with the foreground of rough fields and the roof of the inn to the left—and Mr. Myton had whirled upon the C. B. and Y. victim, teeth bared in a triumphant smile.

"I'm going down again!" he said. "You bring your man down and do it quick—hear me?"

"I—"

"Because if you do not, Phelps, as sure as I'm drawing breath, I'll send for the constabulary and have you jailed for that little float affair! I will, and I'll lock him up, too, as an accessory and—"

And the biped puzzle, more intricate than anything Dr. Vining could be working over, was gone!

Mr. Phelps thrust back his hat as he watched the headlong flight down the path. As a center of Myton's burning interest, he had lost caste as suddenly as he had acquired it in the first place. He had been scorned and ordered to return, and Myton was so certain of his obedience that he did not even wait to see the start.

Nor had he made any great mistake in that. Mr. Phelps sighed and gave it up; he would go, for the simple reason that they could bring him back so easily—but he would *not* go without some inkling of the ridiculous affair! He strode to Dr. Vining with something of Myton's own determination and touched the arm that steadied the black case.

"Doctor," he said firmly, "we're going to move again, now."

"After a time, Mr. Phelps," the worker murmured.

"But this move will have to be made now, I fear; and before we start, I'm going to ask you frankly what it's all about?"

The savant smiled brilliantly.

"That, my dear young man," he said, "is something I shall be most happy to make clear. Be seated."

He edged along the rock and waited for Mr. Phelps to settle himself comfortably. He even laid a kindly hand on Mr. Phelps's knee, and the owner of the knee warmed; at least, armed with an understanding of the situation, he would know what to do down there.

"Calculus—your education ended about there, eh?" said Dr. Vining.

"What?" asked Mr. Phelps blankly.

"Unfortunately, of course, although I have always felt that a greater number of young men would pursue mathematics to the really interesting point, if the thing were made properly attractive," Dr. Vining pursued pleasantly. "However, I think that—"

"I beg your pardon," his custodian interrupted, "it wasn't—just that principle of yours I wanted to know about."

"Then—"

"About Myton, doctor! What's the matter with the man? What does he want, anyway? Why—"

Mr. Phelps caught his breath. Dr. Vining, having passed a stage of blank

staring on his own account, was eying him with cold displeasure.

"That, sir," he said testily, "we will not discuss!"

"But we'll have to discuss it, because—"

"There is no reason, Mr. Phelps!" Dr. Vining said frigidly. "I have no desire to rebuff with undue vigor an intrusion upon my personal affairs which, although boorish, is doubtless well meant. My personal affairs, sir, are not subject to discussion with an almost total stranger."

"Well, I—I beg your pardon!" Phelps stammered. "I—"

Dr. Vining's severity disappeared almost instantly. He permitted his benign smile to rest on Mr. Phelps for a moment—and with a gentle sigh he bent over his work again.

"The incident is closed, sir," he said simply.

And off he went into space again; and while he might be a forgiving soul and properly reticent about his own affairs, he had nevertheless left Mr. Phelps behind on an earth that had developed too many puzzles for one man's handling.

The younger man arose with a grunt. It was all too much for him! His head ached and his very bones were tired. They might, if they chose, come and remove the mathematician and himself with a cart; for the time, at any rate, he declined to interfere further with that gentleman's concerns. He selected a rock of his own and sat down wearily, to stare through the space that Myton had broken open, down on the warm, sunshiny road below.

And thus, for a long time, he blinked at the world and half dozed. The one concrete, understandable thing seemed to be the duty he had assumed toward Dr. Vining; he was doing it! He dozed and blinked further—until the figure in the road caught his attention.

It was a figure rather familiar, yet not until the second good stare did Mr. Phelps quite identify it as McNab. Not a detail of Mr. McNab's simple wardrobe had been altered, apparently, yet the man was different, somehow! Hitherto he had lumbered and shuffled, his head inclined forward at an unpleasant, hangdog tilt, his hands jammed in his pockets and mighty shoulders bowed.

But now he swung along with head up and shoulders squared and much the bearing of a soldier off duty and out for a pleasure jaunt—and alone, which, on second thought, was what marked him so sharply for Phelps's attention. Thoroughly acquainted with the little artist and his enthusiasm, a small thrill of fear ran through the gentleman on the rock. What on earth had happened to Bill?

McNab was Bill's ideal for the moment, and when Bill secured an ideal, nothing but an injunction or an armed rescuing party could pry them asunder until the ideal had been spread neatly over several square feet of canvas. In this particular instance, Mr. Garford's tenacity had even dragged the embodiment of brute strength over the side of a pirate tug and out of the arms of his brute friends—and yet there was McNab, moving swiftly away and happily, and all by himself!

It was really disquieting to Mr. Phelps. He sat erect and speculated for a time. The only plausible explanation seemed to be that Myton had assassinated the abbreviated artist somewhere in the field to which they had disappeared after the mysterious encounter, and freed his temporary slave.

At all events, the slave was free, which was more than Mr. Phelps could say for himself. He turned and examined Dr. Vining; and however long he might have been on his own chunk of stone, the good doctor had moved nothing but his writing hand. Well—the rest of him would have to get into motion now, for Mr. Phelps did not relish the idea of being dragged back to the inn. They'd walk.

And they'd meet the abundantly happy, invisible person, too, perhaps, who was singing so lustily in the neighborhood. Phelps stood erect and stretched and listened with a sour smile. It was quite a song, indeed, bellowed in a barytone which, with several years of careful training, might have been tolerated—a familiar barytone, also, now that it came nearer. Mr. Phelps stepped into the path and looked down it.

The voice was like Bill's, but Bill would never be roaring his way through the woods with the weight of a lost model upon his spirits. He—ah! it was Bill, apparently! Up the rough way the artist was making quick progress toward his friend, hat swinging in one hand, amiable countenance widened by a chronic smile. He waved the hat at Mr. Phelps and fetched up rather breathlessly before him a moment later; and the C. B. and Y. victim observed wonderingly:

"You're happy?"

"I'm always happy, Jacky!"

"But your monkey model—"

"He's gone home," said Mr. Garford, without visible regret. "I gave him a hundred-dollar bill and chased him!"

"*What?*"

"He earned it—or he was willing to earn it, anyway, you know," Garford apologized. "He thought that if he had that much he might cut loose from the gang and stick it out till he found honest work; and a hundred wasn't much."

"It was a good deal for a man who had only eighty cents three hours ago!" Mr. Phelps said hoarsely.

"Seventy, wasn't it?" Mr. Garford chuckled merrily. "Well, that was before, Johnny!"

"Before what?"

"Before *this!*" said the artist; and from his trousers-pocket came a roll of tastefully engraved yellow bank-notes that fairly filled his hand! Under Mr. Phelps's eyes the bundle expanded of its own accord and flattened out, as his sometime poverty-stricken friend said pleasantly: "Four thousand dollars, my boy! Four thousand count 'em!—four thousand!"

CHAPTER XI.

The Stranger and Others.

FROM his rock Dr. Vining spoke suddenly, actually pausing in his work.

"You will pardon me," he said clearly, "but when, in the course of your conversation, Mr. Phelps, it becomes necessary to speak of numbers, will you be so good as to lower your voice slightly? That mention of 'four thousand' distracted me as almost nothing else could have done."

"It—did the same thing to me," stammered Mr. Phelps.

And he turned back and picked the roll from Mr. Garford's palm and looked at it carefully. It was real—quite real.

"Where on earth—" he began.

"There's quite a little story attached to that vulgar display of wealth," said the artist. "That's the proceeds of a sale."

"A picture?"

"Several of them, and the camera that took them as well. That man you called Myton is a lunatic, Johnny!"

"I've been suspecting that for hours," admitted Mr. Phelps.

"I sneaked poor Mac out of that breakfast-room as quickly as I could and took him up the road to make some real studies of him, you know. He didn't know whether to make a dive for freedom or to stick around, and I wanted to catch him before he had a chance to escape. We were just settling down to business when that girl came galloping along in an old station hack."

"I know."

"Well, it had taken me fifteen minutes to get Mac planted in just the right way, holding a rock as big as a wardrobe trunk over his head," pur-

sued the artist. "In fact, I was on the verge of snapping him when the rig came up—and I had to side-step and wait for it to pass, of course; and when it did pass I had to wait for some of the dust to settle. You follow me?"

"Perfectly."

"To continue, then," grinned Mr. Garford, "the said dust was just settling decently when Myton came tearing after in a nice little dust-cloud of his own. Well, I knew that if Mac once dropped that Gibraltar thing he might never pick it up again—and I knew that no mortal could hold it for more than another minute without blowing out a cylinder-head or something. So I snapped him twice, and, I believe, snapped him just as the Myton man steamed up."

"And he saw you do it?" Phelps asked curiously.

"Not only did he see me, but he kept it in mind. He had some sort of low-voiced message to deliver to the young woman, John; and about two seconds after he had delivered it he turned his whole attention to little me. He told me to hand him that camera or prepare to be spread all over the landscape. I told him that whatever little things might be spread on that particular landscape would hail from his economy rather than from mine—and he went for me. He really did try to hit me; and, somehow or other, I couldn't do it, John. He's years older and he wasn't himself, and the camera might have been smashed in any case. So I turned with a lithe, savage grace, hiked over the wall and loped across a couple of fields; he followed over one of them and then stopped and shouted things after me that make me blush to recall. Then he turned around and started back to the hotel, and after a while I came out and found Mac and took five more of the dandiest studies a camera ever recorded."

The artist paused and sighed for a moment.

"Where's the camera?" Phelps asked suddenly.

"You don't discover that till the last chapter; this is it," said Mr. Garford. "I wanted to go back and consult you about going home, of course; and Mac and I concluded that we'd be able to hold him if he boiled over again—and we started back. Big automobile came along behind us, making about seventy miles an hour, and we stood aside politely to let it pass, and thought no more about it until we got to the inn. Then the occupants—three well-fed citizens and one small chauffeur—were on the veranda, and your Myton friend was talking with the three. They looked at me and seemed unpleasantly animated. They talked and pointed — and pretty soon I'm blest if Myton didn't hop up and come to meet me, grinning all over and pleasant as you please. He walked straight up to me, Johnny, and said that I was a clever chap and that I had done well."

"Eh?"

"And, while on the face of it that was ridiculous, he topped it off by saying that he personally had always considered picture-taking pernicious to a degree, and that he had constituted himself a society of one to discourage the practise. He said that it was a commercial age and money the only thing that talked; and that, while he had just four thousand dollars in cash left on him, he would hand it to me then and there for my camera and full permission to search me and McNab as well for any stray films. I assumed that he was crazy, but his friends seemed to chime with the notion, and not a smile on any of them. You have the whole story, John," concluded Mr. Garford.

"You gave him the camera?"

"And he took the poor thing and tore it all to pieces, until it was nothing but shreds and ribbons and little splinters. He went through every pocket I owned and dug out the rolls of film and laid them flat in the sun-

shine. And when he was all done he seemed to crumple up. He just dabbed at his forehead and went back to the veranda, talking to himself. Later, when I had looked all over the place for you, he told me where you were and asked me to get you." Mr. Garford searched his friend's face unsmilingly at last. "Johnny, what in blazes is the matter with him?"

"I give it up."

"Honestly?"

"I have no more idea of what's at the bottom of it than you."

Mr. Garford shook his head and grinned thoughtfully through the woods.

"Well, whatever's up, it simply shows the queer things a man can stumble over by sticking too tight to one idea," he said, more sagely than he knew. "If I had stuck to reason I'd have stayed in the studio yesterday and finished up some calendar-heads by way of collecting the rent for the impolite person who needs it. But that masterpiece thing got into my head and — too bad that has to be postponed."

"Eh?"

"I'm going to Paris to-morrow or next day and put in the year I've always needed," the artist chuckled. "Maybe I can stretch that roll over two years if they don't arrest me and take it away before I sail. Well — you're coming down? They want to see you."

"Did they say why?"

"They did not."

"They were not country constables, Bill?"

"Not in a thousand years! They're millionaires and—"

"I think I'll go," said Mr. Phelps, with an odd little smile, as he stepped back to Dr. Vining.

Thrice he shook that preoccupied person before the vague eyes met his own; but their very vagueness was promising this time. The good doctor apparently had wrestled his new principle into complete submission. It was on the mental operating-table now, and the doctor was docile as before. A murmured, perfunctory objection or two, and he gathered his papers slowly and repacked the black case; a patient smile and he followed Mr. Phelps obediently as, with somewhat mingled emotions, the latter gentleman took to the path.

Was he doing the right thing in returning—or not? Was he walking into new trouble with his charge or doing the best thing possible in answering the command of the gnawing curiosity within? At any rate, Myton could drag him back whenever he needed him and—

"These be populous woods!" observed Garford.

"Why?"

"Some one was fumbling around in the brush over there when I came up, and some one is wandering about over *there* now."

"Country kids probably."

"I decline to believe it," the artist grinned. "This is no day for simple country children to be picking berries in this particular woods. A flock of bears perhaps, or possibly banditti, but nothing so easy as kids. Maybe it's a lost tribe of Connecticut bandits that have lurked in here since Revolutionary days and—well, by thunder!" concluded Mr. Garford, and stood still.

For one of his banditti, at least, was in plain sight.

Ten yards ahead perhaps the path ran through a little gully—a shallow thing with banks well overgrown. Just now, with a warning crackle, a small tree had broken in two on the left-hand bank, roots tearing loose with a shower of gravel and small stones.

And simultaneously, a large hand clutching the thin trunk, a man appeared, tottered crazily on the brink for an instant, and somersaulted to the bottom, where, righting quickly as if equipped with an automatic stabilizer, he bounded to his feet again,

snatched up his hat, and stared at them, gasping.

He was a large man, and very well dressed indeed, although rather decorated at the moment with loose earth. His clothes, his linen — even his soft hat—stamped him the city product from top to toe, and a prosperous specimen as well. And still, rather one of their own stamp, he seemed lacking in any friendly courtesy; he stood for several seconds and merely stared; he peered at Mr. Phelps and then at Dr. Vining, who held his attention completely for an instant; he looked at Mr. Garford and discarded him.

And just as speech returned to that startled artist the stranger fairly leaped about, pointed down the trail, and departed after the fashion of a frightened antelope. It was no mere run that he was showing them—it was a series of down-hill jumps, first on one foot and then upon the other, with a mighty stride between.

Stones flew and little birds screamed and sought the higher branches; a small rabbit dodged the flight with such terror that he raced squarely between Mr. Garford's feet and disappeared. And the stranger, latest madman of the lot, had left the woods and was crossing the fields behind the inn.

Here, as they watched his progress breathlessly, caution seemed to come to him; racing still, he left the path and leaped rocks and rough spots instead, with the evident aim of remaining directly behind the building. He came to the barn and, crouching low, stole up to the edge and peered out, examining the inn itself. He turned and fled around the other side of the barn, and when he reappeared it was beneath a back window of the little inn.

He crouched again and raised himself very carefully for an inspection of whatever lay beyond — and he seemed quite satisfied after the first glance. Straightening up swiftly, he tapped the pane with finger-tips only, and tapped again; and even at the distance Mr. Phelps and his friend could see the white-capped negro man, who must have been the cook, as he approached, stared, and finally raised the sash. The circle of white came out and the black man leaned on the sill and listened; there was a pause, which ended by the stranger extending what seemed to be a bill — and with incredible speed the black man had reached out, taken his hands, and hauled the stranger within.

The window closed.

"Well, I'll be hanged!" breathed Mr. Phelps.

"Who—was it?" gasped his friend.

"I never saw the man before."

"But he saw us; he was lurking around in here, watching us."

"Some of Myton's mysterious crowd—" Phelps hazarded.

"Then why didn't he go to the veranda and see Myton?" queried the artist. "He's there and — say, that fellow bribed the cook to pull him in through the back window. That's the queerest stunt I ever watched."

They hurried after that. They left the woods by the path dug deep with the stranger's heels and crossed the lots in his wake. They even paused beside the kitchen window; and Mr. Garford beckoned to the dark person within and, on tiptoe beneath the window, inquired softly:

"Who was the man that came in this window?"

"Dey didn't no man come in dis window, sah!" smiled the sable person.

"Just a little while ago—you hauled him in!"

"Dey didn't no man come in dis window, sah!" the dark one repeated.

"But we saw him. We saw—"

He paused, for the smile had vanished. The white-clad individual's eyes were large and round and rolling a little as he leaned on the sash and put his ample countenance close to Mr. Garford's own.

"Dey didn't no man come in dis

window!" he said gustily and started back.

And again the window closed.

"Cookie must be another one of Myton's crowd," Mr. Garford observed.

"Well, confound him and the fellow he hauled in and the rest of them!" Phelps said impatiently. "I want to see Myton himself and let him vent the balance of his insanity on me, if he feels so disposed, and then find out whether I'm to be permitted to leave or not."

On the front veranda four gentlemen were standing, with heads close together. Myton was one of them, and he turned with a jerk at the sight of Mr. Phelps and beckoned energetically. The April moods within Mr. Myton's head had worked back to the sunshiny stage apparently. He watched Dr. Vining as the white-haired gentleman fumbled an armchair into place and sat down alone, as a cat watches a mouse; and then he led Mr. Phelps directly to the other three and spoke very softly:

"This, gentlemen, is *the* John Phelps. Mr. Phelps — Mr. Howell, Mr. Drake, Mr. Pinkton."

"The whole C. B. and Y. directorate!" escaped Phelps's lips.

"Not that by any manner of means!" snapped Myton queerly. "And now suppose that we — er — drop railroad matters and chat about yourself, Mr. Phelps. We've been talking you over and—"

"Or better, why not let me have a private moment with Mr. Phelps?" asked the thin, dry little man who seemed to be Howell. "We talked of that, you know. And—will you come with me just for a moment, Mr. Phelps?"

He looked sternly at the younger man; Mr. Phelps followed slowly to the far end of the veranda and a pair of chairs, where he settled at Howell's side and waited for what was to come. It came almost instantly.

"Mr. Phelps," said the dry man, "the time has come to quit."

"Quit what?"

"The whole thing! The time has come to face about and depart, and I'll tell you why: we've practically decided to make things hotter than sixty for you if you refuse. Myton has given you ten thousand dollars; I tell him it was ridiculous to spend a cent. However, he has done it and we have acquiesced, and we're willing to drop all idea of retaliating." He leaned back with a magnanimous wave of the hand and a dessicated smile which seemed to indicate that everything was settled. "Now—go!"

"Well, all I ask is to be permitted that pleasure," Mr. Phelps said slowly. "I'll have Dr. Vining—"

"You'll leave Dr. Vining exactly where he is!" Mr. Howell rapped out. "You need persuasion, do you? Very well, I'll give it to you. Phelps, we are in a position to jail you. And it can be done without publicity, which you evidently do *not* believe. Not one soul, sir, will ever know just what you have done; not a soul will ever know of your ridiculous attempt to secure photographic evidence of a coercion and an undue influence which—ah!—um!—never did or could exist or—"

"Eh?" cried Mr. Phelps.

"But Myton has been fool enough to buy off your photographer, too, and now the least possible shaky leg you had left to stand upon is gone!" The remarkable Mr. Howell directed a stare of triumph at the other. "Need I say more?"

"You'll have to say a whole lot more before I have any idea of what you're talking about," said Phelps with entire candor.

"What does that mean?"

"Simply that you will have to tell me in just so many words what this is all about—and make them plain words."

It was a sufficiently frank and truthful statement, yet it had a most astonishing effect on Mr. Howell. The

dessicated gentleman bounced from his chair and darted to the corner of the veranda, where he peered down the side porch. He snorted and, with a leap, leaned over the rail and peered along the innocent ground. And then, having paused a moment to glare at Mr. Phelps himself, he capped the mystic performance by laughing savage understanding, by snatching up the big wicker rocker and turning it upside down and glaring at the under parts.

And when he had slammed it viciously back to the flooring he snapped:

"It's hooked under yours, then."

"What is?" Phelps asked blankly.

"One of those telephone things that shoot whispers along a wire to a stenographer at the other end," said the astonishing gentleman, and, coming nearer, raised his voice. "I don't like that sort of thing, Phelps. It suggests underhand business, with which none of us ever have dallied or tolerated. It suggests dishonesty, with which you may be familiar, but with which we are *not*. For the last time, I demand that you take your photographer and clear out!"

"With Dr. Vining?"

"With—" Mr. Howell caught himself and nodded a sharp negation.

"There's nothing doing!" said Mr. Phelps. "That gentleman is in my care and—"

And he was alone, for Howell had turned and stamped back to his three friends! The C. B. and Y. victim turned to examine them; their heads were close together once more, and Mr. Howell seemed to be reporting his non-success—and thus for a minute or two they remained, a snort coming indistinctly from their midst now, and now a hand gesticulating angrily.

After which Pinkton, the large, comfortable, eternally smiling good fellow of the band, rose suddenly and rolled the cigar to a sharp angle in the corner of his mouth as he approached John Phelps. He looked at Mr. Phelps and chuckled in the friendliest fashion possible; then he looked at Mr. Phelps's chair most carefully; and as he closed the window near them he also ran a deft hand along the bottom of the protruding sill and glanced behind the green shutters.

"Phelpsy!" he said cheerfully and confidentially, as he took Mr. Howell's chair and hitched it close to the other.

"Well?"

"You've got 'em going, old man!" chuckled the other.

"It would seem so," muttered the recent millionaire. "Say, *you* know what it's all about, don't you?"

"Me?" Mr. Pinkton's eyes opened in childlike astonishment and his grin broadened; one eyelid dropped slowly then and Mr. Pinkton laughed richly. "I haven't an idea in the world as to what it's about. I have no more idea than you, Phelps—and that's no joke!" The boisterous giggle came even again. "But you've got 'em going, son, and to a certain extent they seem to have you going! They've snatched your precious pictures, anyway, and ruined 'em. Why not let it go at that?"

"Why not let what go at what?" demanded Mr. Phelps, with rising anger. "If you'll tell me—"

"Oh, you sly dog!" rumbled merrily from Mr. Pinkton. "Broadway missed a big thing when you didn't turn actor. See here, old chap!" He came even nearer; the smile vanished and, growing more confidential, Mr. Pinkton grew warmly sympathetic as well. "They've trimmed you—quite according to the accepted rules of the game, of course, but, nevertheless, they *did* trim you. I don't blame you a bit for what you're doing. I'd do the same thing myself—and worse—in your shoes. But the point I'm getting at is that you have nothing more to gain, old man. See?"

"No!" The single word left Mr. Phelps with something of a roar.

"Um," observed his latest acquaintance, and rubbed his chin. "The idea

is that you may have something more to gain, eh? Well—drat you! You're right, then!" He laughed sharply. "You may thank me for it, though. Myton wouldn't hear of it, Howell went up in the air, and Drake didn't like it; but I stuck to it, and—you go straight back to New York alone and I'll give you a private code note to my cashier, who will hand you just twenty thousand dollars!"

"For what?"

"For leaving Dr. Vining right here!" whispered Mr. Pinkton. "And you'd better start right now."

Since, on the face of things, that settled the whole matter, Mr. Pinkton rose and beamed. Phelps, on the other hand, could no more than lean back and frown angrily.

"I don't pretend to know what it's about," he said, "but I cannot and will not leave that—"

"What!" Mr. Pinkton's amiability departed as a puff of cigar-smoke caught in a cyclone. "*You're really going to stick to that?*"

"I am and—"

"Confounded ass!" said the large gentleman, as he strode back to his friends.

He was, doubtless. And yet, there was no means at hand of knowing just why he was; and abuse, interlarded with smiles, had begun to grate on Mr. Phelps's jangled nerves. He rose slowly and growled to himself. There was a limit to everything, and the limit here had been passed. They had, apparently, no idea of arresting him, for whatever strange reason. He would take Dr. Vining and depart, punching his way to freedom, if need be, with the assistance of Bill's capable fists.

He glanced then toward the little chauffeur, smoking a cigarette under the trees, and discarded him as a fighting factor. He moved toward the strange quartet to deliver his ultimatum.

Their heads, together again, separated slowly at his coming. They sat back, all four of them, and regarded Mr. Phelps with eyes from which all active emotion had vanished. Mr. Pinkton, indeed, even smiled ruefully and elevated his shoulders—and Myton was on his feet and approaching the recent millionaire.

"Abandon your wicked stare, my dear sir!" he said, with a sour smile.

"What?"

"You win!" said Mr. Myton explosively. "You win and we surrender! We're going home!"

CHAPTER XII.

The Lull.

THE mysterious affair was over with!

It had not been explained, to be sure. It seemed simply to have died a natural death, killed by Mr. Phelps's tenacious refusal to desert an elderly and helpless scientist. Dr. Vining, apparently, was saved, although from what danger Mr. Phelps made no attempt to surmise. For the present, watching the changed C. B. and Y. directors occupied his attention.

They were stretching and adjusting their dust-coats and settling their hats more securely. A word or two from Pinkton and the little chauffeur had started the engine and, in his seat, was backing to the steps. Mr. Howell, having vanished briefly within, reappeared bearing road map and automobile guide, and, at the side of the car, pointed the shortest route to New York to its attentive driver.

And Mr. Myton approached his younger victim with a resigned sigh and:

"You're a wonder, my son!"

"Thanks!"

"Privately, I think you're going to be badly fooled before you're done with this. I think you're going to sit up nights damning things because you didn't take that twenty thousand, but —that's your affair, I suppose. You've licked *us*, and few men can say that!"

"I'm aware of that!" said Phelps.

"And now you're rid of us!" yawned Mr. Myton, as he stepped down to the car. "I've settled with the man here—this was my party, in a way, although I didn't get much out of it. Pile in there, gentlemen."

He waited until the trio had settled themselves in the rear; he lighted a cigar and stepped to the front seat.

"Keep an eye on your captive, Phelps," he said bitterly. "He'll stumble over a six or a nine, if he leans much farther over, and break his confounded neck! Good-by!"

"Good-by!" said Phelps.

"And now you lick it for civilization or I'll fire you, Johnson!" grunted the magnate, as he slid down comfortably in his seat.

The car glided smoothly off on the instant. Down the little side drive it went slowly and turned into the highway. There gears rasped and rattled and the engines roared more loudly for a moment—and the machine, with all its human puzzles, whizzed off down the deserted road in a wallow of dust. Second after second the sound of the motor grew more faint; second after second the angry dust left the air and settled back. And now the air was almost clear again and the purring had passed beyond Mr. Phelps's hearing—and a long sigh left that gentleman as he turned to his friend.

"It's over, Bill!" he observed.

"It would seem to be," the artist grinned. "What was it?"

"I'm no wiser now than I was in the woods, Bill," said Phelps. "And to be perfectly candid, I'm so infernally tired that I don't care a rap what it was about, for the present, anyhow."

Mr. Garford laughed rather wearily.

"These criminal careers aren't what they're cracked up to be, anyway, Johnny. How did you ever do explaining enough about that gold robbery to keep out of jail?"

"What?" Phelps started. "I don't think Myton even knew that there was such a robbery."

"Eh?"

"Fact! He never mentioned it, and I'd forgotten all about it, this last hour or two, Bill. He seemed to assume that I was at the bottom of his troubles, whatever they are. He assumed—" A tremendous yawn engulfed Mr. Phelps for some time. "I don't care a rap what he assumed!" he concluded. "He's gone—thank Heaven—and his whole crazy crew with him!"

He yawned again and glanced at Dr. Vining, intent as ever over his remarkable labors.

"If it were not for him," said Mr. Phelps pensively, "I'd hired the biggest room and the softest bed in this house and put in ten hours of sleep!"

"He—"

"I've undertaken to deliver him at home to-day, and it'll have to be done, Bill!" said the artist's friend, and headed toward the office. "I'll have to find out when there's another train."

The pretty, shadowy lobby of the little place was deserted, apparently, although the proprietor smoked placidly over a newspaper on the side veranda. He looked up at Mr. Phelps's coming and heard his question; and after some thought he said:

"Ain't another train till three-fifty that stops to our station. Ye missed the ten o'clock, didn't ye?"

"We might make it yet, if that carryall of yours is here."

"'Tain't," said the proprietor. "Hen's doing the shopping for the day, y' know, over 'n the village. He oughter be back now, but—that three-fifty'll git ye into New York a little after six, I should jedge."

"And we start from here?"

"'Round three o'clock's plenty o' time with my hoss."

"Then we'll sandwich a snooze in between now and three o'clock!" said Mr. Phelps promptly. "That is, if you have a couple of rooms that connect—yes, and with a big, wide door between 'em, so you can see from one to the other."

The proprietor caressed his beard.

"Six an' eight'll do ye," he concluded. "I'll go up and open 'em up."

He hurried away, and Mr. Phelps, stretching in the solitude, yawned mightily again. Until the going of Myton he had not quite realized his own weariness; but now, with that puzzling gentleman and his riddles out of the way, with an apparently forgotten ten thousand dollars in his pocket which he had no idea at all of returning to the original thieves, and which would give him some small start in a new career, relaxation had come with a rush.

Later, probably, he'd sit around and grow gray trying to figure out what it all had meant; but just now he would doze, with Dr. Vining securely locked in the next room, because queer happenings had left the inn.

At which point Mr. Phelps changed his mind! His weary eye, resting upon the telephone booth, caught one odd detail: the thick green cord connecting the receiver with the body of the instrument, instead of hanging in a loose loop, pointed straight downward and was taut! More, it pointed outward from the instrument, as if some one had fallen with the receiver clutched tight—and just there Mr. Phelps moved forward swiftly and with a caution that had grown instinctive to-day.

He would peep before tearing open the door and raising new excitement. He peeped carefully, from just beyond the edge of the glass door, and six inches below the level of the pane he discerned the light felt hat of the woodland stranger, who had dropped into their lives and climbed out again by way of a kitchen window!

Nor was there any question about the hat. It was of a new model altogether and one Mr. Phelps had been contemplating for himself only yesterday morning; and it rested upon the head of one who squatted low to remain invisible the while he waited for his number.

A solid minute Mr. Phelps stood and watched. The hat moved and he stepped back, quite out of sight. The hat rose slowly and cautiously, and the face of its owner appeared and came close to the pane and looked about keenly; after which the owner stood erect and spoke again into the telephone.

It was another new and eccentric mystery, and rather than uncover it just now Mr. Phelps backed away and left by the side porch as the landlord appeared from the main doorway in search of him.

Six and eight were ready and waiting. They roused Dr. Vining quite easily and led him above to the two spacious, old-fashioned rooms, with their big beds and their crisp, white curtains. There was a splendid lock to the smaller one, too, as Phelps discovered, and a table, which Dr. Vining adopted almost automatically. He looked about the place with vague pleasure, listened to Mr. Phelps's explanation and suggestion of rest, and then, beaming contentment, drew the nearest chair to the table and began his unpacking.

He was quite all right, of course, because nobody could well force a lock and steal him without rousing Mr. Phelps, even supposing such a thing probable, which it was not. Nothing but fire could dislodge him from that table of his own volition, and Dr. Vining's custodian moved wearily into the room where Mr. Garford already reclined gloriously upon one bed and himself sat upon the edge of the other.

He would not disrobe. In fact, having essayed a tentative stretch across the snowy spread, he fancied that he would not even move for a few minutes. Of all beds in the world, this was the softest. He hitched farther up and sighed luxuriously.

To-night, about seven, he would see Miriam Vining again; he would return her preoccupied old dad safe and sound, first discovering from him, by the way, just where they lived. And

after that? Well, there would be no "after that" for a considerable time, he feared. Once, facing death, he had made something of an idiot of himself by declaring his love for the young woman—and on their second meeting. Let him see her too frequently, and Heaven alone knew where he might land! No, he would go to her to-night and say—

"Busy, Miriam?"

Mr. Phelps started up with a jerk. Had he spoken? No, of course he had not. That was the doctor's clear voice and—Dr. Vining's custodian bounced from the bed and hurried to the doorway; and the doctor, smiling over his work, murmured:

"Not now, Miriam."

"Well, I'm — not Miriam, you know," smiled Phelps. "Did—"

Dr. Vining looked astonishment at him.

"Bless me, sir! You're not, are you? I ask pardon. It was a natural error, sir. For the moment I may have lost myself." He tapped his fine teeth with the pencil and, since Mr. Phelps did not depart, added almost impatiently: "My daughter, sir; at home, where I fancied myself, she is the only one who knocks upon my study door."

"Did some one knock on that door?" Phelps inquired.

"Did—pardon me?" The savant, just floating away again, returned with visible effort. "I think so, sir. In fact, I am positive. Else I should not have spoken, you know. Well, Mr. Phelps?"

He was waiting for seclusion again; his custodian supplied it by hurrying through their own room and into the corridor. There was nothing wrong, perhaps, but the mere fact of some one having disturbed the professor was disquieting. He was nervous, of course, because getting the dear old gentleman back home in the face of unexplained mysteries that sought to claim him had gained the magnitude of real labor; but the corridor was altogether deserted. Listening, Phelps walked to the end of it and looked down-stairs; not a soul was moving about. He smiled tartly, and returned to his room and, after a long look at the savant through the doorway, to his welcoming bed once more.

That contemplated nap had better be abandoned. Fighting sleep just now was like fighting destiny, but Mr. Phelps would have to fight. With Myton gone, of course, Dr. Vining was in no real danger at all, but—Mr. Phelps yawned and settled his hands comfortably behind his head. Invariably, they grew cold and prickly in that position after ten minutes or so and awakened him when he dozed. He chuckled sleepily at his emergency alarm, and dropped softly back to thoughts of Miriam Vining and all the things that might have been, had he never undertaken to make the billionaire class at the expense of the C. B. and Y. He thought, too, of things that still might be; hazy plans took shape in his head—mere floating germs of real plans that would have to be made within a day or two. He'd start work on them in earnest to-morrow morning; no, he would begin working over them just as soon as he knew that Dr. Vining was home and safe.

"*Desist!*" said Dr. Vining's familiar tone.

Once more Mr. Phelps bounded from his bed. *That* meant that some one was with his charge, and that they had reached him without rousing the guard. That—he dived into Dr. Vining's room and found that gentleman by the open window, adjusting his glasses and scowling at the ground below. He hurried to Dr. Vining's side and looked down; and only the budding riot of an old-fashioned garden met his eye.

"I spoke — yes," said the doctor's compressed lips. "Children, Mr. Phelps—or small children, I should have said, perhaps—have no place in the same world with a fairly earnest adult mind. Drat 'em!" said Dr. Vining, as he sat down again.

"They've been in here?"

"Not at all. They have been throwing gravel against my window, Mr. Phelps," the doctor said testily. "Some of it flew in and fell upon my work; other bits—oh, they have gone, I think. I spoke most sharply to them."

The recent millionaire returned thoughtfully to his room once more. There were no children about the place—at least, he had seen none; and on such a morning as this healthy youngsters must have been in evidence in one way or another. And if there were children, they must belong to the establishment, and they would be better trained than that. It was peculiar, at the least; and Mr. Phelps snorted and, with a brief inspection of William Garford, who snored vulgarly and smiled in his sleep at the Arc de Triomphe doubtless, he stepped lightly into the hallway and locked the door after him.

One learns more sometimes by approaching a situation softly and from the rear. Conscious of the fact, Phelps walked soundlessly down the corridor, peering again at its emptiness, and to the stairs. Soundlessly, too, he began to move down them, when his attention was caught by the figure at the little writing-table in the corner of the office, scribbling busily as if his life depended upon speed.

Mr. Phelps stopped and watched; that was the woodland stranger who turned somersaults!

His writing, whatever its nature, was brief enough. He finished it and, having slapped the blotter over it, plunged into his pockets and felt about; and a little exclamation of satisfaction escaped him as a coiled bit of string appeared. Eager nails picked out the knot which held it and laid the length of cord upon the table; and Mr. Phelps noted the tense little smile with which the stranger glanced toward the doorway and the verandas, and then, slipping a quick hand into his lap, produced a large, full-fledged brick!

The written sheet was laid upon the string, the brick upon the sheet; and the string had been knotted, and the stranger was on his feet again almost as quickly as Phelps followed his acts and making straight outdoors once more. There was, of course, a chance that the queer feat had no connection at all with Dr. Vining and his concerns; yet Mr. Phelps slid briskly down the stairs, crossed the office on tiptoe, and gained the veranda, unseen by any one.

Out there the stranger was on the ground, looking up at Dr. Vining's window, estimating the distance, doubtless, so that he might deliver his message without braining the prospective recipient. He stepped back and poised his missile and—

"Don't throw that!" Phelps said crisply.

The stranger started back; and the brick was lowered as he stared at Mr. Phelps, flushed somewhat, and demanded:

"Er—why not?"

"Because I want it!" snapped Dr. Vining's custodian as he snatched the brick from the startled stranger's hand and slipped away the note. "And just stand back there, or you'll get it yourself at short range."

"That note—" the stranger began violently.

"It's my property now!"

And somewhat to his astonishment the stranger merely laughed.

"Go ahead and read it," he said. "Good luck to you."

However quick his movements and tense his mien a minute back, he lounged easily to the veranda just now, and Mr. Phelps tossed aside his brick, spread out the sheet, and read:

DEAR DR. VINING:

For your own incalculable benefit, and without permitting your supposed friends, who are in fact your bitterest enemies, to know of your going, kindly see the writer of this in the office below, *immediately, and upon a matter of most urgent importance.*

A FRIEND.

It was a rapid scrawl, not wonder-

fully illuminative, and the underscoring had been done with a vigor that all but cut through the paper. Having read it, Mr. Phelps tore it up and tossed the pieces to the breeze; and then, stepping nearer to the stranger who perched, smiling, on the veranda-rail, he said:

"Well, friend, your note didn't get there."

"Thanks to you, sir," the stranger smiled politely.

"And now I want to tell you something about that note and any other notes that you may be contemplating," pursued Mr. Phelps. "I have no idea of what you wish to say to Dr. Vining, but I'd bet a large sum of money that he doesn't want to be bothered hearing it. Furthermore, I'm trying to snatch an hour or two of rest, and that old gentleman is in my care; and if you annoy him further or make me get up again, I'll lure you off somewhere hereabouts and hammer you to a jelly! That may not be elegant, but—"

"But it conveys the general meaning, and that is all that's necessary," the stranger smiled pleasantly. "Or—was it necessary at all?"

"What?" rasped Mr. Phelps as he ascended to the veranda on his way indoors.

"Your name, I take it, is Phelps?"

"It is."

"Then why shouldn't you and I have a nice, quiet little business chat down here, with nobody but the little birds and the chickens and those two cows over there to hear?" the stranger inquired seductively and lounged nearer to Dr. Vining's custodian. "Nothing could be more private and—anyway, why turn your back on good money, Phelps?"

"Money?"

"I'm not empowered to do anything of the sort, of course; but I have *carte blanche* to a certain extent, and the final confirmation of the thing can be arranged by telephone in ten minutes, or possibly right here inside of an hour," breathed the mystery who ran to somersaults. "In fact, Mr. Phelps, I hardly hesitate to offer you, flatly and positively, fifty thousand dollars in cash!"

"As a present?"

"As a testimonial of esteem, prompted by your wonderful good judgment in sending up-stairs for your friend—your young friend, I mean, of course—linking arms with him and walking not less than ten miles down that road *now!*" He tapped Mr. Phelps's arm and stared hard at him; then he smiled. "That's business, Phelps, isn't it? *Fifty thousand dollars!* Ah!"

"And deserting Dr. Vining—eh?" the recent millionaire asked as curiosity rose mightily within him again.

"Something like that."

"Sit down!" said Mr. Phelps.

"Does it go?" the stranger cried joyfully, as he perched on the edge of a chair and watched Mr. Phelps take the next one.

"Nothing goes until you've answered one question — or two, perhaps," Phelps said smoothly. "For whom are you acting?"

The stranger laughed outright, richly and with real enjoyment.

"For the man in the moon, Phelps," he said. "How did you ever guess it?"

"Then just exactly why does the man in the moon, or somebody else, wish me to leave Dr. Vining here and get out of the way?" pursued Mr. Phelps. "Candidly, I have no idea at all. That's the truth."

"Yes, that sounds like the truth," the stranger said with a humorous gleam in his eye. "The report of a sixteen-inch gun sounds just like the peeping of a mouse, too, come to think of it; does it not?"

"It's the truth; and if you wish to answer and get any answer from me, talk quick!"

Some little time the stranger looked at Mr. Phelps; derision appeared in his eye at first, and then perplexity for a moment, and then chilly caution.

"The assumption is ridiculous, considering just what you're doing and how perfectly you're doing it, that you don't know what you're doing; that some perfectly incredible coordination of circumstances have planted you where you are; but it's humanly possible," he smiled. "And if it were true, it would be silly to enlighten you, would it not? And, on the other hand, so long as we both know it isn't true—"

"I tell you—"

"Oh, rats!" snapped the stranger. "Didn't I see your conference with Myton when he met you in the woods, you chump, even if I couldn't catch quite all the talk? Didn't I see you in the big meeting right on this veranda? Don't be absurd, Mr. Phelps! I want to talk *business!* Well?"

He sat up and watched Mr. Phelps earnestly, waiting for the next words; and just there Mr. Phelps gave him up. The stranger was out of place in this peaceful spot; he belonged in the rushing automobile, somewhere miles away by this time. Phelps rose.

"You'll have to talk your business to somebody else," he said.

"You won't—not even for fifty thousand—" gasped the stranger.

"Not even for fifty thousand!" Phelps said steadily and walked upstairs.

Because he had passed racking his brain over their puzzles! They desired Dr. Vining, for what he could not dream; they could not have him because, in addition to his trust itself, he was *her* father, and anything that happened to the poor old man would grieve her. He glanced at the busy savant, quite safe in there with his black felt hat still tilted on the back of his head, and he growled as he stretched again on the beautiful bed. Presently, if a few more of them came sneaking around to kidnap Dr. Vining, something would snap; Mr. Phelps would enliven the country stillness by running amuck in really good style, and when he had finished the land would be strewn all about with unconscious capitalists and bleeding strangers, and for a time both he and Dr. Vining might pursue their inclinations in reasonable peace.

He smiled sleepily as he studied the papered ceiling. Nearly an hour of his proposed dozing period had been sacrificed already. Hereafter he would not leave that bed unless the excellent doctor actually shrieked. He listened for a time to the creakings here and there in the house; he turned from that profitless pursuit to study Bill Garford's healthy snoring. That in itself was an artwork; it began with a light woodwind effect something like a soprano clarinet, waxed to an oboe tone, and ended, invariably, with a steam-heater sizzle. Mr. Garford must have practised it before a mirror—or, no, one couldn't practise a snore before a mirror. Then he must have—Mr. Phelps turned on one side and listened lazily to the automobile hurrying past the inn. He, too, owned an automobile, although it had lived up in Westchester these last few months; he wondered dimly as to its general health and whether it liked the other automobiles in the Dedham garage.

He wondered, too, why the automobile roared so like sin! And when he had listened to it for a time his eyes opened—and then sat up suddenly. The sun had been slanting into the room at his last view; now it was a mere line on the floor. And the automobile that roared so infernally was a real one and outside the window.

Not, of course, that there was anything remarkable in the mere fact of a car's presence, but that deafening racket resembled strangely the din that had come from the motor that took away Mr. Myton and his friends. It was imagination; Phelps had not been asleep, and Garford slept peacefully as ever. But by way of ascertaining just who and what was responsible for the clattering below, he rose and rubbed his eyes and walked over to the window.

And there a cry escaped him. The scene might even have been timed for his coming. It was a car—and it was the car that had taken Myton—and now, with a mighty whirl and a blast of the deep-throated horn, it was hurtling down the drive and into the highway again.

Howell was in it, and Pinkton and —yes, Pinkton was holding down somebody or something, apparently in the bottom of the tonneau. Pinkton turned his large, good-humored face directly at Mr. Phelps's window and gave vent to a demoniac laugh which radiated triumph so complete that Phelps's hair stood on end.

An instant more he stood there, rooted, and then he shrieked. For out of the dust-shrouded, black seat something dark flew up, and soared for a little and settled on the lower limb of a wayside tree; and the something was Dr. Vining's black felt hat. There could be no other hat about of just that size and style; quarter of a second Mr. Phelps watched it, fascinated and horrified, before he could break the spell and tear for Dr. Vining's door.

Bill Garford was in the way, rubbing his eyes and mumbling. Mr. Phelps pushed him aside and leaped on to the door that had been wide open and was now closed and locked. No, it wasn't locked, because it flew back at his first touch, and he landed in the center of Dr. Vining's work-room, mouth and eyes open, breath stopped for the moment, glaring about.

And the hat out there on the tree had told its wordless tale quite fully and truthfully; there were half a dozen scribbled sheets upon the table, but every other trace of Dr. Vining was gone.

CHAPTER XIII.

The Man Who Evaporated.

THEY had kidnaped Dr. Vining!

Swiftly and surely as ever child of wealth was snatched from the curb they had entered the savant's room and removed him bodily — and under Mr. Phelps's very nose! He had not actually slept, of that he was perfectly sure. He had dozed, of course, and now and then he might have dropped off, just for a second or two; but he could recall clearly—

"Where's the mathematical person?" Garford asked quite calmly.

"Where *is* he?" exploded Mr. Phelps. "Do you suppose I—"

"What is it, John? A fit?" the artist inquired as he finished his last long yarn and stared at his friend.

"They've taken him away! They've come in here and kidnaped him while I—but I didn't! Bill! They've got her father!" cried Mr. Phelps and, gripping his friend with both hands, shook him. "What are they going to do with him?"

The artist freed himself with an effort.

"Have some mercy on these clothes," he said. "They're not much for looks, but they'll do for second best for a long while. How the dickens do I know what they're going to do with him? Who are they?"

"Myton — or Myton's automobile, anyway, with Pinkton and Howell in it. I saw it just as it went out, and that's only a second or two back and you can hardly hear it now. They've got the poor old chap."

"Well, they're not cannibals, are they?" Garford asked blankly. "They're not going to butcher him and eat him? They look like ordinary gentlemen."

"They're—" began Mr. Phelps, and just there he turned and leaped to the hall door of the room and the corridor beyond.

On the sill he poised briefly, staggered by a new realization: that door, which had been securely locked at his last inspection, stood wide open now —and there had been no key in the lock when he examined it, either. He groaned and dashed to the stairway and down it and looked wildly about

the empty office. He called loudly and banged the bell on the desk.

And he fairly danced through the eternal half minute of silence that followed. They had done it between them, and very likely the stranger had been the really active agent in the disaster, for he was the only one of them left behind at the inn when Mr. Phelps made his last fatal trip up-stairs. His trembling fists clenched — and, rather astonishingly, they all but struck the stranger as he hurried out of the dining-room, eyes angry and breath coming hard.

"*You got away with it, didn't you?*" shouted the stranger and Mr. Phelps with one voice and with a precision that a week of rehearsal could not well have improved.

They recoiled then, and stared at one another, and while the stranger smiled dazedly, Mr. Phelps quite forgot him on the instant, for the startled landlord, under the impression that fire had broken out, was hurrying into sight—and Phelps darted at him and gripped him as he cried:

"That carryall—quick!"

"What about it?"

"Hook it up for me, and never mind the boy. I'll drive."

"Ye won't drive that one—not if ye're in a hurry for it," the calmer man said reflectively. "Hen ain't back yet. He oughter be, but he ain't."

"You have another rig or a machine, then?"

"Neither one of 'em, mister. I—"

"Then where the devil can I hire a good horse or an automobile in this immediate neighborhood, *in a hurry?*"

The owner of the inn considered deeply.

"Nowheres," he said. "Not right near here. Lester Burrell's got a pretty good team, but he's doing some late plowing this week, four or five miles over the ridge on the Temsey place—the old Temsey place, that is. Not Hank's. Then, I believe Fred Stringer's got a new hoss o' some kind. Couldn't say if it's a roader or—"

"Telephone him!"

"Fred ain't got no telephone—not him. I guess not. Fred 'd no more think o' spending that dollar 'n a quarter a—"

"Where is he, then?"

"Three mile up that way. He—"

"That's the wrong direction," Phelps said feverishly. "There is no one nearer?"

"No. I'm reel sorry, too," said the landlord. "I thought some o' getting an extra hoss this spring, but I didn't get about it, somehow. These—"

"Well, we'll have to walk, Bill!" the recent millionaire said bitterly as he dragged his smaller friend straight through the door and down the steps.

"Where?"

"After that car, of course!"

"Catch that five-thousand horsepower affair on foot?"

"Not at all—walk till we find a place to hire a horse or another car, of course, and then follow the infernal thing to—to the finish! You needn't come unless you want to."

"I'll come," said Mr. Garford. "I've always regarded you as a brother, Johnny, and I want to be near when you drop dead and pick up the pieces. The idea of trying to follow that four-wheeled cyclone on foot is—"

He saved his breath and fell into step beside Phelps; and as a matter of fact, he needed the breath, for Mr. Phelps had struck a pace not unlike that of the bay horse on his station-ward trip that had been so fearfully prolonged.

Dr. Vining's hat still hung upon the tree. He picked it off and rolled it up and thrust it into the one pocket not crammed with Dr. Vining's possessions, and the pockets took to burning him as he thought of the benign old gentleman who owned their contents.

How had they taken him? The recent millionaire shook his head and groaned, even as he raced along, for it was past his understanding. Dozing, he had been alert for every unusual sound; of that much he was quite cer-

tain. Thrice a step along the veranda below had roused him sharply from the drowsy state; and once, when some one walked through the corridor, he remembered sitting up and listening.

Therefore, the trick must have been turned with no unusual sounds, or with no sound at all. How? There seemed to be but one way, and it chilled Mr. Phelps. They must have picked the lock and sneaked in behind the doctor—and then they must have chloroformed him. Perhaps he was coming out of it, there in the car, as they whizzed away, for Pinkton had been pushing down on somebody. Perhaps—

"Thank Heaven!" Mr. Garford cried devoutly.

"What?"

"Johnny, that's the worst mile I ever walked!" gasped the artist. "If we had to do another like that—have they stopped or are they just running slowly?"

He looked ahead and dashed perspiration from his eyes, and Mr. Phelps looked as well; and then a yelp of joy escaped him, because it was the Myton car, and standing almost still!

And it was not three hundred yards ahead, either! Phelps's heart bounded and the bound reflected in his feet; with a leap he was running, while Mr. Garford sighed and followed more slowly. They had broken down! That was it. He had them after all! Howell he could see, although Howell stooped over something just as Mr. Phelps made sure of his identity—and he could see Pinkton, too, although Pinkton's attention was all on the gruesome bottom of the car, and—the accursed thing had started up again, not swiftly, but steadily, and in a fashion that told of perfect health in the motor region.

Starting, too, it brought another cry from the pursuer. Vining was struggling with them! Only Pinkton's bent back was visible now, but beside it, heels kicked suddenly into the air—a hand waved and a half a dozen sheets of paper flew out of the automobile and fluttered lazily on the breeze. And if final confirmation were needed, it was here, for Phelps knew that yellow stuff.

It was the paper of which Dr. Vining's eternal note-book was made!

Snarling, he raced on and on until he came up to the first of the sheets. The car was rather farther ahead by that time and moving briskly; he merely glanced at the tangle of figures and letters and watched the car again. Its lead was just the same; it appeared that the occupants, quite aware that haste was unnecessary, were delaying the flight deliberately by way of tantalizing him. Blood pounded in Mr. Phelps's temples; he raised his voice and cursed the section of the country that seemed without automobiles ready to pursue or farmhouses which owned telephones connecting with the sheriff's office.

It was indeed lonely hereabouts. To the left lay a wooded hill and a long, green road parted from the highway here and disappeared within the leafy depths—all of which Phelps might not have noticed had the car not swerved gently into the green way and vanished abruptly.

An odd move at best, it set him to running again, and with Garford trailing exhaustedly but gamely, half a dozen yards in the rear, he turned into the byway and looked for the car which held, by this time—*what?* It was moving slowly and steadily upward. As he looked, Pinkton raised his clenched fist and shook it threateningly at the invisible region in the bottom—and spoke earnestly with Mr. Howell.

Both nodded and turned to face the front and the top of the infernal little hill at last.

And the car stopped short.

This time, surely enough, the machinery had quit. Nothing else could account for a stop just there. The chauffeur was not out and examining his engine, to be sure, and the passen-

gers seemed in no sense perturbed at the delay; for, with Phelps panting up to them, and not fifty feet away, Mr. Pinkton trimmed the end from a cigar, lighted it, and leaned back—and Phelps was upon them, gripping the door, trembling with weariness, not more than able to breathe, but *there!*

Instinct sent him to the step of the car before it could start again. He leaned dizzily toward Pinkton.

"You—" he gasped. "You beastly—"

"Why, upon my word! It's Mr. Phelps!" exclaimed the gentleman addressed. "My dear chap, whatever can have happened? Are you—er—going this way, or—what is it? Why on earth didn't you shout and let us give you a lift? We've been crawling along. And there's room in this great boat—oceans of room. Look at the amount of foot-room one has!"

He smiled pleasantly and waved his cigar airily toward the spot that should have held the maltreated savant—the very spot over which, with Howell, he had been leaning and struggling, almost up to the moment; and Mr. Phelps steeled himself and looked downward.

And he looked at a rather ornamental, perfectly new rubber mat, with the car manufacturer's ornate trademark in the center—and at nothing more!

Impossible it was, of course. He lurched forward and tore at the catch of the little door under the seat and, politely wondering, the gentlemen moved to accommodate him. The door came open with a bang; and while a decidedly pretty collection of tools, several cans, and two spare inner tubes were in plain sight, there was no sign at all of Dr. Vining.

"The man—you had—Dr. Vining!" said Mr. Phelps. "He was—in here?"

"In here?" Pinkton said incredulously, and raised his brows. "In—what do you mean, Mr. Phelps? In where?"

"Dr. Vining was—in this car—two minutes ago. I saw—"

Something gave pause to Mr. Phelps. The gentlemen were staring at one another again and quite significantly. They turned together and stared at Mr. Phelps; and Mr. Pinkton said soberly:

"I say, old man, you shouldn't do it, you know! Not even in a God-forsaken spot like this, where nobody's likely to see you."

"I—"

"There's nothing to it at all, my dear boy—nothing! I tried it and I know. It knocks a man in no time, body, brain, everything. Booze, Phelps, never helped a living soul!"

He sighed and drew virtuously at his cigar. Mr. Phelps's dazed eyes wandered to the back of the chauffeur—and a low, unpleasant sound came from Mr. Phelps, because that back was vibrating gently. The chauffeur was laughing, in fact!

"If this—" said Mr. Phelps.

"You come in here and sit down—you and your friend," urged Howell. "We'll run you over to the next town and—"

"You'll do nothing of the sort!" the C. B. and Y. victim shouted. "I saw you—leave the inn with Dr. Vining! I've followed you here and, while I don't pretend to guess what you've done with him, believe me, I'll find him!"

He dropped back, panting. He stepped to the rear of the car and looked at the road for a moment for marks of feet that might lead into the brush! Because he *had* seen what gave every evidence of being Dr. Vining and the gentleman *had* been in this car! How they had removed him, with the car in full sight all the time, was another black mystery; but since it had been accomplished, he would find the savant if it became necessary to tear down every bit of growth in the woods.

"Isn't he—there, John?" Garford asked weakly.

"Not now. We'll—have to find him."

"And we," said Mr. Pinkton, leaning out and speaking directly to the artist, "will wait for you, I think. Let him look if he wishes to look, sir. It's better so. But we'll be near at hand until the poor chap—"

Mr. Phelps heard no more, partly because he had started the search for the vanished doctor, partly because he knew that another second in sound of that gently mocking voice would result in real murder, with himself as the star performer and Pinkton the victim.

"You saw that old man in there, Bill?" he breathed.

"I saw what looked like him, certainly—and those papers of his—"

"He'd never have parted company with them peaceably—I know that much. And he kicked up no rumpus in that room, because I should have heard him. He was in that car with his papers, and he must be within a hundred feet of this spot now; but—how in blazes did they ever get him out of the car?"

"Perhaps they didn't get him out," murmured Garford, as they moved slowly away.

"But—"

"Then, if they did, there's only one thing to assume, Johnny," the artist went on, sanely enough. "He's making no noise now, but they never murdered him; men of that stamp are incapable of such a thing. They may have some strange motive that was strong enough to set them binding and gagging him; it isn't impossible, at any rate. And if they've done that they must have put him out of the car after it turned in here, because there were several times we lost sight of it for a few seconds, you know."

Phelps nodded.

"So that, if they did it, they must have dropped him in these bushes on the right hand side, somewhere between here and the bottom of the hill, for it's sheer rock on the other side. If he's here, we'll find him within ten minutes."

With some slight complacency at the thoroughness of his own reasoning, Garford led the way into the undergrowth and, by the way, set a very admirable example of silence. It was in Mr. Garford's calmer heart to believe that a trick had been played upon them, but poor Johnny Phelps seemed to have a deeper personal interest in the vanished mathematician, and he was taking the thing very seriously indeed.

Nor was there any other visible explanation of the doctor's disappearance, save that he must be somewhere in these bushes, Mr. Garford was inclined to think on further meditation, as they pushed slowly downward, a dozen yards apart. After all, a man in an open room does not go up in smoke; he had been taken from that room and—yes, what evidence they possessed all pointed to his presence in the car, for there had been no sign of Dr. Vining around the inn, and Phelps, in his excitement, had made noise enough to rivet the attention of a dead man! Mr. Garford, who inclined rather to pictures than to mystery in real life, abandoned speculation as a thoroughly bad job, suspended judgment and hunted with more interest.

And in the bushes they found what they had found in the tonneau, which was nothing.

They reached the bottom of the hill and the turn to the highway, secure in the knowledge that they had viewed every square foot of ground within forty feet of the quiet, green road. They knew, as well, that before their coming not even one small bush of the wayside strip had even been bent, far less broken down by the hasty carrying of a bound man.

Dr. Vining, then, had *not* come this way!

They stopped at the turn and shook their heads and sought briefly for a tenable theory—and as they sought

their attention was drawn by the roar of a new automobile, somewhere toward the inn. They stepped back to watch the thing listlessly as it passed —another big car of the heavy touring type; and they leaned forward with quickening attention almost immediately.

Of this car the back seat held but a single passenger—a gray-whiskered man who smoked grimly, with cap pulled down and collar turned up; but in the front seat, beside the driver, there was a larger man who did not smoke and whose every line bespoke alertness. He leaned far out, did the larger man, and as the car ran well from the center of the highway, he stared steadily at the farther side, inspecting recent tracks.

And now he straightened up, with a most unpleasant smile that showed his teeth, and with a word to his chauffeur, pointed toward the wooded byway. The car whirled in. The large man, eyes narrowing suddenly at the sight of the pair beside the road, barked another command, and the car stopped short—after which the large man added to the gaiety of things in general by speaking to Mr. Phelps.

"Pardon me, sir," he said quickly, "but have you seen, either afoot or in an automobile, an elderly gentleman, smooth-shaven, with very white hair, a black frock coat, and, I believe, black trousers? He wore glasses and was extremely preoccupied most of the time, and he carried a black leather case with one tan strap around it and one black strap."

It was a splendid description, of course. One might have expected from Mr. Phelps the simple statement that they were looking for such a man; but it was not his day for simple and direct statements. Phelps, you see, had made quite a study of C. B. and Y. affairs, and had seen at least the pictures of most of the C. B. and Y. powers. So that now he merely stepped forward and, after a second good stare at the strong features of the big man, exclaimed:

"Why—*you're Hemingway!*"

CHAPTER XIV.

Mr. Hemingway Helps.

THE large man opened his dust-laden eyes a little wider.

"That is my name—yes."

"Then—"

From the rear the gray-whiskered man leaned over and whispered, chuckling also—and Mr. Hemingway regarded the man beside the car with new interest.

"You're the Mr. Phelps who—" he began.

"I'm the Mr. Phelps who—" that individual said bitterly. "Dr. Vining is not hereabouts."

"Then where is he?"

"I have no idea."

"You're looking for him yourself?" Hemingway asked curiously.

"I am!" said Mr. Phelps, and his tongue loosed suddenly. "I'm not looking for him because I want to eat him or abduct him, you know. I'm looking for him because his daughter left him in my care and—I've lost him and—"

"They took him away from that little road-house, did they?"

"Yes."

"And the machine must have gone up this way, because the tires that made that trail are new on the market and—"

"The machine," Mr. Phelps interrupted wearily, "is standing at the top of this hill now, and he isn't in it."

"Who is, then?"

"A man named Pinkton, I believe, and another man named Howell."

"And still another named Myton?"

"No."

Once more the gray-whiskered man leaned forward and whispered, and Mr. Hemingway nodded and considered Mr. Phelps again.

"I'm decidedly anxious to rescue

the poor old chap myself, Mr. Phelps," he said quite gently. "He's in bad hands when he is with that crew. Just give me the facts of the case, please—of this kidnaping trick, I mean."

"There are no facts—they're all fancies!" Mr. Phelps said rather wildly. "The doctor must have been in that car when they left the inn, because his hat flew off, and I saw it fly and it's in my pocket at this moment. And he must have been in the car just before they turned in here, because we saw what seemed to be his heels—they appeared to be holding him down in the bottom—and several of his papers flew out. But when they stopped at the top of the hill there was no sign of the poor man and—"

He wound up with a weary shrug. There was nothing weary about Mr. Hemingway, however. He opened the door and stepped from the machine to address Phelps most earnestly.

"See here, sir," he said softly; "I think you're telling the truth, and while the whole thing might be absurd ordinarily, I'm quite ready to believe Myton's crowd is capable of carrying the man off bodily and gagging him. If he was in that car when it turned in and he's not there now, he must be somewhere between the top and the bottom of the rise."

"But why—"

"I don't know why they did it. I don't care much. What I want just now is to find Dr. Vining," explained Mr. Hemingway, with a hard, dry little smile. "Finding the poor gentleman in this undergrowth will not astonish me more than several other happenings lately—and I believe he's there. We'll beat it over carefully, and if you wish to help—"

"I wish to help," Mr. Phelps said drearily. "He's not there, but we may as well look again."

He turned up-hill once more, remaining close to the roadside. Mr. Garford selected a path half a dozen yards farther in and, after a quick search of the immediate neighborhood, Hemingway laid a course of his own, beyond the artist, bending low, pushing aside the larger bushes, poking here and there with a foot.

Thus for a second time they climbed the shady little hill, slowly and very carefully; and as they climbed coherent thought began again in Mr. Phelps's decidedly confused brain—and with it came suspicion.

Mr. Hemingway, to be sure, was rather a pleasant person and, on the surface, more to his taste than any other member of the C. B. and Y. contingent; perfect good faith had seemed to lie in his words and in his unwavering eye. And yet—he *was* one of the C. B. and Y. crowd, and if Mr. Phelps had not learned by this time to distrust anything connected with those fatal initials and to avoid it as one avoids smallpox, it was probable that he never would learn.

But, as a matter of fact, his lesson was fairly well grounded by now, and the more he considered Mr. Hemingway from the corner of his eye the less did that grateful feeling of friendly aid warm Phelps. Plot had lapped over plot this awful day, and to the best of his calculation most of the plotting had had for its object the separation of himself and Dr. Vining.

That had been accomplished now. Since the doctor was not here, he must be somewhere elese. Since he was somewhere else and Mr. Phelps was here, plainly the longer he remained here the longer would they be separated—and what more natural than that Hemingway, chief malefactor of the whole railroad, should be keeping Mr. Phelps's attention on this one locality, and nothing more? Reduced to these simple terms, the idea sent a new warmth through Mr. Phelps. He came closer to Hemingway, each step bringing nearer to his lips a flood of savage denunciation.

Hemingway seemed to be keeping ahead deliberately, too. He had crossed the zone of their fruitless searching and was hunting nearer the

roadside. He bent low, looking, apparently, for tracks that might lead from the road itself, and now, as they came over a little hummock, Mr. Hemingway dropped to his knees.

And from the Myton automobile above, which Mr. Hemingway seemed quite to have forgotten for the time, came a sudden, mighty gale of laughter.

It was a full-chested burst of heart-whole merriment, too, which fairly shook the branches. It rose as a roar and echoed and reechoed; and Mr. Hemingway, starting up, stared savagely at the picture of Pinkton in the roadway, leaning his head against the envelope of the folded top and vibrating from top to toe with mirth that refused longer to be controlled.

Howell, still in the seat, lifted his voice in a thin, hysterical shriek and vanished.

They at least were enjoying the situation; and despite himself Phelps smiled grimly—and ceased smiling in the very same second, for Hemingway with a roar had bounded to him. Mr. Hemingway, far from laughing, shook visibly with white fury; his round eyes spat fire at the recent millionaire and his friend, and the voice that came from within him was hardly a human sound.

"So—you—that—" Mr. Hemingway said lucidly.

"Don't shake those fists over me!" Phelps snapped.

"Shake them! Damn you, I'll wind 'em around your windpipe and choke those rattle brains out through the top of your skull!" cried Hemingway. "I understand it now, and I — I *bit*, didn't I, you blasted young imbecile! I let you lead me up here at a dead march while—"

The words strangled in his throat. From the car, which had followed slowly, the gray-whiskered man jumped down and, hurrying to his friend, shook him as he babbled:

"My Lord, man! Don't! Stop that! Control yourself, Hemingway! Arteries, man! Apoplexy, Hemingway! You look—"

"Look! I—I'll look—"

The bewhiskered gentleman gripped his friend firmly and spoke over his shoulder:

"Skip—both of you, quick! This man has the temper of Satan when it's up, and—"

An awful laugh burst from Mr. Hemingway.

"And I'll send that young hound to the fellow that gave me my temper!" he thundered. "Any man that can make a monkey of me to that extent—"

He choked again. Up above the pair had sobered suddenly. Even the chauffeur had turned, and all three faces were looking down upon the scene with much the expression worn at lively bull-fights. Mr. Phelps, having glanced at them and regarded Mr. Hemingway, whose bewhiskered friend clung frantically, turned away with no great haste.

"I'll go," he said briefly. "I've had enough of it, believe me!"

"And we might better put on a little speed," the artist suggested. "I've never ducked a fight yet, but — I've never seen a man look just like that, either."

"He's probably shamming it," observed the recent millionaire from a wealth of recently acquired experience.

"Not in a million years, my son!" said Garford gravely. "That man—"

"Then he isn't," said Phelps without emotion as he permitted himself to be dragged down-hill at a really ridiculous pace.

Behind them, as Garford's backward glance revealed just as they hurried into the roadway again, Hemingway had turned his animated attention to the pair in the automobile. He was approaching them with great strides, and if Mr. Pinkton and Mr. Howell were acting their work was superb; standing petrified, they gaped at Mr. Hemingway, while the chauf-

feur chattered and failed to catch their attention.

It was an interesting scene and one which promised action, yet Mr. Phelps plodded on. Either the whole thing was an elaborate bit of stage-play or it was not; it mattered little either way. If they wished to murder one another in the pleasant solitude, he had no objection to offer; if they wished to laugh at him when he was quite out of the way, it was a matter of equal indifference.

Because the thing which bored more deeply into him every second was the wretched fact that Dr. Vining was—simply gone. They might, and indeed they must, have taken him in the machine, but they had disposed of the poor gentleman's person long before that halt which had revealed the car to its pursuers. Perhaps, following the scheme of ingenuity which had appeared so frequently in the moves of the C. B. and Y. band, there had been another car waiting up the road; Myton and Drake had escorted Dr. Vining into it and away, while Howell and Pinkton remained behind to manufacture the false clue.

That, in fact, must be the explanation, and meditation upon it did not lift Mr. Phelps's sagging spirits. They were on their way to the inn again chiefly because there seemed nowhere else to go. Once there, he would have to go to work telephoning—to the local constable, to the sheriff of the county, and, by the way, to the sheriff of half a dozen adjoining counties through which the supposed car might pass with Dr. Vining in the next hour or two.

And just how would he describe a car at the existence of which he could but guess? Just what sort of story could he send over the wires to the country authorities that would sting them into arresting Mr. Myton and his friend and their captive? And when he had found his story, and even polished it to perfection, was it likely that Mr. Myton, doubtless with unlimited cash still upon him, certainly with a position in the upper circles which could be established quickly almost anywhere in the East — was it likely that the authorities would hold Mr. Myton?

No, it was by no means likely, and Mr. Phelps admitted as much as they shuffled up the drive to the inn. Miriam had entrusted her father to him—and she might better have entrusted him to a ten-year-old boy, who would at least have had sense enough to scream if anything threatened his charge. And now, when he came face to face with Miriam and made his sickening report—

"Get his darned old hack, John, and let's start for home!" said William Garford as they reached the porch.

"What?" Mr. Phelps came out of his dismal reverie with a jerk.

"Your man is gone, my son, and I doubt very much if anything terrific is going to happen to him. Anyhow, they have him, and the chances are that they're taking him back to New York, because all hands belong there. Let's follow."

It was not comforting, but it sounded rather sane. Phelps nodded sadly.

"I'll go up and gather what papers he left," he muttered.

Indoors, he could not forbear pausing a moment and looking about the deserted little office—and contrasting the moment with that of his first appearance beside the big fireplace. Then Miriam had been within a yard of him, flushed after their strange trudge in the first sunlight of the morning; he recalled how she had looked around, admiring the quaintness of the spot, looking at the really ancient woodwork in the panels, in the doors. She had stood before that cupboard and—Mr. Phelps started back and stifled a little cry.

That closet door was opening now cautiously. She herself would emerge and—he grunted sudden and sour astonishment. No new miracle was in that closet; it chanced to be merely

the stranger of the woodland! The gentleman of the light felt hat came quickly to Mr. Phelps.

"I didn't know who'd landed," he explained. "I thought it might be—did you find him?"

"The—doctor?"

"Yes."

"No."

"You didn't catch up with their car?"

"He wasn't in it," Mr. Phelps vouchsafed and turned to the stairway, while the stranger dropped limply into a chair and stared after him.

"Are you—sure he wasn't?" asked a faint, following voice.

"I am very sure," Mr. Phelps said bitterly as he reached the upper corridor.

Their own ill-fated rooms were at the front of the house; he paused here for a moment at the rear and glanced out of the window. The place was all too peaceful and lovely for such a tragedy; green fields stretched away beyond the building; the structure itself should have been a tonic for tired nerves. His eye wandered drearily up the gray side and to the little attic window in the far wing of the place—and he moved on briskly toward the open door of his own room. Too much excitement was doing its deadly work.

He was breaking down under the wretched strain and beginning to see things which did not exist; even up in that attic window he could have sworn that he saw the vague, shadowy profile of Mr. Myton.

And it wouldn't do at all. The recent millionaire stepped into his own apartment and squared his shoulders; there was too much work ahead to consider going to pieces just now. Until the last penny of Myton's ten thousand dollars was spent, if need be, he would scour the earth for Dr. Vining, neither pausing nor sleeping until the preoccupied savant had been restored.

Meanwhile, he would get what papers the good doctor had left behind. He stepped briskly into Dr. Vining's room.

And his hands went into the air and he stood stock-still, for the moment a man of stone—while at the table by the window Dr. Vining himself glanced up for an instant and nodded.

"Ah, Mr. Phelps!" he smiled very pleasantly. "Awake at last? Come in, sir, if you please, and be seated!"

CHAPTER XV.

The Burden of Capital.

OF Dr. Vining's latest page two inches remained to be filled. He considered the space and his jaw set firmly—and while unbounded amazement held Mr. Phelps chained to the spot, while sheer incredulity of his senses caused his eyes to pop and his breath to come in labored little gulps, he was, nevertheless, able to note that, for once, Dr. Vining put himself to his work with an effort.

"You're—here!" choked Phelps.

"One moment, please."

"But you're—*here!*"

"Is that—astonishing, sir?" the doctor asked testily.

"*But how did you get back?*"

Dr. Vining looked squarely at him for a moment, with eyes wherein the vague preoccupation struggled with an entirely new light—the latter, by the way, strongly resembling smoldering anger.

"If you will be so good as to maintain silence for one half minute, there is a matter of which I wish to speak," he said sternly, and his pencil moved on with grim determination.

Mr. Phelps leaned against the side of the door and held his peace. The doctor was actually there, working along quite as he had worked an hour ago. Mr. Phelps dragged his eyes from the welcome sight and looked deliberately from the window; the carryall, grinding up the gravel drive just then at a crawl, showed the sandy-haired boy of

the morning hunched and drowsing among bundles, home at last—and Mr. Phelps turned back, half fearfully, to the doctor. Beside him lay the black case, before him the note-book and a mass of typewritten matter; but for the missing hat not a detail of the former picture was changed.

But the hat, as he felt of it in his side pocket, saved Mr. Phelps's reason. Its perfectly material felt was there; he *had* picked it from the tree and he had seen it fly wildly from the car. The doctor might have deatomized himself while whirling along and reassembled in the room, which need not have been so very difficult to a person of such utter concentration. He might have chanced upon the missing fourth dimension somewhere in the past, and left the car along its undefined lines—but what did it matter? He was there in the flesh now, and, recovering himself somewhat, Mr. Phelps stepped to the hall door and closed it — and incidentally spent a moment looking at the key on the outer side of the lock, with its dangling tag, which had quite missed him in the last wild flight.

He slipped the thing to the inner side and locked the door; and, turning back to Dr. Vining, he discovered that the gentleman was actually repacking his black case and bundling his papers together. Work seemed to be over for the time.

"You will be seated, Mr. Phelps?" the mathematician queried gravely.

"I—of course."

"You are quite wide-awake now, sir?"

"Why shouldn't I be?" Phelps asked blankly.

"The boy said that you were sleeping when he brought the note."

"What note?"

"The one, sir, which has indirectly to do with the matter of which I intend speaking, sir," Dr. Vining said with patience visibly straining. "And now, Mr. Phelps, there are further questions which you wish to ask before I continue?"

"Only—er—how the boy came in here and—"

"He came, to the best of my belief, through that hall door, sir, opening it, doubtless, with the key. I do not know, Mr. Phelps. He appeared at my elbow with the note and the whispered request that I walk very softly, as you slept," said Dr. Vining, and his exasperated calm was positively dangerous. "I may speak without further interruption?"

"You may, sir," said Mr. Phelps.

"Then—let me see!" The white-haired gentleman turned his thoughtful gaze to the open window and sought, apparently, to choose words for his opening—and as he gazed he started so volently that Phelps half rose and gazed through the window as well.

Out there the eye met nothing more startling than the roof of the veranda; but just at this moment a light felt hat was appearing over the edge, as some one climbed a pillar below. Two or three seconds the hat seemed to stick—and then, with a jerk, the face of the woodland stranger popped into view, red with exertion. A little gurgle of utter amazement came from the face and its eyes turned round as their owner stared at Dr. Vining—and, quite magically, the head dropped out of sight.

There was a gentle thud on the ground below and the sound of voices; also the tramping of hoofs reached the upper room and the creaking of wheels as a carriage was backed about. And the sandy-haired boy's thin tones rose in shrill protest and a savage laugh from the stranger answered it, after which a whip slashed down upon an innocent back—and out through the driveway, into the road, and away in a cloud of new dust, the carryall went at a dead, full gallop. At the reins sat the stranger, leaning forward as if to push the startled beast to greater speed.

"You saw it, sir?" Dr. Vining asked quite breathlessly.

"I surely did."

"And that confirms what I have

half suspected several times to-day. Come nearer, Mr. Phelps," said Dr. Vining, and lowered his voice to a profound whisper. "I am almost certain, sir, that something unusual is afoot here," he stated.

Mouth open for explosive speech, his custodian paused and considered; there are times when one says the simplest thing.

"You may be right, sir," Mr. Phelps replied.

"I am right. Believe me, sir, I am not fanciful. I do not note small oddities and build them into mysteries, but this—I am tired of it, sir. Thoroughly tired."

"And so am I," said Mr. Phelps.

"So that the sooner we have settled this little matter—if, indeed, it is to be settled here—the better," said the mathematician, and faced Mr. Phelps with quite a human and businesslike gaze. "You will pardon a word or two of personal history? I am—let me see—well, a fairly wealthy man."

"I'm glad to hear it, sir," said Phelps.

"Not wealthy as some of the swollen fortunes of to-day are measured, of course, but in comfortable circumstances at least," the doctor pursued carefully. "In a word, I have a number of investments, of one sort and another, all of them selected after the most careful thought and minute investigation, and all of them, I may say, profitable as might be expected. You follow me?"

"Perfectly."

"Wealth, sir, carries its own heavy responsibility. I do not speak of the greatly exaggerated and wholly absurd worry which afflicts most men as to the chance of losing what they may possess; I refer, rather, to the accounting one must render to society as an abstract mass—sufficiently concrete, however, to own, essentially, whatever surplus may be when one's necessary expenditures have been deducted from the increment. That is your own view, sir?"

"Practically," said Mr. Phelps somewhat hesitatingly as he cleared his throat. "Practically."

"In fine, one's wealth and the greater part of its earning constitute merely a public trust—one which cannot be evaded in the smallest degree by the thoughtful and conscientious man. Such I believe myself to be, Mr. Phelps. When I purchase a share of any given stock, or a number of such shares, it is not entirely for the sake of what dividends they may carry. I assume, sir, quite voluntarily and gladly, I may say, my own share in the proper direction of that particular corporation. I follow its career with the utmost care, endeavoring always to digest each new detail as it may appear, and to reach, with perfect impersonality, the proper conclusion, whether it seems for or against my own immediate interest. I attend stockholders' meetings, sir, invariably, and do my best, on many occasions, to pit analytical thought against the crude cunning which, apparently, must crop up here and there in the management of the larger corporations. And with some success, I believe, Mr. Phelps — with some success."

His benevolent smile rested briefly upon the puzzled younger man. It was all leading somewhere, of course, but—

"So now to the C. B. and Y. matter," said Dr. Vining. "Are you in pain, Mr. Phelps?"

"I—eh?—no! You—you said—"

"The matter of the C. B. and Y. securities which I hold, Mr. Phelps — nine shares which I purchased fourteen years ago. I have done my small best, sir, to share in the faithful administration of that road, and more than once I have felt deep gratification. Why, on one occasion, sir, years ago, the stockholders were deadlocked upon a perfectly clear point; I spoke for seven consecutive hours, Mr. Phelps, taking up the matter detail by detail—and at the end, I am happy to say, the vote was almost unanimous.

That, however, is apart. Those nine shares, just now, have grown to be an infernal nuisance, sir," Dr. Vining said warmly.

"Yes? Yes?" said Phelps. "Go ahead!"

"You may find it difficult of belief, sir, but those nine shares are responsible for my presence here at this moment, and to make that clear I shall have to weary you with further history, although of more recent date. Yesterday, I believe, Mr. Myton—you know him?—came to my home. It was his first visit, which, perhaps, should have put me on my guard. Nevertheless, it did not. I listened to his offer of fifteen thousand dollars for what stock I held, and I refused it, of course, on the general principle of wishing more time for consideration. The refusal, I believe, angered Mr. Myton; he talked further, and persuaded me, at least, to go to my safe-deposit vault and get the shares themselves. I did so, in his automobile, if I recall—yes, it was in his automobile. After that we rode—"

Dr. Vining paused and smiled, wearily apologetic.

"Dear me, sir, I hardly know where we did ride," he said. "I believe that we took a train, too, and that there was an accident of some sort. Yes, there was!" He sighed rather hopelessly and shook his white head. "I fear, Mr. Phelps, that the principle which has blossomed so beautifully today has been in the bud, here in my head, for some time. Frequently I have found myself actually apart from the world."

"Well, we're here now, and safe and sound," Mr. Phelps said gently. "Go on."

"Eh? Mr. Myton has been hounding me, sir—that is the gist of it all. There is no other word. He offered me twenty thousand dollars and, in an absent-minded moment, I almost accepted his offer. Almost immediately he offered me thirty thousand dollars — and instantly, of course, and consistently since then, I have refused flatly to sell."

"Why?"

"Because, sir, when a man offers more than three times the value of any given commodity he has a reason which can hardly be quite honest," Dr. Vining said keenly. "Such, at least, is the view I have taken, and I feel it to be right. I have stated repeatedly to Mr. Myton that, when I have had opportunity to consult Mr. Hemingway—you may have heard of him?—and several others of the larger investors in the railroad—when, in short, I have satisfied myself most fully that the transaction would be proper and legitimate in every way, I might give further consideration to the offer. He has refused to accept my decision, sir; he has sought every ridiculous opportunity for a private interview with me —until I am convinced that the thing has become a mania with the man. Nevertheless, some hours ago I fancied that he had abandoned his persecution and left. He seems, however, to have returned; and when the boy tiptoed in here an hour ago with a note from him asking me to come to him for a last five minute interview, I resolved to go and settle the matter finally."

"Is it settled?" Phelps asked.

Dr. Vining smiled faintly.

"It is not, sir. That man talked, sir, for an hour; and as he talked a new detail of my principle occurred to me—one which required at the least an immediate jotting down of the general idea. I employed a subterfuge, Mr. Phelps, and left the man—"

"Where?"

"Er—somewhere up-stairs, I think," the doctor said uncertainly. "I returned to my papers, which seem to have been disturbed since we came to this room, and as I worked I will confess, sir, that a new and possibly cowardly solution of the whole affair occurred to me. I am too old and too busy for combat with a person of this Myton's persistence. Do you — er —

take my meaning?" the doctor asked timidly.

"I'm afraid not."

Dr. Vining cleared his throat with real embarrassment.

"Well—er—it had seemed possible to me, sir, that you might wish to assume the burden of this particular investment on your younger shoulders—that, in short, Mr. Phelps, you might care to buy my very annoying shares of C. B. and Y. stock?"

He flushed a little and waited, eying Mr. Phelps. The latter gentleman for an instant shuddered involuntarily. In his pocket, however acquired, he had ten thousand dollars in real money; with it he had planned hazily to start life anew; yet even before the bills had settled into place C. B. and Y. was reaching out its octopus arms to gather them in.

"Well — er — doctor," Mr. Phelps said wildly.

"Oh, but my dear sir! Do not misunderstand me!" the savant cried. "I am in no sense hinting that you bid above this Myton person's inflated value, or that you approach it. These shares, sir, were issued upon an intelligent valuation of the property. That value is one thousand dollars per share, and my most careful estimates, made after thorough investigation, have failed to show that the property has either increased or decreased in worth since their issuance, save temporarily, and to an extent actually negligible. My suggestion was that you purchase the shares, as a personal favor which, as I see you realize, I have no warrant in asking, for nine thousand dollars."

"But Myton will give you thirty thousand!" Phelps cried suddenly.

"Myton, sir, raised his criminal proposal to a fifty thousand dollar basis, under this very roof and not ten minutes ago!" Dr. Vining said sternly. "Inasmuch as I have never taken, and never will take, one penny upon which there is a suspicion of a taint, I rejected that offer — with justified anger, I may say! You will purchase those shares, sir—or, if you feel that the annoyance is too great, I shall throw them on the open market. Or possibly," concluded Dr. Vining, "I shall donate them to one or another of the charities, with the agreement that they are not to be transferred within a period of one hundred years. On second thought I think that that is best of all."

He smiled at Mr. Phelps with relief and some apology. The solution of the matter had come, of course. But there was no placid relief reflected in Mr. Phelps's expression. Many things were whirling through that young man's head, some of which explained happenings of the immediate past, some of which promised brightly for the immediate future.

"Doctor," he said hoarsely.

"Yes?"

"I'd—like to buy that block," Mr. Phelps pursued thickly. "But — I can't pay much more than—than nine thousand dollars just now, and I couldn't pay that without knowing that I was stealing forty-one thousand dollars from you. I couldn't consider that part, because—"

"My dear Mr. Phelps," the savant interrupted coldly, "I have laid the proposition before you. I shall not recall my offer to sell, nor, as I have sought to explain, shall I consider accepting any price but the *right* price, which is nine thousand dollars. My first idea was to shift the responsibility, but I am glad, sir, that you have refused. The plan of donating that very annoying possession is far better fitted—"

"But I haven't refused it!" Phelps said feverishly, and, crossing to Dr. Vining's side, he clutched that gentleman's arms and claimed his whole startled attention. "There is nothing on earth I'd like better than buying you out of C. B. and Y. for nine thousand dollars, but—say, doctor!" the recent millionaire burst out. "*do you honestly mean that you'll give those things away unless I buy 'em?*"

"Sir," said Dr. Vining angrily, "have I seemed to you the type of mental defective which is likely to jest about—"

Up-stairs some one was walking swiftly. Yes, and some one was coming down-stairs!

"Then — here's your money, doctor!" cried Mr. Phelps, and plunged into his pocket.

The bills were there. He slapped them to the table and snatched away two five-hundred-dollar notes. He stood, not daring to breathe, while Dr. Vining counted the rest quickly and looked up with a bland, vastly relieved smile.

"The amount, sir, is correct," said Dr. Vining, and even as he spoke the vague light which guided his remarkable brain through its beloved maze of calculation began to return to his eyes. "My nine shares of C. B. and Y. preferred are yours!"

"Then—the certificates—or an assignment, perhaps, of—"

From the doorway a savage laugh rang out. Myton was there—a different Myton. The merely excited effect had left him; Mr. Myton had in good earnest turned maniac! His hands waved, his eyes glittered, he yelled with crazy exultation:

"You're fooled! You're both fooled to a finish! You've got nothing to sell!"

"I—" Phelps whirled on him.

"You're fooled!" thundered Mr. Myton, even further from the normal than the mathematician at his worst. "He's got no shares! He's lost 'em! I've searched everything he owns, even to his pockets while he was dreaming up-stairs, and *he's lost 'em!*"

And then Dr. Vining smiled. He removed his glasses and polished them, blinking pleasantly at them; and, although a surge of new trouble came over Mr. Phelps, Dr. Vining smiled again.

"You err," he said gently. "You err, sir. The original shares themselves are in Mr. Phelps's inner vest-pocket. They have been there since early morning."

CHAPTER XVI.

By Way of Cashing In.

DOUBTLESS, in some circumstances, the whole thing would have been pitiful; yet, here and now, Mr. Phelps could feel nothing more than burning interest in the situation. He stared at Dr. Vining, and the doctor sighed lightly and picked up his pencil.

"The long gray envelope, sir. You may consider it yours now, of course, and—thank you very much, Mr. Phelps."

And then came the pitiful part, because Myton, in the doorway, ceased his really wonderful imitation of a wounded wolf howling out its last half-dozen breaths. He inserted the proper farewell gurgle and glided across the room without visibly touching the floor. His hands rose, clawlike, over Dr. Vining for an instant.

"Well, you—you—" he shrieked. "Have I been—been moving heaven and earth for *this?* Have I been riding you around and disrupting train schedules and—hanging on to you as a lost soul might cling to the gates of Hades, for this? Have I been condoning crime and—"

"Mr. Phelps!" cried Dr. Vining with genuine agitation. "Will you call an officer?"

"There is no need for one," the younger man said quickly. "I—"

And there, wonderfully as it had arisen, Mr. Myton's private and personal typhoon swirled into the past. With its passing, the hard-eyed gentleman tottered a little and clutched at his head; his dry lips clacked queerly and he swayed away from the table; yet the countenance he managed to turn to Mr. Phelps wore a smile of such awful sweetness that that gentleman felt a chill run through him.

"Mr. Phelps," he croaked, "once

more I—I am forced to admit that we made a terrible mistake in—in underestimating you. You will—come with me for a little chat?"

"But out of my hearing," Dr. Vining protested.

"A long, long way out of your hearing—yes," the C. B. and Y. magnate agreed from his grinding teeth. "This way, Mr. Phelps, if you please."

He staggered to the corridor and leaned against the wall for an instant; he grunted and glanced back and the teeth bared again—and then he moved resolutely to the stairs and down them, not perhaps a broken man, but one who had been jarred mightily.

Mr. Phelps followed, tense in every nerve. He would not speculate, even now, on what was coming; he would wait and spar and—

"Here!" said Mr. Myton as he paused beside the writing-table and looked about dizzily.

The office was empty as usual. Out on the veranda William Garford sketched busily as he waited for his friend.

"Fifty thousand dollars," said Mr. Myton.

"Eh?"

"Fifty thousand dollars and not a penny more—and not that unless you wish to close the thing instantly," the C. B. and Y. magnate rapped out. "You and I understand one another quite fully, Phelps. Will you take that price for your da—er—your nine shares? Quick!"

"I will not," said Phelps, and continued his saunter toward the door.

A hard hand on his sleeve detained him.

"Wait!" snapped Mr. Myton. "Don't be so cock-sure, young man! I'm offering you the best end of it, believe me. I have no notion what your arrangement with Hemingway may be, and I don't care. I know that I'm absolutely safe in saying that you'll get nothing like fifty thousand dollars from him, and—listen, Phelps!"

The younger man turned on him.

"You listen, instead," he said. "I don't know what you're talking about. I never have known. I have no arrangement with Hemingway and never have had—in fact, I think I never laid eyes on the man until to-day. From one end to the other I haven't even a suspicion of what lies at the bottom of all this madness. But I do know this—and I'm absolutely safe in saying it, too—" grinned Mr. Phelps. "I've got nine shares of stock that you want badly, and you're never going to get them for any fifty thousand dollars."

Mr. Myton's eyes opened suddenly. He stared at Mr. Phelps for several seconds—and somewhat to his satisfaction that young man found that his hands had slid nonchalantly into his pockets and that, whatever internal commotion existed, he was smiling blandly at Mr. Myton.

"I think," murmured that gentleman, "that you're lying."

"What you think is immaterial, but thank you, nevertheless," said Phelps.

"But—blast your eternal soul!" said Mr. Myton pleasantly. "I'll go the limit and have done with it. I offer you sixty thousand dollars."

"I don't want it."

"Why?"

"Because, really, there may be reasons I can't understand as yet for the stock being worth more than that. You see—"

The slyness seemed to slide from Mr. Myton.

"I'm a fool to do it, I suppose, but I'll go to the length of telling you the truth!" he snapped. "Hemingway and I have had trouble." He paused an instant and looked keenly at Mr. Phelps's stare of partial enlightenment. "There is a fight on for the control of the road. We have been buying up every speck of that stock privately, one or the other of us, and the directorate has split into two factions and—oh, helped! When we had bought everything that could be traced I was short five shares of a majority and Hemingway lacked four."

"*And I've got that nine!*" cried Phelps.

"You have them, and do not permit them to excite you unduly," the other said with emotion dwindling visibly. "It is not extremely important to either of us, Mr. Phelps—indeed, as such things go, it is a very small matter. As nearly as I can guess, we must have discovered, almost simultaneously, that Dr. Vining owned those nine shares, and—I went and captured the doctor."

A moment Mr. Myton paused and considered Mr. Phelps.

"And then, as I have taken the liberty to assume, Mr. Hemingway put *you* on my trail," he said with a sour smile. "Don't scowl like that, Phelps. I give you credit for everything—and it was wonderful. I don't know how you discovered that I had Vining hidden on that float; I don't say that stealing the whole thing bodily wasn't a master-stroke of which I'd have been proud myself. I don't know whether you intended originally to have a launch sail up and rescue him and leave me behind, or whether that grounding was a piece of high-class navigation for the purpose of giving you your chance at the old gentleman—and I don't care! I've got you and the shares themselves right here and now, and—"

"And since the fellow that owns them controls the whole blamed railroad, I'll hang on to them myself," Mr. Phelps said breathlessly. "I'll sell my vote—"

"You'll make devilish little money selling the voting of those shares, sir, if you're intending to hang on to them yourself," Myton said tartly. "You have the truth, which you knew already. You have also my assurance that the matter is not of great importance. Does sixty thousand dollars buy them or does it not?"

"It does not," said their owner.

"Then—here! I'll make that—"

Oddly, Mr. Phelps was losing interest in him for the time. Out there, somewhere up the road, sounds reminiscent of the original Vanderbilt Cup race were splitting the air. Where the highway turned a swirl of dust was rising—and out of it, as Phelps peered from the window, an automobile whizzed into sight.

It was not merely racing. It touched the higher spots and, in the intervals, flew; and beside the chauffeur, Mr. Hemingway's squinting countenance showed clearly—and behind that car was another, while in the far distance a galloping carryall—

"Phelps, I'll give you one hundred thousand dollars!" shouted Myton.

"I—"

"I'll give you one hundred and fifty thousand—I'll give you two hundred thousand dollars for your nine shares," shrieked the really astounding capitalist. "Hand 'em to me, I tell you! I'll give you the money before—"

Mr. Phelps turned upon him quickly. There is such a thing as carrying one's financial aspirations too far. He had tried it once with C. B. and Y., and it had not worked at all. Mr. Phelps's hand, therefore, went quickly to his inner vest pocket; a glorified light blazed from Mr. Myton's countenance—and the hand was torn away and Hemingway stood between them.

Ten seconds the larger man could not speak, albeit he turned the smile of a demon from one to the other; but breath came then and he addressed Phelps directly:

"You—shares—Dr. Vining! Did you—get—"

"I did."

"You—have them?" Hemingway cried.

"Yes."

"You haven't sold them?"

"No."

"They're your—own property?"

"They are."

"Has Myton tried to buy them?" Mr. Hemingway inquired further as he pushed aside his late partner in crime.

"He was rather busy at it when you happened along," Phelps smiled, "but—"

"What did he offer you?"

"Two hundred thousand dollars, I believe."

"I'll give you two hundred and fifty thousand dollars," gasped Mr. Hemingway, who could be rather astounding himself when he chose—and he dropped into a chair and shook the establishment with his sudden, mighty roar of laughter.

Looking at him, Mr. Myton's hands worked convulsively. He surveyed the far larger man from head to foot, as if meditating slaughter on the spot; but almost immediately he was in control of himself again and speaking to Phelps.

"I'll beat that by just one hundred thousand dollars," he snapped. "And I guess that clinches it."

"I think you're wrong," Hemingway said pleasantly, and flicked a bit of dust from his sleeve. "Mr. Phelps, you really wish to sell?"

"When a market looks as promising as this one—possibly."

"Then my offer is five hundred thousand dollars, sir—one-half million of dollars, Mr. Phelps," the incredible Hemingway said blandly. "Take it?"

Myton had passed the stage of violent emotion. His hands clenched behind him and he looked Phelps directly in the eye.

"Six hundred thousand dollars," he said.

Hemingway rose to light his cigar at the desk.

"Don't accept it, Phelps," he said suavely. "I'll beat it in a minute, but before doing that and before this little auction goes any farther, let me feel that you understand perfectly what is happening. You have a general grasp of the situation, I take it, sir," he said, with a grave smile at Mr. Phelps, "yet you may not know that Mr. Myton plans merely personal profit in his C. B. and Y. ideas just now. In short, when in control of the road, if ever, he hopes to merge it with — another in which he is interested.

"It is unwise. I know it. He knows it. Yet he chose to defy me—he even went so far as to snap his fingers in my face, although that is apart, of course," Hemingway said airily and smiled at his cigar. "Ah—where are we? Ah, yes. I'll give you seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars, Mr. Phelps."

"Eight hundred thousand dollars!" said Myton.

"Eight hundred and fifty thousand," said Mr. Hemingway.

"Nine hundred thousand!" snarled the smaller man.

"Nine twenty-five!" intoned Hemingway.

"Nine hundred and fifty thousand dollars!" shouted Mr. Myton.

And there Mr. Hemingway crossed his legs and flicked another bit of dust from his sleeve.

"I'll make it a million dollars, Phelps, for your nine shares," he said with a gentle smile. "That's cash, too."

The Myton calm snapped again. Mr. Myton lunged at Mr. Phelps and, catching his hand and arm, shook him violently as he fumed:

"I'll give you one million one hundred thousand dollars, Phelps, and I'll make it better than cash in New York! I've got two accounts and no end of connections right here in Providence, which can't be more than an hour and a half from here, quick going. I'll get you there and fix things so that you can go to your own bank when it opens to-morrow morning, walk in and get eleven hundred thousand one-dollar bills if you want 'em! I offer you that for those nine shares, sold to me here in the presence of Hemingway and the rest of 'em—with no question whatever as to my right to them, no damnable photographed evidence of coercion or—"

His voice choked. For a little it appeared that Mr. Myton was about to explode on the spot, rent in a million pieces by sheer high pressure of feeling within him. The dumfounded Mr. Phelps stared at him speechless.

Because here was the stopping point. Here, if he were not dreaming, his stolen million had returned and brought splendid interest with it. Here—he looked at Hemingway, and that gentleman smiled pleasantly.

"Take that, Phelps," he said. "When he has paid out that sum he can't make a cent on his cussed deal, which is all I started after in the first place."

"I'll have the tanks filled and we'll leave instantly—" Myton was saying.

"So by all means take it, Phelps, and I'll trail along to see that there is no hedging. And that," barked Mr. Hemingway, straight into his old friend's face, "*for you!* You'll snap your beastly little fingers under *my* nose, will you? Well, try it again!" His great laugh all but blew Mr. Myton from his feet. "*Just make your will and try it again!*" concluded Mr. Hemingway.

Notwithstanding some artistic preoccupation of his own, the noise had disturbed William Garford. Wondering, he appeared in the doorway and looked at the group; he stared at his friend, who merely blinked.

"If we're going to start for New York—" began the artist.

"We're not," said his friend, and his voice came from a dizzy altitude. "We're going first to Providence!"

Brown entering just then, Mr. Phelps glanced up from his twelve-o'clock breakfast.

"The messenger has returned, sir," said Mr. Brown, "with the tickets."

Reluctantly, the lord of the snug little apartment laid aside his paper altogether for a moment.

"What did he get, Brown?"

"The royal suite was the best thing they had aboard, sir," Brown reported. "Seven rooms, I think he said, sir. If Mr. Garford could postpone sailing—"

"He wants to go to-morrow," Phelps said briefly. "Send him the tickets, with my compliments, and telephone that I'll see him later in the day."

"Very well, sir."

"The orchids—"

"They were delivered early this morning, sir—the kind you ordered. They had to get 'em special, sir, from some hothouse outside the city. Two hundred and forty dollars for the bunch, sir!" said Mr. Brown, and something rattled in his throat.

"I told you that the price did not interest me," said the employer, who had reconsidered a few simple hangings only day before yesterday. "Give me the rest of the papers, Brown."

He settled again to the one he held and read with an interest rarely bestowed on a mere daily. Because they were interesting papers this morning. They held, among other things, one of the most remarkably written, most strangely veiled financial stories ever printed in a newspaper.

Mr. Hemingway, of course, was behind that bit of news; his vindictive personality stuck out here and there and everywhere—in the odd reference to a certain group of capitalists who had camped early yesterday morning in New Haven, waiting for telephoned news from a Connecticut point, of the strange flight of the group to the Connecticut point, following other strange happenings.

Why, even the woodland stranger who seemed to have been the chief of Hemingway's secret agents was depicted so clearly that Phelps recognized him instantly as the gentleman who had claimed attention by standing on his head in the shady path.

And the comedy touch was added, also, by an artful little description of the manner in which each of the two factions had fancied Mr. Phelps its enemy, the agent of the other and the custodian of the owner of the mooted nine shares.

Concluding, a certain deal in Providence was described with a minuteness of detail that could have been furnished by none but an eye witness.

Written in Greek for the plain citizen, doubtless intelligible and edifying enough for all directly interested, the whole thing was Hemingway's final war-song, chanted over the battered corpses of several Myton money-plans!

Nor was Mr. Phelps omitted from the queer recital—not by any means! He turned to that part again—and as he turned Brown entered rather briskly.

"Mrs. Dedham, sir, is here, and—"

Mrs. Dedham passed him just then, moving even more briskly. Her eyes sparkled, and her color was rather higher than usual. Mr. Brown retired and Mr. Phelps's sister went directly to him, caught his smoothly shaven countenance with both hands, and examined it with new curiosity.

"Jacky!" she began sternly.

"You're in the city at this hour, Sallie?" queried Phelps. "You—"

"We came down for the theater and stayed over at the Rowleys'," his sister said impatiently. "Is it so?"

"Is what so?"

"That you made over a million dollars all alone yesterday?"

"It is so," confessed Phelps and, although he smiled easily enough, his voice shook a trifle.

"You really—*have it?*"

"I've had bank messengers removing it from these rooms ever since I woke up."

Mrs. Dedham hugged him with a vigor that years had not diminished.

"Well, upon my word, Jacky!" she cried. "You — you don't know how delighted I am! I'd never believed it." And she sobered suddenly as she asked: "You have two millions now?"

"One!" corrected Mr. Phelps.

"I thought as much, my boy," his sister murmured. "What are you going to do with this one?"

Mr. Phelps leaned back and looked at her, and there was no smile on the lips that said:

"That million, my dear, will be invested in government bonds. I don't know how many kinds they make or what style is safest, but the safest kind is what I buy—and when I get 'em I'll borrow a spade and bury them so deep that nothing short of an earthquake will ever shake them loose. I'm all done breaking up Wall Street."

"I'm glad to hear it," Mrs. Dedham sighed lightly. "Tell me all about it—the new million, I mean."

"It's too long a tale for this morning, sis. Later—"

"And the tug-boat thing, too!" exclaimed his sister. "You've monopolized the news this morning."

"The—er—er—tug-boat thing?" echoed Mr. Phelps, and ice-drops ran down his spine.

Very mercifully, Mrs. Dedham was glancing from the window just then at a romping dog in the sunny back-yard of the big private house to the rear.

"Didn't you see that item, Johnny? A tug-boat—a regular pirate craft, she must have been. Some police-boat or other, I think, overtook her just as she was making a landing somewhere this side of Newport—and the people on board all got away, but the police found no end of gold and silver aboard! Just think of it—seventy or eighty thousand dollars' worth! And they found your cigar-case — or a cigar-case with your monogram on it, and several of your letters and a dozen of your cards!"

Mr. Phelps was learning to think quickly.

"So that is what happened to the people who picked my pocket, eh?" he drawled. "I'll have to phone the police to send up whatever of my stuff they may have recovered."

And he indulged in a small shudder as he cast about for such explanations as would have to be made to the police—and then smiled, because, even at the worst, which was not quite possible, his friend Hemingway would be glad enough to furnish him with an alibi. Or even, perhaps, his friend

Myton, who cared so little for publicity in any shape.

"So that when she came around this morning to the Rowleys'—"

Mr. Phelps started violently from his reverie.

"She—"

"Miriam!" chuckled Mrs. Dedham.

"You've seen *her?*" cried Mr. Phelps.

"Frankly, yes," said his sister, and eyed him curiously. "She came around in a flying taxi to get your address. She wished, my dear boy, to thank you for bringing home her father safely, late last night. Jacky," said Mrs. Dedham, "it's none of my business, of course, but families of the kind that have fathers *brought* home late at—"

"This wasn't that kind of a bringing," said Mr. Phelps. "But—tell me about her, sis. Isn't she—"

"Lovely? Oh, yes! She was decorated with orchids, though, like the queen of—I think *you* paid for those orchids," Mrs. Dedham said suddenly.

"I sent them—yes."

"Don't glare at me like that, Jacky—it's bad manners," said his sister. "Well, when she appeared to learn your whereabouts I had just finished reading the big news—we all had. I was coming here before running home to the chicks, of course, so I told her to pile in and—"

"She isn't *here?*" gasped Mr. Phelps.

"Right here in your little front room, Jacky—looking. I have no doubt, upon the gold frame with the diamonds and—oh—"

There Mrs. Dedham ceased, since talking to the empty air is a thankless business at best.

Her erring brother, who seemed to have repented and to have mended his ways in quite remarkable fashion, had slid from his chair and glided straight through the curtains, and Mrs. Dedham smiled at the newspapers and sighed real relief.

That particular mystic account, by the way, she had not read at the Rowleys'. She settled comfortably in the big chair by the window and read carefully—and having come to the end after many minutes, Mrs. Dedham leaned back and shook her head. She was little wiser than at the beginning. Johnny had been up to something important and had come out at the right end and—incidentally, where was Johnny?

She looked about—to meet the inordinately sober gaze of Brown and stare a little.

As a matter of fact, there were several grave things on Mr. Brown's honest mind that morning which needed discussion with a member of Phelps's immediate family. On the edge of a nervous breakdown when he had disappeared, day before yesterday, he had returned in an equally abnormal state last night.

Thrice Brown had caught sight of Mr. Phelps doing a dance as he prepared for bed; in the stilly watches of the night, and sound asleep, Mr. Phelps had talked incessantly, almost; and this morning in his bath he had sung strange solos, mostly out of tune—and when Brown had entered to tidy the bathroom he had discovered an ornate old English "M" done in soap on the mirror!

"Whatever is wrong, Brown?" Mrs. Dedham asked.

"Well, it's—Mr. Phelps, ma'am!" the faithful servitor blurted. "Is he—er—all right this morning, ma'am?"

"Why isn't he?" his sister asked quickly.

"Well, I—don't know—just why, ma'am—" Brown stammered and paused.

He was standing just beside the curtains which led through the pretty rooms, fumbling his hands and making a really pathetic picture of concern.

Yet suddenly the fumbling ceased. It seemed to Mrs. Dedham that Brown's ear went nearer the curtains,

that he was listening—which, in fact, was just what Brown was doing, for at that curtained doorway sounds had a way of traveling from the front room which could on occasion be startling!

Two full seconds Brown stood quite motionless—three, four, five. And he caught Mrs. Dedham's wondering eye and stiffened suddenly, moving toward the table and clearing his throat as he went.

"Why, I—I beg pardon, ma'am, for mentioning it," Brown said strangely, addressing the coffee-set. "I—was quite wrong, ma'am! Indeed, I should say that Mr. Phelps was—er—very much all right this morning, ma'am! I should indeed!" said Brown, and turned away quickly.

(The end.)

THE COAL TRAIN.

BY S. H. KEMPER.

HOOK her up! Hook her up!
Mend your fire and buck her up!
Slam the culm in at each door till she pops off again!
Fifty hoppers! Every one
Full of anthracite, my son;
Four locomotives for the run—
This is no varnished train!

My old hog seems to know we've got
Some grown man's work to do;
She's steaming good and lifting 'em
The best I ever knew:
She's humping, hustling up the grade,
With never knock or pound,
And all the noise of all the world
In her exhaust is drowned!

Away back yonder down the line
Three stiff white jets of steam,
And shoving, crowding all the way,
The lunging coal-cars seem
A string of dusty elephants,
Round-backed and blackish gray;
Smith, Sims, and Murphy pushing 'em—
We'll make some run to-day!

The dark and solemn mountains range
Around us as we go,
And up their sides the morning mist
Is trailing white as snow;
And they go fading, fading out
To faint and skyey blue,
Where the valley opens up ahead—
I kind of like the view.

We show no style; no record runs;
We make no fancy fuss,
But, man, no other train that moves
Kicks up a row like us.
Four big Pacifics, fifty cars—
Some grown man's work to do!
Folks know for miles and miles around
A coal-train's going through.

Hook her up! Hook her up!
Mend your fire and buck her up!
Slam the culm in at each door till she pops off again!
Fifty hoppers! Every one
Full of anthracite, my son;
Four locomotives for the run—
This is no varnished train!

On the Editorial Carpet

Where Our Readers Have a Chance to Express Their Opinions About Us and Other Matters.

UNCLE SAM'S ALASKA RAILROAD.

THE *Citizen,* published in Fairbanks, Alaska, mildly charges us with insincerity because in an editorial, "Handicapping Alaska," we stated that, in our belief, the United States government cannot handle such an enterprise as the building of a railroad in Alaska as well as private corporations.

Regardless of the *Citizen's* stand in the matter, we are both sincere and have given the matter considerable thought. We do not doubt, as the *Citizen* states, that the United States has constructed more lasting buildings than some private citizens, but we do maintain that no government could construct better railroads or do more to improve railroad equipment than the men at present engaged in this work.

"The successful construction of the Panama Canal by the government," says the *Citizen,* "is the best evidence of its (the government's) ability to complete a great enterprise successfully."

Nobody denies this, but the Panama Canal being an international consideration, should be built and owned by the United States.

The postal system is also an international consideration, and as such should be operated by the government; but when a thing constructed is liable to cope with competition, then, we believe, the United States had better stick to its original policy "to keep out of business."

When the *Citizen* states that the editorial in the RAILROAD MAN'S MAGAZINE was inspired by selfish interest or privately owned railroads, it only incites our pity for its lack of common sense. There is not a corporate interest in the world that could influence this publication to the extent of a quiver; there is not sufficient money in the world to buy a thought or a word in its editorial pages.

As the representative of the railroad men and the American railroads, however, we want to impress on our critic that government ownership, as we see it at present, will not help American railroad men or American railroads. If any man can convince us other than by the glittering generalities of the government-ownership theorists we would like to hear from him; but, as always, the RAILROAD MAN'S MAGAZINE will give both sides of every question fairly and squarely, regardless of its own beliefs.

To those who feel that we took one side in our February editorial, we beg to call their attention to an article, entitled "Uncle Sam to Build Railroad in Alaska," by Richardson Davenport, which appeared in our June number.

FINE PATRIOTISM.

THOSE who understand the railroad man's status in our industrial life feel that he is constantly impressing on our national experience his value as an economic unit. We postulate, for the assertion seems to be self-evident, that the railroads are the nation's greatest influence for our financial well-being.

Railroading, in the last word, is operating freight and passenger trains. Everything pertaining to railroading becomes a concrete reality because trains are moved. Train movement is the nucleus from which all other phases of railroading spring. Railroad men run these trains and make railroading so picturesque a portion of the great American picture.

The railroad man does not say so, but we think he appreciates the importance of being earnest about his business. He plays the game with a thoroughness of the man who perceives the stakes. This fact presents the finest aspect of the railroad man's psychology.

But is it alone in industry that he serves his country?

A neighbor on our southern border, strife-ridden and desperate, has aroused American displeasure by an unwarranted belligerence. We have been patient and forbearing in the face of disturbing incidents. Railroad men know how vital railroads are in time of such trouble. And impelled by the finest patriotism, the following message was recently despatched to Washington:

> Offer service of five hundred practical railroad men for service in Mexico if desired.

So, not only is the railroader toiling to serve his country as an intelligent worker; when duty calls he stands ready to take his place where death lurks on every foot of steel over which he must travel.

OUR SMILING BOAST.

HUMOR is the rarest element of American literature. Not that we find it more difficult to smile than any other people; in fact, scarcity of laughs in the written word is an international shortcoming. According to the latest statistics, *humor claimed but forty-nine volumes in a year's output of over twenty thousand.*

This brings us to a fact in which we find much gratification—the RAILROAD MAN'S MAGAZINE carries more tonnage on its mirth-making division than any other standard publication in America. Among our writers we number some of the keenest humorists in the country. Just look them over. Emmet F. Harte, Horace H. Herr, Walton Burroughs, J. E. Smith, Augustus Wittfeld, John C. Russell, Frank H. Richardson. These men have found prominent places in American literature for their characters which we consider sufficiently important to publish in the form of a schedule:

Emmet F. Harte.....Honk and Horace
Horace H. Herr.....Ham Hamilton
Walton Burroughs....."Red" Flannigan
J. E. Smith....The Country Station-Agent
Augustus Wittfeld.....Monk Monkhausen
John C. Russell.....Spike Malone
Frank H. Richardson....Bill, the Fireman

Every character in the list has brought a smile to thousands of men and women who love good, clean American humor, so we feel that we are contributing very generously, not alone to our readers, but to American literature.

DON'T BE AFRAID.

NOTWITHSTANDING our repeated warnings in "The Carpet," we still receive anonymous communications, or communications signed only with the initials of the writer. Such communications do not mean anything. If a writer has not the courtesy to sign his or her name so we can send a reply, the letter or manuscript must go into the waste-basket. We beg to refer particularly to Mrs. or Miss F. M. B., Okolona, Mississippi; J. W. H., Chicago, Illinois; T. B. R., Seattle, Washington, and "Old Reader," Chicago, Illinois.

NEW BOOKS.

A WAGE QUESTION.

IN his book, "The Profitable Wage; What Is It?" Ed. E. Sheasgreen, who will be recalled by our readers as the author of many absorbing railroad yarns which have been printed in this magazine, considers a very vibrant question in modern economics from a rather unusual point of view. The work is divided into thirty-four brief, pithy chapters in which Mr. Sheasgreen strives logically to hammer home his points. The brevity of the chapters gives them snap and precludes the danger of tiresomeness which is so often the shortcoming of discussions of theories that must, after all, be termed academic. There is a strong strain of vision and radical thought in the author's arguments, and this is not a matter of surprise when he tells us in his prefatory acknowledgment that in consummating his efforts he had recourse to such writers as Carl Marx, Eugene V. Debs, Herbert Spencer, and Henry George. The book merits the consideration of students of economy.

"The Profitable Wage; What Is It?" by Ed. E. Sheasgreen. The Standard Cost Finding Service Company, Chicago.

A NOVEL WORTH READING.

THE editor of the RAILROAD MAN'S MAGAZINE takes particular pride in bringing to the attention of his readers

"Sweetapple Cove," a new novel by George Van Schaick.

Inasmuch as Dr. Van Schaick made his literary debut in the pages of this magazine with "The Heart of the North," which we published several years ago, our pride in his new work is doubled.

"Sweetapple Cove" has never appeared serially. The original manuscript was sent to its publishers, whose eight readers were unanimous in its acceptance. It is a simply told story of a Newfoundland fishing village, with genuine humanity and a love appeal that gives the book a keen charm. The story is told without the slightest literary subterfuge. All of the characters are capably sketched, especially that of Dr. Grenfell and the self-exiled English clergyman.

Dr. Van Schaick is an authority on the outdor life and the inhabitants of northeast Canada and Newfoundland. This is probably the reason why after reading "Sweetapple Cove" one is inclined to remark that it "sounds true."

When an editor discovers a new writer he feels like one who might reach the end of the rainbow and claim the pot of gold. When we printed Dr. Van Schaick's first novel we realized that some day he would appear among the real authors of the United States.

"Sweetapple Cove," by George Van Schaick. Small, Maynard & Co., Boston, Mass. Price $1.35.

PREFERS "FONE" FOR DESPATCHING.

EDITOR, RAILROAD MAN'S MAGAZINE:

I NOTICED in the May issue of your magazine some remarks about the use of the telephone in despatching trains. I have worked both "fone" and telegraph jobs, and would like to give my opinion on this matter.

I am in favor of the telephone for despatching trains for the following reasons:

(1) The operator (if in an office with more than one despatcher) does not have to keep his mind on different wires looking for a call. A bell rings and he knows the despatcher wants him.

(2) It's a fact that train orders—long and short—can be handled quicker than by Morse.

(3) You can convey information to the despatcher in a much shorter space of time, and more intelligently — practically the same as if face to face.

(4) The conductor often wants to inform despatcher about various things regarding train delays or accidents which, being unfamiliar matters to most operators, would be hard to put into good Morse. In a case of this kind the conductor simply comes on the fone and explains things in his own way, leaving the "op" free to answer some other wire if necessary.

It is probable that some operators who may chance to see this article may think that I am a traitor to the telegraph cause; but this is not so. I am simply stating facts. Having had experience with fone and telegraph in large and small offices, I am, in a way, qualified to speak.

My remarks are from an operator's point of view only, and refer only to the handling of trains and train orders.

I still maintain that message work exclusively is handled much faster on the telegraph than on the telephone.—W. C. C., Idaho Falls, Idaho.

WHO CAN TELL?

EDITOR, RAILROAD MAN'S MAGAZINE:

DURING the sixties I was a railroad man on the U. P. One evening at four or five o'clock a freight train left the Denver station going east. It was storming in the mountain. One hundred or more miles east of Denver is a town called Byers, or Dry Run, where there is never any water unless it comes from the mountains. This is where a freight train—crew and all—went down and were never heard of again. After waiting twenty years, the U. P. people thought they would try and find the train. After spending over $200,000 they stopped. Where did this train and crew go to? No paper has ever been able to tell me. I have my idea where it went, but I am not perfectly satisfied. I have at least written one dozen letters to papers that want questions put to them, but I have never been able to get a satisfactory answer.—GEORGE W. SCHOENHUT, 845½ Central Avenue, Los Angeles, California.

CHANCE FOR AUTHORS.

EDITOR, RAILROAD MAN'S MAGAZINE:

I HAVE taken your magazine for three or four years and have read in it poems from nearly every branch of service, but have not read any from the storeroom boys or the shopmen. I would like to read a story or poem from one or the other of these workers.

If it was not for the storeroom boys or the shop men where would you get any

"running out" of engines or cars?—J. E. S., Wilmington, Delaware.

ONE MYSTERY SOLVED.

EDITOR, RAILROAD MAN'S MAGAZINE:

IN a recent number of your magazine it was stated that the reason a water-wheel runs faster at night than during the day is one of the world's unsolved mysteries. This is a mistake.

A waterwheel runs faster at night, and begins to do so after the sun has set and the air grows colder, thus making the water colder. Cold water contains less air than warm water, and is therefore heavier than warm water, so a greater weight is thus permitted to go through the gate or vent to the wheel.

A ship will travel faster in warm water than in cold water for the reason, as stated above, that cold water is heavier than warm water, and, therefore, offers greater resistance to the progress of the ship.—A. N. T., Hutchinson, Kansas.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

I HAVE been reading your magazine for nearly four years and am pleased to say that for good reading, combined with all that is necessary to accomplish high ideals, the RAILROAD MAN'S MAGAZINE leads them all.—W. T. S., Tank, Pennsylvania.

The RAILROAD MAN'S MAGAZINE is the "real herbs!" Here is looking at you!—H. L. F., Salem, Missouri.

In the Canal Zone the RAILROAD MAN'S MAGAZINE is known as the "Hoghead's Home Journal." It is one of the most popular magazines circulated on the Isthmus. I always have seen great stacks of them at the news-stands and have noticed interested readers everywhere. You must remember that railroad men have played a big and important part in the canal building. They were one of the prime factors in doing the job in record time. They moved the dirt. However, they are going fast now that their stunt is done.—C. H. C., Pedro Miguel, Canal Zone.

The RAILROAD MAN'S MAGAZINE, in my estimation, is greater at present than ever in its history.—A. M., Columbus, Georgia.

The RAILROAD MAN'S MAGAZINE is the best magazine printed, and I read them all. I get more good, sensible reading from one copy of the RAILROAD MAN'S MAGAZINE than from all the others combined.—W. W. F., Thetford Mines, Quebec.

I have been a reader of the RAILROAD MAN'S MAGAZINE since the first number, and will continue to be even if it goes to fifty cents a copy.—B. C., Toledo, Ohio.

"The Gauntlet of Greed," by Orlando Moore, in May, is the best novel I ever read.—H. K. C., Chicago.

EDITOR, RAILROAD MAN'S MAGAZINE:

I FEEL that I must say a few words in praise of the May number of my old friend. I have just finished going through it from cover to cover, and it has the right of a first-class passenger over all of the other magazines for this month.

That picture of the "owl op" on page twenty-seven represents solid comfort, and it is so true that even the resonator stand with the arm is the kind that is used nowadays.

"Training the S. P. Specialist" deserves the attention of all railroad men. If all employees understood the work in each department as outlined in that article we would feel that we owned stock in our work and were not doing it mechanically for a living.

"Mill Taking Place of Fist" ought to make a good operator of any one in that he will copy the penmanship shown. However, some people can never reach a stage of proficiency, for their brains do not work rapidly enough to transcribe to typewriter, and a large majority of "bug-morse" has to be untangled before it can be written intelligently. The figures "3" and "4" and "5" and "7" are Chinese puzzles when produced on some bugs. It is nearly always necessary to change adjustment of relay for each bug on a line.—B. M. M., Shreveport, Louisiana.

Am glad to see the RAILROAD MAN'S MAGAZINE back in its original clothes. They fit better and need no frills.—T. B. C., Glen Rose, Texas.

The RAILROAD MAN'S MAGAZINE contains the best reading of any publication in America. I have arrived at this conclusion after a year of idleness which I have spent in the reading-room of a library where every popular periodical is on file.—G. F. D., Chicago.

The RAILROAD MAN'S MAGAZINE is the best book between covers. I am a regular reader. I know of nothing better. I don't want anything better. I was sick when the

March number arrived at this end of the run. I feared that it was going to run by me, but I flagged a copy, and it has done me as much good as the medicine I was obliged to take.—C. M. A., Birmingham, Alabama.

MASTERS OF THE STEAM-SHOVEL.

EDITOR, RAILROAD MAN'S MAGAZINE:

IN the March number of the RAILROAD MAN'S MAGAZINE was an article about the steam-shovel and the men who run them. You only mentioned one union when there are two unions actively engaged in the operation of steam-shovels throughout the world.

The International Brotherhood was organized on the drainage canal as a branch of Local 440 of Stationary Engineers, at Chicago, and that is the only right it has to that name to-day, as the A. F. of L. has never issued a charter to any organization of steam shovelmen. Last November, at Seattle, the A. F. of L. convention agreed to issue a charter to the International Union of Steam Shovel and Dredgemen, to be composed of the membership of both organizations, the International Brotherhood and the Associated Union, on or before July 1, 1914.

The Associated Union of Steam Shovelmen was organized at Chicago, January 6, 1903, and is now composed of ten locals and three more organizing. The charter members were principally men who had been members of the International Brotherhood.

As matters stand to-day among the shovelmen, the article printed in the RAILROAD MAN'S MAGAZINE is apt to create an impression with the public in favor of the International Brotherhood. I think in justice you should print the facts regarding the Associated Union.—ERNEST L. KELLY, Spokane, Washington.

ADDRESSES WANTED.

INFORMATION is wanted concerning Charles Landon. Height, about six feet; weight, 200 pounds; dark complexion, black hair and brown eyes. He has been a railroad brakeman for over twenty years. He belongs to the Brotherhood, also the Elks. He was last heard from in October, 1912, at Grand Forks, North Dakota, when he wrote to his mother that he was coming home for a visit. Since then he has not been heard from. Will any of the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen who know Mr. Landon or his whereabouts write to his brother, FRED LANDON, Box 42, Helena, Montana.

THE POETS' CORNER.

THE TRANSCONTINENTAL RAG.

BY JAMES J. MONTAGUE.

On some of the railroads they clear away the tables in the dining-cars to allow the passengers to enjoy the modern dances.

WE one-stepped to Schenectady, we dipped to Buffalo,
We Castle-walked to Erie and maxixed to Cleveland, O.
The porter did a half-and-half while he made up the bunks;
The baggage smasher tangoed as he devastated trunks,
And in the cab the engineer kicked up his grimy heels
With every rhythmic rank-te-clank arising from the wheels.

The waiter Texas-tommied through the diner with the eats,
The passengers picked up the time and shuffled in their seats;
The brakeman roared "Fostoria! Change here to Gotham Glide!"
And, grabbing the conductor, did a one-two-three-four slide;
And then the train boy bounded in and led the hesitation,
Which kept us busy till we reached the new Toledo station.

With dip and skip and flop and flip, at seven-thirty-nine
We left the Buckeye State and crossed the Indiana line.
We danced a new one every time the engine whistle blew,
We taught the chef the kitchen sink and fish-walked with the crew;
And sorrow at the journey's end shone forth from every eye
When, just at 3.13 A.M., the train pulled into Chi.

—*New York American.*

THE ENGINEER'S SUNBEAM.

BY S. M. WRIGHT.

AN overland train had arrived at the mole
When an incident happened which stirs up the soul;
The great iron monster attached to the train
Was throbbing and puffing with might and with main.

It had scaled the grand mountains and rocky defiles
And thundered through bridges and valleys for miles;
Like a demon infernal he entered the town,
And blasts of his breath scattered sparks o'er the ground.

The din in the depot was deafening and wild,
But out of the roar came the voice of a child;

She welcomed her parents, who came on the train,
With kisses, caressing again and again.

A golden-haired beauty of six or eight years,
With sweet, loving nature, and thus she appears;
No check did she put on her radiant love—
'Twas pure as exists with the angels above.

At last the fond trio set out for the bay,
Then, passing the engine which stood by the way,
The little one quickly ran up to his side
And patted the monster in juvenile pride.

Now looking him over, she playfully said:
"You good, big, old horse, many thanks, for you led
My father and mother, with toot and a whirl,
Through mountains and back to their own little girl.

"And e'en though you care not a penny for me,
Because I'm as little as little can be—"
And then she turned round to the good engineer
Who leaned from the cab through a window quite near—

"You, too," she continued, and tossed him a kiss,
"I love you both dearly," she said, hit or miss;
And then she was gone like a glimmering ray
Of the sun's golden light at close of the day.

Just then a bright sunbeam which, guided by Fate,
Came softly by way of the great Golden Gate—
And entering through a crevice quite small,
Gleamed in the engineer's cab on the wall.

The engineer now, from a feeling so glad,
Had changed, and his features were gloomy and sad,
For suddenly even the sunbeam was gone
And everything seemed to be darkly forlorn.

He turned in the cab, not a word did he speak,
But tears trickled over his dust-begrimed cheek;
Did he think of a tot—his own, far away,
When tears crowded up that no effort could stay?

—*Locomotive Engineers' Monthly.*

THE OPEN SWITCH.

BY CY WARMAN.

ALL the summer, early and late,
And the autumn days so drear,
A maiden stood at the orchard gate
And waved at the engineer.
He liked to look at her face so fair
And her homely country dress;
She liked to look at the man up there
At the front of the fast express.

There's only a flash of the maiden's eye
As the engine rocks and reels,
And then she hears in the distance die
The clinkety-clink of wheels.
Clinkety-clink, and a mile apart,
And the fireman seems to hear
The clinkety-clink of the maiden's heart
And the heart of the engineer.

Over the river and down the dell,
Beside the running stream,
She hears the clang of the engine bell
And the whistle's screech and scream.
Clinkety-clink so far apart
That nothing can she hear
Save the clinkety-clink of her happy heart
And the heart of the engineer.

Even the trembling steed of steel
Seems to understand
Their sweet distress, and seems to feel
The touch of the magic hand.
Clinkety-clink so far away
In the twilight dark and drear,
But what does the heart of the maiden say
To the heart of the engineer?

The subdued sound of the engine bell
As the Roger rolls away
Seems solemnly to toll the knell
Of the dim and dying day.
Clinkety-clink—there's an open switch—
Oh! angels, hide her eyes.
Clinkety-clink—they're in the ditch—
Oh, hear their moans and cries.

Clinkety-clink—and down the track
The train will dash to-day;
But what are the ribbons of white and black
The engine wears away?
Clinkety-clink—oh! worlds apart—
The fireman hangs his head;
There is no clink in the maiden's heart—
The engineer is dead.

THREE CHEERS FOR THE ENGINEERS.

BY MARTHA F. WINSLOW.

WE say "Three cheers for the engineers!"
They carry us safely across the plains;
Whose hands do guide o'er rivers wide
The engines which draw the trains.

With tireless eye, ever ready to spy
Whatever would hurt or mar
Our journey through the country new
To our home in lands afar.

Their fingers feel, like bands of steel,
As they grip the lever strong,
To check the speed of the fiery steed
When danger is near, as we fly along.

O'er the chasms wide, by the mountainside,
They slowly, carefully take the way
In the darkest night, by the headlight bright,
With hands ever ready to stay.

To those who save us from cares and fears
We say, "God bless you by night and day,"
And cry "Three cheers for the engineers
Who carry us safely on our way!"

THE NIGHT HAS A THOUSAND EYES.

BY FRANCIS WILLIAM BOURDILLON.

THE night has a thousand eyes,
And the day but one;
Yet the light of the bright world dies
With the setting sun.

The mind has a thousand eyes,
And the heart but one;
Yet the light of a whole life dies
When love is done.

Prest-O-Lite

for Motorcycles

No Motorcycle is stronger than its weakest point——

You wouldn't buy a machine whose engine would be useless the first time the motorcycle tipped over.

At night, light is as important as power.

Any motorcycle lighting system depending upon a toy storage battery or delicate complicated apparatus may be destroyed by a knock or jolt which you wouldn't notice otherwise.

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is absolutely reliable

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The most convenient system, and the most economical. The operating expense is no greater than that of a carbide generator, and only one-third to one-fifth that of electric light.

30-Day FREE TRIAL

You can prove all our claims for Prest-O-Lite by our 30-day trial plan. Before buying any other system, insist upon the same kind of a test.

Insist Upon It!

Any dealer who offers you a combination of equipment, including any other lighting system, will give you Prest-O-Lite instead, if you insist. And if you know the facts, you will insist. Tear off on the dotted line, write your name and address below and mail it for complete information about motorcycle lighting.

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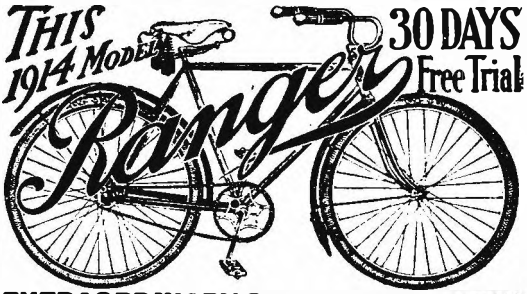
(Contributor to Lincoln Highway.)

Please send facts on ALL Lighting Systems to

THIS 1914 MODEL Ranger 30 DAYS Free Trial



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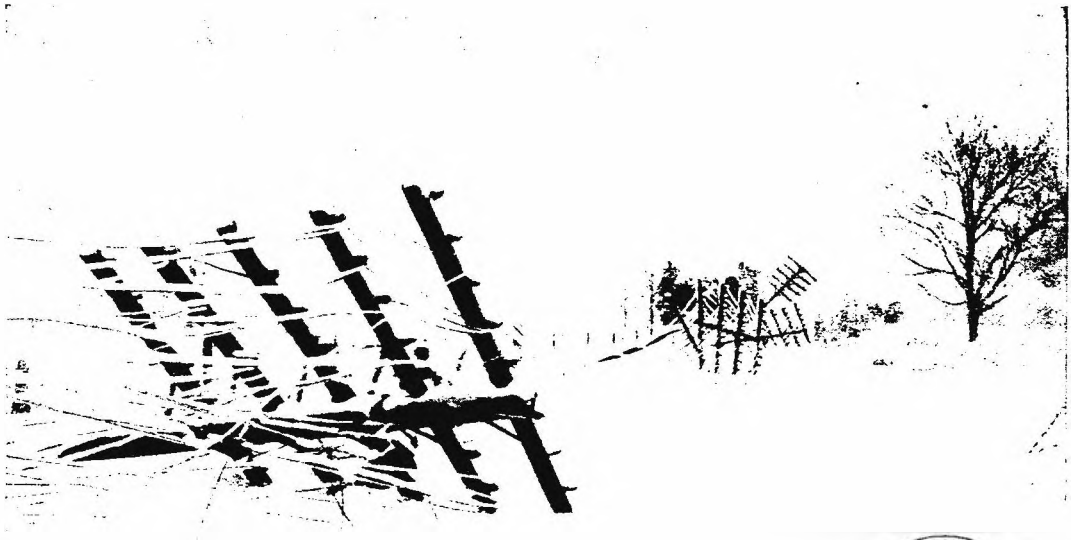

The Telephone Emergency

THE stoutest telephone line cannot stand against such a storm as that which swept the Middle Atlantic coast early in the year. Poles were broken off like wooden toothpicks, and wires were left useless in a tangled skein.

It cost the telephone company over a million dollars to repair that damage, an item to be remembered when we talk about how cheaply telephone service may be given.

More than half of the wire mileage of the Bell System is underground out of the way of storms. The expense of underground conduits and cables is warranted for the important trunk lines with numerous wires and for the lines in the congested districts which serve a large number of people.

But for the suburban and rural lines reaching a scattered population and doing a small business in a large area, it is impracticable to dig trenches, build conduits and lay cables in order that each individual wire may be underground.

More important is the problem of service. Overhead wires are necessary for talking a very long distance. It is impossible to talk more than a limited distance underground, although Bell engineers are making a world's record for underground communication.

Parallel to the underground there must also be overhead wires for the long haul, in order that the Bell System may give service universally between distant parts of the country.

AMERICAN TELEPHONE AND TELEGRAPH COMPANY
AND ASSOCIATED COMPANIES

One Policy ***One System*** ***Universal Service***

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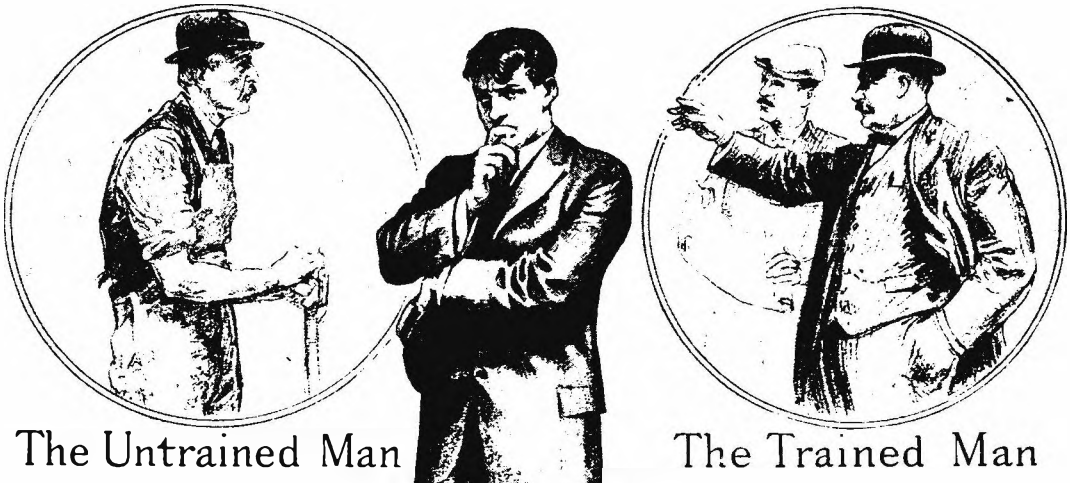

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The Trained Man

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Your future depends on yourself. You must decide **NOW.** The way to avoid the hard road of disappointment and failure is to get the special training that will command the attention and a better salary from the man higher up. The International Correspondence Schools have shown to thousands the way to positions of power and better pay. They can do the same for you.

Are you interested enough in your future to learn how the I. C. S. can fit you for a real good job? **No matter where you live, how little you earn, or what your previous education has been, the I. C. S. are ready to help you.** For 21 years the I. C. S. have been helping young men to increase their earnings and to rise to positions that insure a better income.

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Telephone Expert	Show Card Writing
Architect	Lettering & Sign Painting
BuildingContractor	Advertising
Architectural Draftsman	Commercial Illustrating
Structural Engineer	Industrial Designing
Concrete Construction	Commercial Law
Mechan. Engineer	Automobile Running
Mechanical Draftsman	Teacher
Refrigeration Engineer	English Branches
Civil Engineer	Good English for Every One
Surveyor	Agriculture
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Textile Manufacturing	Languages French
Gas Engines	Chemist German

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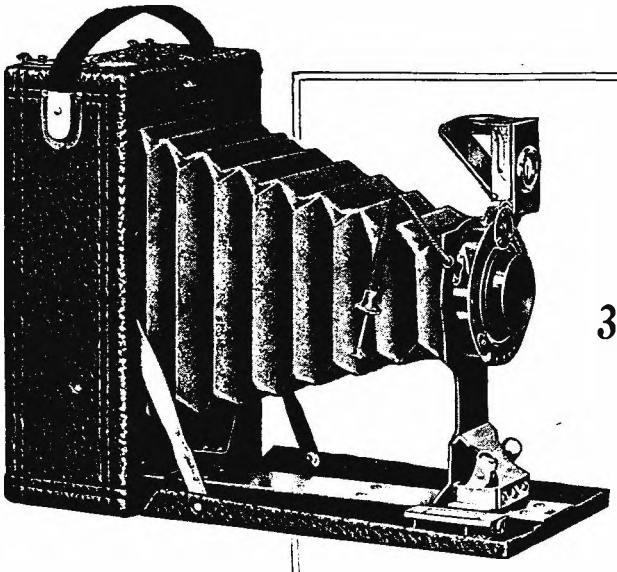

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To load, merely open back, drop in Premo Film Pack, close back and all is ready. To change films for successive exposures just pull out successive film pack tabs.

This model is fitted with a tested meniscus achromatic lens of the highest quality obtainable. The shutter is the new Kodak Ball Bearing with cable release, and the camera is fitted with two tripod sockets, reversible brilliant finder, and is made throughout of the best of materials, by men who have spent their lives in camera making.

Get the new Premo catalogue—a book that no one interested in photography should be without. It describes the many Premo advantages fully—the daylight loading Film Premos, the Premos that take films or plates with equal facility, the Premo Film Pack and tank developing system. It's free at the dealer's, or will be gladly mailed to any address on request.

Rochester Optical Division

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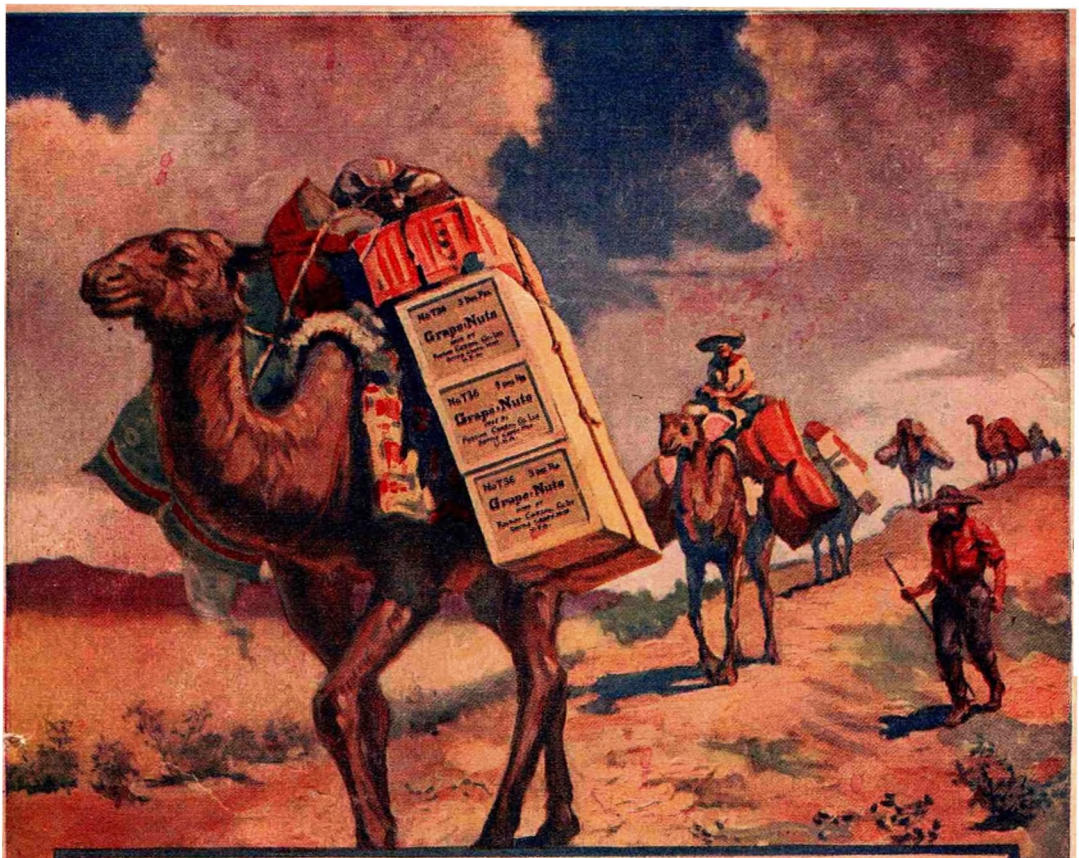

From photograph of Camel Train bearing provisions from Bourke, New South Wales, to the arid lands of central Australia.

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