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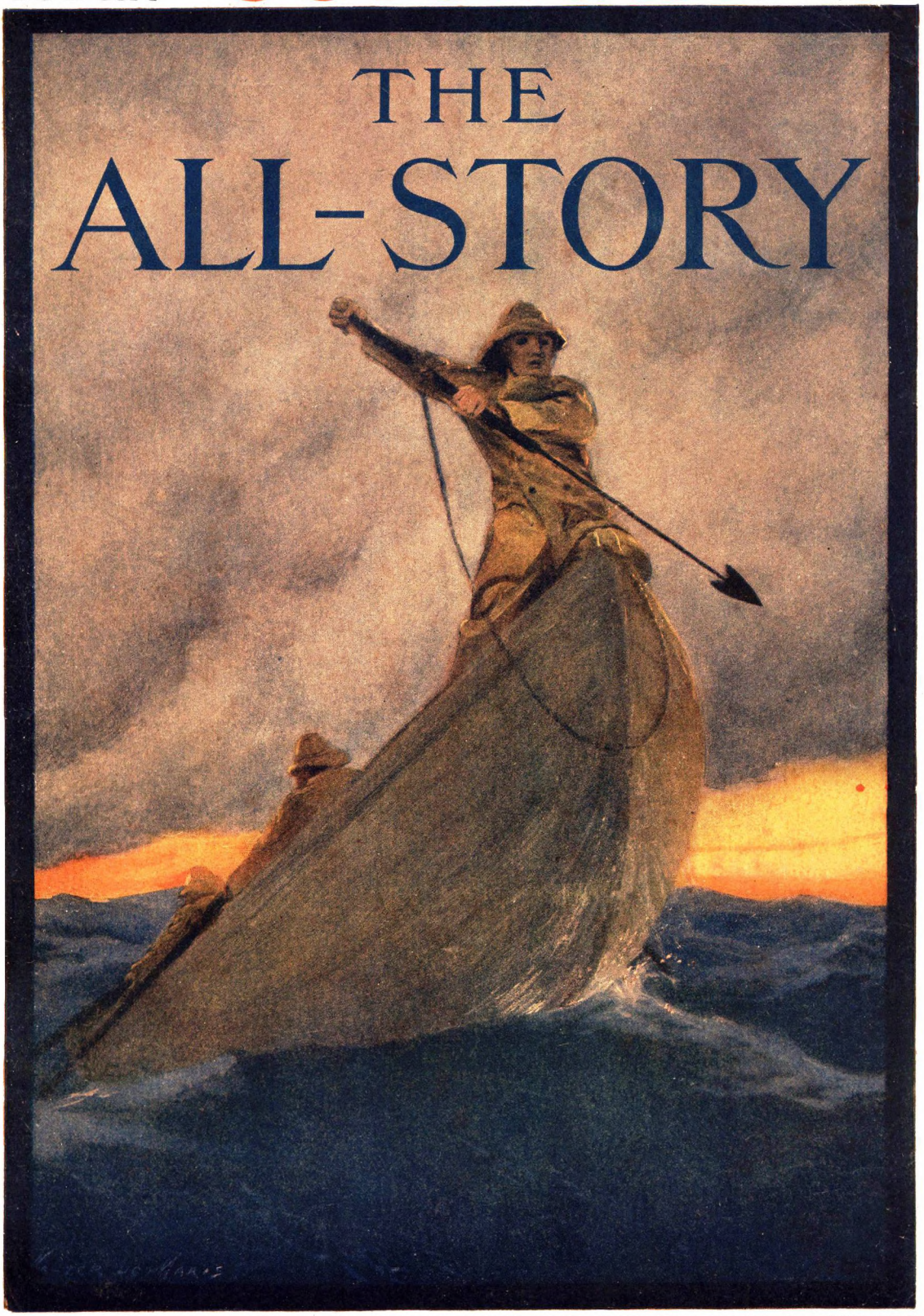

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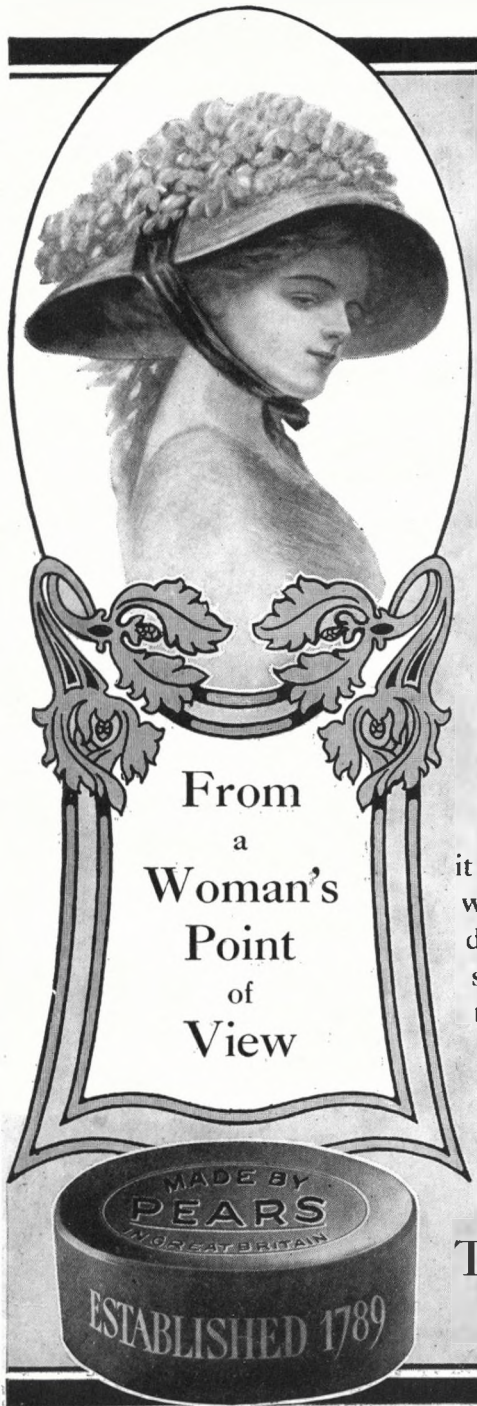

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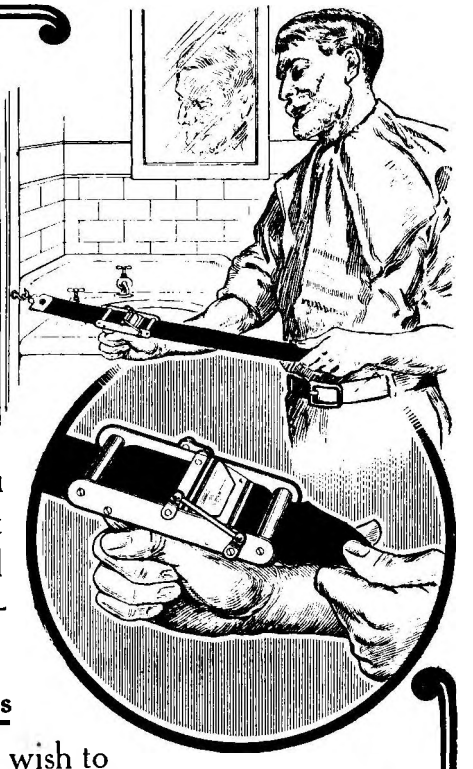

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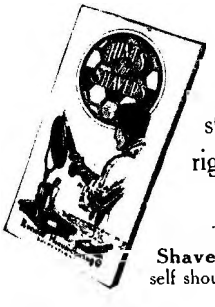

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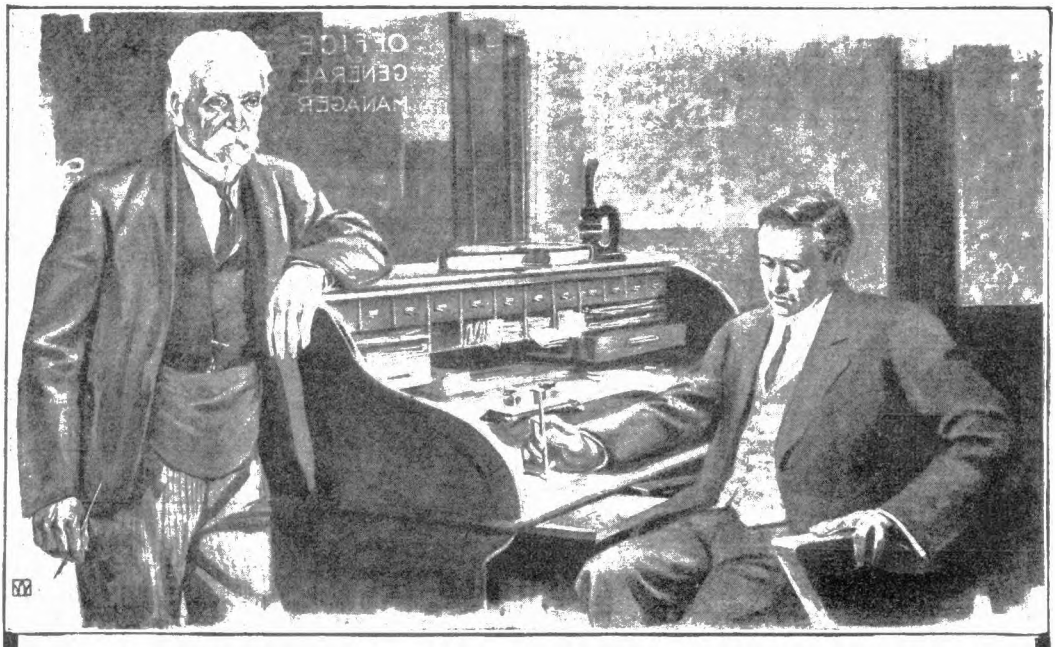

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THE ALL-STORY MAGAZINE.

VOL. XV. OCTOBER, 1909. No. 2

LUCK OF THE DEVIL.

BY ELIZABETH YORK MILLER.

Being the story of a beautiful girl, borne down under the burden of a great hate and a greater love.

CHAPTER I.

EN ROUTE TO BELARMO.

THE dapper little guard with the tiny, well-waxed mustache and the red-and-blue uniform, thrust his head into the corridor as the St. Petersburg, Vienna and Riviera Express came to a slow, jarring halt.

"Ventimiglia! Belarmo is the next stop."

He passed rapidly through the corridor to the farther end, where a spirited argument was in progress betweeen a French railway official and an Italian in uniform—who might, by reason of his elegance, be a corporal of the guard, but who was really only a courier—and a stately middle-aged man in civilian's dress, attended by a small but exceptionally smart military suite.

The members of the suite were two young men, both very good-looking, in opera-comedy uniforms of light blue with yellow facings, and one well past fifty, whose round countenance was like a priest's, but whose garments, also military, belied his face.

At the door of a *wagon-lit* half-way down the corridor a woman's face appeared for the fraction of a moment. It was an interesting, well-bred face, though plain.

Her clothes and demeanor were that of a lady's maid; her voice belonged to a cultured gentlewoman. She turned and addressed her companion—a slim, girlish figure swathed in heavy veils and a traveling cloak.

"It is Ventimille, Valda—the French frontier." Then, in reply to a scarcely audible question: "Oh, some gentlemen having trouble over their compartments. Shall I tell the guard to bring tea? There is just time."

"No—no, thank you, Yvonne. I want nothing."

It was impossible to tell at this moment much about the features of the girl in the traveling cloak. That she was young spoke in her voice and showed in her lithe figure, which even the voluminous folds of the wrap could not altogether disguise.

She wore a broad-brimmed hat, black, with a mass of soft, feathery osprey plumes falling over the left side. Her face was concealed by a thick chiffon veil brought somewhat carelessly round and loosely knotted in front, the two ends falling almost to her feet.

The corridor was crowded with people who had boarded the express at Ventimiglia, and presently the dapper guard appeared at the door of the *wagon-lit*.

"Pardon, *mademoiselle*, I trust it will not inconvenience you to share your compartment for the remainder of the journey. It is but for one half-hour."

The girl who was called Yvonne started to answer him indignantly.

"You know very well this compartment is reserved. Certainly we cannot permit an intrusion—"

But her companion interrupted: "Oh, what does it matter—"

The guard stood aside, and the tall, distinguished-looking man with the iron-gray mustache stepped in the doorway. He lifted his traveling cap courteously.

There was scarcely room for six in the *wagon-lit;* but, with many apologies and some crowding together, the vacant seats were speedily filled by the tall gentleman and his suite.

The two young men in the gay uniform fell immediately to discussing roulette. Apparently neither of these two took any notice of the young woman sitting opposite; but they did, from time to time, cast surreptitious and curious glances at the girl with the veil, who kept her face steadily fixed upon the black, unresponsive square of window-pane.

This man, whose clothes and countenance seemed so to belie each other, leaned forward, gesticulating with one plump hand. On the little finger he wore a ring set with a large, flat emerald upon which was engraved a coat of arms.

"I am most anxious to meet this distinguished friend of yours—Dr. Anatole Condamine," he said. "From all accounts, he must be a most wonderful man."

"He is the man of the century, Hoffmann," returned the distinguished-looking middle-aged man. "In fact, I'm not putting it too strongly when I say that he is the man of any century."

"Strange—strange that he should be the owner of such a place as Belarmo!"

"Oh, that, my dear Hoffmann, is only his means of making a living. You or I, for instance, might keep a butcher-shop and be ourselves vegetarians. Dr. Condamine is not in any sense of the word a gambler. No—no—we must not blame him; for, whatever means he employs to gain his wealth, we may be sure that he is putting it to good purpose."

"Your excellency is right," benignly observed Hoffmann.

One of the younger men burst into loud laughter.

"Ha, ha! But it's a risky business, his. Some day along will come somebody with a system that will break his bank. It's been done before. Why, I've a system myself—"

"Gaspard," said the one addressed as "your excellency," "don't imagine for one moment that your system, or any other, can beat roulette. You know the motto—'Sometimes red wins, sometimes black wins, but the bank wins always.' Lose your money, if you like, but don't lose your head."

Gaspard lifted his shoulders lightly and twirled his mustache. Then he turned to his companion, and said in a low tone:

"Father loves to hear himself preach. If I took his advice, I'd be too good to live."

"Then, *monsieur le comte* does not gamble?" his companion inquired.

The other threw up his hands.

"Great Heavens, no!"

But why does he go to Belarmo?"

"To watch the others—and to see his dear friend, Dr. Condamine."

They exchanged amused glances.

"I fancy, my dear boy, that I shall not see much of Dr. Condamine while I am at Belarmo, if he keeps away from the Casino."

"You won't see him there, Freddy. He lives in a château which might be a prison, and it's a good three miles from the town. Not more than half the residents know him by sight, and the other half are so afraid of him that they run whenever they see his face."

"Really! You astonish me. Is he so very ugly?"

"No—on the contrary, rather decent-looking, but he has an unholy reputation. You know, he is a scientist and a surgeon and a physician all rolled into one; and he's got a notion that he can bring the dead to life. They say a good many corpses find their way to *monsieur le docteur's* château, but no one has ever seen them emerge again as living men."

"*B-rrr!*"

The girl in the chiffon veil had turned about restlessly and cast a quick, comprehensive glance toward her companion. But Yvonne's eyes were fixed impassively on the luggage-rack over the young officers' heads.

"By the way," said the man called Hoffmann, "I have heard interesting rumors about your Dr. Condamine. Something about a woman, wasn't it—a disappointment in love?"

"No, no—you are quite wrong, my dear Hoffmann. It was his great love for a friend, a man of his student days in Leipsic, that impelled Dr. Condamine to his researches. He fought a duel with this friend, not of his own choosing, and I grant you it was over a woman.

"He wounded his adversary, a bit of his rapier breaking off and penetrating within an inch of the other's heart. It was in such a dangerous position that the doctors could not probe for it. They told the man that he might live for years—and that he might die any moment. It all depended upon the little bit of steel.

"Poor Condamine was so overcome with remorse at what had happened that he set himself to make a life study of the human heart, with the intention of being able to save his friend."

"And is the friend still alive?"

"I do not know. I do not even know the friend's name."

With a swift gesture, the girl lifted her chiffon veil, and turned her face toward the man with the gray mustache. At the instant each of the four men gave vent to a soft exclamation of surprise, like the sough of the wind through leafy branches.

There was about her a charm that went deeper than mere flesh and blood—a transcendental loveliness of the soul shone from her violet eyes.

Her face was a creamy pallor, faintly tinged with pink; she had a straight little nose, Grecian in outline, and her mouth was a perfect Cupid's bow. Her hair was a beautiful yellow, with tawny russet tints. She seemed very young—certainly not more than nineteeen.

"Pardon, *monsieur*—it is rude of me to be interested in your conversation, but I could not help hearing you talk of Dr. Condamine. Is he, then, a very great friend of yours?"

The stout man stared aghast at the young woman's impertinence, and the opera-comedy duet had difficulty in suppressing titters.

His excellency, however, was graciously disposed to answer.

"Yes, *mademoiselle,* Dr. Condamine is my very good friend."

The girl's voice faltered.

"I am curious about him," she said. "Will you tell me what he is like?"

"I can only tell you what the world knows, *mademoiselle*—what you probably know already yourself."

"I know nothing, except that he is very wicked. Tell me what he is like," she demanded imperiously.

His excellency's lips twitched.

"This wicked man, as you call him, is really not wicked at all. You must not think ill of him because he makes his living out of Belarmo. He is a great scientist—a great man in every sense."

"Will I see Dr. Condamine in Belarmo?"

"I hardly think so, unless you call upon him."

"But you, *monsieur*—you will be seeing Dr. Condamine?"

"Most certainly."

"Then, will you give him my compliments—the compliments of Valda de Brisac. And incidentally, if you please, *monsieur,* you may tell him that with my compliments I send my hate."

Her *vis-à-vis* was laughing.

"It is customary to send one's love with one's compliments," he said. "I am sure Dr. Condamine will be more than grieved."

He drew forth an exquisite gold-mounted card-case and produced a strip of pasteboard.

"My card, *mademoiselle.* If I can be of any assistance to you in Belarmo, command me."

COMTE HENRI DE LA MOTTE.
MINISTRE DES AFFAIRES ETRANGERS DE LA ROYAUME DE ZANGERIA.

The girl thanked him, and put the card into her hand-bag. If she was embarrassed, she did not show it.

CHAPTER II.

MONSIEUR CALLS UPON HIS FRIEND.

BELARMO is a city of brilliant sunshine. Day in and day out the sky is an unbroken canopy of palest azure. The sea is a blinding, dazzling glare. At the back of Belarmo the mountains are grim

and austere, frowning down upon the gay, wicked little town for all the world like plain, prim vestals upon some lovely, red-lipped wanton.

The Hôtel de l'Univers stands like some whited sepulcher with a red-tiled roof on a promontory which juts out into the Mediterranean.

The Casino is but a step from the Hôtel de l'Univers. It, too, is white, with a red-tiled roof.

It was the morning after the events narrated in the preceding chapter. Sigfried Hoffmann sat at one of the little tables on the terrace directly facing the door of the hotel.

He had finished his *déjeuner*. The fingers of one of his soft, white hands held a cigar at which he puffed meditatively.

Though he had been sitting in this spot, and almost in precisely the same attitude for nearly an hour, his patience seemed monumental. His flaccid countenance was perfectly expressionless except for the small, restless eyes.

Presently a woman came out of the hotel alone. She was very tall and slim. There was a catlike grace in her angularity as she walked slowly down the broad stone steps.

She was dressed with a distinction that made her noticeable even in that place, where the dowdy woman was as rare as a white blackbird. None but a master-hand could have cut that daringly simple white linen frock, which fitted her like a sheath from the high collar to the hem, the sole ornament of which was a long line of enormous white linen buttons. Over it she wore an exquisite coat of Irish crochet.

A white embroidered linen parasol was tucked under one arm. On her head was a smart hat of rough black straw, in the exaggerated bee-hive style, with enormous black plumes caught with a buckle of brilliants.

As for her face, it had been likened many times to Leonardo da Vinci's portrait of a "Mona Lisa."

It was exquisitely pale, with long, narrow eyes the color of amber, fringed by lashes of jet black. Her brows were straight, and finely penciled. Her thin, red lips were curved in a perpetual smile; it was as though the woman was in a state of being constantly amused with some sinister idea.

And her smile did not belie her, for she had long enjoyed the dubious compliment of being called "The Most Dangerous Woman in Europe."

Hoffmann threw his cigar into the shrubbery that flanked the balustrade. He rose, and removed his hat as she came toward him.

"*Bonjour!*" he said in a tone of mock politeness. "How does *madame la princesse* find herself this morning?"

The line of the woman's lips tightened perceptibly.

"Good gracious, Sigfried," she said, "it is madness for us to be seen talking here. I got your note." She lowered her voice. "How long are you stopping in Belarmo? Who are you with?"

"Freddy Menzies—and Gaspard, of course," he said in reply to her last question.

"Who is this Menzies?"

"Oh, a brother officer of Gaspard's—a young ass!"

"Then, he is not in your confidence?"

"Lord, no!"

"And Gaspard?"

Hoffmann looked at his fair interrogator steadily a few seconds before replying; then he said slowly:

"Gaspard has the gambling fever. His father does not approve."

Some faint remnant of goodness in her caused a shudder to cross the woman's face. She clenched her gloved hands.

"Oh, it is terrible!" she cried. "You have bought him body and soul—as you have bought me."

"No heroics, Hildegarde, if you please. When am I to have the pleasure of seeing you alone?"

"Any time you like. Come to my sitting-room this afternoon at five, and I will give you tea."

"Very good! And how are you off for money?"

Again she lifted her shoulders lightly.

"Well, we'll soon fix that. Let me know how much you need, and I'll pay a check into your bankers."

It is possible that he did not expect to be thanked, but certainly the Princess von Kirschwold did not wait to profess any gratitude. She turned abruptly and walked on alone toward the Casino.

He watched her with an expressive countenance as her slim, catlike figure undulated gracefully with each step she took—watched her until she was swallowed up by the Casino entrance. Then, and then only, he smiled.

But instantly he was on his feet and bowing obsequiously. The minister of the Zangerian foreign affairs had come out of the hotel and stopped on the steps to light a cigar.

"Good morning, Hoffmann," he said, in answer to the other's greeting. Then he exclaimed abruptly, rapping out the words with jerky emphasis:

"Do you know who is stopping here? *Nom d'un chien!* But it is unfortunate! The Kirschwold!"

Hoffmann's eyebrows went up in well-feigned astonishment.

"*C'est impossible!* Are you sure?"

"Yes. I passed her in the foyer a few minutes ago. She didn't see me; her back was turned. But I'd know that woman at twenty paces in the dark. My nerves are positively on edge."

"Have a *liqueur*, your excellency."

"No—no, thank you. It's not as bad as all that. I'm taking a stroll out to the château. Will you come?"

"Many thanks, but if you will excuse me this morning—I promised Gaspard I'd join him and young Menzies at the Casino. They're waiting for me now."

"Oh, very well. Keep your eye on the boy, Hoffmann, and don't let him make a fool of himself."

In the road just beyond the hotel grounds there were a half-dozen dilapidated open *fiacres* waiting. The drivers, in rusty-black and dingy top-hats, drowsed on their perches under the steaming glare of the sun.

They were roused to instant tumultuous life as the count appeared. He waved them all aside, however, preferring to walk the three miles to the château.

Somehow, out here the air was sweeter and cleaner.

In five minutes he had left behind him the noisy little street flanked by gilded toy-shops, wherein were to be purchased the costliest jewels and baubles, the most wonderful gowns and hats, at the very highest prices; had passed the white temple of Bernmayer—which is famous the world over for its rich confections, tea-cakes, and delicious ices—and had, metaphorically speaking, shaken the dust of Belarmo from his well-polished boots, and taken to the open road.

The houses here, each with its well-nurtured vineyard, belonged to country-folk and peasants. Just beyond the outskirts of the village proper stood a small structure of gray stone with grim, iron-barred windows—the prison—with its flagged courtyard enclosed by a solid fence of wood palings.

Behind the prison, just over the rim of a low hill, rose a few wooden crosses and simple monuments, marking the location of a cemetery. So did crime and death wait like gaunt specters upon the door-steps of pleasure.

The road ascended steadily. It wound in the direction of the sea, and was overhung by great, jagged rocks.

Upon a natural foundation of giant boulders, jutting out into the sea, was built the château where lived the man of mystery, Dr. Anatole Condamine.

Like its foundations, it was entirely of stone, gray, rough-hewn, forbidding—a great structure of solid masonry, with turrets and towers and wings innumerable. The rocks upon which it stood were partially separated from the mainland by a deep gully, into which the sea eddied and swirled in foam-scummed whirlpools.

To reach the château it was necessary to cross a little iron drawbridge.

There was not a leaf of vegetation growing anywhere about the château—not the tiniest vine, nor a blade of grass. Its multipaned, narrow little windows caught and flung back the rays of the sun like so many diamonds, its gray turrets rose straight and menacing against the vividly blue sky.

The count crossed the drawbridge, walked along a narrow, graveled path leading to an enormous door with panels of thick iron-bound oak.

An old man answered the count's summons. He was so thin that he seemed composed of bones, over which white parchment had beeen fitted neatly. The few scant locks which fringed his lean neck were snow-white, but the veined dome of his skull was as innocent of verdure as the rocks upon which the château was built.

He was dressed in a black velvet coat and knickerbockers, his thin calves covered by black silk stockings, and on his feet were patent-leather pumps embellished with quaint, silver buckles. There was about him an air of dignified austerity in keeping with his funereal, corpselike appearance.

There were rumors—well founded, too—that Josef was no more and no less than a dead man to whom the diabolical genius of his master had given the power to move and speak.

Josef held open the door hospitably, and smiled, displaying the remnants of some very yellow and prominent teeth.

"Ah, Josef, you young rascal—how goes it? Is your master in?"

"Yes, your excellency. Will your excellency step inside? I will tell my master— This way, if your excellency will be so good."

One of Josef's lean, clawlike hands reached out and held aside a thick, crimson velvet portière, which cut off the curious stone-flagged hall from a great room, floored and beamed and paneled with black oak, and hung with marvelous Gobelin tapestries. There was no fire in the huge, gray-stone fireplace, and, coming in from the fresh warmth and sunlight of the out-of-doors, the place seemed cold and musty.

Left alone, De la Motte took a reflective turn or two about the room. But suddenly he paused, and stared with rigid attention at a small, framed photograph which stood on the top of a Flemish chest.

It represented a young man—a beardless youth of some twenty-odd years, with large, luminous eyes, and a studious, serious expression. It was not so much the photograph which had caught De la Motte's notice as the inscription upon it. In precise, faded script were written the words:

TO ANATOLE, FROM HIS FRIEND, JOHANNES DE BRISAC.

The name was the same as that borne by the exquisitely beautiful woman who had been his traveling companion for a scant half-hour the evening before—the woman who had bade him give her compliments and her hatred to Dr. Condamine.

Monsieur le comte's eyebrows drew together thoughtfully. He pursed his lips with a little sucking sound.

"*Voilà!*" he muttered; "'tis but a silly coincidence—that is all."

Then he wheeled sharply, his face relaxed, and he presented a smiling countenance toward the man who had just entered the room.

Dr. Anatole Condamine was a strong, vigorous man in his early forties, stockily built, rather well knit than stout; he had thick, waving brown hair, lightly streaked on the temples with gray, and a carefully trimmed brown beard. His eyes were a deep, trustworthy blue, his complexion almost ruddy. His voice and handclasp were redolent of vitality.

"*Nom d'un nom!*" he cried in hearty tones. "But you have taken me by surprise, my good Henri! And how are your affairs in Zangeria? First tell me about yourself—but first of all come, now—to my workshop. We lunch here in the English fashion at one-thirty, as you know—so there is yet an hour."

"And how is *madame,* your sister?" asked De la Motte, when he could get a word in edgewise. "Well, I trust?"

"Ah, quite well, thank you. She has much to occupy her, poor woman. We have such difficulty in keeping servants. Sometimes there is only Josef."

He shrugged his shoulders and sighed.

"Fortunately my tastes are simple, and my sister is an excellent housekeeper. At present we have a cook—a man with heart-disease, who thinks if he drops dead I shall be able to bring him to life again. But, for all of that, he is afraid of me, and the very sight of me threatens to bring on the calamity he dreads.

"Ha! ha! Poor Guiseppe! He lives in abject terror—and he endures such an existence because his fear of death is greater even than his fear of me. Bah! Henri! Why is humanity cursed with the dread of dissolution? It is the most merciful invention of *le bon Dieu.*"

They had by this time crossed the flagged hall, and were ascending an interminable flight of worn, stone stairs, which wound round and round to the very top of the tallest tower into a circular room of huge dimensions.

The sun streamed in, for there were windows at regular intervals all round it.

Between the windows the whitewashed walls were covered almost entirely by built-in cupboards with glass doors, the shelves of which looked like those of a particularly well-stocked chemist's shop.

For the rest, there were probably a dozen stands and tables bearing the usual laboratory paraphernalia; a big, worn leather couch; a cabinet filled with books, and a glass operating-table of the most up-to-date model, over which hung a cluster of electric-light bulbs, shaded by an opaque-white reflector. There were also a few chairs, and two of them were very large and comfortable.

"Ah, now we can be at home!" Dr. Condamine exclaimed, pushing one of the easy chairs forward for his guest. "You may smoke, if you like. It's an unusual privilege in this place—but this is an unusual occasion."

The count availed himself of the invitation and lit a cigar. Then suddenly his face grew very grave. He leaned forward and said:

"Anatole—can you guess who is stopping at the Univers?" Without waiting for the other to reply, he went on quickly: "Hildegarde von Kirschwold."

Dr. Condamine said nothing, but his ruddy face turned positively ashen.

CHAPTER III.

A CONFIDENCE.

THE two friends looked at each other in silence.

Then De la Motte said slowly, with a grim laugh:

"Here are you and I, two able-bodied men, and both afraid of a woman."

"I do not fear her," the other retorted angrily—"I hate her. I've heard ugly rumors, Henri. The throne of Zangeria is none too secure, I fancy, and *madame la princesse* has allied herself with the revolutionists.

"If Carlos is dethroned, I should not be at all surprised if one day she became your queen. The woman is capable of any audacity. They say that Don Sebastian is madly in love with her."

A pale, cold light flickered for an instant in De la Motte's gray eyes.

"If Carlos falls, my friend, I fall, too. I shall be exiled—or worse. At this moment I wouldn't give a sou for my chance of life. And as for Carlos, poor devil, he lives in a perpetual barricade."

Dr. Condamine gazed thoughtfully out of the window. He was still pale, but seemed less agitated than before. His friend was watching him closely, and presently he spoke, as though wishing to change the subject.

"I had a curious adventure last evening. We boarded the train at the frontier, and found that our compartment had not been reserved, so we were obliged to squeeze into a *wagon-lit* which was already occupied by a young woman and her maid. The girl was the most strikingly beautiful creature I have ever seen—with the face of an angel, and the manners of a passionate, spoiled child. Your name was mentioned, and milady immediately threw back her veil and demanded to be told about you."

He laughed awkwardly, thinking, perhaps, of the name on the picture he had seen in the gloomy salon down-stairs. "She bade me give you the compliments and the hate of Valda de Brisac."

Condamine wheeled sharply.

"Valda de Brisac!" he repeated under his breath. "That was her name?"

"Yes, *mon ami*. And ordinarily, I should say, the gentlest and sweetest of young women."

"How old might she be?"

"Possibly twenty—but she looked younger. And she, too, is stopping at the Hôtel de l'Univers."

The other laughed savagely.

"How things come all at once!" he muttered. "That name—De Brisac—recalls the bitterest memory of my life."

He turned impetuously to the older man.

"Henri, you and I have been friends for years—yet I have never ventured to unburden my heart completely, even to you."

He passed his hand over his forehead, which was clammy with perspiration.

"Years ago I had a school friend of that name. You remember the incident—we quarreled over a woman that, Heaven pity us, we both loved. I married her, and my friend challenged me to a duel. You know the story.

"But what you do not know, perhaps, is that my friend died six weeks ago—

died from the bit of steel which had broke from the tip of my rapier and at last penetrated his heart, as the doctors predicted. Died, still hating me! And I —I alone—could have saved him! Before Heaven, I am his murderer—"

"Anatole! You must not say such things. It is untrue. You were not to blame."

"Wait. I knew nothing of his life, afterward, except that he became a professor of mathematics in the University of Vienna. But on his death-bed he wrote to me. He died, still hating me, and bequeathed to me his curse.

"I didn't deserve it, Henri—the woman has tricked us both. He thought her dead—he believed I had cruelly wronged her, and, because she was his ideal of all that was good and pure, I forbore to disillusion him. He is dead, poor Johannes, but the woman lives—and she is still my wife, legally, though she cut herself adrift from me long ago.

"I told you just now that Hildegarde von Kirschwold had wrecked my life, and that I hated her. I said that she might some day sit upon the throne of Zangeria. And so she may, provided some obstacles are removed.

"One of the obstacles is the minister of foreign affairs—yourself, my dear Henri.

"The other is—can you guess? For, strange as it may seem to you, *madame la princesse* is my wife. The information may be useful to you if Don Sebastian comes to the throne."

CHAPTER IV.

THE MOST DANGEROUS WOMAN IN EUROPE.

THE rooms of the Princess Hildegarde von Kirschwold faced the sea. It was a magnificent suite, even regal in its appointments.

The salon was a perfect gem of the Louis Quinze period, in soft pinks and blues and gold. On the walls and ceiling nymphs and cupids rioted against a wonderful background of ivory brocaded satin. The room was permeated with the odor of La France roses set in crystal vases and bowls. A velvet carpet of dull rose gave under the feet at every step.

Hildegarde von Kirschwold was waiting in the salon, when, promptly at five o'clock, Sigfried Hoffmann made his appearance.

As usual, she was beautifully clad. Her gown was a superb creation of delicate Mechlin lace over a sheath lining of gold tissue. It had a short, pointed train, and the loose kimono-sleeves were caught up with dull-gold buckles.

Without her hat, her resemblance to "Mona Lisa" was more striking than ever. The matchless pallor of her skin was rendered irresistible by a tiny mole just above her chin on the left side.

"Good afternoon, Sigfried," she said without enthusiasm.

He, on his part, assumed a cynical air of gallantry.

"Good afternoon. Your highness has had a profitable day at the tables, I trust? You are looking very charming—but, then, you are always charming."

She shrugged her shoulders impatiently.

"Don't be silly, Sigfried," she said in an annoyed tone. "Where is his excellency?"

She tapped the toe of her tiny, white slipper impatiently, and her pointed fingers fell to plucking the petals from one of the pink rosebuds.

"I left his excellency just now having tea on the terrace with—a lady."

A faint tinge of color flooded her pale cheeks.

"It's too bad that the count hates you so dearly," he went on. "Were it not for that—who can say?—the fate of a nation might be altered."

"You dare to insinuate that I—I—"

"That you are madly in love with De la Motte? Yes, Hildegarde. You love him, and you are furious with him because he doesn't care a rap for you, except to dislike you on behalf of his gracious sovereign.

"You are furious with him, and because of that you will help to overthrow the government of Zangeria—you will help to tumble Carlos from his moldy throne and to set up Don Sebastian.

"Afterward the Comte de la Motte's fate will be in your fair hands. I can fancy that you will serve him as you are serving that helpless rose—you will tear him to pieces, to be quite exact."

The woman drew in a long breath, half dismay, half admiration, but she chose to ignore his impertinent speech.

"And who is this 'lady' with whom our friend is having tea? Do I know her?" she asked, with an air of carelessness.

"Not likely. She's very young and very beautiful. The count says she's the most beautiful woman he has ever seen in his life."

The princess drew in her breath quickly.

"When did he meet her? What is her name?"

"Her name may be a familiar one to you, Hildegarde," he said, replying to her last question first. "It is Valda de Brisac. Didn't you once, in your very young and innocent days, know a De Brisac in Leipsic?"

The princess turned very pale, but she shook her head vehemently.

"Most certainly not," she said. "But it is a curious coincidence—that 'Valda.' My first name is Valda. And it's not a common one. But do go on—tell me what she is like."

"I have already told you. She is beautiful."

"Bah! That is no description—many women are beautiful. What is the color of her hair, her eyes—and how does she dress?"

"She dresses with ravishing simplicity, like yourself, dear *madame la princesse,* but she wears black. Little chit! I fancy she thinks it brings out her complexion better. She has yellow hair, lighter than yours, and—your highness will pardon me—I cast no aspersions when I say the color of it is natural."

Go on; you amuse me. Perhaps you are in love, Sigfried."

"I am," he returned; "but not with Mlle. de Brisac. My love is doomed to live unsung, for it is too ambitious."

"You are a brute, when you attempt to be gallant. But, do you know, I believe I saw the girl you have been describing. If it is the same one, she has spent a profitable day at the tables."

"Ha! ha!" he exclaimed, "I thought the little monkey had the gambling fever."

"Gambling fever!" the woman retorted. "Not a bit of it! She plays a system with cold-blooded precision. She came in and took a seat at a table just back of mine, and she never stirred from the spot. They say she started with a louis, and she brought along with her a black silk bag to take away her winnings. They amounted to several thousand. She never lost once during the whole day. I went for a little while and stood behind *mademoiselle. Mon Dieu!* but it is a strange system! She had it all written out—long columns of figures on a white tablet."

"Did she stake on numbers?"

"No—only on odd and even and red and black. It bore a faint resemblance to the Martingale system, but so faint that it was only a very general family likeness. I watched her for two solid hours, and I confess I know no more about it now than I did then."

Hoffmann rose to go, but she detained him a moment, and a sweet, seductive look came into her eyes.

"Sigfried, *mon cher,* we are friends?"

Her words and manner produced an instant effect. It was as though a mask had dropped from the flaccid countenance of the man and he now stood revealed. The light of passion leaped into his narrow eyes.

"Don't talk to me like that! You are a devil incarnate—you! I am not Don Sebastian, to be cajoled and flattered—"

"Ah, but Sigfried, you love me, and I am very fond of you. If things were different— Ah, well, let us understand each other, and part friends. When the king comes into his own, I will not forget you."

"You anticipate your favors, Hildegarde."

"I anticipate — much. But we will part friends, and you will give me a pledge of your friendship? Yes—come, what shall it be?" with mock coquettishness. "Your scarf-pin? No, that is pointed, and would bring bad luck. I have it. Your ring, Sigfried. I never see that ring without coveting it with all my heart."

She laid her hand on his arm, and her smile deepened as she felt it trembling under her touch. If Hoffmann had any misgivings, or any notion of refusing this harmless request, they melted away under the fire of his passion. He said not a

word, but slipped the great emerald from his little finger.

She held out her hand with a pretty, childish gesture.

Hildegarde von Kirschwold was not the type of woman who loses any time over even a simple matter. Hoffmann's footsteps had scarcely ceased to echo in the corridor outside her salon-door before she had turned and hurried into her boudoir.

She closed both doors—the one leading to the salon, and the one leading to the dining-room.

Then she sat down at a gorgeous little inlaid writing-table, and, taking a sheet of thick vellum note-paper, commenced to write. She covered that sheet and then another with bold, black writing. When she had finished, she enclosed the written pages in an envelope, addressed it, and sealed it with a great blotch of black wax, into which, while it was still soft, she embedded the emerald ring which Hoffmann had just given her.

CHAPTER V.

BELARMO IN A FURY.

At the end of a week after Valda de Brisac's arrival at Belarmo, the whole place was agog with excitement.

Men and women, in whose veins the gambling fever ran like a subtle, intoxicating poison, were wildly inquiring:

"Who is this Mlle. de Brisac? Where does she come from? Who gave her that marvelous system she plays?"

But there was no one to answer their questions.

Morning, noon, and night she appeared at the Casino and took her place quietly, with the demure gravity of a stenographer or office-clerk beginning the day's work. There was no passion in her play; no particular enthusiasm. She began invariably with a louis, and ended with thousands, which she took away in the black silk bag. The white tablet with its columns of black figures always accompanied her.

Her winnings were deposited regularly each night with the hotel management, and as regularly the next morning transferred to the bank, which was a branch of a famous London and Paris house.

There seemed to be no damming the wonderful tide of her luck, or else the system was one calculated for all time to disqualify the famous motto of Belarmo.

"Red sometimes; black sometimes; but the bank always wins!"

This sort of thing could not go on forever without disastrous results. Twice since her arrival the Casino manager, a solemn, clerkly looking person in a top-hat, Prince Albert suit, and luxuriant brown beard, had hired a *fiacre* and driven in state to the château to complain of her.

The first time Dr. Condamine had laughed at him.

"My good Devereaux, this is sheer nonsense! A run of luck—well, what will you? I don't grudge the young lady that."

"But I tell you, *monsieur le docteur,* it is not luck. It is a system—"

"So much the worse for her. She should be warned for her own sake to leave off before it is too late. A system, when it turns, is worse than the worst run of bad luck."

He clapped the Casino manager on the shoulder good-naturedly.

"Come, come, Devereaux, you are getting morbid. No wonder! I should die myself were I forced to undertake your duties. You need a holiday—a breath of Switzerland to blow fresh courage into you.

"A silly little *mademoiselle* who plays a system! We shall yet have to give her a railway-ticket and enough louis to take her back to her convent. I am right? Yes? Of course I am right; and if you stop to think it over, you will agree with me.

"Last season I went through the same thing with you. There was that great English milord, who arrived in a special train with great bags of gold. You remember him? He, too, played a system, and he won—for three whole days.

"You came weeping to me, *mon cher* Devereaux. But I could do nothing. I was the bank—and the bank is there to win or to be beaten. But milord didn't break the bank, did he, Devereaux? He didn't go home in a special train. It was a third-class ticket he took to Paris, if I am not mistaken. And now he is

drinking absinthe in the cafés and compiling a new system. They will gamble, Devereaux, and I must live."

"*Monsieur* is quite right," replied Devereaux. "He must live — and so, *nom d'un chien!* must I. If this thing keeps up, I will no longer be manager of your Casino, for there will be no Casino."

"My dear friend," retorted Dr. Condamine in exasperation, "will you go now and leave me in peace? This interview is getting on my nerves. My word! if you come again, I shall tell Josef to draw and quarter you and serve you up on my dissecting-table."

And Devereaux went.

But in spite of Dr. Condamine's grim threat, only one day had elapsed before he presented himself a second time at the château.

In one way, Mlle. de Brisac was an asset, for the place was in a perfect furor over her. Men and women fought like lunatics for the privilege of sitting next to her; to be brushed by the hem of her dress was considered more lucky than to rub the hump of the genteel, crippled beggar who squatted on the Casino door-steps, and who had heretofore shared his prestige with none. The press went raving mad.

The London papers called her "The Woman of Mystery"; *Le Petit Parisienne* and *Le Matin* dubbed her modestly, "*La demoiselle avec la veine du diable*"; in America they said she was "The girl who broke the bank at Belarmo." Some one wrote a song about it, and by the end of the week everybody was singing it.

Mlle. de Brisac now wore a tiny, black satin mask when she went to the Casino.

The crowd was becoming annoying in its frenzied admiration, and she was obliged to pass each morning through a double file of newspaper men with cameras, who snap-shotted her and otherwise made her life burdensome. But she kept quietly and steadily to her play, and she was winning, winning, winning!

One night the Casino closed its doors two hours before the scheduled time. The reason given out for this was because Carinini, the great Italian tenor, was appearing at the tiny, gilded toy of an opera-house, and it would be a pity, indeed, if lovers of good singing, because of their devotion to roulette, missed the last act of "Madame Butterfly."

But in a town of Belarmo's size news flies about quickly in the most astonishing fashion, and before midnight had chimed everybody knew that the Casino had closed its doors because there was no more money in the bank. They said the manager had telegraphed to Paris for gold, a huge sum, and that even now it was on its way to the rescue, coming as fast as steam-driven iron and steel could bring it.

That may or may not have been true. But certainly the Casino opened its doors the next morning as serenely and innocently as some maid who steps across her threshold and takes her way to church again, silencing the calumnious tongues which have remarked upon her absence from divine service.

Equally certainly the next morning M. Devereaux paid his second call upon Dr. Condamine.

If Josef, the pallid-faced skeleton in black velvet, had orders to draw and quarter him, at least he took no immediate steps toward fulfilling the task.

Dr. Condamine was quietly enjoying his second breakfast in company with his friend, Comte de la Motte, on a small iron balcony jutting out from the eastern wing of the château.

Into the scene of blissful serenity M. Devereaux burst like a perspiring bombshell — if such a thing can be. He looked abominably hot; his clothes smelled of dusty highways and the sun; his polished top-hat resembled a Dutch oven in full blast.

Vaguely conscious of his physical discomfort, he removed his hat and, with a despairing gesture, took out a gaily-bordered silk handkerchief with which he patted the red rim the oven had left on his forehead.

"*Voilà!* It is Devereaux!" Dr. Condamine exclaimed genially. "Just in time, my good friend. The coffee is yet hot, and Guiseppe shall prepare you another omelet. But a thousand pardons!—let me present you first to His Excellency the Comte de la Motte. I doubt if you have met before, since his excellency does not patronize the tables—"

Devereaux acknowledged the introduction with a stiff bow. Then he turned to Dr. Condamine and said in a voice choked by agitation. "Thank you, sir, but I want no omelet—no coffee—"

"Ah, wise M. Devereaux! You have already breakfasted—"

"No, no—I have eaten nothing since yesterday. I shall never eat again!"

"Really you astonish me! Have you, then, found the secret of existence without sustenance—"

"Your pardon, sir, there is no time for joking. I must really see you a moment on most important business. If his excellency will be good enough to excuse you — certainly I would never venture to intrude unless—"

"There, now, I know what you have come about. It's the old story of the girl who is breaking my bank, *n'est-ce pas?* But you—you, M. Devereaux, are breaking my heart, and that is worse. You need not fear to speak out before his excellency. He has been telling me the tale, too; and, besides, I read the papers.

"*Le Matin* calls her 'The young lady with the devil's luck.' Well, it was clever of you to close the Casino early last evening. What an advertisement! Only a master mind could have conceived that *coup.*"

"*Monsieur*—it was for no advertisement that the Casino closed last evening!"

Dr. Condamine stared at his subordinate in surprise.

"What, then?" he asked with a faint trace of coldness.

"There was no money in the bank—not a single louis."

Dr. Condamine sprang to his feet, almost overturning the stand with the luncheon-tray.

"Incredible! Impossible!" he cried. "You have gone raving mad, Devereaux; you don't know what you are talking about."

"It is you, my dear Anatole, who does not know what he is talking about," interposed De la Motte coolly. "I fancy M. Devereaux is stating the truth."

"But the Casino opened again this morning," said Dr. Condamine, still unconvinced. "How was that?"

"I anticipated the necessity, *monsieur.* Already I had telegraphed to our bankers — and I shall telegraph again tonight. Even then—" He shrugged his shoulders helplessly. "There is nothing for it, *monsieur le docteur,* but my resignation. I have done all I can, but—"

"No one can do more than that, my good Devereaux. You are not to blame. Sit down. We must think this thing out."

"And while we are thinking, that girl is playing with the devil at her elbow, raking in your gold."

"She will rake it in whether we think or not—and, strictly speaking, I dare say it is no more my gold than hers."

"Nevertheless, *monsieur—*"

"Quite so, Devereaux. Nevertheless, she must be stopped—or we shall be embarrassed for ready money, eh?"

"In two days time, sir, if this goes on, there won't be a sou of our surplus left."

When the distressed Devereaux had taken his departure, Dr. Condamine turned to his friend.

"Look here, my dear Henri—this is a pretty kettle of fish, upon my word. I don't know the secret of it, but that fair young lady is by way of making me a pauper. There's no time to speculate how or why—but one thing is certain, she must be stopped."

He met De la Motte's gaze candidly.

"You are the only person in Bellarmo whom she honors with her acquaintance. You have the privilege of talking with her. She's welcome to all she's got so far—but she mustn't get any more."

"You mean you want me to beg her to be merciful?"

De la Motte's face twitched slightly. A shadow seemed to rest in his eyes.

"Ah, you do not need to tell me!" Condamine went on. "Henri—you will forgive me?—you are in love with this Mlle. de Brisac. She is my enemy, and yet you love her; but because of that you need not hate me.

"She has no need of more wealth—while I am on the verge of ruin. It costs huge sums to carry on my researches. When I am a bankrupt, my work, perforce, stops."

The count's hand trembled as he held it out to Dr. Condamine.

"You are my friend—and my first duty is to you."

"Very good," answered the other briskly. "That's all right, and we need say no more about it. I am glad you take a sensible view of the situation. Now, *mon cher ami,* come up to my laboratory—I want to explain the action of a very interesting drug to you and show you some experiments. You may have heard of it. It is called 'amyl.'"

De la Motte followed him slowly up the long, winding flight of stairs that led to the room in the turret. Scarcely had they reached it when the living skeleton in black velvet, otherwise known as Josef, overtook them, breathless from having taken the stairs at a speed disproportionate to his age and strength.

"Pardon, *monsieur,*" he panted; "there is a young lady—called to see you. I told her you saw no one; that you were never home to visitors. But here is her card—see for yourself."

There was a curious look in the old servant's face as he handed the thin strip of pasteboard to his master.

"'Mlle. Valda de Brisac'!" said Dr. Condamine, reading. "Great Heavens! What in the name of ten thousand saints can she want with me?"

"The simplest plan would be to see her and find out," De la Motte sagely observed.

CHAPTER VI.

DR. CONDAMINE'S VISITOR.

DR. CONDAMINE paused a moment on the threshold of the tapestry-room in which Valda and her maid waited. He drew in his breath with a soft involuntary gasp of admiration. His friend De la Motte had not exaggerated Valda's beauty.

She was the most beautiful woman Dr. Condamine had even seen in all his life. When he had recovered himself somewhat, he said with an awkwardness that was strange in a man of his *savoir-faire:* "Have I the honor of addressing Mlle. de Brisac?"

"Yes, *monsieur.*"

"Will you be seated, *mademoiselle?*"

"Thanks—I prefer to stand," she replied coldly.

Her eyes were measuring him mercilessly, from his impassive bearded face to the tips of his boots.

"*Monsieur,* I have called to see you to tell you that if you need money, I am at your service."

"But, my dear young lady—I don't think I understand. What precisely do you mean?" He could not have been more surprised if the skies had fallen.

Her soft lips curled contemptuously.

"I mean, *monsieur,* that I will lend you money on your personal note to keep your bank from failing, if you will do me the honor to borrow it from me."

"Ye gods, what an idea! And then, *mademoiselle,* you will set yourself to win all that I have borrowed from you."

She shrugged her shoulders.

"It is the chance of the game, *monsieur le docteur.* What will you?"

"You take no chances, Mlle. de Brisac. You always win. This marvelous system of yours is infallible, they tell me. Perhaps—since you have been so lucky—you can be induced to part with it for a consideration."

Yvonne had turned and was watching her mistress. The maid's lips parted as though she would speak, but closed again as Valda replied:

"I cannot part with it, Dr. Condamine. It was a legacy to me—it was left to me in trust. I dare not part with it. But I will lend you money—all the money you want, *monsieur.*"

For some unaccountable reason Dr. Condamine felt himself grow cold with apprehension. The girl was commencing to wield an uncanny influence over him. In spite of her angel face and calm, businesslike manner, she was like the reincarnation of some pagan deity imbued with the spirit of relentless hate.

It was wholly absurd, of course; like some wildly improbable dream. But the main facts were real enough—there was he, and there was she; and down in Belarmo was his Casino fairly rocking on its foundations. Some wild notion of detaining her indefinitely crossed his mind, but he dismissed it as impracticable.

"You spoke just now, *mademoiselle,* of your system as a legacy. I am acquainted with your family name. I once had a dear friend of that name. Are you from Vienna, *mademoiselle?*"

Valda de Brisac hesitated, but only for the merest fraction of a moment. Then she said in firm tones: "It does not concern you, *monsieur,* where I am from. And as for my family, I myself am the only living member of it. I haven't a relative in the world.

"And now, *monsieur,* I feel that I have trespassed far too long upon your hospitality. Once more—to return to my errand—will you accept a loan from me? My maid has the necessary papers."

For the first time since he had entered the room, Dr. Condamine glanced toward Yvonne. Heretofore his eyes had been all for Mlle. de Brisac.

"This young woman is your maid, *mademoiselle?*"

"Yes, *monsieur.*"

He darted a sharp look of inquiry from one to the other.

His quick eyes had caught something that roused vague suspicions. It was only a meaning glance which had passed between the two young women, but it told him that for some reason Valda de Brisac's sweet, innocent-looking lips had framed a lie.

"A thousand thanks, *mademoiselle;* you are very kind," he said with gentle irony; "and if your *maid* will produce these documents you mention, I will be glad to avail myself of your generosity."

CHAPTER VII.

THE TRYST.

If by day Belarmo was a warm-scented paradise, by night it was fairyland. Every clever artifice of modern civilization aided the natural beauty of the surroundings. It was a setting which the mind and skill of man could never place upon any stage.

High in the heavens rode the moon—a pale, deriding goddess. At intervals, across the silvery sheen of the Mediterranean, were specks of light marking the anchorage of yachts.

Above the terrace and gardens of the Hôtel de l'Univers long festoons of electric lights, shrouded by odd-shaped Japanese lanterns, hung from trellises. On the piazza of the hotel the Hungarian gipsy orchestra, in native costume, discoursed weird *czardas.*

So much the man of stage-craft might have managed, but he could not waft over his canvases and properties the soft, velvety breeze which blew in from the sea, nor the sensuous smell of the roses and violets.

It was nine o'clock, and at this time most of those who had finished dinner were at the Casino. The terrace was comparatively deserted.

At the farther end a woman's figure paced slowly to and fro. From here a little flight of stone steps led into the rose-garden. The balustrade of the terrace formed a sort of balcony. Occasionally she walked to the edge of it and looked over.

The woman was Hildegarde von Kirschwold. From neck to hem her supple figure was clad in a sheath of silver tissue. Over this was draped, shawl-wise, the filmiest of black chiffon, caught up on the left hip and shoulder with oxidized-silver buckles in which gleamed opals. The sleeves were of chiffon, unlined, and fell away, disclosing her beautifully molded arms.

The effect of the gown was like that of pale moonlight shining through a mist.

Over the balustrade she had flung her cloak, a wonderful creation of black velvet and ermine, lined with silver tissue. Long oxidized jeweled tassels hung from it, sweeping the ground.

Opals gleamed on her fingers and wrists and at her throat. Her hat a girl of sixteen might have worn. It was big and black and drooping, with masses of filmy black tulle caught on one side with a huge pink-velvet rose.

She had been waiting perhaps ten minutes, when a low whistle came from directly under the balustrade. Leisurely the princess gathered up her cloak and flung it over one arm. With a quick glance about the terrace, to make sure that she was not observed, she descended the flight of steps.

Here she was joined by a tall man in a military cloak.

Speaking quickly under her breath, she addressed him:

"Come this way. There is a little pavilion—we can be quite alone."

She picked up her skirts to keep the dew from drenching them, and the points

of her little silver slippers twinkled like stars on the damp sward.

The man did not speak until they had gained the shelter of the pavilion; then he exclaimed passionately: "Hildegarde! My love—you are so beautiful! I had to come to you. When I got your letter—"

"Be careful," she interrupted coldly; "some one might overhear us. That beast of a De la Motte is always lurking about."

Even in the moonlight it could be seen that the man was extraordinarily handsome, though there was little about his face besides its good looks to recommend him. He was young—certainly not more than five and thirty. His features were clear cut, like a Greek god's, and he wore his uniform, which was that of a colonel of hussars, most creditably.

"You did very wrong in coming here," the Princess von Kirschwold went on irritably. "If I had any idea you would be so foolhardy, I certainly wouldn't have written."

"It was because you wrote that I came—and because of what you wrote. Hildegarde — you know I love you. There is only one woman in the world for me—and you are that woman."

"You have told me that so many times before," she said wearily. "No—don't kiss me. When you are King of Zangeria, Sebastian, and have given my devotion its proper reward—"

His brows drew together perplexedly.

"I understand," he replied. "In your letter you said that Hoffmann would undertake to go on—on that condition. That I must marry you. I have two passions, Hildegarde. One of them is you, the other is my ambition."

"And there is no reason why both of them should not be gratified, Sebastian," she replied, more softly than she had spoken before. "De la Motte is your greatest stumbling-block, as far as the throne is concerned. He is too popular in Zangeria. As I told you in my letter, he is here in Belarmo. But I am here, and Gaspard is here—"

"Hoffmann, too? Where is he? I was hoping to have a word with him. Letters are too dangerous—"

"Sigfried has gone to Paris," she lied. "He won't be back until to-morrow."

Her eyes were restlessly seeking the shrubbery. If by any chance Hoffmann made his appearance at that critical moment, her whole castle of schemes would tumble to earth.

"And my train goes in half an hour," Don Sebastian replied regretfully. "My darling Hildegarde — I would sacrifice my life to marry you—"

"But not your ambition."

"Yes, yes; my ambition, too, if need be. I cannot understand Hoffmann's changeableness. The last time I saw him he was most opposed to our alliance—yours and mine. We had moved heaven and earth to gain the sympathy of Saxe-Wertheim, and it was agreed informally that if Carlos was dethroned, I must marry the Grand Duchess Anastasia. But, Hildegarde, you are the woman I love—"

"Once and for all, Sebastian," she retorted icily, "please understand. I shall never sit at the left hand of any king. No, no! You must do as we have agreed.

"You read my letter. You saw Hoffmann's seal. Promise the Duke of Saxe-Wertheim anything you like. We can be married secretly—and when you are King of Zangeria, you can laugh at silly grand dukes with ugly daughters."

"Frankly, Hildegarde, I am afraid—"

"Frankly, then, Sebastian, you are a coward! But I have courage enough for two. I would willingly take the chances of *le diable*—for you."

The last two words were spoken with seductive softness. She even let him take her hand, and smiled sweetly when he pressed it fervently to his lips.

"You are a brave woman, Hildegarde. I am ashamed of myself. After all, nothing else matters but you. I have half a mind to abandon the whole game. Let Carlos keep his silly throne, and you and I—"

"Are you losing your senses?" she cried, loosening her fingers from his grasp. Her eyes blazed with temper.

"Fool, fool! What a weakling!" She stamped her tiny silver-shod foot. "Do you think I would marry you—would throw myself away on you just to dwell in some sickening lovers' paradise? Get that idea out of your head, my precious infant."

"But, Hildegarde," he stammered, "you love me?"

His confusion was pitiable. He shrank under her words as though she had struck him with her open palm full upon the face.

"Yes—but I want you to be a man." She had recovered herself and was speaking more calmly. "Go, now—it is quite time. If you should miss your train, it might result in a catastrophe. There is no place to hide in this beastly little town."

"Yes, my love. I am going — at once."

He flung the end of his cloak over one shoulder.

"And we are to be married—when?"

"I will meet you in Paris—this day fortnight," she answered hurriedly. "You know where I stop—at the Elysée Palace. I shall not be using my title. The Zangerian consul is a friend of mine. He can manage the license with discretion. *Adieu,* Sebastian!"

Again she held out her hand to him, and he kissed it. But she did not offer him her lips. There was probably not in all Europe a cleverer woman than Hildegarde von Kirschwold.

The princess walked back alone across the dew-drenched grass to the little flight of steps leading up to the terrace. She was so deeply immersed in thought that she forgot to hold up her shimmering frock. The edges of it, as well as her daintily slippered feet, were soaked with moisture.

With an involuntary cry, half fear, half surprise, she found that she had run almost directly into the arms of a man she least wanted at that moment to meet.

The Comte de la Motte drew back and lifted his hat courteously. His heavy gray mustache hid the smile on his lips.

"It is a heavenly night, *madame;* but damp in the rose-garden, I should say. Are you not afraid of taking cold?"

It is hard to imagine that Hildegarde von Kirschwold could under any circumstances be confused, but now any words she would have uttered froze on her lips.

She stood stock-still and looked at him blankly. His next words threw her into a paroxysm of fear.

"How is our young friend, Don Sebastian?" he asked. "And does he think it wise to go about disguised as a colonel of hussars? But, of course," he went on hurriedly, "Belarmo is neutral ground, and he can please himself."

Great Heavens! How much did the man know? If he had listened to their conversation, by now the part that Sigfried Hoffmann was playing would be perfectly plain to him.

It was so terrible that the princess felt her limbs giving way beneath her. She sank down into a chair beside one of the small round tables and summoned every atom of self-possession. It was well for her at the moment that she had a great deal of it.

Her beautifully penciled eyebrows arched in well-simulated surprise. She was not foolish enough to lie to De la Motte. Evidently he, or somebody else intimately acquainted with them both, had seen Don Sebastian.

There was no use and no especial reason why she should claim ignorance. Her position with regard to Zangerian affairs was quite as patent as that of the Comte de la Motte, yet she knew that to set out deliberately to find how little or how much he knew was a hopeless task. She must trust to luck. Sebastian's fate depended almost entirely upon the fact that Sigfried Hoffmann, De la Motte's trusted aid, was really a traitor to King Carlos.

Hildegarde forced a smile to her lips.

"Your excellency is very clever," she said. "Suppose I were to tell you that what you say surprises me very much?"

She laughed lightly and looked up into his face.

It was too dark for him to see the suspense and terror in her eyes.

"Then I would be forced to think, though I would not be so ungallant as to say so, that the Princess von Kirschwold was not speaking the truth."

"I shall not put your gallantry to such a test, your excellency. Already I fear it is severely strained. This *tête-á-tête* is not compatible with perfect good taste on our part, is it?"

It was a plain hint for him to go, but he ignored it.

"As far as I am concerned, dear lady, I am quite sure that even my dearest

enemy wouldn't hold it against me that I am seen talking with you."

"You mean that your excellency's position in Zangerian affairs is too well known to be doubted?"

"My dear princess, even with you I must decline to talk shop. What I really meant was that any man upon whom you bestow your charming society, even for a little while, can only be honored.

"You will forgive my being rude, princess. Even though I did chance to catch a glimpse of Don Sebastian in the railway-station, and even though I meet you just now coming alone from the rose-garden where one so charming as yourself could scarcely be wandering in solitary state, it is really no affair of mine, and I apologize."

"You and I are political enemies, *madame la princesse*. There is no reason why, because of that, I should forget that you are a woman."

With another courtly bow, he turned and left her without saying anything more.

She watched him out of sight, watched him disappear within the wide open doors of the Casino, and then a very strange thing happened. Two great tears rolled down her cheeks. She did not brush them away, and one fell upon her soft, beringed hands.

People paused and glanced at her curiously; but she still sat there, staring straight ahead with a gaze that strove to penetrate the future yet seemed to find the curtain which obscured it too impenetrable.

She was a thoroughly unscrupulous woman, and her daring and courage were equal to that of any man. She possessed, besides, the indomitable cunning of her sex and great physical beauty. She was a woman to be feared and even hated, yet many men would gladly have laid down their lives for her smiles.

But there was a weak spot in her armor. With all her heart and soul she loved De la Motte, the man who was her greatest enemy. She loved him, and he despised her.

She lost all count of time. It seemed to her that she had been sitting there for hours. In reality it was only about twenty minutes since the count had left her, when she was aroused from her abstraction by a stir and confusion about her. She rose to her feet immediately, half dazed.

Some people were crossing the terrace, carrying an inert figure.

In the crowd she caught sight of Gaspard. With an almost inarticulate cry, she grasped his sleeve to attract his attention.

"What is it?" she asked. "What has happened?"

The young man was standing on his tiptoes, peering over the head of a fashionably dressed woman as curious as himself.

"Nothing very much, I fancy," he replied. "The excitement of the game has proved too much for Mlle. de Brisac —she has fainted."

The princess was on the point of turning away, when a low cry arrested her. The girl had by that time recovered consciousness.

"What is the matter? What has happened to her?"

"Has she gone mad?"

"Somebody fetch a doctor."

"No, no; I'm all right," Valda's voice rang out; "but I've lost my bag. Where is it?"

"Ha, ha!" exclaimed a facetious young guardsman. "She thinks somebody has stolen her gold. What a rapacious little monkey it is!"

"Here is your bag, *mademoiselle*," another voice cried. "It dropped from your arm."

By this time the girl had recovered sufficiently to be able to stand alone, but she was hemmed in on all sides by the throng of interested and inquisitive spectators.

Some one passed her the black bag over the heads of the crowd.

With a wild movement she clasped it and tore it open.

The impression she gave was that of a woman mad for money and filled with consternation lest even a little of the gold she had gathered should dribble through her fingers. She was accredited with great covetousness.

One or two people turned away in disgust.

"Great Heavens!" a woman exclaimed who that day had lost her last sou with all the equability in the world.

"The girl must be mad, I think. She has made an enormous fortune, yet see how greedy she is."

The words were scarcely out of her mouth before Valda let the little silk bag fall from her nerveless fingers. It struck the terrace with a metallic clink. There was a shriek of acute dismay.

"*Mon Dieu! Oh, mon Dieu!* Where is the tablet that has my system written on it?

"It is gone! I have lost it!"

(To be continued.)

THE TAXI-DREAM.

By Thomas R. Ybarra.

WHIZ! Watch the taximeter go round! See the chauffeur chortle with horrid, unholy, glee.

MOST interesting thing, psychical research.

For a number of years I have dabbled in it, especially in that department of it dealing with peculiar dreams. I have read with minute attention all that I could lay my hands on in the way of dream-books—the scientifically respectable among them, of course—and have even conducted investigations of my own, having as their subjects promising dreamers picked out by myself.

Two young men, whom I dubbed, respectively, William and James, after the celebrated authority on matters psychic, provided me with some astonishing data regarding recurrence of dreams, apparent significance of the thing dreamed, etc., etc. And a particularly intelligent talking parrot of my acquaintance, called Nicholas of Cusa—but why ring him in?

What I mean to lead up to is this: That I never encountered anything in my psychical investigations so extraordinary, so well-nigh incredibly fantastic as the experience which figures in my records under the title of "The Taxi-dream."

Unaccustomed as I am to public writing, I shall recount it.

Once I inserted an advertisement in a morning newspaper, reading thus:

> Wanted.—Full details of peculiar dreams. Liberal payment. Address J. Hetherington Topley, Cornwall Court Apartments, Riverside Drive, New York City; or call in person.

The evening of the day on which I put that advertisement in the paper was singularly wild and tempestuous. Flattening my nose against the front window of my apartment, I looked out on sweeping rain, on clouds and mist and mud. Pedestrians, rain-soaked in the dismal streets, tugged at umbrellas caught up by the wanton wind. Nor would my description be at all complete without the remark that the wind in question howled mournfully, like a soul—or, is it souls?—in torment.

The very night, thought I, for something out of the way to happen.

I glanced at the glowing fire in my grate. "Heaven pity the poor sailors—" I began.

The telephone bell rang. I rose from my chair, took up the receiver.

"Gentleman to see you, sir," said the boy in the hall down-stairs.

"Ha!" I murmured *sotto voce;* "most appropriate, most fitting." Then, aloud: "Who is it?"

"He refuses to give any name, sir."

"Perfect—simply perfect," I muttered. "Send him up at once."

In a few minutes I heard the stop of the elevator in the hallway, the clank of its gate, footsteps outside my door, a knock.

"Come in," I called.

The door swung back.

It let in a draft at which my fire flared up protestingly; and a man, at sight of whom I involuntarily started back, clutching at the table for support.

I may add, I suppose—though I have

no absolute proof of the occurrence—that I turned pale; or, better still, went white.

He was tall and thin, enveloped in a coat from which the rain-water oozed, forming puddles on my carpet. His face was pale, with a pallor which, I thought, belonged to death alone. His cheeks were lean; utter carelessness of personal appearance was betrayed by a ragged beard fully a week old.

But his eyes! They were sunken and black-ringed, and in them was a look of such utter weariness and despair, of such stark terror, that I—how shall I put it?—oh, let us say that the very blood froze in my veins!

"S-sit down," I stammered.

Without removing his wet coat, the man dropped into the nearest chair. Hardly had he done so before his eyes closed and his head flopped over sideways.

Something distinctly resembling a snore rose up to vie with the howling gale outdoors. But, almost before I had realized what had happened, he woke up again with a convulsive start. His eyes opened wide; his whole face was branded deep with fear and horror.

"He's still there!" he gasped.

"Who?" I inquired. Something resembling what is usually called in literature a cold chill began to run up and down what I take to have been my spine.

"Number seven-sixty-five!"

"What do you mean?"

But his head flopped over again. He snored three times. Then he positively bounded from his chair, perfectly livid with terror.

"Keep me awake," he begged.

I hurried over to a cupboard and poured him out a glassful of whisky. He took it at a gulp. It steadied him.

"You must excuse me," he said apologetically. "I haven't slept for three nights. You are J. Hetherington Topley, aren't you?"

"Yes."

"You put an ad in this morning's paper?"

"I did."

He took out his watch and opened it.

"Kindly lend me two hundred and eighty-three dollars and fifty cents," he said.

"But, my dear sir—" I began.

I stopped. Words failed me. That, I think, is the phrase. The stranger kept his eyes fixed on the face of his watch.

"Wh-what—" I began again; but, once more, I couldn't finish the sentence.

Then came a click, as my visitor closed his watch.

"I allowed you a minute for pardonable amazement and the expression thereof," he observed very calmly. "Now, with your permission, I'll go on to qualify my request."

He pocketed his watch.

"Loan me the money here—in this room," he said. "I shall not go out of it. As soon as I receive the two hundred and eighty-three dollars and fifty cents I shall put it in the inside pocket of my coat. Then I shall divest myself of that garment and the rest of my clothing—you, I take it, will kindly lend me a suit of pajamas—and shall go to bed in your bedroom."

He took his watch from his pocket and consulted it.

"Midnight exactly," he remarked. "Now, let me see. Five hours should be ample. Wake me, please, at five in the morning."

Outside the rain poured and the wind howled more mournfully than ever.

"But—" I started to object.

He help up his hand.

"If," he said, "you are as much interested in psychic phenomena as I have been led to believe by your ad, you will scarcely hesitate at keeping awake until daylight. I feel certain that you will be repaid for your vigil by a dream-tale that will rank among the best that you have ever heard.

"You risk nothing. As soon as I am awakened by you I shall return to you, intact, the two hundred and eighty-three dollars and fifty cents. You speak, in your ad, of liberal reward for full details of dreams. Well, if my story seems worthy of reward, let me keep the two hundred and eighty-three dollars and fifty cents. If not, dismiss me unrewarded. All I ask is that you do as I have outlined. Is it a bargain?"

I pondered. I gazed curiously at the stranger. As he had observed, I risked nothing. He was smaller than I; so shattered, besides, by fatigue and terror

as to be incapable of violence. His suggestion might be absurd, but, by no stretch of the imagination, dangerous.

Again I looked at him. And, even as I did so, his head fell forward, and his eyes shut. The upper part of him gradually settled over toward the arm of the chair; his head brushed against it. In an instant, with a yell of anguish, he was sitting bolt upright again.

"The money now!" he shrieked. "For Heaven's sake give me the money before I go to sleep again!"

All my hesitation vanished. Rushing to my desk, I wrote out a check payable to bearer for two hundred and eighty-three dollars and fifty cents. I handed it to him.

"Thanks," he said. Already his eyes were half shut again.

He pocketed the check and walked unsteadily toward my bedroom, I following close behind. In the bedroom he undressed, donned a suit of my pajamas, and got into my bed. He pointed to a clock on my dresser.

"At five," he murmured.

With the words scarcely over his lips he was fast asleep.

I returned to my study, leaving the door into my bedroom open, in order to keep an eye on the sleeper.

There I sat, reading books on psychic matters, listening to the swirl of the rain and the moaning of the wind, wondering about the man in the next room, about the story he might have to tell, and whether it would surpass in interest the disclosures of the two young men called, respectively, William and James, and my surprising deductions from the case of the intelligent parrot, Nicholas of Cusa.

The sleeper scarcely stirred. Once, about five minutes after dropping asleep, he raised his hand authoritatively and called out "Taxi!" in a loud voice.

About ten minutes after that he chuckled to himself. Otherwise, until the light of dawn struggled through the darkness, he slept like a log.

Punctually at five I entered the bedroom. The stranger was then tossing about fretfully, muttering incoherent noises, apparently extremely excited and nervous. I shook him. He awoke with a shudder.

"Whew!" he gasped; "what a fool I am! Mesopotamia and back, with extras. Folly, folly!"

Rubbing his eyes hard, he looked at me, seemingly unable to remember who I was. Then, without a word, he jumped from bed, walked to the chair on which he had hung his coat, took from an inside pocket the check I had given him, and handed it to me.

"Much obliged," he said. "Now, if you'll give me plenty of black coffee, I think that I can stay awake long enough to tell you the why and wherefore of this whole business."

I rang for breakfast. While he ate and drank the old look of hopeless terror kept flashing over his face.

After eating he settled into an armchair and lighted a cigarette.

"Here goes, then," he said, with a weak assumption of bravado, and began:

"Since childhood I have had exceedingly vivid dreams. At times, too, successive ones showed a certain thread of connection with each other, but never sufficient to rouse in me more than passing interest.

"But, about two months ago, began the chain of connected dreams which has reduced me to the nervous wreck you see before you.

"It was this way: One night, while wandering about in a chaotic dreamland, I was accosted by a chauffeur, having on his cap the number seven hundred and sixty-five, and driving a neat pink and blue taxicab. I immediately jumped in.

"I must have stayed in that taxicab for hours. No matter where that night's dream led me—I remember that I did everything from lunching with the Emperor of Germany to endeavoring to push over the Washington Monument—I invariably returned to that taxicab, jumped in nonchalantly, and was whirled off to fresh adventures.

"Presently, in spite of the recklessness bred in me by the exhilarating speed of the vehicle, I began to have qualms. We had just shot up one side of Mont Blanc, and were shooting down another, lined with pagodas, sailors, and giraffes—a most interesting spectacle. I rose from my seat and looked at the taximeter.

It registered a dizzying sum. I felt in my pocket. My pocket was graced by the sum of three dollars and forty cents.

"I wondered weakly how I should explain to the chauffeur when the moment of settling came.

"But further prudent cogitation was checked by a sudden stop at the Eiffel Tower, where the Siamese Twins informed me crossly that I was already late for lunch.

Hastily donning pumps and a kimono, which I found providentially under the seat, I jumped out.

"'Wait,' I told the chauffeur.

"'That's extra, you know,' he growled.

As he spoke he produced and wound up a fresh taximeter

"'Never mind,' said I nonchalantly. The new taximeter started whirring alarmingly, in unison with the one that had been working all the evening, while I hastened away, for Patti was beckoning to me.

"I then ordered a case of frogs' legs, and, in spite of the frowns of the French Cabinet, began at once to teach President Fallières the schottische, an operation rendered complicated by the fact that I had neglected to learn it myself.

"This little shortcoming on my part soon came to light, precipitating a war between the United States and France, and necessitating my immediate withdrawal from the dance-hall, where I left the rest of those present devouring with immense satisfaction the frogs' legs I had ordered.

Outside I met a young lady.

"'You can rescue me,' she observed ingratiatingly.

"She was a very adorable young lady.

"'Certainly,' I said without hesitation. 'Step into yonder taxicab.'

"We stepped into the confounded thing, just in time to elude a couple of hundred Russian secret police, who, she informed me, were all related to her, and constantly on her trail.

"The taxicab started at a terrific pace, while the secret police fell flat on their faces, as one man, setting up a most lugubrious howl of discomfiture.

"From whom do you fly?" I inquired of my companion, as we were careering through the north of France.

"She told me that there was a Russian prince who persisted in trying to stuff her to death at luncheon with a frightful salad of his own invention.

"'But why do you lunch with him?' I asked.

"'Because he has such interesting ears,' she answered, silencing me.

Then there came the tramp of many feet.

"'My stepbrother's coronation,' she cried. 'Let's get out and stop it.'

"'Extra if you get out!' bawled the chauffeur.

"'Let's stay in,' I suggested, with a sudden economical qualm.

"'Extra if you stay in!' cried number seven hundred and sixty-five wriggling with enjoyment, and setting a new taximeter going with a sound like a mass-meeting of hornets.

"We got out. But we hadn't walked far before we saw that the sound of tramping was caused by the two hundred secret police, my companion's relatives, who were approaching at a gallop, each bearing an enormous dish labeled *Salade à la Russe*.

"Behind came the Russian prince, trying to look dignified and amorous, a difficult job when you take into consideration that he was riding in a wheelbarrow and playing *'Ich Liebe Dich'* on a bassoon.

"Seizing my hand in terror, the young lady fled toward the taxicab. We tumbled in higgledy-piggledy.

"'Where to?' I inquired.

"'What's the opposite of Russia?'

"'Japan.'

"'To Japan!' she shouted at the chauffeur.

"'Oh, bliss!' cried he, winding up two new taximeters built like Japanese dolls. And off we flew.

"It was not long before I noticed that we were traveling via Iceland.

"'Take the direct route!' I cried.

"'Extra for conversation,' murmured the chauffeur gleefully. And he handed me his photograph in kilts.

"'Oh, I hope you have enough for the fare,' remarked the young lady by my side very sweetly, 'because I haven't a red cent.'

"With which words she calmly fed two ten-dollar bills to a pet armadillo which had appeared on the scene.

"I stood up, steadying myself as best I could, for we were whizzing along at a terrific rate, and looked at the taximeters set up on the front of the vehicle.

I added up the various sums registered by them.

"Then, utterly scared and stupefied, I fell back in my seat, no longer a reckless dreamer, quite alive to the state of affairs.

"The total I owed was two hundred and eighty-three dollars and fifty cents.

"'Are you ill?' asked the young lady. 'Good night.'

"The next thing I knew was that I was in my room, lying in bed, rubbing my eyes. For one delicious fraction of time I grinned from ear to ear.

"'Woke up without paying,' I chuckled.

"For some days I went about among my friends telling them of that dream experience, ceaselessly gloating over the way I had circumvented number seven hundred and sixty-five, never suspecting what horrors were in store for me as a result of my unhallowed ride.

"Then, about two weeks after the first dream, I had another, in which I found myself suddenly confronted with that individual.

"His eyes fairly flashed fire; his whole frame, grown to gigantic proportions, quivered with fury. He seized my throat.

"'Two hundred and eighty-three dollars and fifty cents!' he shrieked.

"Nothing that I might say or do would even suggest the deadly pressure of his grip, the abject terror that his eyes drove into me. Speechless and trembling, I fumbled in my pocket and drew forth—five dollars.

"With a shriek of rage, he drew back and struck me squarely in the face.

"I awoke.

"I was lying on the floor of my room. Apparently, I had fallen from bed; and, what is more, suffered a severe blow, for there was a lump on my forehead.

"For a week I was spared seeing my enemy. Then, from a pitch-dark alleyway, he sprang out on me one night, with long ghostly fingers twitching toward my throat and eyes flaming red in the darkness.

"'Pay!'

"His voice came hissing through his bared teeth. I had eighty cents in change. I started to run, he close behind. Suddenly I felt fingers—talons rather—on the back of my neck, and a mighty push, which sent me hurtling over the edge of a precipice.

"Down I went, down into space, down toward jagged rocks, glistening miles below me.

"When I woke up I was quivering all over and covered with cold sweat. In the glass my face showed white as a sheet; my hair was actually upright on my head.

"Three nights later came another encounter with seven hundred and sixty-five. I shall not recount it. The memory of it makes me shudder still. Two nights later he caught me again. After that he waylaid me every time that I went to sleep.

"I became shaken and racked with terror; I did all in my power to keep awake. I took stimulants; I joined day-and-night gambling games—everything. Naturally, it was useless. I began to doze off at all sorts of places—in street-cars, at table.

"And as soon as I was asleep the horrors that I found were such as to drive me back, trembling and terrified, into wakefulness. My life became a hell. I felt a weakening of my grip on things; I foresaw madness or death. And, in desperation, I sought for some means to release myself from persecution.

"Now, I had noticed one thing. In each dream I always seemed to have in my pocket the same amount that I had actually possessed on going to sleep. Whatever paltry sum I would tremblingly offer to my enemy, the chauffeur, was sure to be in my pocket when I awoke.

"It occurred to me that if I once could get hold of two hundred and eighty-three dollars and fifty cents I might pay seven hundred and sixty-five what I owed him, and enjoy once more a night's rest.

"But how get two hundred and eighty-three dollars and fifty cents? I am a man of narrow means. To me a ten-dollar bill is an event, a twenty-dollar bill a revelation.

"My circle of acquaintance is in like case. When, feeling my reason going, I canvassed my friends. I found that I might possibly raise a paltry two hundred.

"Then I saw your ad. I realized that I had a chance. Hence my visit to you last night—my strange request.

"As soon as I got your check, and

dropped asleep, I actually started courageously to look for seven hundred and sixty-five—actually summoned him when we met, as I would any ordinary taxicab chauffeur. He appeared astonished when I haughtily handed him the check. He scrutinized it carefully.

"'Ha, very good!' he said. 'Topley—excellent name—wealthy man.'

"Let me congratulate you, Mr. Topley. Your credit is good even in dreamland."

The speaker paused; his eyes began slowly to close. Then, with the old look of terror, he forced them open again. But I scarcely noticed this strange action on his part. I was beside myself with psychic enthusiasm.

"That's the finest dream-story I have ever heard!" I shouted. "I promised a liberal reward. Here!" Rushing to my desk, I tore up the check for two hundred and eighty-three dollars and fifty cents, wrote out a second check, and handed it to him. He jumped from his chair with delight.

"Five hundred!" he shouted. "Oh, thank Heaven! Thank Heaven! Now, I can sleep again."

"Why, what do you mean? Didn't you settle with seven hundred and sixty-five?"

He looked a bit embarrassed.

"I have a confession to make," he said. "The fact of the matter is that seven hundred and sixty-five was so overjoyed at getting paid, so impressed with the sight of that check that his whole manner changed. He became exceedingly deferential to me. He told me that I might have credit to any extent in his taxicab.

"At once the lust for taxi-riding seized me. And just at that moment the young lady, whom I had rescued in the original taxi-dream, showed up.

"She was weeping.

"'Just as I have an appointment for ten-fifteen to be Queen of Mesopotamia,' she sobbed, 'my confounded aeroplane has to go and get spavined.'

"As I already told you, she was a very adorable young lady. I promptly volunteered to take her to Mesopotamia, and did. When I got back I found that I owed seven hundred and sixty-five another two hundred odd. Now I can pay him. Excuse me. I'm going to sleep once more."

I seized the man by the shoulder, shaking him roughly. He opened his eyes.

"Look here," I began severely, "no more of this."

But his head had fallen forward. He was fast asleep.

Suddenly he raised his hand.

"Taxi!" he cried; and then, airily: "Peking!"

"Oh, come, confound it, cut it out—wake up!" I roared, shaking him violently. But it was useless. All my efforts only seemed to help his snores. Stretched at full length on my carpet, he smiled in blissful slumber.

"Yes, we're going to Peking," he murmured once; and later: "So you swapped your pet armadillo for a trick mackerel? Very wise—very wise."

Then he began the most agonized series of groans.

I made a last effort. I shook him until I was out of breath. This time he awoke.

"Oh, thank you," he said, rubbing his eyes, very dazed. "You were just in time. The Emperor of China was about to have me shot for overspeeding along the top of the Great Chinese Wall."

"You blamed fool," said I, "how much did the taximeter register when you last saw it?"

"Twelve hundred and eighty-one dollars and sixty cents," he replied, smiling sweetly.

I folded my arms.

"I wash my hands of you completely," I told him. "In the bank I have about five hundred dollars. I cannot raise any more for a month. It looks to me as if your idiotic craze for taxicabbing with adorable dream-ladies—"

He was still smiling.

"I remarked," he said, "that, when you woke me up, the Emperor of China was about to have me shot for overspeeding."

"Yes," I growled impatiently.

"Well, number seven hundred and sixty-five was shot."

Then he slept—peacefully, like a little child—for upward of seventy-two hours.

Little as I know about writing, it seems to me that this is where I should stop.

THE LION'S CUB.

BY RICHARD BARRY.

Wherein father and son are at war with each other, and a family is divided against itself.

CHAPTER I.

THE LOVERS.

AS Walt Dugan turned south on Harrison Street, his step faltered for the first time.

He had been walking briskly, with his head up and a deep blaze glowing in his grave, black eyes. His hands had been clenched, and he had been swinging them tensely at his sides. Some very powerful emotion had evidently made him oblivious of his long walk over the hot pavement, but now this spell of abstraction was suddenly and curiously broken.

Some one might have spoken a word to him, so marked was his change from the look of a determined, vigorous man to that of a faltering, immature boy. But nothing visible had happened.

Walt was nearing home. That was all that really bothered him.

The little shanty of flimsy scantling and galvanized-iron, which was one of hundreds that had been hastily erected on Tar Flat, following the great fire, loomed ahead of him, only a block away, and his nerve suddenly deserted him.

He paused on the sidewalk, and thoughtfully scratched the back of his neck. Then a quick, boyish smile spread over his features, and he hastened on. There was neither deep emotion nor hesitation in his manner now. He was merely a stout, hearty Irish lad on his way to supper.

Just before he reached the little shanty, Walt paused again. This time a smile of mischievous guilt overspread his amiable features, and a blush mounted to his temples. He was in front of a shanty as flimsy as his father's, one that adjoined it so neatly that the gutters of one roofing deposited their fog drippings into the iron gutters of the other. One could shake hands from the bedroom window of one house to the kitchen window of the other.

Walt rapped gently at the door of his neighbor's home. Then he stepped back and, in trepidation, awaited the answer. There was a hurried movement, a significant pause, and then the door was partly opened. After one good look at the caller, the door was opened wide, and the boy stepped within.

Holding the inner knob, her eyes luminous with happy light, stood a comely, buxom girl.

"Mary," he cried, and took her in his arms.

"Walt, it's good to see you," she managed to exclaim through the mufflings of his embrace.

An onlooker might have supposed that a year had marked their separation, whereas but four hours, at the most, had passed since a similar scene had been enacted in the same place. He kissed her hair; he kissed her forehead; he lingered over her eyes.

Then, drawing his arms fully and firmly round her, he gathered her to him in one mighty pressure, and held her with a fixed tensity of inviolate purpose.

Suddenly she crumbled in his embrace and struggled feebly for freedom. "Ach, lad, ye hurt me!" she complained, and leaped backward, tossing her head, and looking upon him with a sharp glow of resentment. She began, petulantly, to fix the pins at the back of her neck, and made a show of displeasure.

"Mary, my darling," he cried, standing back awkwardly and letting his huge hands fall listlessly to his sides, "I wouldn't hurt ye fer th' world." He looked upon her with hopeless solicitude, as an elephant might look upon a lamb it had accidentally trampled. "Sure, it's the strength in me's so bad, not my heart or my head, sweetheart," he pleaded with pitiful earnestness.

"It's that Rincon Hill Athletic Club that's put you to the bad, Walt Dugan," she admonished. "And you no longer distinguish between a wrestling-match and a kissing-bee. What nice girl do ye think'll ever want you, with your rowdy ways!"

She passed through the door into an inner room, with her head proudly arched, and without a further glance in his direction.

He stood as if stunned, pain and bewilderment and shame apparent in his emotional features. He believed all that she said, utterly, finally, as though it had been uttered with a flash of lightning from Sinai. He stood in the middle of the little sitting-room, looking dully at his feet, his hat lying in the corner where, upon entering, he had impulsively dropped it.

She turned at the door and relented, quite the mistress of the situation, and looked him over with the proud, affectionate glance of ownership.

"Oh, don't take it so seriously," she laughed. He started forward with an athletic stride. She checked him with a gesture. "But don't think I'm Turkey Bingo when you try to kiss me."

His arm was round her waist again, and his next attempt, being of pianissimo tone, was received with rapturous warmth.

"You're learning," she blushingly admitted, as she escaped again from his arms. "And now you can come help me peel the potatoes."

She led the way into the kitchen, and he followed. She took an apron from its peg and tied it on herself. She took a pan from its peg, filled it with water, and placed it on the table. Then she filled another pan with potatoes, took a knife from the drawer, and seated herself. Soon she was at work, and as she worked she sang:

My name 'tis Ned O'Maney;
I was born near Lake Killarney;
I can fight and dance and sing;
I can plow, and reap, and mow;
And when I meet a pretty girl
I never practise blarney—O!

He sat uncomfortably in a chair, looking on. Gradually he lost his feeling of being ill at ease. At length he asked: "Where do I come in?"

"In what?" She paused between the bars of the song.

"In the work?"

She shook the knife at him. "You come in right there—watching. That's all you have to do."

Another happy pause. Again he spoke, this time looking at his feet. "I'll have to tell you, Mary, sooner or later, so it might as well be now—"

She looked at him intently, with a shrewd smile. "You didn't land the job," she said simply and sweetly.

"How did you know?" he blurted.

"The way you kissed me," said she, and laughed the laugh that made him forget all the hurts and disappointments.

Another pause, which was awkward to him, ensued, during which she merrily plied her knife under the black loam and over the shiny white of the new potatoes. Meanwhile her singing rang through the small kitchen with reverberating insistence.

To him it seemed that her spirit was oblivious of the hurt under which he labored. He searched vainly for words in which to tell her. He shifted uneasily in his chair. He weighed one foot, then the other, over the opposite knee, and still the words would not come.

Somehow her singing, her gaiety, her coquetry, seemed ingeniously cruel. For one brief instant he wondered if, after all, she really loved him.

Then her luminous, kind glance upon him rebuked his doubts. Her melting, lustrous eyes looked his way, from time to time, with a longing which was almost maternal. Little did he know that she was finding it difficult to restrain a wild impulse to fling down her knife and the potatoes, and to forget her work and all proprieties, while she soothed him with caressing understanding. Finally, he could stand it no longer.

"You don't seem to care," he said, and there was a tone of accusation in his voice.

"Why should I?" she laughed. "That's not the only job in San Francisco."

"No," he admitted, then smiled his quizzical smile. "But it seems as if I'd applied for all the others."

"Shucks!" she replied. "You're just tired, Walt, that's all. It's a hot day for this time of year. You'll be all right in the morning."

She rose, her peeling done, and placed the pan of freshly white tubers under the faucet in the sink.

He was beside her in an instant, with his arm round her.

"You don't care, Mary," he said with suppressed heat.

She looked at him with a calm, gentle smile, and placed her two hands on his shoulders.

"Don't you think I care, Walt?" she said in a low, tender voice.

"Do you, Mary?" he asked, almost pitifully.

"More when you haven't a job," she answered wistfully, averting her face, "than I would if you were president of the United Railways."

Her head sank into his arms, and for a moment they stood, silently communing.

"But if I don't get a job pretty quick, we can't get married in June," at length he persisted.

"By June I'll be earning twelve a week," she said archly, with a suggestion of pride, which he instantly resented.

"What!" he exclaimed. "What difference does it make how much or how little you earn? Haven't you agreed that you'll quit all this working idea, give up your stenography and everything, as soon as we're married?"

"Yes, Walt," she quickly corrected. "Of course, I don't think of it seriously. Even twelve a week, though it's a lot for a girl, isn't much for a man; but still" — she looked at him archly, pursing her lips with the coquetry he could never quite fathom—"don't you think that my little twelve a week would help, especially if that was the only twelve that either of us could earn?"

"I do not," he replied decisively, walking away. "I don't propose that my wife shall work at anything, except at keeping my house in order."

"Oh, Walt, don't be pig-headed," she cried. "Of course, these theories of yours are all very nice, and you know I admire you for them, and quite agree with you about everything you believe. I know that you're the goodest and truest and bravest man that ever lived, but you mustn't be pig-headed, too, in the bargain."

"It's not pig-headed to stick by a principle, at any cost."

"Suppose we couldn't be married in any other way?"

"I'll get a job."

"You've just said you've applied for all the jobs there are, and couldn't get any of them."

"Oh, I was only talking then."

"It seems to me you've been working pretty hard to get work ever since you got out of school, six months ago."

"I thought I had, but I guess I'll have to work harder yet to get work."

"I guess there's something in what your father says, after all," continued the girl musingly, "that your schooling has been a handicap to you. At any rate, it has been a hard thing to overcome, to begin with. You're so big and strong and intelligent that, for your age, you ought to know some kind of a trade. When employers find out that you don't know any, they don't understand it, and it's only in shops and offices that they place any value on schooling."

"Yes," interrupted Walt, "you are right; and in shops and offices they don't want me, because I don't know stenography or typewriting, while my handwriting is a caution. Besides, I look like a day laborer, and I guess that's just about my level; but, even at that, I can't get a job."

"It's tough," said Mary.

"It is tough," assented Walt.

"Oh, well," she added, "there's always a to-morrow, and to-morrow you may find something."

"I don't care what it is," he added intensely—"if it is only enough to fix it so we can go to housekeeping in June."

At this moment a shade was raised

in the window across the way. "Mother's home," said the boy; "so I guess I'll have to go over. Dad'll be back in a bit." He started for the door, asking: "When are your folks coming home?"

"Not to-night," said Mary. "Mother and father have gone over to Richardson's Bay on the firemen's picnic, and the kids went up to Aunt Jessie's to stay over Sunday."

"Then why peel all those potatoes?" asked Walt, as he passed out of the kitchen.

"Oh, they're stock potatoes," said Mary, as she followed him to the door, "for the morning fry."

They were now at the front door, and Walt had his arms around her again.

"I'll be over right after supper," he said as he kissed her.

"I'll wait for you," she said.

CHAPTER II.

THE LION OF TAR FLAT.

WHEN Walt crossed the threshold of his own home, the buoyancy he had shown with Mary Connolly left him; the hesitation he had shown on the street left him. Now he was neither happy nor morose.

Into his face came a dull, dogged look of determination, as though unconsciously he were preparing to meet some customary opposition.

He hung his hat on a peg on the rear of the street door and looked about on the sitting-room. Its sole luxurious appointment consisted of a horsehair sofa and a horsehair rocker. A redwood board protruded from one side of the room, and formed a crude mantel. On this lay some sea-shells from the Cliff House and a big pine cone, souvenirs of his outings with the Rincon Hill Athletic Club.

The walls possessed two ornaments; one a chromo-lithograph of his father and mother on their bridal day, the father's massive, hairy hand laid ponderously on her shoulder with a weight that seemed enough to crush her.

The second frame held an ornately scrolled certificate, which testified that in the previous year Walt Dugan had won the amateur welterweight boxing championship of the allied south-side athletic clubs.

Walt crossed the second room, which was his mother's and father's bedroom, and entered the kitchen. There he found his mother preparing supper. She was a slight woman, who could not have tipped the scales at half the weight her son showed.

Her one note of beauty lay in her deep, melancholy, wistful eyes, which seemed ever searching patiently and dumbly for an understanding which had ever been withheld. There was the stoop of the constant workwoman in her shoulders, and an air of resigned weariness in all her attitude. She brightened somewhat when her son entered.

"Oh, it's you, Walter," she said, and paused in the midst of mashing turnips to cast a proud, affectionate glance his way.

"Who else could it be?" he asked, laughing.

"Your father," she said with a sullen curtness and went on with her work.

"What have you been doing this afternoon?" he asked.

"I've been to a meeting of the Tar Flat Mothers' Association," she answered.

"Giving advice?"

"No. Listening to what one of them speakers from Nob Hill had to say about bringing up boys."

He sat in a chair, and she did not see his smile as he questioned her. "It's too late now, isn't it, to listen to such advice? I'll be twenty-one next fall."

She turned on him with a beaming countenance.

"Ah, but it spoke so much to my heart, to tell me I've been right in keeping you in school, and in going against your father when he wanted you to work. The speaker said boys need open air, lots of exercise, and just enough book-learning. And that's just what you've had."

Walt rose precipitately, and paced up and down the room. Without looking at him, she asked in a less happy voice: "You don't like me to belong to the Mothers' Association, do you?"

"Of course I do," he assured her. "Only I wish you'd take father with you. It might change him."

"Never mind your dad, Walter. He didn't want ye to finish school; but, thank Heaven, I've had my way with you, and now ye can do what he wants ye to—go to work."

"I hope so, mother," said Walt, concealing his trouble.

"And ye won't go off with the athletic club training no more, will ye?"

"No, mother."

"And ye'll not stay over Sunday at San Rafael no more?"

"No, mother."

"And ye'll not mind what ye're dad says to ye no more, 'cause ye'll go to work now?"

"I hope so, mother."

By this time she had felt his trouble, and she turned on him solicitously. She gave one shrewd look at him, then dropped her work and gave him all her attention. "There's something wrong, Walter," she said. "Tell me — what it is."

"I can't tell you just now, mother," he said, turning to the door. "Wait till dad comes home."

He passed into her bedroom. She followed him, vaguely alarmed. "Tell me. Tell me," she demanded.

"No," said he, firmly. "Wait till dad comes."

"Then ye didn't get the job at Farman's?"

"No."

"What's the matter?" She placed her arm on his.

"Wait till dad comes," he repeated gravely, impressively.

"But can't ye tell me, yer mother?" she pleaded. Then she stepped closer and whispered, significantly: "Perhaps I can understand better."

"Wait till dad comes," was all he would say.

"Tell me first?" she asked, vaguely apprehending trouble. "I know better how to break it to him than you do."

"No!"

Before he could say more there was a heavy step on the walk outside, a massive hand was laid on the door, and it was thrust rudely, almost violently, open. Then in stalked Mike Dugan, his sleeves rolled up, his coat over his arm, his flannel-shirt open at the throat, and revealing a sinewy, sweaty neck.

"Hallo, Mollie!" he roared. "I'm hungry enough to eat my weight in bobcats!"

"It's most ready, Mike," she said patiently, and turned to the kitchen.

Mike Dugan flung his coat on the horsehair sofa, his hat on a chair, and stamped through to the kitchen. His curly black hair hung low over his great forehead; his blazing black eyes, untamed by a hard day's work, went straight, in their honest, determined manner, to the boy who was waiting behind the door of the bedroom.

Some instinctive cringing, a mere desire to get out of the way, held Walt from his father, but Mike knew that the boy was there even before he saw him.

"Well," he thundered, "did ye spike that job?"

"No," said Walt calmly, looking at him fearlessly.

"What!" cried the father, pausing with a threatening gesture and looking at his son with a heavy scowl. "No job?"

"No job," said Walt simply, while an amused smile hovered over his mouth. It was the same sort of shrewd, playful, understanding smile that Mary Connolly had had for him when she rebuked his tempestuous love-making; a smile of superior understanding; the smile of wisdom opposed to an emotion.

"Ye saw Casey?" growled the father, his great right fist thrust into his greater right hip.

"Yes," said Walt, still smiling.

"At Farman's?"

"Yes — at Farman's," answered the boy, squaring his shoulders and slowly breathing the defiance that came from his father's manner.

"Well!" The father paused sternly, ponderously, impressively, on the word, looked his son over with one searching sneer, and stalked through the bedroom into the kitchen, saying: "And they tell me I'm yer father! Huh!"

Mrs. Dugan was fitting the crust into a pie, and she did not so much as glance up; while Mike took a basin from the bench, filled it with water, soaped his hands, washed and rinsed them. He turned, with the towel in his hands, and mopped back the crop of black curls that clustered over his forehead.

Thus refreshing himself from the day's toil, he glanced across the kitchen, past his wife, and beheld the stalwart form of his son in the opposite doorway. The smile of physical relief brought by the water died on his countenance, and he began mopping his cheeks and ears furiously. Then some soap got in his eyes, and he dug it out in a mild fury. When he next looked up, Walt called:

"Dad!"

"Don't speak to me," cried the father, enraged with the soap, while his wife, Mollie, went on imperturbably with her pie-making.

"Dad I've got to speak to you," said Walt. "To you and mother," he added with an impressiveness that brought a quick, frightened look from Mollie at the table.

"Ye'll not speak to me till ye've got a job," said the father in a more quiet tone, but with anger now concealed in it, as the glow hides behind the ashes of a partially consumed cigar.

"It's about the job I want to talk with you," continued Walt, now strangely calm and determined.

"Not a word!" exclaimed his father, who hurled the towel in a wet wad into the corner and stalked across the kitchen into his bedroom. The mother looked timidly after him and at Walt with brimming affection.

"Mother," said the son, "will you come in here? I've got to talk with you two, together, just for a little while."

There was no pleading in his tone, but he spoke as if uttering a carefully thought-out conclusion. With a patient and resigned stoop of the shoulders, the mother followed him into the bedroom.

The father had passed into the sitting-room, and was slicking his hair before a small mirror that hung there. He turned on them both, as a man facing his enemies, when they came toward him through the door.

"Dad," said Walt, "I want you to listen to me—for five minutes."

"What's it about — books or athletic clubs?" sneered Mike.

"Neither," answered Walt.

"I suppose you want to explain why you didn't get that job, when Casey himself told me it was there waiting for you. I suppose you've fixed up some other excuse for not going to work like an honest man, with your hands, now that you're just turning of age, and I've brought ye up to be a swell and a loafer."

"It's about the job—yes," said Walt, ignoring the sarcastic allusions.

"Well," said the father, backing against the door and placing his hands on his hips belligerently, "take five minutes, for it's th' last I'll ever listen to ye. Th' next time I send ye to a job, ye take it—if it's piling scrap into the dump. Now talk—for five minutes—that's the best thing to do—*talk!*"

"Father," said Walt, "Casey offered me a job at three dollars a day. It's not a regular job, but the work is pretty easy; it's being a sort of helper to the superintendent of all Farman's teamsters. He said there'd be more in it after a while, if I was steady and got on well with Farman himself and didn't get mixed up in any strikes—"

"Well! Isn't that good enough for you?"

"It is good enough, so far as the money and the work went, but there was another condition I didn't think I could stand for; I didn't think it was honest."

"Honest!" bellowed Mike. "Work's honest, and it's the only thing in the world that is honest. Loafing and reading and running round in a pair of short pants on an athletic field are all kinds of dishonesty that there ought to be jails for to put men into."

"But this wasn't work, father, that Casey offered me. There wasn't to be any regular thing for me to do. I wasn't to be in charge of anything, or to have any regular duties. I was just to go round among the men and find out what they were doing—especially what they were talking about—and report it to the office in written statements every night. There was to be a sort of title of assistant superintendent to go with it as a blind."

Mike's eyes glistened for the first time with sinister pride.

"That's right. They've sized ye up. Ye're smart, and they know it."

"But I can't do that sort of thing. It's spying."

"Spying! It's nothing of the sort!"

"It is spying," stoutly protested Walt. "The whole job is to have me go round and find out what my fellow workmen are doing, without their knowing what I'm about."

"Ah, ye're in wrong, boy!" cried the father. "Take this, now, straight from yer dad; when ye're hired to do a thing, do it, and ask no questions. The fellow that pays ye fer doing it'll decide whether it's right or wrong. So long's ye don't steal or kill or lie or shirk, it's honest work."

"But it is stealing to go out among your fellow workmen and get something that belongs to them, when they don't know ye're after it."

"What belongs to them?" sneered the father. "Their talk?"

"More than anything else," cried the boy hotly. "A man can buy the work of their hands, but he can't buy their thoughts. That's what he wants to pay me to steal for him, and I won't do it."

"Look here, Walt Dugan," exclaimed Mike. "I always told Mollie the schools'd do ye no good after ye learned yer letters. It's the book-learning and the swell guys that's brought ye to this sort of talk. Yer head is full of moonwash and fine notions."

"I don't care what you call it, dad," said Walt, his lower lip quivering, "but I've decided I've got to live with my own conscience; and if I don't keep that clear, I'll not find it right to live with you or mother, or the girl I'd like to marry."

He turned to leave the room.

The father called after him in a loud, masterful voice.

"Now you wait, and give me five minutes."

Walt came back and faced him with a patient, hurt determination.

"Look a' here," cried Mike. "When I was sixteen years old I was earning my own living with them two hands." He held the toiling members forth, with fists clenched. "When I was eighteen years old I was earning eighteen dollars a week, paying my old dad's board, and sending my sister to school. When I was nineteen I was married and the head of a family.

"When I was twenty I was your father, with twenty a week coming in, regular, every Saturday night. I was foreman of the gang, and I've been foreman every day since!"

The father released his clenched hands to his sides, and paused to let his words sink in. Then he raised a long, threatening forefinger at his son.

"You know what they call me around here," he cried. "They call me the Lion of Tar Flat. Now, the least you can be is a lion's cub."

Walt looked up quietly, with that quizzical smile playing around his mouth. "I may be a cub," he said, "but I'll never be a cur."

As though enraged by some unyielding obstacle he could not fathom, Mike started forward, his face clouding with anger.

Mollie stood, timid, perplexed, and vaguely apprehensive, in the doorway, while Walt looked at his father with a simple smile of understanding, which the father took for defiance.

"You'll go to Casey to-morrow and tell him you'll take that job, and then you'll hold it," cried the older man.

"Dad, I never will," said Walt.

"You won't!" yelled the father, instinctively raising his arm in striking pose. "Then take that!"

He towered above the boy in the power of his wrath and physical might, and leveled a terrible blow at him. The rough, welted and wet fist of the father caught the son on the jaw, at the left corner of his mouth.

The boy dropped to the floor as if felled by an ax.

With a moan of anguish, his mother slipped to his side and, as if possessed by a superhuman strength far beyond her size, half dragged, half carried him into the adjoining bedroom.

CHAPTER III.

DESPERATION.

MOLLIE DUGAN bent over her son with imploring helplessness.

Many a hard moment had her rough life with the Lion of Tar Flat brought her, but this was the worst.

"Bubbie, Bubbie, speak to me!" she implored, unconsciously reviving the pet name of his baby days.

She chafed his wrists. She quickly undid his shirt, and felt over his fresh, strong body with a mother's caressing fingers. A galvanic shudder of the arms partially satisfied her, though no words came from the lips.

With a loud, wailing sob she fell upon his breast and kissed him on forehead, eyes, cheeks, and mouth.

Then, with her body close there to his, as it had not been since he was weaned, something pierced her startled faculties and caused her to sit upright. It was a rough sound from the outer room, and she listened with a rapt intentness. The door slammed.

Mollie rushed to the little sitting-room. It was deserted. She threw open the outer door, and almost fell onto the back of her husband, who was standing on the stoop, his sleeves still rolled up to the elbows, his face still glowing with red anger, his coat tossed carelessly over his left arm.

She tottered in the doorway and fell against him. He placed his right arm round her, not with affection, but with a majestic carelessness.

"Mike! Mike!" she sobbed. "What've ye done? What've ye done?"

"Quit blubbering," he said, and deposited her, not too gently, on the door-step. "Ye've ruined the bye enough."

"You struck him," she answered, her imploring eyes, filled with tears, turned upward to him. "Ye're own flesh and blood."

Mike winced under the charge, shrugged his mammoth shoulders, stooped down, picked up his little wife in his arms as if she had been a bundle left by a delivery-wagon, carried her inside, and placed her with a rough gentleness on the horsehair sofa. Then he ran his hands through his wet, black hair.

"That won't hurt him. It'll make a man of him," he said, and turned toward the door. "Good-by."

His hand was again on the knob.

She leaped for him and clung spasmodically to his arm, sobbing hysterically. "Ye wouldn't leave the house, Mike," she wailed, as though convulsed by some sinister foreboding.

"Wouldn't I?" he laughed roughly, seating her again on the horsehair sofa. "I'm goin' down-town. I got to go."

There was the slightest suggestion of a half-apology in his last tones.

"Where ye going?" she asked between her sobs, almost oblivious of his presence.

"Down-town."

"What for?"

"Business."

Even through her anguish a greater fear smote her. She looked at him in a new alarm.

"It's not about the strike again, is it?" she asked.

"None o' yer business—it's mine," he answered gruffly, hurling the door open.

One of his feet was on the little stoop. She was half frantic with grief and desperation, and she knew not what to say. She felt that he must not leave the house, but she felt also so pitifully tiny before his massive determination.

She was like a chip tossed on the froth of a rapids, swaying between her woman-love and her mother-love. Silently and instantly she prayed for something to stay him, but he was already out of the room, when, in irrelevant despair, catching at anything to hold him, she called:

"Not without yer supper!"

It was too late. He was gone. The door slammed. She heard his feet crash down the stoop and up the street. For minutes she sat rocking on the horsehair sofa, shaken with indistinct sobs.

Of a sudden her whole life seemed to have crumbled. She had endured for years and years, and had never given way to the overpowering but, before this, intangible weight of her fate. Now the floodgates of her emotion were dashed open, and she cried until she was exhausted.

At length she lay on the horsehair sofa, an inert mass. Since before her husband had left the room, in his mysterious and brutal impulse to get down-town, she had felt the call which was deeper than words to go to the inner bedroom, where her son lay. Why she had ever left him she could not answer.

It was not her mother-nature to leave him alone, in distress, but instinctive reasoning had told her it was more important to hold her husband. Now that Mike was gone, she ought to turn immediately to Walt; but, somehow, her own overwhelming sense of desolation and

despair prevented her from obeying that impulse.

Then a vague, mysterious fear slowly enveloped her. Once she roused herself and slipped her feet to the floor. She sat up and listened intently.

She even started to rise and go to the bedroom, but it seemed that a cold, clammy hand was laid upon her and held her where she sat. She was contending with emotional powers beyond her strength to master, and, in the hopeless muddle of her feelings, she again collapsed.

For minutes longer she lay there with fear overmastering her despair. Why she did not rise and rush to the bedroom she could not say. It was the thing for her to do. But over her, on her, even through, spread that cold, clammy thing, like a wet shroud.

She remembered the time that Betsy Brannigan died and the friends held a wake, and how the ghost came out in the middle of the guests and spread havoc until Mike Dugan and Red Clancy kicked the beer-cans out, and the whole party ran off, leaving Mollie to guard the corpse alone till morning.

At length, the sobbing all gone, the Thing in the room grew horrific with its vague presence. She rose unsteadily; she stumbled inertly to the door. She peered into the gloom of the bedroom.

The indistinct form of her son still lay where she had left it on the sheets. She rushed forward to him, half-way, and then as suddenly stopped. Fear again clutched her by the throat. She swayed and held herself by the little dresser. She looked, as if hypnotized.

He was but half on the bed; his legs were dangling to the floor. Both his outer and under shirts were torn open at the throat. She forgot that she had done this, and attributed it to Mike.

Her resentment toward her husband now amounted to a passion of hate. She looked at the pale face on the pillow, and lacked the courage to go nearer. Then it flashed over her that she herself had opened his shirts, and by a curious intuitional process of her half-crazed mind, she jumped to the conclusion that she was to blame for it all. For a short instant she even was willing to believe that she had struck the blow herself.

Finally, with a superhuman effort, she ran across the room and threw herself on the bed beside her son. He did not move.

She placed her hand on his cheek. It was cold and wet. She held her finger close to her eyes and peered intently under the late twilight that fell dimly between the houses. They were red with blood.

"Ah-h-h-h!" she shrieked, and her cry rang out with staccato intensity, the first relief to her overwrought nerves.

Now the fear was gone. A warm, terrible agony consumed her, a mingling of grief and apprehension. She drew his body close to hers, as though she would breathe the breath of life again into it, as she had once breathed it upward of twenty years before. She chafed his hands with swift, deft fingers. They made no response, but lay in hers in cold, wet inertness.

"Bubbie! Bubbie!" she crooned softly into his ears.

There was no response. Then she went about placing him tenderly and securely on the bed, as if he were asleep. She smoothed out the pillow, and laid his head there tenderly. She placed his legs carefully over the quilts, and took off his shoes. All this was done in absent-minded abstraction.

Then she returned to his face where the touch of blood had repelled her.

"Walter! Walter!" she called slowly, insistently.

She reached over and pulled up the tiny shade from the window to let the few remaining shafts of daylight into the room. Now she saw his face distinctly. The eyes were closed, the mouth open, and the lower side of his face was a pulpy mass of blood.

She fell to her knees beside the bed, with her arm round him, and, placing her lips close to his ear, called with terrible distinctness: "Walter, it's yer mother! Answer!"

There was not the slightest response. She stood up and looked dumbly on her boy. Then, with a swift movement, an instinctive suddenness, she reached over him and pulled down the shade over the window.

"He's dead," she said slowly in a hushed, whispering voice.

She ran her hand once over her brow. She looked once dumbly round the dark room. She stood there silently for perhaps a minute, gathering her wits.

Then, once again, and for the last time, she went to the bed and felt of her son, slowly, over all his body. She took her kitchen-apron and wiped some of the blood from his face.

There was no need for light. She would know every minute detail of how he lay and how he looked, now and forever. Then she kissed him on the forehead, just above the gash.

Then she rose, a wiry, determined, self-possessed little woman, and reached in the dark for a peg behind the door, where hung her little black bonnet with its purple ribbon, the ribbon he, her boy, had given her. She tied the ribbon under her chin and ran a pin through the bonnet in the dark, instinctively, and with each minute that passed she grew more alert and more self-possessed.

She had swooned and had her cry in the outer room, before she knew what had happened. Now that she was sure, there was no time for demonstration of grief. There was only time to act. Her boy was dead. There was now the living to think of. Yet she turned for one last minute and sobbed on his breast, and kissed his hands and hair and forehead.

Then, jumping up with a pathetic little effort at determination, which was soon vitalized into a heroic struggle, she left the bedroom, carefully closing the door behind her.

Once in the sitting-room, however, the air seemed too stifling, and, as though fearing her courage would desert her, she flung open the outer door and vanished into the street. The door swung idly after her as she sped away.

On the way to the corner, Mollie was seen by three of her neighbors, each of whom called after her. She made no response, but hurried on; and they went back to speculate on what could take her from the house, in her best bonnet, at the supper-hour. At the corner she passed Dennis Flaherty, the patrolman.

"Good evenin', Mrs. Dugan, lifting his stick with friendly familiarity. "'Tis a right warm night we're after havin'."

"Sure it is," answered Mollie, and smiled on him. She was about to ask him the way to Farman's barn, but thought better of it, and hurried on.

At the following corner she turned down Harrisón Street, and proceeded north there for three long, hot blocks before she realized that she was going in the wrong direction. She was then within a few steps of Townsend Street, and remembered that she could take a car to within a block of the barn where she expected to find Mike.

Mollie boarded the car, and had ridden two blocks before the conductor reached her for her fare. She looked at him unintelligently, but then had the presence of mind to make a search in the bottom of her skirt, where she had a pocket. There was not a penny on her, so she said she would get off at the next corner.

"Never mind, missus; just wink the other way," said the jovial-faced conductor.

She relapsed into her seat, striving to shrink into a wee atom of humanity, fearing that every eye was on her, and so consumed with fear of discovery that she rode a block beyond her destination before she discovered it.

Then she left the car and retraced her steps. By the time she reached the barn it was nearly eight o'clock, and quite dark. There was no light nor any evidence of life about the place.

She paced up and down in front of the huge structure for several minutes, a tiny slip of mysterious humanity garbed in pathetic black. Then a slouching figure turned the corner of the barn and accosted her.

"What ye want, ma'am?" he asked.

"Is this Farman's?" she said.

"Sure," said he.

"Is Mike Dugan here?" she asked.

"At this time o' night? Well, I guess not," he answered, peering at her with curious interest.

"Ain't nobody here?" she continued, bewildered.

"Just me. I'm the watchman."

"Where might he be, then?"

"If he's not to home," said the watchman, "he's like to be down to the union headquarters, on the waterfront."

"Thank ye very kindly," said Mollie, as she turned with eager step.

Ahead of her, to the water-front, was a walk of a mile.

CHAPTER IV.

THE HOME-COMING.

For a mile, over the hard cement, Mollie Dugan walked that black night, her slight form buoyed by some inner sense of dire necessity. At times a murderous hand seemed to clutch her at the throat.

She tore at her collar and choked, then blinked her eyes, regained her poise and strode sturdily on. She was completing the arc of a half-circle around her own home, but she was unconscious of the distance or the direction in which she was traveling.

Only that thoughtless utterance of the night-watchman urged her on. Her husband must be at the union headquarters, and there she directed her steps. Children were playing on the cross-streets, and she hurried through the happy groups of little ones like a rabbit pursued by a hound through a litter of field-mice.

At length she stood outside of the dingy brick building on the water-front where she had once gone with Mike on Labor Day to sit, in her best shawl and bonnet, on the platform with him, who was one of the delegates, while a spell-binding attorney from North Market Street had told them, in glowing periods, what dignity lay in their lot as American workingmen.

There was a light in the upper windows, and on the curb in front stood a group of half a dozen lounging men, smoking ill-smelling pipes. They looked at her with a passing curiosity, while she sidled into the hallway and up the narrow, dark stairs.

A kerosene lamp was smoking at the head, and two passages, at right angles, led down two separate halls. Mollie paused before them, bewildered, and while standing there a man in shirt-sleeves, with a sweeping mustache and a brusk manner, came from a room near by. He stepped up to her and spoke gruffly.

"What you doing here?" he asked.

"I want to see Mike Dugan," said she.

"Ye can't see him. This is no place for women." He turned to go back into the room.

She grabbed him by the arm.

"I've got to see Mike Dugan," she whispered hoarsely.

"Ye can't," he answered, and pushed her toward the stairway. "He's on the general committee, and they're locked up."

He passed through the door and slammed it shut.

Mollie opened the door quickly and confronted the man, who had stopped to light his pipe. She glanced quickly round. They were alone in a room that held two desks and a number of chairs; it was clouded with grimy tobacco-smoke, as though it had recently been occupied by many men.

She went up to him, and spoke in a low voice: "I've got to see him. It's a matter of life and death."

He looked at her incredulously, but a grim certainty in her quelled him.

"Did ye come from them motor people?" he asked gruffly.

"No," said she, looking at him with pathetic, large eyes, in which the tears were beginning to gather.

"Who are ye, then?"

"His wife."

His manner changed.

"Take a cheer," he said, and, turning abruptly, left the room. Mollie sat dumbly and forlornly waiting for about five minutes. Then the man returned.

"Come with me," he said.

She followed him down the longest hallway until they came to the last door on the right. This he opened, and let her into another room, like the first, except that it was not freshly clouded with tobacco-smoke. She sank dully into a chair. She was almost unconscious again, without food and exhausted by her emotions.

"Wait," said the man. "Mike'll be with ye in a minute."

He left the room and closed the door. Again she sat, inert, so exhausted that she noticed nothing, not even the long passing of the minutes, which ticked themselves away, one after the other, until half an hour had passed.

Meanwhile, the man who had led her to the rear room returned to his office at the head of the stairs and promptly forgot her. He was writing, when his door was opened, and there entered a group of loudly talking men, in the center of whom was Mike Dugan.

The man at the desk looked up, and when he perceived the towering form of the teamster-foreman, he suddenly remembered Mollie.

The man called Mike aside.

"Dugan," said he, "there's a woman down to the end of the hall as says she's yer wife. She's lookin' fer ye."

Dugan glanced at him savagely, and then round on each of the men. Satisfied that none of the others had heard he asked, with a skeptical growl: "Where is she?"

"In No. 7."

"Thank ye," said Dugan, making for the door. "I'll be with ye in a minute, boys," he called to his companions.

When he opened the door of No. 7, Mollie was staring blindly at her feet. He started for her with a reproof, but she looked up at him with large, beseeching eyes, and before he could make a motion or say a word, she had thrown herself into his arms and was sobbing on his breast.

He reached round, pulled the door shut, seated himself on the chair she had left, and drew her to him.

His eyes grew larger, and a bead of perspiration started to trickle down under the huge curl over his left eyebrow.

"Ye shouldn't of come here," he said at length; for she was too hysterical to talk, and seemed to take it for granted that he knew all. He could get no words from her. Finally he shook her roughly and said:

"Speak, Mollie, speak! What's ailin' ye?"

"He's dead!" she wailed shrilly.

Mike clapped his huge hand over her mouth, and looked back toward the door with a terrible intentness.

"S-s-s-h!" he growled hoarsely at her.

"I tell you he's dead!" she shrieked through the fingers of his hairy fist.

"S-s-s-h!" he whispered, more gently this time. "Not so loud. Some one'll hear."

"But I tell ye, Mike, it's true," she moaned. "Ye kilt him!"

She passed it sibilantly into his ear, so low that only the two of them could have heard had they been in a crowd; but he started back with a guilty movement and glanced about the room, as though the world had heard and was after him.

"Calm yerself, Mollie; calm yerself," he whispered, and tried to soothe her, holding her in his arms as he might have held a baby. "Ye know I didn't mean to hurt the lad."

"Ah, but 'twas yer own fist, Mike, that done it. Didn't I see it with me very eyes? Didn't I see ye strike yer own flesh and blood—my boy, my Walter, my darlin' Walter? And in cold blood ye struck him down. Ye had no cause! Ye had no cause!"

Her sobs had now ceased, but her body was twitching in convulsive sorrow.

"Ye know I didn't mean it, Mollie," he said, looking on her in helpless might, slowly absorbing her grief.

"But I saw ye do it—with my very eyes."

This was all she could think of.

"Maybe he's not dead," said Mike, after a pause. "Ye might not of looked close. Ye was that scart."

"He's dead! He's dead!" she insisted. "I felt the blood. He didn't move. He was that cold and wet. Ugh!"

She buried her face in her arms.

Mike rose solemnly, went to the door, opened it cautiously, and looked outside. He could see no one. He closed the door carefully and returned to his wife.

"Listen, Mollie," he said. "Dry yer eyes, and come on now with me and get out of this. We've got to go back home. Ye may not be right, after all. And we must get there quick."

"They'll hang ye, Mike Dugan," she said, looking at him for the first time with a sane consciousness.

"Will they?" said he. He strode up to her with the great, magnetic power of his huge personality. "Will they?"

She hid her head in her arms.

"Heaven knows," she wailed, "I'll stand by ye, Mike. Ye've led me a hard life, but I love ye. Ye killed my boy, but I love ye, Mike Dugan. I'll stand

by ye. I'll lie or steal for ye—ye know that. I'm yer wife."

With this simple statement, uttered without passion, both seemed to accept the terrors and hardships the situation bore; and, now that the first shock was over, and that both were sharing it together, the atmosphere seemed cleared of much of its anguish.

"We've got to get out of this," said Mike.

He reached down, picked up the hem of her dress, and wiped her eyes with it. Under the rough, crude mask of the man a gentleness shone out supremely.

"Come!" he said, placing his arm round her. Again he peered out the door—saw no one. "Come. The road's clear."

They were half-way down the stairs when the door at the top opened, and a sound of loud laughter and fierce talk floated past them into the night. Steps were heard coming to the top of the stairs. Mike hurried his pace, dragging Mollie by the arm till she winced under the pressure. But they did not escape.

"Hey, there, Dugan!" a voice called after them. "Where ye goin'?"

"I'll be back in a minute." Mike called, as he reached the bottom of the stairs.

"Th' comity's waitin' fer ye," pursued the voice.

Mike did not hear. He was half-way up the block, with Mollie tucked under his arm.

She could hardly keep pace with the huge strides he made. And he went by curious, dark ways she had never traveled before.

As though perfectly familiar, he doubled down an alley and went for three blocks past out-houses and wood-sheds, in the dark, at a lumbering pace which made her breathless.

"Hold on," she at length complained. "I can't walk that fast."

He slowed his pace slightly.

"Where ye goin'?" she demanded.

"Home," said he laconically.

"It don't look that way," said she.

Then he halted her.

"Look here, Mollie," he whispered into her ear. "I may be a rough fellow, and I may 'ave done my bye hurt, not meanin' it, but I never run away from anything—not yit—and I don't commence to-night."

Reassured, she stanchly trotted along at his side for another ten minutes before either of them spoke. They were now over half the way home, and her sobs had entirely disappeared, but she was breathing very heavily, and again she complained of his fast pace. Again he slowed it for her.

"It's a hard world—a hard world," he exclaimed, wiping the mop of hair from his forehead. "Fer an honest workingman there's no way to turn that ye don't git bit. Th' men that hires ye beats ye down, an' th' men ye work with ain't got th' spunk to beat 'em up. Yer bye gets to be a tramp, an' ye try to take it out of him with a bit of a wallop, when yer wife comes an' tells ye ye passed him out fer good. 'Tis a hard world it is!"

Mollie made no response to this hard-headed philosophy. All her tears were gone, as though she were a wrung dish-rag. Moreover, her elbow was almost jerked from its socket where Mike was dragging her along; but at this pain she, Spartan-like, made no outcry.

At length they stood before the house. Mollie gasped. The door was open. With a sharp cry of fatal apprehension, she rushed into the sitting-room even before Mike, with his brawny strides, could get there, though he was close on her heels.

The bedroom-door was open, too. She realized it as she searched for the knob in the dark with her hands, too feverishly eager to wait for a match.

She rushed within and threw herself on the bed. There was nothing there.

Behind her, Mike struck a match and held it aloft. Its tiny flame threw a flicker of ghastly light over the room.

The bed was empty; the room deserted.

In the center of the pillow was a big splotch of blood, and the corner of one sheet was daubed with red. Mike lit a kerosene-lamp which stood on the dresser, and together they passed into the kitchen.

No boy was there. They went into Walt's bedroom. He was not there.

They passed eagerly and fearfully into the parlor. Still there was no boy.

Mike looked at Mollie, and Mollie looked at Mike.

"Well!" said the husband in a tone of accusation, as though asking her why she had had the impudence to follow him to his meeting-place, and to drag him back home for nothing.

Saying no word, Mollie led him to their bedroom, and pointed to the blood on the pillow.

"See fer yerself," she replied. "Ye made it so hot fer him he never wanted to stay in the house living, and he wouldn't stay here dead either."

Dugan's jaws became fiercely set, and he subsided into a chair, overcome.

"They've found ye out, Mike," said Mollie, coming to him and stroking his hair. "Ye're in line fer the gallows."

He subsided, still more limply, into his seat.

She quickly knelt at his side, embracing his knees."

"But I'll stand by ye," she said.

(To be continued.)

EBBERLY FARM.

By Helen Tompkins.

THERE are some men so deservingly hated that even Nature seems to become their enemy.

IT was a little house, little and old and unpainted, tucked away in a waving sea of coarse, unkempt sage-grass, fringed with patches of wild mustard that freckled the edges of the fields with a powder of golden stars.

For more than an hour Simon Carter had stood at the gate of the little brown house, waiting.

He was plain and shambling and awkward, was Simon, but he had a heart as golden as the wild-mustard blossoms, though few people knew it. He hid that as he hid many other things; he played the spendthrift as little with his thoughts as with other things.

So, as the sun rose higher, touching a single spark from the flaming brand of the mountain-ash that was as prodigal of color as a painter's shaken brush, Simon, waiting for the door of the little, shabby brown house to open, heard a voice behind him:

"What are you waiting here for?"

Carter turned—slowly—that he might not appear to be answering in haste.

"I came out here with a young man from town," he said unconcernedly. "He asked me to wait for him."

A shadow passed over the other man's face. He was gaunt and raw-boned, hard-mouthed and lean-jawed — a man whom rough usage might easily turn into a brute. "Was it young Aslin?" he asked.

Carter hesitated. He was telling himself contentedly that every second that he waited helped young Aslin just that much.

"Yes, it was Aslin," he admitted at last. "I guess, Mr. Lindsey, that he's got a right to see his uncle, if the old man don't object."

"Yes, but that is just it, you see—he does object." said Lindsey decidedly.

His lean jaw had stiffened in an ugly fashion and a little, thin, white line appeared suddenly down the middle of his forehead—a mark that his enemies had learned to know and dread.

"It's just exactly for that reason that I'm here, Carter, to protect Mr. Ebberly from persons of young Aslin's stamp. You know that quite as well as I do."

Carter knew it. He looked from Lindsey's hard face to the shabby little house set in the middle of the field, and then back at Lindsey again.

"Mr. Aslin asked me to wait for him," he said again quietly, and yet this time with an air of decided finality. "I don't know anything about the rights of the matter, Mr. Lindsey."

Lindsey hesitated. It was one thing

to obey Mr. Ebberly's instructions—it was quite another to interpret his language too literally, and to run the risk of mortally offending him.

"I'll go up to the house and see about it," he remarked.

Carter nodded indifferently. He was telling himself that Aslin had really had all the time that he had a right to ask for.

He looked thoughtfully at Lindsey as the latter cramped the wheels of his heavy wagon, climbed heavily out, and, knotting the lines about the whip-stock, strode up the narrow path between the clumps of variegated ribbon-grass and stalks of volunteer scarlet-flax.

There was a tiny calf, bound and hobbled, in the back of the wagon. It looked up at Carter with soft, liquid, suffering eyes, and he turned and walked hurriedly away.

He had to wait a long while even after that—long enough to grow very restless. The calf's mother, behind the fence at a little distance, lowed mournfully and nuzzled the lichen-clothed rails with soft, eager lips.

Then of a sudden the door of the little brown house opened and two men came out and walked down the path. The two were quarreling, and Carter took a quick, nervous step forward and then checked himself.

It was Lindsey who was speaking when they came within ear-shot.

"I am supposed to manage Mr. Ebberly's affairs for him," he said insolently. "That is what I am here for."

Though his tone was icy, Carter knew that he was in a towering rage.

If he was hasty, however, the younger man was more so. "I wrote a communication to my uncle last week which he says that he never received," he said angrily. "I am told that his letters pass through your hands—"

"They do," said Lindsey still insolently. "Mr. Ebberly told me that he did not want to be annoyed with you, Mr. Aslin—he repeated the same remark in your presence five minutes ago."

The young man's face had turned deathly white.

"Respect for Mr. Ebberly's age, and regard for the relationship that exists between us restrained me back there in the house," he said passionately. "You can plead neither relationship nor superiority of years, sir, and your insolence is unbearable. I warn you now—"

In spite of his hardihood Lindsey had retreated a half-dozen steps.

"Are you threatening me?" he asked in a changed voice.

"I am telling you here, and in Mr. Carter's presence, just what you may have a right to expect—if you venture to interfere in my affairs again! There was never any trouble between us—my uncle and me—until you undertook the management of his affairs."

Lindsey flashed a quick, interrogative glance at Carter.

"Have I said anything about you that was not true?" he said, turning back to Aslin.

"You had not been here at the farm a week when trouble began. To begin with, there was that letter from Chalmers with reference to the Addison affair."

"It was the truth, was it not—the things that Mr. Chalmers wrote?"

"Partly—and placed before Mr. Ebberly in the most injurious possible way for me. You had gained an ascendency over him by that time and you made things as black as you could. It was through you that my uncle transmitted the command that I should leave his house. It was through you that I learned that I was to be allowed no opportunity to vindicate myself."

"I have merely followed out my employer's orders, Mr. Aslin."

Carter was trying to keep the men apart now, but one of them was fairly insane with rage, and the other was but little better. He was rudely repulsed by both.

"I've tried my best to make my meaning clear," said Aslin, speaking with an effort. "I'll have no more of your meddling, Lindsey. Remember that!"

"What will you do to stop it?" asked Lindsey sharply and mockingly.

"I will do whatever is necessary!" The young man was past listening to the dictates of caution or prudence by this time. "I'll kill you like the low dog that you are, Lindsey, if you ever interfere in my affairs again!"

Lindsey climbed stiffly up into the

wagon and began to unwrap the lines from about the whip-stock.

"I'll do as I please!" he muttered; but, though he was no coward, he did not speak in a tone that was loud enough for Aslin to hear.

Carter had his arm across the younger man's shoulder by this time.

"You'd better come on now, Aslin," he said pacifically. "He's not your sort, you know, lad. You'd never be able to meet him on equal terms."

"I had something to say to him and I've said it!" retorted the other, but he followed Carter without turning his head. "I've been lied about long enough, Simon—the next falsehood that Lindsey tells will be his last. I'll kill him without scruple if he ever meddles with me again! I swear I will!"

Carter was afraid that Lindsey would say something else; but, fortunately, the man held his tongue.

The cow, beyond the low rail fence was lowing softly again and thrusting at the boards with her soft horns. From the wagon the calf answered her, and Lindsey kicked it brutally with his heavy boot. An instant later he caught up the lines and the heavy wagon rattled out of sight.

"You are foolish to get into trouble with Lindsey, Aslin," said Carter reprovingly, as he gave their own spirited horse his head. "He's little better than a common thief. It's a strange thing, but I've heard that he twists the old man about his finger just about as he likes."

"He does!" said Aslin bitterly. "I don't want to talk about the hound, Carter. I meant just what I said back there, however—remember that."

"About killing him?"

"Yes, I did. He's told a whole lot of lies about that Addison affair. And he's got Uncle Thad so that he won't listen to a single word that I say about it."

"He's a hard man, but a better man than our friend out there in the wagon, however," said Carter gloomily. "They tell me that man and brute alike on your uncle's place feel much the same about him—they fare much the same since Lindsey's been there. You know that mare that you used to ride—Jessie?"

Aslin nodded.

"Well, your uncle sold her to a Swede named Peterson—a man down on the river. He drinks a whole lot, but he's a pretty decent lot in the main, and he says—"

The horse shied at a fluttering leaf, and it was some time before Carter could get her back into her stride.

"I see a lot of Lindsey," he said, when he had set the whip back into its socket. "I pass the gate here usually on my way home, and he's nearly always somewhere about. He's making a good thing of the farm, Aslin—laying money by. He's a born manager."

Aslin was not listening.

Circumstances which came up later, fixed every incident of that day down firmly in Carter's mind. He drove Aslin about town for a while—the young man seemed moody and despondent—and he tried his best to make him talk. But Aslin had turned sullen and, when he spoke at all, it was to say just as little as possible.

Carter gathered that he was still brooding over the Addison affair, which had been put in the worst possible light before his uncle, and which had caused, apparently, an irreparable breach between them. Old Ebberly was harsh and exacting, and Aslin was as spirited and restless under control as an untrained colt. The combination, so Carter told himself, was a very bad one.

Carter was sincerely attached to the young man. He had no family ties of his own, and he had lived near the Ebberlys for years—long before Mrs. Ebberly died.

He loitered about town all that day, hoping to have an opportunity to talk to Aslin after he had recovered from the sulks, but the young man kept to his own quarters. Two or three times that day Carter was questioned about the matter.

Had Aslin really made threats against Lindsey's life? He evaded a direct answer to the questions, but they troubled him. They showed that particulars of the conversation of the early morning had, in some way, leaked out. He had not talked—nor had Aslin.

He was convinced that Lindsey, who was very unpopular in the neighborhood, had repeated the conversation; possibly, with the hope of gaining thereby sympathy for himself.

Despairing at last of being able to see Aslin, who kept persistently to himself, Carter about sundown started home. He was walking, and in his mind was a shadowy, half-formed determination to appeal to old Thad Ebberly himself.

Not that he was deceiving himself as to the probable result of such an interview. Ebberly was as hard as flint, and apparently he had determined to have nothing whatever to do with his sister's son. Lindsey had evidently convinced him of the latter's complete worthlessness.

It was nearing dark when Carter reached Ebberly's gate. He had given over by that time his half-formed intention of seeing the old man, and had made up his mind to go on home and to bed.

He did not care to meet Lindsey with the sense of young Aslin's wrongs fresh in his own mind. He was too friendly to the latter's interests, and too much of a partizan to risk his own temper.

There would be a full moon later. Carter saw it, rising beyond the autumn-splashed maple-foliage—a huge ball—round as a dandelion-globe and as yellow as the wild-mustard blossoms.

He noticed a light shining in the Ebberly sitting-room, and knew that the old man and Lindsey would be sitting over the farm accounts, which, prior to Lindsey's coming, had been in Aslin's hands for three or four years. He thought of the old man's failing wits, of Lindsey's opportunities for juggling with the figures in order to show young Aslin up in a discreditable light, and he raged inwardly.

Just then a shadow passed between him and the lighted window. Some one was prowling about the house.

For a moment a sense of deep uneasiness possessed Carter.

Human nature is a queer thing—you can never tell just how far it is to be trusted. He remembered Aslin's bitterness and wondered if he could be fool enough to be hanging about the place. And just then a cry rang out, a man's death-shriek, so full of horror and despair that Carter, an unimaginative man, shuddered with sick terror.

An instant later he heard the sound of heavy feet upon the hard-packed earth of the path, and a man, moving loose-jointedly—shamblingly—ran through the sagging gate, tearing it loose from its hinges as he ran.

He stumbled over the boards, retaining his balance with difficulty, and ran straight into Carter's arms.

"Here—not so fast!" said Carter sternly. "What devil's work have you been doing back there at the house, eh?"

"I haven't been *near* the house," said a faint, strangled voice. "I heard—"

"*Aslin!*"

Carter's arms dropped as if paralyzed as the other man twisted about in his grasp.

"Aslin, what are you doing here?"

"Carter, I'll swear I never touched him! I hated him enough to have done it—I'll admit that."

"Never touched who?"

"Him—Lindsey!"

Aslin was panting—his breath was coming and going in great, strangling sobs. In the moonlight his face was drawn and ashen; and, though he had twisted loose from Carter's grasp, unconsciously he still clutched at him wistfully like a terrified child. His teeth were chattering.

A terrible suspicion festered in Carter's mind.

"Was it Lindsey who cried out just now?" he asked. "Let me go, Aslin. Something has happened and there is no one in the house there but a helpless old man. Did you see him?"

"No, I didn't. I was between him and the gate. He's been trying to get me into trouble, Carter—Lindsey has. And he's got all the opportunity that he wants now that the books have been turned over to him. Uncle Thad will back him up in anything on earth that he says or does. He'd be glad enough to see me go to the penitentiary."

Carter shook his hand aside.

"You don't know what you are saying, Aslin," he said roughly. "Let me go. If anything ails Lindsey—"

"He came out of the house—while I was standing just outside the window," whimpered the boy.

"'Wait a minute, Mr. Ebberly,' he said all of a sudden, laying his pen down upon the table. 'Somebody is prowling about the place. I heard steps just now."

"Then he opened the door and I started to run. I was between him and the gate when he screamed. The fellow is dead, I tell you, Carter. Only the dying ever scream like that!"

Carter shook him again roughly.

"Shut up, Aslin—you must be taking leave of your senses!" he said harshly. "When did you ever hear a dying man scream?"

"I heard Hollis—just as the pile-driver struck him down on the section! He never spoke afterward!" whimpered Aslin.

After all, he was little more than a boy, Carter told himself remorsefully—a child playing with emotions that were too big for him.

"You'll have to wait here and let me see what is the matter, Aslin," he said more gently. "And you want to pull yourself together, lad—if there is something wrong with that brute, Lindsey.

"There's been a lot of loose talk that's not going to do you any good. You did not see him after he left the house, you say? You heard him get up to leave the room and you ran—you didn't want to have any words with him. You were half-way between the house and the gate when you heard him scream. Stick to that tale, Aslin, if it is the truth—for Heaven's sake. Don't get tangled up!"

He thrust the lad out of the way as he spoke and ran up the path. It was almost as bright as day by this time, and half-way between the house and the gate—a little nearer the house, possibly—he found what he sought—the form of Lindsey, lying a little back from the path where the rush of his assailant's onslaught had carried him, one hand clenching the slipping ribbon-grass in his fingers.

A single glance told Carter that he was dead. It was not light enough, of course, to determine much about the cause of death. He had a scarf knitted about his throat, and this was wet with a thin, little stream that was dripping from a wound somewhere near his heart.

"I'll have to go inside and telephone for Mills to come out, Aslin," Carter called out over his shoulder. "The chap is dead. Has your uncle a telephone?"

But Aslin did not answer. The old man himself—Ebberly—thrust a window at the front of the house open.

"What is the matter out there?" he asked querulously. "Who did you say was dead?"

The door was not locked and Carter thrust it unceremoniously open with his foot.

"I'm going to telephone for the doctor and the coroner, Mr. Ebberly," he said curtly. "Mr. Lindsey has been killed, and his body is lying in the path out there."

The old man staggered backward.

"Dead—!"

His voice dropped suddenly. "It was not—Aslin?" he said in a wheedling voice.

"They will *say* that it was—I cannot blame them!" said Carter uncompromisingly. "The lad made a lot of threats, you see, Mr. Ebberly; he was running away from the house when I halted him just now.

"And when I called to him a moment ago he would not answer me. I hope that he's not fool enough to think that flight will help his case any."

"And you are his friend!" groaned the old man helplessly. "It's more my fault than it was the lad's, Carter. I knew his quick temper and I should never have set him wild—"

They were late getting the coroner, although the doctor had come out at once. There was nothing that the latter could do.

The dead man had evidently been stabbed twice—clean-cut wounds—the one piercing the heart, the other evidently struck a little later and just as the man was falling and which barely grazed his side.

Both wounds had been dealt with rather a peculiar instrument, judging from their appearance. It was not an ordinary knife, although it had a keen point. And this weapon was missing. There were rumors that the doctor declared that the wounds could have been inflicted only with a needle-pointed stiletto.

A gang of Italians working on the railroad near by were known to carry queer daggers—the doctor had attended one of them who had been stabbed mortally in a drunken row.

The body was removed to the house and the inquest held about ten o'clock. Carter, who, aside from Ebberly himself, was practically young Aslin's only friend, had a clever man out from town who looked over the ground thoroughly in the young man's interests.

Aslin himself, to Carter's surprise, had already consulted a lawyer; and, in accordance with his advice, beyond the bare explanation of his presence on the scene of the tragedy that night at the exact hour of the crime, was saying nothing.

"He's a clever chap—it's a pity that he couldn't have been clever enough to have held that tongue of his before he talked so much yesterday," Grey said to Carter. "As it is, there's already enough against him now to hang a dozen men."

"And yet he's not guilty," said Carter gloomily.

"I'm not saying that he is. You talked to him this morning, Carter. How did he say he reached the house last night—through the front gate?"

"No, it seems that he came up past the stables. He owned a mare, Jessie, and some one had told him that the old man had sold her. He went up through the lot to see about her."

"And, incidentally, left every gate on the place open, so that the cattle have destroyed every chance of being able to trace the footsteps of the murderer—granting that it was not Aslin, himself, who did the job," said Grey grimly.

"The fellow, whoever it was, was hanging about the house for an hour or more—it's strange that Aslin didn't see him. It's a cinch the verdict of the coroner's jury will hold Aslin, Carter, without bail."

It did. Aslin told the same rambling story on the witness-stand that Carter had already dragged from him by piecemeal.

He said that he had quitted home just before dark intending to go out to the farm to see just what Ebberly and Lindsey were up to, and to have it out with the former, if necessary, about the mare.

Had he meant, as he expressed it, to "have it out," with Lindsey, too, that night? He was in an ugly mood, he admitted vaguely. He meant to tell Lindsey plainly just what he might expect if he did not leave his—Aslin's—affairs alone.

Allowed after that to go on, he took up the thread of his story. He told it from now on, however, with less confidence. He had found the mare gone, as he had been told. No, he persisted, he could not say that this fact had added in any way to his feeling against Mr. Lindsey or his resentment against his uncle.

He felt that he had been badly used, and he had made a great many threats before that.

No, he had seen nobody—heard nobody—about the place that night—that is, outside the house. He waited outside, peering through the window, until he became conscious that he was losing his self-command. The window was open and the two men inside the room were looking over some figures.

No, he did not know what they were. The two were evidently disagreeing about them—that is, about what the total amount ought to be—and then he heard Lindsey say suddenly: "Somebody is prowling about the place. I thought that I heard a little noise some time ago, but could not be sure about it."

That was about what he said; witness could not be sure of the exact words. The older man did not offer any remonstrance, he simply laid his pencil aside and Lindsey got up and quitted the room.

The witness, though called back to the stand two or three times after that, invariably grew excited and incoherent at this point. He did not contradict himself, it is true, but his evidence lacked clearness.

He went on to say that he had started to run after that—had heard the door behind him open and close—a moment later heard Lindsey cry out. That was the gist of his evidence.

"It lacks—the right sound, somehow," said Grey in an irritated fashion. "I'm going to talk plainly to you, Carter, and it's something, plain-speaking is, that I cannot indulge in with Ebberly. He is too likely to lose his temper.

"Aslin is exactly the man to be guilty of just this kind of a fool-crime. He's headstrong—not over well-balanced—and he was busily nursing a large-sized grouch. And there is no doubt that he,

had very irritating elements to deal with: an old man in his second childhood and a rascal.

"I don't like to speak ill of the dead, but Lindsey was no better than a common thief. He had served a good long term once for forgery. And he would have been sent up on a more serious charge, if he hadn't happened to have a very clever lawyer who was able to get him off on a technicality."

"Aslin will fret himself to death in jail," said Carter gloomily. "You don't know him as I do, Grey. And if you don't get him out soon he won't be out at all. That is all there is to it."

Grey was looking at him curiously.

"Here comes old Ebberly now; I want to ask him some questions," he said easily. "He must have heard the other chap prowling about the place last night—if there was any other chap—as well as Lindsey."

Carter looked at him miserably.

"You believe that John Aslin is guilty," he said on impulse.

But Grey evaded uttering the disclaimer which Carter evidently expected.

"Here is the old man," he said in a lower voice. "Now, don't butt in, Carter; be quiet and let me have a go at him."

Ebberly looked broken and harassed.

"I'm worried about the boy, Carter," he said, ignoring the other man entirely. "We've got to get him out of jail, somehow. And if I ever do get him out, we are going to be more to each other than we have been in a long while. I've been a brute and a fool."

"Your nephew has stanch friends, Mr. Ebberly," said the detective warmly, with a warning glance at Carter. "I have heard many kindly things said of him since I have been here.

"His own consciousness of innocence should be a consolation to him now, sir—a wonderful consolation. May I ask if you heard the footsteps that called Mr. Lindsey outside the house last night—as well as your companion?"

"Most certainly!"

"On the same side of the house where young Aslin claims to have been standing—the side next to the front gate?"

"No, the steps were on the other side of the house—quite at the back. I have thought since, Mr. Grey, that the brutal murderer may have been—intoxicated.

"He made no attempt to exercise the smallest amount of caution. I do not hear very well, usually, but I heard the steps plainly enough. He seemed careless of discovery and of consequences."

Grey pondered over his words a moment in silence. "If the steps were heard at the back of the house, why did Lindsey come out of the front door?" he asked then.

"I do not know why, sir, unless it was because the back door was locked—and the front door was not. Mr. Lindsey was no coward."

"I know that," said Grey gently.

He was thinking of the time, five or six years before, when Lindsey under another name and in another State, had fought his way through, single-handed and alone, a crowd of deputies who had been sent to capture him dead or alive. The detective allowed the other man to walk on, and detained Carter with a gesture.

"There's another thing that I haven't said very much about, for I haven't known just exactly what to make of it," he said earnestly. "I was afraid that it might turn out to be something in the nature of a boomerang for our friend if we said too much about it, you see. But I want to know this: How did Lindsey come to be half-way between the house and the gate when he fell?"

"*Eh?*"

"I've questioned you, and I've questioned Aslin," said Grey in a worried fashion. "You practically agree in your statements. What I want to know is, if Lindsey merely stepped outside the front door, what was he doing half-way down the path to the gate when he fell."

"I don't know. You see—"

"I don't, either. Look here, Carter—I want to tell you something. Something that you have never thought of. Lindsey was running from some one when he was struck down. He was running from some one when you heard that awful cry—the man had never touched—never caught up with him—then.

"Lindsey ran until he saw that the other chap was going to overtake him, and then he turned and faced him like a man. And whoever this other was,

he struck poor Lindsey with so much force that he fairly carried him off his feet."

"Lindsey was a strong man—wiry and athletic in spite of his weight," said Carter contemplatively.

"What are you doing, Cartwright?" he called to a man with a coil of rope who was passing.

The fellow stopped.

"They killed a mad dog yesterday down in the lower pasture, and he bit some of the cattle before they put him out of the way," he said shortly. "One of the cows behaved queerly all day yesterday, but Mr. Lindsey thought that she was only fretting about her calf.

"The gates were left open last night and she got in and tramped up and down the yard until after daylight. She showed fight this morning and Mr. Eberly told me that I'd better shoot her."

Grey's face changed oddly.

"That was some of Aslin's work—leaving the gates open when he came up through the barnyard last night," he said thoughtfully. "By Jove, now I wonder—"

Dragging the stupefied Carter after him, he vaulted over the low fence and followed the man with the rope.

"She fairly run amuck last night," said Cartwright sadly. "Poor Lilith, the old man wouldn't have taken two hundred and fifty dollars for her yesterday, and now I'm told to get her out of the way as quick as possible. She all but killed one of the other cows as it was last night. Look at her horns."

Grey looked. One of them was snapped off short—a raw, hideous stump—the other, needle-sharp and slender as a rapier, was mud-caked and blood-stained. Grey caught Carter roughly by the arm.

"Here is the odd, sharp-pointed dagger that did for poor Lindsey last night," he said in a shaken voice. "It's no wonder that the poor chap screamed so hideously when he saw the hydrophobia-possessed thing plunging down upon him in the moonlight!"

Carter swallowed a lump in his throat that all but choked him.

"It was an awful way to die," he said thickly. "Why did the brute not attack me as well, Grey? I was standing over poor Lindsey's body five minutes after he fell."

"Heaven knows!" said the other man. "Come, Carter, it's good news for poor Aslin. Let's go tell him all about it. There'll be a whole lot to do after that before we can prove to a fat-headed jury that we are right."

"All right," said Carter absently.

He was averting his face so that he might not see the beaten path with its fringe of striped ribbon-grass knotted with scarlet flax, and the crushed sage a little beyond, where the dead man had fallen with his wide-open eyes staring up at the stars.

"Fate twists the thread of a human life in and out, and there's many a knot and many an ugly stain before the web is broken from the loom," he said thoughtfully. "Heaven only knows what hideous wrongs were avenged last night. Lindsey was a black-hearted brute."

But Grey was watching an old man, who, leaving the shadow of the jail behind him, passed out into the light and disappeared.

He did not hear.

SPRING AND AUTUMN.

By William James Linton.

"THOU wilt forget me." "Love has no such word."
The soft spring wind is whispering to the trees.
Among lime-blossoms have the hovering bees
Those whispers heard?

"Or thou wilt change." "Love changeth not," he said.
The purple heather cloys the air with scent
Of honey. O'er the moors her lover went,
Nor turned his head.

"IF A MAN DIE—"*

By Bannister Merwin.

How a seeker after revenge tried to prove that death has a sting.

SYNOPSIS OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS.

DR. ASA BISHOP, scientist, doubting the guilt of a condemned murderer, takes the body from the electric chair, after execution, and brings the criminal back to life. He gives the latter, who continues to claim innocence of the murder of William Bullard, and to vow vengeance on the real murderer, who has let him suffer, a hundred dollars, and tells him to go out and be a man. The criminal disappears. A couple of years later a Mr. Thomas Bullard, nephew of the murdered man, and his principal heir, learns that a Mr. John Kent is coming to live in the neighborhood. When Mr. Kent comes he has a rendezvous in the woods with a Miss Conway, governess for the Bullards' young son, and she tries to dissuade him from some project he has. It is clear that she is somehow in his employ.

CHAPTER IV.

A HOUSE OF MYSTERY.

THE new owner of Redways Hill was quick to attract the attention of Netherton. The mystery that had surrounded his personality before his arrival—his peculiar method of ordering from a distance all the details of the renovation of the old house—these things had piqued the interest of a neighborhood which was usually listless regarding newcomers.

And the fact that he had made his appearance at Redways while the servants were still abed—at the hour of four in the morning—spread quickly. By evening there was general speculation whether Mr. John Kent intended to show his face at all. Might he not be some splendid hermit, who desired to live in rich seclusion?

The following morning, however, he rode out in his great black touring-car, which was driven at a rapid pace by a new French chauffeur, in the newest style of toggery. People had only brief glimpses of him as he was whizzed over the country roads, but the impression was everywhere the same—a deathlike white face, above a jet-black pointed beard; eyes that shifted from side to side, noting every passing object, though the head itself was immovable.

If Mr. John Kent had desired to rouse curiosity, he could not have followed a more effective course than the ceremony of these morning rides. By the third day the community was beginning to watch for him. Those who had already seen him would point him out to those who had not.

"Looks like a foreigner," was the frequent comment. Guesses were hazarded as to whether, in spite of his plain Anglo-American name, he might not have had a French or a Russian mother.

Mr. Kent arrived on a Monday. Thursday afternoon, Thomas Bullard called upon him. Bullard knew that most of his neighbors were slow to take up with a stranger, but he himself had no social conservatism.

A neighbor was, to his good-natured spirit, just a neighbor; and, therefore, entitled to recognition from the owner of Fairlawn. His call would satisfy both his sense of duty and his curiosity, for even he had as yet only a passing glimpse of John Kent. He would have been astounded, had any one told him that for several hours daily a pair of powerful field-glasses were pointed at Fairlawn from a gable window on Red-

*Began September All-Story Magazine. Single copies, 10 cents.

ways Hill, and that Miss Conway went every afternoon to meet Mr. Kent at the boundary stile.

An important butler opened the door to Mr. Bullard. In response to an inquiry whether Mr. Kent was at home, he said in his most precise manner: "I do not know, sir; but if you will step into the reception-room, I will see."

Thus, Thomas Bullard was ushered into a room furnished in such a surprising fashion that he unconsciously recoiled at the threshold. For he seemed to have stepped from the hall, with its massive Gothic chairs and rich rugs, into a grotto.

There were several low seats, covered with the skins of wild animals, and the floor, too, was covered with skins; but the walls were apparently uneven surfaces of gray rock, and the dim lights came from luminous stalactites, which doubtless were the cunning hiding-places of electric lamps.

Mr. Bullard turned. The butler had disappeared. Moreover, the door through which he had entered this grotto-room had closed behind him silently, and he found himself staring at gray rock.

"Good Heavens!" he exclaimed. He put out his hand. The surface felt like rock. He shut his eyes, vaguely suspecting that he was the victim of a sudden hallucination, but when he opened them again, his singular surroundings were unchanged.

Panic seized on him. What if this were a trap? He remembered that he knew nothing about John Kent. Had he contrived a scheme to lure rich men into this strange prison and murder and rob them? Impossible, of course; but—

He groped at the uneven wall hastily, pressing his weight against it in the frantic hope of finding the concealed door.

The sound of a voice came to his ear. With a little cry, he turned.

John Kent was advancing from the other side of the grotto—a hand outstretched.

"Mr. Bullard?" he was repeating. "It is good of you to look in on a stranger—and so soon."

Words and manner were cordial, though grave.

"I am sorry," continued Kent, while Bullard was struggling to regain his self-possession, "if this whimsical room of mine has disconcerted you. Corson should not have let the door close. Shall I open it?"

"By no means," Bullard heard himself saying; and he took the seat to which Kent waved him.

"You are wondering at my grotto," Kent went on. "Let me explain. When I bought Redways Hill, I determined to carry out certain rather unconventional notions of my own. This is one of them.

"As you know, Mr. Bullard, your ancestors and mine lived in caves. Men were equal, then; they never have been since. When they lived in caves, those ancestors of ours, they were all splendid wolves—and I know of no better ground on which to meet a man than the old ground of the cave. It is, so to speak, the symbol of a fierce equality."

"Ye-es," said Bullard doubtfully. He was still bewildered, still ill at ease.

"Nowadays"—Kent's voice hardened—"men are divided into two classes—dogs and masters. A handful of us are able to stalk about, saying, 'Down!' or 'Heel!' and the others cringe and follow."

His eyes glowed. But he seemed to realize that he had followed this line of thought far enough, for he said:

"There's another reason why I like this cave. You remember Plato's cave-story?"

"No; I have never read his books," said Bullard.

Kent's face did not change.

"Plato suggested that while all men at a certain stage are like cave-dwellers, watching shadows dance on the wall, nevertheless, a cave is a good place to get out of. Suppose we go to another room."

He rose and pressed against a section of the wall, which opened, disclosing the entrance to a long well-lighted room.

Bullard stepped forward with alacrity. He was glad to be in daylight again. Through a window before him he could see the branch of a tree waving in friendly fashion. But his attention was immediately drawn to the walls of the room itself.

Every available square foot of space was covered with portraits of men and

women — photographs and engravings. At a single glance Bullard realized that here were the faces of the great.

"This is my library," said Kent.

Bullard smiled. "Looks more like an art-gallery, Mr. Kent. Where are the books?"

Kent pointed to the walls.

"There," he exclaimed, "and there—and there. Human faces. They are the most interesting books. Mr. Bullard. Take this chair, and try a cigar."

There was silence while matches were struck and the first blue smoke tinged the air. Bullard was striving to come to conclusions. This man, John Kent, seemed to be an odd person; a crank, perhaps, who used his money to gratify odd notions. But those notions were interesting and startling.

"Tell me something about Netherton, Mr. Bullard." Kent had established himself in a chair from which he could watch the play of expression on his guest's face. "You see, I am almost an utter stranger.

"I passed through once, several years ago—rather hurriedly—and made up my mind that some day I would return and enjoy its beauties. When I saw Redways Hill offered for sale, I bought it and had it made over to suit my taste—and here I am. You have lived at Fairlawn many years, I suppose?"

Bullard took a long pull at his cigar. He always felt the mellower for good tobacco.

"No," he said slowly; "we came here only two years ago. I guess you haven't heard about it."

He looked up. Kent's white face was expressive only of polite interest.

"You see, I was a bank-clerk — at twenty-two hundred a year. I lived in Brooklyn—in a flat, with Mrs. Bullard and Tom. Fairlawn belonged to my uncle, William Bullard. I never knew much about him while my father was alive.

"There had been trouble in the family, and my father had quarreled with Uncle William and Uncle George—who died twenty years ago.

"Two years ago last April—on the third, to be exact—Uncle William was murdered by a tramp. He left no will, and everything he had came to me."

"What happened to the tramp, Mr. Bullard?"

"He went to the chair. Well, you can imagine that I was surprised to find myself worth two millions. I hadn't expected it, for I had always thought that Uncle William would give his money to a college, or do something like that."

"Lucky for you that he didn't."

Bullard drew a long breath.

"I thought it was lucky at the time. I happened to be in bed just then."

"And you must have found the change pleasant?"

"Yes, we have everything we want; and Fairlawn is a fine place. I opened an office at Walchester a few months ago, and I run over there almost every day."

"Indeed? May I ask what kind of business you have taken up?"

"Fire insurance. It gives me something to do, you see. When I was in the bank, my chief ambition was to get a little capital and go into insurance; and I thought that I might as well carry out the old idea. When a man has got into the habit of a daily routine, it's a hard thing to break."

Kent laughed mirthlessly. The strange thing about his laugh was that it never seemed ta rise above his chest.

"I knew a man in Colorado," he said, "who spent twenty years pounding a drill for contractors. One day he unexpectedly found gold—enough to keep him in comfortable idleness for the rest of his life. He bought a house in Denver.

"Every day he used to go out in the back yard and pound a drill into blocks of stone. He used to explain that he was not comfortable unless he did it. The neighbors got an injunction to stop him, and he had to do his pounding in the cellar."

"You are a Westerner?" asked Bullard.

"I have lived in the West."

"Mines?"

"Yes. Let me show you the rest of my house, Mr. Bullard. You will find it unusual."

He rose and went to a door.

"Here is the dining-room," he said, standing aside that Bullard might precede him. "Eating is the one custom

in which I am conventional. Observe that this is quite the ordinary dining-room—with a table and chairs and an Italian mantelpiece."

"Since you eat like other men," remarked Bullard, "perhaps you will do us the honor of dining with us at Fairlawn."

"It will be a pleasure." Kent bowed slightly.

"Shall we say next Tuesday, then?"

"I shall be glad to come on Tuesday."

"It is settled. You will hear from Mrs. Bullard."

Kent hesitated.

"If a guest is permitted to name a condition," he said, "I should like to ask that you do not make it a formal affair. I am rather diffident about meeting many strangers at once. If you would have none of the neighbors in—"

"Quite right," exclaimed Bullard heartily. "Much the better way. Then we can get acquainted without too much formality. I hate formality as much as you do, Mr. Kent."

They passed through another door.

"This," said Kent, "is my recreation-room."

Bullard stared. The only furniture was a bench; but across the farther end of the room was an iron grille, built out perhaps a foot from the wall and extending from floor to ceiling.

"I might call it my gymnasium," continued Kent.

"A strange gymnasium!"

Kent went over to the grille. "With this simple apparatus a man can make himself a Hercules."

Seizing the cross-bars with his hands, he lifted his body from the floor and moved it slowly through several evolutions. The strain appeared to fall altogether on his arms. Then he thrust his arms through the bars clear to the shoulder, and, again lifting his body, swayed it back and forth by means of his shoulder muscles.

"There are also leg exercisers," he explained. "The advantage of this grille is that even a man in prison might keep himself in condition."

"That's so," exclaimed Bullard.

Kent had thrown open a door in the side-wall. "Here is the drawing-room," he said.

At first sight Bullard saw nothing strange in the richly furnished apartment, with its Louis Quinze chairs and tables and cabinets. Then he noted that the ceiling was the interior of a high-pitched roof.

Also, at the opposite end of the room was a large round opening, which apparently gave access to the hall; and festooned above the opening was a massive iron chain. "What a queer door!" he said.

"The main entrance to the kennel," explained Kent lightly.

"Kennel?"

"The drawing-room is a modern invention; and you remember my fancy about the modern social relationship? Dogs and their masters!"

Bullard had forgotten his first uneasiness, which had given place to wondering interest; but now he felt a sudden desire to get away from a house which represented so inexplicable a point of view.

Was John Kent insane?

The manner in which he had remodeled the Redways house might give strength to such a suspicion. But Kent, turning his fathomless eyes on his guest, apparently discerned his doubtful questionings, for he said:

"You see, I amuse myself with my own eccentricities, Mr. Bullard. Of course, I would never put into my permanent home so many freakish details. This is merely my playhouse, to which I shall run once in a while when I am jaded by my business in the West."

"Ah, yes," murmured Bullard, imagining that he had begun to understand; and his face showed relief. "You have a strong sense of humor, Mr. Kent."

"I think I must have." But Kent looked more like death than ever.

"I must go," Bullard continued. "Tuesday evening, remember."

He went clumsily out of the circular door and took his hat and cane from the impassive butler. As he walk homeward, his pace became more and more rapid in the excitement of his thoughts, until he arrived home quite breathless.

The following afternoon, when Kent met Anne Conway at the stile, he said:

"Do not come to-morrow or Sunday. I shall be away. But between

now and Monday, I wish you to gather as many little personal details as you can about Mr. and Mrs. Bullard. Make notes. Describe some of their trifling possessions—mementoes, and that sort of thing."

She bowed her head submissively.

"I had an interview with Mr. Bullard yesterday."

"I know. He is talking continually about you and your house."

"Bah!" he exclaimed. "It is all claptrap; but it will serve."

"Serve *what?*" She looked at him with fierce questioning.

"My purpose," he replied coldly.

"After talking with that man, can you still believe him guilty?"

For a time he did not answer. Under his frozen glare, she again became impassive.

"You are presuming," he said at last. "What is the matter with you, Miss Conway? Are you in love with Thomas Bullard?"

Her face went red.

"Do you think it likely?" she asked.

He shrugged his shoulders.

"I will tell you one thing, Miss Conway. In spite of Thomas Bullard's simplicity and foolish good nature, there is a hidden page in his life—and I intend to read it."

That night John Kent went to New York; and in the morning a slight, unobtrusive man called upon him at his hotel, and was permitted to go at once to his room.

Kent eyed him.

"Well, what have you discovered?" he demanded.

"An interesting bit of history. I guess I've got pretty close to what you want, Mr. Kent."

"Out with it."

"I followed your instructions, sir, and gave all my attention to learning the movements of Thomas Bullard about the time of his uncle's death, two years ago."

"Never mind my instructions. Go on."

"William Bullard was killed on the third of April. Two days earlier, Thomas Bullard disappeared from Brooklyn. He did not return until the fourth."

"Ah!"

"What did they make of it at his bank?"

"That he was ill. Mrs. Bullard sent them a message to that effect."

"Well?"

"People who lived near him remember that he was not at home at all during that period. They saw him going away, with a suit-case, and they saw him return on the fourth."

"Indeed? Those neighbors seem to have good memories." Kent laughed with assumed indifference.

"No, sir. But, you must remember that his uncle's death made him suddenly conspicuous. Naturally people would remember that he was away from home at the time his uncle was killed."

"And did they suspect him?"

"Not for long. The evidence against the real murderer was too conclusive."

"Ah! Against the *real* murderer?" Kent raised his brows sardonically.

"The tramp who did the job."

For the space of half a minute Kent meditated.

"Now, Mr. Walker," he finally said, "it is obvious that you have not traced Thomas Bullard's movements during that period of his absence. Somewhat difficult at this late date, I presume."

"Yes, sir."

"But I wish you to keep at work. If you can establish the fact that Thomas Bullard was implicated in the murder of his uncle, and establish it by the most positive evidence, I will pay you a bonus of—" he paused; then finished slowly—"a bonus of one hundred thousand dollars."

CHAPTER V.

THE INNER EYE.

MRS. BULLARD felt somewhat doubtful after she had heard her husband's account of his visit to Redways Hill.

Nevertheless she promptly despatched a formal invitation to John Kent and at the same time wrote to her unmarried sister, Betty Carpenter, who lived at Providence, Rhode Island.

Miss Carpenter was requested to come on at once to Netherton, for a fortnight's stay; and as the young woman lived in constant anticipation of just such a hur-

ried summons—and knew exactly what it meant — she telegraphed her acceptance and appeared at Fairlawn on Monday afternoon. She was as cool and unruffled—and as obviously pretty—though she had reached an age at which she clung tenaciously to what shreds of girlishness remained from her twenties.

"So glad you could come, Betty," said her sister when they were alone.

"I had no engagements worth mentioning for this week. And I was thinking of writing and asking if you wouldn't take me in for a while."

"How is mother?"

"Placid and happy. But she still declares that she can't spend a night on a train, even to visit you. Poor dear! I'm afraid she won't do much more traveling."

"I must go over there soon," said Mrs. Bullard thoughtfully, "and take Ducky."

"How is the darling child?"

"Splendid. I'm glad to say that he seems to take to his new governess."

"Oh, have you changed again?"

"Miss Burton left on account of her father's health. We have a Miss Conway now."

She rang for a servant, and, when one came, sent a request for Miss Conway to bring little Tom. The appearance of the child was the signal for an enthusiastic demonstration by Aunt Betty, but she nevertheless had a side glance for Miss Conway, who remained unobtrusively by the door.

"This is my sister, Miss Carpenter—Miss Conway," said Mrs. Bullard, as soon as there was a lull in the demonstration.

Betty Carpenter, nodding, made a more prolonged inspection of the governess. And as soon as Miss Conway had taken Thomas, Jr., away to his supper—a ceremony which Mrs. Bullard reluctantly decided for once not to attend, the question came bursting out:

"Nellie, dear, wherever did you get her?"

"Miss Conway? Why—through a regular agent. What is it, Betty?"

"Oh, nothing." Betty laughed.

"But there is. Do you know anything about her? Have you ever seen her before?"

"I have never seen her," replied Betty; "but one look is enough to make me wonder how she happens to be here."

"What do you mean?"

"She is not a professional governess."

"Her recommendations are excellent."

"None the less, I won't believe that she belongs in the governess class. And I feel sure that her history would be interesting."

"Betty, what are you hinting at?"

"Nothing very serious, goosey. But if you had eyes for anything besides Junior, you would see that Miss Conway has—well—lived. However, I don't doubt she makes a good governess."

"You know I never understand you when you talk like this," complained Mrs. Bullard. "She was unusually well recommended."

Betty laughed again.

"You were caught so young, Nellie," she said, "that you had no chance to learn. But, tell me, what is there for amusement in Netherton now? Any tennis?"

This was Mrs. Bullard's cue. She proceeded to talk about John Kent. To do her justice, she was counting largely on Betty's estimate of the man. Doubtless he was a thoroughly unsuitable person; perhaps, mad—Betty would know—Betty always knew.

But when John Kent came to Fairlawn on Tuesday evening, he showed no cynicism, no unconventionality. To Mrs. Bullard he was courteous; to Miss Carpenter, agreeably attentive. He showed the gift of saying exactly the right thing; indeed, the swiftness with which he fitted himself to their grooves of thought was startling.

By night, moreover, his strange pallor was less noticeable. He seemed warmed to a humanity which Mr. Bullard, at least, had not expected to discover.

Almost immediately he was asking Mrs. Bullard whether the child he had seen in the pony-cart that morning was hers. Her response took the form of an eager suggestion that Mr. Kent come to the nursery for a glimpse of Thomas, Jr., before he was put to bed. Betty hid her smile; and as Mr. Kent seemed all interest Mrs. Bullard led the way to the second floor.

The hour before bedtime was Thomas, Jr.'s liveliest period. He then gathered together all his favorite toys, and enjoyed a riot of play in which his mother and Miss Conway were usually compelled to take part.

To-night, as Mrs. Bullard opened the nursery door, the child was manipulating a miniature locomotive on a miniature track, while Miss Conway, kneeling on the floor near by, was coupling miniature cars together.

It may have been embarrassment, because she was discovered in so undignified a position, that made Miss Conway flush painfully. She got quickly to her feet and, with a single swift glance at John Kent, looked respectfully to Mrs. Bullard. In her plain gray dress, she was in severe contrast with the other two women. And her face seemed as plain as her dress.

Kent turned his jet eyes on her casually; then on Betty Carpenter, in her low-cut dinner-gown of canary silk. The corners of his mouth twitched.

Thomas, Jr., was presented to Mr. Kent.

"How do you do?" said the child. "These things are all mine." He pointed to the litter of toys.

Mrs. Bullard beamed happily, as Kent bent his tall figure and arranged a new and quite fascinating combination of cars and locomotives. The man appeared to understand children as well as men and women.

Within a few moments Thomas, Jr., was chatting away with him, oblivious of the others. Such a sudden conquest of the child was unheard-of.

Presently Thomas, Jr., toddled to a little table and opened a box. He took out two small metal cylinders. From the end of each a green silk cord extended to some mechanism within the box.

"You hold," commanded Thomas, Jr., giving the cylinders to Kent.

"What is it?" the man asked, as the child turned again to the box.

Mrs. Bullard answered. "A toy electrical machine. The shock is very slight. It—"

She stopped abruptly. The cylinders had fallen from Kent's hands to the floor. He had leaped back. His face was contorted, as if by the keenest pain.

Mr. Bullard sprang to take his arm, but Kent brushed him aside.

"Don't mind me!" he exclaimed in a hoarse whisper. "It is nothing. I cannot bear electricity—that is all."

He caught up the child and swung him playfully to a pile of spelling-blocks. The diversion was quick and complete; that fleeting expression of agony was forgotten by the Bullards; but Anne Conway, standing in self-effacement by the wall, stared at John Kent with a new light in her eyes and a semblance of momentary comprehension.

For the first time she had looked behind the mask—that what that moment of revelation meant, doubtless she did not know.

At dinner Kent talked fluently of the West. Romantic stories of the fortunes that had been dug out of the mountains by ignorant immigrants followed one another rapidly. It was the kind of talk that interested his hearers—since they themselves had known what it was to make the unexpected leap from poverty to riches.

Betty Carpenter took advantage of a lull.

"A Western man," she said, "was telling me, not long ago, of a fabulously rich lost mine which some one had discovered in Colorado." She looked at Kent inquiringly.

"Yes," he replied and his voice sounded different. "I know of that—if it *is* the same one. It is a curiously adventurous case." He stopped, but Bullard's "Tell us!" launched him into the narrative.

"Thirty years ago an Irish prospector appeared in Denver with a pouch of large nuggets. Nobody knew him; nobody could guess where he had come from; and, of course, he told nobody the source of his gold. He showed no intention of returning to his mine, wherever it was, and after a time the people who were watching him—they always keep an eye on any man who has made a find, you know, hoping to trail him back to it—well, people concluded that the man had merely cleaned up a small pocket somewhere.

"Then, one day, the man went violently insane. When they had shut him up in an asylum, it was found that he

had rid himself of all his nuggets at the faro-tables.

"Years afterward, he escaped from the hospital, and, wandering eastward, fell in with some tramps. He was now a mild, inoffensive person—gray-haired and vacant-eyed, and his queerness got him the name of Denver Dope.

"The tramps all over the country came to know him. They helped him, too; and he helped them, for he was a venerable figure, and got much sympathy and many dimes, when any one was with him to do the pleading."

"How interesting!" exclaimed Betty. "What brought him to himself?"

"An accident. He was struck by a train. He lived only a few hours, but in the interval his mind cleared and he remembered his lost mine. For there was a mine, you see—a rich, gold-bearing ledge, in Summit County.

"He told the story to a man who was with him; and he gave the man a little leather pocket which he had worn around his neck for all these years. People had thought it was a scapular; in reality it contained a map and full directions for finding the mine.

"Now, it happened that this man had lived in the West, and he had heard the story of Harkins—which was the old prospector's name. He knew that no find had since been made in the region shown by the map. And, after Harkins died, he committed the map and the directions to memory and then destroyed the paper. He was afraid that somebody might rob him and get to Colorado ahead of him."

"I suppose he took the first train," Bullard put in.

"No," said Kent. "Unfortunately, the man was penniless. He might have beat his way to Colorado, but after he got there he would need money for an outfit. He couldn't go into the country where the mine was unless he had plenty of food and a couple of ponies. The place was well away from the railroad."

"How long ago did this happen?" asked Betty.

"A little more than two years—if you mean the death of Harkins. Well, the man set out to try to raise some money. It was some time before he got it.

"Meanwhile he found himself in trouble—through no fault of his own. He was—detained. But at last he secured a hundred dollars and went to Colorado and located the mine."

"Was it as rich as he had supposed?" Bullard inquired.

"Richer. I understand that he sold it to a syndicate last year for three and a half millions—more or less."

"And what was this lucky person's name?" said Betty.

"I don't seem to remember," he replied evenly.

She smiled a little as she lowered her eyes. It was plain that she had her suspicions.

The talk drifted on. Mr. Kent appeared to be a conversational monopolist—an interesting one, who ranged from subject to subject and always said just enough to leave his hearers wishing that he had said more. But before the coffee had been brought in, the situation was changed. Kent was no longer leading. Indeed, he was merely giving hesitant answers to the questions of the others.

"And you really have that power?" Mrs. Bullard was demanding.

Kent nodded gravely.

"And you can—foretell things?"

"No."

"Then, what—?"

"I can merely read what is in the minds of others," he said. "At least, that is the way I explain it. I seem to see something happening, and, after I have described it, it is usually possible to trace it to the thoughts of some other person present; not to his active thoughts, always, but to something that at some time has entered his mind and remained there."

The explanation was given patiently.

"Oh, I am sure you will do it for us," remarked Betty. "There are so many things I am dying to be told."

Kent showed a trace of annoyance which, apparently, he was trying politely to repress.

"Why, yes," he said, after a moment. "I will try it, if you wish me to, Miss Carpenter."

"Do you mean to say," blurted Bullard, "that you think there is anything in all that nonsense about ghosts and mind-reading?"

"I didn't mean to say—anything. It

slipped out in connection with that story about Williamson's diamond."

"You'll have to show me, Mr. Kent. Excuse my bluntness."

"I will show you," replied Kent calmly. "I do not object to your disbelief. It will make the test all the more convincing."

Betty Carpenter and Mrs. Bullard gave him little rest after dinner until he had admitted his readiness to hold the séance.

"Well," he said, laying aside his half-smoked cigar, "I feel quite enough now. But I shall have to take you one at a time. Will you come to me in turn in the next room?"

He walked slowly to the reception-room door and, turning, drew himself up to his full height. Betty Carpenter, who, like most women and some men, had a weakness for everything occult, suffered a chill of uncanny presentiment.

In that moment of mysterious waiting, Kent's face was the face of a sphinx—a white sphinx—calm with the eternal calm. The pale brow and the bony cheeks, the eyes that absorbed all light and gave out none, were the mask of secrets which could not be guessed.

"You will please treat my efforts seriously," he said. "Ask no questions. Let me say what comes to me to say."

He disappeared through the doorway, and they heard him shutting off the electric lamps until one only remained, and this one he must have partly covered with a cloth, for the light that came from the reception-room was faint.

"Mrs. Bullard," he called.

She went promptly, closing the door after her.

Betty smiled excitedly at Bullard. "I hope Nellie won't be long," she said.

"It's tommyrot," grinned Bullard.

"Oh! How can you say that," she protested. "I know a girl who went to a trance-medium in New York once, and—" She broke off suddenly. "I think Mr. Kent is the most remarkable man I ever met," she said. "Don't you?"

Bullard drummed with his fingers on the arm of his chair, and pursed his face into a look of gravity.

"Ye-es, he is remarkable. But he's queer. Do you know about his house?"

"Nellie told me. It must be perfectly fascinating."

"Humph! It pretty nearly gave me the willies at first. I don't know what to make of it, or of him. He looks like one of those Russian princes, and he talked like a man who has lived everywhere. I don't believe he's quite right."

"Junior liked him," suggested Betty. "When a child of five takes to a man that way, I can't believe the man is bad. Children know."

"Ye-es. I set a good deal of store by what Junior thinks." Bullard tapped the floor with his foot. "But, good or bad, this man Kent is up to something—I don't know what."

"It is sure to be something interesting; something unique."

"Maybe." Bullard sighed. "I'd like to know a little more about him. Don't let him make love to you, Betty."

The girl laughed consciously. "Don't worry about me, Thomas."

The door opened and Mrs. Bullard appeared. Her cheeks were flushed; her eyes were wide with wonder. "I never dreamed—" she began.

"Miss Carpenter." Kent's voice came in to them.

Betty hurried through the door.

"Thomas!" gasped Mrs. Bullard. "The man knows everything you can imagine."

"Oh, I guess not," said Bullard uneasily.

"You know my photograph of Brother Will—the only one he ever had taken? He described it perfectly, though there's only one copy and I keep it in my writing-desk."

"He might have seen it," suggested Bullard weakly.

"How could he? When has he been near my writing-desk?"

Bullard shrugged his shoulders.

"And he knew about mother; described her."

"Easily found out."

"How? Why, Thomas, you don't suppose he would go to the trouble of going to Providence and looking at mother just so that he would be able to amuse us? But there are more than that. You remember the time in Brooklyn, when there was a fire in the flat—before Ducky was born? Well, he knew about that!"

"He did?" Bullard was beginning to show amazement. "I can't say I like this sort of thing, Nellie. It—it isn't natural."

"We only feel that way, because these mysteries are so strange to us, dear. People wouldn't have the gift, if there weren't a reason for it."

"I don't know about that. There's something unwholesome about Kent. He is like—why, Nellie, he's like a dead man!"

Betty came into the room. Her eyes were bright and her lips were parted.

"Your turn, Thomas," she said with forced gaiety.

"Oh, Betty, did he tell you anything?" Mrs. Bullard clasped the girl's hand impulsively.

"He is wonderful," said Betty, and her voice broke nervously.

"Thomas, don't keep him waiting." Mrs. Bullard turned to her husband.

"I'm not going in there and have him make a monkey of me," muttered Bullard.

"Oh, you must."

"Hanged if I will."

"But, Thomas, it would be rude. And I want to know what he will say. Perhaps it will be something about Ducky."

Bullard grumbled, but slowly got to his feet.

In the reception-room, Kent sat waiting. The fingers of his right hand played idly with the switch at the base of the ornamental electric lamp on the table beside him. His face had a hard, sardonic smile, and for once his eyes showed expression; they were expectant. But when he heard Bullard's steps, he became impassive.

"Close the door, please," he said.

Bullard obeyed.

"Sit in this chair, facing me."

As he seated himself, Bullard said: "Can't we have a little more light?—that table-lamp beside you, for instance."

"I'm sorry," Kent replied, "but too much light is fatal to concentration. You see, I even had to shield that single wall-light. But you need not be alarmed." He smiled faintly.

"I ain't," replied Bullard. "It's only that I don't feel quite right about things done in the dark."

"Yes, you like plenty of light." Kent's tone was enigmatic. "You even keep a bulb switched on in your bedroom at night. Darkness affects your nerves. I wonder why?"

Bullard reddened.

"I've always been that way," he admitted. "They frightened me once, when I was a child, and I never got over it."

Kent sank back in his chair and closed his eyes. "Do not speak," he cautioned. "It may be several minutes before I see anything. You are skeptical, and it will be harder with you than it was with the others. Remain perfectly quiet."

The silence was broken only by Bullard's heavy breathing; and the minutes passed by. Kent sat like a statue. To Bullard's unnerved gaze, he seemed to grow whiter, moment by moment.

"A dead man!" he said to himself. "He's like a dead man!"

But Kent was speaking in a low, colorless voice.

"I see you as a child, about six years old. You are walking along a city street, and a man is holding you by the hand. The man seems to be your father.

Between the sentences he paused, as though stirring to concentrate his inner vision.

"I don't know where the city is. It is a residence street. Your father is a smiling man—big—broad-shouldered. He is talking to you.

"Two men are coming toward you. One of them is young. He is only a boy. He is not more than sixteen years old. The other is a man of thirty—a man with a hard, formal face."

The sound of Bullard's breathing grew more rapid.

"Do you remember? The man with the hard face—who is he?"

"Uncle William!" gasped Bullard.

"And the boy of sixteen?"

"Uncle George."

"They have stopped your father. The man with the hard face is talking. His voice is stern. Your father looks angry."

Kent's eyes were apparently still closed, but his head had dropped forward, and had he chosen to steal a quick look through his heavy brows, he would not have been detected.

"I see the man with the hard face turn.

on his heel and walk away," he went on. "You are crying. The picture fades." He stirred in his chair.

"Heavens!" whispered Bullard. "I had forgotten."

There was another long silence. Bullard was like a man in a trap. Caught and held by a power at which he had scoffed, he was struggling with new emotions of awe and terror.

Kent was speaking again:

"I am in another city. I know this city; it is Brooklyn. I am in a room. You are there. You are putting things into a valise, and your wife is helping you. She is saying: 'I will send word to the bank that you are sick.'

"You are leaving the flat. You have pulled your hat down over your eyes." A longer pause; then: "We are on a train. It is night, and you are sleeping. The porter is awakening you, though it is still dark. You take your valise and get off the train. Do you remember?"

"Yes!" came the tense answer.

"It is daylight. I see the grounds about a handsome country house." He raised his voice in astonishment. "It is this house—it is Fairlawn! A man is coming out of the house. He is about sixty years old. Why, it is the man with the hard face! It is your uncle!

"He walks down into the shrubbery at the right of the house. There is a tramp in among the bushes. He comes out and speaks to your uncle. They talk. Your uncle becomes angry. They are still talking. Now, your uncle suddenly takes a silver flask from his pocket. There is scorn on his face. He gives the flask to the tramp. Your uncle walks on, and the tramp vanishes."

"Stop!" Bullard was leaning forward, at the edge of his chair. His face was working spasmodically.

Kent opened his eyes, and fixed the frightened man with a burning stare.

"Another man comes," he went on rapidly. "He talks with your uncle. There is a quarrel. They are both in a passion. The man raises his arm. He strikes. Your uncle falls. He is dead! The man has murdered him!"

The lamp on the table burst out into flame. Kent had snapped the switch.

Bullard uttered a choking cry and got to his feet.

"You are the devil!" he exclaimed. "You are the devil!"

And Kent, rising, stood like an image of malignant triumph. Neither man moved.

Some one tapped hurriedly on the door, and at once opened it.

"Mr. Bullard!"

It was Anne Conway.

"Mrs. Bullard asks that you excuse yourself. Little Tom has the croup. The doctor is on his way. They want you to come."

With a groan, Bullard went from the room.

CHAPTER VI.

THE REVEALMENT.

"STAY where you are, Miss Conway," said Kent curtly, as the girl turned to follow Bullard.

She halted irresolutely.

"They need me," she said. "Would you want them to think that you had detained me?"

"No." He frowned. "You are right. Go back to them; but meet me outside as soon as you can. I will remain here in this room a few minutes longer—until there is opportunity to leave a good night—and some expression of solicitude for the child."

She darted away. He noted the lightness of her step on the stairs, but his thoughts were not long with Anne Conway. She was a mere cog in the wheel.

Slowly pacing the room, he concentrated all his faculties on the scene that had just passed. Bullard's emotional outbreak had been as convincing as a confession. The sudden illness of the child had brought interruption at exactly the right moment, for the situation could not have been carried to its logical conclusion at that time, in that place.

Nor was there any hurry. Let Bullard learn the meaning of suspense. Let him discover what it meant to awaken every morning, wondering whether the day would bring the final blow. Let him study how to cover with a calm exterior a heart of fear.

Some one entered the front door and hurried up-stairs. The doctor, no doubt; but Kent continued his pacing; and his

eyes glowed hotly beneath his brows; and his mouth hardened. Intense, dragging moments brought him something akin to joy—savage joy. Half an hour passed—three-quarters.

Betty Carpenter came to him at last.

"It is all right now," she said with a sigh of relief, "but it was a close call. Poor little Junior! If Dr. Bishop had not happened to be at his place, I doubt if—"

"Fortunate that he could be found," exclaimed Kent. "I will wait no longer. I realize how upset you must all be."

"Nellie is at her best in crises like this," replied Betty. "But Mr. Bullard is all unnerved. I know you will forgive this breaking-up of the evening, but I am afraid neither of them will care to come down again to-night."

Kent moved toward the door to the hall.

"Say good night for me, please, and give them my sympathy. I shall see you again, of course, before you go."

He held out his hand.

A man appeared suddenly in the doorway—a tall man, with a crown of thick, wavy white hair.

"Miss Carpenter, pardon me," he said. "Will you get me a glass, half-filled with water."

"At once. Dr. Bishop, this is the new neighbor—Mr. Kent."

She disappeared.

Dr. Bishop advanced into the room.

"Glad to meet you, Mr. Kent. Poor Bullard is so upset by little Tom's attack that I am mixing a draft for him."

Kent smiled unfathomably, but did not answer.

"I only just ran up to Netherton this afternoon," continued Dr. Bishop. "Which accounts for my not having seen you before."

"Yet we have met before, Dr. Bishop."

"Indeed?" The surgeon studied Kent. "There is a familiar note in your voice, but I can't seem to place it."

He smiled courteously.

"It was some time ago," remarked Kent indifferently. "I wore no beard then. You may have forgotten."

Dr. Bishop was puzzled.

"More and more you remind me of some one I have met—somewhere."

"Yes, we have met—somewhere. Don't you remember? Look at me well, Dr. Bishop. Do you see me with a sullen, despairing face? Do you see me with the hard lines of hard living? Do you see me, the victim of the wheel of justice—lying dead upon a table—dead for a murder that I did not do?"

The surgeon's face turned white.

"Do you hear me swearing an oath to pay in the coin of suffering the man who had let me suffer?"

"It is you!"

"Yes, it is I—and I am ready to fulfil my vow, Dr. Bishop. I know who killed William Bullard."

The two men stared at each other; Kent, sardonic, triumphant; Dr. Bishop, overwhelmed as by a blasting revelation. The sound of Betty's returning steps broke the spell, and Kent moved toward the door.

"Come to my house in an hour," he said in a low voice. "We must talk."

Dr. Bishop slowly bowed his head.

"Yes," he muttered, "we must talk."

With a farewell to Betty, Kent went out into the night. At the head of the drive he stopped and looked up at the sky.

The moon shone wanly through a thin veil of cloud. It was light enough to make one's way under the trees, and he turned to the left, across the lawn, and picked his path to the stile at the Redways Hill boundary.

Anne Conway did not keep him waiting long. She came through the woods like a gray shadow. He scarcely heard her steps; yet he was conscious of her approach—felt her presence even before he glimpsed her. She was close to him before she spoke.

"Mrs. Bullard wanted the child with her to-night," she said. "It was easy to get away."

"I wanted you," he began slowly, "because I wished to tell you—you have been wrong about Thomas Bullard. He is guilty."

There was an elated ring in his voice.

"I don't believe it," she whispered.

"If ever a man condemned himself without words, Thomas Bullard did so this night. Thanks to the bits of family information you gathered for me—combined with certain things I knew—I was

able to play on the emotions of those people. He betrayed himself."

"You cannot make me believe it."

He laughed.

"You did not see; you did not hear. When I pictured the scene to him as I have conceived it, he went to pieces. He tried to stop me."

"Then his emotions were due to something besides guilt."

"Why are you so eager to defend him?" Kent demanded. "If I thought that you—"

"Well?"

"If I thought that you cared for that round-faced, guilty fool, I—"

"What would it be to you?"

"To me? Why, nothing."

She sighed. "Yet you have some reason for telling me so much."

"Yes, I have a reason," he said slowly, "I have a reason. You are the one human being I know, the one person, who would understand. And I must talk; I must tell some one.

"You and I are both at odds with the world, Anne Conway. We have let society array itself against us. You have been the victim of a false ideal; and I, the victim of a false practise of living. It makes no difference that you have escaped, where I have paid; the fact remains that we can understand each other."

"I have escaped, because you have helped me," she whispered.

"And why do you think I helped you?"

"You thought you could use me," she answered.

"I have used you; and I have made it the price of your father's safety that you should continue to serve me. But that is not all. When I saw you place the bomb that wrecked that mining-plant, I said to myself: 'They will kill her, because she has lived for an ideal. And I made up my mind to balk them.

"That is why I spirited your father away to safety, for I knew that he would be suspected. And that is why I lifted you into my motor and raced thirty miles to a railroad and gave you money and sent you East. Do you remember how you cried? Do you remember how, when you realized what you had done, you wanted to kill yourself?"

"It haunts me now," she exclaimed.

"Yet you can justify yourself."

She drew herself up and spoke tensely.

"Yes, I can justify myself. My father fed me the theories of anarchy when I was a child. I was brought up to believe that all government should be destroyed, just as other children are brought up to believe in God.

"My most vivid early memories are the police raids on our rooms and those exciting periods when my father had to go into hiding. He has always talked—talked—talked; and he has never acted; but others have acted because he has talked.

"While he was trying to rouse the striking miners out there in the West, some of them laughed and said that he would never dare do the things he urged them to do. So I determined that, if John Kemper would not act, his daughter, Anne Kemper, would."

"Anne Conway," said Kent.

"I am not Anne Conway, here with you," she replied fiercely. "So that is why I did what I did. I believed it was right.

"Only after the explosion, when I realized that human lives might have been lost—only then I knew what a horrible thing it was. But as I considered my training, I refuse to blame myself."

"Quite right. But it is enough for you that you are safe. For me there remains the need of doling out that form of justice which men call vengeance."

"Then, be just!" she cried. "Leave Mr. Bullard alone."

"Don't say that again."

"But he is innocent." In her eagerness, she seized the lapel of his coat. "You say the evidence is strong against him. But do you remember that other man, your friend—the man who was killed by the State?

"Was there not evidence against him? Was he sent to the chair without an effort at justice? Think long before you run the risk of wronging another as your friend was wronged."

"You care for him!" he snarled.

"I? Care for him? Do you think there is no fire in me, that I should love a spineless clerk? You know that I care nothing for him Yet, I believe him a good man."

"You are sure you don't love him?" he demanded, grasping her arm with fingers that pressed painfully into the flesh.

The girl looked at him strangely. She laughed softly.

"What is it to you?"

He stared into her face. "Nothing!" he said. "Why should it be anything to me? But you must still serve me—you must do what I wish. I realize that you do not care so much about your own safety; but never forget that your father's safety also depends on me."

She threw back her head.

"What do you want me to do?"

"I want you to get that child for me to-morrow."

"You—really—mean—that?"

"You have questioned my evidence against Bullard. Now, suppose that the child disappears, and I then go to Bullard and say: 'Give me a written confession of the truth regarding William Bullard's murder, and I will find your boy'!"

"Are you a human being?" she asked.

"I don't know. Since those months in prison I have never asked myself the reason for my feelings. The farce of that trial, with a brilliant attorney to beat down the efforts of my stupid counsel; the dumb awfulness of that moment after the verdict was announced; the horror of the waiting; and then, that morning, when they led me to the death-chamber and strapped me into the chair—ah!"

He had forgotten her presence.

"And then the crash and the blackness of a black, black, black eternity; and the coming back to life—"

"What are you talking about?" she cried in a shaking voice.

He backed away from her. But she pressed closer, and the moonlight, dropping through the leaves above, fell on her awakened face.

"You are that man!" she said. "You are the man the law killed!"

He made no answer.

"You are that man! Now I understand so much! I understand why you are so relentless—why you are so terrible in your purpose."

Time itself seemed to have halted in astoundment.

At last he said grimly: "To the world, I am dead."

"To me," she answered, "you are for the first time alive."

Again the silence and the lagging moments.

But Kent straightened himself.

"You will bring me the child to-morrow," he said. "Cover your movements carefully, so that you will not be traced."

"And if I refuse?" There was a new note in her voice.

"Then—your father—" he replied coldly.

She laughed. "Where is my father?"

"That is something I have not chosen to tell you."

"Have you thought yourself omnipotent? It would have been well for you to remember that I have spent my life among weavers of plots. You refused to tell me where you had hidden my father; but you forgot that he would communicate with his friends—and that I knew those friends.

"I learned his address two weeks ago, and we exchanged letters. And after you had appeared here, I sent him money and urged him to leave the country. He has done so."

"And you have tricked me?"

"Yes, I have tricked you. My father is out of your reach. You cannot command me by threats."

He said nothing.

"But I will still help you, John Kent," she cried—"not because I fear you, but because I choose to help you. As a free agent, I will work with you in your vengeance."

For the second time he caught her arm.

"You will bring the child?"

"If you wish me to," she answered steadily—"though it will make me despise myself again."

"I wish it," he said. "I must have the child. To-morrow in the afternoon—get him here to the stile, by a round-about way through the woods. I will take care of the rest of it."

The girl bowed her head. The moonlight searched out the fine tendrils of her hair; and the man, gazing, sighed like one who hungers in his soul.

Suddenly the girl started. There was a sound of approaching steps.

"Stay where you are," Kent said to her. "It is only Dr. Bishop. I expected him."

She struggled to free herself from his grasp.

"It doesn't matter how much he knows," continued Kent. Then, raising his voice: "Is that you, Dr. Bishop?"

"Yes."

The surgeon stopped short when he saw that Kent was not alone.

"Miss Conway is with me, Dr. Bishop. You need not hesitate; she knows."

"I was on my way to your house," said the surgeon.

His voice sounded labored. It seemed to be an effort for him to speak.

"Yes; we must talk." Kent spoke calmly. "Doubtless we shall have more than one talk."

Somewhere in the distance a night-bird uttered its wail. Dr. Bishop started nervously. Then, shaking his shoulders, apparently in disgust at his own weakness, he placed himself squarely before Kent.

"I don't know what devilish conspiracy you are hatching," he said, "but I have come to tell you that you must stop it. Do you forget that you are a dead man? Go back out of my life. Leave these good people to themselves."

He waved his arm toward Fairlawn.

"Have you forgotten my vow?" asked Kent.

"No. It was a malignant utterance made at a moment when your only feeling should have been one of thankfulness."

"I owe you a hundred dollars," remarked Kent. "I will send it to you to-morrow, with interest to date. Thank you for it; that loan enabled me to get millions. Now, then, understand me. In so far as I should be grateful to you for bringing me back to life, I will be grateful—indeed, I have been.

"But I know now that you knew I was innocent. You brought me back merely to save yourself from your own conscience. You had shielded your friend, Thomas Bullard; and you and he were willing to let me suffer months of ignominy, despair, pain—me, an innocent man. I cannot spare the guilty.

"I am not sure that I can spare you—though I owe you a measure of gratitude. That justice might not be done, you kept silence while I went to death; and you relied on your conscience to justify you afterward. In my place, would you forgive that?"

"You are mad," exclaimed Dr. Bishop chokingly.

"I am not mad, but I have centered all my being in this purpose of punishing the man who let me go to a murderer's fate. Afterward— Well, it doesn't matter. There seems to be nothing else for me to live for."

"What was there for you then? You were a miserable, drunken wretch." The surgeon's voice shook. "What were you worth to the world? You were killing yourself with alcohol as fast as you knew how; you were sullen, sodden, depraved. Your death would have made no person the sorrier. Now, at least, you might show yourself a man."

Kent laughed.

"A good sermon! Yet you cannot expose me without exposing yourself. And who would believe you if you declared that two years ago you revived a man who had been electrocuted and turned him loose? No, Dr. Bishop, you cannot even denounce Miss Conway as my ally.

"I have learned what I set out to learn. In my time, in my own way, I will see that Thomas Bullard suffers as he should suffer."

Dr. Bishop raised a trembling arm.

"By Heaven!" he exclaimed. "If you make one move to harm my friend, I—I will kill you!"

Kent laughed.

"Again?" he asked.

The surgeon cried out despairingly, and let his uplifted arm fall to his side.

"We will meet again," said Kent. "For this time enough has been said. Go and spend the night reviewing your own action in shielding a murderer at the expense of another man."

But the surgeon could not yield.

"What was there in life for you?" he asked, trying to control himself.

"What was there in life for me? There was a great deal. Haven't you guessed who I am?"

"No."

"But for that arrest and conviction,

I would have regained a name and a place; I would have had an incentive to live as other men live. You thought I was a common, drunken tramp. Well, I had become just that, but there was hope for me; I was, at least, a man; I was alive—not dead, as I am now in the sight of the law.

"Did you never hear of William Bullard's youngest brother, George, who was supposed to have been killed in a landslide out West? Well—I—I am George Bullard! Do you realize what that means?"

"You—George Bullard?" whispered the surgeon.

"I am George Bullard; and I can prove it, if I wish to."

Dr. Bishop groped weakly for support. He could not speak. After a moment he turned and walked stumblingly away.

And Anne Conway, who had stood apart, came close to Kent.

"Is it true?" she whispered.

He inclined his head gravely.

"I was reported as killed. I felt that I was no credit to the family, and I took the chance to disappear."

"And you have kept silent all these years?"

Again he inclined his head.

Then suddenly he drew her into his arms and held her in a fierce embrace.

He pressed a burning kiss upon her lips.

With a little sob, she freed herself and darted away toward Fairlawn.

And Kent, passing his hand across his brow, slowly climbed the stile.

(To be continued.)

THE AMBASSADOR'S CARRIAGE.

By Philip S. Hichborn.

WHO may judge between the fickleness of chance and the hand of an unseen power?

WASHINGTON is proverbially capricious in the spring.

It was raining now as I stood, after a lonely dinner, staring out through the library-window into the wet, shining park beyond. Half a block away an arc-light flashed fitfully, throwing the calm statue of Lafayette now into bright relief and now into shadow.

On the sidewalk below me a jam of hurrying people, with raised umbrellas, jostled each other, and the street was blocked with a tangle of brightly lighted motors and frightened horses. Now and again the line of vehicles would start spasmodically, move a few feet, and then halt as the first of the line reached the glare in front of a theater, discharged its passengers, and went dashing off in the darkness.

I opened the window a little and peered out.

The sound of voices, the humming of the motors, and the slamming of carriage-doors mingled occasionally with the fleeting strains from the near-by orchestra. A policeman, glistening in a rubber-coat, stood in the middle of the street before the theater.

I could hear him calling out to the coachmen down the line, beckoning some on, holding others back.

At last I drew back and shut the window. It was hardly amusing, the scene had become so familiar to me in my long years of residence in that same spot. I snapped on the electric light nearest my most comfortable chair and picked up a half-finished novel.

Do you ever imagine that there is something peculiarly distinctive about the ring of your front door-bell—that it forebodes sometimes good, sometimes evil?

I cannot say that I had any very decided intuition about this ring, except that I was impressed by it; that in some way it would have to do with occupying the remainder of my evening.

It was long and vigorous, as though some one were there who had a right to entrance. There was a silence for a moment; then in the lower hall I could hear the even, undisturbed tread of my man Jenkins, and the unlatching of the door. Exclamations followed. Even Jenkins was excited out of his customary calm.

A moment later a step sounded upon the stair, and in the doorway stood John Braxton—Braxton, whom for months I had mourned as dead.

He laughed at my discomfiture with that curious railing tone he always had, and grasped my hand. At least, then I had no doubts as to his earthliness, for his grasp is like the hug of a grizzly and fairly makes one's bones cry out.

"John Braxton!" I managed to articulate at last, gaping at him.

Braxton held up his hand.

"I know what you're going to say," he said. "You thought I was dead. Of course, so does every one; but I do not intend to explain now. I've come here to rest."

He flung himself into a chair dejectedly and lit a cigarette. I recovered myself with an effort.

"But—but—see here, John," I stammered. "This won't do. You've got to tell me something about it, you know. I haven't been regretting you all this time for nothing. At least, I deserve a word of explanation."

I knew his stubborn nature. He couldn't be driven a little—he must do everything in his own way, or think he did—then he was like Mary's lamb. He smiled a little, and his mouth had the old-time humorous uplift at the corner.

"Oh, all right, Billy; but call Jenkins first, there's a good fellow. I'm all in—I want a drink—then I'll tell you all there is to know."

He finished his drink in silence, and sat rattling the ice about in his glass for a minute; then began abruptly:

"I'll make it brief, Billy. I don't like to talk about it much.

"When you, steady-going, hard-working grind that you are, began to practise law, you remember I was knocking about the Continent and lots of queer places with a great deal more money than brains, and a kind of illusory attachment to one of our big New York dailies. One day while I and the rest of the world—without his wife, who happened to be in Paris at the time—were listening to the latest milliner's modiste prima donna sing *tra-la-la,* the Japs sailed into the harbor of Port Arthur and blew half of the Russian fleet into buttons.

"That was my chance. I got into instant cable communications with my paper, and in twelve hours was on the way to the front as special correspondent. You may not be aware of it, though I believe the fact was somewhat emphasized in my obituary notices, but I was the only correspondent that saw the game played from both sides.

"I won't go into details; but you've heard, no doubt, from some of the others how they treated us. Most of the boys never got any farther front than the hangers-on did that followed in the rear of all the armies, but I was more lucky; and finally, when the rout began after Mukden, I was with the advance-guard of the Russians."

Braxton paused and reached for an ash-tray.

"It was then I saw her. Oh, yes, of course, there is a woman in it. Isn't there always a woman in every man's real 'story'? She was there in the midst of it all, the shot and shell, the dead and dying, and the loathsome, panic-stricken fear that was everywhere.

"How she got there, so far front, it's hard to understand, unless she was nursing some wounded general officer who would not be sent to the rear."

Braxton's voice trailed off in the distance; he seemed to be talking to himself, and his eyes were fixed on the hearth.

"She was very, very beautiful," he said slowly.

He paused a moment, then went on:

"A wild gun-carriage, with two fear-maddened horses, was bearing down upon her through the scattering crowd. I caught her in my arms out of harm's way, and she lay there, clinging to me, her arms about my neck.

"The rest of that day we fought it out together, hand in hand, like two children, barely able to keep up with the half-crazy retreating mob that threatened every instant to crush us under foot.

Then of a sudden—it is all I recall—there was a blinding flash; I felt myself grow limp, and knew no more.

"When I was conscious again, a long time after, I discovered myself on a stretcher; and a Jap saw-bones was standing over me with that imbecile grin of theirs, holding my wrist with one hand, while he kept tab on the beats with a dollar watch in the other. But she was gone.

"That's all, except that I raved for a fortnight and couldn't remember my own name until quite a while after I was able to walk; and then it was impossible to get a wire off until after the articles of peace had been signed at Portsmouth, they watched us so close.

"How I loved her during those days, as I do now; but I'm stronger, and it doesn't hurt so much. Love comes in queer ways—sometimes with happiness, the sunshine, and the scent of roses—but this was born in the midst of horror, and it gripped us by the heart with an iron hand.

"One of the Jap nurses told me he had found me lying all doubled up; and at first they thought my neck was broken, but that there was no one very near me—certainly not a woman."

Braxton rose and drew his hand languidly across his forehead.

"Jenkins is slower than he used to be," he said peevishly. "Why doesn't he bring the Scotch?"

He turned, and the bottle on the table caught his eye.

"Oh, I'm sorry! I see I've had it. You must forgive me, Billy; I'm not quite myself to-night. This thing rather puts me out of business."

"You have searched?" I questioned.

He nodded.

"Everywhere—half the world over."

"Not a clue?"

"Not one."

He sank back in his chair, and I poured him out another drink.

"John," I said, "perhaps I can help you."

He looked at me and shrugged his shoulders.

"It's like you, Billy, to want to help; but, you see, it is impossible. I, who know her, have spent months, and have not found a trace."

There was a pause while we both smoked silently. I got up and walked about uneasily. I hesitated to subject my idea to the intolerance of his skepticism. Finally, I stopped in front of him.

"John, do you believe that some people have certain powers, superior to the rest of us, for seeing into—" He interrupted me quickly with a cynical smile about his lips.

"Fakers, Billy, every one. Take my word for it, I've tried them from London to Calcutta. Fakers—every one."

"This man is no faker," I answered with some heat; "I know him well."

He got up and stretched his great arms over his head.

"Go ahead," he replied. "You were always the hard-headed one in the old days. What you say still goes with me, you know."

I won't tell you the name of this man. He doesn't like it generally known in connection with this particular subject; but I may tell you that he is a little, gray-bearded man of infinite scientific knowledge, who holds a subordinate position in the Smithsonian Institute.

He is better known, perhaps, in the world of science under the *nom de plume* of Karl Haltzmann, and I am informed that he has contributed several substantial volumes to the subject of dyamics. I met him through a former ambassador to this country, who, strangely enough, had known of him well by the name of Haltzmann before even the former had been accredited to the United States; while I, who lived only a block or two away, had never heard of him at all.

We had become good friends since then, and he had taught me much. I turned to him now as the only one who could aid Braxton in his trouble.

While Jenkins went for him, Braxton and I smoked our cigars, and I read a little of the novel I had laid aside earlier in the evening. Twenty minutes passed before I heard Jenkins's key rattle in the lock of the door below.

A moment later Karl Haltzmann stood before us.

"Goot evening!" He bowed to us both.

The vaderland still preserved its influence upon his speech, though in all

else he was the most complete cosmopolitan I have ever known. He held out his hand to me while he spoke to Braxton, waiving the formality of an introduction.

"Your face, sir, iss to me familiar, and yet where? I haff years enough to be your father. Iss it possible that it was, indeed, your father that I knew? Wass it, perhaps, that I knew your parent in Berlin when he wass even so young as you?"

Braxton started suddenly, his brow clouded.

"My father was military attaché in Berlin just after the Civil War," he said quietly.

Haltzmann's eyebrows went up expressively.

"So! John Braxton, is it not he wass named? *Ach,* those are over forty years ago."

Braxton wore a puzzled expression, and his face had gone a little pale.

"I am John Braxton's son," he said; "how could you know?"

Haltzmann answered him with a surprised shrug.

"Is it so? How do I know? I am not able to tell. Things are as they are." He smiled in my direction. "Who may say?"

He drew out his huge meerschaum, regarded it lovingly for a moment, filled its bowl with tobacco from the jar upon the table, then seated himself, half hidden, behind a cloud of blue smoke.

"The air is surcharged, my friends," he addressed himself to me with an amused smile. "What does it import?"

He looked first from one and then to the other of us. Neither spoke, until at last the little china clock upon the mantelpiece had ticked a minute's space; then Braxton broke the silence and told his story for the second time that evening.

Karl Haltzmann listened, leaning a little forward, his left hand to his ear. Occasionally, now and then, he would hold up his other hand, in which he held the big pipe, for Braxton to stop.

"So!" he would say. "So, that is correct. On Wednesday ninety thousand troops were in retreat."

Then he would nod for Braxton to proceed.

At last Braxton finished and sat back in his chair, watching Haltzmann's face. The latter, quite calm, his deep-set eyes staring over and beyond Braxton and me, had, for the moment, forgotten us.

All was quiet; the lights overhead, which I had switched on when Haltzmann came, still burned brightly, casting the lower half of his face into shadow. Then he began to speak, and Braxton and I leaned forward lest we might miss a word, for his voice was soft and dreamy.

"I fear," he said to Braxton, with a wave of his hand toward me, "that my friend here may haff quite unintentionally misrepresented my—what you say—ability. I haff upon occasion been to him of some assistance; but that I am of the so advanced thinkers that I believe in thought transference, or that to the few the future is an open book, and a closed one to the many, iss untrue."

He shook his head vigorously.

"With such theories, for they are nothing more, I haff no patience, but"—and he stopped abruptly—"there are many things I, any man, may know, with much study and some knowledge reaped therefrom."

He looked at us, first the one and then the other, to see if we were listening.

"Many years of study lend self-control—and the power of concentration. It iss true that even I some time haff thought that, after all, I possessed some extraordinary power, so clearly haff I seen into the mirror of coming events. But nearly always do I find the elucidation within my normal self.

"Ah, my dear Braxton, I will torment you no longer with stupid explanations. She lives!"

Braxton's teeth shut with a snap, and his fingers tightened over the arms of his chair.

"You speak as if you knew," he said.

Haltzmann sat up quickly in his chair.

"There is no alternative," he replied sharply. "She lives or she is dead. It is impossible that she is dead. I could give you a t'ousand reasons alone why you searched and did not find."

He rose suddenly from his chair. There was a sharp crash which startled us all. Haltzmann spoke first:

"*Ach,* my pipe! He is broke into smithereens!"

He regarded the remains with a sorrowful expression, while he stroked his beard meditatively.

"Life is ever thus. Pride comes before the fall. I had almost made an idol of dot pipe."

For a moment he had forgotten Braxton.

"Well!" the latter said, standing there tense and rigid under the brilliant lights.

"Well!" he reiterated, bending forward over the library-table, "go on—go on, for Heaven's sake! What else?"

Haltzmann looked up from the destruction upon the floor. "*Ach,* young man, be patient! You have lost but a woman that once you saw. I, who am old, haff lost my pipe. He was the gift of a very great man who is since dead."

Braxton walked to the window, threw it open, and stood there, hands clasped behind him, his tall, strong figure silhouetted against the reflected light from the street.

"And yet," said Haltzmann thoughtfully, "even a broken pipe iss sometimes more than mere accident. It is"—he hesitated for a word—"coincidence, if I may say so."

He waved aside my questions and drew out his watch, glanced at it, and closed the heavy gold case with a snap:

"Phew, it iss elefen o'clock; I must go. I haff got yet three hours' work to do."

It had ceased raining as suddenly as it had begun, and the asphalt pavements were already partly dry. The theater, a few doors below, was disgorging its animated audience, and the electric sign over the entrance was flashing the numbers to the waiting coachmen.

The room had grown warm and stuffy with smoke.

"We will see you home," I said. "Will you come, John? It is quite clear out."

Braxton nodded and turned from the window. Haltzmann chuckled delightedly.

"You think I am an old woman, perhaps, who needs protection?" He shook his head knowingly. "I am not so feeble as you think."

Even Braxton smiled at him, and I led the way down the stair into the street, where we mingled with the gay throng that filled the sidewalk, sauntering from the play.

As we reached the theater the crowd grew denser, and for a moment we were obliged to stop. Ladies in brightly colored gowns and opera-cloaks stood in groups upon the sidewalk, while most of the men tried to hurry up the carriages and motors.

Braxton watched with languid interest, though the scene was exceptionally brilliant; and we remained standing there, while Haltzmann and I attempted to divert him by pointing out certain celebrities and foreign diplomats.

Gradually the crowd grew less and less. Then another number was flashed from the electric sign overhead, and a carriage drove quickly up.

A footman in livery, with a cockade of variegated colors in his hat, sprang forward to open the door.

Haltzmann took hold of Braxton's arm.

"Look," he exclaimed, "that iss an ambassadorial equipage! Ah, here is Restroven himself, with his countess and another lady. You must meet him some time. He iss most intelligent—I know him well.

"Imagine, he speaks seven languages, and Greek as though she were his native tongue. He also iss an authority upon Sanskrit."

The party was slowly pushing its way in our direction. Braxton, who was in front, regarded them indifferently.

"*Ach,* what a beautiful woman!" Haltzmann said, peering over my shoulder.

I glanced from the distinguished figure of the ambassador to the girl who walked at the side of the countess.

She was tall and beautiful, indeed. Her hair was fair and shone like bronze, and her cheeks were the most delicate shade of pink. Upon her white forehead there was a scar which seemed only to accentuate its whiteness.

She bore her proud, well-shaped head erect, and moved with a certain lithe gracefulness. I think Braxton had noticed her as soon as either Haltzmann or I had.

All the blood seemed to have left his face, and he was staring at her as if he would draw her to him with his eyes. Haltzmann, too, must have known almost as soon as Braxton, for he put his hand on the other's arm to steady him.

The footman stood with heels together and lifted hat as the ambassador approached the carriage-door. The girl's eyes wandered curiously over the crowd with an amused expression about her exquisitely firm lips.

I felt my nerves snapping with suppressed excitement as for a moment her gaze rested upon us. Then she hesitated, the smile left her lips, and she went as pale as death and swayed a little.

The ambassador had turned round, and half made a movement to come back to her. From within the carriage the countess was calling excitedly in the French tongue:

"Marie — Marie, come quick! You keep everybody waiting. Quick, I say!"

But she did not hear.

She took a step forward, her lips parted in wonder. "You," she whispered, so that I could barely hear her. "They drove me on—you know. I would not have left you there like that, after all you did," she pleaded.

In an instant Braxton was crushing her hands in his.

I think hardly any one but ourselves noticed the little scene that took place; and, if they did, certainly we did not know it. The next thing I remember—for it all passed more or less like a dream—I was standing there alone with Haltzmann, after the doors of the theater had been closed and the great arc-light over our heads had ceased to flicker.

Braxton had gone. I seemed to have a dim recollection of seeing him get into the carriage with the others, of seeing the footman slam the door, run round the back of the carriage, and clamber up to the box; then the swish of the driver's whip and the clatter of iron shoes upon the asphalt.

I looked at Haltzmann. He was examining the amber stem of his broken pipe, which he had preserved.

"What's her name—do you know?" I asked.

"Her name?" he repeated absently. "Yes, I know now. She is the Princess Trotoski."

"But she cannot marry a plain American like Braxton, can she? It is almost worse now that he has discovered her."

"If she does not," he answered quietly, "she will never marry any one. Ah, if I had ever been so loved!

"She is so very beautiful—as beautiful as one that many years ago I—"

He held the pipe-stem nearer, studying the broken edge, then dropped it into his pocket.

"*Ach,* goot night," he said softly, and disappeared in the shadows.

PRESS SONG.

By Marion Couthouy Smith.

THEY whir and clash, through the nights and days,
The magical looms of thought;
And in and out, through a thousand ways,
The flashing threads are brought.
Their swift purveyors part and meet,
On rail and ship, on mart and street,
With tireless brain, with hurrying feet,
As the endless web is wrought.

They may not pause when the sun is high,
Nor rest when the light is low;
For while men live and act and die,
The word flies to and fro.
It leaps the sea, it spans the plain;
On throbbing wire and mighty chain,
It runs like fire from main to main,
That the world may see and know.

WHEN THE WORLD STOOD STILL.*

By Johnston McCulley.

Being probable chapters in United States history, showing how an invention and a woman saved the country.

SYNOPSIS OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS.

WAR is being waged between the United States and Japan. This country, after much disaster, has the upper hand, and the Asiatics sue for termination of hostilities. Captain Goodwin, of supreme power in the United States army, has a hatred for Asiatics and argues for their total destruction. So insulting is he that the Japanese emissaries depart in anger, and war is to be resumed at sunrise. Professor Selester, cousin of the President of the United States, has a wonderful invention, whereby, he says, the "sun shall not rise." He calls his daughter on the phone at his laboratory, directs her to set in motion certain machines, and bids her under no circumstances to leave the laboratory. Goodwin, broken down by strain, tries to kill the President, but dangerously wounds Selester. Goodwin is taken to prison, but later Selma Selester comes to the President, and, because she is engaged to Goodwin's son, is given a pass to the prison, where she goes with an Austrian attaché, Testnor. Goodwin, mystified, is rescued and taken to a gathering, where he is hailed and toasted as "Dictator of the United States of America." He recognizes the gathering as composed of foreigners, holding various ambassadorial positions in Washington, and refuses to be a party to their plot. They struggle with him and bind him, and later forge his signature to a treacherous proclamation, which is posted all over the city.

Meanwhile it has continued to stay dark, though it is eight o'clock in the morning. The President is nonplused about Goodwin's treachery—which he has learned of from the proclamation—and about Selma Selester's actions, as is her fiancé, Frank Goodwin. Though the girl is reached by phone at the laboratory-tower, several people meet her on the street almost at the same time, the last two being Frank and Eperson, an Englishman, who, jumping into a cab, pursue her.

CHAPTER X.

THE WHITE HOUSE RIOT.

IN the President's private office, at the White House, the cabinet meeting was still in progress. The administration felt that it faced a crisis.

The popularity of Captain Goodwin was well known, and was powerful. In such a time, when the nation was riddled as a result of the long war, when men did not think with sane brains, a people was liable to forget the past, to do things it would not do ordinarily.

The time for the conspiracy had been well chosen. The President and his advisers feared the worst would happen.

Secret agents, troops, officers scoured the city and the suburbs in every direction, searching for the ex-chief of staff. Inquiry was made of every one.

The aeroplane-depot was watched, every aeroplane accounted for. Rumors were pursued without avail.

"The orders forwarded by Captain Goodwin before his arrest," the President told those about him, "were, according to the duplicates which have been found, to renew hostilities at sunrise this morning. The sun has not risen, owing to the genius of Professor Selester, who now lies in this house, recovering, we hope, from the bullet-wound given him by Captain Goodwin.

"In the meantime, Count Kashuma has returned to the field of battle on the Aragon, and has ordered the representatives of the Asiatics to report at once at Washington and confer with us, looking toward a treaty of peace.

"What is occurring at the field of battle is a matter for conjecture, but it is

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safe to assume that hostilities are at an end, for a short time at least.

"I have forwarded orders to General Bell, chief in the field, under my own signature, telling him of Captain Goodwin's dismissal, and informing him that a peace protocol is in force for one week, unless he receives notification to the contrary before the expiration of that time.

"Captain Goodwin has, in all probability, forwarded further orders, for it is possible he has an aeroplane at his command of which we know nothing. These orders will conflict with mine, and what General Bell will do in this extremity is something we cannot tell. I hope for the best, however, for General Bell is a loyal officer.

"That disposes of matters in the field. Now we have matters here to consider. Captain Goodwin must be captured; this conspiracy must be broken at once. There is no telling what the crazed and grief-stricken people will do in the heat of anger. We can do nothing but wait."

The President ceased speaking. The Secretary of War looked at his watch.

"Noon, and the darkness continues," he said. "It is wonderful."

To the ears of those in the room there came, then, the roar of the approaching crowd. An aide left the room quickly to ascertain its cause. He returned in a moment, his face white with fear.

"The people are mad, sir," he told the President. "They are surrounding the White House—thousands of them—screaming and crying. The troopers are trying to keep them back."

"Let there be no bloodshed!" the President cried. "Warn the officers!"

He led the way to the floor above, the others following. From behind the shutters of a window they looked out upon the grounds.

Thousands of screaming, screeching people were there, their faces ghastly in the glare of electricity. Many of them had smoking torches, manufactured out of any materials that had been near at hand.

"The President!" they screamed. "We want to see the President! The world is coming to an end! It is a punishment. The war has brought it upon us!"

They surged about the building, screaming, trampling each other, fighting like madmen. There were hundreds of women in the crowd—women who screeched and screamed and fought with the others.

"They are mad — mad!" the President said. "I am going to speak to them!"

"They may slay you, sir!" the Secretary of War cried. "You would not dare—"

"They are my people," the President said, choking. "They will not harm me."

He fumbled at the catches on the shutters, threw them open wide, and stepped out upon the balcony under the lights, where all could see. A shout greeted him. He raised one hand, commanding silence.

It was several minutes before the crowd grew quiet; there were hysterical ones who continued to scream and rave.

"My people," the President said, "you need have no fear. For five years you have suffered under this cruel war. Your homes are wrecked; your loved ones have died for their country.

"There are those who desire the war to continue, who hold some authority to make it so. It is because of this that eternal night is upon you for a time. We have sent for the representatives of the Asiatics to discuss means of peace. When there is peace, the sun will shine again."

The crowd caught at his words, and they were cried down the streets.

"When there is peace, the sun will shine again!"

The President commanded silence once more.

"There is no danger," he said. "I am responsible for this unusual change. It is but a means to a better ending. It is necessary, in the face of events. Go to your homes, and do not fear!"

A chorus of angry shouts greeted his words. Again the people surged about the building, screaming in rage and terror.

"He says he is responsible! He says he did it!"

A shot rang out above the din. A

puff of smoke showed for an instant back in the crowd before the President. A bullet crashed against the building within a foot of the President's head.

Those on the balcony behind him screamed for him to reenter the building.

Down below there was quick silence —the shot had calmed the people.

The President stepped forward and threw out his arms.

"I am trying to save you, my people," he said. "If you wish to murder me, I am here, waiting for your bullets!"

And now another chorus of shouts greeted him—shouts of approval.

"The President! Long live the President!"

For a moment the President stood there, looking at the mass before him. Then he backed to the window and stepped inside.

Down in the crowd a man in civilian clothes mounted the steps.

"Countrymen!" he screamed. "The President would betray you! He would conclude peace with the Asiatics that would dishonor the country and its flag! We want no white-livered man to lead us! Ask him what he has done with Captain Goodwin!

"Where is Captain Goodwin, the man who conquered the Asiatics yesterday, who has fought them these five years against great odds? There is an American for you—a man who said the United States could win by herself alone, who refused the proffered aid of other powers! Ask him what he has done with Captain Goodwin!"

"Goodwin! Goodwin!" the crowd screamed.

Soldiers attempted to get to the orator, but he disappeared in the crowd. The people continued to cry for Goodwin. He should be there with the President and the Cabinet officers—they knew that. If he was not, where was he?

"What can we tell them?" the Secretary of War asked.

"The truth—if we tell them anything," the President replied.

"They will not believe the truth."

"We will tell them nothing else," the President persisted.

The crowd continued to call for the ex-chief of staff. At another place another orator got up and called to them.

"Let us follow Captain Goodwin!" he cried. "Long live Captain Goodwin, dictator of the United States!"

The ever-ready crowd took it up:

"Long live Captain Goodwin! Long live Dictator Goodwin!"

But there were wise heads there, too —brains not muddled by events.

"Treason! Treason!" these men cried. "We want no dictator in a republic like ours!"

"Captain Goodwin has won your battles!" the orator cried. "He has preserved national honor when the President and others would have sold it!"

A score of troopers charged through the crowd at him; he slipped away, as the first orator had done. The people turned upon the troopers, pulled them from their horses, fought and kicked them into insensibility. The President saw.

"They have gone mad!" he said sorrowfully. "They do not realize what they do!"

Other troopers rushed to the assistance of their comrades. Revolvers flashed in the crowd. The soldiers drew their weapons. It was no time for them to await the commands of officers. It was a time for civil war. Every man in uniform became a target for the maddened people. Every man not in uniform became a mark for the soldiers. The grounds of the White House, in a few seconds of time, became a battlefield.

The President pushed by the others, rushed out upon the balcony, and threw up his arms. Above the noise of battle came the cry of some conspirator.

"The President's soldiers are killing you! The President's troopers are riding you down! Long live Dictator Goodwin!"

In vain the President screamed to his officers below to stop the carnage; none heard him.

And then the temper of the crowd changed—quickly. The voice of a crazed man was heard above the roar of angry throats:

"It is still dark! The night is still upon us! No human being could have

done it! It is punishment for this war! It is the end of the world! Pray—pray! It is the end of the world!"

Fighting men stopped to listen, to wonder, to contemplate again the phenomenon they faced. Weapons dropped to the ground.

"It is the end of the world, the punishment for so much bloodshed! Pray—pray!"

"The end of the world!" they screamed, their crazed brains grasping at the new thought. "No more bloodshed! We want peace—peace! Pray—pray!"

A hush fell upon the throng. Some knelt on the grass wet with blood, knelt beside dead and dying men and women.

"Pray—pray!" the cry continued.

By dozens, scores, hundreds, by thousands, the people went down upon their knees, and from them arose a murmur that grew into a wail of supplication for mercy.

"We want no more bloodshed! We want peace—peace! Pray for peace!" cried that voice above the crowd.

The President turned and walked back across the balcony, his eyes filled with tears. He stepped into the room and looked at the faces of his Cabinet officers, of his commanders.

"God be praised!" he said softly. "Let us pray—too!"

CHAPTER XI.

AMONG THE CONSPIRATORS.

"How long do you intend to keep me here a prisoner—treat me like a common cur?" Captain Goodwin demanded, walking up to Count Bernstein.

The German took a step backward, and regarded the ex-chief of staff.

"You had your chance, sir," he replied. "You made the choice between being our leader and the leader of the country, or of being treated as a prisoner."

Captain Goodwin turned his back and walked across the room. They had tied his arms behind him; they had barred and bolted the doors and windows, and allowed him to walk at will around the room, watching while they plotted treason through the use of his name.

He had seen Captain-General Torocco delicately forge his signature to the proclamation, which had been scattered broadcast; to orders which had been sent to General Bell in an aeroplane—the Merrimac — which the conspirators had seized, and which was commanded by M. Elliton.

Once a man had brought coffee and rolls into the room, and had left them standing on the table. They had unfastened Goodwin's right arm, so that he could eat.

"What time is it?" the ex-chief of staff asked suddenly, as he stopped to glance through a crack in a curtain at the outside.

"Almost eleven," one of the men answered.

"In the morning?"

"Most assuredly."

Goodwin did not reply, but reeled backward as though he would fall. He stepped up to the window again, looked through the crack in the curtain for some time, then turned to them.

"Either you are lying to me," he said, "or else I am indeed insane."

"What is the trouble now?" demanded Count Bernstein.

"It is dark—as dark as night!"

"Are you trying to jest with us—trying to work a trick—get us to walk into a trap?"

"I tell you it is dark," Goodwin repeated.

"It is not dark," said Bernstein; "and by telling us it is, you are not going to get us to throw open the curtains. If that is your subterfuge, rest assured it will fail.

"We prefer to work under lamplight, in a room where curtains hide the windows, even though the sunshine outside is very beautiful."

The German count sneered at the ex-chief of staff.

"I tell you it is as dark as night outside," said Goodwin. "I can see through this crack in the curtain. I can see the stars, man. Tell me the truth! Either it is dark, or else I am indeed insane!"

"Come away from that window," commanded Captain-General Torocco.

"Very well; and you look — satisfy yourself," Goodwin replied.

He stepped back into the center of the room, and Torocco hurried over to the window and looked through the crack in the curtain.

"Why—it is dark!" he cried. "Bernstein—Testnor! It is as dark as night!"

The others rushed to the captain-general's side and looked out. Bernstein glanced at his watch again.

"Surely we haven't been here all day—surely it is not nearly midnight!" he exclaimed.

"Nonsense!" cried Testnor. "Of course it is not night. We have been here but for a few hours. I say it isn't noon yet!"

"But it is dark!" Bernstein cried. "What does it mean?"

For several minutes they said nothing, only looked at the outside through the crack in the curtain, and wondered. They could see the stars plainly; they could see the lights over in the city, twinkling as at night.

"Something must have happened," Bernstein said finally. "We ought to know. Who is outside, Testnor?"

"Elliton has flown away on that aeroplane of yours," the Austrian replied, "and will not be back until mid-afternoon at the earliest. Lieutenant Bremen went out two hours ago; he ought to be back soon."

"We will wait for Bremen's return," said Bernstein, and led the others away from the window, back to the table.

"We may as well go on considering the plans," Torocco said. "As I understand it, General Bell has received orders from us—or will, as soon as they can be relayed to him—to begin hostilities again at once. That disposes of matters in the field, for, in reality, we do not care what happens there.

"It is matters here in Washington that most concern us. When Bremen returns with news of how the people have taken the proclamation, we can tell which way to jump. Just now, we are working in the dark."

"Thieves and traitors always work in the dark," said Captain Goodwin.

Bernstein whirled upon him.

"My fine friend," he said, sarcastically, "it is you who are being called a traitor by the President and his administration; do not forget that."

"And do you think I'll not get a chance to clear my name? Do you think I have not friends who will seek me out, who will look beneath the surface and know that this is not my doing? Do you forget that I have a son who will take some action in the matter?"

"That cub!" laughed Bernstein.

"Give that cub, as you call him, a sword, and meet him face to face, Count Bernstein. He is worth a dozen of you! You may taste his steel yet!"

Bernstein's face grew dark with rage as he rose and walked over to Goodwin and faced him.

"You are a prisoner—your hands are tied, sir," he thundered, "else I might not take your insults so carelessly."

"Untie my hands then, and give me a sword. Stand up before me!" Goodwin cried. "Do that, and I'll save my son the trouble of killing you!"

Bernstein drew back one hand. Goodwin laughed in his face.

"There shows the brave man—one who would strike with his hand a man who is helpless," said the ex-chief of staff.

Bernstein's hand dropped to his side; he looked Goodwin in the eyes, his own flashing with anger, then turned back to the table.

"There may come a time when I am at liberty to remember these insults, Captain Goodwin," he said.

"Remember them as quickly as you like, and demand what satisfaction you please," the prisoner returned. "Nothing would please me better, sir."

As Bernstein resumed his seat at the table, there came a knock upon the door which led to the hall. The knock was repeated twice. Captain Testnor got up, unfastened the door, and threw it open.

Lieutenant Bremen stumbled into the room. He was a young man—one of those who had been in the room when Goodwin was first taken there a prisoner, who had kept rather in the background, and had not taken part in the conversations of the others. Goodwin looked upon him as a spy, a tool, rather than as a conspirator.

The young German lieutenant's face was ashen, his hands were trembling. He stumbled to a chair, and almost col-

lapsed into it. Captain-General Torocco handed him a glass of wine, and the boy drank it.

"Well?" Bernstein asked. "What has frightened you?"

Bremen threw one hand above his head.

"What has frightened me?" he cried. "Nothing has frightened me! I am not frightened—but my nerves are broken! What has done it? Why, troops and civilians have been fighting in the grounds of the White House.

"The President has stood up before the mob on a balcony and welcomed their bullets, and none fired at him. Soldiers and citizens have clashed, and the grass has been wet with blood!"

"What is this you are saying?" Bernstein cried, with the others.

"I am telling you the truth! I have seen people fight like madmen—civil war I have seen! And in the next instant I have seen them cease their fighting to kneel among the corpses and pray!"

"The man is mad!" Testnor cried.

"Mad?" echoed Bremen. "Who wouldn't be mad? Do you want the truth? Very well! It is within ten minutes of the noon hour—and the world is dark! The stars are shining—at noon. It is like midnight.

"The people are crazed, frightened into insanity. The sun has not risen to-day—the world is standing still!"

"You are mad—mad!" Torocco cried again.

Captain Testnor was upon his feet, struggling into his coat.

"I will learn the truth of this matter," he said. "We have a man on duty in the White House. I'll go to him, learn the truth from him. I'll return as quickly as possible!"

"You'll be recognized — seized!" Bernstein cried. "We do not know what the secret-service has told the President. He may know more than we think!"

"The risk must be taken!" Testnor cried. "Give me that long coat; it will cover my uniform. Here—take my sword, and give me a revolver! A hat now—that's it! I'll get through—never fear—in all this confusion. I'll be back in an hour, or not at all!"

The door slammed; he was gone. Lieutenant Bremen put his head down upon his outstretched arms and gasped for breath. Bernstein handed the boy another glass of wine.

"He is no good—his nerves are broken," Torocco whispered.

"Well?" Bernstein asked.

"A man with broken nerves will betray anything—anybody," the Spaniard said.

"Well?" Bernstein asked again.

Captain-General Torocco made a gesture that demanded silence. He slipped a dagger from his blouse, pointed to it, and Bernstein shuddered and turned his head away.

Torocco slipped around the table, stopping beside Lieutenant Bremen. The hand carrying the dagger went arm's length into the air, started to descend with a rush!

Midway, it was caught by an elbow thrown before it, thrown as far in front of the Spaniard as a man with hands tied behind him could place it.

Torocco looked down into Captain Goodwin's stern face.

The lieutenant, sudden fear clutching at his heart, sprang to his feet and confronted them.

Goodwin slipped from beneath the other's arm. It had been a dangerous thing to do, for a slight miscalculation would have meant death.

"You would have murdered me!" the boy screamed.

He started to spring upon Torocco, but Bernstein held him back.

The Spaniard replaced the dagger in his blouse, but his eyes never left Captain Goodwin's.

"You cur!" he hissed.

The ex-chief of staff smiled at the Spaniard with meaning.

"There is some honor," he said, "even among conspirators and thieves."

CHAPTER XII.

TO MAKE THE SUN SHINE AGAIN.

An hour passed — an hour in which those in the room spoke but few words to each other, in which Captain Goodwin paced back and forth across the room, in which Lieutenant Bremen cow-

cred in a corner, considering this new fear born of suspicion of those with whom he was in league.

Then Captain Testnor, the Austrian, returned. Bernstein opened the door to him.

He came into the room walking swiftly, his eyes alight with intelligence. Before he spoke he threw off his hat and coat, and tossed off a glass of wine.

"The boy told us the truth," he said. "The world is standing still. Everything seems to be tottering. The people are frantic, insane."

"Explain, man!" Torocco cried.

Captain Goodwin walked nearer, and remained standing, listening, while Testnor told his story.

"I saw our spy," he said, "and he told me all. He has been doing excellent work for us.

"On the other side of the city is a large tower — perhaps you have seen it—"

"Where Professor Selester, the eminent scientist, conducts his experiments —is that the one?" Bernstein asked.

"That is the tower," said Testnor. "In that tower, at the present time, is a girl of twenty years—alone. Professor Selester, as we know, is at the White House, recovering from his bullet-wound. This girl of twenty years, alone in that tower, is making the world stand still!"

"Are you insane, too?" Torocco cried.

"Wait! Listen!" Testnor exclaimed. "When Captain Goodwin declared there should be no peace protocol with the Asiatics and left the council-room in the War Department Building, Professor Selester appeared before the President and declared that he had perfected a plan whereby he could make the world stand still — could prevent its rotation on its axis and maintain eternal night on this side of the earth, as well as eternal day on the other side.

"Captain Goodwin had issued orders to renew hostilities at break of day. The President and his Cabinet desired hostilities to cease. The scientist told them the sun would not rise this morning—and it has not.

"He went to the telephone, called the tower, and told his daughter, Selma, to start the machinery—or whatever it is—that causes this unusual state of affairs. The girl obeyed.

"A few minutes later the scientist was shot by Captain Goodwin. His daughter continues to obey his last order —to maintain eternal night.

"So far—so good; that much is explained. It was a trick to stop the war —to outwit Captain Goodwin through the application of the greatest scientific discovery of the ages. And it is ruining us, too."

"What do you mean?" Bernstein asked.

"The people began to go insane when they saw that it remained dark long after the sun should have been shining. They surged up the streets toward the White House, surrounded it, and called for the President.

"The fools, not knowing the truth, cried that the end of the world was at hand; that it was punishment for so much war and bloodshed. They reviled the President and the administration.

"Our men thought they saw their chance. They began addressing the crowd, calling upon the people to support Captain Goodwin, telling them to demand of the President what he had done with Captain Goodwin. The President stepped out on the balcony and addressed them.

"Without telling them the whole truth, he said that they were not to fear, that he was responsible for the darkness. Upon hearing that, they reviled him more, and some one shot at him.

"The bullet went wild; the President walked to the front of the balcony, threw out his arms, and told them that they were his people, that they could murder him if they desired.

"His heroism set them wild. They began to praise him. Our people began speaking again, telling the crowds that the President was trying to conclude a dishonorable peace, calling upon them to support Captain Goodwin as dictator of the United States. Troopers tried to get through the crowd and seize our men.

"They rode down a few of the citizens. In an instant there was civil war —the soldiers were fighting the citizens, the citizens were trying to slay the soldiers.

"In vain the President tried to stop the carnage. Our people were pleased, knowing civil war of that sort would help our cause. In a few moments there were scores of corpses in the grounds.

"Then some fanatics began to scream that they didn't want Captain Goodwin, that they didn't want war, that the world was at an end because there had been so much bloodshed and war already. The fighting ceased—the crowds began to kneel and pray."

"Pray!" Bernstein cried.

"Yes—kneel and pray among the dead bodies, on the grass wet with human blood. Soldiers and civilians knelt side by side. Fear clutched them. They are walking the streets now, by thousands, and praying for peace, praying for the end of war."

"Our cause is lost!" Bernstein said.

"Yes—it is lost," Testnor echoed. "The people are praying for peace; they want no more war. Our cause is lost unless we have further war from which to snatch the spoils. Our cause is lost in the city—but in the field we do not know what is transpiring. The battle may be on—"

"Not if the darkness endures," said Bernstein. "We shall know this afternoon, when Elliton returns in the Merrimac."

"We are undone!" Testnor declared. "This darkness is our undoing. The nation is praying for peace, praying with fear in its heart, praying with repentance on its lips.

"What can we do in the face of that? The darkness is the foe of conspiracy for once, instead of conspiracy's friend. We can do nothing unless we have light!"

"Then we must have light!" Torocco cried. "Are we children, to throw up our hands, even in the face of such an unusual affair? Shall we hand ourselves over to the halter?"

"The temper of the people might change if the sunshine came again," said Bernstein. "But when will the sunshine come again?"

"It will come," replied Testnor, "when the representatives of the Asiatic forces have concluded peace — when peace has been announced. Then the President will pass the word to release the world from the bondage of science and let it resume its natural course. And then it will be too late, for the nation will worship the President, and listen to no treason."

"Who knows the truth concerning this darkness?" demanded Torocco.

"Less than a score of men outside ourselves — the President, the wounded scientist, the Cabinet officers, our spy, the girl in the tower—"

"Ah! The girl in the tower!" exclaimed Torocco.

"We must have light!" Bernstein repeated. "Without it, our cause is lost."

"We shall have the sunshine," Torocco declared.

"But when? How?" cried Testnor.

"A girl in a tower, alone—a girl but twenty years of age—is causing all this," the Spaniard said. "There is no one protecting her; no one but half a score of men knows she is there, and what she is doing. She stands between us and the accomplishment of our purpose — between us and death, perhaps! Well?"

Testnor glanced at Bernstein.

"We thought that girl—" the Austrian began.

"Stop!" Bernstein commanded. He glanced at Captain Goodwin, then back at Testnor.

"Well?" Torocco asked, a wicked gleam in his eyes. "She is but twenty years of age—a girl—and alone—and she stands between us and death, perhaps. Were she out of the way, unable to maintain perpetual night, the sunshine would return, and we would have a trump card to play.

"There is no one could take the girl's place. Her father is wounded, near to death. And if there is any machinery, it could be destroyed."

"There is no time to be lost," Bernstein said. "Elliton will not be back until mid-afternoon; the Mexican is down in the city; there is at hand for this enterprise no one except myself, Torocco, Testnor, that boy Bremen—"

"I do not fight women!" Bremen cried.

"Do you not?" sneered Torocco. "Be glad you are able to fight any one! You go with us! Do you think we would leave you here to guard Captain Goodwin, after he has saved your life, when

you are already sniveling and at the point of betraying us?

"You go with us, and at the first backward move you get a knife between the ribs over your cowardly heart! You understand?"

"Who remains?" Bernstein demanded.

"Two of the men are in the other room!"

"We cannot trust either of them in this. The man who remains must keep Captain Goodwin a close prisoner—must be ready to face any emergency—"

"I'll remain," Testnor said. "I've been out once; and you, Bernstein, know as much about the tower as I do."

"So be it!" the German cried. "Torocco, summon the others! We must not fail in this! Every man but Testnor shall go with us!"

"I fight no women!" declared Bremen stubbornly.

None gave him attention; they were not worrying about the boy lieutenant; he would do as they commanded when the time came. But when they started toward the door, they found Captain Goodwin confronting them.

"And so half a score of men are to fight a girl of twenty," he sneered. "It shows your bravery, your gallantry, gentlemen!"

"Stand aside!" Torocco cried.

"Untie my arms, give me a weapon of some sort, and I'll fight you one by one!" Goodwin exclaimed. "If you have one jot of manhood left, any of you, leave that defenseless girl in the tower alone! And use your common sense! What girl—what human being—could make the world stand still?"

"Professor Selester can do almost anything, and his daughter carries out his orders!" cried Testnor. "At any rate, the matter is such as to demand instant investigation. Stand aside!"

Goodwin remained standing in their way; Bernstein grasped him in his arms and hurled him to one side. They rushed out—all except Testnor.

He closed the door after them, locked and bolted it, then returned to the center of the room and sat down beside the table. Goodwin was standing near a window on the opposite side of the room, his back toward the Austrian lieutenant.

Half an hour passed—and not a word was spoken by either man. Once Testnor arose and paced up and down the room; once he tossed off a glass of wine. Once Goodwin turned and regarded him as a brave man regards a coward.

Then there came a quick knock at the door—repeated twice.

Testnor sprang forward and began fumbling at the bolts.

"Some of them returning," he said.

He threw open the door; Goodwin turned to see who entered. The next instant he rushed forward.

"Selma! Selma! Thank Heaven!" he cried.

The girl in the gray suit stumbled into the room, looking weary and faint.

"Shut the door!" she commanded.

Captain Testnor snapped the bolts, then helped her to the table.

"You are not at the tower! It was all a lie? What have you been doing? What are these men to you? Explain, Selma; tell me everything!" Goodwin was crying.

The girl ignored him.

"Where are the others?" she asked Captain Testnor.

"Gone to make the sun shine again," replied the Austrian, laughing.

"What do you mean?"

"They have gone to Professor Selester's scientific tower."

"I don't understand," she said.

"You don't understand?" Goodwin cried. "Have you been at the tower, Selma? Is it true you have been making the world stand still?

"What does this mean? You are in league with these vultures, yet they just set out to slay you! What does it mean? Is my poor brain indeed gone wrong?"

The girl regarded him curiously, and opened her mouth as though to speak. But Captain Testnor signed for her to remain silent.

"Say nothing," he warned. "You may give away a clue!"

CHAPTER XIII.

THE LANE'S TURNING.

WHEN Lieutenant Frank Goodwin and Eperson seized the waiting carriage in the name of the government and be-

gan their chase after that other carriage, the crowds were still surging through the streets, the people screaming and cursing, making their way as swiftly as possible toward the White House grounds.

The carriage ahead turned another corner, got away from the thickest of the crowd, and the driver lashed his horses to greater speed. The one containing the lieutenant and Eperson followed at a short distance.

"Keep them in sight, but do not betray that you are following, if you can avoid it," Eperson said to their driver.

On and on they dashed, those two carriages. To all appearances, the one ahead was unaware that it was being followed.

"This unusual darkness is helping us, at any rate," Eperson told Frank. "We can keep their lights in sight."

Rapidly the leading carriage drew away from the central part of the city and journeyed toward a suburb. The second carriage followed. The one ahead slowed down, and so did the second. Then they reached a boulevard, and the one ahead went slower still.

Frank stopped their driver, and bade him extinguish the lights. After he had done so, they went forward again, still keeping a certain distance behind.

The forward carriage came to an old mansion which set back some distance from the street, and stopped before it.

The second carriage drew a little nearer. Eperson and Frank saw the girl get out and start up the long walk that led to the house. The carriage started again, and went on down the boulevard.

Frank and Eperson got out.

"You wait here," Frank told the driver. "It is most important that you obey. Remember that we are on government business.

"Remain exactly here, at all hazards. If you are forced, for any reason, to drive on, return as soon as possible. No matter whether we do not appear for several hours—you are to wait!"

"That's all right—I understand," the driver said.

Keeping in the shadows cast by the trees, Frank and Eperson ran lightly to the walk which ran to the front door of the house. They were just in time to see a flash of light as the door was thrown open—just in time to see the girl enter and a man close the door after her.

"That man was Captain Testnor, the Austrian attaché," Eperson said.

"Then we are on the right track," Frank declared. "What can Selma Selester be doing here? What is transpiring? Are we to find my father here? And when we find him, what else will we find?"

"We will find him a loyal man, and not a traitor, at least," declared Eperson. "I have known your father for years; if he has committed treason, boy, it is because he is not responsible for what he is doing. Come!"

They crept into the yard, and approached the house. All was dark without. Not a ray of light came from a door, a window. They listened at the door, but could hear no voice. They began to go around the house, revolvers held ready for instant use.

The windows were high from the ground, and all of them were dark. They had almost completed the circuit of the house when Frank put a hand on Eperson's arm.

"I hear voices," he said.

"So do I, Frank! Listen!"

"The sound comes from inside the house!"

They crept nearer the wall, directly beneath a window.

"There's a ray of light," Eperson said; "but it is high from the ground. It is just a crack in a curtain."

Frank fumbled at the base of the wall.

"There is no foothold," he said. "Can you help me?"

Eperson braced himself against the wall, and the younger man mounted to his shoulders. His head was on a level with the bottom of the window. He crept to the sill, raised himself with his hands, and peered within. In a moment he was upon the ground beside Eperson again.

"Could you see?" Eperson asked.

"I saw my father—his hands tied behind his back. I saw him and Captain Testnor—and Selma."

"No others?"

"No others!"

"What do you wish to do?"

"Go into the house," Frank said.

"We may be overpowered, put out of the way, and then all chance for saving your father will be gone. There are certainly others in the house."

"There were no others in that room, and we must take the chance," Frank responded. "If we do not—if we go for help—we may find them gone when we return."

"Into the house, then," Eperson said. "But how?"

"Let us see," Frank replied.

They went round the house again, but found no way of entering. The windows they could reach were not only locked, but, also, there were heavy shutters, barred upon the inside. They tried the front door, working carefully and without noise, but they found it locked.

"Shall we knock?" Frank asked.

"And put them upon their guard? No!" Eperson replied. "We must find a way in."

Again they made the circuit of the house, following the wall closely. Presently they found a basement window. It was fastened with an ordinary lock.

They decided to try to effect entrance there. While Eperson stood on guard, ready for any emergency, Frank gave the window one kick, and tore the lock away. They retreated to some shrubbery near by and waited.

Five minutes passed—ten—fifteen, and there was no outcry—nothing to show that those in the house had heard the noise. Again they approached the window, weapons held ready for use. Frank went inside; Eperson followed. They found themselves in a dark basement, at the foot of a flight of steps.

Frank led the way up the steps; they came to a door.

"Is it locked?" Eperson asked.

"No; but it may be a trap."

"You hear nothing?"

"Nothing."

"In we go, then," said the Englishman.

Frank opened the door cautiously; they entered what appeared to have been at one time a kitchen. They passed through it and entered a small corridor.

"Which way?" Frank asked.

"Straight ahead," Eperson replied.

They reached the end of the hall. There were several doors, but from beneath none of them came a ray of light that told of the room in which Frank had seen his father, the Austrian, and the girl.

"I believe this is a sub-basement; that we ought to be on the floor above," Eperson said. "And we are at the rear of the house, too; while the room in which you say you saw your father and the others is well toward the front."

"Here is another flight of steps," Frank whispered.

They mounted these steps, reached the floor above, and stood there for some time, listening.

"I can hear voices now," Frank said.

"So do I—and there is light coming from beneath a door."

"Forward, then!"

They crept along the hall, and came to a halt before the door. They could hear the voices plainly now. Captain Testnor was speaking.

"We will ask the young lady no more questions, Captain Goodwin, if you please," he was saying. "She does not care to talk with you."

"You are afraid to let her talk with me," Captain Goodwin accused. "You fear I will unravel this confounded mystery. I demand that she tell me what this means—why it is that she is here, in league with you and these other scoundrels, when, at the same time, men are on their way to the tower to destroy her."

The girl spoke.

"I do not understand what you mean," she said. "We will drop the subject."

Outside in the corridor, Eperson bent nearer Frank.

"What shall we do?" he asked.

"Enter this room," Frank replied.

"But how?"

For an answer, Frank raised his revolver and struck the door with the butt of it. The voices inside ceased; there was a quick step.

Frank raised the revolver again and struck twice more, unconsciously giving the signal. Inside, the bolts were shot back, the door was thrown open. Captain Testnor stood there in the bright light.

"You—" he screamed.

Frank's fingers, clutching about the Austrian's throat, ended the scream.

He was inside, had Testnor upon the floor in an instant, was choking the life out of him, and had hurled the Austrian's revolver across the room before Eperson could make a move.

Captain Goodwin had sprung from the chair in which he had been sitting.

"Eperson! Frank—my boy, my boy!" he cried.

Eperson did not reply. He, too, threw himself upon Captain Testnor, who was proving too much for Lieutenant Goodwin, and in a moment the Austrian was subdued, his hands bound behind him, a handkerchief pushed between his teeth for a gag.

He lay on the floor and glared up at his captors.

Frank sprung to his father's side and removed the bonds that held his hands. Eperson watched Testnor closely.

"Now!" Frank cried, whirling around. "Selma!"

He fell backward in amazement—the girl was gone!

(To be continued.)

THE HIRED HOUSE.

By William Tillinghast Eldridge.

THE city has advantages over the country; they know how to do people better in the former.

THERE is nothing like the country—the clear air, the lack of noise and rush, peaceful nights, green trees, a place to breathe in. I had preached that; it became almost second nature with me to run off the suburbanite's reasons for being, without heed to my words.

Yet, in our heart of hearts, both my wife and myself had to confess that in the winter time—say for a few weeks, or, at most, one or two months—we would not mind in the least if we lived in the city.

We might have gone in and taken an apartment, but there we drew the line. We had never lived in one, and our education, begot of four acres of our own, had not prompted us to feel kindly toward such a suggestion.

The time did come, however, when we felt we must do something in the way of getting nearer city pavements, if for only a single month. At just about this time our eyes fell on an advertisement. A house, furnished, and in a good quarter, was for rent.

I brought it home to my wife one night—the advertisement, not the house.

"We might look at it," she suggested.

"To be sure," I agreed. "We could take it for, say, two months; we wouldn't have to move in a thing—"

"We would have to move in a good deal," my wife interposed, with her practical mind mentally roving over the house—our own house—from room to room, and selecting the articles that would have to be moved for even a two-months' stay.

"Of course, a few things; the house is furnished," I suggested.

"Bed-linen, silverware, clothing—"

I held up my hand beseechingly.

"Let's look the place over first, and see if it is worth even considering, before we bother our heads about the troubles of moving in. We can have our friends round—a dinner-party every evening."

"And when we haven't a dinner on, we can go to the theater." My wife clapped her hands.

"And after the theater we can have a lobster, without the danger of missing the last train home."

"Or sleeping with a stiff neck all the way out, and waking up just when you believe you are getting half comfortable."

"It will be just like a little vacation; we'll have a lark out of it," I declared, and then added hastily: "But we'll be glad to come back to the country."

"To be sure we will," my wife agreed. "But let's look at the house to-morrow."

The house was delightful. The owner was going South for two months; and, really, all he wanted was some nice, respectable people to come in and take care of the place. He was ready to rent it for a mere song, so he said. Of course, we did feel that his song was a little more than mere, but then we were looking at rents from a suburbanite's view-point.

The house was well furnished. We would, as my wife had said, have to bring in our own bed-linen—but that we would, of course, have done—and a few other things. Beyond that, nothing. Even the silverware was to be left.

In fact, the very nice family was just going to pack up their personal effects and move out, while we packed up our personal effects and moved in—just as if we were personal friends.

We took the house, as it stood, for two months, and I wrote out my check. Then the owner suggested—he did it very nicely, I must admit, and I took no offense—that, as his silverware and *bric-à-brac* and —he waved his hand about carelessly—was to be left, I should put up a deposit of a thousand dollars. It could be left with his attorney. In fact, I could call on his attorney and give him my check. His attorney would fix up the papers.

I suggested references.

It wasn't a question of reference—that wasn't the idea at all. It was a business transaction; he had always done the same thing each winter when he rented the house. When he returned, and we checked up the inventory of goods, my money would be returned, of course.

I took my wife aside, and we talked it over. It was a very dear little house—we both agreed as to that—and it was in a very nice neighborhood. In fact, it was just the very place we wanted.

"He says he has always had a deposit before," my wife whispered, "and you know we would like one if we were going to rent our house."

"I don't think it is usual," I insisted, "but of course we can do it. We have the house and the furniture and the silver against the thousand."

"Why, of course," my wife smiled, "he isn't going to run off with our money and leave us his house."

I still didn't like the idea, and suggested I would sign an agreement to make good any loss.

Here he interposed in the nicest manner possible.

"I don't want to urge you to do it," he smiled delightfully—and so did his wife, who was being just as nice to my wife as one could be. "But, as I say, I have always asked it. If you would rather not, we can let the matter go, or you can take a day to think it over. I wouldn't agree to give you an option for a day, but if the house isn't rented—I have two people who are to call this afternoon—and you decided to take it, then it would be yours."

I led the owner aside, and put it up to him frankly that I expected to do a deal of entertaining during the two months, and didn't care to tie up a cold thousand.

"You understand," I explained, "I don't question the money being safe, only I don't want to draw that sum out of the bank right now."

"I'd really like you to have the place," he said. "You see, I've done business with the house you are with, and, by the bye, I happen to know your property up the river. Mighty nice place; I wonder how you can tear yourselves away from it, even for two months in the winter."

"We never have before. But our friends have all been after us to come in —so much handier," I explained. "So we decided to take a try at it. Pay back a bunch of social obligations, and all that, right in a clip. You can't get your city friends to come out so far unless you put them up overnight."

"True, true. We are very close to the theaters here. The Subway is handy, and yet it is quiet. There is a taxicab-stand, too, right up at the corner."

"I'll tell you what. I'll give your attorney my check for five hundred. You know the house I am with. They'd make good—out of pride—if I ran away with anything."

"My dear fellow," he laughed, clapping me on the shoulder—I knew then, from his manner, that I had won, and actually I felt cheap at beating him down—"you must know every man has little fads in doing business. Mine is to get a cash deposit every time I rent my house. It

isn't the amount—far from it; I only said a thousand, as it is a round sum. The things are worth many times that amount. If, as you say, you may run a bit short, why, make it five hundred, and let it go at that."

I felt not over two feet high. I came within an ace of saying I'd put up the thousand—nay, two thousand—or not take the house at all. But I didn't. I just accepted the reduction, pocketed my pride, and went round to his attorney's with him.

My wife stayed behind to check up the inventory.

A week later, with much anticipation, we moved in. It was fine.

My wife had written notes to all her friends, and I told every man I knew that we were at last in town. The first evening we had quite a reception.

It was a very informal affair—a sort of house-warming—but it did seem good to think one didn't have to watch the clock and calculate the shortest number of minutes it would take to make the station, and then, when your friends had gone, to stand round and listen to see if the train was on time—which it never was—and, when the train didn't go past, count the wait your guests were having on a cold station-platform, with their only comfort the view of a red-hot stove through a locked door.

"The city is not so bad, after all," one of the men suggested, as we loafed in the little room I had converted into a smoking-den.

"Not bad for a little while," I admitted. "I wouldn't take it all the year round, though."

Nothing could induce me to go back completely on our own place.

"You'll like it better the longer you stay," some one else suggested.

"That remains to be seen," I laughed; and, truth to tell, it did.

The first two weeks went finely. Then, one night when I came up from business, and was counting the number of minutes saved on the trip, my wife met me at the door almost in tears.

Before I could demand an explanation of the trouble, she poured forth her tale.

"The most horrible man you ever saw," she cried.

"Where?" I demanded, glancing about for the blackguard.

"Oh, he's gone; but he was here, and he wouldn't go for the longest time. He's coming back this evening, and we have the Brownells and the Carletons for dinner."

"What in the world is it? What did he want?"

"The silver!"

"The silver?" I questioned. "What silver?"

"Why, the silver—our silver."

I looked at my wife in doubt.

"Was he a burglar?" I demanded.

"Of course he wasn't. He just wanted the silver."

"If he wasn't a burglar, and just wanted the silver, what was he?"

"I don't know, but he was going to take the silver away with him. He had a wagon at the door."

I was puzzled; but, seeing how much my wife was disturbed by the affair, I laughed the matter aside, and said, with some confidence, that I would arrange the thing when the man came again—if he did.

It was just as the fish came in that evening—with our friends, the Brownells and the Carletons for guests—that a ring came at the door.

My wife cast me a glance that I pretended not to see. The maid brought in a very dirty and soiled card, which I hastily shoved behind my plate.

"Tell him to come back. I'll see him later," I remarked in a low voice to the maid.

She departed, and almost immediately returned with the announcement that the man would wait. My wife signaled me frantically that that could not be.

"Just tell him, will you"—I tried to lower my voice, and our guests strove to appear interested in an entirely new subject from that which we were talking about when the interruption occurred—"that I cannot see him for some time. He can call back in a couple of hours, or to-morrow morning."

The maid departed with reluctance, and in a moment a rather loud voice could be heard in the hall.

"It's the same one," my wife exclaimed, as the first angry words were borne to us.

I rose hastily, muttered an excuse, and strode out into the hall. At that moment I could have committed murder. The interruption of a dinner-party, no matter how informal, is to my mind unpardonable.

A short, dark-featured man, with a large nose and very red cheeks, nodded indifferently to me.

"If you'll be good enough to state your business and get out," I remarked icily, "I'd be much obliged."

"You know what I want," the dark-featured individual shot out in a gruff voice. "Either pay up right now, or I take the silver. We've written you often enough without getting any replies."

"To whom do you think you are talking?" I demanded, decidedly nettled.

The fellow looked up at me with a sour smile on his face.

"This is number twelve thousand forty-one, isn't it?"

"It is," I admitted.

"And this is Seventy-Eighth Street?" he demanded again.

"Yes," I nodded. "What of it?"

"I guess there weren't no mistake. You pay the last five instalments on the silver, or I take it—see?"

The word instalments gave me light.

"Do you mean to tell me that the silver isn't paid for—that it was bought on the instalment plan?"

I felt weak all of a sudden.

"Oh, go on; I ain't telling you nothing new. Don't try any funny business on me. Come on with the money or the goods. We've waited long enough!"

If what the fellow said was true, complications galore stared me in the face. He actually threw me into as great a state of excitement as he had my wife. If I had allowed her to tell me what he had said when he called during the afternoon, I might have had time to prepare for such a condition as now confronted me. Instead, I had made her calm herself and prepare for her guests without another word on the subject.

"You doubtless think you are talking to the owner of this house," I began.

"This is number—"

But I stopped him.

"Listen!" I commanded. "I never bought the silver you are trying to collect on. I rented this house two weeks ago—rented it furnished." I was going to add that I had put up five hundred dollars as a guarantee that I wouldn't run off with the silver; but I didn't."

"That's an old bluff," the fellow growled.

"It's the truth," I urged in almost pleading tones. I was only anxious to make the fellow believe me and get him away, thus giving me time to think.

"Well, it don't go. I want my money or the silver."

"Do I look like a man that would buy silver on the instalment plan?"

The fellow nearly laughed in my face.

"I don't know what looks has got to do with the instalment game. I never see it keep any one from doing it, and I have thought at times it was a reason."

I glared at the fellow for his levity.

"What I tell you is the truth. I'm not the owner of this place, and the silver was never bought by me. Where is your firm's place of business? Leave me their card, and I'll be round to see them tomorrow."

"What I come for is money—"

I stopped him with a gesture, and bethought what the last word he had uttered might lead to. I pulled out a bill.

"Take this for yourself, and get out. Give me the card—the address—and I'll call in the morning. Great Scott, man, I've got more at stake than the silver! I want to look into it quick."

I do not know whether it was the money I gave him for himself, or that I impressed him as perhaps being personally honest. At any rate, he slipped me his card, and my money went deep down into his pocket.

"Mind you, I'll be round in the morning and take that silver, if you don't show up at our place."

"I'll be at your place—don't you fear," I said as I shut the door on him, little realizing what the morning had in store for me.

I stood staring at the card, wondering what I had been led into. Suddenly a sound from the dining-room brought me back to my senses, and I hastily thrust the card into my pocket and went back to my guests.

My wife cast me a questioning glance, and I mustered up a smile for the benefit of the entire assembly.

"These pressing business matters," I murmured—"they always come up at the wrong time."

Brownell nodded, and began to relate how a business engagement had put him out terribly.

I was thankful for his story, but I knew before he reached the point that he hadn't been put out by his engagement as much as I had by mine. I didn't enjoy the rest of that dinner, and I know I acted decidedly absent-minded.

I was thinking of my five hundred. If the silver was bought on the instalment plan, how about the *bric-à-brac?* How about the furniture; how about the house itself?

The guests departed at some terribly late hour, and I sank into a chair.

"Did you really fix it up with that horrid man?" my wife questioned.

I nodded. There was no use disturbing her with the thing.

"Yes," I agreed. "He was looking for some one else."

"I told him so when he called in the afternoon, and he asked me if this wasn't number—"

"Don't," I begged feebly—"don't repeat his arguments."

"Oh, very well," my wife agreed a little icily. "Only, I don't think, dear, that you are very sympathetic. He annoyed me very much."

"I haven't the least doubt of it. He did me." And I added under my breath: "I fear he will still more."

The next morning I was up early. I had had a wretched night of it, and there is no use of lying in bed, even if it is only five o'clock, when you haven't slept since one.

I would have started for the instalment house then and there, only I knew it was useless. So, instead, I spent the time till breakfast roaming over the house—examining the furniture, the pictures, the carpets, the vases, everything—in an endeavor to see if they all looked like instalment goods.

It did me little good, for, never having had any experience either in the instalment business or as a purchaser of their goods, I didn't feel I was any wiser after making the examination twice over. One thing I did know was that the silver was instalment silver; and if that was, the rest stood a good chance of being of the same brand.

At breakfast my wife remarked upon how restless I had been during the night, and that she had never known it to occur before.

"Such a cause never occurred before," I answered without thinking.

"Cause?" she questioned.

But before I could answer, the doorbell rang.

I leaped to my feet, and made for the front door. Could it be that they had expected me to call about the silver before breakfast?

It was not the dark-faced fellow on the steps, and I opened the door with a feeling of relief.

The man had a paper in his hand, and he glanced up at the fan-light over the door.

"Yes, it's twelve-forty-one," I agreed, and could nearly have bitten my tongue for the words.

He handed me the paper, and stepped into the hall without a word.

I cast one glance at its contents, and felt my head reeling.

It was an order on me—me personally—to deliver over the furniture. On the back was a list. The thing was signed by some one with an official title, and looked authentic.

"Who are you?" I demanded feebly.

"The man who tends to these things for the house."

I shut the door, and led him into the parlor. "This thing looks official—"

"Oh, it's official, all right; we don't do it otherwise."

"No," I agreed faintly, "I suppose not. But would you tell me just what you did to get this official paper?"

"Attached the goods under our contract—the contract that was signed when they were delivered."

"To be sure," I agreed. "Just how much is due on them?"

The man referred to his book. "Two instalments, five hundred."

I shook my head sadly. I had had the thought of paying up, but the sum named put that mode of relief out of the question.

I turned to the man again.

"My name is on the order. How did you get my name?"

He smiled.

"It wouldn't make no difference if we didn't get your name. It would be made out to the man who had them in his charge."

"But I haven't got them in my charge —I only rented the house furnished."

"Sure," the man nodded. "We found that out when we went round to collect. We didn't get any answers to our letters, and the man who bought the goods wasn't at his office. It was, in fact, closed."

"Given up?" I asked.

The man nodded. "So we looked into the matter quick. We found the goods were here and you had them." He pointed to the paper in my hand. "So we got that."

"And you've come to get the goods?" I almost laughed aloud.

"Here are the vans."

"Is there any way I can stop this thing? Can't I rent the furniture, starting new?"

The man shook his head. "You can pay up what is due. We can't let you have this furniture, and skip the two past months. That game would be worked too often."

"Hold up a minute, will you," I begged, "till I can decide what to do?"

"Sure," the man agreed, and he dropped down into one of the instalment chairs.

I fled to my wife, and told her the truth.

She took it better than I thought.

"Call up Mr. Verbeck and ask him to come round. He can tell you what to do, perhaps."

Verbeck was my attorney, a personal friend, and I seized at the idea with great joy.

I rushed to the telephone. No answer came. Mentally blessing Central, I jiggled the receiver up and down. Finally, in a tired voice, came this:

"Your phone is cut off, as you were notified."

I just dropped the receiver, and left it dangling.

There was no need to hang it up—the men who came to take it out would do that, and no doubt they were now on their way to number twelve-forty-one Seventy-Eighth Street.

Still, I must get Verbeck; so I seized my hat and fled down the street. At the corner I nearly ran into a dark-faced fellow with a large nose and two bright-red spots in his cheeks.

"How about that silver?" he demanded.

I glared at him, and dashed into the drug-store.

Finally I got Verbeck's house, and was calmly informed he was out of town.

On the run, with the dark-faced fellow after me, I got back to where my wife sat, calmly awaiting whatever Fate had in store for her.

"My dear," I began, "Verbeck is out of town, and I never was up against just such an arrangement before. I see nothing to do but retire with what grace we can."

"And the Crossetts are coming for dinner to-night," she murmured.

"Go up and write them a note, while you have a desk to write on, and tell them to—to—tell them anything," I cried, for the door-bell had rung again.

I departed for the front door, and my wife for the second floor.

It was the man from the telephone company to take out the instrument. As he came in, the dark-faced fellow pushed by me into the hall. At the same moment, the instalment chair doubtless becoming uncomfortable, the man with the legal paper strolled out from the parlor.

I waved the man toward the telephone, and turned on the other two.

"Go ahead; take it all. Don't stop at anything."

And they didn't. Carpets were pulled up, pictures taken down, beds pulled apart, chairs and tables hurried out. I and my wife stood by and watched the wreckage.

Suddenly I recalled my five hundred dollars, and, with a word to my wife, rushed to the street.

A passing cab—one from the stand at the corner, which the owner of the house had mentioned when making his bargain —was pressed into service.

I had my pains and spent my money for naught.

The office of his friend, the attorney, bore a "To Let" sign.

Once more in the street, I thought of the house, and hurried to a friend of mine in the real-estate business.

Would that I had consulted him before.

He looked up number twelve-forty-one Seventy-Eighth Street, called another firm on the telephone, and, calmly informed me that the house could be rented, the present occupant being behind in his rent.

I thanked him, and went back to my wife.

"Well?" she questioned in an excited manner.

"Not very well," I replied weakly, feeling the situation permitted a pun. "Come."

And we went to a hotel whose name guaranteed, at least, that the furniture was not purchased on the instalment plan, and we would not be disturbed by collectors for instalment-houses.

HELEN OF TROUBLES.*

By Meyram Hill.

Dealing with several of the many things a youth will do for a lady in vicissitudes, especially if he has a nose for news.

SYNOPSIS OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS.

IN the very early morning Marjory Roland leans out of her motor-car and asks Barry Ellison, correspondent, to aid her. Being adventurous, the young man consents, and is taken by a roundabout route to a country-house, where he is told he must impersonate one Jack Rutherford, and patch up a quarrel with the latter's sick uncle, Benjamin Gordon. Barry's suspicions are roused by their stealthy approach to the house, also by voices heard in the dark. A dwarfish person, Mr. Hardston, a lawyer, supposedly the employer of Miss Roland, leads him to Gordon's bedroom, where the sick man asks him unintelligible questions. Later, Barry, having been drugged, wards off sleep long enough to give to another strange girl, Helen Gordon, a paper her uncle has given him. Next day, realizing that he has been in a house divided against itself, he is about to let the matter drop, when he receives a telephone message asking him to go to Poe's Park at eleven o'clock in the evening.

Helen Gordon is there. She explains that the trouble is over an invention—a dynamic that will eliminate the use of steam and electricity. Hardston and Miss Roland are trying to get it from Gordon. Jack Rutherford has deserted his uncle and cousin because he will not be mixed up in a matter which may entail murder. Barry says he will find Rutherford and make a last plea for assistance, and after making an engagement to meet Helen on the morrow, goes with his friend, Herrick, to a gambling-place, where he meets Rutherford, but can learn nothing from him until the following day, when, after having met Helen Gordon as arranged, and having ingeniously disposed of her companion, the mysterious Marjory Roland, he and Miss Gordon go to Rutherford's apartments and question him. As a result, Helen and Barry borrow a motor-car and go out to River View Inn, on Long Island, kept by Dudley, an old servant of Benjamin Gordon's. There they find an oak chest containing papers, which they set about to read in order to learn just whom it is that has so terrified and overpowered the old man.

CHAPTER XX.

THE CONTENTS OF PACKAGE "M."

THE first paper, which was the one written by Benjamin Gordon, read in part as follows:

The letter attached came to me by messenger. I have read the same with great care, and for the first time my faith in Harold Hardston is really shaken.

I cannot say that this letter alone forms my opinion. There have been other things, but the letter is the final evidence, that places my doubts so strongly before me, that I must investigate before I do anything more. I shall announce that my invention is not

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perfected and look for the writer of the letter, having failed to find him at his office the three times I have called.

All my papers relating to the invention—the powder and the liquid—I have made I shall place in two chests and send to my nephew to keep. This letter I shall send, with other papers, to my old butler, Dudley. It has been hard for me to know what was best to do, so I have written down my intentions, and shall thus have a chance to read them over, as I do my notes, and so determine if I am acting rightly.

I cannot believe Harold Hardston is striving to take from me the result of my life's work—that which is to be Helen's and Jack's.

Barry read the name at the bottom and the date, and glanced at his companion.

She sat through the reading with her chin on her knees, her hands clasped about them. As Barry's voice stopped she raised her head slowly.

"Well?" she asked.

"It shows we were right. It was Hardston he was in doubt about. The invention is perfected, and it was the writer of this letter for whom he asked your cousin to look. He was taken sick before he could find Barrington himself."

Barry was wondering as well if Hardston had by any chance learned of the letter; and that Benjamin Gordon's illness, as he had suggested to Rutherford in their first talk, was the result of a drug administered for the purpose of keeping the inventor from making any inquiries.

Such a condition might well account for the care with which Helen Gordon had been guarded lest she help her uncle by searching for Barrington. But Barry decided that there was no reason for advancing such a theory as yet.

"And it also mentions the fact that the papers and notes relating to the discovery, with the powder and liquid he has made, are in the chests my cousin has on board his yacht. He does not know that."

Barry began to chuckle.

"If he did, I fear he would toss the whole thing overboard."

"That is just what I was thinking. We must get the chests away from him without his finding out what they contain."

"I hardly think he will go so far as to throw them away. He would just send them back to your uncle, particularly if we get Mr. Gordon away from Hardston's."

"And we must do that," Helen urged.

"We certainly must," Barry agreed. "Why, what I told him when I took your cousin's place was practically to refute this letter. If my statement was enough to renew his confidence in Hardston, and he felt he was going to die, he might give Hardston full control of his secret."

"He can't." Helen shook her head. "The papers and all are with Jack."

"He may tell Hardston so," Barry said. "Suppose he did. Hardston would go at once and get them away from your cousin."

"I've no doubt he would, if he knew where they were. But I cannot believe my uncle would tell him that."

"Why not?" he argued. "If I restored his confidence in Hardston, he would go ahead and do just what he would have done before he got this letter."

Barry held up the papers.

"But he never intended to give Mr. Hardston the invention," Helen urged.

"He wanted your cousin to take the whole thing," Barry considered, speaking very slowly. "Suppose he went ahead to make it over legally. If he did that, he would have Hardston draw the papers. He might even tell him that your cousin had the things."

Helen straightened and, leaning back, rested one elbow on the corner of the oak chest. With her finger pressed against her teeth, she considered Barry's suggestions.

"Read the letter," she said slowly.

He turned to the two dozen sheets and began to read. It was a very plain statement of what the writer knew about Hardston and his plans to get control of the discovery Gordon had made.

It went on to tell how Hardston had gone to men that were interested in forming a company to put the invention on the market, and advised them that he did not believe in it sufficiently to vouch for its perfection. The paper continued:

This man then went to others as unprincipled as he, and told them he would have the whole thing in his control within a few months. He arranged with them to raise the money to put it on the market.

Toward the end the letter spoke of the writer's acquaintance with Hardston in England, at which time Barrington had suffered through the other's villainy:

It is my reason for writing you. I desire revenge for what he did to me in London, and I told him I would have it some day. You cannot know the man you are trusting. If you did, you would be certain that all I say is true. I have signed a false name and given a false address, yet, by the name I give, you will be able to find me if you go to room 1145.

In pencil at the bottom of the letter was written in Benjamin Gordon's cramped hand:

Room 1145 is vacant. The janitor says it is rented, but never occupied.

Barry laid down the sheets and looked at his companion.

"What do you think of it?" she demanded without glancing up.

"I think it sounds very peculiar. I would not be inclined to doubt an old friend, as I understand Mr. Hardston is to your uncle, on such a letter as that. That is looking at it from your uncle's standpoint. It might, of course, make me anxious enough to look into it."

"But he says that Mr. Hardston was forming another company to put out the invention when it was stolen," Helen urged.

"I don't doubt for a moment but what it may be true," Barry answered. "I have seen Hardston once, and I would believe almost anything against him, except perhaps that he would kill your cousin to get the discovery."

"That idea comes from what Miss Roland told Jack."

Helen smiled slightly.

Barry nodded and got to his feet.

"I think we had better start back. We can take these papers with us, and on the way decide what we will do."

They closed the chest, locked it, and put it again in charge of Dudley. Then they started back for the city.

"Shall I try to find the writer of this letter before we do anything more?" Barry asked.

"And we would just stay on where we are until you had confirmed it?" Helen cried. "Oh, can't we get away? Isn't it enough to go to my uncle with the story of how they got you to play my cousin's part and tell him he must leave?"

"It seems to me it is. If we can get your uncle away from there and have one good talk with him, we shall find out the truth in short order. He really is the one to be consulted."

"I am sure he would want to leave at once if he only knew that they had sent some one to him as his nephew who was really a stranger."

"I agree," Barry nodded; "yet we must not forget that to take him away will be against the wishes of Hardston."

"What if it is?" Helen questioned.

"It will mean a break between them," he cautioned.

"We must take the risk," she answered. "I know enough to make me feel that it is the only thing to do."

Barry nodded and, turning the car to the right, headed down a long, straight stretch of road.

Helen drew back her veil and let the wild rush of the wind break with its full force against her cheeks.

"It is as if we were going away and away from all our troubles. They seem far off now. You have dispelled the clouds very quickly."

"We are not quite out of the woods," he laughed, "but we will be in short order. You have only to say how to proceed, and *presto!* it is done."

"Just like a fairy story. I was in trouble, and you came."

"As your prince. Shall I have the chance to claim my reward?"

He turned, and his eyes were bright and dancing as he gazed down on her.

"Oh, I shall reward you!" she laughed. "Will you be president or manager of the—what shall we call it—the Great New Force Company, Limited? Is that a good name?"

"That is a very mercenary reward," he protested.

"Name what you will have, and it shall be yours." She waved her hand. "If Uncle Ben's discovery is all he thinks it is, we need only to command."

Barry looked long and earnestly at her and, as she suddenly became conscious of his regard and glanced up, he turned away with a sigh.

"Well?" she questioned.

"I will think it over," he answered. "I will let you know first what reward I shall demand."

"Oh!" she exclaimed, catching a suppressed note in his voice. "Oh, we shall see." And then she fell silent.

It was dark when they finally reached the Manhattan side of the river and started to turn up-town.

As they swung out behind a truck a man came running toward them, waving his arms. It was Sam Herrick.

Barry swung the car to the curb and stopped. "Well?" he demanded.

"I thought you would be back this way. I've been waiting an hour!" Herrick exclaimed.

"Miss Gordon—Mr. Herrick. What is it?"

Herrick acknowledged the introduction and lowered his voice. "This Miss Roland has started a search for Rutherford."

"Has done what?" Barry exclaimed.

"Has started a search for him—that is, she has found him."

"Are you crazy, Herrick?" Barry demanded.

"Listen!" Herrick went on. "I met Johnston this afternoon. He runs a private detective agency, and has done a good deal of work for me now and then. Well, this afternoon Miss Roland came to him and asked him to find Mr. Rutherford for her. All she wanted was his address, and it seems Johnston had that and gave it to her."

"How in the world would Johnston have Mr. Rutherford's address?" Barry questioned.

Herrick hesitated, glanced at Helen, and replied vaguely: "He had been looking some people up for a party by the name of Larson, and it just happened he ran across Mr. Rutherford at the time."

Barry nodded. "And he gave the address to Miss Roland?"

Herrick nodded.

"How did he happen to tell you about it, Mr. Herrick?" Helen inquired.

"He remembered Miss Roland as Mr. Hardston's private secretary. In fact, she gave him her address, care of Mr. Hardston, and he told me of it, because he thought I would like to know where Mr. Hardston was. You see, we newspaper men were quite interested in your uncle's invention, Miss Gordon. Johnston knew this, and so he spoke of the matter to me."

Barry glanced at his companion, and she looked up with a questioning frown on her brow.

"If they know he has the papers—and now they have his address?" Barry began.

"Even if they do not know he has the papers," Helen put in. "There is nothing to do but get my uncle away at once."

"Jump in here, Herrick, and drive!" Barry exclaimed. "I'll sit on the step. We are losing time."

CHAPTER XXI.

BENJAMIN GORDON'S ILLNESS.

BARRY gave Herrick the directions and, crouching low on the floor at Helen's feet, turned to her.

"This may mean that something new has come up," she said.

Barry nodded.

"When Miss Roland failed to meet your cousin, she may have decided to find him at once; or they may have the papers, making him your uncle's heir, and want to get hold of Rutherford to get his signature. They could make him sign anything."

"We ought to send him word," Helen suggested.

"Then he would run away with those two chests. We must get them away from him," Barry argued.

"Then what are we to do?" she demanded in a puzzled tone.

"Get your uncle away from Hardston at once, and then go after the two chests. That is my idea, but we can tell best after we have had a talk with Mr. Gordon."

"My cousin will give up the chests

gladly as soon as he is told what they contain."

The thought of Rutherford's feelings when he learned what he had in his possession made her smile.

"If Hardston will let your uncle go without raising a fuss, we will be lucky."

"I'll see uncle some way and tell him enough to make him willing to leave. Can we get away to-night?"

"We certainly should," Barry agreed, considering the question. "As soon as we get to the house you run up-stairs to your uncle. I'll see Hardston, and Mr. Herrick can get a carriage. You can get a carriage somewhere, can't you, Sam?"

Herrick nodded, and Barry turned again to Helen.

"As soon as you see your uncle and explain to him, pack up what you need, and we will get away at once."

He spoke with confidence, but he secretly anticipated more difficulty in surmounting Hardston's objections than he cared to admit. Having Herrick with him he felt was a great advantage, for he had quite made up his mind, if no other way offered, to carry Benjamin Gordon away bodily.

As they ran up the long avenue to the front door, Barry glanced the place over with much curiosity. It seemed that months had elapsed since the night when he had first seen the place. It was hard, indeed, for him to convince himself that but two nights before he had waited in the summer-house, and for the first time heard Helen Gordon's voice.

Too much had happened since then. He had in such a short time come to feel that he knew and cared for the girl at his side in a way that made it seem that their friendship must, as they were pleased to pretend, date back for years. Yet, after all, as she had said, what was time? Barry nodded to his thoughts. In this case hours and days surely did not count.

They stopped at the front steps and Barry leaped down, Helen after him.

"Go ahead and get a carriage," he called to Herrick as he ran up the steps with Helen.

Before he could press the bell the door was flung open. Hardston, with hat on, stood in the opening. Marjory Roland was half-way down the hall, dressed to go out.

Barry assumed the most pleasant manner possible; but, being desirous of getting into the house, pushed by the lawyer.

"How are you, Mr. Hardston? I dare say you didn't expect to see me again so soon. Oh, Miss Roland"—he raised his voice—"would you mind waiting just a moment? I want to talk with you."

Marjory Roland had turned toward the stairs as Helen hurried up them, but she turned at Barry's question and stood hesitating.

"It won't take long," he went on, smiling pleasantly. "Shall we step into your library, Mr. Hardston? I'll go under the spot-light for you once more, then you can have a good look at my face. This light is bad."

The little dwarf peered at Barry, his eyes wide, his long corded neck stretched out, and his face grew livid with rage.

"You fool," he cried, in a deep, mad bellow, "get out of this house at once! Get out, or I'll have you thrown out!"

Barry shook his head and continued to smile, but his voice was cold and even.

"Better have me drugged and carried out to be dumped on Riverside Drive. Come, I think I know enough to make it worth your while to talk with me. What do you say?"

"I say—" Hardston roared, when Marjory Roland broke her silence with a sharp word to the lawyer.

"Go into the library. We were going out, Mr. Ellison." She spoke in an even voice; but, some way, Barry felt there was more to be feared from her, soft as was her tone, than from the ugly Hardston, with all his blind rage.

With the quickness of a cat, Hardston turned and led the way down the hall. Marjory Roland closed the door as they entered. Then she moved across to her employer and spoke in a tone that, while low, did not—and was evidently not intended to—escape Barry's ears.

"Just keep your temper. We need not get angry."

Hardston glared at his secretary one instant and turned to Barry. His voice was still a deep bass, but under a little control.

"Well, sir — well, what is it? Be done, and get away quickly."

"You were not in such a hurry to be done with me night before last, were you?" Barry suggested audibly.

"Never mind night before last. That has nothing to do with now," Hardston cried.

"Unfortunately for you, it has," Barry put in, still keeping his voice under control. "If it hadn't been for night before last, I wouldn't be here now. But, then, let's not argue the point one way or another. I have come to tell you that Mr. Gordon and his niece are leaving your house at once. That is all I care to say now."

Marjory Roland, whose cold, calculating eyes had not left Barry's face since he came into the room, started forward. Hardston leaped as if he had been struck, and came at Barry, both hands high above his head, his fists clenched, his voice shrill in rage.

The man was so utterly repulsive that Barry gave back. Before the lawyer could cross the room Marjory Roland caught him by the arm and swung him about as if he was a child.

"Will you keep your temper?" she exclaimed. "Sit down!"

As if spent by the fury of his outbreak, the lawyer dropped into a low chair and leaned back, panting.

"Now, Mr. Ellison," Miss Roland suggested, "what is the meaning of this strange statement you make?"

"I do not believe I will make any explanation," Barry replied. "You may draw your own conclusions. I dare say they will be wrong in some particulars, but in the main fairly accurate. The point is that Mr. Gordon is leaving at once."

"Mr. Gordon is very ill." Marjory Roland suggested.

"We are taking him where he can have proper treatment."

"We!" Hardston exclaimed like an explosion.

"Has not Miss Roland told you?" Barry demanded in surprise. "It is very odd, of course, but the one your secretary picked up to play the penitent nephew is an old friend of Miss Gordon's."

"Yes," Marjory Roland agreed slowly, her eyes still on Barry. "it is very odd."

"One of those strange coincidences in life," he laughed.

Marjory Roland turned quickly and, stepping to Hardston's side, leaned down. Barry turned out of ear-shot, though he would have given a good deal to hear what was being said.

At first Hardston protested at what the girl was saying: and then, after a little, his head began to nod and his face grew calmer.

At last Marjory Roland straightened.

"I shall not even favor you with an explanation in this matter, Mr. Ellison, in view of the very high-handed methods you seem to think necessary to pursue."

Barry bowed.

"I can only say that Mr. Gordon is very ill—that he should not be moved. Mr. Hardston and I are going out. We were about to leave the house when you broke in upon us. Now, we shall go. If you and your old friend see fit to take Mr. Gordon out of his bed and carry him away, it is something Mr. Hardston will not prevent; but he feels it will be fatal. You can do as you please."

Barry smiled under the sarcasm in the words.

"It is very good of you both to give in so easily. I think we understand each other quite well. It is very wonderful to me how my knowledge of certain people have developed in two days."

Marjory Roland inclined her head; there was a smile on her lips. Even Hardston got up out of his chair, looking fairly pleasant. Barry was beginning to feel decidedly uneasy.

"We leave the house now," Miss Roland said, her hand on the door. "I dare say it would be safer"—she turned to her employer—"to call in the butler, and so be sure nothing is taken?"

Hardston chuckled, but Barry laughed as well. "I don't think that was quite up to your usual style, Miss Roland," he said, shaking his head. "In my judgment, you should have passed the opportunity."

The front door slammed, and Barry was left in the huge hall—as silent now as when he had first seen it two nights before.

For an instant he stood undecided.

He could not make out why they had so willingly consented to the removal of Benjamin Gordon. It made him suspicious.

Touching a bell on the wall, he waited until it was answered by the butler.

"Do you happen to know how long Mr. Hardston and Miss Roland will be gone?" Barry asked. "They just left, and I neglected to inquire."

Without the least exhibition of surprise at finding a stranger in the house, the butler answered: "Mr. Hardston told me he would be back in an hour, sir."

"Very good," Barry nodded. "Find Michael and send him to the second floor. Miss Gordon wishes to see him."

He turned, and with a rush hurried up the stairs. Helen was on the top step. Behind her stood a nurse. She beckoned him down the hall.

"Uncle is in a terrible stupor. He can't be roused."

"What does the nurse say?"

"She won't tell me anything."

There was only an hour to act in, and Barry felt that time must not be wasted. Turning to the nurse, he demanded information as to Mr. Gordon's condition.

"Miss Gordon can tell you," the nurse replied in a sharp tone. "She has seen her uncle."

Barry stepped close to the woman, his voice lowered; his manner imperious.

"I am Miss Gordon's attorney in this matter. Now, out with it. You've been drugging Mr. Gordon."

The woman shut her lips tightly.

"Quick!" Barry insisted. "No fooling. I expected trouble here, and I have arranged for the police, if necessary. I want the truth from you, or I'll tell my suspicions to the captain in this precinct. Do you care to be questioned by the police in this matter, or will you just answer me?"

"I know nothing," she persisted.

"What is Mr. Gordon's disease?"

"I—I—"

"What does the doctor call it?"

"There is no doctor," the woman admitted.

"No doctor!" Barry exclaimed. "Then, it is a fact that you have given him drugs. Helen, will you just run down, and as soon as Mr. Herrick comes ask him to call up the nearest police station? He's a newspaper man and will know the captain. Have an officer sent around here at once."

"Don't!" the woman cried; "Don't! I have done nothing. Mr. Hardston told me to do it."

"Then you have been giving him drugs?" Barry asserted.

The woman nodded dolefully.

"Come with me," he ordered. "Get an antidote, quick! Helen, get your things packed. As soon as Michael comes tell him to collect Mr. Gordon's things."

He hurried to the sick-room with the nurse, and they started to work over Benjamin Gordon.

In ten minutes Herrick arrived, and Barry explained the situation to him.

"Get him into the carriage and down to your hotel as quick as you can. He isn't gone by any means. They've just got him drugged into a good sound sleep. Get Miss Gordon ready. You tend to her. I'll get some clothes onto Mr. Gordon and get him down-stairs. His man can help me."

Barry found Helen and explained her uncle's condition.

"He won't die—he isn't really sick?" she questioned.

"He'll be out in two or three days, I know," he assured her. "We'll get the facts out of him to-night. I dare say that by the time he reaches the hotel he will be able to walk."

Barry and Helen reached the hall, and found that Herrick, with Michael's help, had placed Benjamin Gordon in the carriage.

Barry turned to Herrick.

"You go ahead in your car. Get rooms for them, and"—he lowered his voice—"have a doctor there with a nurse."

Herrick nodded, Barry gave the address to the driver, and, with Michael on the box, they drove down the long avenue between the dark trees.

CHAPTER XXII.

A CALL ON HARDSTON.

With his two hands on the centertable, Barry waited very quietly, regard-

ing Helen Gordon's back as she stood by the parted curtains, looking out into the night.

It was quiet, with the ominous silence of the sick-chamber, in the sitting-room of the suite that had been secured for the Gordons. Michael sat with bowed head in the corner. Herrick, Barry knew, was waiting down-stairs somewhere.

The nurse came out of the bedroom and Barry glanced up. She nodded to Michael, and sent him out with a prescription. Barry's eyes asked for information.

"He is going to come out all right."

"Can I tell her that?" Barry questioned, motioning toward Helen. "I don't want to build up false hopes."

"In a moment. The doctor will tell you in a moment. I'll nod, if it is all right; then you can tell her."

Barry fell to drumming lightly on the table, and the nurse went back. So they waited until she again stepped from the bedroom, and this time there was no mistaking the look on her face.

Barry crossed to the window.

"Helen," he said, in a low voice, "it is all right now."

The girl turned like a flash. Her eyes were filled with tears; but, until Barry had announced all danger as past, she would not allow herself to give way. Now she reached out her hand to Barry, for her tears blinded her and he led her to a chair.

"If they had killed him!" she exclaimed, glancing up.

"But they didn't," he laughed. "They didn't intend to, I'm sure. They gave him more than they thought, that was all. The drug has played havoc with his heart. But it is over now. The doctor, you remember, said that if he rallied, it would only be a question of his getting back his strength. He'll do that in no time."

"If he hadn't! But for you I would have let it go on and on. You have done so much!"

Barry laughed softly.

"I must do more. We have your uncle out of that wretch's hands; now, I must go and get those papers from your cousin. Then we will have the whole thing under our control."

"We should find out what uncle has done, if possible," Helen suggested.

"I will wait. If the doctor will allow him to be questioned to-night, it would, of course, be a good idea to find out what he knows."

"We will see."

Half an hour later the physician came out of the bedroom and reported all danger past. "Your uncle will be himself in a very few days, Miss Gordon," the doctor announced with an encouraging smile.

"Could I talk to him now—could I ask him one or two questions of great importance?" Helen asked.

She hurried to the bedroom on receiving the doctor's permission, while Barry saw the physician to the hall. As he came back, Helen was waiting for him.

"Can't he talk?" Barry demanded.

"Yes — yes!" she cried. "I have questioned him; or, rather, he told me without my saying a word. He seems to understand why he was taken away from the Hardstons. He says he gave Mr. Hardston full power of attorney to act for him. That he made his will, leaving the discovery to Jack and me, and Mr. Hardston has all the papers. He even knows about the two chests."

Barry pursed up his lips and looked at Helen.

"Herrick is down-stairs with his car. He thought something might come up. You are all right here. I'll run out and see Hardston at once, and either get the papers from him or have an understanding with him which he won't fail to observe. There will be no need for mincing words this call."

"Is there any use to-night?"

"It's not late"—he glanced at his watch—"only half past eight."

"You'll come back here?" she questioned anxiously.

"I'm under the same roof now. This is the hotel where I am stopping."

Barry found Herrick moodily regarding the tiled floor in the lobby.

"I didn't know but what you had forgotten my existence," he chuckled. "How are things?"

"Mr. Gordon is better. He'll be round in a few days, the doctor says."

"Sure, he told me that as he went out. I mean, how's the lady — the beautiful

lady — the beautiful lady, with courage?"

"Come on, Sam!" Barry exclaimed. "I've no business to stand and talk. Your car is here."

"Sure. Where to?"

"Hardston's!" Barry exclaimed as he started for the door.

"What's up?" Herrick questioned as they headed up-town.

"Hardston got some papers away from Gordon while he had him under the drug. I'm after those."

"On the discovery—were they?"

Barry nodded.

"And the worst part is that I am to blame for the whole thing. If I hadn't gone and helped that woman, Gordon would still be suspicious of Hardston."

"And still under Hardston's roof, filled up with dope. To say nothing, Barry, of the beautiful lady all alone."

"Stop calling Miss Gordon the beautiful lady, will you?" Barry growled. "Of course, there is something in what you say. If I hadn't broken in as I did, I never would have had anything to do with the matter."

"Of course you wouldn't." Herrick agreed with a laugh. "I think you'll have to make this Miss Roland a beautiful testimonial of some kind for the introduction."

"I think I'd like to give her a little of the stuff she has been pouring into poor old Mr. Gordon—the same that she gave me, I dare say."

"Rutherford may not be far wrong in his opinion of her."

"If he'd had any backbone, his uncle wouldn't be in his present condition," Barry growled.

"And, what's more, you wouldn't be playing the rescuing hero. What's the whole story? I've only a snatch here and there. Give me the facts."

Barry went over all that had occurred in the last few days. When he finished his friend glanced at him.

"All the papers on this discovery are aboard Rutherford's yacht?" he questioned.

"And the stuff that is made. As I recall the memorandum Gordon made out and attached to this man Barrington's letter, there are cans of the powder and a few bottles of the stuff."

Herrick nodded.

"Rutherford doesn't know that they are there, but Hardston does. Miss Roland has Rutherford's address."

"Yes, according to your story. I must get that stuff out of Rutherford's hands at once."

"Unless Hardston does it first."

"I thought of that; but the butler told me Hardston was coming back in an hour. I think we will find him out here."

The house was as dark as the night.

"It was the same way the other night," Barry declared as he leaped up the steps.

All the way from the hotel his doubts had been growing as to whether it would not be better to first get the papers from Rutherford's hands, leaving his interview with Hardston until the next day. Now he was certain he had made a mistake.

He rang and rang the bell, and just as he was about to give up all hope of raising even a servant, a light was turned on in the hall, and the next instant the door opened a crack.

Barry shoved his foot into the opening and asked for Mr. Hardston.

"He is not in," came the answer.

"When will he be in?" he demanded.

"I have no idea." The reply was very curt, and at the same time an effort was made to shut the door. Barry's foot blocked that.

"Where is he?" he demanded, and, not waiting for an answer, he threw his whole weight against the door. The man inside held it closed one instant, and then Barry swept it back; and he was in the house. The butler stood before him.

"You told me but a little while ago he would be back in an hour. He is here. Tell him I will see him. Be quick!"

"Get out," the butler cried. "I don't know you. Get out, or I'll call the police."

With a leap, Barry had the servant by the throat, and had forced him, fighting and screaming, to the sofa.

"Talk quick! You told me that Hardston would be back in an hour. Did you lie?"

The butler fought to get free; but, at last, Barry's fingers pressed too hard on his throat, while his knee held the servant from rising.

"Now, you are silent!" he exclaimed, letting up his grip on the man's throat. "Tell me the truth, or you'll go to the nearest police station. Talk quick!"

"He told me to tell you that. He came round to the side door when he went out and said, if you asked, to tell you he would be back in an hour. I thought he would."

"Where has he gone?" Barry demanded.

"I don't know."

Barry let go his grip and, without a word or glance at the prostrate servant, ran for the car.

"Back to town, Sam, and let her out!" he cried.

Like a shot, they flew down the avenue and into the road.

"Where to, Barry?" Herrick demanded.

"To the hotel. Helen can do more with that cousin of hers than I can. We'll get her."

Few words passed between the two men as they sped on their way. As they drew up before the hotel, Barry leaped to the ground and raced for the elevator. He feared that even now they would be too late; but he was bound to make the effort, and each moment meant a great deal.

If only Rutherford was out, or had in some way got wind that Hardston and Marjory Roland were looking for him, Barry felt he could be counted upon to keep out of their way. Thus he and Helen might get hold of her cousin first.

He knocked on the door of the apartment, and in an instant it was thrown open by the nurse.

"Miss Gordon?" he demanded.

"She has gone out. Her uncle was asleep, and she felt she must go," she said.

"Gone out?" he demanded. "Where?"

"Here is a note—she left it for you." The nurse handed him an envelope.

Tearing it open, his eyes swept over the contents. It ran:

> I have gone to find my cousin. Mr. Hardston knows that he has the papers and Miss Roland has his address. I have taken Michael with me.

Thrusting the paper into his pocket, he ran for the elevator.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE HUNT FOR RUTHERFORD.

HERRICK glanced at his friend as they swung into Fifth Avenue.

"I don't know," Barry answered the look, and he pushed his watch back into his pocket; "but I have a feeling that all is not right. It's having that rascal Hardston to deal with. No"—he shook his head—"it's Miss Roland.

"Hardston is cruel, and has the heart of a scoundrel; but I think she would plan the real moves. They have had time to get those chests away from Rutherford. If they have done it, there is no telling when we shall ever find them."

"Could Gordon work the thing out again?"

"A lifetime's work? I don't know, but I should think he would hardly have the heart or the strength to start all over again. But, then, we won't call them gone till they are."

Herrick nodded, swung out for a cab, and advanced the spark a trifle. The car had been racing, but now it leaped ahead at a terrific rate.

"Don't get stopped for speeding," Barry begged. "I don't like the idea of Miss Gordon being at Rutherford's any more than the thought of Hardston knowing about the papers. I want to get there."

"Don't you worry. The press has a little right to hurry sometimes. I can pass the limit and still not get held up."

Once a policeman signaled them to slow down; but a word from Herrick satisfied him, and they were on their way again. In a very few minutes they drew up in front of the apartment-house which was their destination.

Running into the hall, Barry asked for Rutherford. The boy shook his head.

"He don't live here. What's the matter with every one?"

Barry suddenly remembered.

"I mean Mr. Hammerton."

"Sure," the boy agreed. "He lives here, but he's not in. There's a man waiting for him now; the lady went out."

"The lady went out!" Barry exclaimed. "Where is the man?"

"Up-stairs in the reception-room."

"Has any one else been here to see Mr. Hammerton?" he demanded.

"Not to see Mr. Hammerton"—the boy shook his head—"but a man and a woman were here earlier in the evening, looking for the man you asked for first."

"Mr. Rutherford?" he questioned.

"That's the name. They raised the roof when I said he didn't live here. The man wanted to kill me. Gee! He was a corker!"

"A little man not over five feet high?" Barry demanded.

"That's the man!"

"Did they go away?"

"They went out of here at last, but they waited down the street," the boy answered.

"Are they there now?"

"Not that I know of. I saw them out there hanging round, but when I looked twenty minutes ago they were gone. I guess they decided I knew what I was talking about."

"I'll run up to the reception-room. I think I know the man that's waiting up there."

As Barry expected, it was Michael.

"Where is Miss Gordon?" he demanded anxiously.

"She went out not over ten minutes ago to find Mr. Rutherford's yacht. The boy down-stairs told her it was up at Twenty-Eighth Street. She left me here to tell you where she was, if you came, and to tell you to keep Mr. Rutherford here until she got back — if he should come in."

"Have you seen anything of Mr. Hardston or Miss Roland?"

"No, sir." Michael shook his head. "They haven't been here, so far as I know."

Barry considered a moment.

"I'll run up to Twenty-Eighth Street and see if I can find Miss Gordon. If she comes back here before I do, tell her to wait. If Mr. Rutherford comes, tell him that Mr. Hardston is trying to find him. Say to him that if he will go to his rooms and wait until either Miss Gordon or I return, we can help him."

Michael nodded, and Barry hurried back to Herrick.

"Twenty-Eighth Street, Sam!" he called as he leaped in.

"Where on Twenty-Eighth?" Herrick questioned.

"East River. I'm after Rutherford's yacht now."

Once more they sped up-town and ran out onto the dark wharf at the end of Twenty-Eighth Street.

Barry leaped to the ground. In the river lay a number of dark, shadowy hulls, their anchor-lights burning.

The wharf was deserted. He looked first for Helen, and then for any one who could tell him which of the boats belonged to Rutherford. He had the thought of going aboard and trying to get Benjamin Gordon's two chests.

A careful search revealed the fact that the wharf was deserted. Turning back to the car, he put the case to his friend.

"I don't see what you can do," Herrick said, with a shake of his round head, "unless you get a boat somewhere about here and row out. But you don't even know the name of his yacht."

"Miss Gordon must have come up here, and, finding no one round, gone back," Barry put in, glancing about the dark water-front.

"You say Hardston and Miss Roland waited on the street for Rutherford?"

"The hall-boy told them Rutherford didn't live there. He goes under the name of Hammerton. I suppose they didn't believe him, so they lay in wait to see for themselves."

"And, getting tired, went away?" Herrick suggested.

"They certainly were not round when we were there. The boy said they were gone about twenty minutes before we arrived."

"And Miss Gordon?"

"According to Michael, she left ten minutes or so before we did."

"She's gone back, or hasn't got here yet," Herrick said, looking about. "Ten to one, Rutherford will be found at Lee Larson's."

"It's pretty early," Barry suggested. "He may be round town somewhere, and we can find him at Larson's later."

"Then we better go back and see if Miss Gordon has returned."

"You run down there, Sam. I'll stay here, for she may have missed her way or something. If she isn't there, come back for me. Michael is on the second floor in the reception-room. He can tell you."

Herrick turned the car and ran off the wharf, while Barry walked out to the end, and, leaning against a pile, studied the riding lights of the yachts.

As the sound of the car died away, he caught the stroke of oars. A small boat rounded the stern of a large white yacht anchored in close to shore, and came toward the wharf where Barry stood.

As it pulled in within ear-shot, he hailed it.

The man stopped rowing and glanced about.

"What's wanted?" he called.

"Can you take me out to one of the boats?" Barry questioned.

"Sure," the rower agreed, and began pulling in toward the wharf.

Barry moved along toward the end for which the boat was headed, and, finding steps to a landing-stage, went down them.

"Do you know which boat belongs to a Mr. Rutherford?" he questioned, as the boat bumped against the float.

"Rather," the man agreed. "It's the Vim. I just took a young lady out there."

"You did!" Barry exclaimed, leaping into the rowboat. "What did she look like?"

"I don't know," the man laughed. "Just like any other girl. She was young. Kinder tall. I didn't pay much attention to her."

"Did she go aboard?"

"Sure, as quiet as a mouse," the man chuckled. "Guess she counted on giving the owner a surprise. She wouldn't let me hail the boat, and she told the sailor that helped her aboard to say nothing. I heard her as she went up the ladder."

"Well, pull away hard," Barry urged.

The Vim lay well out in the stream beyond all the other yachts, and, to Barry's surprise, she had steam up. He remarked on it.

"Sure," his boatman agreed. "She's lain that way for the last three weeks. Guess she has to go out in a hurry pretty often."

"Oh, I see," Barry nodded, feeling relieved to find it was a regular thing, and that it did not indicate that the boat was just preparing to start out.

"Row quietly, now," he cautioned; "I want a chance to look her over before I go aboard."

They pulled a little down-stream, and then came up directly behind the yacht. She was a good-sized boat with a dark hull, and lay with her nose up the river.

"Pull in now," Barry whispered. He had caught sight of a dark figure on the starboard side about midships, and he was trying to make himself believe it was Helen Gordon.

The dory came up under the stern of the yacht without being noticed.

Barry leaned across to his boatman and handed him a bill.

"Just hang round, will you? Pull out a way. I may want to go ashore again in a hurry, and I'll hail you. It's worth as much more for you to wait."

The man nodded, and Barry worked the boat along the starboard side of the yacht by pushing on the hull. As he came about midships he reached up, grasped the rail, and swung himself aboard.

The decks were dark, and he tiptoed forward. Suddenly a figure started out from the shadow of the deck-house.

"Helen?" he whispered.

She came to him like a shot and grasped his arm.

"Hush!" she cried. "They are in there." She pointed to the cabin. "Hardston and Miss Roland!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

WHAT CAME OF A LOST HAT.

DRAWING Barry back along the deck, Helen pointed toward the stairs that led down to the cabin.

"I got aboard without knowing they were here. I thought I might find Jack, and the sailor that helped me told me he was in the cabin.

"I started to go down, and heard some one talking. Then I slipped round to

the side, where I could hear. I couldn't see them, but it is Mr. Hardston and Miss Roland."

"And your cousin!" Barry exclaimed. "What are they talking about?"

"Come, we'll listen. Nothing, so far, about the papers. I don't know how long they were here before I got aboard."

"Not very long," he answered. "They were both waiting outside on the street for your cousin. They must have caught him as he came along."

"And made him come here," she added.

"That means they have the chests in view."

"We should be able to stop them," Helen urged.

"If we can find out what they intend to do. We might let them take them ashore for us. I've got a boat"—Barry pointed to a dark object in the water a hundred feet astern of the yacht—"and we could get to shore as soon as they did. Herrick would be there with the car. If they went off for a carriage, we could simply seize the chests and get away with them. That would really be a very nice trick to turn."

Helen nodded, and they moved along to where the open transoms of the cabin permitted them to hear the conversation going on below. It was still on ordinary topics.

Rutherford was evidently exerting himself to be very nice, and Marjory Roland was laughing and leading the conversation along amusing lines. Hardston's voice was the thin, soft treble that indicated the nature of his feelings, as a barometer does the state of the weather.

The same line of conversation kept up for at least ten minutes, and Barry began to grow restless. It struck him that Hardston and Miss Roland were simply striving to kill time, and their object was not at all clear to him. The desire to secure the two chests, Barry had no doubt, accounted for their presence on the yacht; but why they did not at once come to the point and take them he could not see.

"We are wasting time," he whispered, leaning close to Helen. "I'm going forward. I saw a couple of the crew at the bows; perhaps I can find out from them where the chests are, and bribe them into getting them out for us. We could slip over the side and get away."

Helen nodded, and Barry moved forward very quietly. When he got well out of range of the voices that issued from the cabin he stepped ahead and called a sailor to him.

"There were a couple of oak chests that came aboard some time ago. Do you happen to know where they were put?"

The sailor looked at Barry in doubt. "I do remember the two boxes, sir. Both were heavy for their size."

"Brass-bound," Barry ventured, remembering the chest at the River View Inn. "That is, the two I refer to were."

"Yes, sir," the sailor agreed.

Barry led the man to the rail.

"Those chests belong to Mr. Rutherford's uncle, and your master is only keeping them for him. Now, I am a friend of Mr. Rutherford's. The two in the cabin are here to get those chests, if they can. I want to stop them.

"If I go down and ask Mr. Rutherford about them, the two who are with him now will try and block his giving them to me. If you can get them out here on deck, I'll have a boat ready to take them ashore. It will be worth quite a bit to you to do it."

The sailor hesitated.

"I don't know, sir. If I got caught at it—"

"Then I'll put it this way to you," Barry said. "Just forget what I've told you and take orders. Mr. Rutherford wants those two chests brought on deck at once. I'll help you." He slipped a bill into the sailor's hand.

Without a word, the man turned and disappeared down a companion.

"Mind your head," he cautioned, as Barry started to follow. A small door opened at the head of the stairs, and Barry crouched down to pass through into a small storeroom under the forward deck.

"Here they are, sir," the sailor said, pointing out the two chests.

"Catch hold!" Barry cried. "The quicker it's done the better."

Between them they carried the first

chest to the deck and put it close to the rail. As they came up with the second one, Barry's hat was knocked from his head by the low doorway.

"Hail that rowboat down-stream," he said to the sailor. "Be quiet about it, though."

He turned and dove back down the steps for his hat. He felt about in the darkness; but could not locate it, and so he struck a match. As it flared up, he heard a step on the deck, and glanced up to see Marjory Roland peering down the companion.

As she uttered an exclamation, he dropped the match, stepped on it, and drew back. Then, before he could leap up the few steps to the deck, her hand reached in and the door shut above him.

With a bound, he was up the stairs and listening at the door. Not a sound came to his ears, and he tried the knob. It was locked.

For a minute he stood undecided. Undoubtedly he had been recognized; for otherwise there would have been no reason for her to have locked the door.

A step came along the deck.

"What are those two chests?" he heard Miss Roland demand.

"I don't know, miss," the sailor with whom Barry had been talking answered.

"Very well," Miss Roland replied, "that is all."

The sailor moved away, and then Barry heard the swish of skirts as Marjory Roland went forward.

He tried the door again. It was fastened on the outside. Striking a match, he peered about. The stairs on which he stood led straight down into the storeroom. There was no other way out.

Picking up a small iron bar, he crept back up the stairs. One blow would smash the panel of the door, and, if the key was in the lock, he could get out.

Suddenly he caught the shrill note of a whistle; then a bell rang, and the next instant there was the sound of the anchor-chain coming aboard.

With a crash Barry brought the iron bar down on the door. He drove a panel out, and reached through. There was no key in the lock. Without hesitancy, he began to beat the door to pieces, but it resisted his efforts.

The rattle of the anchor-chain kept up, stopped suddenly, and the jingle-bell sounded in the engine-room.

As Barry drove the door from its hinges and leaped on deck, the bar still in his hand, the throb of the engines could be heard. The yacht was under way up the river.

"Stop!" he roared at the man on the bridge.

"Go on," came the calm voice of Miss Roland.

"I say stop," Barry cried, leaping toward the wheel. "Ring—"

A body came down with a crash on his back, and the next instant he went tumbling down the half-dozen steps to the deck.

(To be continued.)

NONE BUT THE BRAVE.

By John Barton Oxford.

WHEREIN a terrific battle takes place, and the conquering hero gets worsted.

DOYLE sat uncomfortably in one of the rockers in the Quinns' tiny parlor, watching, rather apprehensively, Annie Quinn's deft fingers as they applied the arnica to young Tim Quinn's bruised cheek, and listening, also, with more or less apprehension in his attitude, to Annie's voice as she endeavored to calm the child's choking sobs.

"The big bully that Dan Casey is!" she said with flashing eyes. "Pummelin' a little shaver like you the way he has! He'd oughter be ashamed of himself, beating up an innocent kid in such a brutal manner.

"Look at the lump he's raised on your cheek, here. Oh, I wisht I was a man!"

Doyle squirmed in his chair and was aware his face was reddening. Furtively he watched the girl's ministrations to her small brother, and not without a certain sinking at his heart he glanced at young Tim's battered face.

Somehow, the girl's tones seemed to suggest that something might be expected of Doyle in this matter.

"What's Casey been doin' to Timmy, anyway?" Doyle inquired nervously.

"Can't you see?" the girl snapped. "He's whaled the child somethin' fierce."

"What made him do it?" Doyle persisted. "What had Timmy been doin' to him?"

"Nothin' but hookin' a few of them measly pears on the tree in Casey's backyard," said she. "Mind, I ain't upholdin' Timmy in hookin' the pears, nor I ain't sayin' but what Dan Casey had a right to give him a lesson for goin' in there where he shouldn't; but when it comes to anything like this—"

She stopped abruptly, but the flash of her eyes was more pronounced.

"I just wisht I was a man," she repeated, "or I wisht I had a big brother. I'd show Dan Casey a few things about bullyin' a little kid this way."

She turned to glance meaningly at Doyle, who coughed and flushed once more.

"Aw, maybe he didn't mean to go so far," Doyle deprecated. "Maybe, what with the kids swipin' his pears right along, he lost his head when he got hold of one of 'em."

Annie's lips were drawn tightly across her even teeth. The look she cast in Doyle's direction at that moment was not exactly approving in its tenor. Doyle's eyes fell, and he began, abstractedly, twirling his hat.

"That ain't all of it, either," said Annie at length. "When I heard Timmy yellin' and ran out and saw Casey thrashin' him, I told him what I thought of him then and there, and you'd oughter heard the things he said to me—me, a lady, mind you!"

Doyle straightened himself with an effort.

"What'd he say to you, Annie?" he asked rather thickly.

"I ain't repeatin' what he said," she replied with a toss of her head, "but 'twas fierce."

"If he's said things to you he shouldn't—" Doyle began firmly.

"He did," said she with tight-set teeth.

"He'll have to answer to me, then," Doyle declared. "No one's goin' to take that liberty with you, Annie, not if I know it."

"He's bigger'n you are," the girl said, but not without a smile of approval at the uncomfortable Doyle.

"That don't cut any ice with me," was his valiant response.

"And he's got an awful reputation round here for a scrapper," she reminded him.

"Then he'll have to live up to it," said Doyle flatly.

He rose and put his hat firmly on his head.

There was about him at that particular moment an air of great and relentless determination. One might almost have seen Mr. Casey's prospective finish written in Doyle's hardening eyes.

"I'll go over there right away," he announced. "We'll see how long Mr. Casey is goin' on with his fine game of lambastin' helpless kids, and insultin' ladies that remonstrates with him."

Annie turned to him admiringly.

"I don't believe there's any one else I know would dare to go up against him," she declared. "Give him all that's comin' to him for what he's done, and I'll never forget it."

Then she gathered up the sniffling Timmy in her arms and departed kitchenward, while Doyle strode to the door with erect shoulders and his head in the clouds.

Once he was outside, however, the rashness of his promise all but overwhelmed him. The fire faded suddenly from his eyes, and his erstwhile belligerent swagger became a dejected limp.

He took counsel with himself; and, taking counsel, came to the verge of panic. It had seemed easy enough back there in the parlor, with Annie beaming upon him, to threaten dire vengeance to Mr. Casey; but, here on the street, alone with his sober judgment, the whole thing took on a decidedly different aspect.

Yet, this was his chance—there was no denying that. Annie, herself, had said there was not another man she knew who would undertake this thing. There had been, too, in her inflection a subtle hint that the man who did wreak vengeance upon Mr. Casey would have a decided preference over all the rest of the suitors who followed in her train.

If the thing could only be done—if it only could! Doyle could see the path to Annie Quinn's heart as plain as day; but, blocking that path, an ominous obstacle, was the disquieting figure of big Dan Casey and his more than local reputation as a scrapper.

Doyle shuffled slowly down the street. At one of the houses near the end he paused with a quickening heart. Sprawled on the front steps in the soft dusk was the huge figure of Dan Casey.

Doyle halted; started to speak, but found his tongue was prone to cleave to the roof of his mouth. Therefore, he resumed his steps, and Mr. Casey, basking there in the evening twilight, never knew the terror the bare sight of his big frame had struck to the heart of the limp little man shuffling past.

"Aw, gee!" Doyle muttered to himself. "I've promised her, and look at the fix I've got myself into. I couldn't do it, not in a hundred years.

"I'm scared to death of him. He wouldn't do a thing to a mut like me, if I started any trouble with him. And I've promised Annie. I've said I wa'n't scairt of him! Aw, say!"

Deep in his own disquieting thoughts, he reached the avenue and stood on the curb watching the cars whiz by. Once he almost decided to retrace his steps to the Casey cottage, say his halting best—or worst—to Dan Casey and make the most cheerful sacrifice of himself possible.

Perhaps Annie would understand he had done his best and look on him accordingly. But, somehow, he was not at all sure just how acceptable such a sacrifice might be to her; nor was the sacrifice in itself a thing at all pleasant to contemplate.

How long he stood there, a prey to doubts, misgivings, and self-upbraidings, he was not aware. It might have been minutes or hours.

But just as a clock on a near-by steeple began chiming out the hour, an inspiration broke like a great and dazzling light over the darkness of Doyle's despair—an inspiration that made him catch his breath and then swing himself onto the first inward-bound car that came along.

He alighted, after a ride of a half-hour, at a certain shabby cross-street, hurried through it to a yet shabbier avenue, turned into a doorway and climbed a flight of creaking stairs. At the top of them was a ground-glass door, bearing the legend:

TREADGEAR'S PHYSICAL CULTURE PARLORS.

P. V. Treadgear, Prop.

Doyle pushed open the ground-glass door and entered a room filled with chest-weights and rowing-machines, punching-bags, and vaulting-horses. The gas-jets in their wire cages flickered wanly; at the chest-weights an attenuated individual was sadly going through a series of exercises.

Save for the gentleman at the chest-weights and a big young fellow, reading a pink-tinted sporting sheet by the front windows, the place was quite deserted.

The young man by the window looked up as Doyle entered, grinned, nodded, and laid aside his pink-tinted paper.

"Hallo, Andy!" said he.

"Hallo, Pete!" said Doyle. He glanced quickly at the man at the chest-weights. "How long do you keep open?" he asked.

Mr. Treadgear pulled out his watch.

"Oh, about half an hour longer," said he. "Why?"

Doyle drew a chair close to the other man, sat down and leaned toward him confidentially with lowered voice.

"Say, Pete, can you do a job for me after you close up to-night?" Doyle questioned anxiously. "I'll make it right with you. I'll pay anything you say for it."

"What sort of a job?" Treadgear questioned.

"Lick a feller."

Treadgear whistled under his breath.

"Who's the victim?" he asked.

"Dan Casey, that lives out the Reservoir way. Know him?"

Treadgear shook his head.

"You wouldn't have no trouble with him," said Doyle eagerly. "He'd be dead easy for a feller like you that knows the game and keeps in trainin'."

"Say," Treadgear demanded, "wot you got it in for this Casey bloke for?"

"You see," Doyle explained, "he walloped a kid brother of a girl I know; walloped him for swipin' his pears, and then when the girl got after him for it, he up and sarsed her somethin' fierce. Casey did; and when she told me about it, I got hot under the collar and agreed to give this Casey person a bit of a lesson."

"And, then, when you come to think it over, you thought, maybe, 'twould be cheaper to let the job out, eh?" Treadgear suggested. "I see. But, say, how's it goin' to help you make good with the girl—and I take it, that's why you want it done—if I do the job?"

Doyle leaned yet closer to his companion.

"There ain't no need of any one but you and me knowin' who done it," he declared. "See? This Casey party don't know me from Adam, nor you, neither. He won't know who it is that's licked him, and if you was to sorter drop it to him while you was doin' the job that you was me, it would go fine."

Treadgear grinned and nodded.

"I'm on," said he. "When do you want me to do this? To-night, you say?"

"Yep. I've promised to do it then."

"You goin' up there with me?"

Doyle shook his head.

"I'm goin' to stay right here," said he. "You'll find this feller up to 129 Oak Street. It's a cottage-house, like all the rest on the street. He'll be sittin' out on the front steps, most likely, if you get there before nine o'clock. If he ain't out on the steps, ring the bell and ask for him.

"I'm goin' to wait right here till it's all over and you're back again. Then I want you to give me a black eye to make it more real, as if I'd been in the scrap, you know; and then I'm goin' up to the girl's."

Treadgear threw back his head and laughed long and heartily.

"You're all right when it comes to schemin', you are," he declared. "Don't forget a detail, do you?"

"Will you do it, Pete?" Doyle asked anxiously.

"Sure I will, if you'll come up with my price," said the other.

Just as the gentleman at the chest-weights finished his monotonous exercises, a few bills changed hands by the front windows.

A moment later, Treadgear, his final instructions ringing in his ears, was stumbling down the stairs, and Doyle picked up the pink sporting sheet and prepared to kill time as best he might until Treadgear's return.

An hour slipped by; an hour and a half. The single gas-jet, flaring just above Doyle's head, flickered feebly in the draft from the open windows. The rumble and clang of traffic on the avenue below began to quiet down a bit. Somewhere over the sea of roofs a clock began booming ten.

Scarce had the last note died away, when the door opened and Treadgear entered. He was perfectly cool and collected; moreover, his clothes showed no signs of any recent strife.

Doyle looked at him in surprise and disappointment. That Treadgear could accomplish the task and bear no marks of the fray upon his person was beyond belief.

"Couldn't you find him?" Doyle asked with chagrin.

"Oh, I found him, all right," said the other easily. "Easiest thing ever. Almost a shame to do it. You can run up to the girl's now and tell her what you've done."

"You've done it—licked Dan Casey?" Doyle asked incredulously.

Treadgear nodded nonchalantly.

"Sure. Want that eye on you? All right. Here you are."

He swung about quickly and landed a blow on Doyle's left eye that sent that worthy crashing into a far corner. He rose, gasping, grinning ruefully, but game.

"That's the stuff. It oughter be a beaut'," he said a bit unsteadily. "Much obliged to you, Pete. I won't forget this."

A half-hour later, Doyle alighted from the car at Oak Street. A glance into

the mirror of the druggist's window on the corner showed him that the left eye was all that could be desired—perhaps just a trifle more. As he walked chuckling down the street, he rumpled his coat, and with a befitting presence of mind managed to give his collar and tie the disheveled appearance the occasion and his assumed rôle seemed to warrant.

It was with a decidedly glowing feeling inwardly that he at last reached the Quinns' gate. There, on the tiny veranda, placidly swinging to and fro in a wicker rocker, sat Annie, quite alone.

Perhaps Doyle's swagger was just a trifle overdone; perhaps his head was carried just a bit too high. But these minor circumstances could not detract from the conquering-hero air that enveloped him as in a cloud of glory.

At the sight of him as he turned into the trim little path, the girl sprang up.

"Andy!" she cried, and there was surprise and doubt in her tones. "Is it you?"

"That's who," said Doyle.

"What's happened to you?" she said breathlessly.

"Nothin' worth talkin' about or makin' a fuss over," said he. "You'd oughter see the other feller."

He came a step nearer, but the girl backed away. There was something in her eyes—something like anger and loathing that puzzled him sorely. This was hardly the reception he had been anticipating all the way up the street.

"Where have you been?" she asked coldly.

"Where do you suppose?" he returned. "Didn't I tell you where I was goin'?"

"Then it *was* you that was over to the Caseys, was it?" she demanded.

"Dead sure it was me. If you don't believe it look at these clothes and the collar of me, and just take a squint at the lovely shiner I got on my left lamp. And if that ain't sufficient, ask 'em over to Caseys' what happened there about an hour ago."

"I know what happened there," she said hotly. "I've heard all about it. Oh, so it was you, then—you! You coward—you coward!"

Doyle was staring at her stupidly. His eyes were wide; his breath seemed to choke him. He stammered, coughed, and finally managed to say chokingly:

"I thought yer wanted me to do it. You said so, anyway!"

"I said I wanted you to pay Dan Casey for what he done to Timmy and what he said to me," she said in a voice that shook with anger. "I didn't say I wanted you to go over there and take it out on Tom Casey—poor, sick Tom, that's just gettin' over pneumonia and is as weak as a rag.

"That's what you done. I suppose you thought I'd think it fine if you licked anybody with the name of Casey. You didn't dare to touch Dan, did you? So you waited until you saw him go off, and Tom come out on the veranda steps alone for a bit of air, and you jumped on him—and—I hate you!"

The door banged viciously. Doyle found himself alone on the veranda. Dazedly he strove to collect his scattered wits. He was aware of a most oppressive feeling of physical discomfort, as if some one had kicked him in the stomach.

Slowly he turned and descended the steps. As he reached the bottom one, a parlor window was lifted the barest crack.

"And, say," said a voice from within, "you'd better break for the tall grass and stay there for a time. If Dan ever finds out who done that thing to-night—and I shouldn't wonder if he did find it out—it's going to be mighty unhealthy for you round these parts."

Doyle, without a word, stumbled down the path to the street.

For the first time he noticed how his left eye was paining him.

AN OCTOBER MEMORY.

By William Cullen Bryant.

THE sweet, calm sunshine of October now
Warms the low spot; upon its grassy mold
The purple oak-leaf falls; the birchen bough
Drops its bright spoil like arrow-heads of gold.

PRINCE OF APACHES.*

By Frank Lillie Pollock.

The story of two men who went on a love-chase up and down dim Parisian boulevards and into the dens of Montmartre.

SYNOPSIS OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS.

COUNT COURVOIE, the last of an excellent old family in Paris, but a black sheep, with an unenviable record and now a fortune-hunter, comes to America to catch an heiress. Williams, erstwhile American detective in Paris, recognizes him, and learns that the Frenchman is making up to Laura Wainwright, daughter of the rich Henry Wainwright, president of the Madison Life. With Penfield Carr, a young man enamored of Laura, he tries to stop the count's attentions, but without much success. Suddenly Laura and her father leave New York, dropping quite out of sight. After weeks of worry, Williams receives a cablegram from Laura. With Carr he goes to Paris, where, at the Grand Hotel, they locate the girl. Her father has disappeared. Him they finally rescue, and move to a small Latin Quarter hotel, preparatory to sailing for America, but Wainwright, in a confession to Williams, explains that Courvoie has got hold of a ledger containing an itemized account of all his (Wainwright's) peculations from the Madison Life, and that Courvoie will expose Wainwright unless he is allowed to marry Laura. Carr and Williams, led by an Apache named Rochet, go to the café of the Drop of Gold, a resort where Courvoie, also known as Fil-de-Fer, is apt to be.

Though they meet and search the latter's rooms for the ledger, they are unsuccessful, so later they endeavor to trap Courvoie into coming to their hotel, but he replies that he will have no dealings with Wainwright till Carr and Williams have left the country. Williams proposes to Laura, but she rejects him kindly. He, in desperation, goes on a lonely hunt for Courvoie, reenters the café, is set upon by Apaches and rescued only in the nick of time by Carr, with whom he sets off running down the street.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE WOLVES OF THE STREET.

THE Apaches were indeed pouring out on the sidewalk before we were twenty yards away. They sighted us just as we shot round the corner of the Rue Duranton, toward the Boulevard de Clichy—as we thought. If we had made the turning unseen, we might have eluded them.

But in our confusion we must have turned the wrong way. We ran to the next corner, darted round it, and expected to see the lights of the boulevard ahead. Instead, we were in a tiny *carrefour*, at the meeting of three streets, lighted dimly by a single lamp.

Two or three passers-by dived hastily into shops and cafés at the yell of our pursuers. I saw scared faces thrust against windows; but people in that quarter knew the meaning of such sounds too well not to stay off the street when they heard it.

I think I was never so glad of anything as I was to see the gray cape of a policeman appear from the shadows at that moment. We dashed up to him with a single question in both our mouths.

"Where's the nearest police station—or cab-stand?"

"What's the matter, *messieurs?*" the officer demanded sharply.

At that instant the mob poured into the *carrefour,* and explanations were unnecessary. Their yell fairly appalled me, it was so charged with savage bloodthirst.

"Run," I urged, grasping the officer's arm.

But this man, though a little fellow, like most of the Paris police, was as

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plucky as a bull-terrier, and shook me off.

"Don't be afraid. Stay where you are," he said, and he threw back his cape, drew his sword, and started to meet the crowd of wild beasts.

"Halt there!" he said, so sternly that the leaders actually did stop, only to be pushed ahead by the pressure behind. The officer said something sharply that I did not catch, and then, "Stand back!" as a man jostled against him.

I saw the quick flash as he cut the man over the head, sending him to his knees.

Instantly there was howl, a surge, a scuffle. Carr and I dashed toward it to aid our plucky defender. I snapped my pistol, forgetting that it was empty.

For a moment the policeman's sword played like swift lightning, and two or three of the Apaches went staggering out of the fight.

Then I saw a dwarfed ruffian spring on his back—I heard the rapid thud of thrusts that went home this time, and the officer fell back, under the feet of the crowd that trampled over him.

The deformed murderer went down with him, with a bullet from Carr's pistol through his head.

We might have slipped out of sight in the excitement, but the shot drew them again. We bolted off, up and down those narrow, crooked, ill-lighted streets, expecting always to see the lights of the great boulevard, but still involved in that accursed labyrinth.

We tried half a dozen cafés, and found them barred against us. We looked for an archway or alley, but found none. By bad luck, we could not even find a church where we might have claimed sanctuary.

"I can't stand any more. My wind is gone!" I gasped.

"Keep up, Williams, for Heaven's sake. We must strike the boulevard or something in a minute!" Carr implored.

He seemed to stand the pace without difficulty; but then he was addicted to "physcial culture."

But I had to lean against a wall, almost fainting.

"You go on. I'm done for!" was all I could get out.

As I spoke, the wolf-pack poured round the corner, stared this way and that, and sighted us.

"*Les voilà!*" they shrieked, and Carr suddenly jerked the bell-handle of the doorway where we had stopped.

A second's interval, and then the door clicked and opened an inch. We dived inside and slammed it again, and the lock had hardly snapped when a volley of kicks rained on the door.

We were in a wide, arched way, with stone under foot, and in an obscurity relieved only by a low-burning gas-jet on the stairs, in front and above us. The frightful racket at the door increased.

"Who is that?" called a voice from the black aperture of a doorway on the right. Then, more imperatively: "Who came in just now?"

I perceived what was going to happen, for when one comes in after the door is locked, he is required to call out his name to the *concierge* before going up-stairs.

I made a wilfully indistinct reply; but a match flashed up in the dark room, and a big man came out in his *robe de chambre*, black hair and mustache bristling. His wife, in a similar state of *deshabille*, followed him with a candle, but she took the lead in conversation.

"What is this? Who are you? What do you want?" she demanded shrilly. "Ah, *nom d'un nom!*" as a fresh volley of blows rattled against the door.

"Those roughs out there were after us," Carr explained. "We had to take refuge somewhere. You have saved our lives."

But she did not appreciate this privilege. When a Frenchwoman sees her house or her furniture in danger, it turns her usually kindly blood to vitriol. And there seemed to be a good chance of the door being kicked in.

"You can't stay here. Out you go. Instantly!" she screamed, stamping.

"Good Heavens, *madame!* Do you want to murder us?" I protested.

"Achille, are you going to make them go out, or not?" she vociferated, and Achille made a threatening step toward us. I was determined not to be put out without a struggle, but just then a youthful voice called to us from the stairway.

"Hallo, there! What's the racket?"

It was one of the pleasantest sounds I ever heard, for the words were English, and the accent unmistakably American.

On the landing stood three or four young fellows, one holding a candle, and all dressed in the peculiar uniform of velveteen coat and immense tie that the art student is apt to affect in Paris.

"Hallo!" I called back. "Can't you help us out? We're both Americans —New Yorkers."

"I won't hold that against you. I'm from Chicago myself," responded the first speaker, and the whole group swarmed down into the hall, excited at the uproar and evidently anxious to take a hand in the scrimmage. I rapidly explained the situation.

"Sure, we won't see any fellow countrymen turned out to that mob," said the Chicagoan heartily. "Come along upstairs to my studio. We can see what they're at from the window."

"But, M. Smeeth—" the *concierge* protested.

"Get along with you, *vieux farceur,*" replied Smith amiably, and he led the way up-stairs, four flights, two steps at a time.

A lighted doorway let us into an attic studio, the usual bare, sky-lighted place, smelling strongly of paint and turpentine, littered with canvases and stretchers, the walls scrawled with caricatures and spotted with dabs of paint. A table in the center was strewn with cards and chips.

"We were having a little poker game," Smith explained. "Turn out the gas, somebody. Let's have a look out of the window."

We looked out cautiously, and a wild gust of riot and fury surged up at the opening of the windows. The mob had increased, swelled, probably, by all the ruffians of that none-too-orderly neighborhood. The street was full of black, moving forms. They had smashed the gas-lamp for greater security, and they seemed to be in the act of wrecking the front of a *charcuterie* establishment on the other side of the street.

Some of them were still battering at our door, which still held out. But I observed that other house-doors were being similarly attacked. The affair had assumed the form of a regular riot, directed against property in general, and the rioters were already singing the revolutionary "*Ca Ira.*" or, rather, howling it. As we listened, the strains changed to the terrible "*Internationale,*" the prohibited song, one note of which is enough to bring down a squad of police in any city of the continent.

But there were no police to come down here. The affair had gone beyond their control.

"Look here," I said. "We can't allow you fellows to expose yourselves to risk. That mob may break in—search the house for us—"

"They've forgotten all about you," replied one of the artists.

But I did not think so, for I observed that there was a continued and determined attempt being made on the street door of the house. But it was built as doors are not built nowadays; and I suppose fists and boots would have taken a month to wreck it.

We looked and listened for some fifteen minutes. The mob had broken into the *charcuterie* shop, and was plundering the contents. I heard shrill screaming within it. There were heads at every window; and then a new sound became dimly audible, a vague thunder, heavy and approaching.

"The police!" Carr shouted.

But it was not the police. They have a more summary way of dealing with street rioting in France. Down the street came a squad of cavalry at the charge, the light glittering on drawn sabers, the pavement blazing into sparks under the horses' hoofs.

The Apache pack melted and scattered, thinning themselves against the house-walls, squeezing into doorways. A single revolver-shot flashed, and the man who fired it was instantly ridden down.

The thugs made no attempt to stand. They scattered before the troopers like sheep, and the horsemen went through and over them, striking with the flats of the swords, down to the corner and then back again. Here they paused, picked up the body of their solitary victim, and knocked at our door to learn the cause of the riot.

Carr and I hurried down-stairs and explained briefly, giving our names and

addresses. It was too good an opportunity of getting away safely to be lost; and with the warmest thanks we left our young Americans to their interrupted poker, and trotted along stiffly in the wake of the mounted men till we encountered a prowling *fiacre*. In another minute we were driving down the Montmartre slope, on our way home—out of danger.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE LADY OF THE CLUB.

I FELT as if I had always been driving home in cabs in the early morning—unsuccessful always.

It was just before the earliest dawn, and gay Paris was like a dead city. A high wind was rising, and it seemed to be coming on to rain.

My rage of jealousy and disappointment had melted into a dull sorrow, blurred by the vivid emotions of the night. I felt that I had got only what I deserved, and more than I might have expected. Laura had the sincerest affection for me, and what more had I any right to wish for?

The luck was for Carr, and he had, besides, saved my life at least twice that night. More strongly than ever, I felt my inferiority to this handsome, strong, courageous young fellow riding beside me.

In the gray chill of the wet morning I came to the bitter truth that I was gray too, and that youth must be served. After all, what I desired was Laura's happiness, and her will was mine.

"I owe you a good deal for to-night, Carr," I broke silence at last. "How did you ever come to be on the spot just when I needed you?"

"Laura sent me out to look for you." Then, rather hesitatingly, he added: "I suppose I must congratulate you, mustn't I?"

I looked at him sharply, puzzled.

"Me? I'm afraid not. Didn't you see her? Didn't you say—what you had to say to her?"

"Yes."

"Well?"

"She turned on me like a fury, and told me to go after you, and not to speak to her again till I had brought you safe back. I looked everywhere for you, and at last I got the idea that you might be scouting around that *cabaret* again. I had just got within hearing when I heard the shots."

"I don't wonder that it puzzled you," I said. "But I assure you that she showed me clearly that I had no chance. From something else she said, I infer that you have. You're going to win, Carr, and — all I say is, Heaven bless you, and if you don't make her happy, I'll kill you myself."

Carr quite brightened up at this threat, but my jocularity was rather forced. We finished the drive almost in silence, and crept into our hotel and upstairs, candle in hand, as quietly as we could.

But Laura must have been waiting and listening, with her door ajar. She met us at our door, carrying a candle herself. She was fully dressed, and had evidently not been in bed.

I noticed with surprise that her shoes were muddy, but I was too thoroughly worn out to wonder at it.

"You're safe? You're back, all right —both of you? Nothing has happened?" she said under her breath with a little gasp.

"Yes, I brought him safe back," Carr responded.

"Your face is cut!" she exclaimed. "And your coat is all torn—or cut."

"Just broken glass," I told her, discovering for the first time that there was a big streak of dried blood on my cheek.

Laura looked from one to the other of us in the flickering candle-light.

"Nobody ever had such friends as you are," she said. "I don't know how often you've both risked your lives for me, but there will be no more of it. You'll never have to do these things again. I've settled it."

"We've done very little, and it's amounted to nothing," I protested, though I did not quite understand her "settling it."

"I want you both to believe that I tried to do what was best and right," she continued, almost solemnly.

I should have questioned her, but I thought she was in an overstrained nervous condition; and we both tried to

cheer her up, and we urged her to go to bed. I was very glad when she went up-stairs again, for to talk to her just then was a strain that sore nerves could not bear.

I was dead tired—too tired, in fact, to sleep. The dawn came in long before I was able to close my eyes; but when I did sleep, I slept soundly and long.

I was awakened by being shaken violently. Carr, fully dressed, with his hat on, was leaning over me.

"Get up. Williams, wake up!" he was crying. "She's gone."

"Gone? Who? Where's she gone?" I demanded stupidly.

"Laura went out at nine o'clock, the *concierge* says. Went out in this storm."

I became aware that the rain was dashing against the window in fierce gusts, driven by a high wind. The clock on the mantel marked a quarter to ten.

I leaped out of bed and seized my clothes. "Have you seen her father? Does she know anything?" I asked him.

"Says he doesn't. Great Heavens, Williams, what can have become of her?"

I thought hard, while I was performing the most rapid dressing of my life. With the last button, I rushed into Wainwright's room, Carr close behind me.

"Where's Laura? You must know, Wainwright," I demanded.

"I expect her back by eleven, at the latest," said the millionaire rather sullenly. He was already up and dressed.

"You said you didn't know. Where is she, then?" Carr and I exclaimed together.

Wainwright took out his watch.

"I'll tell you at ten minutes after ten," he announced.

"You'll tell us now—this minute!" I shouted; but Wainwright only shook his head with grim obstinacy.

He held out, too, in spite of the persuasion, entreaties, bullying—everything short of physical violence—that we could resort to. He had plainly braced himself to an effort of obstinate resistance; we might storm as much as we liked, but he kept his mouth closed fast. We had to wait, and twenty minutes of the most intolerable dread and agony went past.

Finally he snapped his watch shut.

"By this time," he began, and then—"Look here," he broke off, "you will both be furious, I don't doubt, but it was unavoidable; and, after all, it's Laura's affair and mine. By this time she's married."

Carr emitted a howl.

"You wretched hound!" he shrieked.

"Stop!" I said. "Where is the marriage taking place?"

"At the *mairie,* of course. A civil marriage. Laura came to me last night and demanded to know all about the affair. She had got a hint somehow, and I told her all—everything. I didn't advise her, nor urge her; she made her own decision. She went last night and saw Count Courvoie—"

"Where?"

"At the address he gave—the Cercle Russe—"

"Lord! It was she I saw!" I groaned, remembering the woman at the club.

"She arranged to meet him at the *mairie* this morning at ten o'clock. He was to bring the stolen ledger with him, and hand it to her before the ceremony. By this time it's all over."

"There may be time to stop it!" Carr exclaimed. "Come on, Williams. It's only ten minutes from here. You come too, Wainwright."

We hurried Wainwright into a raincoat and hat, in spite of his objections, and dragged him with us. As I dashed into my room for my hat, I picked up my revolver and poured a handful of loose cartridges into my pocket.

"If she's really married that fellow, I'll make her a widow," Carr muttered grimly.

"It's only a form. She explained to him that she'd never live with him," Wainwright objected. "She's coming straight home, and that's all there is to it."

"You don't know anything of French law," I returned. "He can send a commissary of police and force her to go with him."

We rushed into the open air as I spoke. A gust of wind and rain whipped me in the face. The Luxembourg Gardens

were a sea of surging tree-tops in the gale.

Behind the Odéon there are always cabs, and in less than a minute we were racing toward the Place du Pantheon, where the *mairie* offices are most pleasantly situated.

It did not take us five minutes; but I scarcely hoped to be in time, unless some unusual delay had occurred. The great square in front of the enormous dome was deserted when we dashed into it—deserted except for a single cab that stood, dripping, in front of the civic offices.

Carr and I tumbled out almost before the cab had stopped, and darted toward the *mairie*. But before we had crossed the sidewalk, the glass doors swung open and Fil-de-Fer came out, with Laura beside him.

An aspect of stony resolve sat on her face. But the count was beaming. He wore the most elegant morning dress; he carried a large flat paper parcel in his hand, and his countenance was full of triumph and exhilaration.

CHAPTER XXIII.

CAUGHT IN THE DAYLIGHT.

WAINWRIGHT dashed suddenly past us and snatched the package from the astonished count, ripping the paper loose. I caught a glimpse of a black-covered book.

"Laura! How dared you do this?" I exclaimed.

"Now you've done for yourself. Now we've *got* to kill you!" I heard Carr mutter between clenched teeth to the count, and he reached quickly toward his pocket.

Before the weapon could be drawn, Fil-de-Fer struck him heavily in the face. Carr stumbled back, and in that moment the Frenchman had leaped into his waiting cab, and was going at a gallop toward the Boulevard St. Michel, with the driver lashing the dripping horse.

Carr recovered himself, ran a few steps after it with his pistol drawn, and stopped.

"Jump into our cab. We'll get him yet. Laura, take your father home!" I cried, and then a lamentable cry came from Wainwright.

"This isn't it! This isn't it!"

"That isn't the book!" I exclaimed.

"It's only the cover. The inside's been changed."

I gave it a glance before I leaped into the cab. The cover of Wainwright's fatal ledger had been stripped off and placed on a very different inside. Fil-de-Fer had cheated to the last.

Another second, and we were after him, catching a glimpse of his cab as it wheeled into the Boulevard St. Michel and going north.

It was easy enough to tell our driver to catch that carrriage, and the man did his best; but he seemed to be a poor horseman, and his beast was a wretched one, even for Paris. A hundred yards ahead, I caught sight of the count's fast-driven vehicle, but he was increasing his lead. At the river we lost track of him completely.

But I felt certain where he was going. He was making for his own quarter, and we would have to overtake him before he got under cover with his Apache friends.

There was no use in following him; we would better try to head him off; and I called to our driver to take the quickest way to the Boulevard Clichy.

We rattled over the bridge and across the island, but at a pace that meant defeat. By the time we reached the arcades of the Rue de Rivoli, I was thoroughly disheartened, and the sight of an automobile-renting agency on the corner struck me as providential.

"Right!" cried Carr at my gesture, and we stopped the cab and rushed into the garage office.

I always had the bad American custom of carrying a good deal of money about with me, but for once I was glad of it. There was only one car ready to go out instantly, and it needed recharging with gasoline; there was only enough for a few miles, but we had no time to wait.

The manager had never done business so quickly before; before he well understood it, we were gone with the car, leaving a pile of blue bank-notes on his desk.

It was a huge black landaulet ma-

chine, and the chauffeur was a young man with just the reckless expression that we wanted. As for the gasoline—there would be enough to carry us at full speed to the Rue du Foin, and that was enough.

With this powerful engine, and no fear of police interference, I was sure that we would intercept our man. We tore up the Boulevard Sébastopol, cut over eastward for a few blocks, and started up the long Montmartre hill, with the mud flying from our tires.

It was a steep pull. Our motor coughed and panted, and I fancied how it would try a horse's wind. Our driver zigzagged us through a maze of cross streets, darting round corners with not an inch to spare, narrowly escaping manslaughter more than once, and then out upon the wide Boulevard Clichy, where the chestnut-trees roared in the rain-laden gusts.

Another minute, and we were in the Rue du Foin, going more slowly, and Carr and I leaned back out of sight under the hood, each of us with his hand on a weapon.

But the narrow, curved street was absolutely deserted in the rain. Even the nefarious Cabaret de la Goutte d'Or had an air of sleepy respectability. At a glance, I saw that the windows of Courvoie's apartment, next door, were closely curtained. There was no cab anywhere in sight.

I was sure that we had forestalled him. We turned round at the next corner, and rolled slowly back to the corner of the boulevard. It was by this way that I was sure that our enemy would come.

We had caught the bird of darkness in daylight at last, and this time I was sure that we would have him. But what should we do with him when we had him?

I glanced at Carr, who was pale as death. That fatal marriage must be annulled indeed, but not, if we could help it, by murder.

Our car stood on the corner for four or five minutes, while the rain lashed the cover, and the pounding motor shook the chassis beneath us. Then a head was suddenly thrust in on my side, topped by a dripping cloth cap.

It startled me sharply, but in an instant I recognized Emile Rochet.

"You're waiting for Fil-de-Fer? He went up the street ten minutes ago in a cab," said the tame Apache, jerking his thumb toward the cabaret.

"We're too late, by Jove!" Carr exclaimed. "Here, jump in," to Rochet, who scrambled in as the car started with a jerk.

The chauffeur slowed down by my orders in front of Courvoie's house, where the blinds were still drawn.

"Did he go in there?" I asked sharply.

"*Bien sure.* Maybe he went out again—I don't know. But he sent away his cab."

I stopped the car. We all three jumped out and charged into the archway of the entrance, where the grenadier *concierge* met us, fiercely protesting.

Carr took her by the arms and forced her aside, in spite of her screams and kicking, and I started up the dim stairs.

"Keep that wildcat back," I ordered Rochet, and he took his post on the bottom step, threatening the lady with a long knife, and addressing her with a stream of not very decent banter, which made her fairly foam at the mouth. I was certain that her yells would rouse the house.

Carr and I did not knock. We put our shoulders against the count's door, which was still splintered where the police had broken it open, but seemed to be fast barred.

But as we heaved against it, there came a rapid rush of feet on the stairs above, and a mass of men seemed to drop on us.

A violent blow numbed my left arm. A hand gripped me chokingly by the throat, a knife gleamed dimly before my eyes. The whole struggling mass of us crashed against the door, which burst open, and we tumbled into the room in a fighting tangle.

I had an impression of seeing the count, in overcoat and hat, fumbling over the desk with a flat iron box. Then I went down on my back, with an Apache on top of me.

I was trying to hold off his armed hand, and at the same time to draw my revolver, when the top of my head

seemed suddenly to cave in with an earthquake concussion, and all at once the fight fell into the silence and dimness of a dream.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A MAN-HUNT IN PARIS.

I CAME to myself and found my face streaming wet. Carr was pouring water over me from a large pitcher. I was lying on the floor, where I had fallen, and the air was blue with powder-smoke.

I managed to get staggeringly to my feet. I was dizzy, and my head ached and swam. My coat front was soaked with blood, but it was not mine. It came from a man lying on his face beside me, quite still, with a red pool spreading around him.

Another ruffian was propped against the wall, with his eyes shut, groaning at an appalling rate. Emile Rochet was nonchalantly wiping blood from a curved clasp-knife, but the enemy had disappeared.

"Where's the count? Did he get away?" I exclaimed, and I tottered to the window and peered through the curtains.

The automobile was gone. I caught sight of our chauffeur sitting doubled up on the curb.

Carr uttered a roar of exasperation as he saw it, too, and we all stampeded down the stairs, with my allies half leading, half dragging me.

The chauffeur was able to tell us that several men had suddenly run out of the house and two of them had thrown him out of the automobile, half stunning him, and had driven off very fast toward the boulevard. One of the men carried a black box; the other had bandages on his face.

I heard the man's excited story half in a daze, and I did not understand Carr's plan when he began to hurry me down the street toward the boulevard. But a word in my ear explained it.

"The gasoline!" Carr muttered. "It's all but done. He'll have to stop for more. You know the big supply station on the Place Blanche?"

I caught at the idea, and the shadow of hope and the rain and wind in my face began to restore me to life. My head ceased to whirl as we picked up a taximeter-cab and raced toward the Place.

I knew the big garage well, and I thought there was a chance. But, as we entered the square, I caught sight of the black landaulet top of a large automobile wheeling away from the supply shop, and turning westward round the monument.

Was it our car? It looked like it, but the distance was too great to be sure.

As we crossed the Place Clichy I caught another glimpse of it, starting down the Boulevard des Batignolles, as if it was making for the Bois de Boulogne. If it really were the count, it was more than likely that he would think of losing himself in the great park.

"That's it, I'm certain!" Carr cried. Then, to our driver: "Catch that black automobile, and you'll get a handful of louis."

Gold whipped our speed as we tore down the noble avenue, going blindly now, for the auto was out of sight. But if Fil-de-Fer should really enter the Bois he must do it by the Maillot gateway, and we could learn of it by one of the policemen on duty there.

As we rushed along through the rain, Carr told me briefly the story of the fight that I had not seen since receiving the kick on the head that had stunned me.

At the first sound of the attack Rochet had rushed up-stairs, arriving just as we all smashed through the door. He had driven his knife through the Apache who was trying to stab me, and Carr emptied his revolver blindly into the mass.

They had fled at this, leaving two of their number on the floor, and the count had slipped out with them, carrying with him the flat sheet-iron box that we had once tried to open.

That Wainwright's ledger was in that box we had no sort of doubt now. And now we felt almost certain of recovering it. We had the count on the run, and we would overhaul him.

But—the terrible thought came to me then—it was too late to save Laura. Except, indeed, in one way.

There were few vehicles on the street that stormy day, but we did not once

sight the motor-car in the whole length of the boulevard. With sinking hearts we flashed into the almost deserted Place de l'Etoile—a vast expanse of wet asphalt, dominated by the enormous Arch of Triumph.

To the right lay the way to the gate of the Bois; on the other hand stretched the magnificent perspective of the Champs Elysées, two miles of park and palaces, and we did not know which way to turn. The scent was almost hopelessly cold.

A mounted policeman stood dripping and disconsolate in the center of the square, and I applied to him for news.

He pointed wearily toward the Seine.

"Only a minute ago, *monsieur*. It turned toward the Trocadéro Palace."

"Are you sure?" I cried in astonishment.

"Perfectly sure. It was the only automobile such as you describe that has passed for half an hour."

So we turned down toward the river, and I wondered where the count could be going. It was possible, after all, that we had been chasing the wrong car.

We drove past the Trocadéro cascades into the *quai* toward Passy, looking out eagerly along the parapet that borders the river. On the other shore the Eiffel Tower loomed up into the sky, with wisps of cloud clinging round its top, where the tricolor flag streamed out stiff in the high wind.

We were opposite the monster when there was a sudden commotion on the bridge. People cried out, scattered, and then we all three leaped up in the cab.

A great black automobile was coming—flying, rather—across the bridge, headed straight for us. Through the muddied glass shield I caught sight of the face of Jules, the Apache chauffeur, with reddened bandages round his temples, and there was another man in the shadow of the hood behind him.

I was out on the sidewalk with a terrified bound, and Emile and Carr almost fell over me as I landed. We had scarcely touched the pavement when the racing machine struck our carriage fairly in the middle with a splitting crash.

Our driver was dashed from his seat, and the cab was thrown into the air with the shock. But I saw the motor rear up on end, and Jules was shot forward, right over the cab, landing on his head with a crash like the smashing of a pumpkin.

The automobile reeled over, writhing with the still racing motor, and then a great flash of flame enveloped it, and the crowd fell back with screams of fright.

But I had seen the man on the rear seat disengage himself from the wreck, and run back across the bridge, limping, but apparently not much hurt. He carried a flat black box, and I recognized the count.

CHAPTER XXV.

ENDED IN THE AIR.

We slipped out of the crowd and ran after him, but when we came to the other side of the bridge he was not to be seen anywhere. He could not have gone far, for neither cabs nor omnibuses had passed, and yet the broad open *quai* afforded no sight of him.

Carr hurried up the street leading to the exposition grounds, and then came running back to the base of the tower, raging at the thought that Fil-de-Fer was slipping through our fingers again. Every quarter-minute doubled his chance of escaping us.

We beat the shrubbery of the little garden about the tower, and then it occurred to me that the Frenchman might possibly have gone up into the Eiffel Tower itself.

We posted Rochet to watch the bottom of it, and Carr and I got into the first ascending lift. I had never been higher than the first platform, for great heights make me dizzy, but excitement this time overcame my dizziness.

The car crawled up the incline, round the monstrous iron legs of the frame. It was almost empty, for it was no weather for sight-seeing, and only two or three wearied tourists went up with us.

These got out at the first platform, and a glance from the car showed us that the count was not there. The second platform was all but deserted, and when we changed from the car to an elevator for the top story there was no one going up but ourselves.

I had forgotten to be dizzy, but when we stepped out upon the circular gallery that surrounds the top of the tower, I was seized with such a sudden vertigo that, if I had been alone, I believe I would have dropped flat on the floor to hide my face.

Below us — a thousand feet below — lay the immense gray field of Paris, blurred and veiled by the driving rain. At that height the force of the wind was appalling, and the whole vast iron framework vibrated and hummed under us in the gale. Fifty feet overhead the great flag thundered and strained, and it seemed to me, dizzily, as if the whole structure were falling—falling—sailing smoothly down through the tempestuous air.

But none of all this seemed to affect Carr's nerves. We seemed to be all alone on the platform, but we could see only one-half of it, and after a rapid glance round, Carr started to walk around the elevator-shaft that cut off the view.

I forced myself to follow him, clinging to the iron-work. A few steps, and Carr suddenly stopped, and held a warning hand behind him.

I peeped over his shoulder. Not six feet from us stood a man, his back toward us, leaning over the railing and gazing down. In one hand he held a flat, black box by its iron handles, and he had neither seen nor heard us.

Without saying a word Carr drew the revolver from his pocket and cocked it. He raised his arm slowly, steadily, while I watched in a terrible, nightmare-like fascination.

What instinct of danger warned the count at that moment?

He wheeled, and confronted us with startling suddenness.

The pistol-barrel wavered. Courvoie did not speak or move, and in the crisis he certainly showed the courage of his fighting ancestors. Not a muscle of his face quivered as he faced the bullet that he must have supposed coming.

But it was impossible to shoot the man like that. I felt Carr's irresolution as he stood without firing. Then, without the slightest warning motion, the count launched himself forward in a flying leap, dropping the iron box with a crash.

The revolver clicked softly—vainly. It had been emptied. Fil-de-Fer had his arms round Carr's waist and was trying to swing him from the floor—trying to fling him over the rail of the balcony.

I fumbled for my pistol. It was gone. I seized Courvoie by the arm, trying to break that steel grip.

"Let me alone. Keep off!" said Carr hollowly.

The danger of the first rush was over. My friend had recovered himself. He was smaller and lighter than the count, but a skilful wrestler and in better condition. He had Fil-de-Fer gripped closely now, and was trying to lift him in his turn.

To and fro they swayed together, locked in that close grapple, each trying to trip or lift the other. They crashed heavily against the railing, so that I thought it would give way, and then they both reeled totteringly toward the elevator.

I scarcely could guess how many minutes that desperate, silent struggle lasted before I saw that the count's face was growing purple, and that he breathed in rattling gasps. Then Carr gathered himself together for an effort; he shifted his grip slightly, and, heaving backward, and swaying with the gigantic effort, he raised the Frenchman, lifted him from his feet, heaved him higher, while the veins on his face puffed out like swelling cords.

Carr told me afterward that he had no idea of throwing the man over. He had forgotten the height, forgotten where he was.

Inch by inch the Apache went up, clawing desperately in the air. He drove his fist frantically into Carr's face, gouged at his eyes, and then, with a shriek, he went over—clear over the railing, tearing Carr's coat half off in his last clutch at life.

No, not the last—for he snatched at the rail as he went down. His fingers slipped from the wet iron, but he caught the small cornice at the base of the platform, and clung there with both hands, swinging over the dead drop of a thousand feet.

Carr had tottered back against me, as if exhausted. Then he glanced down and

caught sight of his enemy's head, as the man hung, prolonging life by moments.

"Great Heavens!" Carr gasped. "Look!"

I did not want to look, but the sight drew me with a terrible fascination. Blood was dripping from the count's fingers where the sharp iron had cut them, and he glanced up at us as he swung in the driving gale.

"Can you hold me by the ankles?" Carr exclaimed. "I can pull him up if you can hold me."

"What are you going to do?" I cried in affright. "You're not going to risk—"

He sprang up and threw his leg over the railing.

"Are you going to help me?" he snapped. "Or must I do it alone?"

I knew the thing was insane; but, still protesting, I was caught up in the whirl of the moment. I found myself grasping Carr's ankles, while he let himself down by his hands, head foremost, over that awful depth.

He grasped the count's wrists firmly.

"Let go, and swing off. Be quick!" he said.

"I didn't think it possible that we could lift him. Far below I saw a black crowd collecting, pointing upward. They had seen us. And just then I heard the clash of the elevator-door, and the elevator man's terrified ejaculation as he rushed out beside me.

"Quick," Carr urged. "Don't be afraid."

"You can't do it," I heard the count's voice, hollow and half blown away. "No use."

"Let go!" Carr cried; and the count did let go, wrenching his wrists out of Carr's grasp. The jerk almost broke my own hold, and I had a glimpse of a disappearing, diminishing figure whirling over and over as it went earthward.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE PAWN-TICKET.

But for the elevator man's help I do not believe that I ever could have got Carr back upon the platform.

When he was in safety, we both dropped on the flooring, gasping, exhausted, and incapable of replying to the excited questions of the official.

When my breath returned it was easy enough to make the necessary explanations.. The wretched man who had fallen had tried to commit suicide; the elevator operator himself had seen how heroically my friend had endeavored to save him, and how nearly he had missed it.

Yes, he had seen it, and he had seen the like before, for there is a suicide on the Eiffel Tower almost monthly. The man entertained us with reminiscences of former events of the sort while he took us down in the car to the second platform, where we found a detachment of police coming up to investigate the matter.

The testimony of the elevator man was providential to us just then, and the officers made no difficulty about accepting our story. The idea that we might have first thrown the man over, and afterward risked our lives to save him, was too mad and too Anglo-Saxon to enter their minds.

However, Carr was requested to go with them to the police station where the account of the affair would be drawn up, while I was excused, my name and address taken, and I was permitted to go home.

I had reached the bottom before I recollected the iron box, and returned immediately to the top to get it.

The terrible, vibrating, wind-swept platform turned me sick with horror; but, thank Heaven! the box was there, on the floor where Courvoie had dropped it. We had won at last; we had the box and Fil-de-Fer was dead, dying like a brave man.

The earth seemed to surge and sway under me when I reached it, and it was with difficulty that I managed to get to a cab on the *quai* and give the address of our hotel.

I saw Rochet elbowing his way avidly into the crowd round the tower, as I drove off, and the sight of him filled me with a kind of loathing. But, by degrees I recovered my nervous control a little, and, to keep my mind from dwelling on the terrible adventure that had just passed, I began to examine the count's iron box.

It was still fast locked, but I thought there would be no difficulty about breaking into it with a "jimmy" of some sort. The weight and sound of the contents as they rattled about alarmed me, however, for it did not sound as if the box could contain anything like the lost ledger.

Growing anxious on this matter, I resolved to settle it at once, and I stopped at the shop of a dealer in tools and purchased a strong chisel. Returning to the cab, I drew down the blinds and set to work as I drove along, and presently I had the lid wrenched open.

There was no large book in it.

It held the strangest collection of antiques and tarnished objects—the hilt of a broken sword, a number of faded ribbons, several enameled crosses, stars, insignia.

There were two or three ivory miniatures, an ancient "Book of Hours" in an old vellum binding, several antique parchments rolled tightly, a number of letters.

The sword-handle was set with rubies, and the stars and crosses glittered with small precious stones; but it was not for their value that these things had been preserved, as I realized intuitively. They were the records of the glory that had been the heritage of Courvoie's blood—the insignia worn by ancestors who had handed them down to Fil-de-Fer, the Apache.

And, mingled with the crosses and parchments was something that was new, of the modern world—a pawn-ticket from the *Mont-de-Piété,* making complete the picture of the glory of the family and of its shame.

It gave me a new view of Courvoie's character to see these pitiful relics that he had treasured. They showed a pride of race which I should never have expected to find in him.

But there was no denying that at the last moment he had been true to the best traditions of the Counts of Courvoie when he refused to let us risk our lives on the impossible chance of saving his own. Blood will tell, they say, and the Courvoie blood had told, if only once.

And he had beaten us to the last, after all, for we were no nearer the recovery of the lost ledger than ever. Impossible to say in whose hands it might be, or what use might still be made of it.

I examined the pawn-ticket, and gathered the fact that it represented a "box," on which the sum of two francs had been loaned three weeks ago.

I wondered what sort of box it was and what it contained, but it was rather curiosity than any definite hope that made me drive to the government pawnshop before going home.

I secured the box on payment of the forty sous and interest. It was worth the money, indeed. It was a casket about a foot square and half as deep, made of some rich, dark wood, and carved with last-century art. It was decorated with mother-of-pearl and was silver hinged, and there was something heavy in it.

Once back in my closed cab I brought my chisel to bear on the lock, though it was a sort of sacrilege to splinter that perfect bit of workmanship.

The lock gave way easily, the cover flew up, and there lay a pile of ruled paper, covered with clear entries and figures—the leaves of an account-book from which the cover had been cut away.

I knew it at a glance. I had found what we had sought so long. It was Wainwright's honor, and—

No, it was not Laura's liberty. It had come too late for that. I recollected again, with a fresh shock, that Laura was married. Laura was the Countess Courvoie. The knowledge made me somewhat shrink from meeting her, though I knew with what deadly anxiety she must be awaiting our return.

I reached the hotel at last and climbed the stairs somewhat slowly.

Before I reached our landing I heard a door thrown open, and Laura and Wainwright came out into the hall together, stopped short and looked at me with the same silent and intense question on their faces.

"It's all over," I said blunderingly. "He's dead!"

Laura caught at the door-casing with a sharp cry.

"Penfield—?" she gasped.

"No, no. The count. Carr is safe and sound. He'll be here in a few minutes."

"Did you find it?" Wainwright demanded feverishly.

"Here it is," I responded, handing him the wooden casket. He gave one glance at the sheets and bolted into his room, with a cry of the most intense thanksgiving I ever heard. And at that moment I heard the outer door open, and recognized Carr's footstep on the stairs.

He seemed to come up slowly, wearily, as if every step cost an incalculable effort, and Laura caught my arm unconsciously and squeezed it hard.

He rose in sight of us, a battered and terrible spectacle.

He was bareheaded, collarless, his clothes torn and drenched with rain. Wide purple bruises showed on his neck, and there was a cut on his face that still bled, so that the handkerchief he pressed to it was stained alarmingly.

But with a bound Laura flung herself upon his neck, crying and laughing at once, and murmuring passionate words in complete forgetfulness that I was there.

But Carr put his hands on her shoulders and forced her to look into his face.

"Laura, did you marry Courvoie this morning?" he demanded huskily.

Laura drew back suddenly, startled.

"No—no!" she cried. "I thought you knew. But I remember — we couldn't tell you. But it didn't happen. They had to have authorization from the American consulate, as I was a foreigner and a nonresident. We were going there—"

"Thank Heaven that we were in time!" Carr exclaimed. "It would have been too terrible—"

He stopped and drew Laura's head down to his shoulder again, but I knew what he meant.

"I ought to have thought of that," I said. "Thank Heaven, indeed!"

They both looked at me, as if they had suddenly remembered me where I stood in the background—in the background in every sense. But if I felt its bitterness, I did my best to crush it down.

"Don't mind me," I said. "My foolishness is over, Laura. You've chosen rightly. Carr is the finest fellow I know. But you'll always let me love you a little, too, won't you, as an old fellow may, and—"

She sprang to my side and put her arms round my neck.

"You're my dearest, dearest Uncle Bob!" she cried. "You'll never be any less dear than that!"

And she kissed me most rapturously on the mouth.

(The End.)

THE KING'S IDOL.

By Kenneth MacNichol.

OF the blood of emperors and the songs of slaves, of poisoned wines and jeweled daggers.

DREAMS are, of all things, the most strange.

Out of the Unknown they come flocking, beautiful, bizarre, or terrible, fanciful or grotesque; sometimes a projection from the thoughts of is always removed from the commonplac have no relation to the daytime life; but is always removed from the commonplace.

Working in dream-stuff, the dreamer spins from within himself, as a spider spins her web; often he is a spectator of the imagery, while still feeling the pains and pleasures of the dream-folk that, through him, are born to a brief life.

In such fashion there came a dream to me while I lay sleeping in the open beneath the star-pierced dome of a desert sky.

Like the fluid pictures cast by a magic-lantern on a screen, the wide levels of sage-brush and mesquite gave place to moonlit desert sands; the slim cotton-woods guarding the water-hole were transformed into the fringed date-palms

of an Old World oasis; brown lava cliffs at the edge of a dry *arroyo* bed dissolved into the terraced palace of a king.

In the palace of King Hezganopolis, and in the gardens, people lived and moved, hating and loving, slaying and being slain, quite as though the oasis of Baaloc, in Assyria, had not long since been covered with drifting sand, and again become desert again three thousand years after the palace had crumbled in the dust of its own decay.

Here, for the story's sake, is set down that dream in the desert—the dream of the King's Idol.

Sitting on a stone seat by a fountain, an old man touched his hand wearily to his eyes and let it fall again, brushing the hair of a white-robed slave-boy crouching at his feet.

The boy raised his fair head to the caress, leaving neglected the three-stringed lute upon which he had been idly strumming.

"Sing for me," the man requested. "I am tired, and your music charms me into forgetfulness."

The boy looked up shyly as his head rested against the old man's knee.

"I am weary with singing," he returned petulantly. "Rather I would have you tell me stories. Tell me of Greece."

"Will you never have done with Greece?" the old man queried gently.

For a moment the boy did not answer. A hot wind, blowing in from across the desert, stirred the heavy leaves of the plane-trees and brought down a shower of crimson petals from the masses of clustering roses; the air was perfumed with the scent of peach and almond blossoms bursting into bloom.

The boy threw out an arm, bared from his tunic, in a gesture of passionate discontent, and a thick golden armlet, mark of his servitude, flashed back a ray of white moonlight into the dark water of the fountain.

"When you cease to think of Egypt, then will I forget my Greece," he said shortly. "These gods of Assyria—they are strange gods, and I want none of them. To-morrow I sing at the feast of Nin-ki-gaal; at night I dream of Apollo, for he is beautiful and his garments are not stained with blood!"

The old man laughed mirthlessly.

Under the white moon glow, the boy's finely chiseled face was as colorless as his tunic; his eyes were dewy petals of purple iris—it was the face of a child-poet, or one of the forgotten children of the gods.

"Truly, you should have been a woman," the philosopher said musingly. "What now of the philosophy that I have taught you through these many days?"

"Ah, but you tell me that my gods are dead," the boy returned.

"Nay," the graybeard answered. "Only that they never were."

The boy struck the lute idly, as though seeking to draw an answer from the strings, and the chord shuddered through the garden like a prayer.

"Almost I believe you," he said hesitatingly. "There are so many gods, and they are all silent. "Yet—the—priests—?"

"The priests prate of the Unknowable!" the old man returned sternly. "They, too, will achieve nothingness in time!"

"Yet they have much knowledge and power—" the boy mused.

"Aye!" the philosopher answered bitterly. "So much power that should a word of our speech reach priestly ears, you and I would quickly reach nothingness together."

"You, perhaps; but not I," the singing-boy corrected. "Am I not the king's idol?"

"As I am the king's physician," answered the old man gravely. "But many are the things that are stronger than the king. Chaos, itself, is stronger, and dust comes to fill the ears of king and slave alike. Nothing from nothing comes, and to nothing returns again; so it is with dreams and all the lives of men, my Phraca."

The boy wrinkled his smooth forehead in perplexity.

"In truth, my Nebchar," he said, "I understand your dull philosophy not at all. Nothing from nothing—I see not how that can be?"

"Think no more about it, child, but sing for me," the old man replied listlessly. "To-morrow I will tell you easier stories in plenty, but now I am weary."

"Philosophy is hard," the boy murmured, smiling in light forgetfulness of the problem. "Truly I would rather sing."

Obediently he rested the lute against his knee and touched the strings with light fingers.

Weirdly sweet, the melody floated out into the moonlit garden; the rose petals drifting softy down into the fountain water fell not more lightly than the tinkling minor voices from the strings.

Presently he sang—a quavering evening herd-song, of his countrymen; the purling Greek words intoned in a chanting rhythm as though syncopated with the slow rise and fall of the sparkling water, that dropped from the mouth of a winged bull rearing upward from the pool.

Carried away by the enchantment of his own music, his eyes filled with a dreamy light, he became scarcely conscious that the old man's hand had ceased to rest caressingly on his hair.

Awakened at last from his reverie by the sharp tingling in his cramped limbs, he glanced upward at his companion.

Like a moss-grown satyr, weary with his revels in the woods, the old man's head had fallen backward to a resting-place on the stone seat; his breath came in fitful gaspings from between his straggling teeth.

The boy rose, and, gliding forward noiselessly, pulled down a spray of roses, mischievously crowning the undignified philosopher with a Bacchanalian wreath.

"An augury!" he murmured, standing away to survey his work with delighted eyes. "Great fortune and great evil will come to me—I am seeing the piping Pan!"

Leaving his mentor to the care of the gods of sleep, the boy circled the fountain and ran lightly along a pathway strewn with pearl shells that led to an entrance of the palace; heavy gates of carved cedar-wood at the head of a broad flight of marble stairs, flanked on either side by granite monoliths sculptured to the likenesses of the great Assyrian bulls.

The gates, flung ajar, opened into an unroofed court, paved with mosaics, and hung, in the openings, with gold embroidered tapestry; round the frescoed walls, at the height of a man's head, ran a broad band of hieroglyphics picturing the martial successes of the king.

Here and there where a smaller doorway gave access to the apartments beyond a patch of crimson stained the moonlight on the walls, the luster from shaded lamps hung over the doorways; the air was heavy with the odor of their perfumed oil.

Somewhere in the palace a feast was in progress, and a suggestion of stringed music and the clinking of goblets, echoed hauntingly through the branching corridors.

Just inside the gateway a gigantic Nubian, wrapped in a scarlet cloak, lay face downward on the pavement, with his shaven head resting heavily on his folded arms; at sight the boy recognized the massive form of Nur, the queen's first slave.

Treading lightly, in fear lest the slave awaken, Phraca stood over him, watching with fascinated eyes the slow heave and drop of the negro's mighty breast.

Unconsciously aware of the boy's presence, the slave stirred uneasily, twisting over, bringing his face into a ruddy glow of light that stained his skin with blotches of dusky purple, and cast into relief a pallid scar extending from his forehead to the bestial lips drawn tense over white tusks.

Shuddering, Phraca stepped quickly backward; his lute, striking against the wall, produced a jangling discord. Partly awaked by the sound, the negro thrust out a knotted hand, that, groping aimlessly, secured a tenacious hold on the boy's slender ankle.

"Wine!" he muttered sleepily. "Wine—wine—"

The boy screamed at the abhorred touch, and the negro's eyes opened wide and staring into the face of his palpitating captive. He rose to his elbow, grinning, yet keeping fast his hold. The boy could only gasp: his terror of the black clutched him by the throat and choked him into silence.

"So—my singing bird," the negro grunted in guttural delight "you come in time. My throat is as parched as Moloch's, and you can bring me wine."

"I—I serve the king!" Phraca stam-

mered, shrinking backward from the negro's clasp.

"Only the king?" Nur suggested, tightening his grip.

His gaunt fingers bit into the flesh of the boy's ankle like rods of iron. He jerked his captive downward until the singer's knees rested on the pavement, then drew him nearer still and held him fast. The boy closed his eyes to shut out the sight of the leering mouth that almost touched his own.

"Only the king?" Nur repeated in a voice of mocking tenderness.

Scarcely exerting his strength, he lifted Phraca clear from the pavement, tossing the light burden across his body as easily as a cat might toss a feather ball. The boy fell sprawling on all fours.

"Wine," the negro purred. "Bring me a goblet, and, Moloch speed your feet. Since when has the king's idol become too proud to serve the queen's black slave?"

Blind with terror, Phraca staggered erect and fled. Once inside the shelter of a friendly doorway, he leaned, panting, against the tapestry-hung wall of the passage, where his face found a hiding-place in a fold of the hanging.

Fearful that the negro might follow after him, for a space all his life was in his ears, and then his thoughts flocked back to him suddenly, disorderly, and uncontrolled, until his fright spilled out in words.

"He will kill—kill—"

At a sound from the outer court, his wits again flew from him like frightened birds. He threw back his head, listening intently, but the sound was not repeated. Then, on the heels of his terror, came another thought; unreasonable, yet perhaps subconsciously suggested by the first.

The words of the philosopher in the garden repeated themselves over and over to him in a hypnotic rune:

"Nothing to nothing—so it is with dreams and the lives of men—nothing from nothing comes, and to nothing returns again—nothing to nothing—"

The words beat through his stupor and into his brain with a curious insistance, as though the rhythm was timed with the beating of his heart:

"Nothing to nothing — nothing to nothing—and then—"

The boy turned ad sped along the passage as though his thoughts were demons from which he would flee away; yet the terror had gone from his eyes, and his fingers clenched tightly in his palms.

When he returned again he bore in his trembling hands a crystal goblet brimming full; into the incarnadined chalice something had been spilled that was more potent than the ruddy wine.

Grasping the goblet that the singing-boy held out to him, the negro raised to his haunches and put the liquor thirstily to his lips. Trembling still, the singer drew back from him, watching every motion with a strained intentness.

Yet, being now safely out of reach, it was not fear that held him motionless, but only a suppressed excitement of curiosity that brought vivid spots of hectic color to light the creamy pallor of his cheeks.

Even the slave, intent upon his wine, could not fail to notice the boy's abstraction, and he paused momentarily with the cup at his lips.

"Are you become a brother to the owl?" he asked threateningly. "Since when have you forgotten how a man drinks wine?"

The boy flinched.

"I—I would have my lute," he parried, circling toward the wall.

"Think you that I keep your toys in my mouth?" the slave mocked. "Bel secure you and your noises! Go sing to Ashtaroth with your piping bird's throat; she may take pity on you and make you a woman. Go — before I drown you in my goblet!"

But yet the boy did not depart; in the shadow of the gateway he leaned against the stone, eying the slave timorously, yet with a certain expectant boldness.

Laughing coarsely, the slave threw back his head and drained the chalice to the dregs. The boy advanced a step nearer.

Nur sullenly tossed the goblet on the pavement, wiping his mouth with a knotted forearm. Looking up at the boy, he grinned wickedly.

"For that I will make you burn," he threatened. "Is it for the queen's first slave that you chose the mustiest liquor in the vaults? Come nearer, my singing bird—nearer!"

As though obedient to the command, the boy advanced, but he circled well beyond the slave's reach.

His eyes were staring, and he gulped continually, wetting his fevered lips with his tongue.

The slave moved to stand erect; then into his eyes came an expression of astonishment; his hand groped questioningly at his waist. Suddenly his arm was outthrust in an accusing gesture.

"The wine!" he stammered; "the musty wine—"

The boy laughed hysterically, his voice high-keyed, unnatural.

"Aye," he shrilled; "the wine—the wine—"

The slave sank to his haunches as his muscles contracted in a spasm of pain; but he struggled to his feet and ran at the boy, gnashing his teeth in rage. The boy fled, shrieking.

Midway down the court the negro's legs gave from under him, and he fell writhing to the pavement. The spasm departing, he looked up at the singer with the eyes of a wounded animal.

"It was poison—in the wine?" he questioned thickly. "Poison?"

Even now his brain refused to grasp the portent of the word. Again the boy laughed shrilly.

"Be not afraid," he gurgled; "it is only to nothingness you go. But I had not thought that it would be so hard. Why do you not die?"

Another spasm shook the slave with agony; shriek after shriek thrilled the moonlit quiet of the night as the white foam gathered at his lips.

Exhausted, he lay quiet, beating the pavement feebly with his hands. The boy drew nearer, curiosity again predominant over fear.

Once again the slave looked up; his dusky color had fled and left his face a muddy yellow; his eyeballs seemed popping from their places, and from them the light of reason had died away.

Babbling incoherently, he crawled along the pavement on hands and knees, with spasmodic jerkings of muscles that refused obedience. Something intangibly terrible in the appearance of that blind, contorted thing struck the boy with his first horror, and he turned away, covering his face, groping toward the gateway to the garden.

The slave gave up the struggle and lay still.

A moment later the singing-boy was struggling and biting in the arms of one of the king's guards.

At dawn, in the king's garden, Sardanapalus and his singing-boy were alone.

The boy reached out his arms appealingly. "Master!" he essayed weakly. "Master!"

Black-bearded and shaggy was the king, one in whom little softness might be expected, but he turned away his face before speaking.

"There is but one other way," he said. "Yet it will not be for long—I will send you out among the herders, where you will not be sought, and truly there you will have the care due to the king's own son."

The great king was almost pleading.

"Under the shadow of my shield you have lived, protected from the queen's anger; but now her slave is slain, and she demands your death. On the throne of the bull she would set her son—my seat trembles under me. In the palace is heard a loud complaining—"

A new dignity crept into the boy's voice.

"Master," he said passionately, "how can I live if my heart is left behind? Rather I would die than leave my king!"

"But how should I give the order?" the king cried.

The boy spoke quite calmly.

"No order shall be given—I have no fear of the shadows when you are near; and see—I have come prepared!"

A flash of bronze—a thrust! From the boy's arm the blood spurted in a crimson fountain. Holding his arm away, he sat down upon the ground. The king sprang forward quickly; the fountain stained his robe.

"Nay—not that, my Phraca!" he exclaimed.

The boy shrank back from the king's

touch, but he grasped the king's hand and kissed it eagerly. "It is the only way—an easy way," he said. "Have Nebchar called; I would say farewell to him."

The king hesitated, yet finally turned away.

"The only way!" he murmured brokenly. "Perhaps—the better way."

How long it was before the king's return the boy did not know. Now that his decision had been made, he was no longer afraid, and only slightly curious. For a little while his senses were abnormally acute; a leaf fluttering from a tree, a whistled bird-note, the murmur of the fountain, the play of light on a single rose-bloom were matters of vast satisfaction to him. Then his thoughts turned inward.

"Nothingness—it must be like a long, long sleep," he mused drowsily. "Perhaps I shall even dream."

Presently he ceased to think at all, and became absorbed in watching the shifting play of color-spots that danced before his eyes, weaving in and out in all manner of weird and beautiful patterns, while his body grew light and floated away on a sea of ecstasy, like a bit of thistle-down drifting on the wind.

But something drew him back again from his idle journey; at first it was only a struggle to return, and then gradually he became conscious that, as though from an infinite distance, a voice he loved was calling his name:

"Phraca—Phraca!"

Reluctantly he at last opened his eyes to look into the face of the king, alight with a great tenderness. With the world of reality near again, thought returned.

"Nothingness should be black," he whispered inwardly, "and I have seen only light."

The king's face drew closer to his own, and he whispered aloud, feebly:

"Master — do you think — that the gods grant life—after death?"

"Aye," the king answered softly. "I believe that the gods grant life where there are no masters—and no slaves!"

The boy smiled faintly, as though in communion with himself over an outworld secret.

"Then," he said weakly, "over the border—I will await you with a cup of wine — to refresh you — after the long journey."

Smiling still, he closed his eyes, sighing as one sighs who is a-hunger for sleep.

From his outstretched arm the blood ran away in a tiny stream.

The king drew his breath in a quick sob; then into his face came a light of purpose. He turned fiercely to the physician, who stood aside, his lips trembling under his white beard.

"I will not have it so!" the king cried passionately. "By Moloch, if you do not bring the boy back, you shall follow him!"

"It is too late," the physician replied gravely.

"Too late—"

"There is but one remedy."

"And that?"

"The boy has now no blood; yet should the blood of another be run into his veins—"

"A slave!"

"There is not time for that," the philosopher said hurriedly.

He stooped over the boy, laying a hand on his breast and attempting to stop the feeble flow that still pulsed from the boy's arm.

Swiftly the king bared his arm and thrust it forth. "There!" he cried; "your instruments!"

Momentarily Nebchar hesitated, faltering into speech:

"To touch the king with bronze—is death!"

From the jeweled belt at his waist the king drew forth a knife.

An instant it glittered in the air, and then slashed deeply across his arm; the blood spattered on the boy's tunic as the king knelt at his side.

"Quick!" he ordered; "your instrument—your life or the life of the king's idol!"

A bronze tube flashed red in the sunlight of early morning.

The veins of the humblest slave drank thirstily from the life-blood of the greatest king.

So ended the dream of the king's idol.

But somewhere in an old book is recorded a tale of a great Assyrian king who took a Greek singing-boy into his

home and household and made him one of the most honored and respected princes of Assyria.

And afterward, so the story relates, in the palace there was strife and revolution, yet the singing-boy held his place, and in time took the daughter of the king for wife; from the marriage sprang a line of poet-kings who conquered the world with arms and song.

Tradition would have it that the great King Sargon the First was not of unmixed Assyrian blood.

But of these things we know little. "Nothing to nothing — so it is with dreams—and the lives of men."

THE GHOST-TRUST.

By Frank Condon.

A spiritualist seance, in which a too-perfect materialization rises up and strikes against the unhappy medium.

A NOVEL—COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE.

CHAPTER I.

THE IDEA.

ABOUT seventy-five years ago, two farm-houses managed to get within hailing distance of each other in this particular State we are thinking of, and eventually a Swede built another shack in the neighborhood. So they gave the town the name of White Pigeon and elected a school-board.

You will find the village marked plainly on the map, page ninety-four. Jenkins's American Atlas. It has grown steadily, and to-day the population is more than seven thousand, including Ichabod Nappstrabb.

There is nothing cocky about White Pigeon.

If a soul-mate were to slip into town from a Central Southern train, she would be arrested. The folks are as plain as a gingham apron, and they read the Chicago Sunday papers in private.

They know nothing of philosophy, alimony, soul-culture, or "isms."

When you move into White Pigeon, you may as well go to the mayor's office, over the printing-shop, and tell him all you can remember about yourself and your family, because you are an interloper until you are known to every man, woman, and child between Peterson's red barn to the west and Mrs. Sullivan's candy-store on the extreme east; and so it came about that when Ichabod Nappstrabb rented the only vacant house in White Pigeon, and manifested a love of reticence, the countryside began to look into his case with interest.

Ichabod was forty-four years old, and he was a complete and utterly unredeemable "nut," a spiritualist, mesmerist, hypnotist, medium, soul-searcher, delver into the unknown, trance specialist, and, worst of all—yes, ten times worst of all—he knew a scheme for producing perpetual motion.

When a man gets to forty-four, and still believes in perpetual motion, the theory in White Pigeon is that he not only endangers his immortal soul, but that he ought to be put in jail at once before he murders some one with an ax.

And yet Ichabod Nappstrabb was a most engaging old man.

His hair had turned gray when he was twenty-two, and it fell round his lean face in thin wisps. He was tall and ungainly. He used snuff; and when you use snuff in White Pigeon, openly, brazenly before the populace, there is something deep, dark, and diabolical about you. It would not have surprised any one to know, after Ichabod had lived

there six months, that he kept a bottle in his home.

It was even rumored that Ulysses Nappstrabb, aged twenty-eight, smoked cigarettes, and Fannie, the daughter of the household, wore one of those wire things in her hair to increase its volume.

In the words of the livery-stable man in White Pigeon: "Them Nappstrabbs ain't no better than they ought to be."

Human nature is like the rough side of a sieve. It's the same all over. On Broadway, about Thirtieth Street, you will see people going into an upper room to have their hands read; and up-town a woman takes money away from sophisticated New Yorkers, and in return gives them a new name which will increase their bank balance if they play the shades of its color against Fate.

Men and women who have had the verdancy rubbed off their systems by the take-away system are still buying information in large cities from race-track tipsters, and on one street in New York City there are thirty clairvoyants who live in complete luxury.

So if New Yorkers trail along year after year in the here's-my-money class, can it be expected that White Pigeon shall sit still and sneer at a man who seems to be doing business with another world?

Ichabod Nappstrabb walked abroad one sunny afternoon and entered into converse with the ticket-agent. The latter was a youngish man who had never been away from White Pigeon; and when Ichabod remarked that the spirit world seemed active, the ticket-agent was mildly interested.

"I hold séances and materialization hours every Thursday night," concluded Ichabod. "You might drop in and bring a friend. My wife will be glad to see you."

From such a simple beginning did Ichabod Nappstrabb start, and in fewer weeks than you might think the Nappstrabb barracks on Western Avenue became the rendezvous of a group of White Pigeonians that included the sheriff of Butler County, the mayor of White Pigeon, and some reputable townsfolk who slipped into the séances quietly and singly and sat as far in the rear of the room as possible.

Ichabod had them buffaloed from the very first, and they recognized in their own doings a shameful situation that had nothing to excuse them except their tremendous curiosity.

And what Ichabod Nappstrabb could do with his friends in the astral world was a caution. He scorned the trumpery of stagecraft and the adventitious aid of screens, cloths, shaded lights, black-velvet hangings, and wooden booths.

He did a direct-current business with the spirit people, and the folks began to stop asking foolish questions, because the answers now and then embarrassed and disclosed skeletons that had long been laid away in the musty closets of the town.

Ichabod found no fault.

For a time the interest in his psychic investigations held very well, and the coins rattled in cheerily; but White Pigeon is a small town, and a modest one. The population had been pretty well worked out when Ichabod dropped the séances and turned his attention to the perpetual-motion machine.

The only perpetual motion so far devised by man is the movement of the rent collector. All others have been failures; and after years and years of patient effort, Ichabod Nappstrabb stood on the verge of success.

His machine was perfect. Its mechanical arrangement was simple; its parts were few; its idea was basic, and its effect upon the human race, upon manufacture, transportation, power-transmission, lighting, heating, mining, ocean-traffic, and the myriad activities of modern existence would be revolutionizing. The only thing wrong with it was that it wouldn't go.

The Nappstrabbian theory was true and correct. In its model state, the machine consisted of three sets of wheels, arranged one within the other and looking for all the world like three small carriage-wheels. The spokes consisted of double steel rods from hub to rim, and between these rods small steel balls rolled back and forth as the wheel turned.

A push from Ichabod's hand, and the machine started. The balls rolled down the incline, giving the wheels its impetus; and there you have it all.

Simple as one, two, three. And what was lacking? you ask.

The pesky balls rolled gaily back and forth, as Ichabod meant them to roll, but they didn't roll quite far enough. Hour after hour, week after week, the tireless inventor worked over the problem of how to make those steel balls canter down their inclines just one-tenth of one inch farther than they would go.

Think of it! Let the puissant thought sink into your comprehension.

Here was a man standing on the threshold of an idea that would free the world from the Irish trick played upon it by a party named Adam. There would be no more work if Ichabod could chase these little balls a tenth of an inch farther down the groove. Factories would go without engines, boilers, coal, or stokers. Locomotives would hurry their palatial trains across continents without steam. Ocean greyhounds would slip from New York to Liverpool at eighty miles an hour, and nary a curl of smoke from their funnels.

In fact, there would be no funnels, no firemen, no engineers, no nothing that had to do with the power. Elevator apartments would have all-night service because it wouldn't cost a cent. Subway-trains would be on time because the power couldn't break down.

People wouldn't have to work because it would be done for them by silent, ever-moving machines, propelled by that mysterious elemental principle, perpetual motion.

And in little, inconsequent White Pigeon, Ichabod Nappstrabb wore himself into bad health trying to produce the machine, separated from instant success only by one-tenth of an inch, one-one-hundred-and-twentieth of a foot.

Standing there in his greasy overalls, smoking his corn-cob pipe, staring disgustedly at the machines in model form that cluttered the workshop, Ichabod might have stirred the wells of sympathy within the most hardened of us.

It had been a particularly trying day, and as the afternoon sun eased down into the woods north of White Pigeon, Ichabod realized that he hadn't shaved that one-tenth inch in the minutest degree. He leaned back and communed bitterly, smoking silently and with the abstract air of a man whose mind is thrashing around among powerful ideas.

It came to him like a bolt from the blue.

The pipe fell from his gaping mouth because of the roar of joyous noise that temporarily occupied it.

It was *the idea.*

Ichabod yelled with the reckless mirth of a man who has come to a goal without expecting it. He wondered why in the name of common sense he hadn't thought of it before.

Here he was, an inventor of years and years and years, puzzling over the extension of a roll-limit for a few steel balls, balked and discouraged by a distance of one-tenth inch, almost at the point of giving up, and then suddenly to come upon the solution like a man falling down-stairs!

It was great. The world would soon know.

White Pigeon was coming into a heritage of red-ink head-lines in the metropolitan press, and Ichabod Nappstrabb would be the man to cause it all.

Those all-important steel balls could be pushed the extra one-tenth inch by Ichabod's friends—the spirits.

CHAPTER II.

"ICHABOD IS ON."

"GENTLEMEN," continued Ichabod, speaking with intense earnestness, "I want you to understand me thoroughly. I don't want it to be said of me later that I produced a misapprehension or aimed at subterfuge or equivocation.

"This is a plain business matter and a straightforward proposition, and I give you my word I see in it for you, gentlemen, as well as for me, enjoyment, profitable occupation, and a world of good."

Ichabod had been speaking for some time. He was standing at the head of his battered dining-room table addressing some friends.

Maybe you know some of them yourself, and to get this memorable meeting on the minutes in a parliamentary fashion—and, indeed, it was a most momentous and epoch-making assembly, and deserves the widespread and detailed publicity it is now receiving for the first

time—to get everything in, it is stated that Ichabod faced and directed his words to some very important persons, among whom, as well as the chronicler can now recall them, were:

Rudolph Meyerhoffer, a Chicago butcher, who was incinerated in the Great Fire.

Outlaw Tracey, killed ten years ago out West.

Confucius, the Chinese Big Noise of his era.

A Denver plumber, who died in 1898.

Billy Patterson.

Sitting Bull, the famous Indian chief.

Joe Miller, who wrote the joke book and has since regretted it.

Samuel Weller, a man who lived in London.

Omar Khayyam, tent-maker and poet.

Gaston, a cook, who invented hash.

Hendrik Hudson, after whom a New York apartment house is named.

Jesse James, a bandit from America.

David Nappstrabb, Ichabod's father, who had been dead eighteen years.

Mind you, this brief list by no means includes all who were present, sitting round Ichabod's very comfortable dining-room and listening to his proposition with varying emotions.

Some of these folks had been dead for centuries. Others had passed into the Great Beyond only a few years before; but, grouping them roughly, it may be said that they were all friends of Ichabod, and they were willing to do him a fair turn, providing he treated them with the courtesy their station demanded and laid no undignified requirements upon them.

For years most of them had been coming to Ichabod's séances and pulling spirit talks with a courtesy and good nature that speak mighty well for the whole ghost fraternity.

Never in all these years had they refused to climb out of bed and respond to Ichabod's raps, no matter how hard it was raining. Not once had one of them slewed in with a grouch and upset the meeting by refusing to answer or, if answering, giving the wrong responses, or in any other way— Well, you can see what is meant when the statement is made that Ichabod and these ghosts were mighty blamed good friends; and as Ichabod stood there with his hand in his coat-pocket, looking from face to face eagerly and hopefully, the tears came unbidden to his eyes, and, strong man as he was, he wept.

Ichabod Nappstrabb was not of the sort that forgets friendly acts.

When his emotion had partially disappeared, Ichabod took up his theme, and, as he warmed to his argument, a close observer might have noted the look of increasing interest that gradually spread round the circle of expectant faces.

He would have to have been a very close observer, come to think of it, because the distinguished listeners were not visible to mere physical eyes—yours or mine, for instance—but they were very plainly visible to Ichabod, as any one could see who watched him speak.

"As I was saying," Ichabod went on, "the proposition involves a great deal. I know that you folks have done no work for many years, but I put it to you plainly, as man to man, wouldn't you be better off if you did work?

"Idleness is the curse of modern civilization. No less is it the ruination of ghosts. It destroys their initiative and it dulls their ambition; and the longer I think about it, the more certain I feel that every man within the sound of my voice will be happier if he agrees to accept my proposition and come in with me on this deal.

"Think of the vast advantage in it for the people who haven't died yet! See what we can do to lessen the misery and labor of the world!"

It was a mild-mannered little ghost who interrupted. In life he had worked for a Louisville piano concern, and when he died, his wife profited by the comfortable insurance he left.

"Now, Ichabod," he began. It may be remarked that they all addressed the inventor as Ichabod, so well did they know him. "Now, Ichabod, you haven't yet explained what you want us to do. I'm sure there isn't a gentleman present who wouldn't be willing and anxious to help you.

"But you know yourself there are certain things to be observed, and I think you had better start at the beginning and tell us what you will require of us."

"He's dead right," remarked Sitting Bull cheerfully. "And make it short, Ichabod, because I've got to chase out to Des Moines at nine to-night. Made a date, like a fool, with a young woman who's just learning, and I hate to disappoint her. Go ahead, and cut it short, Ichabod. Cut it short."

Annoying as interjections are, it must be said here that people who have died don't talk as they did when they were alive.

You will notice that the accent you may expect to find in the conversation of the various ghosts is entirely missing, and this is accounted for by the fact that while a man's body dies pretty dead, his accent dies deader still. There is nothing so dead about a dead man as his accent.

"Well, I will," said Ichabod, when Mr. Bull had resumed his seat. "This is my plan. I've got a machine here, and it's nearly completed. These balls, you observe, slide down the grooves, causing the wheels to revolve. This is a small model.

"By increasing the size and weight of the model and the force of the initial push, we get a power that will be simply incalculable. That is, we do — if the balls can be made to move just that one-tenth inch farther.

"I have figured that one of these machines, built—say—as large as an ordinary carriage-wheel, and started off at the rate of seven thousand revolutions per minute, will produce the motive-power represented by the combined strength of two hundred and fifty high-grade locomotives.

"Think of that, my friends. There is absolutely no limit to the power. It all depends upon the initial movement of the wheel, because once it is started at a certain speed, it must continue at that speed unfalteringly and unceasingly until its very bearings wear out."

"What do we do?" put in Omar Khayyam politely.

"That's the point I'm coming to. These balls must cover that extra one-tenth inch, and I have proved to my own satisfaction that I can't make them cover it.

"Therefore, I want you to help me; and when we start into operation, I want you—all of you—to come to the aid of the human race by taking your place, one man to a machine, and when the steel ball reaches the spot in the groove where it now stops rolling, I want you to reach in and give it a push. It will then cover the extra one-tenth inch, the impetus will be continued, and the wheels will revolve. Plain, isn't it?"

Ichabod looked round smilingly, for he saw that every man-jack before him comprehended. Indeed, it was so simple and easy of understanding that anybody could see what he meant; and that was a good thing, too, because very few ghosts retain a knowledge of mechanical engineering, no matter how much they knew about it while they were flesh men.

A deep silence followed Ichabod's explanation.

Julius Cæsar, who was lounging in the Morris chair, tapped the arm idly with a paper-cutter, and the Denver plumber coughed thoughtfully. It was Billy Patterson who spoke first.

"But, Ichabod," he said, "how fast did you say you were going to start the wheels?"

"I simply mentioned a speculative force," answered Ichabod. "I can start them at twenty revolutions a minute, or twenty thousand. Naturally, the power increases with the increased speed of the start."

"But, Ichabod, we can't sit by a wheel that's going around twenty thousand times a minute and push a little ball each time."

"It won't be a little ball, Mr. Patterson. It will be quite a large ball," explained Ichabod kindly. "You see, this machine is merely a model. The machines in the factory will be large ones. I shall determine upon their size later, and as our business increases."

"You don't mean to say you want us to work in a factory," interrupted Shakespeare, who until this moment had been looking at the family album. "That'd never do. Now, would it, boys? Just imagine working in a factory! Ridiculous. I s'pose you'd be wanting us to punch a time-clock."

Every one round the table chuckled. Ichabod frowned.

"Now, William," he began, addressing himself seriously to Mr. Shake-

speare, "this is no time for pleasantries. Of course, we will have to have a factory. You don't suppose I can build machines in my parlor, do you?

"And, besides, I can't have you ghosts running round my house here and cluttering things up. My wife don't like it. Personally, I wouldn't mind, because I like you, one and all. But she doesn't. That's why I sent her out this afternoon, so's I could have a long talk undisturbed.

"We will have a large and comfortable factory, and from it we will transmit power to the entire world at prices so ridiculously cheap that no other existing power can compete with us. I figure that we can operate the entire Continental Railroad system for three cents a week."

"Well, what do we get out of it? Where do we come in?"

It was William Shakespeare speaking again. His remarks were greeted with favor by the rest of the meeting, and Ichabod almost lost his temper—something that rarely happened to him.

"Now, you look here, William Shakespeare, if you're going to be a disturbing factor, you may as well cease to have any interest in this project. I am trying to benefit the human race, of which you were one, and there you sit, thinking up silly objections. I tell you it'll do you good to go to work.

"Here you are idling away your time, frittering off the precious hours in doing not the smallest thing in the world; and when I offer you a good, wholesome job in a clean, hygienic factory, you sneer at it. I'm ashamed of you, William. Seriously, I'm mortified; and I'm sure, when you reflect, you'll change your stubborn attitude."

William was visibly affected.

"Oh, now, come, Ichabod. I'm willing to listen to reason, but we've simply got to know what we're going to do."

"I've just told you, haven't I? Good Heavens, man, I couldn't be any plainer!"

Ichabod was getting roiled. Any one would.

"Well, boys," said William, turning to the interested group, "what do you think about it. You've all heard what Ichabod says. He can't perfect this machine without us? Are we going in with him, or do we stay out?"

It was then that Ichabod's capacity for creating friendships with ghosts was very plainly shown.

Every one in the room rose to his feet, and the rafters rang with the hearty shout as each announced:

"Ichabod, you're on!"

CHAPTER III.

THE NAPPSTRABB POWER COMPANY.

ANY one can understand the eagerness with which Ichabod went to work on a large machine for the production of power on the basis of perpetual motion.

Human aid could never have helped him, but with a crew of willing ghosts behind him, ready to start work the minute he gave the word, the prospect was indeed rosy.

Ichabod was not a mercenary man. His principal design was the benefit of the human race; and when the first machine was completed, it was with no little excitement that he went into a trance and summoned several of his spirit friends from a conclave that was being held in Los Angeles.

Of course, it was necessary to keep the business private, because, as it was, White Pigeon folks had a way of staring at Ichabod; and if he should puzzle them farther, he would stand a fine chance of a bed in the asylum over in Haverhill County.

They came enthusiastically. Shakespeare and Artemus Ward offered to test out the first machine, taking turns at pushing the ball over that dead-center one-tenth inch, and the result was successful, perfect, and joy-producing.

"Now let's start her good," said Ichabod to the admiring group.

The test was taking place in his barn because Mrs. Ichabod was doing the washing that day, and it would irritate her to see Ichabod gesturing at the empty air and talking apparently to nobody at all.

Ichabod's wife — her name was Jersey—couldn't see the ghostly assistants any more than you could have, had you been there that morning.

"This time," said Ichabod, "we'll

start her off flying, and you fellows don't want to miss the ball."

He grasped the spokes firmly, and leaned down to get a strong leverage. Then he whirled the wheel with one mighty pull, and the Denver plumber, who had asked for the privilege, took up the job of pushing the ball.

"Now I'll show you something," continued Ichabod, watching the rapidly flying wheel.

At the far end of the barn was a printing-press that hadn't been used in twelve years. It was rusty and clogged with dirt, and an ordinary engine would have broken a cylinder trying to turn its jammed bearings. Ichabod strode down to the barn, and returned with a heavy leather belt, which he draped around the shaft of the press. The other end he snapped over the hub of the flying motion machine, and instantly, without causing the wheel to diminish its speed in the slightest, the dilapidated press began to roar and clatter.

Presently it smashed into pieces, because the speed was tremendous. Bits of rollers flew like hail. Cog-wheels spattered about the barn, and the framework fell apart.

"See there!" shouted Ichabod triumphantly. "A two-hundred horse-power steam-engine couldn't have moved a wheel in that old press. That's what I meant by power. You can stop now, young man," he added, speaking to the Denver plumber, who was busily pushing the ball. "The demonstration is over."

Ghosts as they were, they had once been humans, one and all, and they simply jumped up and cheered Ichabod to the echo. That is, it would have been a cheer to the echo, had they possessed voices, or at least lungs and a windpipe, or anything else with which to make a noise as human beings do when they are pleased.

Ichabod stood there, smiling calmly. He knew that he had convinced them, and the very first thing he did was to issue instructions.

"Now, boys," Ichabod began, "you take a good long rest, and cut out these séances and materializations until I send for you. I'm going to get our plant ready and put in the machinery, and, of course, that'll take time.

"I'll get what business I can before we actually start operation; but you know as well as I do that these fool people won't believe I can furnish power until I actually show them.

"When the plant is ready I'll send for you, and I'll need about one hundred and fifty men to begin with. You fellows that are now here, and who have seen the demonstration, can begin to put the others wise. I want good, husky men, and willing ones too. No shirkers, mind you; and you can tell them that while I'm easy and good-natured, I'm going to be the boss of this business—the whole boss, and nothing but the boss.

"I'll treat every one fairly and alike. I'll listen to complaints, remedy troubles, act the way a corking good general manager ought to act, and insure a fine job for every man who wants to quit this silly dark-room business with elderly females and long-haired males."

Ichabod bade them a fond farewell, and the troop of ghosts filed out of the barn just before Jersey Nappstrabb came around the corner.

"Who are you talking to now, you old idiot?" inquired Ichabod's wife. "Babbling the same as usual. Honestly, Ichabod, you're getting on my nerves worse than ever."

"I may talk some," admitted Ichabod meekly. "But I ain't like you, Jersey. I say something once in a while. Go in the house before I speak harshly to you."

Well, if ever a man hustled and toiled, scraped up money here, borrowed it there, leased an old and decrepit sawmill principally on conversation money, ordered wheels from a neighboring city on pompous letter-heads bought on time from the local printer, gathered together the material for his power-transmitters, put in dynamos—in fact, if ever a man got a plant into working order through sheer nerve and in wonderfully quick time, that man was Ichabod Nappstrabb.

His wife surveyed his activities in dismay; but he scorned her questions, just as he scorned the caustic comments of the villagers. He knew. He had something on them—one and all.

Around the factory Ichabod erected a twelve-foot fence to keep out prying people, and on Thursday, June 24, he ap-

peared before the village council with an offer to light the town with electricity at one-tenth the cost it was paying local capitalists.

The council laughed, took a josh vote, and awarded Ichabod a contract for six months at the ridiculously low figures he named. The next day Ichabod strung a high-power feed-wire from his factory into town, and the day following he went into a heavy trance, and returned with three hundred more or less prominent spirits.

"Here's the plant, boys," Ichabod said to the interested crowd. "I can't put you all to work when we start on Monday, because there ain't work enough for so many. You can see what I've been doing. We start with a contract to light White Pigeon."

Ichabod then conducted his employees through the big mill, showing them the rows of machines, already connected with shafting by which the power could be transmitted to dynamos.

Ichabod explained that with every wheel in the shop going, he could turn every wheel in America, Canada, and Cuba. He omitted the technical terms, because ghosts know nothing about amperes and volts; but everybody present gathered that Ichabod's intention was to produce electricity in such vast quantities that the power-plants at Niagara Falls would be mere pygmies beside his reconstructed sawmill.

When the tour of the shop was over, Ichabod selected one hundred and fifty men.

"You start in Monday morning at seven sharp," he announced. "Now, don't be late, any of you, because we want to get going on time."

He spoke encouragingly to those he could not take on, and promised them the first openings when the plant grew larger.

"In the meantime, fellows," Ichabod continued, "I'd rather you wouldn't hang around the grounds. You'll only interrupt the work, and, besides, this is going to be a well-conducted shop."

Everybody went away, employees and the disappointed ones, among whom there was some grumbling over Ichabod's orders keeping them out of the plant.

"I think he's a big stiff," remarked King John—same chap who granted the charter. "He's too gay altogether. We wouldn't get in anybody's way, if he let us in. And every one of us has helped him in his séances. That's gratitude for you. If anybody wants to know my personal feelings, I'm blamed good and sore."

Others spoke in a similar vein, including Hawkeye, a Fenimore Cooper rifle expert, a man from Albany who had been a perpetual-motion crank before he died, and was naturally curious to see how Ichabod's plan would work; Jesse James; and Dill Wexford, the famous English pugilist, who died in 1765. Mr. James was particularly put out about it, because he had been invited to the very first meeting.

Ichabod locked the front door of the sawmill, and went home to supper.

Monday would be a great day for the Nappstrabb family.

CHAPTER IV.

MR. ARCHIMEDES, FOREMAN.

THROUGH a regrettable lack of attention, the faithful chronicler has omitted all mention thus far of a very important personage upon whom Ichabod was to lean, and from whom he was to expect even greater service and loyalty than from all the rest.

This was no less a man than Archimedes, an elderly gentleman, who specialized in philosophy during the Young Greek days, when there were no printing-presses or leather garters.

He sprang into notice early in his youth. It was quite accidental, too.

Archimedes was coming home early in the morning from a lodge meeting and, being depressed and unhappy, he leaned against a lamp-post and philosophized in a calm and dignified manner.

A friend of his passed along and noticed the look of intense earnestness in young Archimedes's eyes, and the firm clutch he had on the post.

"Why, Archimedes," said the friend, laughing, "you can't move that post."

"Give me a place to stand on and I will move the world," retorted Archimedes, without a moment's hesitation.

The reporters for the morning papers heard about the remark, and the result is that that chance retort has come roaring down the ages, and can be found in most good text-books.

In fact, it is the only thing most people remember about Archimedes, except the fact that he delved into mechanics and invented the first screw for pulling water uphill.

Ichabod naturally selected Archimedes for the most important post in the new factory; and when they were together, and Ichabod had offered Archimedes the job of foreman, the old spook was simply overcome.

"You'll have to run the place when I'm busy," said Ichabod; "and you'll have your hands full. There's a lot of fresh mugs in this bunch, and they may have to be tamed."

"I'll do my best, Ichabod," replied Archimedes gratefully. "It's a good many years since I took an active interest in factories, but I guess I'll get along all right with the boys.

So Archimedes's appointment was announced, and it is a pleasure to be able to narrate that not a man in the entire gang found fault with the foreman or showed any envy.

At ten minutes after seven Monday morning a low hum was heard in the plant of the Nappstrabb Power Company.

It was the first wheel, in charge of Rudolph Meyerhoffer, the Chicago butcher. Ichabod started this wheel, the first in the long line, at eight hundred revolutions a minute. The building contained one hundred and thirty-nine separate wheels, and in half an hour they were whirling at full speed, sending their power into the shafting.

The dynamos clicked and sparkled as the electricity flew over the wires, and at first Ichabod simply grounded the current to get rid of it. He couldn't light White Pigeon by day, because it didn't need light; and, furthermore, it wasn't in his contract. But a factory producing electricity must have some outlet, and Ichabod had made preparations without consulting either his employees or the human beings whom he desired to benefit with some free power.

He had discovered a dozen or more feed wires in the neighborhood of White Pigeon, and under ordinary conditions these wires were charged from a number of power plants in adjacent cities, and furnished motive power for dozens of commercial concerns, including an interurban car line, a couple of boiler factories in White Pigeon, the glass-works at Owensboro, and the iron-foundry at Sand Lake.

Ichabod had determined to help out the power companies by switching in some of his spook-made juice, and before noon he had connected his wires with the main feed wires, and by slowing down his P.M's to fifty revolutions a minute he could send out free power and keep every machine going.

The glass-works was the first to notice. Its four huge motors blew out with a crash shortly after Ichabod turned on his free power, and the conversation in the glass-works sounded coarse and uncouth, but expressive.

Before the middle of the afternoon Ichabod and his power-plant had burned out every motor within a radius of forty miles, and the innocent power companies were in the first stages of law-suits before they had even heard about the trouble. Ichabod learned that you cannot double the power without burning the motors, so he discreetly unhooked his connection and said nothing further about the matter, although there were many men in White Pigeon who would have been glad to talk with him about it.

To keep one hundred and fifty new ghosts—that is, new to the job—going, see that nothing went amiss, and instruct the helper ghosts in their few duties, took up most of the day.

Ichabod bustled hither and thither through the humming factory, cheering up the men, instructing them on fresh points that kept coming up, and watching the purring dynamos.

It was a strange sight. There he was, lean and coatless, rushing through a factory, giving orders to the empty air, reproving this employee or that, busy continually—in fact, he forgot his lunch, and was eating a hurried bite at home, about seven in the evening, when he felt a pull at his sleeve.

Jersey was opening a can of cold beans on the opposite side of the table.

"My dear," said Ichabod kindly, "will you go out into the wood-shed and get my bootjack?"

"Get it yourself, you big lummox. Can't you see I'm busy?"

"Very well, Jersey. But you might at least accommodate me occasionally. I'll get it."

Ichabod rose from the table and darted out. In the shed he turned violently upon Gaston, the French cook who invented the first hash. It was Gaston who had plucked his sleeve at the table, and Ichabod hated to talk before Jersey.

"What in the name of blazes do you mean by coming in there when I'm eating? Don't you know I can't talk to you before Jersey? She can't see you, you idiot, and she thinks I'm nutty already. What did you leave the factory for, anyhow?"

Gaston was a little frightened by Ichabod's rude manner. He smiled an ingratiating French smile as he said, without his accent, of course:

"Ichabod, the men sent me up to ask you what time the factory stops in the evening?"

"Stops!" Ichabod roared. "It don't stop. It keeps on going, you fathead. How're we going to light White Pigeon with electricity, if we stop working at night? Think they want the town lighted during the day? You're a fine sample of intelligence."

Gaston refused to quail this time.

"Well, they've all quit, Ichabod. They're sitting round on the windows waiting for you."

Ichabod was the maddest man you ever saw. He tore out of the barn, with Gaston at his heels, and ran all the way to the power-plant, reaching the gate in a thoroughly exhausted condition.

Opening the big doors with a bang, he dashed in among the startled ghosts, not a man of whom was stirring. Every machine in the place had stopped.

At first Ichabod could only stand and gasp, but when his breath returned he mounted an empty soap-box and looked sternly down the line of cheerful countenances.

"What does this mean?" he shouted. "Why aren't you men at work?"

A murmur of astonishment ran the length of the plant from ghost to ghost.

Michael Angelo, who had been assigned to the last wheel on the right, slipped off his seat and dropped the monkey-wrench with which he had been idling. Ichabod appeared to recognize him as the spokesman for the hands.

"There's nothing the matter, Ichabod, is there?" Michael asked mildly. "We simply stopped work, because we've been working all day. Every factory stops at night, you know, Ichabod."

For an instant Ichabod was speechless with rage and astonishment.

"Look here, you men," he bellowed, and the abruptness of his shout jolted Sitting Bull from his perch on the window-sill. This ain't a regular factory, and you ain't regular men. This plant has got to run nights—that's all there is to it. Haven't you got enough brains to see that we can't supply White Pigeon with electric lights, unless you keep the power going? It's our very first contract, and you want us to fall down on it, do you?

"Why shouldn't you work day and night?" continued Ichabod, warming up to his subject, and fixing the silent workmen with a baleful glare. "Spooks don't get tired. You ain't got stomachs to get hungry. You ain't got any homes. Where do you want to go, anyhow?

"Ain't this factory good enough? It don't make you tired to work, because you ain't got muscles like real men. I counted on all these things before I hired you, and now you want to go and crab the works.

"You're a bunch of loafers; that's what you are," he concluded bitterly, wiping off the perspiration.

Ichabod was no manager of men.

In losing his temper, he was making a grave blunder, and threatening the future of his plant, because, if there is anything a ghost hates, it is to see a man get hot under the collar; besides, the situation was one that called for managerial conciliation, not reprobation; for kind words and coaxing, not a bellicose call-down.

"Look here," said Michael Angelo sharply, when Ichabod had stopped talking. "Look here, Ichabod, you've got to use some common sense about this. We're ready to help you, and we'll do our work willingly enough.

"You'll get the money from our labor. We won't get a red penny—couldn't spend it if we did," he continued sadly. "But we want fair treatment and decent hours, and we won't work day and night for anybody. That's the sense of this meeting—eh, boys?"

It was a meeting, too, by that time, because every man in the factory had trotted up noiselessly, and a group formed about the spokesman. In fact, from the cool, determined look on every man's face, it began to look for all the world like a May day strike in a Paterson silk-mill; and while Ichabod was no mental giant, he wasn't fool enough to disregard the attitude and feelings of his employees, especially when they seemed to have the upper hand.

As he looked into their unsmiling faces, from little Rudolph Meyerhoffer, the Chicago butcher, to grave Benedict Arnold, who was juggling the ball of his machine in a careless fashion, he began to feel that perhaps he had been a trifle too brusk.

"Now, men," he began, "we don't want trouble about this. If you feel that it's an imposition on good nature to work day and night, I'm not the man to quarrel with you. I want to do right. But you've got to work to-night, because, if you don't, White Pigeon won't have a single electric light, and it will kill us with prospective capital, drive away trade and ruin the business.

"To-morrow morning you fellows can chase out and corral the other gang of fellows that I couldn't take on last week. We'll have two shifts, night and day. I think that'll settle the trouble."

Ichabod regarded his men nervously. They said nothing, but drifted down to the other end of the factory in little groups, and gathered for a brief consultation. Ichabod could see them gesturing, and the argument ran high.

Finally, Michael Angelo walked back to where Ichabod was standing. The employees scattered to their various wheels, and in five minutes the perpetual-motion machines were humming briskly. Peace had descended.

"We'll work to-night, Ichabod," Michael announced shortly; "but we'll be darned if we work to-morrow night. We have feelings, in a way, and, while we like you, we won't stand for having it rubbed in."

Ichabod heaved a sigh of relief, and connected the plant with the high-power feed wires.

Through the windows he could see White Pigeon's few oil-lamps twinkling dimly.

The town lay in almost complete darkness, and as he turned on the power a stream of electricity shot into the village, lighting every arc in the municipality, and heading off an angry delegation from the city council that had just started out in buggies to see what had happened to the Nappstrabb Power Company.

Gratefully Ichabod went home to bed.

CHAPTER V.

STRIKE ONE!

ONE hundred and fifty new spooks for night work were hired on Tuesday, and spent the day in the factory learning how to push the balls on the perpetual-motion machines. They went on duty at seven o'clock promptly, and for the first month thereafter all was serene.

Money began to pour into the company's treasury, which was Ichabod.

Business boomed. New contracts were signed, and daily conferences were held between Ichabod and owners of mills, telephone companies, street-car lines, sawmills, flour-mills and others who wanted the chief power. Ichabod inserted advertisements in all the neighboring papers.

In two months the prospect was so rosy and the funds so numerous that Ichabod began to figure on an annual income of one hundred thousand dollars.

The ghosts worked perfectly and skilfully. Perhaps the day-shift showed the greater adaptability. At any rate, Ichabod could draw greater horse-power out of them than from the night-shift.

But in the course of time, unknown and unsuspected by Ichabod, a spirit of discontent began to brew among the spirits, a feeling that the boss was pulling out too much profit and contributing too little actual labor, besides doing nothing at all for the comfort, enlightenment, or advancement of his employees.

This feeling started in a small way,

but increased rapidly. Here they were, argued the malcontents, clicking the steel balls ten hours a day, with no time off for lunch, turning out power for a score of factories, and what—what! asked the dissatisfied ones, were they getting out of it?

Nothing. Absolutely nothing.

And, therefore, be it resolved that, as a lot of self-respecting, hard-working, and conscientious ghosts, they make a demand upon their boss. Motion carried. Some few final remarks. Adjournment.

When a business man is hurrying down the main street of the town, walking past the post-office with his mind on weighty matters of policy, and ignoring a hated and impudent populace, it is positively disgusting to have a ghost, even an employed ghost in one's service, sidle up alongside and start a conversation.

The spook was none other than Captain Kidd, the notorious buccaneer. Now, in giving the captain a wheel-job—that is, pushing a ball in the factory—Ichabod had generously overlooked the past he had made for himself while roving the Spanish Main in a leaky brig.

"Oh, Ichabod!" cried the captain. "One moment. I've got a message for you."

"Thunderation!" muttered Ichabod profanely, but in a low tone. "I can't stand here talking to you in the public street. People are watching me. What d'ye want?"

"I've come as a delegate from the factory, since you didn't come down today. We've held a meeting, and I'm appointed to make a demand on you."

"A demand!" shouted Ichabod, forgetting that he was speaking to a wraith, and thereby attracting considerable White Pigeon attention. "A demand! What do you mean?"

"It's like this, Ichabod, and you needn't go to making any scene about it. We decided that we ought to have some rights, and so far we ain't been able to see that we do anything but stand round pushing balls while you cop off all the glory, reputation, and money. Of course, we don't want money, because we ain't the grasping kind of people. But we decided that we're going to have what we want, that's all."

Captain Kidd was quite deliberate.

"Ichabod, we want an automobile—a great, big, red one, with leather seats and a horn, an extra wheel and four lamps for night touring."

Well, sir, when Ichabod heard that he stopped on the sidewalk, banged his cane against the flagging and burst into an angry guffaw.

He stood still, and laughed one of those bitter, wormwood laughs, and maybe the town loafers didn't eye him with renewed suspicion, standing there in broad daylight, chortling like a daffy hyena.

"You want an automobile, do you, you flat-faced, hammered-down, lantern-jawed pirate. Ho-ho! double ho! and an extra ho! besides. Will you tell me what in the name of blazes you want it for?"

"We want to ride in it," replied the captain calmly. "Think we were going to bake muffins with it? Besides, you're making an exhibition of yourself on the public highway. No fewer than twenty people are watching you with intense interest, and if a cop comes up, you'll be pinched for disorderly conduct and causing a crowd. Better walk along. I'll keep step with you."

Mad as he was, Ichabod couldn't well ignore such sound advice. People were beginning to gather. He tramped ahead, and the captain kept obligingly at his side.

"Well, Ichabod," the captain asked, after a suitable pause, "do we get the automobile?"

"No," roared Ichabod, "five hundred noes! D'ye think I'm crazy? Buy a ten-thousand-dollar touring-car for a gang of sky-hootin' ghosts that can go anywhere they want to in the jerk of a lamb's tail! I won't, d'ye hear me? I won't buy you an automobile. That ends it."

"All right," answered the captain, unruffled. "The Nappstrabb Power Company closes down as soon as I can get back to the men. And you'll have a few lines of sweet trouble with those factories in Olean when we shut off the power. Gracious, Ichabod, but they'll be mad."

Ichabod snorted.

"Go and do your dangdest!" he bellowed, shaking his cane in Captain Kidd's face. "I'll not be bullied by a

lot of dead ones. Do your worst, you throat-cuttin' sea-robber."

So Captain Kidd hurried straight back to the plant, and the day force surrounded him with eager questions. They had set their minds on having an automobile, and in each face was the smiling hope that the captain came with good news.

"Do we get the automobile?" chorused a dozen voices.

The captain kicked over a water-bucket.

"No, we don't. The old idiot is mad as thunder. Told me to go to—told me to do our worst. Won't buy it at all. Won't hear of it. What'll we do?"

"What'll we do?" echoed the men gaily. "We'll put a little pressure on dear Ichabod—that's what we'll do."

In ten minutes not a wheel was turning, not an ampere of juice was on the feed wires. Every man stopped his wheel and danced joyously round it as the power slowed up and ceased completely.

In three minutes the telephone-bell on the wall began to jangle madly. It was Olean yelling for help. But spooks can't answer telephones. Ichabod's gang didn't want to, anyhow.

Enraged as he was by the preposterous demand of his men, Ichabod realized the gravity of the situation; and, as he plodded angrily along, his better judgment began to get the upper hand. He cooled down somewhat and considered.

"Of course, I can't have the plant shut down. There's too much depending upon it, and one break now may injure our prospects. I expected those Chicago capitalists up this afternoon; and if I show 'em a plant full of wheels that won't run, I can see where Ichabod gets off.

"It's funny about Archimedes. He oughtn't to be away now, just when we're starting. I'll just go up now and talk to the men. I'll fix them with a little hot air. Maybe I can get 'em over this fool notion.

"Dang them ghosts, anyhow!" he burst out suddenly. "Dang 'em! They're worse than a lot of bone-headed Eyetalians. They'll be wantin' me to buy them dress suits and a French valet next."

When he reached the Nappstrabb Power Company plant, an ominous silence brooded about the place. Through the open windows came no merry buzz of flying machinery, no hum of dynamos, no clatter of the steel balls in the P.M's.

Ichabod danced up and down in sheer rage. He burst in upon his employees with red wrath written all over his lean countenance.

"Where's Archimedes?" he shouted, and the idle employees turned to him calmly and grinned.

"If you want to know," remarked Dick Turpin cheerfully; "he's gone to New Orleans. Dropped in a few minutes to let us know. Very important séance in New Orleans, and they needed old Arch to do a little fancy slate-writing."

Mr. Turpin was a gentleman-robber in the days gone by, and he never forgot his station.

"He's a fine foreman," roared Ichabod indignantly. "What's he doing away from the shop now—now of all times when you guys seem to have set your fool minds on ruining everything?

"What do you mean," he continued, glaring at the sullen gang, "by throwing me down now, at the very minute when I'm dependent upon you? Get at those wheels, you doggone loafers. You're shutting off twelve factories in Olean. Hear that telephone-bell? Get at them balls, you ungrateful rummies!"

Not a man stirred. Open defiance glared from every eye. If ever there was mutiny, this was mutiny.

"Do you hear me!" Ichabod clamored.

"We hear you, Ichabod," said a voice—it was the Denver plumber. "We hear you. Calm yourself. You are very much excited, and you'll most certainly burst a heart-valve if you keep on."

And then Ichabod did something that nearly ruined everything.

He picked up a heavy wrench and hurled it with all his might. It struck the mild little Denver plumber squarely in the face—and went through his head, of course, smashing a window.

The plumber laughed pleasantly, and Ichabod, angered as he was, realized

that they had it on him. You can't kill a spook, even with a monkey-wrench.

But the other employees were not inclined to take this violent outburst with equanimity.

Mr. Tracey, the ex-outlaw, strode forward and sternly pushed Ichabod into a chair. He stood over the boss in a most menacing manner, and when Mr. Tracey gets menacing, look out.

"You let up, Ichabod," Mr. Tracey said roughly, "or, by gravy, we'll knock your fool head off.

"You got our demand, didn't you? We made it like gentlemen, and we expect gentlemen's treatment. If you'd come and work in your factory, instead of leaving it to Archimedes, maybe we could have settled this peacefully. You throw any more wrenches, and we'll make you into a hash."

"That was hasty," admitted Ichabod, breathing hard; "but that plumber irritated me. Now look here, men—what are you trying to do?

"Why don't you go to work like good fellows? We simply have got to have power. We can't shut off those fellows at the other end of that phone. Come on now, go back to work. Mr. Khayyam, I appeal to you."

Omar dropped the dog-eared "Rubaiyat" he had been reading, and grinned.

"We made our move, Ichabod," said he. "It's up to you now. We want an automobile, and, by heck! we're going to have one. We held a meeting, and every man in the place voted for it. Ain't that plain enough?"

"But you don't want an automobile," Ichabod groaned. "What will you do with it?"

"We do want one, Ichabod. You're simply an old fool to sit there and argue with us about what we want. We're not children.

"When we take a vote and vote for an automobile, we want it, and what's pleasing about it is the fact that we're going to get it. If we don't, no perpetual motion, no electricity, no power."

The whole factory force had gathered round the boss, and man after man murmured assent as Omar spoke. Suddenly Ichabod's gloomy eye lighted upon his dad, the ancient Ulysses Nappstrabb, a fine old gentleman in his day, but a man of modesty in action and in speech.

"Father," said Ichabod mournfully, "this thing is going to put me to a big expense, and you know I'm not making so much out of the factory yet. It's all in the future, and if you fellows go saddling me up with burdens, how am I to keep things going?

"Father, surely you're not with the rest of these — these pinheads—on that automobile question? Surely you'll stand by your son—your only son, dad, remember!"

"Ichabod," replied Ulysses gently, "go soak your head. If you think you can bamboozle me now, you're dead wrong. You might have rubbed it in when I was only your father, but now I'm your employee, and I'm working with these other gentlemen to make you wealthy; and when they say they want a motor-car, I'm with them, heart, soul, and liver.

"In fact, Ichabod, if I remember correctly, it was I who suggested the automobile in the beginning."

Ichabod sank back and groaned. The silent factory reverberated with the noisy rattle of the telephone, and one hundred and fifty confident and smiling ghosts flitted hither and yon, toying with the pulseless machines, cranking up the starting machines, and waiting for Ichabod to capitulate.

The telephone was breaking its metallic heart, and Ichabod knew that twelve hard-won contracts with the Olean people were in danger of cancellation, and all because of a factory full of spooks wanting a touring-car.

Well, there was only one way out of it. If they wouldn't push the balls without a motor-car, they wouldn't.

"All right," said Ichabod, starting to his feet suddenly. "All right, you dum idiots. I'll get you a motor-car, and I only wish it breaks your necks."

With a silent whoop of joy, one hundred and fifty spooks filed to their places.

"We want a big one, Ichabod," put in Buck. Buck was the man who invented the first safety-pin, and, while he made loads of money, he had never ridden in a motor-car, because he died before they were invented. "We want a

great, big, large one, with room for seven passengers and a top for rainy weather."

Ichabod glowered at him, but said nothing. Here and there through the big plant the starting machines were being cranked vigorously, and soon began the welcome purring as the P.M.'s picked up the lost thread of their endeavor, and whirled away on their power-producing journey.

Fifteen minutes after Ichabod had announced his surrender, the shop was humming again, and the telephone-bell stopped jangling. Olean was happy.

At that very moment, his moment of deepest humiliation, a shadowy form slipped in through the back door and sneaked up in a bashful way, as though he were ashamed. It was Archimedes.

Ichabod turned upon him in a fury.

"Where have you been, you old doddering loafer? Why didn't you stay on the job? You've got me into a nice mess. I've had to buy these driveling maniacs an automobile."

"Now, Ichabod," protested Archimedes weakly—"now, Ichabod, you know how it is. I simply had to get down to New Orleans and materialize. I've been worked to death. But I promise you I'll never leave the factory in your absence again while I'm foreman.

"There's a young fellow spiritualizing down there, and he's just opened a new store, and he needed me. He said he couldn't make a success at the start without me, so I just went. That's why, Ichabod."

"You get on the job," retorted Ichabod, "and you stay on. No telling what the hands will want next. And if there's any more trouble, I'm going to come up here and baste you one. You hear that?"

Ichabod went out of the factory growling; but once outside, he smiled, as the welcome roar of the machinery wafted itself through the windows and smote him on the ear.

CHAPTER VI.

THE JOY-RIDERS.

Now, a motor-car isn't a strange spectacle these modern days, even in White Pigeon. The flour-mill man has been scooting round town in his own runabout for years.

The mayor has long owned a roadster of uncertain horse-power, and the chap in the sawmill toured Europe two summers ago.

White Pigeonites have long forgotten the days when they shied into the ditch at the merry chug-chug or the fearsome honk of tourists.

They know motor-cars thoroughly. In fact, they sneer at them, and swear at their owners for reckless driving, just as they do in gay New York.

Nicodemus Hoge lived just three miles north of White Pigeon, on the Old Town Pike, in a large white house with a red barn attachment and balloon roof. He was standing at his front gate, smoking a good-night pipe and gazing reflectively into the darkness, one night some time after Ichabod had given in to the demands of his employees. It was ten o'clock, and pitchy black.

Far, far down the road came the siren wail of an automobile-horn, faint as a dying whisper, clear as the tinkle of a sheep-bell.

"Another one of them dum motor-cars," soliloquized Nicodemus, glancing expectantly down the pike. "Gettin' thicker'n bees lately. This makes three this week."

He continued to watch for the familiar headlights—the two dim oil-lamps and the two powerful reflectors that light the pathway of every well-ordered touring-car.

The steady honk-honk grew in volume. Nicodemus could see the wavering gleam over the tree-tops and between the branches, as it split the night into streaky patches, and finally the machine came tearing round a bend in the road, making a good sixty miles an hour on the gravel roadway.

"By cricky, they're comin' some!" ejaculated Nicodemus. And they certainly were.

Like a giant four-eyed dragon of the darkness, with her engine purring sweetly, the big car shot by Nicodemus's front gate, and at that precise moment the rural gentleman let out a yell of terror, dropped his pipe, and fled, shrieking, with white face and trembling hands, to the bosom of his family.

The motor-car was perfectly empty.

Furthermore, it was steering itself along the mad course at that mad speed.

Strictly speaking, the big car was not empty, except in the sense that it carried no human beings. But rolling round in the springy seats, and chortling with a new joy, was a gang of the noisiest, joy-riding spooks that ever moaned beneath a casement—all members of the recently organized Nappstrabb Automobile Touring-Bund, and employees in the power-plant.

At the wheel, stern of visage and sure of hand, sat Cesare Borgia, who died in 1507, leaving a satisfied community and a lady named Lucrezia, who was particularly good at poisoning wells. Cesare learned how to run the car in twelve minutes, and he was appointed immediately as one of the chauffeurs.

There were others, including Mike Hanlon, one of the first baseball players in America. He was hit with a bat in 1853, and died the same year. The other chauffeur was Chaucer, the man from whom painters and artists learned to spell the English language. The Nappstrabb spooks elected Chaucer chauffeur, because the two names were similar.

Naturally, the motor-car became a subject of conversation.

First, the employees of the Nappstrabb power-plant talked about it before it came, devising ways of using it, and planning trips. The night-shift might use the big car during the day, and from sunset to dawn the day-workers proposed to do considerable touring.

Later on, the car was talked about further. People living in White Pigeon began to notice it, just as Nicodemus Hoge had noticed it.

And the Sunday papers in Chicago sent reporters up to investigate, because a monster French automobile rarely cranks itself up and shinnies round the countryside by itself. The Sunday papers did themselves and White Pigeon equal justice, and Ichabod Nappstrabb jumped suddenly into very black ink and very large letters across the top of the page.

The day-shift at the power-plant was composed of some pretty decent spooks —men who came from good stock, and who, while they were on earth, stirred things up in a way to get their names into the public school histories.

They were hard and intelligent workers, and Ichabod frequently expressed his satisfaction with the way they handled their jobs.

But the classy bunch was that night-gang.

There was Mnesicles, the architect, who reared the Propylæum in 437 B.C.—as fine a chap as you ever met. He worked a wheel next to Robert Fulton, the man who built the steamer Clermont way back in the days of first things. Isaak Walton held a night job in the south end of the factory, and not a man in the place could beat him for steady application.

There was Euripides; and Esop, the first newspaper reporter, a man who is still well spoken of wherever there are growing children.

There was Ptolemy and King Rameses, Napoleon Bonaparte and Attila the Hun; Robin Hood, Danny Boone, and Dave Crockett; Demosthenes and Plato; and the Ericsson Twins, Nils and John. John built a steam-engine once, and they still run his name prominently in the advertisements, though he has ceased to eat food for many a long year.

It must be remembered that there was nothing unusual about the presence of all these people in an electricity-producing plant.

In the first place, Ichabod Nappstrabb was **well** and favorably known wherever there were spooks. His is an enviable reputation; or, rather, it was in the days whereof we tell. He and his plant offered, for the first time in the annals of mortal affairs, a steady and attractive job to ghosts, and, quite naturally, the list of applicants for work in the mill grew with each succeeding day.

The day-shift told their friends, and the friends told other friends, and you had to be a mighty prominent shade before you could even get your name down on the waiting-list.

There was some discussion regarding the motor-car that almost resulted in animosities and estrangement. The day-force wanted the car, and as there were one hundred and fifty men, all of them couldn't joy-ride at once. The question

resolved itself into a dice-shaking contest, and the day-workers divided themselves up into groups of eight, which was the number the big car could carry in comfort. Of course, it would have been possible to crowd ten spooks into the French tourer; but, as Artemus Ward very justly remarked: "What the dickens is the use of jamming. We got enough of that when we were alive."

Ichabod was forced to build a garage behind the factory. It was only large enough to contain the automobile comfortably; and in building it that size, Ichabod made a painful mistake, as will be shown.

Ichabod was a very busy man. He was perpetually signing new contracts to supply power; conferring with capitalists from Herkimer, New York; visiting large centers of population and talking up the beauty of his perpetual-motion machines and the cheapness of his power.

Naturally, good old Archimedes, as foreman of the plant, found himself tolerably busy. Being foreman of a place that kept going day and night, he had to superintend both shifts, there being no sub-foreman; and the very fact that the old gentleman accepted his hard lot, and plugged along without a murmur of protest, simply shows you what a thoroughbred he was.

But he had his faults, like everybody else. One vice in particular must be mentioned here, not in a desire or an attempt to cast odium upon a man who is long dead, but simply to demonstrate that right living and morality are not virtues to strive for while we live, but that we must guard ourselves against temptation after we get into the obituary column.

Archimedes, unknown to a living soul —or a dead one, for that matter—was a hopeless algebra fiend.

It's hard to say it. Genial and wholesouled, pleasant to the men and painstaking in his direction of the plant, Archimedes was a fine and lovable old gentleman; but facts are facts, and this history may have its faults; it may carry out personal prejudices and inject seemingly unnecessary details; but if it has any one sublime virtue, that virtue is its unflinching truth.

Time and again some member of the day-gang would come upon Archimedes suddenly, and find him working out algebraic problems with the stub of an old pencil. The old chap fought off his vice with all his strength, but again and again it conquered him, and his fellows learned to respect his failing and sympathize with him.

He would sneak out through the back door and get round behind the garage, where he would plow into the midst of some abstruse problem. So intent would he become in its intricacies that hours might pass unheeded, and finally one of the men would find him, his wrinkled old face flushed, his hands shaking uncertainly, his eyes rolling in an intoxicated ecstasy, and everything about him betraying the terrible grip the vice had upon him.

Ichabod was very kind with the old gentleman, and very forbearing, when you stop to consider how many hours per week Archimedes knocked down on the firm, working out how long it takes a man to walk from the railway station home, providing his coach has been sent for him, traveling eight times as fast as he can walk, but owing to the fact that a wheel caved in, the coach didn't get to the station until two hours before the man would have left, had not the ferry stopped in the middle of the stream, causing him to miss the 8.47 local, which ran off the track before it got to the station, anyhow.

Ichabod spent as much of his time as possible in the plant, but he had many engagements; and it was while he had gone to Rochester to land a fresh contract for power that the night-shift officially demanded a separate motor-car. Ichabod returned on the first train to mollify the trouble-makers.

The night-shift was important because of the numberless clients the company had for night-work. The Nappstrabb Power Company provided electric lighting for twenty-eight small towns, so you can see that any trouble with the night-shift would result in a catastrophe.

"What's the matter with the car I bought you?" inquired Ichabod temperately.

He had learned, in handling spook workmen, that impatience, loss of tem-

per, and sarcasm generally result in seventeen kinds of bother and an ultimate peeve that requires weeks in the mending.

It was Mr. Dan Boone who replied.

"We are tired of that day-crowd, Ichabod," he said. "We are making more money for you than they are. We are better people, taking us by and large, and we consider that we ought to have an automobile of our own. You can well afford it.

"We want it. If we don't get it, I am commissioned to inform you that the whole night-shift will walk out without further ceremony."

"All right, Danny. Tell the boys you get the machine. That means," he added bitterly, "that I'll have to build a new garage. The other one is too small."

"You will," smiled Mr. Boone cheerfully; "and I might say that we want our garage on the opposite side of the grounds. We don't care to have our car anywhere near that other affair."

That matter being settled, peace descended again upon the Nappstrabb Power Company, and before long two fantom motor-cars were gallivanting about the county, instead of one.

The first direct returns came in about midday, August 18.

CHAPTER VII.

TIMES OF PEACE.

ICHABOD had cautioned the men time and again. He had warned them against reckless driving along the country roads, but they simply laughed at him. But when Mr. Chaucer drove the big touring-car through a flock of sheep, killing nineteen of them and spreading mutton stew down the pike for half a mile, Ichabod put a double extra lock on both cars and called a meeting of the two shifts.

It was a solemn and chastened assemblage. Both gangs gathered in the big plant, and Archimedes called the meeting to order, while Ichabod sat on a soap-box and looked stern. The night-riders had killed the sheep; and not only that, but the day-gang had run into old Mrs. Peters's blond cow a week previous, mutilating the bovine beyond recognition.

There was a double charge to be faced, and, skilful as they were, the spooks knew they were in for a lacing. They lacked their cocksureness, and Ichabod felt it.

"Now, men," Ichabod began in a quiet and ominous tone, "you know why I've called this meeting. It's about the two motor-cars and the sudden desire for murder that has come over you. The people round this section of the country know who owns those two cars.

"They know that Ichabod Nappstrabb is down on the books as proprietor of the two man-killing French automobiles. They have put up with a lunatic car scooting round with nobody in it, although I will admit that the circumstance has caused considerable discussion. We are in very bad round here, and it won't take much more to start a lynching-bee.

"And if they get busy with some stout Manila twine, who will they hang? I ask you as man to man. Who gets it in the neck when this long-suffering community goes into action? Not you. They can't muss up a lot of irresponsible spooks. No!

"They will come round to my peaceful home in the small hours of the morning and slip me into the hereafter with speed and facility. Now, men, I've got a family to support, and you haven't. I've got a physical body that can be beat up by superior numbers, and you haven't. I've got a factory and a business, and you haven't.

"Consequently, this reckless night and day riding at the rate of ninety miles an hour has got to stop.

"I don't mind your having motor-cars. I don't object to your enjoying yourselves after hours; but I most certainly do register a kick against your running down inoffensive farmers, killing their sheep and cows, and getting me into trouble. I've put a lock on the garage, and until I get your solemn promise of better behavior, not an automobile stirs. What do you say?"

After that long speech there was a pause. The factory-hands stood around guiltily, offering no excuses. Finally both gangs temporarily forgot their enmity, and drifted together for a consultation.

It was Balboa, a famous historical character, who led the discussion, and he seemed to have the right idea. He put

it to the men briefly that Ichabod had acted like a gentleman, that he had bought the machines, and that he was being put to serious inconvenience, having had to pay for the cows and the sheep, besides buying new tires for the machines.

"I think we'd better agree to what Ichabod says," continued Mr. Balboa seriously. "He's a pretty good old scout, after all, and there's really no need of making so much trouble for him. We can be more careful, and have just as much fun. Let's cut out some of the speed."

Everybody agreed.

While they were spooks, they realized that they were in the wrong, and Balboa was appointed at once to be the spokesman and to tell Ichabod that his hands hereby agreed to behave in future, apologize to him heartily, and plunge into the factory work with renewed enthusiasm.

Ichabod accepted the situation cheerfully, passed out a few indiscriminate compliments, and turned over the garage keys to Archimedes, after which another spasm of peace descended upon the plant of the Nappstrabb Power Company.

For a time things progressed so calmly and placidly that even Ichabod was deceived. Not a rumor came from either the day or the night force. There was never a demand and never a complaint, and the one hundred and thirty-nine monster perpetual-motion machines buzzed interminably, except for an hour or two when the day-force ceased its labors and the night-shift was getting under way.

Capitalists came to White Pigeon and spent money freely at the one hotel. They looked over the Nappstrabb plant, and marveled at the wonderful idea and the more wonderful operation.

"What makes the wheels go?" was the single and foremost question.

"Perpetual motion," was Ichabod's unvarying reply, and while all believed, because they couldn't doubt their eyesight, they went away puzzled. If this man Nappstrabb could run a plant on perpetual motion, why couldn't somebody else?

The result was that engineers and designers of machinery sneaked into Ichabod's plant in all sorts of disguises. Some of them were English tourists, attracted to the spot by its repute. Others were New York experts who could make machinery talk, but who couldn't make a wheel turn without motive power. Railway systems sent their best men, and packing-plants in Chicago forwarded deputations of their high-browed mechanicians.

The best brains on mechanics in two hemispheres soaked up all the visible information in the Nappstrabb Power Company's plant, and their owners wandered down to the station at White Pigeon, and departed in wonderment.

All they knew was that a man was running a monster plant, producing tremendous electrical energy and operating street-car systems by a battery of wheels, which turned and turned at any old speed demanded without absolutely any power.

Ichabod grinned at the puzzled scientists. So did one hundred and fifty invisible spooks, seated upon their individual platforms beside the spinning monsters, tickling their individual rollers, and humming idly through the sunny afternoons.

Perpetual motion received a boom. Grizzled old maniacs, who had long since given up the idea, were urged to try again, and every workshop from Montauk Point to Los Angeles sported a deranged individual who was wearing away his remaining gray matter on the problem which Ichabod had solved.

And Ichabod read the newspaper accounts smilingly, cheerfully, and ecstatically, because he was the only man in America who was making good gold dollars out of the idea.

"Oh, you spooks," Ichabod was wont to chuckle. "I'm sure one great man!"

The treaty of peace was officially smashed into smithereens a few weeks later, when Ichabod had begun to read up on the summer-resort literature.

CHAPTER VIII.

SUMMER PLANS.

MOST of you will remember tne story of Daniel Boone, the backwoodsman and adventurer, who passed to a better world before the days of steam-heat. Daniel had wheel 67 in the day-shop, and a delighted old ghost he was, cheery and so-

ciable all day long, and as faithful a workman as ever punched a time-stamp.

He had a certain glibness of speech that endeared him to the other employees, and when the next meeting of the Employees' Association was held Daniel was elected temporary chairman.

It is necessary here to recount how the hands formed their labor union. Not that a labor union was a crying need in the Nappstrabb Power Company; but, as Dill Wexford, the pugilist, said, it was his opinion that the force ought to organize and get up a set of by-laws. The night-shift could affiliate if it cared to, and if it didn't it could go to blazes forthwith.

So, one rainy night, when the day-force quit work, a meeting was held in White Pigeon over the livery-stable. Of course, the livery-stableman, Mike Malone, didn't know that his premises were being invaded by a gang of spooks. He would have objected.

Rudolph Meyerhoffer, the Chicago butcher, made the opening address, and it was afterward admitted that Rudolph was no slouch when it came to ripping off flakes of the English language and spreading metaphor round a room.

"Gentlemen," began Rudolph, when every one had been seated, "we are called together by a popular demand, and I sincerely trust that the outcome of this meeting will not be regarded as an unfriendly act by a certain party." Rudolph referred to Ichabod, and all the hands knew it. They smiled gently.

"We are here," continued Mr. Meyerhoffer, wiping his hands on an imaginary apron, "to form a union for the protection of our interests. This union will include only the day-workmen at the Nappstrabb Power Company.

"We will have nothing to do with the night-crowd. They can do as they like, but we will act regardless of them. I now move that this assemblage go into a committee of the whole to discuss the matter."

There were numerous speeches during the night. The meeting was called to order about quarter past eight, and it was two minutes of five in the morning before the vote was taken on adjournment, by which time the delegates were fatigued to the point of actual collapse.

The best speech of the night was made by a party who invented safety-pins, and whose name perpetually slips the memory.

He went into the history of ghosts from their first discovery down to the present day, marking off their steady progress in intelligence, health, and morals. He pointed out to the meeting that ghosts had invariably helped mankind, in a score of small and unappreciated ways, and that even at the present time gratitude from a man toward a ghost was something absolutely unknown. The popular impression of ghosts, he said, was something unpleasant.

A ghost was nothing more than a hazy object, somewhat given to moanings and strange noises, which infested old rooms, and spoke in a low, tense voice, generally scaring the human being into seven fits.

It was all wrong, declared this speaker, and he was one who was heartily in favor of beginning a movement to change the idea — the popular human idea — about ghosts. He wanted it understood that there were good and bad spooks, the same as there were righteous and crooked men.

There were ghosts who sneaked round late at night, scaring children and flitting through dark rooms with their hands upraised—bad, incorrigible ghosts, from whom no good was ever to be expected. They were the renegades of the party, and their politics were bad all through. But, on the other hand, take ghosts such as they were—good, honest, hard-working ghosts that went home after work and read the evening papers—what right had people to classify them. And so on, and so on, and so on, until the rafters rang with subdued cheers and the speaker blushed under the spontaneous applause.

After the speeches came the resolutions, and the moment the assemblage began to resolve, trouble began to brew for one Ichabod Nappstrabb.

A couple of men—or ghosts—engaged in amicable discourse about the high price of necessities or the prospects of the home team do not make a formidable gathering; but one hundred and fifty high-strung spooks, meeting for the purpose of passing resolutions, can cause more trouble than a cake of thawing dynamite.

Ulysses Nappstrabb, the departed fa-

ther of the boss, was a member of the day-gang. His speech was particularly good and particularly long, because he had come prepared with a list of suggestions —things the hands needed—and the first of them, the one which provoked the most discussion, was the summer home.

David admitted that the idea was entirely novel. He had never before heard of a country home as applied to ghosts, but inasmuch as the plant was now on a paying basis, and as Ichabod was making plenty of money, why shouldn't he equip his hands with proper quarters?

A summer home, after all, wasn't such an unheard-of thing. Other people had country homes. If they had been men, instead of spooks, and if Ichabod were paying them two dollars a day, the salary bill would be three hundred dollars a day.

How long would that take to pay for a first-class summer home?

David had arranged his arguments logically and convincingly, and, after a protracted discussion, a vote was taken, and later on it was made unanimous. The hands were to have a summer home, which was to be erected immediately at Ichabod's expense.

The concluding action of the meeting was a vote of confidence in Archimedes, who was unable to be present, owing to his official duties in the factory. The vote of confidence was very nice and sweet of the men, but the second part of the resolution, appointing Archimedes at once to hold converse with Ichabod, came as a blow to the foreman.

In the first place, Ichabod and Archimedes hadn't been getting on well at all. Ichabod had been growling about this and that, and complaining of various matters, and if it had not been that Archimedes was the most patient old gentleman in the world he undoubtedly would have taken a punch at Ichabod for some of his peevish outbreaks.

So when the men rushed up to the little booth that served as the foreman's office and apprised Archimedes of his new honors the foreman failed to rise to the occasion. He was looking over the books when the day-gang returned to the plant, and he was in no amiable frame of mind.

"I'm glad you like my work as foreman of this joint," Archimedes said, addressing himself more particularly to Ulysses Nappstrabb, "and I appreciate the vote of confidence. But the fact is that I have all the trouble on my hands that I care for, and if you will kindly nominate some other gentleman to speak with Ichabod about these resolutions, I shall be very much obliged to you."

"Impossible, Archimedes," replied Ulysses. "You are the logical candidate. You are in close touch with Ichabod, and have better opportunities to approach him than any other of the men."

"I don't want this job," Archimedes argued. "I'm too busy. Why not appoint Billy Patterson?"

"Billy has an impediment. Now, be nice, Archimedes. You've done a good many things for the hands. You've lightened their labors whenever you could. You've interceded for them with Ichabod when things were stormy, and I'm sure you never had a more loving crowd working under you. This is the last thing we will ask. Please act as our spokesman when we want something from Ichabod."

The spooks offered so many and such convincing arguments that Poor Archimedes finally gave way, and, with a sigh of mixed emotion, he agreed to take the job as buffer between the irresistible force and the immovable object, the latter rôle being played by Ichabod.

CHAPTER IX.

GHOST VILLA.

Two miles north of the Nappstrabb Power Company plant is a knoll, and, surrounding the knoll, is a fringe of trees that makes a miniature forest.

The country for miles round can be seen, and the place is free from mosquitoes. Naturally enough, the beauty of the point appealed to the committee which had been appointed by the day-force to investigate the question of home sites.

This committee was composed of men from both the day and night gangs, and certain causes brought about this partial recognition and friendliness between the two parties. It was argued by Sam Weller, on the day-gang, that as soon as the night-bunch heard about the proposed country home every man in the evening-shift would set up a holler for a similar convenience.

Eventually Ichabod would be forced to build two summer homes; and why, argued Sam, should he be put to that added expense when by using a little forethought the hands could simplify the business and have him build one house, separate it by a thick partition, and provide two homes, one for each crowd?

There was strong and continued objection to this proposal, but wiser counsel prevailed in the end, and an emissary was sent to the night-shift—Archimedes, of course—to suggest that they appoint three capable men who would act on the committee of selection.

For a wonder, the night-workers fell into the scheme with enthusiasm, and, temporarily, animosities were forgotten.

They appointed King Rameses, Nils Ericsson, and Aristotle, and the day-men appointed Outlaw Tracey, Amerigo Vespucci, and Ulysses Nappstrabb, the last named being selected as a delicate honor because of his well-known parentage of their boss.

Furthermore, Ulysses had shown an inclination to sock it into his son whenever the occasion offered.

For a few weeks thereafter the committee lolled round the county in the big touring-car, looking up suitable sites, and their decision for the site of Ghost Villa finally fell upon the pretty hill mentioned

Then came the plans and details.

Another double committee had to be appointed to consider these, and it consisted of twenty-four men from each force; because a summer home is a complicated thing, particularly when it is to be occupied by spooks. Many things that human beings would like to have in a country home are absolutely of no use to ghosts, and *vice versa*.

Personal preferences have to be considered. Many shades coddle little dislikes, and it was the object of the bulky committee to satisfy, as nearly as possible, every man in both shifts.

The committee sat off and on for eight weeks, taking up this detail and that, drawing up plans, considering the furnishings, lighting arrangements, sleeping quarters, servants' department, ventilation, plumbing, heating, and so on.

And in the meantime, Ichabod Nappstrabb was bathing his rheumatic legs in the salty breakers at Atlantic City, totally oblivious of the financial smash in the eye that was coming to him as soon as plans were completed back in White Pigeon.

Ichabod had broken through the upper crust of a sort of society, and he liked the flavor. He was sitting on the veranda of the Fildringham Arms, looking at the ocean and flirting with a Chicago widow, when the uniformed house-boy slipped him a telegram.

> Return immediately; important matter up for consideration before committee.
>
> ARCHIMEDES, chairman. Collect.

Ichabod gave one last languishing look at the widow, moaned in hollow tones, grabbed his hat, and took the train for White Pigeon.

"Well, boys, what's up now?"

Ichabod, travel-stained, grip in hand, and smiling a strained smile which deceived no one, greeted his employees, and Archimedes coughed apologetically.

When the news filtered through the plant that Ichabod had returned, many of the men stopped working. Those who remained on the job simply put on more speed, thus keeping the plant's output at normal. The hands gathered in the alcove, which had now come to be the meeting-place, and when Ichabod had washed up, Archimedes braced himself for the shock and started in, encouraged by the cheerful countenances of the men about him.

"Ichabod," he said, "we have been taking some very important action while you were away, and we trust that we will not seem unreasonable. You realize that we have been steady workers, both day and night forces, and as for myself, you know that I have worked day and night uncomplainingly.

"Because of my relative position to both forces, the men have done me the honor to appoint me their spokesman in this matter, as well as in others that may follow, and it is in this capacity that I now address myself to you as representative of your entire force."

Ichabod sat down on the soap-box.

The listening hands seemed impressed with Archimedes's classy start.

"You appreciate the fact, Ichabod,

that, when the day-men finish their labors at the wheels, they have no place to go. A few of them have gone about a bit, attending séances here and there, assisting old friends, and keeping up the work they once followed. But it was in only a half-hearted way. Their interests are now bound up with yours.

"Others have idled round the grounds during the night and wasted their time. Others have taken the automobile for short trips, and still others have hunted up quarters in old barns and deserted corn-cribs.

"What is true of the day-force applies equally to the night-shift. Neither gang has a home, a place where it can retire after the work of the day is ended and enjoy life in a rational way.

"Now, I do not believe that a man of your standing and intelligence cares to see his employees living outcast lives, scattered here and there in disreputable makeshift sleeping-quarters, and it is in this calm belief that I am speaking."

"I could build you a little shed back of the factory," interjected Ichabod, who was beginning to see light.

The men who heard this unfortunate remark sneered aloud. A murmur of surprise ran round the group.

A shed, indeed!

"No, Ichabod," continued Archimedes, shifting his weight, "we have met and considered the situation, and I am commissioned to inform you that your employees want a summer home."

Ichabod started. A gleam of astonishment danced across his rugged face, succeeded by a frown.

"What sort of a summer home?" he demanded coldly.

"Well, a regular summer home," continued Archimedes, picking up courage, as he noted that Ichabod wasn't going to be violent. "We have had a committee working on the details. They have chosen the site, which is Mr. Newell's old farm up on the knoll.

"The ground will cost three thousand dollars, and the plans for the house have just been completed. They call for a double house—one side for the day-gang, and one side for the night-men. The house is to have sixty-two rooms, hot and cold water, steam-heat in winter, electric lights and gas, bay windows, Persian rugs, hardwood floors, oil paintings, statuary, an electric elevator, a self-playing piano, and all the other modern conveniences that go to make up a first-grade home."

Ichabod's countenance had turned a ghastly gray. He strove to speak, but the words failed him. He sat on the soap-box, staring blankly at Archimedes, and the latter became a trifle uncomfortable under the prolonged gaze.

"How much—how much," Ichabod finally whispered, "will this summer home cost?"

Archimedes looked over the papers in his hands, and finally found the estimates.

"We have tried to keep down the cost, Ichabod," he answered; "but the best we can do—the lowest sum required to construct this building and furnish it without skimping is one hundred and thirteen thousand dollars."

When Archimedes looked up from his blue-prints, Ichabod had fallen off the soap-box and lay on the floor in a dead faint.

The spooks poured cold water on his face, and forced stimulants down his throat, after which they laid him out under a tree, where he stayed unconscious for five hours.

The shock was a terrific one. At the very broadest estimate, Ichabod's fortune was less than one hundred thousand dollars, and here he was called upon suddenly to spend it—and more, too. Furthermore, he realized the utter hopelessness of arguing with his men.

Experience had proved the futility of that course, and, as he lay blinking in the shade, alone and unnoticed, the pathos of his position struck him.

A rich man, as the world views wealth, he had no say in the spending of his money. At any moment he was open to attack and spoliation by a group of ball-pushing spooks, not one of whom had ever been rich in life, comparatively speaking, and not one of whom seemed possessed of sympathy or forbearance.

The iron was deep in Ichabod's soul, and a dull resentment permeated him.

Vengeance upon these friends would have been sweet indeed; but what could he do? Refuse to give them the country home, and, *presto!* the power plant stopped. For an hour Ichabod struggled

on in silence, now disposed to fight the hands, now in utter despair and capitulation.

When he walked feebly into the shop, the men were busily at work, as though nothing out of the ordinary had occurred. Archimedes was up in his little booth, doing a sum in algebra, the one hundred and thirty-nine perpetual-motion wheels were twirling furiously, and the hum of activity buzzed from one end of the big plant to the other.

Archimedes dropped his pencil and hurried forward. Ichabod's face was white and drawn. It is no cinch to fork out one hundred and thirteen thousand dollars, and stronger men than Ichabod would have winced under the touch.

"Well, Ichabod," said Archimedes cheerily, "made up your mind yet?"

Ichabod nodded weakly. He was years older in those few hours.

"Do you agree to buy us the house as provided for in the specifications?"

Again Ichabod nodded. He was beyond words.

"That's fine—that's the way to act! I'll tell the men, and in the meantime you'd better hurry home and go to bed. You don't look a bit well."

Ichabod staggered forth into the afternoon sunlight, a broken and dispirited man.

Archimedes called a brief meeting of the hands, informed them that the summer home was an assured fact, and then wrote out a formal report for the night-hands, whistling a gay ditty the while.

CHAPTER X.

THE HOUSE OF GRIEF.

WHEN that summer home began to assume form, it was watched day and night by crowds of delighted spooks—invisible, of course, to the laborers who were putting up the building.

The ghosts danced among the rafters, went down in the cellar, selected the places they intended to like best, and acted like pleased children. Never before had the power-plant turned out such tremendous volumes of electricity. The men worked as if inspired, and it was nothing of a hot afternoon to find every wheel in the plant doing twenty-three thousand revolutions a minute, where before the average was rarely above sixteen thousand.

Fortunately fresh contracts came in with pleasing regularity, and Ichabod's balance in the bank grew steadily enough to assure his ability to pay the bills.

Toward the end of summer, when the outer shell of the home was finished, there rose bickerings and troubles that threatened the peace of the community. Some of these scraps were settled among the men, but others had to be referred to Ichabod.

Dick Turpin, who worked with the night-shift, was determined that the home should have a tin roof. Others were equally determined that it should not.

"I say I want a tin roof," asserted Mr. Turpin doggedly, "and I'm going to have it."

"Tin roof your eye," snorted Artemus Ward. Artemus was a day-wheeler. "A tin roof is unhealthy. What d'ye want it for, anyhow?"

"Because I like the sound when it rains," retorted Mr. Turpin. "Nothing in the world so soothing as the patter of the rain-drops on the roof. Sweetest of all sounds. Puts you to sleep in a jiffy."

"You don't need sleep," sneered Mr. Ward. "Been gallivanting round in that dod-rotted motor-car ever since we got it. You make me tired."

Then rose the fight. The night-gang supported the contention of their Mr. Turpin, and, naturally, the day-crowd fell in with Artemus. Archimedes was called in.

The argument raged for three hours before Archimedes thought up a solution.

"I'll tell you how we'll have to settle this little matter," he said, waving his hand for silence. "We'll have a tin roof over the half of the house that the night-boys sleep in, and a slate roof over our half. How's that?"

Instantly peace was declared, and everybody shook hands. The report was carried to Ichabod.

He was beyond raising objections. If they had asked for golden radiators in each of the sixty-two rooms, he would have consented with absolute lack of interest.

But he had to tell the contractor, who looked at him in amazement.

"The old guy's nutty," the contractor confided to his foreman when Ichabod had gone. "Tin roof on the left half, slate roof on the right. He better have his own roof examined by a specialist."

Nevertheless, the house was topped with a half-and-half roof, and Dick Turpin chuckled brightly.

The next row was really silly.

It was started by a man named Quinn, who had lived in England and was employed in a blacksmith's shop during the early part of his life. It seems that his father had got into trouble over a horse, and the trouble led to a fight with the owner of the horse, and Quinn's father had prepared the horse-owner for burial with a large scantling.

After which the merry villagers had strung old man Quinn up to a telegraph-pole, where he choked noisily to death.

So when the Quinn that was working for Ichabod went through the completed summer home, and noted the sixty-two gas-chandeliers—one in each room—he flew into a terrible rage.

He insisted that this insult had been heaped upon him deliberately in order to remind him of his father's unhappy end. Anybody would know, he contended hotly, that chandeliers remind a man of hanging, and he wanted the cursed things removed instantly.

They tried to calm him, but it was of no avail, and, as he had numerous sympathizers, the entire force again split. So serious was the trouble that both gangs stopped working, and the plant was idle for three days and nights, during which time Ichabod lost $4,500 in income and prospective contracts.

Eventually the question was settled, and the chandeliers were taken down and buried behind the barn.

This barn, by the way, was an afterthought that came from Chaucer, the chauffeur of the night-car. He insisted that every summer home has a barn, particularly when the residents own two automobiles. The barn cost eighteen thousand dollars extra, and it was a very pretty place, extremely well arranged within, and fringed by little hedge-rows.

It was a great day when the home was formally opened. Ichabod was present, though his gloomy appearance didn't contribute to the gaiety of the occasion. The self-playing piano was turned on, and music flooded the rooms.

Various little extras had been added to the list as the house was building, and, from where he stood in the reception-room, Ichabod could gaze across the closely cropped lawns to where the mallets were flying on the croquet ground. The factory had closed for twenty-four hours in order to permit the hands to attend the house-warming. The tennis-court presented an animated scene, with the balls flying back and forth and the racquets swishing in the summer sun.

It looked a trifle strange not to see the players, but nobody was present in the flesh except Ichabod, and he felt tired—very tired.

There was a running-track round the house, and golf links. The conservatory was on the second floor, and florists all over America had sent their choicest posies to give it the right class.

In the basement was the gymnasium and ring. It was intended to hold boxing-bouts at frequent intervals, and Ichabod had been instructed to procure the best prize-fighters in the country.

The auditorium was an immense room with three hundred seats and a stage. This was intended for various purposes. The committee in charge had decided to have musical comedy companies drop in at frequent intervals and exhibit the latest Broadway hits. Now and then a Shakespearian play would be produced.

At these various festivities Ichabod was to be the sole spectator. That is, he alone would be visible to the actors; but every seat would be occupied, and its ghostly occupant would appreciate the wit far more than Ichabod, whose bank balance had long since shrunk to nothing, and far below nothing.

"I don't know where it's going to finish," muttered poor Ichabod, surveying the pomp and magnificence about him, "but I can see my own."

CHAPTER XI.

THE NEXT TO THE LAST STRAW.

From time to time, capitalists visited the Nappstrabb Power Plant, interested in its possibilities, and looking about with

a possible notion of buying Ichabod out. At first, during the palmy days, when the spooks had not learned their power, Ichabod would have scoffed at the thought of selling his gold-mine. But as time went on, and his hands took the management away from him, Ichabod changed his mind.

It was late in the winter when an Eastern syndicate sent experts to see the wonderful plant and to make Ichabod an offer.

Things round the power company had been going from bad to worse. The business was booming, but the men had become tyrants. Nothing seemed to please them, and when Ichabod objected or declined to grant their demands, they simply quit.

Even good old Archimedes had ceased to hold up his employer's hands, and nine times in ten he sided with the hands. Every time the plant stopped, it worked tremendous havoc, because power was now being supplied to every manufacturing concern within a radius of five hundred miles, and these plants were entirely dependent upon the Nappstrabb Company for motive power.

In the face of Ichabod's strenuous objections, the employees had added expensive luxuries to their home. They had demanded a motor-bus to carry them from the plant to the home.

Ichabod refused.

They struck. They got the motor-bus.

Some of the more adventurous ones had asked for a balloon, and the balloon came, in the course of time, and scandalized the community.

William Tell had asked for a groaner. Ordinary people do not need a groaner, but Mr. Tell said he couldn't sleep without it.

It may be explained that ghosts sometimes are addicted to the moaning habit, and their friends get so accustomed to the noise that they can't sleep when it is absent.

Mr. Tell was now surrounded by spooks who went peacefully to sleep and slept like longshoremen, with scarcely a sound. So he demanded an instrument that would produce the noises he craved.

Ichabod finally bought a phonograph that produced the most hideous moans in White Pigeon, and some of the White Pigeon phonographs are wonders at that. Mr. Tell slept in peace thereafter.

Sitting Bull sent in a requisition for a steam-launch. He said modestly that he had never ridden in a steam-launch, and, as he had been reading about them in the Sunday papers, he thought it would improve the tone of the place and provide good relaxation. The nearest body of water was one hundred and fifty miles away, so it was first necessary to build a lake. The lake cost Ichabod six thousand dollars, and the launch three thousand dollars.

Sheer and causeless nervousness on the part of Izaak Walton brought about the installation of a fire-alarm system. Mr. Walton spoke feelingly on the subject, bringing out figures to prove that seven-ninths of all fires occur at night when the folks are sound asleep.

He contended that the house was unsafe without a fire-alarm system, and it cost Ichabod two thousand dollars to have it put in. The wires were connected with White Pigeon, and Mr. Walton was content. He hadn't investigated the White Pigeon fire department, which consisted of one hundred feet of Civil-War hose and a hand-engine that hadn't worked in eleven years.

Ichabod was slowly going to pieces under the strain. The minute he made a little money, somebody thought of some good way to spend it.

Time and again, Ichabod's wife, Jersey, complained of the cold. Ichabod hadn't the money to buy coal, and Jersey accused him of gambling, little knowing the trials and tribulations that were constantly dogging her husband's footsteps.

When the Eastern capitalists had made a thorough examination of the Nappstrabb Power Company, noted the tremendous power being produced, gone over the books, and observed the financial prosperity ahead, there was a long consultation. The meeting was held in Ichabod's house on Tremont Street, and Jersey Nappstrabb was present.

"We have considered everything, Mr. Nappstrabb," said the Eastern representative, "and, after consulting with my companions, I have come to a decision. The Eastern corporation which I repre-

sent will give you ten million dollars for your plant, its contents, the property, and all that goes with it. Will you accept that sum? We can deliver it to you in a week in cash, bonds, and stocks."

Jersey Nappstrabb gasped once, and then pinched Ichabod's arm until it turned green.

Ichabod knew what the pinch meant.

"Gentlemen," he replied slowly and deliberately, and thinking of the ghosts, "I accept your offer. I will have the papers drawn up to-morrow."

The representatives of the Eastern corporation went away, and, for the first time in months, Ichabod smiled.

Jersey Nappstrabb kissed her husband then and there—something that had happened only once before in their lives.

It is a curious thing about news. Some news never leaks out at all, and other news, no matter how carefully it is secreted, sweeps out and gets about in a most amazing fashion.

When Ichabod, treading on air, and preparing to spend ten million dollars at the European winter resorts, walked into his plant at twenty minutes after two that same afternoon, he found only half the force on duty. The other half of the day-gang was holding a meeting, and Archimedes was presiding.

"What's the matter now?" asked Ichabod sweetly. "Are you preparing to have me buy the National City Bank for you—or do you want a dog-kennel?"

Oh, how Ichabod loved that little jest! Soon he would be far beyond the clutches of these ghostly leeches.

"We have something important to say to you, Ichabod," announced Archimedes. "In fact, we were just on the point of sending for you. This morning you held a meeting with some Eastern capitalists, and agreed to sell out your factory. Is that true?"

Ichabod started. How in thunder did they know that?

But, as long as they did know it, he would face them unflinchingly.

"Yes," replied Ichabod, stepping toward the sullen-looking group, "it is true. I have sold the plant—or, rather, I have agreed to sell it—to an Eastern corporation, and for the sum of ten million dollars." He lingered long and lovingly over the figures.

"Well," returned Archimedes coldly, "we've been considering. You can't sell out. We won't let you." He flipped a straw idly.

"What's that?" shrieked Ichabod, his face turning purple. "You won't let me! Isn't this my property? Can't I dispose of it as I please? What right have you to dictate to me?

"I'll tell you men something, and I'll say it now. I've stood for your cussed bulldozing just as long as I intend to. I've been nagged and thwarted, and forced to spend my earnings upon your worthless hides.

"You've taken from me every cent you could squeeze. You've rolled in luxury, and I've starved, with scarcely enough money to buy food for my family or clothe them properly.

"I've stood for your tyranny and roughshod methods just as long as I am going to; and, now that the chance has come, I'm going to rid myself of you. I never want to see you again. And I'm going to sell out, in spite of you. That's all."

Ichabod paused in his furious harangue. His face was dripping with perspiration, and his hands were trembling. He was no longer the tame old man. He was a dragon, spitting fire and defiance, and the spectacle impressed his men. Not a wheel was turning. Each employee had come to listen.

"Very good speech, Ichabod," commented Archimedes carelessly. "We're not going to get angry with you. We're going to be very nice and temperate, and not let you butt your poor fool head against the wall. But you must get over the idea that you're going to sell this plant.

"We don't care to have you sell it, and we don't care to work for the Eastern corporation, or any other corporation. We like to work for dear old Ichabod, because he is so good and kind to us, and does so many things for us. We might make a mistake if we let you select another employer. So when we say that we don't intend to let you sell out on us, we mean every word of it.

"In other words, Ichabod, we protest against it, and we are manifesting our objections by going on strike. The wheels are stopped now. They will remain

stopped. As chairman of our strike committee, I hereby call out both our day and night shifts, and they will stay out until you formally and in writing notify these Eastern capitalists that you have reconsidered your determination to sell to them.

"When they come here again to see your pretty plant working, they will find silent wheels and no power. And if you choose to be regarded as a maniac, you can inform them that your old friends, the ghosts, are off the job, and have refused to push the balls any more. Then they will take you away to a padded cell, and the end will have arrived for one Ichabod."

While Archimedes had been talking, Ichabod traveled ahead of his words. In a flash it occurred to him that once again his hands had him at their mercy. When the chairman stopped, Ichabod raved and stamped about and tore his hair. He heaped curses upon his employees, and called them every bad name he could think of. They simply laughed at him, and loafed out into the sunshine.

The wrath of man can only endure for a certain time, and quiet must follow.

When Ichabod had boiled for an hour, he left the factory and went to his home.

There was no doubt in his mind about one thing. He could not sell his factory.

He might call the capitalists over, and ask them how much they would offer for a plant full of wheels that wouldn't run. Their final examination, before purchasing, would show them a silent factory; and, as Archimedes had sardonically remarked, Ichabod couldn't tell his friends that the ghosts had stopped work.

No, he must swallow this last infamy the same as he had accepted the others. He must tell the capitalists that he could not sell, and then he must refuse to explain why.

But what about Jersey, his wife?

With untold wealth before her, and striving poverty behind, it would be a terrible blow. Undoubtedly, Jersey had already cut into that ten million, and it would take a great deal more talk to calm her than the capitalists.

Ichabod hastened along. He outlined a brief speech which he would make to Jersey. Then he would leave hurriedly and seek out the men of means at their hotel.

Jersey met him with a smile that died on her lips after his first sentence.

"I have changed my mind about selling the plant, my dear. I'm not going to sell it. The machines have broken down, and won't run. You'll have to forget that ten million dollars."

Jersey turned pale, and gathered her breath for the answer. It would have been one of the best answers she had ever made Ichabod, only that hurried gentleman was down the road to White Pigeon and going fast.

The capitalists received the news silently. They were accustomed to double-dealing.

Ichabod stood before them humbly.

When they finally told him what they thought, he replied not, and the capitalists sailed away from White Pigeon on the three-ten local more in sorrow than in anger.

For a week Ichabod lived at the hotel, fearing to return to Jersey. The power company resumed operation the day after Ichabod capitulated, but not until he had signed a severe, legal paper.

CHAPTER XII.

ICHABOD ANNIHILATES THE TRUST.

For several days Ichabod remained in his room at the hotel. He sent for his clothes and papers, and prepared to stay away from home.

Jersey did not send for her spouse, but sent word that she didn't care very much whether he came back or not.

For hours Ichabod lay back on the bed, burning dully, somewhere inside, like a volcano that can't get up quite enough steam.

He looked away over the hills, where he could see the roof of the Nappstrabb Power Company. He thought of his success in the beginning and his failure in the end.

He looked back upon the happy days when he had introduced the idea of perpetual motion to a waiting world and carried it to a successful culmination with the help of his shadowy friends. He mourned over the loss of friendship between his employees and himself; he writhed when

he recalled their tyrannies and exactions, their profligate spending of his money, and the luxuries they had taken for themselves, while denying him even a modest living.

Two days of grouch-nursing is likely to start a man into action.

On the third day Ichabod leaped up from his bed and walked to the window. A written request had come from the hands. They wanted the circus, then playing in Madison Square Garden, New York, removed in its entirety to the grounds of their summer home for one performance. The cost would be high, but they needed relaxation, and if Ichabod refused they would strike at once.

Ichabod pondered the letter, and when he had finished reading it a bright smile overspread his thin face. He called up the plant on the phone.

"This you, Archimedes?" he said quietly. "I've just heard about the circus. You can't have the circus. It costs too much."

"We're going out on strike, then," retorted Archimedes warmly.

"Go, and be dinged!" replied Ichabod, hanging up the receiver.

The plant closed in half an hour, and an hour later Ichabod was spinning away from White Pigeon in his red automobile.

He returned at midnight, driving the car very slowly and very carefully, avoiding the hollows and bumps in the road.

In the tonneau was a bundle. It was perhaps six feet wide, six feet deep, and six feet across, and it seemed to be composed of many small lumps, over which Ichabod had drawn a tarpaulin.

The big red car chugged along the deserted country roads and turned up the lane leading to the plant of the Nappstrabb Power Company. Not a light was glowing, not a wheel turning. The small door in the rear of the building was open, and Ichabod smiled grimly as he entered.

He drove the car up to the entrance and halted it. Then, with patience and speed, he began to unload the white, irregular mound from the tonneau. It took an hour before he emerged for the last time.

Before leaving, he struck a match and examined the register of the storing-machine, an invention of his own. It was designed to store up electricity and hold it in reserve. The dial showed enough to last for several days, even though the men continued their strike.

From the factory Ichabod drove straight for the summer home. The bundle in the tonneau had been reduced to half its original size, and it jolted about gently.

Some of the hands were away in Seattle, where a spiritualists' convention was in progress. Others were out joy-riding, and the remaining were fast asleep. Not a soul was abroad, and house and grounds were silent as the grave.

Ichabod turned into the stately barn, and once again he began the process of unloading from the rear of his automobile.

The summer home next received his attention. In and out he hurried, carrying little gray bundles from the car to the house, and returning again and again.

Finally the last package was taken from the car, and Ichabod wiped his forehead and grinned again. His silent footfalls had awakened no one. When ghosts sleep, they sleep like the dead.

Then came the final work of the evening. Ichabod drove his car into the barn, and returned without it, closing the doors carefully. In his hands he trailed two slim, black wires.

These wires he snaked along the grass and into the summer home, where he connected them up with companion wires, and when this had been done the proprietor of the Nappstrabb Power Company slipped out into the night. Straight back to the plant he hurried, stumbling along in the darkness.

He found things as he had left them, the small rear door still open. He went in and remained a few minutes, and when he emerged again he clasped with both hands a heavy roll of insulated wire, which he paid out as he walked down the lane.

The wire was very thin, and at only one point was the copper exposed. Two tiny copper ends stuck out from either side of Ichabod's left hand as he passed out the wire with his right.

The plant faded away in the darkness, and still Ichabod walked slowly, feeding off the wire into the thick grass. When

he had come to a point a quarter of a mile distant from the factory, the wire ran out, and Ichabod stopped.

Nothing remained of the black thread except the two naked bits of wire in his left hand, and the object of their being uninsulated was to enable Ichabod to touch them together, thus forming a circuit, and the object of his wanting to form a circuit was to pass a healthy stream of electric current back to the power plant, back to the summer home, and back to the barn, in which three places he had just finished distributing, where they would do the most good, about one and one-half tons of high-power dynamite.

A faint siren horn tooted far in the distance. The night-riding ghosts were returning. In a few minutes they would run their machines into the barn for the night, and, standing there in the darkness, Ichabod chortled right merrily.

The horn tooted again, faintly, and then all was silence for a period of three minutes.

Ichabod very carefully took one wire in his right hand and the other in his left, and gently, almost caressingly, he laid the naked copper strands against each other.

There was a soft hiss and a pale spark as the wires touched, and at that precise moment most of Flemango County was thrown out of bed by a terrific explosion.

Summer home, power plant, garage, and motor-cars were hurled up into the heavens and abroad upon the countryside, where the fragments fell into smoking ruins and blazed up.

Millions of dollars went back to the earth, and three hundred surprised ghosts lost their home and their employment.

In the small hours of the morning a bent and wrinkled old man slipped into the open door of a grain-car and laid himself upon some sacks.

It was Ichabod, poor as a church mouse, but free from ghosts.

The Ghost Trust was ended.

The Nappstrabb Power Company was a reeking, burning chasm, and the summer home was a pile of ashes.

Two months thereafter a man giving his name as Ichabod Plummer hung out a clairvoyant's shingle in the city of Memphis, and Ichabod Nappstrabb started in life anew.

It is only fitting to say that, at this day, he is getting along comfortably.

But he is old, very old, and very careworn about the face.

(The End.)

DUGGLESBY'S AIR-SHIP.

By Paul West.

AN elopement in midday, with an irate and jealous wife more than responsible for the haste.

THE thing wabbled in the air, as though hesitating between comporting itself like a bird, which it was intended to emulate, or a fish, which it resembled.

The fish part of its complex nature triumphed, and the air-ship, raising its tail aloft, pointed its nose to the ground, forty feet below, and dived.

It struck with a crunching sound.

From among the tangle of canvas and bamboo, they deduced Cyrus K. Dugglesby.

He emerged triumphant.

"I knew it!" he exclaimed joyfully. "I knew I was right. If I'd hung the motor further aft, and inclined those parallel planes a little more, she'd have flown. Is she—is she much hurt?"

Harstrom, his assistant, indicated with a sweep of his hand the remains of the air-ship. Dugglesby gave voice to an expression of disappointment and impatience.

"Confound it!" he cried, "I hope she

can be put in shape for the fifteenth! She's got to. Let's take a look!"

He tried to rise, but sank back amid the wreckage with a cry of pain.

"My ankle!" he moaned. "It's sprained!"

Assisted by Harstrom, he hopped on his good leg, to a convenient knoll, where he was again seated, while Harstrom removed the shoe from the injured foot and examined the rapidly swelling ankle.

"It bane bad sprain, all right," he said. "Must see doctor, right avay!"

"I know that, you Scandinavian idiot!" exclaimed Dugglesby. "But, how? I told the fellow that drove us here to be back at five, and it's only four. And, the railroad is two miles from here."

"There bane doctor's house up dat road," said Harstrom, pointing across the wide field, a deserted race-track, of which they were the sole occupants. "I carry you dere!"

"Good," said Dugglesby. "Can you do it?"

By way of answer the big Swede knelt in front of Dugglesby, presenting his broad back for him to climb upon. Dugglesby was a little man, and, once aboard of Harstrom, the latter had little difficulty bearing the burden.

"Now," said Dugglesby, "hurry. The machine will be all right for a little while. You get me to the doctor's, then come back and put her in the shed. Pick up every bit of her, because if any new parts have to be made we'll need the old parts for models. Now, get along!"

It was a warm day in June, but Harstrom plodded across the field as though he were unimpeded by a living burden. Dugglesby, however, panted and perspired, more from the pain of his ankle, no doubt, than from the heat of the sun. He kept up a running fire of talk, partly to Harstrom, partly addressed to nobody in particular.

"Confound it all!" he exclaimed. "Just when I had everything going so well, too! Harstrom, get out here early in the morning and start fixing her up. Put the motor back where I had it, and swing those planes according to the model.

"And, above all, don't let anybody know about the accident. Don't let them know—I say, Harstrom, they mustn't know how this darned thing happened to me, must they? Mustn't know—by George! My wife! The doctor! How did I sprain my ankle?"

"She's bu'sted!" said the Swede.

"Bu'sted, nothing! I tell you, I stepped off a trolley-car, and didn't notice how high the running-board was. Turned my ankle and fainted. You picked me up, and—yes, that'll do, Harstrom; trolley-car. Remember?"

"Yaas, sir."

"All right, then. Here's the road now. That's the doctor's house, just beyond, isn't it? Yes, I can see his shingle. I'll bet he's out!"

When Harstrom mounted the steps leading to the doctor's house, however, and maneuvered round so that Dugglesby could reach the door-bell, they found that the doctor was at home.

At sight of his visitors he seemed surprised, but ushered them into the office, where he soon had Dugglesby in charge, with a cold application on the limb.

"By George!" exclaimed the physician, "it's a bad sprain. How on earth did you get it?"

"Stepped off a trolley-car," said Dugglesby.

"A trolley-car?" repeated the doctor. "And your man carried you all the way here?"

"Every step," said Dugglesby.

"But why," continued the doctor, "did you come to me?"

"Why?" said Dugglesby. "You happened to be the nearest doctor."

"H'm!" exclaimed the doctor.

Dugglesby wondered what he meant by the observation. Suddenly he reflected that there was not a trolley-line within two or three miles of the locality. That, however, was none of the doctor's business. He was engaged to fix the sprained ankle, not to think of how it had happened.

The recollection of the accident brought to Dugglesby's mind the necessity for having Harstrom back in the race-track lot with the unprotected flying-machine. He turned to his man and said:

"I guess there's no need of your remaining any longer, Harstrom. You'd better get back and see if she—see if—

do as I told you; I will be round some time to-morrow and give any necessary directions."

"All right, sir," said Harstrom, and went.

"Did you say that you'd be around to-morrow?" asked the doctor.

"Why, yes; I must," said Dugglesby. "Won't I?"

"Hardly," said the doctor, "nor for many, many to-morrows. You'll be lucky if you can get round in a fortnight."

Dugglesby gripped the arms of his chair and started to rise, involuntarily, to his feet. He fell back in pain.

"Good grief!" he said. "It's impossible. Why, doctor, I've got to be round. Why, it's only ten days till—" He stopped. He was about to say, "Till the great prize contest of air-ships under the auspices of the States Aero Club."

"Engagements in the future," said the doctor, "will have to be postponed."

Dugglesby groaned. Was the ambition of his life to be thwarted by this foolish accident? Was all the money spent, were all the risks run in perfecting his wonderful aeroplane, to go for naught, just because he had sprained an ankle? The thought was too horrible.

"Don't you deceive yourself, doctor," said he. "You don't know me when you talk that way. Why, I'll be all right to-morrow. I'll show you!"

He rose bravely to his good foot, and started to step out with the other, now heavily swathed in bandages. Those whose ankles have ever been sprained can understand why he stopped with a cry of pain and gripped the doctor's arm.

The doctor smiled.

"You see," he said. "You'll have to do as I've told you, or you'll be in a serious fix. A man of your age can't twist his leg as you have done, and not feel it. Now, come. The next thing is to get you to your home. Do you live near here?"

With a shock Dugglesby recollected that he had a home. Also, that he had a wife. A Mrs. Dugglesby from whom, for the past two years, he had concealed his ventures into aeronautics by a series of skilfully contrived deceits that had so far proved successful.

What would she say to his trolley-car story? Would she believe it? He could see that the doctor did not. But would the doctor stand by him?"

"Doctor," said he, "I noticed that you smiled when I said I hurt my ankle getting off a trolley-car. Why?"

"Oh, nothing," said the doctor, "only it struck me as rather odd that you should make a man carry you three miles, on a hot day, to see a doctor you did not know, when there were a dozen within a short distance of the car-line."

"Well," said Dugglesby, "you might as well know, then, that it wasn't a trolley-car, but a—"

"That's all right," said the doctor. "You haven't told me where you lived, but I'll have to take you there, anyway. My machine is at the door, and I am about to start out on my rounds. We'll take you aboard, and on the way you can tell me anything you wish to, though I assure you I am not a curious person."

The chauffeur and the doctor helped the injured man into the automobile, propped his foot up on a cushion, and off they went.

For a short time Dugglesby was silent. Finally, the feeling that it was necessary to take the doctor into his confidence overcame all other thoughts, and he said:

"I said I'd tell you how I sprained my ankle, doctor."

"If you choose to, you may."

"Well, I got it falling out of an air-ship."

The doctor gave him a startled glance, and spoke to the chauffeur.

"Drive faster," he said.

"Oh," said Dugglesby, "I'm not crazy. It's all true. I'll tell you the whole story, beginning with my full name and everything. Here's my card."

He handed it to the doctor, who read:

CYRUS K. DUGGLESBY,
COMMISSION MERCHANT,
CATTLE ON THE HOOF.

"That's me," said Dugglesby. "But selling cattle on the hoof is merely my business. My life's ambition is aeronautics.

"From boyhood I have been interested in nothing else. I have invented many, many aeroplanes, some that have flown,

too, but never under my own name. There are reasons for that deceit, as you can understand. A doctor or a lawyer could mix up in that sort of thing, you know, and nobody would be surprised, but for a commission merchant—why, people wouldn't trust their cattle on the hoof to him two minutes if they thought he was a flying-machine crank! You've got to keep a level head to sell cattle.

"Well, a few months ago I found that I had solved the problem perfectly. In a paper which I read to the States Aero Club, of which I am a member under the name of William Smith, I proved to them satisfactorily that my ideas were practical.

"At their request I have been working those ideas out, and have at last built an aeroplane far superior to any yet shown to the public. I have been using the old race-track near your house for several weeks, as a demonstration-ground. It's strange you have not noticed that something was going on behind the high fence."

"I had," said the doctor, "and I heard what it was."

"And you were not curious to see the man who was carrying on the operations?"

"Not at all," said the doctor. "I knew that he would be brought in to me for treatment, sooner or later, if the coroner didn't get him first. But, go on."

"Well," said Dugglesby, "I satisfied you, then. But I didn't fall because the machine wouldn't fly, but because I was working out a theory that I believed to be fallacious, and my fall has proved it so. I know, now, that my machine, as I originally planned it, will fulfil all expectations.

"In fact, when it is repaired, it will be ready to start in the Aero Club's international prize contest—you may have read the announcements—which take place on the fifteenth of the month, scarcely two weeks hence. You see, therefore, that I must be in shape on that day.

"Well, I have had other reasons for keeping my experiments secret. Those reasons are—Mrs. Dugglesby!

"She is an estimable lady, who thinks a great deal of me and my welfare. In fact, her regard for my safety and health is sometimes embarrassing. I happen to know, from what she has said when she has read of air-ship experiments, and the like, that she considers any man who meddles with such matters a fit subject for an insane asylum.

"You can readily understand, then, that it would never do for her to know what I have been doing. Is it necessary then for me to ask you to let her believe the trolley-car incident, unless—unless you can think of something better?"

"That will do," said the doctor. "I will respect your confidence, and get you well, if possible, in time for the air-ship race on the fifteenth—on one condition."

"Name it."

"You must pay me in full before that date for all my services."

"Why, doctor, I am certainly good for—"

"Yes, of course; but it is such trouble to collect money from the estate of a dead man!"

At this moment the automobile turned into the street where the Dugglesby residence was situated.

On the porch was Mrs. Dugglesby, and a quick glance at the lady assured the doctor that Dugglesby's reasons for keeping his ambition secret from her were well founded. She was sweeping the road carefully, as though wondering what was detaining her husband. As she saw the machine stop in front of the house, and noted its occupants, she came down the path belligerently.

"So," she exclaimed, "here you are! Come right in the house."

"Yes, my dear," said Dugglesby meekly. "My dear, meet Dr. Briggs."

"Huh!" said Mrs. Dugglesby, scarcely glancing at the doctor, who had laid his medicine-chest on the sidewalk and was preparing to assist Dugglesby from the car.

And then, suddenly, she saw that her husband was injured. In an instant her whole demeanor changed. From being warlike, she became solicitous to the point of danger, insisting on carrying her husband, unassisted, up the path and into the house, where she laid him tenderly on the sofa, the doctor following.

"Oh, Cyrus, Cyrus," she moaned, "what has happened? Who did it?

Who assaulted you? Were you run over, or did a cattle kick you? Why didn't you send for me? Doctor, how did it happen? What can I do for you? Tell me, tell me, quick!"

When the doctor and Dugglesby could find an opening they explained, going into details in their exposition of the trolley-car story, with the result that Mrs. Dugglesby hated every trolley-car in the world.

At last, the doctor left, promising to return on the next day, and Dugglesby was put to bed by his careful wife.

For a week he suffered untold agony. Not alone agony of the body, though the pain of his sprained ankle was sufficient to make the days seem like long links in an endless chain of torture; but mental pain as well, caused by the uncertainty of events connected with the repair of his air-ship and the preparations for the forthcoming international race.

To be sure, Dr. Briggs brought him all the news possible. Each morning, before coming to see his patient, he paid a visit to the race-track, where he obtained from Harstrom a report of progress or delay in the work.

These reports had to be given to Dugglesby surreptitiously, as his wife was seldom absent from the sick-room. She was always about, fearful lest her absence should make it necessary for them to send for her. And it was sometimes difficult for Dr. Briggs or Dugglesby to contrive excuses for getting her out of the room.

"Good morning," the doctor would say, on entering. "How's the foot this morning? Ah! much better, I see. Swelling almost gone, but the soreness still there.

"Well, a little more frequent application of the liniment. I might put some on it myself, now that I'm here, if Mrs. Dugglesby will be so kind—"

"It's right here," would come the instant reply from the ever-ready wife.

That expedient to get her out of the room having failed, the doctor would have to fall back on another. When, at last, the good lady had been enticed from the spot, the conversation would flow rapidly.

"Just saw Harstrom," the doctor would whisper. "He's got the machine in pretty good condition, but he wants to know if you want the front wings made of the heavy canvas or that new, thin stuff I had him buy at your directions. He says—"

"The thin kind," the patient would reply. "It's specially made for me, very strong and light. And is the motor all right?"

"Yes, but he's got to make another propeller-blade. The old one—"

The return of the wife would put an end to such a dialogue in the most interesting places, and poor Dugglesby often had to see the doctor depart without having had an opportunity to give him the most important instructions for Harstrom.

Furthermore, there must be something in the papers about the preparations for the race. Foreign contestants, Dugglesby knew, would be entering their machines daily. He was dying to read these accounts in the papers but the doctor had, unfortunately, agreed with Mrs. Dugglesby that any undue excitement would not aid in the patient's recovery, a decision that the good woman understood to apply, above all things, to the reading of newspapers.

She condescended to read the papers to Dugglesby however, but chose to exert a strict censorship over what should be read to him and what withheld. She read the editorial pages which she figured out were something; but she avoided all such things as the stock-reports, the details of scandals, and the accounts of accidents.

The golfing news she expatiated, having always cherished an ambition for Dugglesby to take up the game, and considering this a good opportunity to get him interested in it. It may be imagined how pleasant it all was to the patient.

One morning, however, she forgot herself. The room was a little darkened, and she sat by the window with the paper. Suddenly she exclaimed:

"The idiots! The fools! They ought to be killed!"

"Who, my dear?" asked Dugglesby from the bed.

"These insane air-ship people," said Mrs. Dugglesby.

Dugglesby nearly leaped from the bed.

He was about to hear something. Fortunately his wife did not observe his excitement, but went on:

"The paper says there's to be a big air-ship race over on Long Island, next week, and thirty men are going to contest for a prize. I certainly hope they'll all fly out over the water and be drowned."

"My dear," expostulated Dugglesby.

"I mean it," said Mrs. Dugglesby. "What right have men got to make such fools of themselves? And their wives! How can they let their husbands do it! I'd like to see myself letting you try anything of the sort. It only goes to show how different I am from most women. I think too much of you!"

"But, isn't it in the interest of science?" asked Dugglesby faintly.

"Science! What good will it do to kill a half-dozen men—I suppose some of them will be killed—just to show that a balloon can go up? What good will it do? No. It's ridiculous, and nobody but fools would think of it."

"But they are not all fools," said Dugglesby. "Some of them are quite bright men, I imagine. Does the paper—does the paper say who any of them are?" He was trying diligently to have his wife read the list of entrants, to see if he were among them. Not, of course, as Cyrus K. Dugglesby, but as William Smith. She read the list:

"Yes," she said, "here they are: De Volante, of France, with his marvelous monoplane; Zeischutz, the German, whose flight of three hours recently astonished Berlin; Baganini, the Italian; De Leppertz, of—"

"Any Americans?" asked Dugglesby.

"I hope not. I hope Americans have some sense. Yes, here's one. William Smith, of New York, whose exceedingly daring experiments of late have been the astonishment of the few who have been permitted to know of them. That's what the paper says.

"Daring experiments, eh! I hope he falls during one of those daring experiments and break his fool neck! That's what I hope!"

Although Dugglesby knew that his wife had not the slightest idea that he and the daring William Smith were one and the same, her words sounded very unpleasantly on his ears. It is disquieting to hear your wife express a wish that you will fall out of an air-ship and break your neck, even when she doesn't know it is you whom she is consigning to such a fate. Dugglesby, however, said nothing, and his wife continued:

"'William Smith,' the paper says, 'is expected to represent the latest in American aeronautics. America pins her faith on his air-ship, and the foreigners are more afraid of him than of any of the other native entrants.' Well, I don't know anything about William Smith, but he must be crazy! Why, Cyrus Dugglesby, whatever is the matter? Have you got a fit?"

The patient was endeavoring to stuff the sheet into his mouth, in an effort to drown an exclamation of childish pleasure at hearing the words of hope and praise concerning his aeroplane, as his wife had read them.

Mrs. Dugglesby detected him in the operation, and he made haste to assure her that it was nothing serious, merely a bit of nervousness, caused, no doubt, by lying so long in bed.

"In fact, my dear," said Dugglesby, "I think I had better get up to-morrow, even if I can't walk on my ankle. I will be much better, I am sure."

"Not until the doctor says so," was Mrs. Dugglesby's comment.

The next morning, however, Dugglesby impressed on Dr. Briggs the necessity for his being up and about.

"Why, good grief, doc," he said in one of those moments of safety when Mrs. Dugglesby had been sent from the room, "there are only two days more before the race. You tell me Harstrom has the aeroplane all ready for a test, and I must make it. Good heavens, man, get me out somehow, or I'll go crazy!"

So the doctor told Mrs. Dugglesby that her husband would be able to get out of bed, and perhaps go about his room by the aid of crutches. This was joyful news to the sick man, and Mrs. Dugglesby hurried down-town to order the crutches, which she had sent home quickly.

During her absence Dugglesby, whom she had dressed and left in his easiest chair, hobbled to the telephone and

called up the Aero Club, notifying them that he would be ready at the appointed time to show the prowess of his aeroplane.

Then he began to hit about for some plan by which he could escape from the house on the morrow, to pay a visit to the race-track, and look his air-ship over. It would be impossible, he figured, for him to sail it in the race without having once tested it.

When the doctor called, next day, Dugglesby begged him to take him out for a drive, but Mrs. Dugglesby insisted that she had been thinking of doing exactly that thing, and had already ordered a carriage. Dugglesby, with inward groans, was obliged to go with her, but not before he had made Dr. Briggs promise to superintend getting the aeroplane from the race-track to the ferry and thence to the location, a few miles down on Long Island, where the race was to be held.

"Harstrom," the doctor said, "declares that he is perfectly competent to navigate the machine. He has made daily tests in the race-track grounds, and says that you needn't worry!"

Needn't worry! Dugglesby squirmed. As though anybody should have the honor and glory of handling his pet, his own creation, the fleet child of his brain, but himself!

During the drive with his wife, Dugglesby managed to lead up to the question of his return to business.

"I feel that I must go down-town tomorrow, my dear," he said. "I have been away too long now. Large consignments of cattle will be in next week, and I must arrange for their handling and disposal."

In vain Mrs. Dugglesby protested, assuring him that his partners were attending to the business in every detail. She finally had to forbid him to move out of the house until he had her permission.

And Dugglesby knew that she meant it. Besides, Mrs. Dugglesby weighed two hundred and eighty pounds. He tipped the scales at something like one hundred and thirty. He had to take it out in groans.

It was a sleepless night for Dugglesby. The evening papers had much about the race of the next day, and there was a paragraph to the effect that there were fears that William Smith, who, it had just leaked out, had suffered a serious accident a few weeks previous, would not be able to handle his own aeroplane, which would be managed by his assistant, Peter Harstrom.

Under these circumstances, the paper said, there were chances that some of the foreign aeroplanes of inferior construction might win the race through superior handling. Poor Dugglesby, on crutches, read this paragraph over and over, and when he went to bed it was to toss and turn in agony of spirit.

Along toward dawn he must have fallen asleep, for he was suddenly brought to his senses by hearing the bell ring. What could it be? Mrs. Dugglesby arose, threw on a wrapper and went down to the door. She returned with a telegram, and in a state of perturbation.

"I knew it," she said, "I knew there must be something in the way we've both lain awake all night. It's Susan."

"Su-san who?" asked Dugglesby.

"My sister. She's been taken suddenly very ill, and they've sent for me. I must go at once. Oh, I hate to leave you, but I must."

All this while she was dressing rapidly. With injunctions for her husband to remain quiet until he heard from her, Mrs. Dugglesby rushed out of the house. The moment the door closed behind her, Dugglesby was out of bed, and throwing his clothes on at a rapid rate.

Nor was he dressing for the office, either. The staid, plain, business clothes which he always wore down-town were not taken from their places in the closet.

Instead, he donned a suit of khaki, with knickerbockers, and on his head he placed a rakish cap. Then, on his crutches, he hopped from the house, eluding the servants, and caught a taxicab at the corner.

"Long Island Ferry," he told the driver.

On the way to the ferry Dugglesby had time to think. Also to rejoice. He would be able to get to the race-grounds in an hour, and, as it was not yet eight o'clock, he would undoubtedly have time to make a test—a practical test—of his

aeroplane, which, he knew, had been sent over on the previous day. The joy of this stifled all worry over the consequences that would meet him on his return home, after the race.

What was the wrath of a wife, if it must be, to the glory of upholding the honor of America in the air? Then, too, he reflected, he might be able to get home before Mrs. Dugglesby; and, in that case he could either bribe the servants to say that he had not been out, or could tell his wife that he had been suddenly called down-town to the office, after her departure, and had returned as soon as possible.

It looked like a very pleasant day for the indomitable voyager of the air!

As he bought his ticket for the Long Island village where the races were to take place, he noticed with a start that his destination was only a few stations beyond that to which his wife had gone, to Sister Susan's. He thought little of this, however, after the train had started, and when he reached the end of his journey it had entirely left his mind.

At the end of a two-mile drive from the station he came to the race-grounds, and from among the air-ships that were occupying assigned spaces, he had no difficulty in spying his own beauty.

He hurried to it, on his crutches, and was soon alongside the astonished Harstrom, who had quite made up his mind that he was to be the fortunate handler of the machine, that day

Dugglesby looked his pet over.

It was perfect in every detail. He longed to climb into the frail network of bamboo and wires and start the motor. And, as soon as he could do so, he did it. He had a little difficulty on account of his lame ankle, but once in his air-ship, with the levers at his control, he was at home.

The motor was started, the aeroplane was shot from the platform on which it reposed, and off it went. Just clearing the ground, steadily, smoothly it sailed, answering its helm perfectly. About the immense open space sailed Dugglesby, now William Smith.

He cut antics, he described figure 8's, he dipped, and he soared. And at length he returned to his starting point thoroughly satisfied. No further test would be necessary. The aeroplane was all right.

He fell on Harstrom's neck and wept with joy.

Twenty thousand people had seen Germany come a cropper. The same number had watched with perturbation and doubt of America's ever being able to duplicate the feat, the marvelous achievements of France and Italy. Two Americans had tried and failed.

It was the turn of William Smith.

Who was this mysterious William Smith, anyway? He on whom the country pinned its hope and faith seemed to be something of a myth. Nobody had seen him on the field with other aeronauts.

He kept to himself — very much to himself, in the canvas tent beside his strange-looking aeroplane. Dugglesby had reason for this exclusiveness. He did not want to run the risk of being seen by any of his friends or acquaintances—at least, not until after the triumph that he fully expected to be his.

Then his turn came. He was assisted into the machine, the usual "boosting" operation was given it, and off he went.

At first everything went well. The air was rent with cheers. But, suddenly, Dugglesby found that something was amiss with the mechanism of the machine."

It refused to keep on a level keel. It bucked and reared, and tipped and shook. The motor missed fire occasionally. The whole thing seemed somehow askew.

Dugglesby pulled and pushed at his levers, but it was beyond him. He tried to keep his machine at an even distance from the earth, but it rose and dived against his will. He feared, for the first time; he actually feared.

And well he might; for, suddenly, just as the machine had reached the edge of the fair-ground, everything seemed to get away with him, and the spectators saw with horror that he was going to crash against the fence.

Dugglesby looked. At the rate at which he was going he would be dashed to certain death; or at least terribly injured. He saw the fence, and it seemed to have destruction painted all over it. And, suddenly, on the other side of the fence, he saw something else.

There was a crowd outside the fence, almost as great a gathering as within. All the faces in this assemblage were turned upward and observing him with horror.

Among them was that of his wife.

She saw William Smith as soon as he saw her, and she uttered a cry.

"Oh, Cyrus!" she shrieked, and at the sound of that voice, and at the meeting of their eyes Dugglesby gave a great pull to a lever and the machine shot upward. The motor whirred, the propellor took the air, and the aeroplane began to behave.

At least, it continued to fly, but it flew higher and higher. Dugglesby could not keep it near the earth. It rose and rose, but never so far that he could not hear the cry of "Cyrus! Oh, Cyrus!" which floated up to him each second.

He turned the machine, somehow, and back it went into the enclosure of the fair-ground. And through the gate went his wife. He could see her following him. The machine could never hope to distance her. Wherever he went she went. He was no longer trying to break the aeroplane record. He was trying only to escape his wife.

The crowd cheered and shouted, for already he had far outstripped the best effort of any of his competitors; but they were cheering the wrong person. It was not William Smith nor Cyrus K. Dugglesby who was urging the machine on to fame and glory—it was Mrs. Dugglesby.

At length the inevitable happened. The gasoline that drove the motor gave out, and the machine began to drop. Easily, lightly, it came to the ground, and the crowd surged forward to take William Smith in its arms.

But it was too late, for one with a prior claim was there ahead of any one else, and William Smith, lame ankle and all, was being carried across the fair-ground in a pair of strong matronly arms, before the rest of the multitude could touch the hem of his garment.

Some one, Dugglesby remembered afterward, tried to stop their progress long enough to pin a medal on his breast. Mrs. Dugglesby managed to strike the intruder to the ground with one blow of her umbrella. No one else interfered.

There was an unpleasant hour for Dugglesby during the ride back to New York. And a more unpleasant one that evening, when he was put to bed and made to tell his story to an audience of one, that one being his wife.

"And to think," she cried as he finished, "I wished that William Smith would fall and break his neck, when I read to you about what the paper said of him! Oh, Cyrus, promise me never to do it again!"

"I couldn't," said he. "In fact, I didn't. You made my machine go."

THE DECIDING VOTE.

By E. B. Waterworth.

A STORY of men and the stakes for which they play—of women and the men they love.

HE'S not at all like the usual run of these foreign noblemen. He even speaks with just the faintest suspicion of an accent. His ability in acquiring the language is really wonderful."

Mrs. Warren, seated beneath the shaded lamp of the library in an attitude which evinced decided interest, if not expectancy, turned an eye upon her husband as she spoke, and settled herself more complacently in the easy chair.

Thomas Warren, broker, one of the best-known men "on the Street," paused in his idle stroll up and down the apartment and smiled half unconsciously as a ripple of laughter floated down the big hallway from the parlor through the open doors.

"Yes," he responded, slowly and thoughtfully, "he isn't like that pack we ran across on the continent. That was a contemptible bunch, and no mistake. I often used to smile at the realization that they were really what is known as the nobility of Europe. This young man seems to have some brains."

Another laugh, following an indistinct exchange of remarks in the parlor, was again heard faintly through the open door.

"He gets along very well with Eleanor," said Mrs. Warren, rather complacently. "And those letters of introduction he brought from the Hilliards spoke very highly of him," she added irrelevantly.

"Hilliard wouldn't speak of him as he did unless he was sure of his facts," remarked her husband, gazing abstractedly at the wood embers on the hearth. "I formed my impression of the whole set from the lot we met while traveling. I may have done the genus, as a whole, an injustice, though."

"The Hilliards move so well in the East," pursued his wife, following her own train of thought, "that they surely know who's who. That's why I was so glad they sent him directly to us. We were the first to introduce him here, and I flatter myself he has done us credit."

"Yes, De Mayneau has made a better impression than any of his kind ever seen out here," conceded Warren.

"Better impression!" echoed his wife indignantly. "I should think so. You remember the Italian prince the Hayworths made so much of, and who always drank so much champagne that he actually dozed after supper, even when a lady was talking to him?

"And that Danish count who ate so much, and who was so fearfully impolite and curt? How Mrs. Westemonde tolerated him I could not see."

"How Mr. Westemonde himself refrained from booting him out of the door was what I couldn't see," answered her husband.

Through the folds of the portières the soft notes of the piano could be heard from the music-room. In a moment the muffled strains of a masculine voice, singing an old French *ballade* came to the ears of the listeners in the library.

"Eleanor seems to think a good deal of him," remarked the mother in a tone of apparent indifference. "Of course, a count, and especially a French count, is not regarded as having much of a title. But when a man's family is so well known abroad—"

She paused, and her husband seemed to see nothing inconsequential in her remark.

"Well," he said meditatively, passing one hand over his clean-shaven chin and gazing dreamily at the fire, "he seems a clean-cut young man. I'm rather impressed with the boy. If there should be anything in that direction—" He shrugged a shoulder toward the music-room, and his wife nodded in understanding.

"What I particularly like about him is his utter indifference to wealth," she said in a low tone, almost as if the subject of their conversation was in the room. "He is so different from those horrible creatures we met abroad. Do you recall how evident it was they followed Eleanor and ourselves merely on account of our money?

"They could never cease growing ecstatic to Eleanor over the 'profusion,' as they were pleased to term the nature of our entertainments. I actually believe they figured out the cost of every plate when we asked them to dine."

"De Mayneau seems to have acted a good part all through," agreed her husband. "I reckon that I'll turn in for the night," he concluded, yawning, only to shake himself impatiently as the tinkle of the door-bell could be faintly heard.

"A gentleman to see you, sir," announced a maid, appearing in the doorway.

"A gentleman?" demanded Warren irritably.

"Well, sir," replied the maid doubtfully, "I don't just know whether to call him one. There's something about him—well, I left him standing in the hall, sir. He said he would not send in his name."

"If it's a case of deserving charity," commented Warren, as he strode from the room, "he'll find he has called at an unpropitious time."

Standing in the hall, in the circle of light thrown from the massive chandelier

above, was a thick-set young man in quiet garb, whose heavy jaw, broad face, and close-cropped light hair at once marked him in the broker's eyes as one of some calling which required force; to be held in reserve if necessary, but used if demanded. The resolute expression in the light-gray eyes which faced his own confirmed Warren in this opinion.

"Mr. Warren?" asked the visitor.

"That is my name," said the broker curtly.

"I'm a police officer—from headquarters, Mr. Warren," said the other quietly, pushing back his coat for an instant to reveal a shining badge on the vest beneath. "Fogarty is my name. I have something to tell you — something unpleasant—I'm sorry to say."

"To tell me!" repeated Warren in astonishment.

"Yes, sir. May I have a word in private?"

The broker nodded in impatient wonder and led the way to his study, where he snapped on the lights and motioned the visitor to sit down.

"What is it?" he demanded.

"I'm after a man who's in your house right now, Mr. Warren," said the detective impassively, disregarding the other's wave toward a chair. "I want Gaspard de Mayneau, of France."

"Count de Mayneau!" thundered Warren in amaze.

"Yes, sir. I intend to take him with me. I would prefer to have the affair handled quietly," said the detective calmly.

"But why? What's the reason? What has he done?" ejaculated Warren, in a whirl of astonishment.

"He's wanted in New York for passing a worthless check. The Newport police are after him for getting away with a necklace he took from a young lady, seemingly in joke, and never returned.

"A hotel at Bath Harbor wants him for getting money on a bogus draft. But the man who turned him up indorsed a check for him and had it sent back when the bank found it was worthless," recited Fogarty with professional calm.

"But De Mayneau! There's some mistake! I won't believe it of the boy!" stormed Warren indignantly. "You've got him confused with some one else."

With the same undisturbed manner, the officer reached into an inner pocket and withdrew a circular, on which, surrounded by heavy type and surmounted by a glaring head-line—"Five Hundred Dollars Reward!"—appeared the face of a young man.

In the clean-cut features, the foreign trim of the hair, the very curl of the slight black mustache, the broker instantly recognized the man separated from them by only a few partitions.

"Only photo I have of him," said Fogarty casually. "He posed for a society paper at Saratoga, and the police there sent it on—sent it round the country on the quiet so we might get him unawares."

"But — but — why, there must be something wrong about this," cried the bewildered Warren, gazing on the sheet he held in shaking hands and at the halftone which left no room for doubt as to identity. "The name above this picture is Vascelles."

"That's the name he went under in some parts of the East," answered the detective. "His real name is De Mayneau, all right. I've worked up the case myself, and," he added proudly, "I'm pretty certain I'm the only man who's connected the two."

"But for him to steal! To forge checks!" exclaimed Warren. "Why, he's acted as a thorough gentleman as long as I've known him."

"That's been about three weeks, hasn't it?" queried Fogarty with professional impersonality. "It's part of his game."

"His game!" retorted Warren indignantly. "I tell you he's the very personification of all that a high-bred man should be."

"He knows it," returned Fogarty, not at all ruffled. "He trades on that fact, Mr. Warren. Oh, he's a count, all right enough. He's been so accustomed to having his doings across the water hushed up—a title goes over there—that he thought he could work the same game here.

"He gets a good stand-in—gets tied up with some family—gets seen with them. Then, when he's found out, he

figures they won't squeal because it will show them up. None of them did till he sprung this check business. That happened because he passed it on a gent who was a bit of a rounder, and who got sore when he had drunk a bit.

"He rushed off with his souse on and told the police about Vascelles. He even offered this reward and paid the money down to the sergeant. When he sobered up, he tried all he knew to suppress the thing. He's trying yet."

Rage boiled in Warren at the thought of being made the dupe of such a man. His powerful shoulders twitched slightly, and his lips drew into the thin line that business opponents had learned to dread. To think that he, whose business acumen was a byword in the financial system of the city, should be taken in like this!

"I'll give him something he won't suppress," he said through set teeth, and turned to the door. But the detective was there before him.

"You'd better let me do this as quietly as possible, Mr. Warren," he said, a cold note coming into his even tones. "That's a bad man in there. He's a powerful fellow, too. From what I know of him, there may be trouble. And if he gets rough—"

Fogarty shrugged his shoulders and transferred a pair of bright steel circlets from his trousers-pocket to the side-pocket of his coat.

"If he gets bad, I may need the bracelets," he said, feeling his right hip-pocket.

Through the storm of the broker's rage, the sight of the handcuffs and the officer's move toward the pocket where his revolver bulged sent a sudden chill and an appreciation of the situation. In a mist of doubt he heard the detective continue, as one hears in sleep:

"The only way he got out of one scrape was by threatening to blacken the name of a young girl at Newport. He had been with her alone a couple of times, and had arranged that purposely.

"He threatened to say a lot on the stand, if they did anything to him. Of course, the girl was innocent enough—a young débutante of a fine family. But the disgrace of having her name even mentioned in a case of the sort made the parents call it off. You can see what sort of a game this is."

"One moment, officer," gasped Warren, sitting down heavily in the nearest chair.

To blacken the name of a young girl! So this was why he had been so assiduous to Eleanor!

That very noon, Warren recollected, De Mayneau had asked casually if the broker would indorse a draft for him on the morrow, and Warren had readily consented. In case this had come about and the draft, undoubtedly bad, had been returned, he could see that De Mayneau meant to use his daughter's name to suppress the affair.

Wrath at the French adventurer for imposing on him, for trying to make a victim of him, was succeeded by a sickening fear almost akin to nausea. For it was he who had introduced the count to the society of his city.

Doubtless the man had only avoided victimizing the Hilliards to gain entry to a house where there was a daughter whose name could be used as a lever.

Warren rose with an oath on his lips and a glare in his eye at the thought, only to sink back, worn and haggard as he realized his own position—a position where some disgrace, some publicity, might be thrown on Eleanor's name.

Fogarty, he dimly realized, was bending over him anxiously.

"Shall I get you a little water, Mr. Warren?" he asked, his eyes glancing alertly about the room in search of a decanter.

"Nothing—it's nothing—wait a minute," gasped Warren weakly.

For a minute at least there was silence in the room as the color crept slowly back to the broker's cheek. For one instant his eye roved toward the door in the direction of the music-room, and he started to rise, only to sink back with a groan. But the effort had brought back part of his strength.

"Officer," he said, "this fellow deserves the limit of the law. But you can see the position in which I am placed. Could not this be suppressed by the police? Is there any necessity to make a report?"

"Orders from the new chief, Mr. Warren, are to turn in reports of all

cases on which we have worked," answered Fogarty. "They are not recorded before, as it might spoil some cases. But the reports are turned over to the reporters afterward."

The reporters! The newspapers! Warren shuddered as he thought of the head-lines, the shouts of the newsboys, the gossip of the streets.

"Mr. Fogarty," he said, trying to keep his voice steady, "possibly I can arrange this with your superiors. I will take the entire consequences. If you will say nothing about the matter, I will see that you lose nothing by it."

"Say nothing about it?" repeated the detective with a faint note of amusement in his even voice. "Why, the case will have to be tried. You can't suppress a trial, Mr. Warren."

The broker groaned again.

"Would it do any good to call up your chief?" he asked miserably; "he may be able to aid me in some way."

"The number at headquarters is Main 0444," answered Fogarty, holding out a paper manual, with the telephone number thereon, to the broker. "If you wish to say anything to him, Mr. Warren, go ahead. But the reporters have their police press-room at the station, and they're pretty sure to hear of anything that comes in."

Warren sat, collapsed in his chair, as one stricken by a physical blow. The electric lights, dimmed as they were with frosted globes and silken shades, seemed to burn into his brain and set it reeling. But in this mental turmoil one thought suddenly seemed to catch in his attention.

"You say you are the only one who has identified De Mayneau with Vascelles?" he demanded.

"I'm pretty certain," said Fogarty thoughtfully. "Yes, I'm sure I am. For this circular wasn't sent with any special orders to watch for the man here. It was simply to keep us posted. I tracked him myself."

Warren sat up, pale but collected, and with a gleam of hope in his eye.

"Officer," he said, "I know what I'm going to ask. I know how you feel and what you will think of what I'm going to say—but it's a case where it has to be said. That man in there—that cur—has something more in his power than to shame my wife and himself for bringing one of his breed here and introducing him.

"There's a girl's name in his filthy hands. Can't we arrange it to let this fellow go? I can promise he'll get out of the country quick enough."

"By 'arranging it,' I suppose, you mean what I'll take, Mr. Warren," replied Fogarty impassively. "I want to tell you there's something else besides money. That's a fault with you rich men. You can't see anything else—"

"That's where you're mistaken," interrupted the broker hastily. "It isn't the money. It's because I realize there's something else."

"I've made a straight record on the department," continued the detective, as if the other had not spoken. "There's nothing I'm ashamed of in it. I've worked hard to get my place, and my record means—well, I don't know how I can tell you what it means to me. Then there's others that it means a lot to.

"Oh," he continued, raising his voice as the broker attempted to speak, "I'm not going to give you my family history. I just thought, maybe, you would understand."

"I do understand. That's it—that's it!" cried the broker protestingly. "Man, can't you see that your reasons and mine are just alike? There's some one else I'm thinking of. It isn't for myself I care—and I didn't believe the money alone would influence you. "Listen, Fogarty! When you said you thought of some one else, did you mean you have a family?"

"A wife and a little girl."

"So have I," continued Warren. "I can stand any shame that would come out of this thing. Personally, I'd like to handle that fellow myself. But what would it mean for the wife and daughter?

"Put yourself in my place, Fogarty. Think of what this hound can do—how he can sting falsely by using his tongue on the stand. The jeers about the way we were taken in wouldn't be the worst of it."

Fogarty attempted to speak, but the broker raised his voice and proceeded:

"I can remember when I was a young

man like yourself. I wasn't living in this fashion then. I fought for every cent. I fought hard for it, too. I was as proud of my success as you are of yours, and I know what I'm asking.

"I'm asking you to do something that will make you ashamed of yourself, just as I'm ashamed of myself for asking you and for the part I'm playing. But I'm asking for the wife and daughter.

"Think of your own! What will be the little glory you get compared to the humiliation of two women—think how your own wife would feel. Think of what that paltry reward means compared to what I can do for your little daughter. You're working for them, I know. Even if it's a violation of your ethics—"

"And reputation," interposed the detective calmly.

"And honor," conceded Warren desperately. "I've laid the case before you. Merit on the force counts for little in this politics-ridden city. You know that. You may be made a martyr, with even getting the crown of thorns, if that other gang gets in power.

"Yet you're clinging to the hopes of a record, which may prove utterly worthless, no matter how good it is. Do you want your little girl to take chances with you? Or, to put it flatly, would you rather take five thousand dollars instead of that five hundred dollars, on my guarantee that De Mayneau leaves the country and, if questions are ever asked, say that you saw both him and myself before his departure, and that the picture did not correspond with the original?"

There was silence for a few moments as the detective gazed steadily at the floor.

"Mr. Warren," he said slowly at length, "you've struck the key-note. I'll not make any pretense about high feelings in the matter. It's the money for that little girl I want. I've been saving ever since she was born, so she could be brought up like a lady. And this opens the way, no matter how I feel about the matter myself. You're on."

The broker rose and walked to a desk, where he scribbled a check in silence.

"One question," asked Fogarty. "How will you get this man out of here?"

"Tell him he's found out, and give him a chance to cross the Canadian border," snapped the broker. "If he doesn't go—well, he'll find there will be something else stirring. I've made this check payable to bearer, and, if you prefer and will call at my office to-morrow, I'll have one of the clerks indorse it and cash it for you. That will keep your name out of it. Bring it to the office whenever you like. Now, come with me."

Throwing open the door, he walked determinedly across the hall, through the parlors and into the shaded music-room, from which the soft notes of the "Miserere" were issuing brokenly, as the conversation of the two young people, outlined in the glow of the piano-lamp, interrupted the strains.

A fair-haired girl, in simple evening-dress, whirled round on the piano-bench as her father entered.

"Why, daddy, how you scared me!" she exclaimed laughingly. "I did not hear your steps until you were inside."

"Eleanor," said her father briefly, "this gentleman and myself have something to say to that young man. Would you kindly withdraw for a few minutes?"

"Oh, father!" commenced the girl in a shocked voice; but something in her father's glance stopped her.

"Will you please go, my dear?" he said decisively, holding open the door.

With a puzzled and alarmed glance at her companion and at the stocky figure standing by her father, she slowly rose and left the room. Warren softly closed the door again.

"And now, De Mayneau," he said grimly, "I've got a word for you. This man is a detective. You're going to get across the Canadian boundary, and then start for France. You are going to start at once, and can leave word you were suddenly called home."

De Mayneau rose, and a faint smile curled his lips as the broker mentioned the detective.

"And if I do not care to go, M. Warren?" he asked, his slightly foreign speech accentuating the covert sneer in his tones.

"You're going there, or you're going up for a good stretch," broke in the detective curtly. "I've agreed to let you go for my own reasons. I've got your

photo and record as Vascelles. You'll find your French pull and your nobility won't cut any ice with a jury this side of the water. And," he continued with a sneer as pronounced as the Frenchman's, "you don't look as if you would be much of a hand at breaking rock."

De Mayneau's face changed abruptly when the name of Vascelles was mentioned, and the broker noticed it.

"I have nine hundred dollars here in bills," he said, pulling a small roll from his vest-pocket. "Take this and get out of the country. Sail for France at once. If you are identified as Vascelles, you know the cost."

The Frenchman bowed mockingly and took the money.

"But nine hundred dollars, M. Warren, is a decidedly small sum," he said, "especially as—"

He glanced to the door through which Eleanor had left and raised his eyebrows meaningly.

The broker's face turned a deadly white, and he stepped forward in a fashion that made De Mayneau slink back. The detective laid a restraining hand on his arm.

"It's for her sake I'm letting you go, you coward!" he said, in a tone so savage and vibrant that the Frenchman trembled palpably. "I'll say right here in front of this detective that there are ways of ending the account of a man like you and getting out of it.

"And remember that one word from you means the end—and you won't end easy, either, not if I swing for it. Now, go!"

"I'll go to the depot with him," said the detective laconically; "I want to make sure he don't make any mistake about when that Dominion Midnight Special pulls out."

As De Mayneau sullenly grasped his hat and coat in the hall and stepped through the door, Warren gave a curt nod of thanks to the detective. The latter paused an instant and glanced at the folded bit of paper he held in his hand.

"Did it occur to you, Mr. Warren," he said thoughtfully, "that this is the price of two men?"

It was drawing near the closing hour for the saloons in the disreputable regions of the city, but there was no sign of any intention to shut the doors at Pete Casey's place.

Young women with tired faces and hardened eyes sat listlessly about the beer-stained tables which crowded the huge room.

Casual customers passed through the swinging doors, to drink before the garishly glittering bar, which extended along one side of the room and behind which a dozen white-jacketed bartenders were scudding up and down, hastily slapping drinks before the patrons.

Others strolled in to take seats at the tables, while above the clatter of the room could be heard from a bower of artificial palms the persistent booming of a brazen orchestra.

Up and down the sawdust-covered aisles a motley array was passing; pallid youths, with the jaunty air of the "hop" fiend, affording a strong contrast to the ruddy-cheeked and callow element, taking their first steps in vice and fancying they were having a "good time."

In the extreme corner of the hall a party of three was seated about a table.

One was the man who had called himself Fogarty, another was De Mayneau, the third the maid who had opened the door at the Warren house.

Fogarty was gazing abstractedly at the floor, toying idly with his glass. The girl, her own liquor untouched, was listening to the orchestra with a pensive look in her eyes. Only De Mayneau was flushed, and talked gleefully and excitably in a low voice.

"The thing went through like clockwork," he half whispered rapidly. "Better than we ever worked it before. It was easy enough for me to play the count—I'm glad I went in for French at college. And he fell for your tin badge, your detective gag, and that yarn about a family right at the jump.

"I had Mike waiting at that 'headquarters' number you gave him to call up the chief. Wouldn't he have been surprised to know that was the number of Monaghan's bar?"

And he laughed with the hollowness of approaching intoxication.

"But Kitty had the hardest job, after all," he went on. "First, she had to get a job as maid and spot some fashionable

friend like the Hilliards. Then she had to forge those introductions, and it must have been hard to be at hand at all hours to flag the letters that Mrs. W. wrote to the Hilliards and write notes in reply, so Mike could mail 'em from the East.

"And I want to say, Jimmy," he said admiringly, turning to the erstwhile detective, "that you did a first-class bit of acting there."

"I did too good a piece of acting," answered Fogarty abruptly. "I'm through with this game."

The girl looked at him in surprise. De Mayneau in consternation.

"Oh, I say now, Jimmy—" he commenced, sobered at once.

"I mean what I say. Money ain't the whole thing, after all. I'm going to quit this and try and live decently."

"And the—the—money?" stammered De Mayneau, who had turned pale.

"The reason I asked you to let me carry that nine hundred dollars was because I'm going to take it and the check back to Warren in the morning, and tell him the whole thing," said Fogarty deliberately. "He acted like a man.

"You don't know what that means, of course, any more than you're being from college and supposed to be a gentleman makes you know what that term means, either. But I'm not going to have a man who came to the front like he did—a man who could have choked the life out of you and got away with it, too—I'm not going to let him eat his heart out thinking something is hanging over his daughter.

"Oh," he went on, raising his voice disdainfully at the bitter snarl on the other's face, "don't you try to raise any howl. You know better than to try a fight with me.

"Most of the money we've made in other cases has gone to keep you in style and on Easy Street. You've made more in the last year than you ever could have done at any honest game; and if you've spent it, it's your own fault."

For one moment De Mayneau clutched the edge of the table with trembling hands, while his eyes took on such an expression of hate the girl drew back.

But one exchange of glances with Fogarty, whose own eyes had narrowed to slits, and who had drawn his muscular frame together, made De Mayneau relax weakly and force a nervous laugh.

"Oh, come now," he said with attempted jocularity, "it's all right if you want to quit, Jimmy. But that money was made by all three of us. You'll have to split that, anyway. The majority rules, and I think you ought to leave it to Kitty's vote to see what she decides."

He turned confidently to the girl.

Kitty, who had been watching Fogarty with a new expression on her face, leaned forward and put a hand on his arm.

"I'm glad you have it in you, Jimmy," she said, never looking at De Mayneau. "The Warrens always treated me white—and you get the deciding vote."

BEYOND THE BANYANS.

By Epes Winthrop Sargent.

OF an explorer into a forbidden Eden, who was his own angel with the flaming sword.

"DEATH!"

The grizzled African blew into the air a tiny cloud of smoke.

"Death!" he repeated, as his broad palm swept the air, dissipating the wreath of vapor. "That is death."

"Then, since there is naught to fear from death," suggested Tom Loring, "why this refusal?"

Bomoni smiled pityingly.

"Much there is that is worse than death that lurks in the mountains," he began slowly. "There is mighty Obeah; more mighty than aught any one will ever know.

"Once one of my tribe sought the

secrets that the mountain locks. One year he was gone, and three months more. Then he came—alone and silent—for his life was nigh spent. A little he dabbled of Obeah and of the men-monkeys and of the mighty magic, but this and that we might not put together to make whole speech. He died the second day, glad that death had come, for death is welcome when one would think no more, and too much had this man seen.

"I was but twenty then," added the chief reminiscently, "and that was full forty years ago, but even now I see his face as it was then. Naught on earth can put such fear into the heart and eyes of strong men."

"And because one man had failed to gain a path forty years ago, you are afraid to let us have bearers?" asked Loring patiently. "Our men were of the coast. Their hearts longed for Boma, and they would not stay on.

"From here it is but a few hundred miles to Nyanza. In three months they will be at home again and rich men. Many cattle may they buy, and with the cattle buy also wives from the best in the tribe."

"Those who go come not back again," persisted Bomoni. "Some there are who have gone but a little way, to come back hurriedly and with tales of horrors. Others have kept on. They came not back, for in the land of the man-monkeys there is death for all. Not for any price will my men go, for what are many herds of cattle to a man who is dead?"

Loring looked from the white-haired Congo chieftain to the remnants of his little party, the two white men and the coal-black Kassonga. Carlin and Brailey looked as disconsolate as their leader, but Kassonga spat contemptuously into the fire of green wood that mitigated the plague of winged insects.

"The lion roars," he grunted, "but the lion runs. I, too, have heard of the men-monkeys. Even on the coast I have heard, but I am not afraid. The magic, even the magic of the Obeah, is not as the magic of the white man. Is there game in this land of the monkey-men, O chief with the chicken-heart?"

"Much game, man who talks loud to hide the beating of his heart," replied the offended chief.

"Then we four may get through where these ignorant blacks fear to travel," suggested Kassonga, ignoring his own black skin. "Look, Big Boss. It is but a few hundred miles. On the map less than three hundred miles it is to Albert Lake. Before then we shall find bearers. With guns and ammunition and medicines alone we shall travel fast. In two weeks we shall be where there are white people. Shall we try it?"

Loring looked at the others. Brailey nodded his grave assent, and Carlin smiled broadly.

"We might as well be eaten in a lump by the monkey-men as grain by grain by Brailey's bugs," he assented. "We'll be well done on both sides if we stick here. Look here, Tom, the next time you take a trip make it the north pole. Then you can write a book, 'Fried and *Frappé*, or from the Equator to the Pole,' which will be a great seller."

"Kassonga makes a good suggestion," assented Loring. "It is better to push ahead than to remain here. As he says, it is only a few hundred miles, and we can do it in a couple of weeks. If we can reach Albert Edward Nyanza the rest will be simple."

Kassonga nodded proudly toward the chief.

Educated in one of the mission schools in the French Congo, he was an odd mixture of European and Congo ideas. In his heart he was miserably afraid of the Obeah, even though time and again he had been shown that the Obeah-worship was fanaticism. He was proud to be of the party that feared nothing. It raised himself in his own esteem and in the eyes of the natives, and he would have gone willingly enough to certain death to go a hero.

Once before he had guided Thomas Loring, the "Big Boss," whom he worshiped, and though this trip up the Congo had been little to his liking, he had followed blindly, even after the other natives of the party had fled from the unnamed terrors which beset the path on every side.

It was partly this talk of the men-monkeys that had determined Loring to push ahead toward the lakes. He did not believe the tales, but he wished to disprove them.

Orphaned in his boyhood, he had spent his lonesome youth with tales of travel, and with the independence of legal maturity he had headed for Africa to realize those youthful dreams.

He was disappointed at first, for along the beaten routes there was no excitement, and civilization had penetrated well inland. With Dick Carlin and William Brailey, classmates of his at college, he had come up the Congo well beyond Stanley Falls, and had struck off up one of the feeders to find himself away from the beaten path, and in the face of a very apparent mystery. Two days before the last of the bearers had fled from the tales they heard, and only Kassonga remained faithful.

Bomoni, the native chief, refused flatly to furnish bearers, though Loring offered extravagant pay, and Loring had caught the fancy of the old man in the last couple of days.

Now, Bomoni was genuinely distressed at the announcement that they would keep on, and his anxious glance traveled about the circle.

Loring was tall and fair, though now his skin was as brown as a berry, and his rudely cut beard faded by the fierce sun.

Brailey, who was already famous as a naturalist, was short and spare, his intensely black hair and eyes suggesting a Spanish rather than his New England ancestry; but Carlin frankly betrayed his Teutonic strain in the clear skin and blue eyes, to say nothing of a tendency toward stoutness that did not, as a rule, hamper the rapidity of his locomotion.

All three were alert and reliant, and Bomoni nodded approvingly, though he scowled when his glance rested on Kassonga, the last of this oddly assorted quartet.

In the mission school Kassonga had been educated with especial care in the hope that he would become a native missionary. He had learned English and French and the Congo dialects at the same time; but, after a brief service as a missionary, he had become a backslider, and he turned his knowledge of the explored Congo to good use as a guide. He was boastful and overbearing to his own people, but he was reliable and faithful, and Loring trusted much to him.

"At least you will rest before you start this trip," pleaded Bomoni. "Two or three days will not matter much, and meanwhile you can gain the strength you may need."

Loring turned to his companions for their opinions. No word was said, but glances spoke, and in a moment he turned to the chief.

"We appreciate your hospitality," he said quietly, "and some day I hope that we may be able to avail ourselves of it, but now we are anxious to get ahead. We have heard of a tribe called Mongoba that lives far to the northeast. Perhaps it is they who you mean. They are not bad fellows, but hairy men and tall."

"You shall hear," declared Bomoni as he called to the guard who stood a little distance away.

The man darted off, and presently others began to arrive at the circle—the men who had seen, or who at least had been in the territory of the monkey-men. They were agreed that the country was held by men little better than ourangs, who ruthlessly slayed all who crossed their path, and each spoke shudderingly of the man who after fifteen months had returned to die, too stricken by his experiences to give a coherent story, and able only to utter raving cries of warning against tresspass in the land where terrible things were done.

"It must be a pretty able bunch to shock these natives," Carlin declared, summing up the opinion of the rest. "If we do get through, we'll have an interesting tale to tell. What was that you said about the white Obeah, Bomoni?"

"He spoke only of the great white god, who made strange sacrifice," explained Bomoni.

"I wonder if some renegade explorer is mixed up in this," mused Carlin. "The obeah worship is really the voodoo of the Southern States. Perhaps some chap who had a reason for hiding picked out Central Africa long years ago and set up shop as a god.

"Down on the coast they were telling something about a threatened voodoo uprising. Perhaps our white friend is at the bottom of all that. A clever conjurer, for instance, could give some mighty interesting kinks to the voodoo worship."

"If there is a white man at the bottom of this, we'll see presently. "Let's turn in. We will make an early start in the morning."

The three white men nodded a pleasant "Good night" to the aged chief, and went off toward the hut which he had assigned them, but Kassonga lingered long at the fire, talking with the natives, for there were many things about the journey that he wished to know. He seemed scarcely to have slept at all, when he was awakened by a cry from Loring, and sprang up to make his rapid toilet.

Loring had apportioned the ammunition into three parcels, leaving but one gun and a revolver apiece, and giving the rest to Bomoni. Some salt and hardtack and a few simple medicines completed the outfit, and even the tent was left behind.

Bomoni headed the crowd of grateful natives, who accompanied them as far as the edge of the jungle, and there the last farewells were said, and the four pushed into the tangled undergrowth that surrounded the place.

As they were lost in the brush there came the sound of a monotonous chant, and Loring turned to Kassonga.

"What is that?" he asked curiously.

"Only a good-by song," was the prompt response, and Carlin eyed the native curiously.

He alone of the whites knew what Kassonga knew—that it was the death-song that is chanted over the brave warriors who die in battle. It was evident that Bomoni was sincere in his belief that danger lay ahead.

II.

ALL through the day the party pressed on through the tangle of jungle undergrowth, keeping when possible to the river-bank, but frequently making a short cut that materially aided their progress.

It was well past noon when the first stop was made, for the thick growth of forest formed an almost impenetrable canopy overhead, and tempered the fierce heat of the equatorial sun.

Kassonga had brought down half a dozen small birds, and Carlin declared some wild yams to be of the edible species, so at the halt they made a meal; and, after a rest and a dip in the stream, they pushed on again, anxious to press forward as rapidly as possible.

To Carlin it seemed as though the murmur of the river over its rocky bed, the sighing of the occasional gust of wind through the trees, the very sound of their footfalls repeated the dreary dirge that had been their farewell; and he, above all of them, was anxious to leave behind the gloomy forest, even though it facilitated their progress.

From the reports of the various survivors of exploring expeditions from Bomoni's tribe it was apparent that, once the jungle was passed, there was a mountain-chain to be scaled, and Kassonga's aim was to reach a point where the passage of the barrier would offer the least impediment to their progress.

No mountains were charted on the maps, but Kassonga put small faith in maps, and hurried the party ahead as rapidly as possible, though at best their progress was slow through the tangled brush. They found none of the native paths, such as exist between towns, and which the feet of countless generations have beaten into permanent ways.

For full five days they traveled without discovering a trace of human habitation, though from all accounts of the natives there were less than fifty miles of neutral territory, and the expedition had averaged fifteen miles a day. It was in the morning of the sixth day that Kassonga turned sharply aside from the path and clambered into a tree, from which he presently descended, bearing a fragment of cloth, rude in texture, but unmistakably of European origin.

"I have said nothing," he explained, "but for two days past we have been followed. We see none, and none we hear, but always they are there. Last night on my watch I could swear that I saw a figure move among the trees. But though with the light I searched through the soft earth, not a trace of footprints could I find. Here, too, there are no footprints but the cloth. It is not the native cloth."

"Our friends, *messieurs* the monkeys?" asked Carlin laughingly.

There was no laughter in Kassonga's face as he nodded assent.

"They do not strike," he murmured

uneasily. "Perhaps they delay that they may be saved the trouble of carrying us. They make us prisoners only when we are close to their great town."

"Then there is a great town?" asked Loring.

"Where is the great white Obeah," explained Kassonga. "No man has seen, but—it is the way of Obeah."

"Kind of funny if we should fall into the headquarters of this new obeah movement we heard of on the coast," suggested Brailey. "Professor Smolak, at Boma, assured me that the entire center of Africa would some day rise in revolt against the intrusion of the railroad and civilization."

"You said you wanted excitement," reminded Carlin. "You are liable to have it delivered in wholesale quantities."

"Nothing to it," insisted Loring; "but if they are waiting to get us in the open, it looks as though they would not have long to wait. The open spaces are growing more frequent."

Kassonga nodded. "By evening we should be out of the jungle," he assented. "We camp to-night in the open."

Carlin brightened up at the announcement. The gloom of the jungle was depressing, and he would be glad even for the equatorial heat after the dank, unwholesome coolness of the shade. In his eagerness he pressed forward beside Kassonga, instead of lagging behind to examine the new growths he found.

Kassonga proved a true prophet, for just before the tropical night set in, with but the briefest interval of twilight, they passed the last of the thick growth, and stood on the edge of a vast plain that led to the foot of the uncharted range.

From northeast to southwest, as far as the eye could reach, the range stood like an impenetrable wall, and a little to the north of their position there rose a single peak fully two thousand feet above the rest.

"Here's a chance to chart Central Africa," declared Loring, as he threw down his gun and pack. "From the top of that peak we can make a map of this section that will add whole pages to the geographies."

"I'm more interested in supper," declared Carlin with a yawn, as he threw himself upon the turf. "It will be a terrific climb, Tom, and you won't see much when you get to the top. Take it easy, man. It's a long walk to Albert Edward still. Don't let's get away on any 'Seeing Africa' trips, unless we can get the automobile that goes with it."

Loring laughed at the suggestion, but the firm lips met over the white, even teeth, and Carlin groaned. There was little to interest a botanist on the top of a mountain, and he hated climbing, as all stout men do, but he knew that Loring would go, and that it would be well to acquiesce.

All that night they kept double watch—Brailey and Kassonga, Loring and Carlin. The finding of the cotton cloth so far in the interior, the trackers who left no prints, combined with the stories they had heard at Boma and in the interior, left them restless and uncertain.

It was the time of the full moon, and as they sat back to back they could sweep the horizon. The watchers were far enough away from the sleepers to be able to converse in low tones, and to Carlin, Loring in their watch confided his plans.

"We can't hope to meet force with force," he continued, "but we may be able to learn something and pass it along to the authorities. The best way is to keep on in our rôles of travelers and leave definite investigating alone."

"Including that mountain inquisition?" he asked hopefully, but Carlin laughed.

"That fits our incognito as travelers," he explained. "We'll be on top of that peak day after to-morrow. Come on, old man, it's our turn to sleep." And he led the way to the sleepers to rouse Brailey and Kassonga.

Loring did not quite make good his promise, for the end of the second day found them no farther than the foot of the range whence Mount Loring, as Brailey insisted it should be charted, towered majestically against the evening sky.

Game was plentiful, and there was an abundance of fish in the clear stream that evidently was one of the feeders of the river that led to the Congo. Loring assented to the suggestion that they rest for a day, and even he appreciated the luxury of inaction after their arduous trip, but on the following morning he

roused to action, and insisted upon a start even before the sun was up.

It took but a moment to break camp, and presently they were clambering over the rocks, which Brailey, too, who was something of a geologist, declared to be of volcanic origin.

The ascent was a task of far greater difficulty than they had anticipated, and night fell with but two-thirds of the journey made. They had passed beyond the source of the stream which gushed out of the side of the mountain, and Kassonga was sent back to fill the water-bottles, while Carlin set about building a fire from the scanty stock of wood, and Loring and Brailey gathered brush for beds on the hard rock.

"Lucky it's the dry season," grunted Carlin to himself, as he built the tiny fire.

"I shouldn't fancy camping out here without a tent in the rain."

"It will be easier going down," suggested Loring, who came up in time to hear the remark. "Brailey and I think we have found a sort of track more to the north. We'll be at the top by noon to-morrow."

"Let's hope so," assented Carlin devoutly, as he glanced at his shoes, torn and cut by contact with the trap-rock. "Next time I travel on a trip like this you'll have to build a funicular."

"Think of what's at the top," reminded Loring, alluding to the probability of their being able to see their goal from the peak.

The speech came back to him the next morning as he gained the crest, to find it the rim of an ancient crater.

"Hurry up, boys," he called back, as he unslung his glasses. "We've climbed over Africa into Louisiana."

The others hurried forward, and presently stood beside their leader on the edge of the long extinct crater.

They looked down into a valley roughly circular in outline, and some twelve miles in diameter, the upper part of which was covered by a dense growth of trees, from which emerged a broad stream, evidently the same which they found gushing out of the side of the mountain, for there was no break in the rocky wall.

The sides of the hill were thickly timbered, but the center formed a level valley, part of which was covered by fields of cotton, while an artificial marsh formed a broad rice-field.

In the center the stream broadened into a lake, and on the shores of this were rows of huts similar to the slave-barracks of *ante-bellum* days, while in front stood the "big house," a low, rambling structure that might have been transplanted bodily from some Mississippi bayou.

Kassonga glanced inquiringly at Loring, who nodded, and presently they were descending the steep slope, tearing their way over the loose stones, utterly unconscious of the falls they were sustaining.

It was better when they reached the timber, for the fallen leaves provided a surer footing; and a little later they encountered a rude path, apparently an equestrian road, for the beaten earth was marked by hoof-prints, and even as they bent over these the thud of an approaching animal was heard.

The four faced the direction of the sound, with their guns ready for action, but dropped their weapons shamefacedly when round a turn in the road there cantered a girl riding upon a powerful black. She reined her mount in as she came upon the four.

III.

"How come you here?" gasped the girl when she had recovered from her first shock of surprise.

Loring's sweeping gesture appeared to take in the entire continent.

"From all over," he explained. "We came up the Congo by boat, but our bearers would not continue when they heard that we were to cross to the sources of the Nile.

"We could not replace them from the other tribes, for it was told that there was mighty magic in the path. We did not anticipate that the mighty magic would take the guise of an American plantation presided over by a fairy goddess."

"It would have been well if you had shared the terror of the natives," she said seriously. "There is some blight upon the land."

"We are in search of adventure," re-

minded Loring. "Since there are Europeans so far inland, we would be discourteous indeed did we fail to pay our respects."

"There is but my father and myself. I am Mona Carroll," announced the girl simply.

She did not offer her hand, and Loring had to content himself with a low bow.

"I am Thomas Loring," he introduced, "amateur explorer and seeker after excitement. Mr. Richard Carlin is the botanist of the expedition, and keeps us from eating poisonous plants. Mr. William Brailey is the naturalist. Kassonga is the sole guide, philosopher, and friend left us."

The girl acknowledged with quaint, old-fashioned courtesy the introductions, and wheeled her horse.

"If you will follow, I will take you to my father," she invited. "It is many years since he has seen white visitors."

Loring stepped beside the horse and chatted with their hostess, while Brailey and Carlin followed with Kassonga.

"Looks as though Tommy was pretty hard hit between his lungs and his diaphragm," suggested Carlin with a chuckle. "That's where the heart is," he interpreted for the benefit of the serious-minded Brailey.

"One cannot blame him," was the grave response, as Brailey's eyes rested approvingly upon the trim, rounded figure.

Mona Carroll was a type of the Southern girl before the Northern invasion and Northern conquests had spoiled their charm of simplicity.

"She is a very attractive girl," continued Brailey. "Were it not for a little woman in Boston—"

"I know all about her," broke in Carlin with a chuckle. The little woman in Boston was a favorite allusion of Brailey's, but as mythical as John Doe.

Brailey shrugged his shoulders, and Carlin lagged behind. The girl and the man in front seemed to have forgotten their companions. Loring's stride carried him quickly over the ground, but Carlin's shorter legs refused to keep pace, and presently his distant hail halted them for a moment until he caught up.

When Carlin hurried up they set out again, but the jolly acceptance of the jokes about the shortness of his stride gave place to a look of concern as he took his place beside Brailey.

"Drop back a bit and keep your eyes open," he whispered. "No. I won't say why."

Much amazed, Brailey lingered behind under pretense of examining some plants, and his face, too, was grave as he again caught up with Carlin.

"We are being tracked," he said in an undertone. "I saw nothing, but there are some animals or persons paralleling our path. Send Kassonga back."

Carlin whispered instructions to the black, but the Congo shook his head.

"I know," he muttered. "I have heard and seen. They are the men-monkeys. The old chief spoke the truth. We are in a land of enchantment."

"So it seems," muttered Carlin.

Yet his eyes were not for the side of the road where the fantom trailers were, but ahead, where Loring seemed engrossed with the queenly girl who bent in her saddle to catch his remarks.

"The sooner we trek on the better," he murmured to himself. "We're liable to stay here for weeks."

His gloomy train of thought was interrupted by their emergence from the forest. It was still a long walk to the house; but with the goal in sight, they all quickened their pace, and even Carlin hurried forward, happy in the thought that he was to sleep in a bed, and forgetting the dark forebodings in the near presence of creature comforts.

A wide veranda ran round the four sides of the house, and on the porch stood a man, who looked as though he might have stepped from between the covers of some romance of *ante-bellum* days.

He was spare and thin, and the slightly gray hair was worn long enough to touch the rolling collar of his immaculate shirt. The gray suit, with frock coat and wide-brimmed soft hat, the flowing mustache and imperial, were all a part of the picture, and fitted well into the background of the old Southern homestead.

He came forward to swing Mona to the ground as she galloped up in advance of the travelers and was ready to

greet each with a hearty hand-clasp, while he patted Kassonga's shoulder with the air of paternalism that marked the attitude of the old-time planter toward his slaves.

"I make you welcome, gentlemen," he said in the soft Southern drawl. "It has been many years since I saw white faces other than those of my own family. I look forward with pleasure to a long visit."

"I am afraid you will find us but birds of passage," demurred Loring. "We are hurrying toward Albert Nyanza and the Nile."

"I am sure that we shall find means to induce you to prolong your visit," declared the colonel with his slow smile. "Meanwhile, I would suggest that, perhaps—"

He motioned with his head toward the wide French windows to the dining-room, where white napery and shining glassware looked most inviting to men who had been roughing it for months. He led the way, the others trooping after; and presently he was busy with the preparation of an old-fashioned appetizer.

Carlin's face grew ecstatic as he listened to the tinkle of ice in the glass.

"I didn't know that there was an ice-plant this side of Boma," he cried.

"I had it brought up the river by carriers," explained the colonel. "It is a great convenience. I was here when the Congo Company was in its infancy. As a matter of fact, the existence of this place is not known to the Congo Company. I settled here in 1859. I foresaw that the war must come sooner or later, and sold my plantation on the Yazoo at a handsome profit.

"One of my slaves, Unonyi, had been a king in his own country, and it was he who guided us here. It took long years to bring this volcanic crater to the fine state of cultivation in which you find it; but I was young then—but thirty-five—and work was welcome. It enabled me to forget what was happening in my own country.

"I suppose that the march of progress will reach me in the course of time, but I shall be ready for the invasion then. To your good healths, sirs—and a long visit."

They drained their glasses, and, as they placed them on the table, an elderly negro entered.

"Andy will take you to your room," announced the colonel. "He will look well to your wants, for he was trained in a good school. I regret that for the night we shall have to put you in a single room. On the morrow others will be opened, but we have no visitors, and were unprepared."

"We are sorry to put you to this trouble," said Loring with grave courtesy. "We are old campaigners, and can be comfortable anywhere. To-morrow we must push on, so do not trouble. We are anxious to get along."

"Not a bit of it," denied the colonel. "You'll remain here for a week—at least. You must humor an old man who has not seen his kind for years—but I must not detain you now. Supper soon will be ready, and Mona will scold if we are late."

He hurried the three from the room with genial haste, but Carlin, despite the ice and the cocktail, was suspicious still. It seemed as though the colonel sought to avoid debate on the length of their stay.

The body-servant led them through a wide hall, up the broad staircase, and into a large room at the extreme end of the hall. He had borrowed liberally from his master's possessions, and presently the three men were enjoying the luxury of sponge-baths and shaves, while Andy, with a stiff brush and a needle, made their khaki suits more presentable.

Presently he slipped from the room for more hot water. Carlin looked up suddenly.

"I say, fellows!" he cried. "How old do you take our courteous host to be?"

"About fifty," hazarded Brailey.

"Nearer fifty-five," corrected Loring.

"Not more than that?" demanded Carlin, and both men shook their heads.

"To the contrary," said Brailey, "I think I am nearer the truth than Tom."

"Yet he was thirty-five when he came here in 1859," mused Carlin. "That makes him eighty-five now. Either he is a gifted liar, or the mighty Obeah himself."

"It simply speaks well for the African climate," suggested Loring. "It's absurd to imagine that the fine old gentleman is a votary of the voodoo cult."

"Yet he comes from the home of voodooism in America," persisted Carlin. "I tell you, Tom, the sooner we get out of here the better."

"Even if there is ice?" asked Loring with a grin. "I'll bet that by the time dinner is over, you'll feel differently about it. There's no magic here, except the magic of hearty welcome."

"You didn't see the escort," began Carlin; but the entrance of Andy put a stop to the talk, and they hurried to complete their limited toilets.

IV.

DINNER was a delight to men who for days had lived on what game they could shoot, baked yams, and fruit. The table was as perfectly served as though the resources of a metropolitan market were at the disposal of the host, and the picture was completed and made more perfect by the appearance of Mona Carroll, standing at the head of the table.

She had exchanged her riding-habit for the ample skirts and low-cut bodice of the early sixties. The rounded shoulders and slender neck rose gleamingly from the *décolletage,* the ivory white shading softly to the darker tan of the face. The full skirts set off the slender waist, and she suggested some old painting in which the colors were still fresh and new.

She smiled slightly at the astonishment of the trio, and indicated that Loring was to have the place at her right, while Brailey sat at her left and Carlin was placed at the colonel's left.

The well-trained house-servants moved quietly and skilfully about their tasks under the imposing direction of Andy. The travelers were sorry when, all too soon, the cigars and decanters were set forth and Mona rose to leave them.

Loring sprang to hold the door open for her, and her shoulders grew as rosy red as her cheeks at the look of open admiration in his eyes as she passed him. When he returned to the table the blacks had left the room, and Colonel Carroll looked up.

"I was asking Mr. Carlin," he explained, "to be good enough to refrain from discussing the matter of slavery. With the exception of Andy and Unonyi, my people do not know that slavery has been abolished, and they are entirely content as they are.

"To free them would only be to invite disaster. Paying wages might tempt them to look outside for better pay, and the Congo Company is worse than any slavery that ever existed."

"Do none ever seek to escape?" asked Brailey.

"Some few have sought to escape," admitted the colonel. "The result has acted as a deterrent to the others."

"You track them with hounds?" asked Carlin, recalling that he had not heard a dog bark since he had come into the valley.

"We track them — but not with hounds," explained the colonel with slow emphasis.

Carlin stirred uneasily in his seat. Mystery was something abhorrent to his care-free nature, and, in spite of the peaceful comfort of the place, he felt that the valley masked some horrid secret.

He was glad when at last they rose and sought the veranda. Loring already had slipped away, and he and Mona had sought the lake. Carlin and Brailey gave their attention to the colonel, who stretched himself in one of the wicker porch-chairs and gave himself over to reminiscence. The soft Southern drawl became more pronounced, until the fine head dropped gently back against the chair, and he slept.

"Let's slip away and take a walk, too," suggested Brailey. "We can go to the lake and turn the other way, so we will not interrupt Loring. I guess you were right in what you said about his being hard hit. If it wasn't for a little woman in Boston—"

"We'll take that walk — and forget the little woman in Boston," urged Carlin. "Still, it's better to be in love with a woman in Boston than one in Central Africa. That is, if you want to get back to civilization quickly."

Carlin laughingly led the way down the steps, and they turned in the direction of the lake, heading toward the

north, where the stream which fed the artificial pond entered from the thick grove of banyan-trees that virtually cut the valley into two unequal sections.

"Let's walk up to the banyans," suggested Carlin. "I don't remember ever having seen a more remarkable growth."

"I wish we could get Kassonga for a guide," said Brailey. "I wonder what has become of him."

"Andy tells me that he is in the servants' quarters," was the careless reply. "What's the trouble?"

"I feel that we are being followed," explained Brailey. "It gives you an uncanny feeling to be tracked."

"I've had an uncanny feeling ever since we got here," retorted Carlin. "I'm getting used to it now. Those men-monkeys are everywhere. You remember what the colonel said about not using hounds to track the slaves. These monkey-police do the work. I wish I could see one of them."

"We probably shall before the visit is over," Brailey assured with gloomy foreboding. "I wish that we were out of this, Dick."

"We'll be ready if it comes," was the cheerful response. "I have an idea that we are going to stay here longer than we expect. The colonel lays great stress on the importance of keeping his retreat concealed from the knowledge of the rest of the world. Is it to be expected that he will turn us loose to blab round about the wonderful place in the heart of Africa with an ice-plant and electric lights, and all that sort of thing?"

"We must win through somehow," declared Brailey. "Tom will lead the way."

"Tom!" Carlin's emphasis was scornful. "Tom is perfectly willing to stay here the rest of his life, and even be assistant Obeah, for the sake of Miss Mona. I don't know that I blame him. We'll have to win through ourselves, Billy. Tom is out of the running, I'm afraid."

As they spoke they drew within the shade of the banyans, and for a moment both were silent. The huge Indian fig-trees grew so close together that it was impossible to distinguish between their interlaced trunks. Some of the trees had sent down from fifty to one hundred false trunks, and the effect was that of miles of a single tree.

"I never saw anything like this," cried Carlin. "The banyan is not often seen in Africa; and not even in India have I seen such specimens. Let's push in a ways."

Brailey nodded, though he did not like the aspect of the place. The dense shade had precluded all undergrowth, and only the bare trunks checked the passage of the explorers.

They had not progressed fifty feet before there came a rustling in the branches overhead, and before they could look up, a score of hairy forms had dropped down and closed in around them.

Neither monkey nor human they seemed, but an odd mixture of both; and as they uttered their shrill cries, both Carlin and Brailey turned and fled for the open.

The shock of surprise had unnerved the seasoned hunters, and not until they had reached the edge of the banyan-grove did they think of their revolvers.

The blued steel gleamed in the moonlight as they turned to retaliate, but a fresh surprise awaited them.

Where an instant before the woods had been full of the screaming horde, now there was no trace of life.

The dusky aisles were deserted, and only a slight rustling in the tree-tops gave a clue to their disappearance.

White and shaken, they made their way to the house. The colonel had just been roused from his sleep by the arrival of Loring and Mona, and he listened with a quiet smile to the tale that Carlin had to tell.

"The banyan-grove is infested by apes," he said. "I did not know that your walk would take you that way, or I would have warned you. I would suggest that you do not venture near the banyans unless some one of us is with you. We they know and do not molest; but when new slaves are brought in, there is sometimes trouble with them.

"Will you gentlemen have a night-cap?" he added, as his tones lost their seriousness.

There was a murmur of assent, and the three followed their host into the dining-room.

"To a long and pleasant visit," he cried, as he raised his glass and smiled at Loring.

"I thought that we were to press on to-morrow," protested Brailey.

"I think we had better rest up," explained Loring awkwardly. "The colonel suggests that if we wait a couple of weeks, he can let us have bearers to Albert Lake. It will be better to wait and rest up."

Loring spoke with a finality that checked discussion, even after they went to the room which for that night they shared in common.

Of the three he was the only one who slept well that night, for Brailey and Carlin were apprehensive of a danger the more terrible because they did not know what it might be.

Carlin tossed restlessly on the bed which was nearest the window, and had just succeeded in dropping off into a doze, when a shrill cry awoke him, and, springing from the bed, he rushed to the window.

Down by the shore of the lake two forms were running across the turf.

One seemed to be a monkey-man, but the other was white, though his hair was long and matted, and the body was partly covered with a hairy growth.

The white man was in the advance, and the other seemed to be his pursuer. As he looked, they sprang into the branches of a shaddock-tree, and Carlin whistled in surprise.

It was a good twenty feet to the lower branches, for he had admired that very tree in the journey to the house. To reach the lowest branch required a clean spring of not less than fifteen feet, yet both white and black swung themselves into the tree without an instant pause.

Carlin stepped out on the roof of the porch, the better to follow the race, when from the shadows of the vine-covered wall there sprang out another hairy form that raised him from his feet as though he had been a child and flung him violently into the room.

The shock of his fall roused the others; and while Loring bent to his assistance, Brailey rushed to the window, presently to report that he could see nothing.

"It's a nightmare, and you've been walking in your sleep," declared Loring laughingly.

"If it's a nightmare, the stable is beyond the banyans," declared Carlin. "I tell you, Dick, we're going to suffer a lot from nightmares while we stay here."

V.

ALL three thought it strange that the colonel took no notice of the commotion in their room, but he did not make allusion to it in the morning, nor did he ask how they had slept.

It was Carlin who introduced the subject, describing what he had seen.

"I could have sworn that it was a wild white man," he insisted earnestly, but the colonel laughed away the suggestion.

"Probably a gray ape," he declared. "They are very frisky on moonlight nights. I am afraid that I shall have to set a guard. Sometimes they do considerable damage to the flower-beds. What do you gentlemen propose to do this morning?"

"I have suggested to Mr. Loring that he might like a gallop," announced Mona. "There are plenty of horses for all, if you would like to come," she added.

She looked inquiringly at Carlin and Brailey, but Carlin was looking at Loring, and promptly shook his head as he saw the disappointment in his friend's face.

"I think I'll go fishing," he announced. "It won't do to get used to a horse and then have to walk when we start to trek again. How about you, Brailey?"

"I'll go with you," was the prompt reply. "You know you always fall overboard when you get a bite."

"There is plenty of good fishing," interposed the colonel. "I have had the lake stocked, and you will have good sport. I have some good flies in my library."

Loring was gone long before the others were ready to depart for the lake. Carlin insisted that they did not need a man to row, but the colonel, with an allusion to the heat, insisted, and they put off with a burly Congon in the bow at the oars.

Carlin's fishing had been in part an effort to get where he could talk over the events of the night before with the naturalist. He had become thoroughly imbued with the belief that he was in a land of magic, and he feared to speak openly where there was any chance of being overheard.

The presence of the black prevented freedom of speech, and he could only turn his attention to the fishing. The colonel had spoken truly when he declared that they would have good sport, for the lake was filled with gamey fish, and Carlin almost forgot his apprehensions in his appreciation of the battles royal with five and six pounders as good fighters as the mountain trout.

He had almost decided that his experience was all a chimera, when there was a loud outcry from the far side of the lake.

As they turned, from the very top of one of the highest banyans a figure sprang far out over the lake, and fell into the water with scarcely a splash.

Brailey gasped with astonishment.

"That is no ape. It is a white man," he cried, and Carlin nodded.

"The same that I saw last night," he declared. "Funniest white ape I ever saw. Row over there, boy, and we'll see about it."

As he spoke, a dozen darker figures sprang out from the banyans and into the lake, apparently seeking to head off the white swimmer, who was making a course toward the house. At the sight of the blacks, the rower turned and made rapidly for shore, nor did the shouts of the two men have the slightest effect.

His face was ashen with terror, and as he bent to his task, fear lent strength to the powerful arms, and sent the boat along at a pace that rapidly drew them away from the swimmers.

Brailey rose in the boat and slipped off his coat, but Carlin drew him down upon the seat.

"You'd have no chance with those chaps," he declared. "They've almost headed him."

Even as he spoke the blacks had surrounded the white swimmer, who turned and headed again for the banyan-grove. As he dashed up the bank, his body gleaming from the water, he sprang upward and vanished among the branches.

Immediately the blacks followed him into the trees, and only the ruffled surface of the lake remained to remind them of the strange sight.

The boy with the fishermen still pulled for the shore, and presently the boat swung against the landing, and Brailey and Carlin stepped ashore, leaving the native to bring the fish and tackle to the house.

Andy hurried out to receive them with cooling drinks. The colonel, he explained, had been called away to look after some trouble with the electric-light plant, and would not be back until lunch-time.

The two men were only too glad to sit on the veranda and rest, for the incident of the chase had shaken them both.

They sat close together and chatted in low tones. Brailey sought to argue himself into the belief that it was an albino ape that they had seen, but Carlin would have none of it.

"Either something in his heathenish rites turn men to monkeys," he declared, "or else the colonel is a scientist trying to prove the Darwinian theory by working backward.

"I tell you, Bill, this is the home of enchantment, and that Island of Dr. Moreau, where they grafted halves of different animals, isn't in it with this place. They use human beings here. I'll swear that those beasts were partly human, and Kassonga declares that he heard them speak. It's not right. We ought to be getting away from here."

"It will not be easy," declared Brailey, as he pointed to where Loring and Mona had just emerged from the forest.

Their horses walked slowly side by side, the reins hanging loosely upon their necks, and it was evident that Tom Loring had well employed his time. Carlin slipped off to wash up before they should arrive, and in the upper hall he met Andy, who had just completed the task of changing their rooms. Loring retained the room they had occupied the night before, and Brailey had the room next to him. Carlin's room was across the hall and at the rear of the house,

overlooking the servants' quarters and the distant banyans.

As he stood at the window, drying his hands, the colonel emerged from the grove and came toward the house. Carlin, whose eyesight was uncommonly good, started as he caught sight of the face, for it was drawn and haggard, filled with a mute misery that, even at the distance, caused Carlin to cry aloud.

He quickly stepped back from the window, and as quickly completed his toilet, hurrying down-stairs to join the others just as Loring and Mona rode up and the colonel came forward from the dining-room.

Carlin stared incredulously at the placid, smiling face. Not a trace remained of the mortal anguish which showed so clearly but a few minutes before. The colonel was again the ideal Southern gentleman, with never a trace of care; and as he stood chatting with the fishermen, while Mona and Loring made ready for lunch, his voice was light and steady, even when Carlin spoke of the incident of the apes.

"It probably is an albino," he declared, echoing Brailey's thoughts. "I shall have to tell the boys to thin them out, if they keep on. There is a sort of tacit understanding that they are to stick to the banyan-grove. The field-hands are mortally afraid of them. That is why Joe headed straight for shore.

"It is a good thing in one way that the blacks are afraid, for it keeps them this side of the banyans and away from the power-plant. One inquisitive black can do a lot of damage to my generators and dynamos, and it cost many hundred yards of cotton cloth to get that machinery from the coast."

"I could swear that this was a white man," persisted Carlin.

The colonel turned toward his guest.

"I have lived here for nearly fifty years," he said slowly. "Surely you will allow my authority on the fauna of the country."

He turned toward the dining-room as though that put an end to discussion, and a moment later he was chatting as pleasantly as ever.

Carlin was far from satisfied, but there was nothing to be said, and he ate his lunch in moody silence.

Loring, on the other hand, was more than ordinarily gay, and he laughed and chatted continually. His gaiety only served to make Carlin more quiet, for he felt that Loring and Mona had arrived at an understanding which meant that the start for civilization would be further delayed.

He made an excuse to leave the others when the meal was done, and, while Loring and Brailey walked with Mona to the fruit-plantations, Carlin, under pretense of needing a nap, slipped up to his room and tried to figure out the meaning of the mystery.

On the coast he had been told of a supposed plot to make a holy war against Belgian rule, and, by an appeal to all followers of voodooism, upset the white government. He knew that a successful issue was impossible, but the uprising might retard the settlement of the interior, and that was exactly what Colonel Carroll seemed to desire.

It was not illogical to reason that he was preying upon the superstition of the natives to bring about his own ends, but he could not reconcile Mona in the scheme of things. It could not be that she was implicated in such a plot, nor was it reasonable to believe that she could remain in ignorance of the strange rites that must be practised if voodooism prevailed.

As he sat at the open window, giving free rein to his thoughts, he saw a commotion in the banyans.

The fruit-plantations were well to the east of the house and close to the banyan-grove. With a powerful glass, he could see that the men-monkeys were gathering along the edge of the grove, hiding themselves well among the trees, but not so well that the searcher could not locate them.

Fearful that they had designs on his two friends, Carlin hurried to get his gun. The range was too far, but he could at least give an alarm. He had raised the gun to his shoulder and was about to fire, when he dropped the weapon and reached again for his glasses.

Through the trees he could see the white skin of the fugitive of the morning, and now the other apes were closing in upon him.

It was evident that an ambush had

been planned, but the ruse was unsuccessful.

Even as he watched, the white fugitive dropped through the banyans to the ground, and was running across the open toward the house.

VI.

CARLIN sprang out on the roof of the veranda, the better to follow the progress of the uneven race. He still carried his gun with him, and, as he perceived that the blacks were gaining on the white, he raised it to his shoulder.

Before he could fire, Colonel Carroll sprang through another window and threw up the muzzle of the gun, at the same time catching at the trigger and preventing a discharge.

His thumb was caught between the hammer and the shell, and badly torn, but he did not seem to notice the accident in his excitement.

"If you want hunting, I shall be glad to provide it," he said as he returned the gun to Carlin; "but I must insist that you do not fire upon the apes."

"But they have been chasing that albino all last night and all to-day," pleaded Carlin. "You said that you wanted them thinned out."

"In a proper manner," conceded the colonel, "but not with rifles. A shot would bring them all about the house."

There was truth in the speech, and Carlin rather shamefacedly returned to his room, the colonel following. He replaced the gun in its case, and turned to the window to see what progress had been made. More than a hundred black apes had swarmed from the grove, and by surrounding the white one had driven him into the banyans again.

"They'll get him before night," declared Carlin, and he could have sworn that the colonel's eyes lighted at the thought. Together, they descended the stairs, and the colonel led the way to the dining-room.

"Let us have a tiny drop," he suggested smilingly. "Shall we drink to the success of the chase?"

His voice was light, but there seemed an undercurrent of eagerness; and Carlin noticed that the rather stiff drink was swallowed at a gulp, though usually the colonel drank little, and that very fastidiously.

The arrival of the others, ladened down with fruit and blossoms, prevented further speech, and Carlin turned to the doorway.

"I'd rather drink to Miss Mona," he said gallantly, elevating his glass.

Loring looked curiously from Carlin to the colonel, but the grave, unruffled demeanor of the latter dispelled any lurking suspicion that there had been an argument. He turned again to Mona.

Brailey slipped up-stairs to his room, and Carlin went out on the veranda to wait the coming of the others.

He was in no mood for conversation. He could not rid himself of the idea that the fugitive who had engaged his interest was a white man metamorphosed through some cruel process into an ape, and even when Brailey came down, he did not discuss the matter.

Brailey took things lightly, though, as a rule, he was far more serious than Carlin. He was ready to accept the theory of the albino ape; he had even declared that it was natural that the others should pick upon one of their species so plainly marked as apart from the rest; then he had seemed content to let the matter drop.

It was more than Carlin could do, and he was but poor company through dinner. Afterward, he smoked his cigar apart from the rest. He welcomed the early dispersal of the company and quickly sought his room.

He did not sleep well, and finally decided to get up and smoke a cigar.

He lighted the roll of fragrant tobacco, and took a chair by the open window, watching the smoke drift out and become silvered in the moonlight.

To his surprise, he saw his host crossing the lawn and making for the path that led toward the banyans. For an instant he was tempted to follow, but abandoned the idea.

Already he had trespassed on the colonel's courtesy, and until he was more certain that evil was being wrought, he would not further tax his host's forbearance.

The cigar was finished, but Carlin continued to sit by the window, enjoying the light breeze that had sprung up. He

was not conscious of being sleepy, but presently his head fell forward on his chest, and he did not waken until he felt some one cautiously moving past him, and he looked up to see a white apparition standing over him.

There was no question but that it was a white man—a white man sadly brutalized, but none the less a Caucasian, and apparently an American.

The body was covered by a fine growth of hair, while the face and head were a mass of matted locks from which the eyes shone with feverish glance.

As Carlin roused himself, the figure clutched at his throat, and the long, lean fingers closed about his neck with a tenacity that he could not break, struggle as he might.

He could not cry out for aid, and he felt his strength rapidly leaving him.

Then came a patter of feet on the veranda-roof, and a score of black bodies sprang through the window.

There was a short, sharp struggle; and as Carlin collapsed in his chair, he was conscious that the intruder was being hustled through the window, struggling fiercely, but prevented from making any outcry.

By the time Carlin could rise to his feet and stagger to the window, the little party were almost at the edge of the banyan-grove.

With a sudden determination to see the mystery through to the end, Carlin slipped through the window and dropped to the lawn below.

By the time he reached the banyans the little party had disappeared, but he could hear them crashing through the mass of trunks as their captive still fought them, and he followed the sound.

For some fifteen minutes he kept the trail, though he noted with dismay that the sounds were growing fainter.

At last they ceased altogether.

There was nothing to be done but to follow on, and Carlin stumbled blindly forward. The impenetrable mass of leaves overhead made it impossible to guide his course by the stars, and he began to fear that he was traveling in a circle when there was a thud behind him and two hairy arms encircled his chest.

The struggle was short, and presently Carlin found himself pushed rapidly ahead until he emerged from the grove and at last stood on the other side of the barrier of banyans.

A short distance ahead, there was a long one-story building, and, from the whirring that came from the end which was lighted, Carlin knew that it was the power-plant operated by the river which fed the lake in the valley.

He was hurried up a flight of steps into an office to one side of the plant, and found himself face to face with Colonel Carroll.

As he entered the place, Carlin, for the first time, had a good look at the monkey police. The man was speaking in his native tongue to Colonel Carroll, and stood within the circle of light cast by the electrolier over the colonel's desk.

At close range Carlin could see the broad African features that from a distance might be mistaken for the face of an ape, but it was the body that was most deceptive.

The man stood at least seven feet, and the lean but powerfully muscled limbs were covered with a thick growth of soft hair, very unlike the wool of the Congo natives. The feet were large, but longer in proportion than the foot of the native; and both toes and fingers were extraordinarily developed, suggesting claws rather than hands and feet.

A breech-clout of black was the sole garment.

Carlin stood silent while the native spoke, and watched eagerly the face of his host. When the colonel spoke it was slowly and with evident pain.

"I regret, Mr. Carlin, that you have sought to unveil my secret. You suspected from the start that there was a secret. I had hoped that the vigilance of my watchers would prevent you from penetrating the banyan-grove.

"On your first day, you were turned back, as you would have been turned back to-night had it not been that the Mongobas were unable to be on guard."

"I followed, because I saw that your so-called albino monkey was a white man," protested Carlin. "A crowd of them caught him in my room, and I could not see a white man mistreated by a crowd of blacks.

"Of course, you had not told me that

these monkey-looking men were your own people; but, even at that—the other was a white man, though sadly tortured and distorted by some unholy rite."

"Even in your own country — our country—" reminded the colonel, "the insane are kept under restraint. This poor soul escaped the day of your arrival, and his freedom very seriously complicated the plans I had made for your entertainment.

"It was my desire that you should see only the beautiful side of this valley. It was not to be, and I am afraid, Mr. Carlin, that curiosity will cost you dear."

"You want another victim to torture and make insane?" demanded Carlin, stung to bitterness by the realization that it was curiosity, rather than chivalrous defense of another, which had led him into the quest.

"Not to torture and make insane," repeated the colonel sadly. "If I should let you go back into the world, Mr. Carlin, the unsolved mystery would act ever as a lodestone to bring you back.

"It is easy to account for your absence to your friends. These men-monkey people will serve as an excuse to them. Your party will grieve over your death, but they will go on their way. I am selfish enough to be rather glad that you force me to keep you here. It will be very lonesome when Mona is gone."

"Gone!" echoed Carlin. "Then Loring has—"

"Mr. Loring has claimed her hand," explained the colonel. "I admit that it was with the idea that one of you three might fall in love with her that I gave orders for your safe conduct when word was brought that you were about to traverse the country held by Unonyi, my old slave.

"Had you not scaled the peak you would have been made captive and brought to me.

"It is but seldom that white men have penetrated this region, and mostly they were of the Congo Company and deserved the death that visited them. With you it was different.

"I realized that Mona was being sacrificed to my selfishness. I determined to let her go out into the world—to find the happiness to which she was entitled. They three will go; and, once they are gone, you will have the freedom of the valley, Mr. Carlin."

"But do you think Miss Mona will be happy?" asked Carlin. "You look at it from a narrow point of view, Colonel Carroll. We came here with weird tales of a mighty Obeah who ruled a tribe of monkeys.

"We find instead a fine old Southern gentleman and a very beautiful girl. Loring is in love—very much in love—just now; but in years to come, when the blood cools and the intoxication of love is past, there will be this dread secret between them. Suppose that doubt comes to Loring's mind, even as it had to mine. What explanation can Miss Mona give?"

"Nothing," cried the colonel. "I pray Heaven that she never may know the dread secrets of this place."

"That will not do," said Carlin gravely. "Her ignorance will be thought to be concealment, and doubt and suspicion will arise that will prove fatal to the happiness you plan. There would also rise up the fact of my death to stand between your daughter and complete happiness. It will be difficult to explain my disappearance, colonel."

Colonel Carroll's head bowed over the desk, and for a few moments he was lost in thought. Carlin, ill at ease, glanced curiously about the room; an odd combination of library, laboratory, and office. At last the colonel raised his head.

"I believe that you are right, Mr. Carlin," he said slowly. "I thank you for bringing the matter to my attention. I have lived too far apart from the world to face problems such as this intelligently. It is best that your friends should know. May I have your promise that you will not mention this matter until I speak?"

"My promise and my apology," cried Carlin sincerely. "I am ashamed of my curiosity, colonel."

"It was for the best," was the weary reply. "Sam will see you safely to the house. Good night, Mr. Carlin."

VII.

CARLIN woke in the morning with a heavy head. In his dreams he had con-

jured all sorts of visions, fantastic explanations of the mystery beyond the banyans. He was just in time for breakfast, and found the others in high good humor.

The colonel had not yet come downstairs, and Mona apologized for his absence, saying that he had returned from the power-station very late and wanted to sleep late.

"But he sends word that this forenoon he will take us out to his power-plant and show us round."

"And is that the reason for this smiling gathering?" asked Carlin.

"That's another story," announced Loring with a laugh. "Mona has promised that when we start for Albert Edward Nyanza she will come with us, and the first missionary we meet up with is going to make her Mrs. Loring."

Carlin added his congratulations with a heavy heart. There was a presage of misfortune that weighed heavily upon him, and which he could not shake off.

A bit of toast and a cup of coffee sufficed him, and he was smoking on the veranda when the others came out with Colonel Carroll.

The colonel greeted Carlin with no trace of embarrassment. Evidently he wished the meeting of the night before to remain a secret between them.

"We are going out to my power-plant to show modernism in the midst of barbarism," he explained. "Are you ready to come with us, or will you finish your cigar?"

Carlin's answer was to throw away his cigar and put on his pith helmet. The colonel kissed Mona with unwonted tenderness and stepped briskly toward the path that led through the banyans.

There was no path visible; but he threaded his way through the myriad trunks with a certainty that showed his familiarity, and in half an hour they had passed the grove.

In the light of day the power-station did not look as mysterious as it had to Carlin the night before.

It was a long, low structure of sunburned brick, with a roof of burned tiles. To the right was Colonel Carroll's office, and behind this a separate building with barred windows, strongly suggestive of a jail.

The colonel led the way into his office and motioned them to take seats, and himself took the chair at the head of the table.

"Mr. Loring does me the honor to ask my daughter's hand in marriage," he began abruptly. "I will admit that I anticipated some such result from your visit, else you would have shared the fate of many blacks and some few whites who have invaded Unonyi's territory.

"A conversation I had last night with Mr. Carlin leads me to the belief that before I give Mr. Loring his answer it would be well to explain certain mysteries."

"I don't care about mysteries," began Loring, but the colonel checked him.

"Mr. Carlin makes it plain that perhaps this question may rise later. When you leave here you leave this place forever, and what is said must be said now.

"Perhaps you have heard of Dr. Charles Montgomery Carroll?"

He looked inquiringly about the table, but saw no gleam of recognition—and he sighed.

"He was my father," explained the colonel, "and in the early forties he was an authority on nervous complaints. So runs the world. He is long forgotten. Attention is now turned to the man who claims to have weighed the soul, and that other who from a soap-bubble produced the lowest form of animal life.

"My father was the son of a planter, and completed his medical education in Paris. On his return he sent me there to study, and when I, too, came back he admitted me to his experiments.

"He had found that the essence of life is a form of electricity—the soul—the animating spark that vivifies the inert body. He sought to locate and isolate this particular form of the electrical fluid, but he made slow progress.

"He did find that the electrical current restored low vitality, and that this current was more effective if administered through the hand of the operator. The mechanical current seemed to carry with it a portion of the life current of the person.

"Elaborating on this idea, he applied the principle of electroplating, in which, by means of a current of electricity, a portion of a metal attached to one pole

of the battery is deposited upon an object attached to the opposite pole.

"He constructed huge batteries, and soon he had succeeded in making the weakly strong. We owned hundreds of slaves, and subjects were ready to hand; but my father foresaw the war that was presently to result in the freeing of the blacks, and we knew that soon our experiments would have to come to a close for want of subjects.

"One of my boys — Tom he was called—aided me in my experiments and knew of our anxieties, and it was at his suggestion that we sold our plantation and announced that we would not only manumit our slaves, but return them to Africa.

"I had just married Mona Gourdain, one of the belles of New Orleans, and she brought with her a considerable fortune, which, added to our own, enabled us to charter a steamer and land near the Congo.

"Here Tom resumed his native title of Unonyi, and under his direction we came to this extinct crater, the existence of which he knew.

"With the aid of some cheap magical tricks, he not only regained the supremacy over the king who had replaced him in his tribe, but he became a sort of voodoo demigod; and his word was law, not alone in his own tribe, but in the near-by tribes whose kings acknowledged him as their superior.

"With his assistance we soon converted the crater into the semblance of our old plantation. The growth of banyans formed a natural barrier between the placid plantation life and the scene of our experiments.

"There was a natural water-power that permitted the manufacture of cotton cloth and other things the natives prized; and, best of all, Unonyi kept us supplied with material for our experiments — huge giants from the tribe of the Mongoba to the north of our country.

"These Mongobas were little better than orangs in intelligence, but their splendid physiques enabled them to stand the strain of experimenting, and we made a regular practise of supplying our slaves with fresh vital fluid from the Mongobas.

"I think that first day you found it difficult to reconcile my appearance with my age, for I have regularly kept up the doses of life-fluid. Mona wonders at my eternal youth, but—you will presently understand why I feared to give her treatment.

"My father, some twenty years ago, installed a new and larger electric plant, which not only gave power to the looms, but which enabled us to make experiments on a larger scale. Oddly enough, he had not regularly tried the transfusion of the life-fluid himself, but now failing health made it necessary to regain his strength.

"There was one Mongoba, a splendid specimen of brute strength, who had just been brought in by Unonyi's people. He was fully eight feet tall, quite the tallest I have ever seen.

"My father decided to use him for the experiment, and with infinite trouble we placed him in the tank; but not until I had numbed his senses with chloroform.

"The life-plater, as we called it, was a huge tank of glass filled with a saline solution. At either end were chairs somewhat similar to those I believe are now used in electrocutions in New York State, but these were immersed in the bath.

"My father took his place at the opposite end, and was strapped in, that perfect contact with the electrodes might be assured, and I turned on a mild current.

"The shock revived the Mongoba, and it was well that the straps were stout, else he would have burst his bonds and I would have had to shoot him.

"Almost from the first application I could see the change in my father. His sunken cheeks grew full, his eye was brighter, and at his urging I increased the strength of the current.

"The Mongoba writhed and strained at his straps, uttering wild cries of fear, until at last we had to gag him; no easy task, for the man clearly was insane from terror. He was growing weaker every moment, but so tremendous was his vitality that he still had the strength of three men.

"I suggested that we stop the experiment for the day, but my father was

drunken with the new sense of strength, and insisted that the experiment proceed. Much against my will, I let it continue for a while; but the Mongoba was growing so weak that I turned to shut off the power.

"To my horror, the rheostat-switch stuck; and while I frantically struggled with the accursed thing, Unonyi uttered a cry of fear, and I turned in time to see the Mongoba's head fall upon his breast. The application of the current too long continued had drained his vitality to the very last drop. The man was dead.

"Hurriedly I released the straps that held my father in his seat and raised him from the tank. He assisted me in adjusting the rheostat, and was describing his sensations, when suddenly he sprang upon me without warning and bore me to the ground.

"The shock of the fall stunned me, and when I revived Unonyi was bending over me, and a score of blacks were holding down my father, who fought like a wild animal for his freedom.

"I spoke to him, but gained no recognition; and when at last he raised his eyes, I saw in them the fierce maniacal glare of the Mongoba. In that last instant the soul had followed the spirit.

"My father's body was tenanted by a dual personality—his own and that of the insane Mongoba.

"Now one, now the other, was in the ascendant; and when the change would come, no man might know."

VIII.

THERE was a moment of silence, broken only by the rhythmical hum of the machinery.

Colonel Carlin's story had been simply told, but it had gained tremendous pathos through the expression of the care-worn face.

Now he sat back in his chair, his bent form slightly quivering with emotion, and the fine eyes looking fixedly at the opposite wall.

Loring half rose, as though to offer comfort, then sank uncertainly back in his seat. He realized the futility of words in the face of such a tragedy.

Presently the colonel roused himself to continue the explanation.

"That was about eighteen years ago," he went on, "just after Mona was born. The shock was too much for my wife, and she lived but a year and a half, refusing the administration of life-electricity even through my own body.

"Mona never has known the horrors that exist here. She knows that I am conducting a series of experiments of a scientific nature, and she knows that some great mystery is hidden behind the banyans, but she never has sought to penetrate my secret, and she little guesses that her grandfather still lives.

"I have kept the dual entity alive by the use of the life-fluid, and all these years I have vainly sought some method of undoing the damage I have done.

"I have created other double-souled personalities, and I have cast out one of these entities by means of the current, but herein lies the great difficulty. Alternately, the two personalities are in the ascendant, and it is this personality which leaves the body.

"The periods of change are sudden, and occur without regularity. At almost the instant of demission it might be that the change would occur, and, instead of throwing out the soul of the Mongoba, my father's soul would pass, and leave his body entirely to the tenancy of the insane Mongoba.

"Sometimes far into the night I have wrestled with the problem, but not a hair-line of progress have I made, and the discovery that I was about to give to the world eighteen years ago has been withheld until I can restore my father.

"I fear that the end draws near. The soul of the black is the stronger, and more and more maintains possession of the body. Perhaps there will come a time when my father will be completely subjected by the black. In other words, when he will 'die,' though his body will continue to be tenanted by the Mongoba.

"I want Mona to go out into the world. If I should die, Unonyi would take her to the coast; but when word was brought that three white men, not Congo Company officers, were about to make for Albert Lake, I issued orders that they be brought here, as I have explained to Mr. Carlin, in the hope that

one of you might come to love her and carry her away.

"The very morning of your arrivel the Mongoba broke from restraint and escaped into the banyans. What Mr. Carlin has called my monkey-police are picked men from Unonyi's tribe, who, by means of repeated administrations of life-electricity from the Mongobas, have gained tremendous strength and agility. They can leap incredible distances into the air or across space, and the interlaced network of banyans is their thoroughfare.

"The Mongoba with the craft of the insane eluded capture, though at times his retaking was imminent. Twice, I believe, Mr. Carlin and Mr. Brailey saw the chase and sought to interfere, and a third time — last night — the Mongoba reached the house and very nearly strangled Mr. Carlin before he was caught by my men. Mr. Carlin followed, and was in turn captured by my police, who patrol the banyans constantly."

"You never said anything about it, Dick," cried Loring.

"I had promised not to," explained Carlin. "The colonel wished to tell you the whole story first."

"Shortly after his capture my father's spirit gained the ascendancy," continued the colonel, "and it was an easy matter to place him under restraint again. Mr. Carlin convinced me that before I gave my consent to Mona's marriage it would be best to reveal the secrets of the banyans, that there might rise no misunderstandings at a time when explanations could not be obtained. You are still willing to take her, Mr. Loring?"

"More than ever," was the fervent response. "It is a splendid sacrifice you are making, colonel; but let us hope that presently success will attend your efforts."

Colonel Carroll shook his head in negation.

"I have a feeling that the end is near, but not a happy ending," he said wearily. "Now that Mona is provided for, I feel more at ease."

His hand clasped Loring's, and the others turned away. For a moment no word was spoken, then the colonel again broke the silence.

"Perhaps you would like to see the life-plater, as I call it," he suggested.

They gave silent assent, and the colonel led the way to the small building they had noticed. A door gave into a room about twenty feet square. On the opposite side was another door, this one heavily barred.

"For my subjects," explained the colonel. "I differentiate between my patients and my subjects. With the latter, I find that the dual personality almost always is accompanied by some manifestations of insanity. Under proper restraint, and with plenty of Unonyi's men to help, there is small danger of a mishap."

Beside the door was a huge rheostat for reducing the current from the dynamos to any desired strength, and the colonel patted the glistening brass lovingly.

"With this I can get full current or merely a vibration," he explained. "Some of the devices are my father's inventions, others I have made; but the base is the regulation switchboard and rheostat. The wires lead to the tank by means of conduits in the floor."

He turned to the tank, which stood in the center of the room. Within concrete walls was set a tub of glass several inches thick, three feet across, and about eight feet long.

At either end was a heavy chair, provided with thick straps of hippopotamus hide, and insulated wires, running over the top of the tank, led to copper bosses set into the back and seat.

"It is exactly like the electroplating apparatus," explained the colonel, "but with a human anode and a human being to be plated. Perhaps you would like to see it work."

The three men made a gesture of dissent, but the colonel was leaning over the tank adjusting the wire. He did not see the distaste with which the suggestion was received, but chatted on, explaining the method of connecting the wires. He was holding both sets of wires in his hand when Loring gave a cry.

Unseen by any one, the Mongoba had entered the chamber, and as Loring cried out he threw the master switch that sent the current into the board. The re-

sistances were all thrown off, and the full current entered the colonel's body. For a moment it grew horridly stiff, then fell limply over the edge of the tank.

Carlin, who was the nearest, rushed to the switchboard to throw off the current, but before he could do so there was another cry of horror from Brailey and Loring. As he turned, Carlin saw that the Mongoba, too, lay on the floor beside the tank.

"It was the most terrible thing I ever saw," declared Loring when speech came to them again. "You could see the change from the Mongoba to Dr. Carroll's personality, and, unthinking of the danger, he rushed to the aid of his son. He, too, received the full current just before you had time to throw it off, Dick."

"Perhaps it is better so," said Brailey softly. "I don't believe that the colonel ever would have succeeded in restoring his father; and think what it would have meant to live here alone with the blacks and this poor wreck. It is much better so."

"It will be hard to break it to Miss Mona," said Carlin. "You'll have to do that, Tom. Just tell her that there was a short circuit, and that he was showing us the machinery. You do that, while Brailey and I rout out the blacks and send a runner for this Unonyi. Do you know where Mrs. Carroll is buried?"

"In that clump of shaddock by the lake," replied Carlin. "Mona took me to it yesterday."

"We'll have the grave dug there and bury the colonel before she knows," suggested Brailey. "Then we'll read the burial service over the two graves. Miss Mona need never know it is a double service."

"That will be the best way," assented Carlin. "The less Mona is told, the better. I'll go and prepare her for her father's death."

Reverently he covered the still, cold face with his handkerchief, and Brailey used his to cover the face of the elder Carroll; then, while Loring went through the banyans to bear the tidings, Carlin and Brailey made arrangements for the care of the bodies and despatched a runner for Unonyi.

Late that evening the chief arrived, and Carlin arranged with him for bearers to the Nile sources.

Later yet, they stood round the open grave in the shaddock-grove, and Loring read the burial service over the two men who had found death in seeking the source of life.

As the earth began to fall upon the coffin and the natives took up the long, wailing death-chant, Mona caught Loring's arm, and gently he led her to the house where Unonyi's wife waited to minister to her.

The three men spent the night going through the colonel's papers, destroying all that had bearing upon the discovery and packing for carriage those few documents that would be of use to the girl.

"I suppose that you will move in when we are gone," suggested Loring to Unonyi.

The chief shivered slightly.

"Perhaps, when the spirits of the dead have passed beyond," he said. "I shall come but for a little while, for the night draws fast for me. Those who live by magic go quickly when the magic stops. One hundred and ten years I have lived. It is well that I go.

"Miss Mona will leave to-morrow, and when she has gone, the House of Life, and all that is beyond the banyans, will be destroyed. Those for whom there is no hope also will I destroy. The others may depart into their own country. It is not well, sirs, to take liberties with life and death."

"And Kassonga?" asked Carlin. "The colonel said that he was being cared for."

"He sought to escape that first night," explained Unonyi. "My people found him."

Carlin shook his head sadly. He had grown fond of the black; but it would never have done to let him return to the coast. He moved to the window and stepped out on the piazza.

The sun was rising above the rim of the crater, turning the dewdrops to diamonds with its slanting rays.

Unonyi stepped out beside him.

"A fair scene," he said softly. "The poor old colonel would have had an earthly paradise here. All through the years when we worked to make it like

his own beloved plantation, he planned that he should live here forever.

"To the eye it was a paradise, but for seventeen weary years hell lurked beyond the banyans.

"It is well that it is ended."

And Carlin, glancing in the direction of the little grove where at last the scientist lay at rest, reverently echoed: "Amen!"

THE HOPE OF HURLEY.

By Agnes and Elliot Balestier.

A VERY rich fantom does its level best to make a humble stenographer comfortable for life.

CHRISTOPHER HAZZARD sat at his desk, in the inner sanctum of his modest law-offices, and frowned perplexedly at the letter lying open before him.

He was a fairly good-looking young man of twenty-eight, with no particular claim to distinction—one of the type of well-set-up, clean-shaven, wholesome-looking young Americans to be met by the hundreds in New York; and being a New Yorker, as well as a lawyer of two years' standing, he prided himself on his studied and secure imperviousness to surprise.

The letter, however, that had come to him this bitter winter morning was certainly odd.

"Hum!" he exclaimed. "Huh! Confounded curious that!"

He rose and, walking to the window, gazed speculatively over the extended spectacle of housetops, rivers, bay, and islands that his elevated position in a down-town sky-scraper gave him unobstructed command of.

But though he always had claimed this view to be the most inspiring in the world, it apparently offered no solution of his present difficulty, for after a moment he returned to his desk, and picking up the letter, perused it for the fourth time.

"'Hurley House!'" he read. "'near Rumney, Grafton County, New Hampshire.'"

He touched a button on his desk, and a girl, dark and remarkably pretty, but brisk and businesslike, entered, notebook in hand.

"I'm not ready for the letters yet, Miss Carroll," said Hazzard, "but please sit down. I've just received a rather odd communication, and you may be able to help me."

The girl obeyed demurely, but there was a slight twinkle in her black eyes, almost veiled by heavy lashes. Hazzard's manner with her always amused her, there was so great a difference between his cold formality of address and the unmistakable adoration in his eyes.

"You are from New Hampshire, I believe?" he went on.

"From Plymouth," she admitted. There was a curiously thrilling quality in her rich, throaty contralto.

"That's in Grafton County, isn't it?" Hazzard continued. "Is it anywhere near Rumney?"

The girl glanced up suddenly with a look that might almost be called alarm.

"Rumney?" she repeated. "Why, yes; there are two or three of them—West Rumney, and Rumney Depot, and so forth. They are all about fifteen miles from Plymouth—northwest."

"This letter is from some one," began Hazzard, "who signs him or herself—I can't make out which—Hope Hurley, of Hurley House. The name — why, what is it, Miss Carroll; are you ill?"

The girl had suddenly turned very pale, and uttered an exclamation, half fear, half astonishment, all horror.

"No! No!" she gasped, recovering herself with an effort. "How foolish of me—I—I used to live near there—it startled me—old associations, you know. Please go on."

"No," he protested earnestly, "we'll drop the confounded thing — I'm hor-

ribly sorry, Miss Carroll — I didn't know."

"Of course you didn't," replied Miss Carroll gently, quite herself now. "It was only my silliness. Please go on, Mr. Hazzard; I am really anxious to hear the rest."

Hazzard looked at her doubtfully.

"Well," he said reluctantly, "I'll read the letter. It really isn't so very mysterious—except in the directions, and the fact that it is addressed to me."

He took up the letter.

"Queer, cramped old hand, too," he added. "And I can't quite make out the signature; there seems to be a middle initial; an 'H' or 'S,' though it looks more like a small 'of.' It isn't clear like the rest." He began the letter:

Christopher Hazzard, Esq.,
Attorney at Law,
Singer Building,
New York, N. Y.

HONORED SIR:

Doubtless this communication from one you deem a stranger will surprise you; but believe me, my dear sir, you are not unknown to me, and I have reason to believe that I may trust you in a matter of great import to me.

It will be necessary for you to proceed at once to the above address; and I must caution you against mentioning my name or the name of Hurley House to any one, *more especially in the neighborhood of Rumney.*

Above all, neither write nor telegraph me.

You will proceed to Rumney, taking care to arrive there at night. Plainly visible from the depot is the church. In front of this church you will receive further directions.

The enclosed one hundred dollars is your retainer.

Let me urge upon you the necessity for haste, for my health is broken and I feel that I have not long to live.

Believe me your obedient servant,

HOPE OF HURLEY.

"I think it is 'of,'" he added, glancing up questioningly at Miss Carroll. Again he surprised the look of fear and horror on her face, and with an exclamation of regret he threw the letter impatiently on the desk.

"Plague the thing!" he said. "I shouldn't have troubled you with it!"

But Miss Carroll picked it up, eagerly examining it.

"Oh," she cried with suppressed excitement, "but I'm glad you did! I'm glad. He speaks of one hundred dollars?" she added interrogatively.

"A one-hundred-dollar bill," replied Hazzard. "Here it is."

The girl took the bill gingerly, as though loath to touch it, and laid it on a corner of the desk, looking at it curiously. "Don't—don't you notice anything odd about it?" she asked.

"Why, no," Hazzard returned slowly; "it seems all right."

Miss Carroll took the bill and held it toward him.

"Look!" she said. "The date."

"Eighteen-sixty-one," he read slowly. "By Jove! Before the war!"

The girl looked at him, a strange wonder in her eyes.

"Yes," she said in a low voice; "the year that Jacob Hurley—'The Hope of Hurley House'—died."

Hazzard stared at her in amazement.

"Died!" he exclaimed. "Impossible! There must be a mistake. Surely," he smiled, "you don't think this letter is from a ghost?"

"I don't know what to think," replied the girl rather dazedly. "It's all so queer. But—but I know Jacob Hurley is dead."

"But this isn't signed Jacob," began Hazzard. "Perhaps— Would you mind telling me all you know about it?" he interrupted himself. "Perhaps then I can see some light."

"I—I only know the story as I have heard it from my grandmother," replied Miss Carroll hesitatingly. "Jacob Hurley's father was the richest man in that part of New England. He owned the largest farm and considerable other property; and it was he who built Hurley House, which was considered a very grand place at the time.

"He had four sons, all fine boys, except Jacob, the youngest, who was a cripple—a hunchback. But, all within two years, the three eldest died, and Jacob, from being the least considered, became the first—the 'Hope of Hurley,' he was called.

"In his fifteenth year his mother died; and shortly after his father unexpectedly

married again, and one son was born; a sturdy child, who was named Philip.

"Thus, from being the 'Hope of Hurley,' petted and made much of (on account of his prospects only, for, like many cripples, he was an evil-tempered, vindictive creature), Jacob returned to the unconsidered hunchback, ignored and slighted, and receiving at the best, from his father as well as others, only contemptuous tolerance.

"Of course, he was bitter; and as the years passed, and Philip grew tall and straight, his father's idol, and popular with all, the bitterness increased to raging hatred. Then Philip married, and the girl he chose was the one Jacob had vainly wooed; and the last and bitterest stroke was when, at his father's death, he found himself absolutely ignored—left a penniless dependent on his half-brother's charity.

"Philip tried to do his best, but the position was almost impossible; he was a hot-tempered man, and more than once, when the hunchback's vindictive hatred had tried him beyond endurance, he had laid hands on him.

"One day nearly ten thousand dollars in currency, that Philip had drawn from the bank for some purpose, was missing, and he accused Jacob of the theft. There was a terrible quarrel, and after it the hunchback disappeared; later, what seemed to be part of a body and some of Jacob's clothing was found in the lime-kiln back of the house.

"Philip was arrested for his murder; but there was not sufficient evidence, and he was finally released; but every one believed him guilty; and though many considered his provocation, yet his friends and neighbors began to turn from him, or, what is more likely, he imagined they did.

"In any case, he and his young wife closed the house and left town. Then the war broke out, and, leaving his wife and baby in New York, Philip enlisted. Two years later he was killed.

"After that his wife and daughter returned, not to Hurley House, but to Plymouth. The farm-land was rented, and they tried to rent the house also—but—it is silly, of course—but it had the reputation of being haunted, and they could get no tenants.

"It was said that at night lights were seen at the window, that the fires of the old lime-kiln were mysteriously kindled, and that a strange hunchback figure had been seen, waving his arms and dancing round the house.

"Of course, it was all the imagination of the country people; but for many years no one has been near enough to discover if the haunt is still there. That is all there is to the story."

Hazzard studied the girl's flushed face thoughtfully.

"Hum!" he said at last. "You say Philip was married. Possibly my correspondent is a child of his—or of one of the older boys who died."

Miss Carroll shook her head decidedly.

"No," she answered. "Philip's only child was a girl. The boys who died were little more than children. There is no one else."

"But, my dear girl," insisted Hazzard, "there must be, unless this chap"—he tapped the letter—"is a rank impostor; and if so—why?

"My two years of practise, while sufficiently successful to keep the wolf from the door, have not been lucrative enough to tempt kidnapers, especially kidnapers with hundred-dollar retainers. The date of the bill is probably pure coincidence. I dare say there are a good many older notes than this in existence.

"And as to ghosts, they write letters for revenue only at spiritualistic séances. Anyway, I will keep the appointment."

"Oh, but you must not!" cried Miss Carroll, seizing his arm in sudden terror. "Mr. Hazzard, you must not go! I—I don't know why I fear, but do not go to that terrible place!"

Hazzard laughed and patted the hand on his arm soothingly.

"Why, Miss Carroll," he said gaily, "I always thought you the most matter-of-fact person. Come! There won't be the least danger."

But the girl was very much in earnest.

"You must not go!" she repeated firmly. "Tell me you won't, Mr. Hazzard. Send back the money and don't go—for—for my sake!"

Hazzard suddenly possessed himself of the hand on his arm.

"Do you mean that, Cecily?" he asked earnestly.

But the girl drew back, flushing slightly.

"Please don't," she said gravely. "We have settled all this before, and it isn't kind to take advantage of my anxiety."

"But why won't you marry me, Cecily?" Hazzard persisted, the letter forgotten. "There is no reason at all—if you love me."

"There is a reason," replied Miss Carroll gravely. "A reason which I at least consider sufficient to prevent my marrying you—or any other man. But," she added gently, "promise me you will not go."

Hazzard rose abruptly.

"I think you might tell me your reasons and allow me to judge," he said impatiently. "I'm going to take the midnight train to Boston, and go to Plymouth in the morning."

He strode angrily out of the office.

Hazzard's relations with his secretary were somewhat out of the ordinary, in the fact that Miss Carroll was an intimate school-friend of his sister's; and it was at the latter's request that he had given Cecily the position a year before (after her father's death), at a time when his practise did not absolutely warrant the luxury.

There was, as Hazzard said, no reason on earth why she should not marry him, if she loved him. Her repeated refusal to say whether she did or not, or to give any answer other than that there was an obstacle to her every marrying any one, he considered unfair and foolish.

II.

TRUE to his word, Hazzard took the midnight train to Boston and a morning train to Plymouth.

Miss Carroll had said nothing further of the letters, going about her secretarial duties with a gently reproachful silence that irritated her young employer greatly.

He arrived at Plymouth in the afternoon, waiting there for a train that would bring him to Rumney after dark; so it was long after nine o'clock when he finally stood on the platform of Rumney Depot.

It was a cold, still night; and though there was no snow, the frozen ground gleamed white and sparkling with frost under the December moon. Far up the road the tall spire of the church rose ghostly above the leafless trees, sentinels over the silent houses.

He had left his suit-case at the hotel in Plymouth, carrying with him only a stout stick; so, slipping his revolver into an outer pocket, he buttoned his fur coat closely round him and set off boldly toward the white spire.

In front of the church he paused, glancing sharply round.

No one was in sight, and only the weird rustling of the dried leaves beneath his feet disturbed the silence; for several moments he paced slowly up and down, still no one appeared.

Could it be possible, he thought, that the whole thing was a hoax—yet practical jokers of that sort did not spend money on their victims.

Suddenly from above him a volume of sound boomed forth, cleaving the still cold air like a cannon-shot, and for an instant his heart stood still; indeed, it was not until the second stroke that he realized that it was only the church clock striking ten.

He stood still, looking up at the clock's face, plainly visible in the moonlight, until the last reverberant stroke died away; then, as he was about to resume his pacing, a figure, squat and shapeless, detached itself from the shadow of the church and came toward him.

"I'd about given you up," began Hazzard, advancing.

At his first word the figure stopped short, its arms waving frantically above its head. Then, with a strange, wild cry, it sped swiftly up the white road.

Without a moment's hesitation Hazzard followed; he was uncertain whether the cry and motions were an invitation or not, but his curiosity was roused, and though the uncouth, bat-like figure set a rapid pace, he managed to keep it in sight for a mile or more, until, with another animal-like cry, it suddenly turned toward the side of the road and disappeared.

For a moment the young lawyer was conscious of a distinctly unpleasant sensation. So far as he could see, the road ran straight before him, between high stone walls, bordering open fields, the

only trees anywhere near being a grove upon a knoll some three or four hundred feet back from the road.

But as he reached the spot where the strange figure had disappeared, he saw that there was a break of some twenty-five feet in the wall, and that a grass-grown but well-defined lane ran upward toward the knoll and grove, in the midst of which he now made out the black outlines of a great square house.

"Hurley House, I'll bet!" he exclaimed, and the next moment he was hurrying up the lane.

On nearer approach he saw that the house was a massive stone structure, set in an orchard of gnarled and twisted apple-trees. A wooden ell sagged away from it helplessly, and beyond, on the farther side, a great barn and half a dozen smaller outbuildings staggered drunken and broken-backed on their foundations.

It was a picturesque ruin, but, by moonlight, somewhat uncanny. The lower windows were all heavily shuttered, but, above, the black yawning spaces, from which the frames had long since rotted, stared at him unpleasantly, and the black shadows of the apple-trees, grotesque and misshapen, were grimly suggestive of many things.

But most oppressive of all, in this scene of desolation, was the silence; to his city-bred ears it seemed charged with some subtle mystery, brooding, watchful, almost alive.

Hazzard, however, was there for a purpose — he intended to discover who had written that letter, and if the person were in Hurley House, to have him or her out. So, taking a firm grip on his stick, he mounted the two huge slabs of granite that served as front steps and, lifting the iron latch, pushed against the heavy oaken door.

Somewhat to his surprise it gave easily, allowing a rush of musty, cellar-like air to escape. Feeling carefully with his stick for any rotten board, Hazzard cautiously entered.

Presently his foot struck against some article of furniture, and he paused, regretting that he had not had the forethought to bring at least a candle; fortunately he had plenty of matches.

But even as he was in the act of striking one, a hand, cold and bony, seized his.

Only for a fraction of a second did it retain its hold, and almost at once the match flared up. Hazzard held it high above his head.

It revealed nothing. Hazzard's hand trembled ever so slightly.

"Hallo!" he shouted. "Stop this funny business and show yourself, or I'll—"

The match burned his fingers, and he dropped it; but even as the darkness fell, he received a stinging slap in the face. This time he did not wait to light a match, but lashed out right and left in the darkness.

A low, mocking laugh from behind was his only answer, and as he turned he saw against the faint light that marked the open door a squat black figure glide silently out.

He sprang after it, and the next moment, tripping over something, he measured his length on the floor; and though he was up and out in a second, there was nothing in sight.

"Come back here, you imitation ghost!" he cried angrily; but there was no answer; so, with a muttered curse, he turned back into the house, this time carefully shutting the door behind him.

Then, lighting match after match, he began a systematic exploration of the house. Save for the moldy and mildewed furniture, the two front rooms were empty, and he found nothing unusual; but in one of the back rooms he came upon a closet, which was locked; though the key was in the lock, it resisted his efforts with one hand, and to use both he was obliged to drop his match.

It was the work of a second to turn the key then; but scarcely had he opened the door, when there came a rush, an arm slipped around his neck, a hand closed upon his throat, and in a second he was struggling for his life.

In ordinary circumstances he would have been more than a match for the emaciated form pressed against him; but the attack was so sudden, the arm around his neck held him so close, the cutting off of his breath was so complete, that from the first he was practically helpless.

With all his remaining strength he

fought. Round and round the room he dragged his adversary, knocking over chairs and other furniture, and crashing against walls. Still the creature clung, and second by second Hazzard felt himself growing weaker.

His temples seemed bursting, and flashes of lightning played before his eyes. Then suddenly there came a scream, and as with a last desperate effort he threw his assailant from him, a light flooded the room, and, staggering back, he saw in the doorway a girl—a girl in a long fur coat and fur cap, a lantern in one hand, and in the other a revolver.

Hazzard, his hand at his throat, stood staring at her, speechless between surprise and the choking he had received

"Cecily!" he gasped at last. "Cecily!"

"I followed you," she said simply.

"Who called Cecily?"

In their surprise both had almost forgotten Hazzard's antagonist, who had fallen to the floor as he had thrown him off. Now, as they looked, they saw that the fallen man was old; a tall, lean old man, with white hair and beard.

"Who called Cecily?" he repeated weakly. "Who are you?"

"Considering the way you attacked me," replied Hazzard grimly, "I think I have the first call on questions; but as you are the elder, I'll tell you that I am Christopher Hazzard, of New York."

The old man looked up eagerly.

"Ah!" he said, "then I owe you an apology. I came here to get something before meeting you; but as I was leaving the door I was struck down by some ruffian, and when I recovered I was locked in that closet.

"I do not know how long I remained there. I was afraid to call out; and then I heard him—as I thought—and—"

"I see," interrupted Hazzard kindly. "But if you came to meet me, you must be—"

"I am—I am—" The old man hesitated. "It is fifty years since the old name has passed my lips. Even in writing to you I used *his* nickname. I am Philip Hurley."

With a quick motion Cecily set down the lantern and knelt by his side, resting the white head on her knee.

The old man tried to look at her, but the light was dim.

"I do not know who you are, my dear," he said softly, "but your touch is kind—now. It will do no harm for you to hear what I have to say. It is not much, Mr. Hazzard. Probably you know my story. I murdered my brother—yes, it is true.

"He had stolen ten thousand dollars from me, and I accused him of it; he admitted it, and said I had stolen *all* from him. I struck him—I was a powerful man then—and he fell. I found the money on him and took it, and then I found he was dead!

"We were close to the lime-kiln—I threw him in, and ran, ran, ran until my senses returned, and I came back to face it. Then, as I thought of my wife, I fought—denied it—and they set me free.

"But in every face I saw an accuser. I hid the money in this house, and with my wife I fled to New York.

"Then came the war—and in the second year I went to Libby Prison. When I was finally freed, I learned that I had been reported dead.

"Of my wife and child I could find no trace. For a whole year I searched; but the last scene of the war was on, and everything was in confusion, and I could not find them.

"Finally I gave them up as dead, assumed another name, and since then I have been a wanderer on the face of the earth. The curse of Cain was upon me."

He paused for a moment, his gaunt frame shaken by emotion.

"At last," he went on weakly, "the longing to see the old home overcame me, and I returned here last week, taking lodgings in the village. No one knew me, of course, but I learned from the gossips that while my wife and child were dead, I had a grandchild, and, incidentally, that you and your sister, Mr. Hazzard, had been kind to her."

"I?" began Hazzard in surprise; but a gesture from Cecily silenced him.

"Then it occurred to me that she should have the ten thousand, which I had found intact," continued Hurley. "But I was ill—I felt I dared not take the journey to New York—for I feared I might die before I could return; and my dearest wish is that as she nurtured

my youth, so may the bosom of the old Granite State receive my old bones.

"That is why I sent for you; and I went to the house to-night to get the money, which I had left where it was for safekeeping, intending to meet you before the church: but, as you know—"

He stopped, his eyes distending with sudden horror.

Through the open door had come a strange shape—squat and grotesque. It glided forward, its long arms waving, its skull-like head thrust forward on its skinny neck from between the humped shoulders.

Wicked it was; wicked in every lineament of the buzzard-like face, marked by every evil passion that brain can conceive.

For a moment it stood glaring—then a shriek of laughter rang through the room.

"Philip!" it cried. "The handsome Philip. Oh, you fool — you fool! I was not dead! I was not even stunned —I fixed it all—ha! ha! Brother Philip.

"For fifty years I have lived in the house you stole. For fifty years you have been a wanderer on the earth. How does it feel to wear the brand of Cain—on your soul, not on your brow—good Philip?

"Fifty years I have played ghost to frighten the fools away, and robbed their hen-roosts and their stores by night. I am not in the lime-kiln yet—good robber-brother — I am still the Hope of Hurley. Fifty years it has been mine —and now, to-night, it is mine still. Smell! Smell how it burns!"

He rushed to a window, dashed open the shutters, and sprang out.

"Come!" cried Hazzard hastily as a curl of acrid smoke swept into the room. "He has fired the place!"

Together he and Cecily assisted Philip Hurley out of the house, and from a safe distance they watched the hungry flames lick up the dry wood; and as the fire gained headway, they saw, too, the humpbacked dwarf, dancing like an evil spirit, hurling his taunts and curses at them.

In a sudden access of rage, Hazzard seized his stick and started for the uncanny figure that flitted in and out of the leaping shadows.

The hunchback saw him coming and, with a taunting laugh, turned to flee; but too late he saw where he was; he strove to recover himself, slipped, and with a cry of rage toppled over into the caved-in kiln.

A few moments later Hazzard returned to the pair by the house. The old man was smiling softly.

"Let him go," he said. "He has wrought all the evil he can, and in his last act is only good. I shall not die now; I am at peace. Let him go."

"He has gone," said Hazzard; but he did not tell them that, on the piles of brick and mortar in the time-wrecked kiln, Jacob Hurley lay dead, his neck broken by a short ten-foot fall.

"I have been telling grandfather," said Cecily, and it was not wholly the flames of Hurley House that deepened her cheeks, "that he will soon have a new grandson as well as a granddaughter."

Hazzard stared from one to the other in blank amazement. "Granddaughter!" he gasped. "You? He?"

Cecily came to him.

"His daughter was my mother," she said gently.

A sudden light broke upon Hazzard.

"Then, that is the reason you would not marry me before," he whispered.

She nodded half shyly.

"Would you have married the granddaughter of a fratricide?" she asked.

Hazzard took her suddenly in his arms, regardless of the soft smile of Philip Hurley.

"My dear," he said with grim tenderness, "I'd have married you if you had murdered your whole family."

ADVICE TO A LOVER.

By Lord Byron.

DO proper homage to thine idol's eyes;
But not too humbly, or she will despise
Thee and thy suit, though told in moving tropes:
Disguise even tenderness, if thou art wise.

THE BURGLAR'S TIP.

By Floyd F. Lonergan.

WHEREIN a gentlemanly housebreaker keeps on making history repeat itself.

WILLIAM DENNISON, in bathrobe and slippers, was sitting in his cozily furnished room, very intently conning over his favorite evening paper.

Suddenly he saw an item that, had he mentally classified it, he would have placed with "Business Opportunities."

Mr. Dennison was a burglar, but if he and *Bill Sykes* had met, *Sykes* would probably have tried to rob him. Dennison did not look like a burglar.

Mild-mannered in appearance, unobtrusively dressed, he occupied a room in a modest-priced bachelor apartment-house, and was one of the best tenants, prompt in paying his bills, and quiet in his habits.

The article that had attracted his attention read as follows:

SHE ROBBED HERSELF.

Mrs. Jessie Corbett, of No. 4099 West Eighty-Seventh Street, "heroine" of the sensational burglary that created excitement a few days ago, has admitted to the police that she robbed herself.

With tears raining down her cheeks, she told Detective Graney to-day that, having lost a large sum at bridge, she was afraid to tell her husband, although honor compelled her to pay her gambling debts.

Accordingly she pawned her jewelry and settled with her creditors. A few days later she was found in her apartments, bound and gagged.

It now develops that her maid, because of a handsome cash bonus, had agreed to be her accomplice, tied her with ropes, and then, returning from "market," had given the alarm that kept the entire detective force busy day and night. This girl finally broke down, after a vigorous "third degree," and her admissions to Detective Graney, used with effect, have drawn a confession from the "victim."

Contrary to what most husbands would have done, Mr. Corbett has forgiven his wife, and has even gone so far as to take her jewels out of pawn and return them to her. The collection of gems is valued at thirty-five hundred dollars; but, despite their value, the wife has always kept them in a bureau drawer, which has the flimsiest kind of a lock. Mr. and Mrs. Corbett live alone in their apartment, except for the maid, Mary Andrews.

"Everybody should read the newspapers," he said, addressing a water-color on the opposite side of the room. "They are worth their weight in gold to a business man."

Two days later when Mary Andrews returned to the Corbett apartment after a trip down-town, she saw something that sent her bounding to the telephone.

"Police headquarters!" she cried. Then, after an interval, "Give me Inspector Reilly. Oh, is that you, inspector? This is Mary Andrews. She has done it again."

"Who?" she repeated. "Why, Mrs. Corbett. Don't you remember how she robbed herself? Well, she's bound and gagged now, just as she was before. This time, however, I didn't have a thing to do with it. I swear it. Your detectives scared me to death before, and I mean to be honest in the future.

"No, I haven't cut her loose, and I don't mean to. Send your men around here. It is none of my business, and I am sick of the whole affair."

Half an hour later two disgusted detectives strolled into the Carlin flat.

"I've been helpless this way for nearly three hours," she said, when finally revived. "And this girl would not do anything except glare at me. She has no heart. Mary, you are discharged."

Mrs. Corbett looked in vain for sympathy.

"Why did you do it?" asked Garrity, the senior in point of service. "We have lots to do without bothering about your foolish stunts. It is a shame to take up our time in this way."

"But I was actually robbed," protested Mrs. Corbett, as she wept profusely. "Really—truly—honest."

"Well, what was it now?" questioned Garrity. "A book-agent, like the last time?"

"No, sir," said the woman. "He was the curate of St. Paul's Chapel. At least, he said he was."

"Did he want you to join the choir?" sarcastically queried the elder detective.

"He had a letter of introduction from Bishop Sigden," was the frigid response. "The bishop and his nephew are great friends of my husband, although I have never met either of them. Mr. Sanders, that is the name the curate gave, wanted to arouse my interest in tenement-house reform."

"He—what?" gasped Garrity.

"Of course I told him that I was not one bit interested, and then he requested permission to use the telephone."

"Who did he call up?"

"He rang up some butcher-shop, and ordered a four-pound steak sent to his rectory."

"What next?"

"He remarked that as it was raining, I probably would not care to go out. So he took a rope out of his pocket, bound and gagged me, and left me as you found me. While I was helpless, he ransacked the bureau, and took all my money and jewelry."

"Just like the book-agent who called on you the last time. "Did he tell you it would be fine weather to-morrow?"

"He certainly did," said Mrs. Corbett in surprise. "And added that Central Park was beginning to look beautiful, and that he hoped to meet me on the Mall some pleasant afternoon. I did not say anything, because I was gagged."

"Well, I am not gagged!" shouted the enraged detective, "and I do not believe one word of your ridiculous yarn. No burglar would act the way you say this man did. Would he, Kelly?"

Kelly, thus appealed to, indicated that he agreed with his partner.

"If you had any sense you'd know that you couldn't pull off a stunt like this twice in two weeks," Garrity continued severely. "You had to steal the same old jewels in the same old way, and you thought you could cover it up with a brand-new story. Well, you cannot fool us. Go and see the pawnbrokers yourself. Good day."

And the two detectives stalked out of the house.

When Mr. Corbett came home, he also expressed his doubts. Being possessed of political influence, he was able to keep the story out of the newspapers.

"Jessie," he said to his weeping wife, "don't do any foolish stunt like this again. When you want money, come to me. But if I were you, I should drop bridge.

"Understand this, I cannot and will not permit any more robberies. They are too severe a strain, both mentally and financially. As a punishment, I will leave your jewelry in the pawn-shop. Please, please drop romances, and be a sensible little girl."

And Mrs. Corbet, who by this time had almost wept herself into a belief that she was the culprit, promised to behave in the future.

In a modest room in a bachelor apartment-house, William Dennison was smoking his after-dinner cigar. He limited himself to three a day.

"A pretty good afternoon's work," he mused, "even though the jewelry was not as valuable as stated. Forty-five dollars in cash, and one thousand six hundred dollars for the diamonds, will keep me in modest comfort for some time.

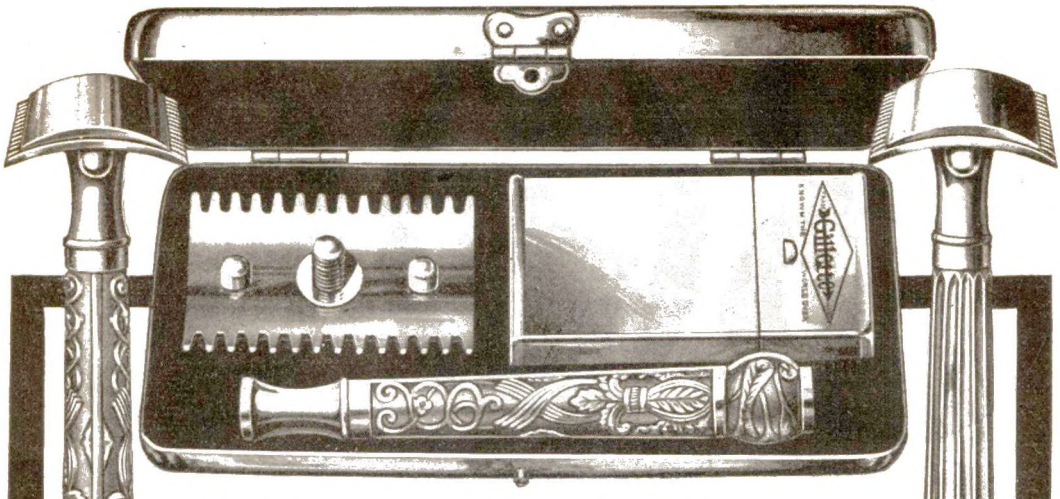
"Poor little woman!" he continued. "Still, I honestly believe she will learn that truthfulness always pays in the end.

"Look at her position. Even should she meet me on the street, she dare not have me arrested, for nobody would believe her. Nobody would believe anything she might say on any subject. Well, in time she may live down her bad reputation. I hope so."

He picked up a newspaper, paused a moment, then threw it down again.

"No more business for several weeks," he said. "I will now enjoy myself."

And he settled down on the couch for a comfortable "reading" evening.



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Supt. City Elec. Lt. Plant, Huntington, Ind.

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J. J. HELLING,
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WALTER E. WELLS,
Care of The Henry Heywood Memorial Hospital,
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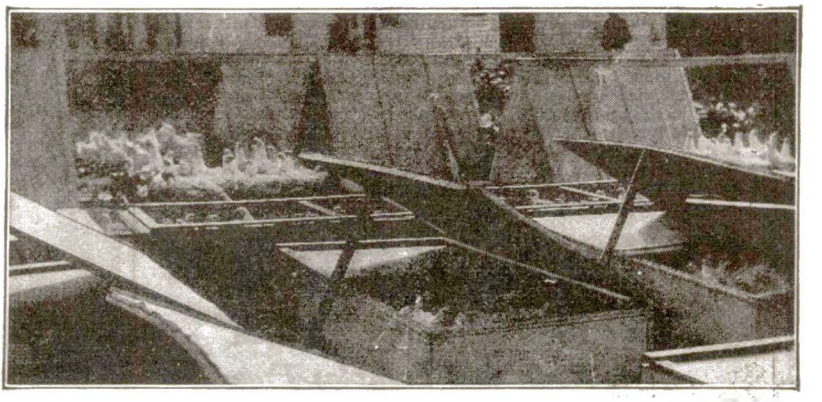
PHILO SYSTEM

is adopted.



THE PHILO SYSTEM IS UNLIKE ALL OTHER WAYS OF KEEPING POULTRY,

and in many respects just the reverse, accomplishing things in poultry work that have always been considered impossible, and getting unheard-of results that are hard to believe without seeing.

THE NEW SYSTEM COVERS ALL BRANCHES OF THE WORK NECESSARY FOR SUCCESS

from selecting the breeders to marketing the product. It tells how to get eggs that will hatch, how to hatch nearly every egg and how to raise nearly all the chicks hatched. It gives complete plans in detail how to make everything necessary to run the business and at less than half the cost required to handle the poultry business in any other manner.

TWO POUND BROILERS IN EIGHT WEEKS

are raised in a space of less than a square foot to the broiler without any loss, and the broilers are of the very best quality, bringing here three cents per pound above the highest market price.

OUR SIX-MONTHS-OLD PULLETS ARE LAYING AT THE RATE OF 24 EGGS EACH PER MONTH

in a space of two square feet for each bird. No green cut bone of any description is fed, and the food used is inexpensive as compared with food others are using.

Our new book, the PHILO SYSTEM OF POULTRY KEEPING, gives full particulars regarding these wonderful discoveries, with simple, easy-to-understand directions that are right to the point, and 15 pages of illustrations showing all branches of the work from start to finish.

DON'T LET THE CHICKS DIE IN THE SHELL.

One of our secrets of success is to save all the chickens that are fully developed at hatching time, whether they can crack the shell or not. It is a simple trick and believed to be the secret of the ancient Egyptians and Chinese which enabled them to sell the chicks at 10 cents a dozen.

CHICKEN FEED AT 15 CENTS A BUSHEL.

Our book tells how to make the best green food with but little trouble and have a good supply, any day in the year, winter or summer. It is just as impossible to get a large egg yield without green food as it is to keep a cow without hay or fodder.

OUR NEW BROODER SAVES 2 CENTS ON EACH CHICKEN.

No lamp required. No danger of chilling, overheating or burning up the chickens as with brooders using lamps or any kind of fire. They also keep all the lice off the chickens automatically or kill any that may be on them when placed in the brooder. Our book gives full plans and the right to make and use them. One can easily be made in an hour at a cost of 25 TO 50 CENTS.

TESTIMONIALS.

Bellefontaine, Ohio, June 7, 1909.

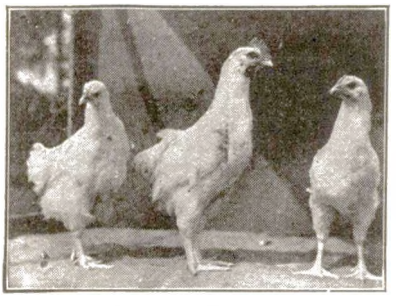
Mr. E. R. Philo, Elmira, N. Y.

Dear Sir:—I just want to tell you of the success I have had with the Philo system. In January, 1909, I purchased one of your Philo System books and I commenced to hatch chickens. On the third day of February, 1909. I succeeded in hatching ten chicks. I put them in one of your fireless brooders and we had zero weather. We succeeded in bringing through nine; one got killed by accident. On June 1, one of the pullets laid her first egg, and the most remarkable thing is she has laid every day since up to the present time. Yours truly, R. S. LaRue.

205 S. Clinton St., Baltimore, Md., May 28, 1909.

E. R. Philo, Publisher, Elmira, N. Y.

Dear Sir:—I have embarked in the poultry business on a small scale (Philo System) and am having the best of success so far, sixty-eight per cent of eggs hatched by hens, all chicks alive and healthy at this writing; they are now three weeks old. Mr. Philo is a public benefactor, and I don't believe his System can be improved upon, and so I am now looking for more yard room, having but 15x30 where I am now. Yours truly, C. H. Leach.



THREE POUND ROASTERS TEN WEEKS OLD

South Britain, Conn., April 14, 1909.

Mr. E. R. Philo, Elmira, N. Y.

Dear Sir:—I have followed your system as close as I could; the result is a complete success. If there can be any improvement on nature, your brooder is it. The first experience I had with your System was last December. I hatched 17 chicks under two hens, put them as soon as hatched in one of your brooders out of doors and at the age of three months I sold them at 35c a pound. They then averaged 2 1-2 lbs. each, and the man I sold them to said they were the finest he ever saw, and he wants all I can spare this season.

Yours truly A. E. Nelson.

Osakis, Minn., June 7, 1909.

Mr. E. R. Philo, Elmira, N. Y.

Dear Sir:—You certainly have the greatest system the world has ever known. I have had experience with poultry, but I know you have the system that brings the real profits. Yours

Jesse Underwood.

Brockport, N. Y., Sept. 12, 1908.

Mr. E. W. Philo, Elmira, N. Y.

Dear Sir:—I have had perfect success brooding chickens your way. I think your method will raise stronger, healthier chicks than the old way of using lamps and besides it saves so much work and risk.

Yours respectfully,

M. S. Gooding.

Send $1.00 direct to the publisher and a copy of the latest revised edition of the book will be sent you by return mail.

E. R. PHILO, PUBLISHER, 159 THIRD ST., ELMIRA, N.Y.

We Sell Thousands of Things On 30 Days' Trial—On Credit

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Furniture, Carpets
Rugs, Draperies
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Sewing Machines
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8 to 14 Months to Pay

Our Mammoth Fall Catalog is ready to send to you **FREE.** It pictures over 3,000 new-style things for the home. Everything in Furniture, Carpets, Draperies, Stoves, China and Silverware, Sewing Machines, etc.—every style and price. No store in America shows an equal variety. And no store can possibly meet our prices—that we guarantee. With this catalog, you can sit by your fireside and see all the best housefurnishings the world has to offer. The pictures are perfect—some are in actual colors. And all things are sold on credit.

No Risk Whatever

If you see something you want, tell us to ship it, and we will send it on 30 days' trial. Then see how the article looks in your home. Compare our price with others. Use it a month before you decide about keeping it. If you are not satisfied with the article or the price, simply send it back. We will pay the freight both ways. You are under no obligation whatever. Isn't that immensely fair?

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Three-fourths of the housefurnishings sold to city people are now sold on credit. They are paid for a little each month. It is useless and wrong to pay for such things cash down—things that last you a lifetime. The modern way is to have what you want and enjoy it, then pay for it as you can.

We bring these city credit conveniences to everyone everywhere. No matter where you are, or how little you earn, your credit is good with us. No interest, no security, no publicity, no "red tape." We are originators of the open account credit plan. You can have, on the average, over a year to pay.

Don't imagine that credit costs more than cash, for it doesn't. We guarantee to undersell any cash house—mail order houses included. If you find that we don't, send our article back. The decision lies solely with you.

450,000 Customers

There are 450,000 homes now buying from us—buying over and over again. By pleasing them, we have made this by far the largest business of its kind. Our buildings now cover six acres of ground. Our combined capital is $7,000,000.

Our buying power is so enormous that we control the output of scores of factories. Our selling is done by catalog only, so our expense is exceedingly slight. It is utterly impossible for any concern to buy or sell lower than we. We guarantee a saving of 15 to 50 per cent.

Do you suppose we could do such a business as this if others offered equal advantages? Don't you know that these splendid methods—which have won us 450,000 customers—would win you, too, if you knew them?

Our Free Catalogs

Our General Catalog pictures and describes 3,000 new-style things for the home; furniture, carpets, rugs, draperies, and all kinds of household goods except stoves.

Our Stove Catalog shows 70 styles of Empire Stoves and Ranges, costing from 89c up. Any one of these stoves will pay for itself in fuel saving before you finish paying us.

Cut out this coupon and send it to us. Do it now. We will mail either or both of the catalogs free. You will be amazed at the prices and our liberal terms. For your own sake, see what they are.

M-7511

Solid Oak Upholstered Rocker
Richly carved, golden oak finish. Fabricord leather.
75c first payment, 50c monthly payments; total price, $5.85.

E-2490 Mutual Empire Steel Range
Six 8-inch covers. Blue steel body, asbestos lined; 14-inch oven; high closet; porcelain-lined reservoir.
$3 first payment, $1.50 monthly payments; total price, $21.95.

M-6002 Combination Bookcase and Writing Desk
Solid oak, golden finish; bent glass door, French bevel plate mirror.
$2.25 first payment, $1 monthly payments. Total price, $12.65.

M-6060—Gothic Iron Bed
Very massive. Best quality malleable iron and Bessemer steel. All parts framed and jointed.
75c first payment, 50c monthly payments. Total price, $4.95.

E-3824 Victor Empire Hot Blast
10-inch firepot. Burns all fuel.
75c first payment, 50 cents monthly payments. Total price, $4.95.

E-3794 Marvel Empire Base Burner
with 12-inch firepot. Self feeding.
$3.75 first payment, $1.75 monthly payments. Total price, $24.95.

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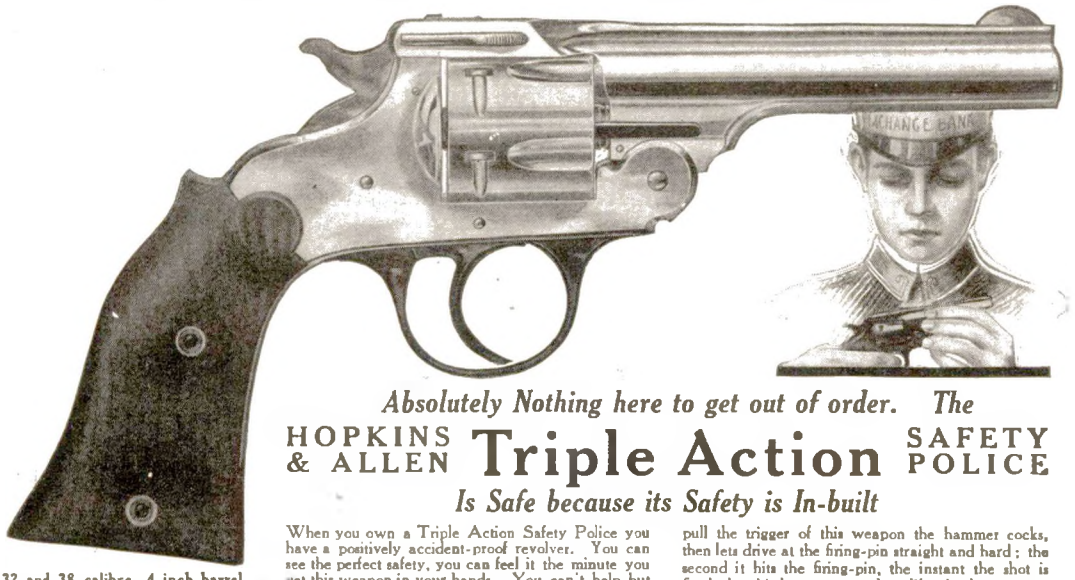
SPIEGEL, MAY, STERN CO.,
880 35th Street, Chicago
Please mail me the catalog marked.

____General Catalog. ____Stove Catalog.

Name _____

Postoffice _____

State _____



Absolutely Nothing here to get out of order. The

HOPKINS & ALLEN Triple Action SAFETY POLICE

Is Safe because its Safety is In-built

When you own a Triple Action Safety Police you have a positively accident-proof revolver. You can see the perfect safety, you can feel it the minute you get this weapon in your hands. You can't help but know it's safe because the evidence is right before your eyes. The triple action is the safety action, and it's built right into the mechanism of the gun. That's why the Triple Action Safety Police is safe, not once or first, but last and always. It can't go off until you deliberately pull the trigger. The Triple Action just means Triple Safety. The instant you pull the trigger of this weapon the hammer cocks, then lets drive at the firing-pin straight and hard; the second it hits the firing-pin, the instant the shot is fired, the third movement then lifts the hammer up and above the firing-pin, away above it, out of all possible contact with the firing-pin. There it lodges—securely, safely—firm, fixed and immovable against a wall of solid steel. The weapon will not, cannot fire again unless you actually pull the trigger all the way back.

32 and 38 calibre, 4 inch barrel, nickeled finish, $9.50; blued finish, $10.00. For sale at all good hardware and sporting goods stores, but if your dealer does not have it, we will send one to you post-paid on receipt of price. Send for our 1909 Gun Guide and Catalog, which illustrates, describes and prices the most extensive line of firearms made

The HOPKINS & ALLEN ARMS CO. 11 Chestnut St., NORWICH, CONN.

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you will enjoy the National Sportsman

Every month the National Sportsman contains 100 pages or more, crammed from cover to cover with photos from life, stories of hunting, fishing, camping and tramping, which will thrill and interest you.

This monthly visitor will lure you pleasantly away from the monotonous grind of your everyday work to the healthful atmosphere of the woods and fields. The price is 15c. a copy or $1.00 a year.

Special Trial Offer

Send us 25 cents, stamps or coin, and we will send you a copy of the National Sportsman, and one of our heavy burnished Ormolu Gold Watch Fobs (regular price 50c.) as here shown, with russet leather strap and gold-plated buckle. Can you beat this?

Watch Fob, regular price, 50c
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You Can Make BIG MONEY Entertaining the Public.

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comprising the regular theatre and lecture circuit, also local fields in Churches, Public Schools, Lodges and General Public Gatherings. **Our Entertainment Supply Catalogue** and special offer fully explains everything. **Sent Free.**

CHICAGO PROJECTING CO., 225 Dearborn Street, Dept. 7, Chicago.

Salesmen Wanted

Hundreds of good positions open. Traveling Salesmen earn more money than any class of men in the world. Over 600,000 employed in the United States and Canada, and the demand for good salesmen always exceeds the supply. Marshal Field, the most successful merchant in the world, commenced his business career as a salesman. If you earn less than $50.00 a week, send for our free book, "A Knight of the Grip." It will show you how to increase your earning capacity from two to ten times above what you now earn, regardless of what your business may be. Through our Free **Employment Bureau** we have assisted thousands of men to secure good positions and better salaries. Hundreds of them who formerly earned from $40 to $75 per month now earn from $100 to $500 a month and all expenses. Write for full particulars today. It costs nothing to investigate. Address nearest office.

DEPT. 130 NATIONAL SALESMEN'S TRAINING ASSOCIATION,
New York, Chicago, Kansas City, Minneapolis, San Francisco.

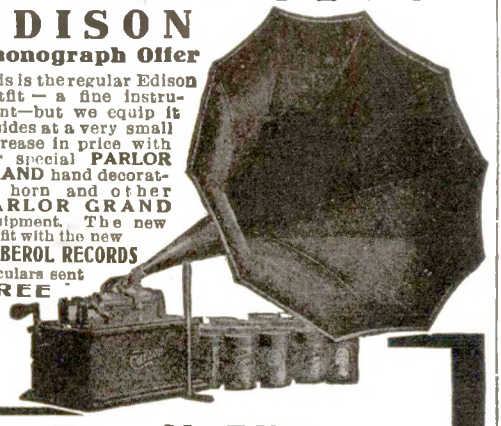
The newest romance

by Maurice Hewlett begins in the October "Cavalier." It is called "Brazenhead in Milan" and is one of the really notable serial stories of the year.

Wonderful

EDISON
Phonograph Offer

This is the regular Edison Outfit — a fine instrument—but we equip it besides at a very small increase in price with our special **PARLOR GRAND** hand decorated horn and other **PARLOR GRAND** equipment. The new outfit with the new **AMBEROL RECORDS** circulars sent **FREE**.



Mr. Edison says: "I WANT to see a Phonograph in every American Home."

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Free Trial Means Free Trial
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Try this great latest style phonograph in your home; play the beautiful Edison gold moulded records, and if *then* you do not care to keep the outfit, return it at our expense. We do not charge you one cent for the trial.

$2.00 a Month now buys a genuine Edison phonograph, easiest possible payments at rock-bottom prices—*and no interest on payments.* Our beautiful catalog quotes absolutely rock-bottom prices — the magnificent latest style Outfit No. 5 — at about *one fourth* the cost of inferior imitations.

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Remember free trial - *no money down.* You cannot imagine how old and young enjoy the Edison—the endless variety of stirring music, the comical minstrel shows and songs.

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Let us send you this Complete outfit consisting of **1 Stippling and Veining Tool, 1 package Polishing Powder, 1 package Coloring Powder, 1 Fine Sandpaper, 1 piece Polishing Plush, and complete material for Handsome Brass-Craft Calendar** (see illustration) as follows: **1 Brass Panel, 1 Wood Panel, 50 Round-Head Brass Tacks, 1 Brass Hanger, 1 Calendar Pad. Furnished with stamped design and full directions for making Calendar worth $1.00**—all in neat box, **FREE** and **prepaid,** to anyone sending us 25 cents to pay cost of packing, shipping, etc.

Ask for FREE CATALOG SA 64

Illustrates hundreds of articles in **Brass-Craft** for use, ornament or profit. The above outfit offer is made for a **limited time only** to quickly introduce our splendid line of **Brass-Craft goods** and distribute our **New Catalog. Write today.**

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"I hear you. I can hear now as well as anybody. 'How?' Oh, something new—THE MORLEY PHONE. I've a pair in my ears now, but you can't see them—they are invisible. I would not know I had them in, myself, only that I hear all right." The

MORLEY PHONE

makes low sounds and whispers plainly heard. Invisible, comfortable, weightless and harmless. Anyone can adjust it. Over one hundred thousand sold. Write for booklet and testimonials.

THE MORLEY CO., Dept. 701, Perry Bldg., Phila.

We Trust You
10 Days
$1.85
Each

Send no money, write to-day for this handsome 14-inch, beautifully curled, carefully selected Ostrich Feather, any color. If you find it a big bargain remit $1.85 each, or sell 2 feathers and get your own free. Enclose 6c. postage. Write for catalogue.

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Giant Heater

Will Make A Stove of your round wick lamp, gas-jet or mantel burner. Requires no more gas or oil than for light; does not lessen the volume of light; utilizes the waste heat. Heat and light at one cost.

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Will Heat Ordinary Room Comfortably in Zero Weather

A river will run mills by concentrating its power—your lamp or gas-jet will heat a room by concentrating, intensifying and radiating the waste heat with a **GIANT HEATER.** This heater causes a circulation of the air, giving uniform heat. No odor, dust, ashes or trouble. You can heat any room, office or den, warm baby's food, or your shaving water, make tea or coffee; and you can do these things **quickly**, for the heat is intense.

You know how hard it is to heat a room from a stove or radiator in a connecting room. The cold air drives the warm air back. The Giant Heater will not only heat the cold room, but will mix and circulate the air in the two rooms, securing uniform heat in both. Descriptive booklet free.

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PRICE, Polished Brass, Complete, $1.50 Nickel Plated on Brass, $2.00

Send to-day for a heater—we will send it by first mail or express, all charges prepaid. Use it in your room: if not satisfied, return it in 10 days and get money back.

Send for Free Book Anyway

Giant Heater Co., 52 Temple Street Springfield, Mass.

Send For My Book **THE CHEST 10c.** *In Stamps or Coin*

ITS ACTIONS AND ITS MUSCLES—REGULAR PRICE, 25c.

Contains **COMPLETE** and **ORIGINAL** instructions how to develop the **CHEST MUSCLES**—for **CHEST EXPANSION** and **DEEP BREATHING.**

The exercises are described in detail and with full page half-tone illustrations, enabling men, women and children to follow them with ease, in their own room without the use of apparatus.

By following instructions in this book you will quickly **BUILD UP** the **MUSCLES** that draw the air in and out of the **LUNGS** and this will cause you to **BREATHE DEEPER, DEVELOP** the **CHEST** and **BROADEN SHOULDERS,** thereby **STRENGTHENING** the **LUNGS** against all kinds of diseases and greatly improve your general **APPEARANCE.**

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Individual instruction for health and strength at my select gymnasium or by mail. Particulars on request.

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Needed in every home. Every lamp guaranteed. Sells itself. Ask our nearest office how you can get a lamp free or apply for agency proposition.

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Mount Birds

We teach you **by mail** to stuff and mount all kinds of **Birds, Animals, Game Heads;** also to **tan skins and make rugs.** Decorate your home with your own beautiful trophies, or command big income selling specimens and mounting for others. **Easily and quickly learned in spare time, by men and women.** Success guaranteed. Write today for our **FREE BOOK, "How to Learn to Mount Birds and Animals,"** absolutely free. Write now.

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The Great Burlington Special at a No-Trust Price!

The world's masterpiece of watch manufacture now sold direct! —

The most amazing offer ever made in the whole history of the watch industry — an offer which has absolutely PARALYZED competition — **the offer of the genuine Burlington Special direct to the public at the rock-bottom NO-TRUST PRICE,** without middlemen's profits.

The Fight is On!

We will not be bound by any system of price-boosting contracts with dealers. We will not submit to any "high profit" selling scheme. We will not be dictated to by ANY Trust.

NO MATTER WHAT IT COSTS, we are determined to push our independent line **even if we should have to fight a combination of all the Watch Manufacturers of the country!**

And so we are making this offer—the most sweeping, astounding offer ever made on a high-grade watch. The famous BURLINGTON direct and **at the same price WHOLESALE Jewelers must pay.**

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Be sure to get posted on watches and watch values, trust-method prices and no-trust prices **before you** buy a watch. Learn to judge watch values!

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FREE WATCH BOOK

Read our startling exposure of the amazing conditions which exist in the watch trade today. Read about the anti-trust fight. Read about our great $1,000.00 Challenge. Learn how you can judge watch values. Send your name and address for this valuable **FREE BOOK** now — TODAY. Sign & mail coupon.

BURLINGTON WATCH CO. Dept. 1087 Millard Sta. Chicago, Ills.

Please send me *without obligation* and prepaid, your free book on watches and copy of your $1,000.00 challenge, with full explanations of your cash or $2.50 a month offer on the superb NO-TRUST Burlington Watch.

Name.....

Address.....

Burlington Watch Co., Dept. 1087, Millard Station, Chicago, Illinois

Be letter, postal or coupon will do.

Send us your order for this $10.50 suit under our positive guarantee of perfect fit and perfect satisfaction. We furnish EVERY size, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43 and 44 inches bust measure. We will send samples of the cloth on request.

$10.50

You are looking at a picture of a new kind of tailored suit. It embodies new ideas in design, in cutting and in tailoring. This suit fits you the very moment you first put it on, because we make it in thirty-nine different sizes and shapes—your size and shape among the rest. It will fit you as long as you wear it, because the fit is built into the original tailoring. (The little picture shows how.)

We are making this suit of an entirely new all wool Venetian finish suiting with raised self colored stripe effect in black, navy blue, brown, green, old rose or gobelin blue. The lining is of a fine quality satin, guaranteed for two seasons' wear. Should it wear out before you have worn the coat two seasons we will reline it for you free of charge.

The illustration shows the style, one of the latest single breasted, straight front plain mannish coats with collar and lapels faced with fine quality satin. The two lower pockets have flaps and the sleeves have neat cuffs. Buttons are of jet to conform with the latest style. Back in latest semi-hipless fashion with two open slits, trimmed with six jet buttons. Wide facings and perfectly sewed buttonholes, such as you will find in suits at a very much higher price. Average length of coat, 36 inches. The skirt is one of the latest eleven-gore models, having full 3½-yard sweep, with box plait panel front trimmed with six jet buttons to match the coat.

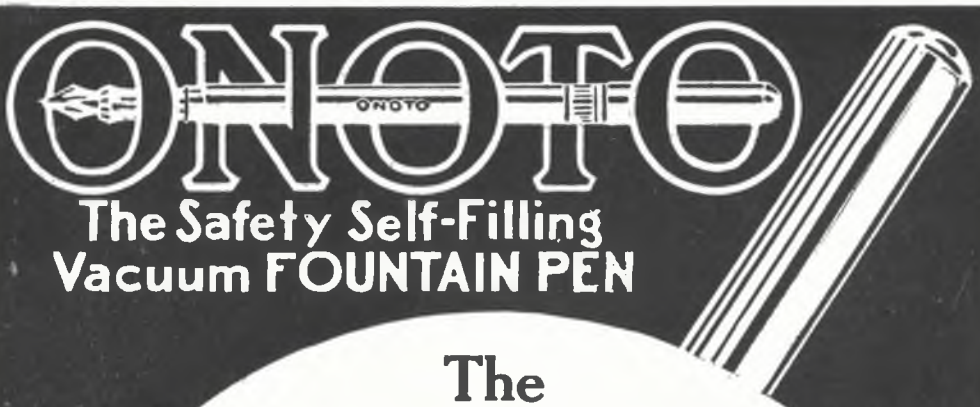
In our new Book of Wearing Apparel we show 72 styles of tailored suits,

every one representing perfection in style, fit and finish and every one twice the value that you can obtain elsewhere for the price asked. We want every woman who cares for quality and value in wearing apparel to have a copy of this book as a guide in making fall purchases. It's a handsomely printed book of 144 pages, filled from cover to cover with the very latest styles for women, misses and children—suits, coats, waists and skirts. Sixty beautiful styles in dress hats, pages of remarkable values in underwear, hosiery, shoes and dress accessories.

Ask us today for a copy of this new Book of Wearing Apparel No. **604 G** and we will send it free by return mail.

SEARS, ROEBUCK AND CO. CHICAGO

ONOTO



The Safety Self-Filling Vacuum FOUNTAIN PEN

The ONOTO has 12 Distinct Features

(1) FILLS AND CLEANS ITSELF in 5 seconds. Merely pull out and push back the plunger—the Vacuum construction does the rest.

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(3) NO GLASS DROPPER, RUBBER SACK, PUMP OR INTRICATE MECHANISM.

(4) SELF REGULATING ink flow. Flows as slow or fast as desired.

(5) INSTANTANEOUS ink flow. Writes at the first touch—never needs shaking.

(6) CONTINUOUS ink flow. Never misses a stroke.

(7) EVEN INK FLOW—never catches, scratches or blots.

(8) FOUR SIZES AND PRICES, $2.50, $3, $4 and $5.

(9) FIFTEEN DIFFERENT STYLE PEN POINTS.

(10) ALL PENS MADE OF SAME KIND AND QUALITY MATERIALS finest black polished Vulcanite with 14K Gold Iridium-tipped points.

(11) NOT NECESSARY TO RISK ruining your clothes by carrying along a bottle of ink in your trunk or bag when traveling.

(12) FULLY GUARANTEED IN EVERY WAY—construction, material, workmanship and operation.

No other Fountain Pen, at ANY price, has ALL these 12 features. Few have even ONE of them.

Yet the Onoto COSTS YOU NO MORE than the old-fashioned finger-besmearing leaky Dropper-Fillers or the new-fangled impractical Rubber-Sack and Pump-filling kinds!

Get pen-wise and get your Money's Worth!

Any Stationer can supply you.
If yours will not, write us for Catalog Z, and names of nearest Onoto dealers and free Onoto Score Pads for "Bridge" and "500"
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N. Y. C.

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