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The Popular Magazine

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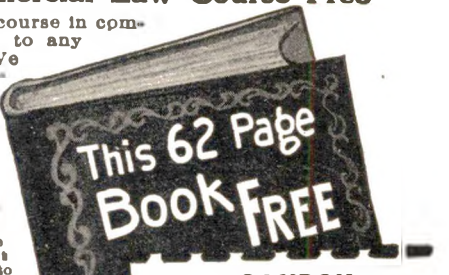

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VOLUME XXIII — NUMBER 2

TWICE-A-MONTH

The Popular Magazine

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FEBRUARY 1, 1912

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THE POPULAR MAGAZINE

VOL. XXIII. FEBRUARY 1, 1912. No. 2.

Chain-Driven

By Henry C. Rowland

Author of "The Bloodhound," "The Make-Believe Man," Etc.

Is it better to be the first mate of a transatlantic freighter or the private chauffeur of a millionaire? That was Jason Seagrave's problem: mate of a shaft-driven ship or skipper of a chain-driven auto? And the chain drive won —that and a face with appealing eyes. For in spite of discouraging adventures ashore and afloat Jason saw the "light that never was on sea or land" and charted his course by the beacons lit for him.

(A Complete Novel)

CHAPTER I.

YOU'D hardly expect a young man who'd followed the sea all his life to quit it when he was holding down a first mate's billet and turn private chauffeur. Yet that's exactly what I did, and I can't say that I've ever come to regret it.

I'd been first mate of the little *Clarendon,* carrying wheat in bulk from Montreal to Leith and bringing back woolens and jute and Scotch whisky. I'm American, of course, and hail from Portland, Maine, and got the billet through my mother's sister, who married the head clerk in the agent's office. He had often told me that if I kept on like I was going, I'd be master at thirty, and, as I was going on twenty-six, it didn't seem very long to wait. And then I chucked my billet of my own free will and accord and turned chauffeur. And this is how it came about.

The ship was to lie over a trip for some repairs, and I'd got leave and run across to Portland to see my mother. The train was due to reach Portland about midnight, and I noticed there weren't many passengers, and most of what there were got out at the first stop.

Not long after we started, I went up into the dining car to get something to eat, and while I was sitting there, two fellows came in and took the table in front of me. They were drummers, I reckoned, and that was nothing against them, either, but there was something in their loud way of talking and joshing the waiter and grabbing all the grub in sight that sort of went against my grain. Both were mighty well dressed and good-looking enough, so far as their lines went, and one of them seemed to consider himself something of a bucko, for he started in to tell the other how he'd slugged a hotel porter the day before because the porter was careless with his trunk.

What they were saying didn't interest

me any, but the big fellow had one of those harsh, raw voices that reach everywhere and with a sort of thick accent to it, like he might have been used to speaking German or the like. Pretty soon, says he:

"She's gettin' off at Deering, same as us. I seen her ticket."

"Oh, there ain't nothin' doin' there, I don't believe," says the other fellow. "She's one of them shy, country flickers, and would be scairt to death if you was to speak to her."

"Say," says the other man, "that corn-fed kind is the easiest goin', bec'us' they ain't got the nerve to call you down. Say, you watch me. Bettcha a cigar I'm sittin' alongside listenin' to why she left the farm within the next hour." And then they both laughed, and I wished that I had the pair of 'em aboard a sailing ship for about fifteen minutes.

Anyway, it was none of my business, so I went back to my seat, and just before I got there I happened to look down the aisle, and there, just behind my billet, was the sort of face that I've raised sometimes out of the murk toward the end of my watch on the bridge.

Young fellows most of the time at sea often fancy such faces, I reckon, and in my case they've always been sort of sweet looking and appealing, with eyes to make a man hungry in his heart and lips that droop a little. But somehow these dream faces had always been a lot prettier than any real, live women I ever saw, and so it gave me sort of a shock when I saw those tender, appealing eyes, the soft cheeks and tired, drooping mouth.

She must have seen something strange in my look, for she turned to the window, and I slipped into my seat, ashamed that I'd stared at her that way. And it seems foolish to say, but it's the Lord's truth that when I sat down and for some little time afterward my heart was hammering like a circulating pump, and there was a nice, warm feeling all through me. Thought I: "Then there are such faces, after all, and one of them is right here, close behind me."

I'd meant to curl up and sleep the rest of the run, but somehow I felt as if I'd been asleep all my life and had only just waked up. Besides, I was pretty tired, and I was afraid that my head might flop over and put a kink in my neck and make me red and gurgly and plain looking. Not that I'm any beauty, but a heavy-boned man like me has a sort of top-heavy look when he goes to sleep in his seat. Besides, I wanted to stay awake and think about the face behind me. I'd have given the price of my ticket for another look, but I could feel myself getting red around the gills at the idea of turning to stare.

So there I sat, thinking about her, and pretty soon the two drummers came into the car, and as they swaggered down the aisle I saw the big one nudge the other, and they both stared my way. Would you believe it, for the second it never struck me that it was the girl behind me that they were goggling at with their beery eyes! In fact, I'd forgotten all about them, and my thoughts were up soaring around the topmast truck, hunting for that face in the fog, and I might not have got below for some time if the short cuss hadn't said to the other, just as he got abreast of me:

"Guess I win a cigar, all right. Nothin' doin' in the ladies' shirt-waist line."

"Oh, I don't know," says the other, who was chewing a toothpick. "You can't ever tell until you've had a chance to examine the goods."

It sounded harmless enough, seeing as I was probably about the only man in that car that wasn't selling goods. But the bet of a cigar that I'd overheard them make in the dining car flashed across my mind, and I suddenly realized that the girl behind me was the one they'd been talking about. And just as this idea got stowed in my head locker, the big fellow slid into the seat behind the girl, and hauled open the window, for the car was hot, and it was along the first week in June.

If my back hair had been straight instead of having a curl to it, the people behind me might have seen the bristles lifting like those on the back of a

trapped timber wolf. Here was a girl, the mere sight of whose face had set my heart to milling like a bull cachalot in his flurry. She was my best dream come true, and I was afraid to turn around for fear I might wake up and lose her. And then here came this chunk of pork that wasn't fit to bait a shark hook betting bum cigars that inside an hour she'd be telling him the story of her life!

The little devils began to dance, and I could feel things hauling taut inside me. I knew that the lubber belonged down somewhere in the after end of the car because I'd noticed him pass when I went in to eat. It was plain enough he'd run into the slip behind the girl to get in his gay work.

Well, I couldn't very well get up and say: "Shift your berth, my matey; you're in the wrong slip." He had a right to sit where he liked so long as there was plenty of room, and by this time there weren't but half a dozen people left in the car. So I sat there and suffered; yes, I really suffered.

There's nothing a decent sailorman hates as much as getting mixed up in any sort of trouble where the water's shoal. Along the beach it don't matter so much; your ship's there, and they understand things better. But to fall foul of an inland party usually means that the seafaring man gets the worst of it. Mind you, I'm speaking of the final results, not the immediate ones, and there's planted in me a streak of Yankee prudence which makes me take soundings a mite before I go charging in at full speed ahead.

So there I sat, worried and anxious as a dog that sees a skunk in the yard —and knows the breed. Only I didn't have to wait long, for pretty soon Mister Drummer leans over and says in a voice like crude molasses:

"Pahdon me, but is the drawft from the window too strong?"

I looked back then, and saw that he had his flipper hooked over the back of the seat and his red jowl almost against her hair. The girl leaned forward, as I looked, turning at the same time so that I saw her profile.

Yes, there was no doubt about that being the face that I'd been dreaming of from the time that I began to think at all about girls. The forehead was low and the eyebrows ran 'way back, turning up a little at the end, and her little nose had just the right tilt, and her lips were soft and delicate as the wing of a petrel.

I'd expected to hear her say yes or no, rather short, and finish the business, it was so plain why he'd slipped in behind her and opened the window, instead of heaving ahead to where he belonged. But the girl never seemed to realize this, for she said in a voice like running water:

"Oh, not at all, thank you. I like the air—if nobody else objects——" And she looked back with a little smile.

Talk about molasses! This time there wasn't as much sugar in a Matanzas tank steamer as oozed out under his butcher's mustache.

"Nevertheless," says he, "I fawncy I had better close it." You see he was in a beer sweat himself, and afraid of a sore throat or a rush of malt to the liver, for the night air is sharp up there, even in June. "I see that your hayre is blo-owing, tu——" I couldn't imitate the son of a stoker. "You are going cleaw through?" says he, and I could guess that, having a toothpick route in the Dominion, he was trying to splice a lime-juice accent onto his American, which was the Canuck kind, I thought.

"I'm getting off at Deering, just this side of Portland," says she, and I wondered that she could talk to him. Mind you, her tone was no more than civil—but there was a sweetness in it, too.

The drummer shut the window, then slithered out of his seat. I could hear him doing it.

"Permit me to turn the seat for you since you got such a long way to go," says he, as slick as fresh paint. "The gentleman in front of us wouldn't mind moving up, I am sure."

"Oh, no, thank you," she answered; "I am very comfortable as it is," and I could hear her give a sort of uneasy little squirm.

"Just as you like," says he, in his thick, oily voice. "Ever been over this line before?"

"Never," she answered.

"You're English, ain't you?" he goes on, no more discouraged at her short way of speaking than a slop-shop dealer. "You got a real English accent."

"I am Scotch Canadian," she answered, and there was another rustle, and I guessed that she'd turned to the window. When the fellow spoke again, his voice sounded lower and nearer, as if he'd leaned forward.

"Funny, I get off at Deering, too. If you don't happen to be acquainted there, I could give you the name of the best hotel——"

"My room has been engaged for me," she answered, and there was a sort of tremble in her voice, but whether it was because she was angry or afraid, I couldn't tell. You can bet I was getting mighty restless myself. It was plainer than whales that she wanted to get rid of him, but was afraid of being rude.

"What hotel was it?" he asked. "I usually put up at the Portland House. Was that the one, maybe?"

This time her answer was slower to come. "I—I think so," she said, as if she hated to admit it.

"Good!" says he. "That's the best, and the proprietor is an old friend o' mine. Always shows me special attention when I put up there."

I heard him moving about, and was in hope that he was going to leave her alone a spell, now that he'd seemed to win his bet about talking to her. But not a bit of it. Up he gets, and starts to slide in alongside of her.

"You don't mind if I sit beside you a little while?" he says, and before she can answer he goes on: "It sort of helps to pass the time on a long journey like this."

"I'm—I'm—afraid it would be rather crowded——" she begins, and her voice sounded like she was going to cry. But Mister Hog Fat cuts in with that oleomargarine voice of his.

"I'll turn the seat," says he, and then steps up alongside me. "You don't mind changing your seat, I'm shuah, sir——" he begins.

I hove myself around, and looked at the girl. Something about her face made me almost catch my breath. It seemed like she was the woman I'd always been waiting for; always been saving myself for. That was the face I'd been looking to see these many months; the big, tender, appealing eyes, blue as violets, but darker and as clear as the Gulf Stream. The soft, pretty cheeks, and the straight mouth with the red of both lips turned out—it seemed as if I knew her. Then her eyes caught mine, and I recognized that pleading look. "Help me!" she seemed to say.

Mister Drummer noticed the long stare I gave her. An ugly look came around his eyes, and his mouth got hard under his big, curled mustache.

"If you don't mind changing," says he, "I'd like to turn this seat."

"I was just about to change, anyway," I answered, and got onto my feet and stepped out into the aisle. The girl gave me a sort of hopeless look. Mr. Hog Fat shoved past me to turn the seat, and as he did so I slipped in behind him and sat down beside the girl. She gave me a quick, startled look, then bit her lip, and turned to the window.

But the drummer was knocked all of a heap, and for a moment he just stared with his jowl hanging down, and I heard a snicker or two come from here and there around the car. Then the blood came surging into his face.

"I beg your pardon," he growls, "but that seat's mine."

"Nothing of the sort," I answered. "It belongs to this lady. There's your seat in the after end of the car, abaft your friend."

He began to get purple. "S'ppose this lady doesn't care to have you share her seat," says he.

"Then all she's got to do is to say so," I answered, "and I'll find another billet. I'm not the man to crowd myself in where I'm not wanted."

He shoved out his jaw. "Might you be meanin' anything personal?" he

asks. "'N who in blazes are *you,* anyway?"

"Stow that," said I, not raising my voice. "I'm Mr. Jason Seagrave, first mate o' the freighter *Clarendon,* and I'm putting up to-night at the Portland House at Deering. If you've got anything to say to me, you can say it to me there."

You might have heard a pin drop in that car for all the noise any passenger made. Mister Hog Fat hung in the wind a moment, then says: "We'll fix this up later, young feller," and went lurching off down the aisle.

The girl had turned her shoulder to me, and was staring out of the window, though the night was too dark to see anything. The fine lines of her throat and cheek and forehead came against the black of the windowpane, and something in the soft curves and the white, velvety skin set my heart to swelling again until I thought it would burst.

Folks say there's nothing in love at first sight, and maybe there isn't for some, any more than there would be for a crocodile or snapping turtle. But if I wasn't in love with that girl from the second my eyes fell on her, then there's no such thing.

She made me want to laugh and cry at the same time, and I wanted most of all to soothe her and see the color come back in her cheeks and hear her laugh and breathe quietly and without those long, shuddering breaths.

As for Mister Hog Fat, if we three had stood on some naked beach instead of in that stuffy car with a parcel of goggling passengers, he'd have never walked away alive.

When I told him that I was going to the Portland House at Deering, I told him no lie. I was. I'd no more have let that girl go there alone after what had happened than I'd have struck her adrift in a ship's boat. Bloated land sharks like him were no new fish to me. I knew the mean, sly eyes of him and the cruel mouth, and I sort of felt that under his slick ways he had the stubbornness of a hog. So I just made up my mind to see her safely to her berth and then put a flea in the ear of the folks that ran the place.

But there was plenty of time before Deering, and she was still upset, as I could tell by the way she breathed, so I hauled a magazine out of my pocket, and settled back and pretended to read, though what was in front of my eyes might have been the love songs of a stoker or the report of the British Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Whales, for all the sense of it I got.

It was enough just to be close to her and to feel that I was clamped down there like a steel bulkhead between trouble and this sweet girl that I somehow felt was meant for me. So I didn't try to talk to her nor even to so much as look at her until by and by I heard a sort of gentle little sound like a sigh and then easy, regular breathing.

She had fallen asleep sitting straight up in her seat. Her hat was hanging from a hook overhead, so that didn't bother her any, but her hair was so thick that it acted sort of like a fender, and kept her head from resting easily against the back of the seat, and every little lurch of the car shifted it from side to side in a way that looked mighty strained and uncomfortable. She certainly had lots of hair, and it was a sort of smoky black, very fine and wispy, with a natural curl in it.

I stole a look at her face, and reckoned she must be pretty tired, for there were dark shadows under her eyes, and the blood seemed to have gone away from all but her lips, so that her cheek looked almost hollow. Her forehead was broad and low, and the dampness of sleep was on it, so that the hair that grew down a mite in the middle was in snug little curls.

My, but as I looked at her, something seemed to swell up in my throat and nigh choke me. I wondered what billet she held in this big sea of life, and knew that it couldn't be a very fat one, for, though just as neat as a pin and all the cut of the lady about her both in hull and rigging, her clothes were of the cheapest sort, I reckon, and her little straw hat up above might have cost a dollar. Not only that, but she

looked actually hungry; not the hunger that comes of a missed meal, but the pinched look that comes of a long run on slim rations. I wondered if she'd had any dinner. She hadn't been in the dining car, and there was no sign of any lunch basket or even so much as a few crumbs about her seat.

The train swung around a curve, and her head began to slip down on the back of the seat. Lower it came, and still lower, till presently it landed on my shoulder, without so much as wakening her. On the contrary, she gave a little whispering sigh, as if from comfort, and her body settled against me in a nestling sort of way. Her fine hair was against my neck and cheek, and I could feel her breathing against my throat.

About everybody in the car was calked off now. There were snores coming from here and there, and the place was hot and stuffy. My little girl slept on like a baby, and the very peacefulness of having her there quieted me down, and I got a little nap myself, as I hadn't slept at all the night before, bringing the ship in.

Her head must have been on my shoulder for a good hour and a half, when suddenly she waked up with a gasp.

"Oh!" says she, and reaches for her hair, which had tumbled over me a mite.

There was no fault to find with the color in her face now. She looked like a poppy.

"I didn't know that I was leaning against you," says she. "Why didn't you wake me?"

"I heard you say that you were getting off at Deering," I answered, "and that won't be for three hours yet. You'd better put your feet up and take a nice nap. You look awful tired."

"I was almost dead." She gave me a quick, curious look. "You see, I've come all the way from the Soo."

"Sault Sainte Marie?"

"Yes."

"It's a long pull. I hope you didn't mind my interfering a little while ago," said I. "As a rule, I try to mind my own business, but he was trying to carry things a mite too far, it seemed to me. Besides I heard him making a bet in the dining car that he'd get to know you before the end of the run."

"Nasty brute!" There was a flash in her eyes now. "I suppose he saw that I wasn't used to traveling." She gave me a straight look, then said, rather shyly: "This is the first time I've ever been farther from home than Montreal."

"Do you live at the Soo?" I asked.

"My mother lives there. I've been teaching school at Montreal. Now I'm going to take a position for the summer as governess with some Boston people who have a place near Portland. I've been home to see my mother, and decided to come straight through."

"Is anybody going to meet you at the train?" I asked.

"Mrs. Newell wrote that she would try to send an automobile for me, but that if the chauffeur were not there I was to go to the Portland House, where she would telephone them to be on the lookout for me. Their country place is over on Casco Bay, but it is shorter to cut directly across than to follow the shore around to the city. I believe the road is better, too. Mrs. Newell said that if there was nobody to meet me to-night, she would send the car at about nine to-morrow morning."

"Are you acquainted with these Newells?" I asked.

"No. I have never seen any of them, but I know all about them through a chum of mine who was governess last year and left them to get married. They are rich Bostonians, and very good people, I believe."

"I'm mighty glad of that," I answered, feeling a heap relieved.

The chances were, I thought, that Mister Hog Fat would shift his course when he got to the hotel and found out that the girl he'd been pestering was consigned to a millionaire's family. Just the same, I made up my mind on two things—one was that I'd hang on and off until she was safe in the hands of her friends; the other was that I'd make bold to ask her to write and tell

me of her safe arrival, and maybe drop me a line now and then afterward. It may sound foolish, but I had a sort of feeling that this girl and I hadn't crossed each other's tracks just to exchange signals and hold on our separate courses.

Maybe she saw something of this in my face, for her color got a little brighter, and she said, as if to get the talk away from herself:

"Are you really a sailor?"

"Yes," I answered, "I'm the mate of a ship running from Montreal to Leith and Dundee. We're lying up for repairs, and I'm off on leave to see my folks in Portland, where I hail from."

This started us talking, and before long I learned that her name was Grizel McNair, and she was twenty-two years old. Her father had been a civil engineer, and had got drowned about five years before, leaving his widow and three children, Grizel the eldest. Since then her life had been spent in helping her mother make both ends meet and give the children an education. Her brother was due to graduate that month from school, and was then going to work with a chief engineer who had been a friend of the father's. The other daughter was studying to be a trained nurse.

Grizel tried to keep her part of it under hatches, but it was plain enough that she'd been the mainstay. She'd worked her way through college in Montreal, and gone right to teaching, and was now taking this governess job for the summer, because she couldn't afford to be idle. I was glad to learn that it was only for the summer, as in that case there was some chance of my seeing her when in port.

Then Grizel got to asking me questions about the sea and the different ports I'd visited, and seemed surprised to learn that I'd made a whaling voyage around the world and banged around considerable on windjammers. She seemed downright fascinated at a yarn I spun her about getting dismasted in a typhoon and the story of the wreck of the bark *Etta Jaynes*.

It seems the extent of her travels was Montreal. She'd never even been to Chicago, and, as for New York, that seemed to her like talking about the Hanging Gardens of Babylon.

Meanwhile we'd quite forgot our friend, Mister Hog Fat, and when pretty soon he came lurching down the aisle from the smoker—he must have gone up there when we were both asleep, and I wondered how he liked the picture—Grizel took one look at his ugly mug, and shrank a little closer to me.

"He's an awful-looking man," said she.

"Don't let that bother you," I answered. "I've had as many as ten at a time like that to lick into shape. Besides, I'm going to see you to your hotel."

She straightened up, and opened her blue eyes wide.

"Indeed, you're going to do nothing of the sort," says she.

"Of course I am," I answered. "Didn't you hear me tell him that if he wanted any back slack, he could get it at the Portland House?"

"Yes, but I thought at the time that you did that to avoid an ugly scene here in the car—on my account. Really, Mr. Seagrave, I could not think of letting you do such a thing. Besides, there mustn't be any more trouble. Think how badly it would look for me if there were to be a fight and you should hurt this man seriously."

"It would be worse for you," said I, "if he were to get nasty at the hotel. Men like that would just as soon work off a grudge on a girl as not. Besides, you've got to get from the station to the hotel, and it's a bad, rainy night, and nobody about. Anyway, if I didn't put up at a hotel here, I'd put up at one in Portland, as my mother lives a little way out on the shore and the trolley cars will have stopped running. This place is so near the city that it makes no difference."

She gave in then, especially as I said that if I saw the chauffeur on the platform I would turn her over to him and stay aboard the train, even if it did make me look like a quitter.

Grizel was glad, I think, even if she did pretend to be put out. She shoved out her pretty chin, and said that she wasn't afraid and that she was old enough by this time to take care of herself, and that it was an outrage to make me break my journey just to save a perfect stranger from the chance of being spoken to, and a lot more like that. But there was a look in her blue eyes and a curve to her lips that made me feel as if there was no such thing as the laws of gravity.

Pretty soon a sleepy brakeman came through, and hollered the station, and we got our gear together. As the train slid in and came to a stop, I saw that there was no chauffeur on the platform. It had stopped raining, and in the glare of the station lights we made out the bus from the Portland House.

Out we got, and as I turned to help her down, I saw the two drummers right behind. I put Grizel in the bus, and gave the driver her checks, and as I did it I saw the other two start to walk away from the depot.

I turned to Grizel. "You stay in the bus," I said. "I'm going to walk."

CHAPTER II.

It wasn't that I was hunting trouble, or anything like that. My only idea was that if there had to be any trouble, it was better, for Grizel's sake, not to have it in the hotel. So I gripped the handle of my valise, and went across the platform and down the steps in the wake of the two ahead.

Just on the corner of a big, deserted street, I overhauled them, intending to walk straight past without a word, unless they tried to stop me. To tell the truth, I didn't think they would, as there isn't much fight in that sort. But whether because he'd been "sucking the monkey" across the State of Maine or because he thought he had to square himself in the eyes of his friend, I don't know, but at any rate, as I forged up alongside, he looked back over his shoulder, then stepped in front of me.

"Hold on a minute, my friend," says he; "I want a little word with you."

I fetched up, and set down my valise.

"Heave ahead," said I; "that's what I'm here for."

He set down his own luggage, and the short, thickset fellow with him did the same. They both started to walk up to me.

"That'll do," said I, and pushed my hand straight out in front of me; "you don't need to whisper it."

They stopped, then gave each other a look that made me think it was fixed up between them for Shorty to lend a hand. Just then the bus rattled by, and I caught a glimpse of a white face at the window. The sight of it took the patience out of me.

"Now, then, you bum," said I, "if you're lookin' for a lickin', come to me. It'll hurt, but it may do you good, and the sooner you get it over with, the better."

I don't think he cared much for his job, but that fetched him. He waltzed up, and made a jab, and a second or two later he found himself out in the middle of the wet street. And he stayed there, too, in pretty much of a heap. His friend started to go to him, but I waved him back.

"You keep out o' this," said I, "or you'll think you've shipped aboard a whaler." And I walked over to where my man was struggling to sit up, his head in both hands.

"That's a good place for you," said I. "You're a man o' mud. You let that be a lesson to you, and before you pester another woman or try to stand up in front of another man, go somewhere, and learn to handle yourself. Why, you swab, any Sidney larrikin fattened on rotgut and maggoty junk is a better man than what you are. If I'd ha' known you were full o' duff, I'd taken a spoon to you——"

I was giving him a bit of this whalefishing talk, when suddenly there came a blaze of bright light, and I looked up to see two big acetylene reflectors on us. *Wop—wop!* went a horn, and then the whine of a brake, and all we could see were the two blazing eyes.

"Well, gents," said a cheerful voice, that somehow struck me as familiar, "if

the first round's over, maybe you wouldn't mind gettin' back to your corners, and let a feller pass."

Surely I knew that voice, though for the life of me I couldn't place it. I wasn't long guessing, though, for, as I stared up half blinded by the glare, the fellow in the car sings out:

"Darned if it ain't Jase Seagrave. Hello, Jase; what's the row?" And he stopped his motor and got down, to lend me a hand, if need be.

I knew him, then. It was Billy Maguire, a Portland boy, and we'd been shipmates when I was in the Maine Steamship Line; my first steam billet on the old *Cottage City*. Billy and I had always been mighty good chums, but I hadn't seen him now for a couple of years.

"What's the trouble, Jase?" Billy asked, and looked over at Mister Hog Fat, who'd got onto his feet and was standing there growling and cussing. His friend was waiting for him on the sidewalk, and Billy looked over at him as if he'd like to get in the game himself.

"Oh, just a little scrap that started in the train," I answered; "nothing worth speaking of. What you doing driving a big car, Billy? Quit the sea?"

"I have, Jase, and I'm proud of it," says he, "and the sooner you follow my example, the better off you'll be. Let me tell you, son, there's nothing in it. It's the only profession that hasn't kept up with the times, and seafarin' men are all suckers. But what are you doing here at this time o' night, Jase?"

The two drummers had moved along, and Billy and I were standing by the motor. There was scarcely anybody in sight, but down the street a piece were some lights, which I reckoned must come from the hotel.

"Well, you see," said I, feeling sort o' foolish, "there was a mighty nice young lady on the train, and this bum I just soaked tried to get gay with her. I broke it up, and then, being afraid he might try to make trouble for her, I landed here, instead of going on to Portland."

Billy gave a low whistle.

"She must be the party I came over to get," says he.

"What!" said I. "Are you working for Mr. Newell?"

"That's what. I'd have been there to meet her, but I fell into a well in the middle of the road, and dished my fore wheel on the starboard side. Been running on dead slow ever since, and now I've got to wait until morning to get her off and have a look to see if I can heat her up and straighten her or have got to get a new casting. It's soft steel, and so long as it ain't opened any, I can fix it up, all right. Look here, Jase, did you notice anybody else getting off the train besides you and the lady and those two drummers?"

"No," I answered, "that was all, I think."

"Are you sure those fellers are drummers?" he asked.

"No," I answered; "they might be con men or walking delegates, for all I can say. Why?"

Billy scratched his ear. "Well," says he, "and so they might. But do you know, Jase, I've got a sort of hunch that this gent you've been using for a punchin' bag is the skipper of the boss' seagoin' pleasure packet."

I must have gaped at him, for he began to laugh.

"Haul taut on your jaw tackle, matey," says he. "That's who it was, all right. He was coming to-night or to-morrow morning, and the boss told me to look out for him. He's a Canuck ex-pilot, and hails from Quebec, and the other cuss is a mate that he was goin' to bring back with him. This here skipper's a new one especially recommended to the boss by some friend o' his. The old skipper he had before was forced to quit, 'count o' the rheumatism."

But I'd got over my shock, and was beginning to pull myself together again.

"That's all slush, Billy," said I. "Those two fellows are no more sailormen than I am a chauffeur. They are sunburnt a mite, I know, but they probably got that in barrooms and riding around in open buggies selling green

goods to farmers. And they may be a mite husky so far as looks go, but that's just beer and sauerkraut. Sailormen? If you told me they were Mormon recruiting officers, I might believe it, Billy, especially as Maine ought to be a promising field for those corby crows to work up, but not sailormen, Billy."

"Well," says he, "jump into the car, and we'll go on to the hotel and find out. The lady has probably gone to bed, and we might as well get a berth for the night, too."

Billy started his motor, and we got in, and went on to the hotel. The driver of the bus was unhitching out in the stable, so we told the porter, who was closing up, to wait for us, and then went out and found a billet for the car under a shed.

"I'll go in and find out about those fellers, and get us a couple of rooms, Jase," says Billy, "and then come back here and we'll get that wheel off and see what the damage is."

So I waited, and pretty soon he came out, laughing.

"That was Captain Volger you pasted, Jase," says he, "and the other feller's the mate, just as I said. His name is Landois, both Scotiamen and known around here. They're short chops, Jase; the bay and gulf and lakes and the like. Excursion-steamer gents and long on pointing out the porpoises to the lady tourists and riggin' swings for the kids from the awning ridgepole. He told the night clerk that you came up behind and hit him when he wasn't looking."

I've never been a profane man, but nobody would have guessed it just then. So this tub of gurry I'd been maltreating was no one else than the captain of Mr. Newell's seagoing yacht, and the other joker his mate. And of course the family would be a lot aboard the yacht and Grizel with them, sort of standing watch over the two youngsters—my, but it made me sick just to think about it.

"If I'd known that," I growled to Billy, "I'd have sent him to hospital."

Billy grinned. "'Stead of which," says he, "I've got to take the three of them for a joy ride to-morrow morning." He gave me a keen look. Billy Maguire was one of the quickest fellows I ever knew. "What's the matter, Jase?" he asks. "You look like you'd started a bedplate."

I felt like it, too. It was bad enough to think I might have to wait until fall before I got sight of her again. But to have to leave her in the neighborhood of Captain Volger and his mate Landois nigh drove me crazy.

"Look here, Billy," said I, "we've been good friends and shipmates, 'spite the fact that you were engine room and I belonged to the deck gang. But we played together as kids, and I'm just going to own up and ask your help. I've never met a woman that just naturally got under my ribs first heave like this Miss McNair. I'm hard hit, Billy." And I went on to tell him of how I'd first heard the two talking on the train, and then had interfered when Volger tried to shove in alongside Grizel afterward. I told him, too, of the talk we'd had and what she'd told me about herself and the struggle she'd had for the last five years.

"That's the kind of woman she is," I finished up, "and you've only got to see her to understand the rest. I don't want to lose her, Billy, and, worse than that, I don't want her pestered by any such mud shark as this Volger."

I'd rather thought that Billy would josh me a bit, as he was pretty fond of that sort of business. Instead, he seemed to be thinking hard and not paying very close attention to what I was saying. Finally, says he:

"Look here, Jase; how'd you like my billet at the Newells'?"

"*Your* billet?" I tooted, like an echo off Grand Menan.

"Sure. My billet as chauffeur. A hundred dollars a month and all found. Three cars to look after, but no washing or dirty work. The stable sweeps do all that. I eat with the head gardener, and have a nice room over the garage. It's a cinch, Jase, and double what you draw down now. You fellers that chase seagoin' freight cars back and forth across the pond are a

lot of marks. Four hours on and four off, on the bridge or sweating below, bum grub, a rotten little bunk to sleep in, wastin' the best part of your life to make money for everybody but yourself. Seafarin' men are the worst suckers alive. There's nobody gives so much for so little. Nowadays seafarin' men ought to be the crips, shy a leg or a fin, or old, like the lightship gang. There's nothin' aboard ship for able-bodied huskies like you and me—but there's a lot ashore. When they get five-thousand-ton transatlantic aryoplanes and need keen, nervy men to run 'em at a high salary, then we can get back in the game again. But waddlin' out across the wet at ten knots for a little over a plunk and a half a day? Shucks!"

"That's all right, Billy," said I, "but s'ppose you're trained to that, and don't know anything else?"

"Oh, rats!" says Billy; "you can't be trained to anything that takes intelligence and not know something else. I was a well-trained shovel engineer; third, I was, aboard the *Cottage City,* and when I left her a couple o' years ago to tackle the gasoline game in a Boston garage, old Wishart, the chief, took me aside, and talked to me as if I'd been contemplatin' suicide. In six months' time I was drawing as much as he was, counting in perfectly square rake-offs and tips and all. And now I've got a little interest in a new garage in Portland, and I'm about to leave Mr. Newell to go on my own—and if you want the job, I think I can fix it for you."

"But how you talk, Billy!" said I. "What in tarnation do I know about automobiles?"

"You may not know an awful lot about 'em just this minute," said Billy, "but you've had some experience with machinery, and you're useful and handy, like all good sailors, and you've got a steady head and a good eye. I can send you to our garage in Portland, and in a week you'll be all right on the road, and it won't take long to learn the works of a machine. Look at the goops that run their own cars. They have to build 'em fool proof these days. Look here, Jase; I'm not joshin' you. Here's a chance to double your pay and live ashore and see life and be near your ladylove. What if this mutt Volger does captain the yacht? Yacht skippers don't rate any higher than what chauffeurs do, and you can work up a lot more sensation behind the steerin' wheel of a big six, like this, than you can on the bridge of an old wind barge like the *Nahma.* Chuck your sad billet on that seagoin' dough packet, and I'll hang on for a couple of weeks while you are learning the ropes. Then I'll resign in your favor, and go to work in the garage, and you can send all your work our way. Just you think it over. And now let's get this wheel off and have a look."

And without waiting to hear what I had to say about it, Billy peeled off his blouse, and went to work.

CHAPTER III.

That night before going to sleep, I wrote a letter to Grizel, in which I told her that I had met Mr. Newell's chauffeur on the street, and found him to be an old friend and shipmate. I went on to say that he had been telling me how much better a man could do in the motor business than at sea, and that I had about made up my mind to give up my present profession for the sake of something better, and was going to start in right off to learn the business in a garage at Portland. I wound up by saying:

> It seems that the man who tried to bother you on the train is the captain of Mr. Newell's yacht, and the man with him his mate. When I see lubbers like these two holding billets as ship's officers it makes me want to hunt a new job. However, Captain Volger is not apt to bother you again, and the best way is for you to say nothing about the trouble to any one, as I'm sure *he* won't.

Billy promised to give Grizel the note and to tell her on the quiet his plans for working me into his job without letting her think that she herself had anything to do with it. It was natural enough, after all, that a man should

jump at the chance of exchanging a sea billet for a land one at twice the pay.

I thought it better not to see Grizel the next morning, but to get out early on the five-o'clock local. Billy gave me a note to the garage, telling them as much as was necessary of the facts of the case, and asking them to put me right on the job and to teach me as much as they could in the shortest possible time.

"You see, Jase," says he, "this works in all right for me. They need me at the garage, as everything points to a busy season. I've only hung on with Newell because I liked the people, and don't want to see their cars in the hands of some slob. Besides, the next man might take the business to another shop. The boss gets everything through me, and I give him a discount, at that."

So in I went the next morning early, and hurried right home, where I found my mother, and told her what I was going to do. She was mighty pleased of course to have me so near home, but she hung in the wind a mite at the prospect of my being a private chauffeur.

"It seems like sort of a come-down, Jason," says she. "Your father and grandfather were both masters of the finest ships that floated in their days. There was your grandfather, Abram Seagrave, who commanded a Blackball clipper, and many a voyage he sat at the head of his table with a duke on his right and lords and ladies and statesmen and scholars on either side. And your father captained an East Indiaman, one of the fastest tea ships afloat."

"And went down with her," said I, "and left his wife and child dependent on relations. Just the same, I know it's a come-down, mother. But the days when the captain of a sailing ship was entertained by the nobility are past. Billy's right about the sea as a profession nowadays. It's money that counts in the world we live in, and there's none to be got by following the sea. I don't expect to stay a private chauffeur any very great while. Just as soon as I can save up a little, I'll do what Billy has, and start in business on my own, if not in automobiles maybe in motor boats, or something of the sort."

Mother allowed that maybe I was right, but she never for a second suspected that there might be a girl at the bottom of it.

When I went up to the garage, I was surprised to find how much of a place it was and to see the amount of business they were doing. It seems that four young fellows, all ex-chauffeurs, had gone in together, each putting in a little money and hustling for what business they could get. Billy had the smallest cash interest, but he was the best mechanic of the lot, and they needed him badly, as the rich summer crowd was beginning to pour in, and there was a good deal of repair work to be expected. When I gave the manager Billy's letter, he was right pleased.

"All right, Seagrave," says he, when he'd read it through. "Just shift into working clothes, and sail right in. With your experience, you'll be able to qualify in a week's time. We've got a couple of old wagons here, and I'll undertake to make a driver of you in three lessons."

The third day that I was at the garage, Billy came around in a useful-looking car with two bucket seats.

"Hello, Jase," says he; "how's she headin', matey?"

"Seagrave can qualify now, if you like," said the manager. "He's a natural driver, and his hands have got fingers on 'em when it comes to adjustin'. We need you bad, Billy. Got a big French valveless here that nobody knows what to do with."

"I got an hour," says Billy. "Come over to meet a gent on the boat, and there's fog outside. Call up the wharf, Jimmie, and ask Skinner to give me a holler when she starts to make her turn."

He soon put them right on the French car, then came over and took me aside.

"Say, Jase," says he, "I'm awful sor-

ry you and me are old chums. She's a flower garden. I'm fightin' myself every minute to keep from cuttin' your line."

"You gave her the letter?" I asked.

"Yes, but I ain't told her anything. Fact is, I ain't so keen about chuckin' my job as I was."

"Oh, you ain't," said I, knowing quite well he was only kidding me. "That'd be a nice hand-out, when I've gone and chucked mine."

"The family is crazy about her," Billy goes on, "especially Mr. Edmond, the boss' younger brother. He's got mighty attached to his little nieces since she come——"

But I reached for a spanner, and he shifted over.

"I thought I'd let you tell her yourself, Jase," said Billy. "She's coming in with me to-morrow to do a 'little shopping for the missus. It'll take a couple of hours, like as not"—he winked—"and you can take my place and go along with her to carry the parcels while I look over this Frenchman and see what sort of a job's been done. Mrs. Newell ain't in any hurry."

"You're all right, Billy," said I. "How about Volger?"

"He was set hard aback when he found she was consigned to the Newells as governess," said Billy, with a grin, "but she acted like she'd never laid eyes on him. I saw the two of them talking last evening, though, and it seemed like she was sorta sorry for what had happened. They were down by the boat landing, and he was talking to her mighty earnest——"

I reached for the spanner again. That was the trouble with Billy. Good-hearted boy as ever drew breath, but he never knew when to slack down on a joke, and you couldn't ever tell how much was truth and how much his fire-room idea of fun, for Billy had started his technical education with a slicing bar, and was what steam people call a "shovel engineer."

Just the same, it showed that he had sort of a delicate feeling to wait and let me tell Grizel myself that I was in hopes of getting a job at the Newells', and I was glad that he had because I wanted to see how she was going to take it. To tell the truth, it had been bothering me a mite to know just where a chauffeur stood with the family, and whether he rated as an officer, so to speak, or how. So I asked Billy about it.

"Where does a chauffeur stand?" says he. "Say, Jase, that's a question that ain't been answered yet. Everybody knows the place to put a butler or a coachman or a gardener and the like. But a chauffeur? That depends on the people you're workin' for. I'd rather be rated a servant in Mr. Newell's house than be one of the family with a good many, you see. The trouble is, Jase, most chauffeurs just lays themselves open to calldowns they wouldn't get if the boss could help it. All you've got to do is to 'tend to your business, just as you would aboard ship, and obey orders and keep your mouth shut, and you'll always get as much respect as you got comin' to you."

The next time Billy came to the garage, it was in still another car, a light roadster with a torpedo body, and my heart gave an awful backfire as I looked up and saw Grizel in the stern sheets. She looked prettier than ever in her cute little motor hood, and her cheeks had a lot more color than when I had first seen her.

Her face sort of lighted up when she saw me, but that look only lasted a second, and she frowned and bit her lip. I wondered if Billy had told her anything.

"How do you do, Mr. Seagrave," says she, as I walked out to the car, and her voice sounded stiff and as if she might have been speaking to somebody beneath her. She was sitting very straight in the car, and her eyes were like a pair of violets with the dew on them.

I said something, and then Billy slid down, and let her out, and asked her if she'd mind if I piloted her around, instead of himself, as he had some work to do on the car. Of course she made no objection, so I went in and washed up, and slipped into clean white ducks,

a summer uniform that I'd stripped of the braid.

When I went out, I found Grizel waiting by the car, talking to Sparkes, the manager. Nobody would have known her for the tired, dusty little girl that I'd befriended on the train. Somehow she looked taller and fuller of figure, and she had on a lovely white serge dress that gave her the fine free lines of a trim white yacht. There was none of that appealing look in her face, either, and, as I walked up to say that I was ready, I felt sort of cheeky and ashamed to think that I'd ever hoped to win such a girl as that.

Her face looked kinder as she turned from Sparkes to me. It seems that she'd been telling him that we'd got acquainted on the train, coming from Montreal, and that Billy had told her I was changing my trade.

"Mr. Sparkes says that you are a natural-born motorist, Mr. Seagrave," says she. "Can you drive, already?"

"I'll let you judge that for yourself," says Sparkes. "Here, Seagrave, take Miss McNair around to do her shopping in our runabout. I don't need it for a couple of hours."

"You're not afraid to trust yourself to me?" I asked, looking at Grizel.

"Of course not," she answered, and the rich color came into her cheeks; "I'm not afraid of anything."

"Well," says Billy, "that's *one* kind of a compliment." And all four of us laughed.

So we got into the runabout, which was a handy little car, and started off. I'd been out in her every day with Sparkes, and could handle her like a whaleboat. Grizel seemed right surprised to find that we weren't going to climb any telegraph poles or try the sidewalk for a change, but she didn't say much. In fact, she was so quiet that I was a mite uncomfortable. She showed me the list of stores she wanted to go to, and I took her from one to the other, waiting outside while she bought what was wanted. It didn't take very long, and when she had finished, and suggested that we had better go back to the garage, I said:

"Maguire wanted a little time to look over a French car that has come in for repairs. Do you mind if I take you for a little turn? Mr. Sparkes wouldn't object."

She turned her head a little, and gave me a steady look out of her blue eyes.

"I don't know anything about Mr. Sparkes and yourself," says she, "but Maguire's time belongs to Mr. Newell, who employs him—and so does mine."

There wasn't much to answer to that, so I turned around, and went straight for the garage. Presently Grizel said in a gentler voice:

"Have you resigned your position as mate on the *Clarendon,* Mr. Seagrave?"

"Yes," I answered.

"Oh, why did you?" she cried, and there was a sort of ring in her voice. "In another three or four years, you might have been captain of a big, seagoing ship; absolute master, with the responsibility of the lives and property under your command. You would have taken your vessel out into the big, mysterious ocean and set your human skill and strength against storm and fog and treacherous tides—how could you give it all up for *this?*"

From the tone of her voice, you'd have thought I'd done something disgraceful. I was startled and surprised, and, to tell the truth, a mite angry, too.

"But what's the matter with this?" I asked. "It lets me see something of life and people and keep in the movement, to say nothing of paying me more money——"

"Nonsense," she said, so sharply that I stopped short. "Do you call puttering around a garage, covered with black grease or perching behind a wheel in a maroon livery to serve the idle pleasure of some rich man 'seeing life'? There's no comparison. What difference does it make whether you've got a motor in front of you or a team of bays—except that in nine cases out of ten the bays would be more difficult to drive. For my part, I fail to see the difference between a coachman and a chauffeur, except that it's easier to learn about motors than it is to learn about horses, and

motors are less dangerous, unless you take silly risks. Oh, Mr. Seagrave, when I read your letter I was *so* disappointed—especially after the stories you'd been telling me. *Don't* give up the sea. Just think! How many men, not sailors, could command a vessel? And anybody with two hands and two feet can soon learn to drive a car."

Well, here was a nice state of affairs, wasn't it? For the moment I was tempted to drive to the nearest telegraph station and send a wire to Montreal, asking them to take me back if they hadn't got somebody else. But my pride wouldn't let me do that.

"That's one way of looking at it," I answered, "but I see it differently. There's no future for the ship's officers of these little lines, and as for the big ones, well, I guess Billy Maguire picks up more in a year than the first officer of the biggest of 'em. And, what's more, he'll soon be his own master, and your sea captain never is. He's a servant of the company first and of his passengers afterward. What I'm trying for is not to be master of a ship, but master of myself and free to go and come as it pleases me."

Maybe my tone was harsh, for I saw her color fade a little, and she bit her lip. She didn't answer, and pretty soon I said:

"What about Volger?"

"*Captain* Volger"—she put a little weight on the "captain"—"I'm afraid I did him an injustice, Mr. Seagrave. He spoke to me on the landing night before last, and explained that he really meant no harm on the train, but that, from having been the captain of a lake passenger steamer, he had no doubt got in the habit of taking too much for granted with strangers. He had no idea that I was annoyed, and he said that if he had suspected it for a minute he would never have spoken a second word to me. He is a little rough, perhaps, but very kind and well meaning, and I was awfully sorry for what happened."

She turned to look at me, and pushed out her pretty chin a little. "He told me of your attack upon him going to the hotel, Mr. Seagrave, and I must say I was very much surprised. You might at least have given him a chance to defend himself."

I could feel the blood pouring up under my collar. What Billy had told me wasn't all josh, after all, it seemed. I could just see Volger filling this innocent young girl chockablock with his dirty lies, and I could almost hear his fat, oily voice as he did it and catch the smirk of his near-gentleman way of talking.

But what Grizel told me made me all the more anxious for Billy's billet with the Newells. I was acquainted with the Volger sort, and I knew the curious sort of influence these slick, fat-necked, domineering brutes can sometimes have on the very sweetest women. Then his position as captain of the big yacht gave him a big jerk to windward with a romantic, imaginative girl like Grizel. No doubt they'd do some cruising through the summer, and I could see where Volger wasn't going to miss any tricks when she was on deck. He'd just make her think that he was the one and only big steel bulkhead between the whole ship's company and a watery grave.

"If Captain Volger feels that way about it, he will soon have a chance to get even," I said.

"What do you mean?" she asked, quick as a flash.

"Maguire is going to leave Mr. Newell when his month is up," I answered. "He'll probably give notice to-night. You see, he has an interest in this garage, as Mr. Newell knows, and they're so busy now that they need him. That's the reason I wanted to give him a little time this afternoon. He's going to try to get me his place, and he doesn't seem to think that there will be any trouble about it."

Grizel leaned back without saying a word. We were almost to the garage, and I slowed a little, being anxious to learn how she was going to take it. Almost there, says she:

"When did you decide on this step, might I ask, Mr. Seagrave?"

"The night that I met him and he

told me how well he was getting on. You can't tell; in five years' time he might be head of a big garage and making five or six thousand a year, where before he was making seventy-five a month. The sea is all right for unambitious people, Miss McNair, but *I* want to get on."

I took a look at her face. Her pretty brows were knit, and her lips were pressed together. As we turned into the garage, she said:

"Of course, you know your own affairs better than I do. If it pleases you more to drive a car up and down the road than to take a big ship back and forth across the ocean, then no doubt you are better fitted for it. But" —and she turned her head and gave me a hundred-fathom look out of those deep, Gulf-Stream eyes of hers—"I would advise you not to count too much on the future, Mr. Seagrave."

CHAPTER IV.

Billy came into the garage a couple of days later to get some supplies.

"It's all right, Jase," says he; "I've talked to the boss, and he's perfectly willing to take you on. Get in here with me, and drive this one around a little, just to get the feel of her. She's a lot easier to handle than these thrashin' machines of Sparkes, but you got to learn about where to shift your speeds."

So I got in, and we ran around a little, and I found the dandy little car just as Billy had said, no end easier to handle than the old scrap heaps I'd learned on. Fact is, there was really no need for me to practice, and, seeing this, Billy told me to go back to the garage.

"Say, Jase," says he, "what did you do to Flower Garden the other day? She's treated me like I was a plague victim ever since."

"She don't like my quitting the sea for gasoline," I answered.

Billy gave me one of his twisted squints. "Well," says he, "she's sure stuck on the brine. Your friend, Cap'n Volger, takes her and the kids out in the knockabout 'most every day. Say, that dub knows almost as much about boat handlin' as I do about breakin' broncs, and that's a little less than nothin' at all."

"Did you tell the boss I was a seafaring man?" I asked.

"Sure. He said: 'So much the better; he can run the launch when the yacht is not here.' You're all hunk with the boss, Jase. But if I was you, I'd sit up nights worryin' about Flower Garden."

That was exactly what I did until Billy's month was up. He came in the day before, and took me out to Otter Rocks, as the Newell estate was called. Sailing along the shore, I'd often seen the place, but never from the land side. It was mighty handsome—fine grounds with gardens and groves and a sheltered bathing beach, where there was a good-sized boathouse. The stables and garage were big and roomy, and the house was long and low, stone to the second story and then stucco with big beams laid in like you see in old English inns, all just as comfortable looking as it could be.

Mr. Newell was at home, and sent for me to come right up to his writing room. He was a handsome man of about fifty, tall, lean, with a long, narrow head, and ears set snug against the sides of it. His nose was high and thin, and his eyes were a cold gray, and had an expression that was polite rather than kind. There was a sort of dryness about him, as if he'd studied out beforehand exactly what he was going to say and how he would say it, and it struck me that he rather enjoyed hearing himself talk. But with all this, he was mighty high-bred and distinguished, and you somehow couldn't think of anybody treating him with anything but respect. He seemed to me more like an English gentleman than an American, and I noticed that he used a monocle.

He didn't ask me to sit down, but just leaned back in his chair, and gave me an inquiring but pleasant sort of look.

"Maguire tells me that you are a be-

ginner, Seagrave," said he, "but he tells me also that you are a very clear-headed and careful man. Personally, I don't object to beginners when they've got the latter qualities. I find that over-confidence is apt to be more dangerous than the tinge of caution that comes with a knowledge of one's inexperience. Don't you think?"

"Sailors say that a green hand never falls from aloft, sir," I answered.

"Quite so. By the way, Maguire tells me you have been a sailor up to now—ah—the mate of a vessel, I believe?"

"Yes, sir."

"So much the better. I usually send the yacht down to Newport for the use of my sister, Mrs. Ellery-Jones, for a month during the summer. Since you—ah—understand boats, we can depend on you to run the *Seal*, our seagoing motor boat, when the *Nahma* is not here. Now, if you will get the big car ready to go out, we will take a little spin around. I would like to satisfy myself in regard to your—ah—proficiency before intrusting my family to your care."

So I took him over the road for an hour, and he seemed quite satisfied, the more so that I didn't try to show him how brilliant I was, but contented myself with a good average road gait and no chances. Then when we got back, I took Billy and his trunk to the depot, and here I was, a private chauffeur, at the beck and call and to serve the pleasure and convenience of a lot of rich and pampered people.

I didn't see Grizel at all that day, as I was busy cleaning up the garage, for Billy and I had different notions on what was shipshape. The head gardener's house was not far from my quarters, and I went there for my meals, and found them nice, respectable people, while the table was something that made me open my eyes, used as I was to seagoing grub.

The next morning at about ten my telephone rang, and the butler, a fat Englishman named Hobbs, told me that the "thirty" was wanted at the door in half an hour. She was all ready to go out, of course, so I shifted into my chauffeur's uniform, and when the bell rang drove up under the porte-cochère. There, standing on the steps, were Grizel and Captain Volger.

Grizel gave me a quick look, then pushed out her chin in a little way she had when displeased, and reached up to tie her veil. Volger's face wore a sort of smirk, and he drew down the corners of his mouth a little, and lifted his heavy, black eyebrows. He was dressed in his blue-serge uniform, with his captain's insignia and a smart yachting cap, and I could see how he'd pass with the women for a bluff, hearty sailorman.

Volger had one of those square-jowled faces that a good many women consider handsome, and his heavy mustache hid the mean, cruel lines around his mouth. His eyes were blue, but they were the wrong blue, too light and shifty, but the pale color gave them an intent look, set in his swarthy face with the thick, black hair over them. He was a well-knit man, a little above the average height, and in his smart uniform nobody would ever have guessed what a bag of duff he really was. There are lots like that, and they're always to be found in the soft billets: a yacht, excursion steamer, and the like that lay up through the nasty winter months.

I sat there like a figurehead, my eyes on the road and the engine turning over gently. My face don't show much of what's going on inside, but I could feel myself hardening up all over. The thirty was a new car, not exactly a torpedo model, but with a narrow body and no wider aft than forward; a "corset box," as Billy called her. Two people just fitted nicely in the tonneau, and three made a jam. Volger opened the door for Grizel, and helped her in, then got in beside her.

"Trims the boat better, Miss McNair," says he, in his hearty voice; "ain't that so, Seagrave?"

I turned a little in my seat. "Where to?" I asked.

"Let Miss McNair out at Darrow and Simpson's," says he, "then take me down to Perkins' stores."

I started off, and as I let in the clutch, I heard him say: "Nice morning for a little spin, Miss McNair."

"Very," she said; "there's no wind."

"The breeze'll spring up with the turn of the tide," says he. "We'll have enough air for a sail this afternoon. I'll give you a lesson in coming up to a mooring."

The thirty ran like oil out of an oil can; no more noise than a swimming shark, and I had to listen to this sort of talk all the way into town. By the time I pulled up in front of the department store, I began to wonder how much my job was really worth. Miss McNair got out, and Volger said:

"Seagrave can take me down to the ship chandlers', then come back and wait for you. As soon as you get through, you can come down for me. I'll probably be some time, and if we arrange it this way, you can wait in the car."

Grizel agreed to this, and Volger got back into the car. As we started off, he leaned forward.

"Look-a-here, Seagrave," says he; "s'ppose we let bygones be bygones. After all, I'm the injured party. You made me look like a lollop on the train, and my jaw ain't right yet from our argument on the street. I won't say that if my foot hadn't slipped in the mud——"

"If that idea keeps you from enjoying your watch below, there's lots of chance to get it put right," said I.

"Oh, come now, sport," says he, in a sort of tired tone; "there's nothing in it for us to go startin' another rough-house. On the contr'y, there's a lot of reason for keepin' the peace. Mr. Newell is a nice man, and we've both got good billets, and what's the use of puttin' everything on the bum? I know the boss' kind; they are quiet and easy-goin', and you never get a word out of 'em that you wouldn't hear at a high-life banquet, but if there's any trouble, it's just a case of *git*. Now, so far as you and me are concerned, I'm the one that's got the kick comin'. Nothin' was farther from my thought than to bother that little girl——"

"Miss McNair——" I interrupted.

"Right-o. Than to bother Miss McNair on the train. That part of it's fixed all right, and all we got to do now is to shake and call it square."

"I don't like to let go the wheel," said I.

Whether he caught my drift or not, I don't know. The chances are he did, for Volger was no fool. At any rate, he said:

"Oh, that's all right. I'll take the will for the deed. What I mean is that there's no use in us each tryin' to cut the other feller's throat, so to speak. 'Live and let live' is my motter."

We were drawing up on Perkins' stores by this time, so I didn't answer, but fetched up to let him out.

"Come have a drink," said Volger. "'Twon't take a minute. Here's a place opposite."

"All right," I answered, and stopped the motor, and got out.

It may seem funny that I should have taken a drink with him, considering the way I felt, especially since I'd just refused to shake hands with him. But there was a reason for my doing what I did. I've always had a heap of contempt for the virtuous, storybook sort of fellow who would rather be skinned alive than have anything to do with the villain. They make me tired. Volger was pretty near right when he said that he was the injured party, after all. He certainly was, and I must have injured him considerably that first night of our acquaintance.

I knew well enough that he didn't like me now any better than he had that night, but he respected me, and he'd respect me even more if I was to go in and have a drink with him and not appear to sulk. Besides, he wouldn't be quite so much on his guard against me if he thought that I was willing to let things go and bury the hatchet.

And the last reason was that I was thirsty, and wanted a glass of beer.

Young Perkins, a boy I went to school with, came out as we were stepping down from the car.

"Morning, captain," says he, glanc-

ing at Volger's four stripes of braid. "Hello, Jase. What's this? What's this? They told me you'd quit the sea and gone in for gasoline, but I couldn't believe it. Aimin' to follow in Billy Maguire's wake?"

"That's what," I answered, and introduced him to Volger, who was over there for the first time. So far as I could make out, he'd only come because he knew that Grizel was going to do some shopping for Mrs. Newell, as all he wanted was a couple of snatch blocks for the boat falls, and I could have got those as well as not.

He told me that he thought it a lot snappier to lead his falls down to a snatch block on deck and let the hands walk straight away with them, the bo'sun giving the step with his pipe, than to have them heaving straight from the davit heads. It took twice the number of men to walk the boat up this way, but, as Volger said, and with a certain amount of truth, you've got to invent ways of keeping yacht sailors from getting too fat to squeeze through the hatch.

We went over to Delano's place across the street, and had our drink; beer for me, ginger ale for Perkins, and rye for Volger. I left them there to go back and get Grizel. She came out at the end of half an hour, and I got down to open the door for her. Somehow, she looked prettier and trimmer-rigged every time I saw her. This day she was wearing a sort of straw-colored pongee silk blouse with a square sailor collar and skirt to match. The skirt was a mite short, and showed her pretty ankles and dainty little feet in their yellow buckskin, rubber-soled shoes. A round hat made of Panama grass was smashed down on her fuzzy dark hair, and there was a sea-green scarf wound around it. The whole outfit had been given to her by the oldest daughter, whom I hadn't seen yet, and who was just about Grizel's build. But Grizel's lines had altered a lot since she'd been at the Newells', and in that loose-fitting sailor suit she looked a big girl and real plump. It was mighty becoming to her, and her lips and cheeks were blood-red.

Not only were her looks changed, but so was her expression and manner and everything. She was not the same girl that I'd met on the train, nor was the face she turned to me as she came out of that store one bit the face that I'd seen in the murk from the bridge. And yet I was wilder about her than ever, and as she paused and looked me over I found it sort of hard to get my breath.

What she said, though, was calculated to cool me down a lot.

"You look quite nice in your olive-drab livery," says she. "In Boston you will wear a sort of deep maroon with a velvet collar. It must be very smart. When Mrs. Newell makes calls, the footman always goes along and sits beside you. His livery is exactly like yours. I should so like to see you in it—though really I think that the blue uniform that you were wearing when I met you on the train is more becoming to a man of your type—even if it did show the stains of sea water." She got into the car, then said, with a sort of a lisp: "Go to Perkins' stores, Seagrave."

It's a wonder we got away without stripping our cogs or busting the shaft or something. As it was, I must have nigh whipped her head off her shoulders, for I heard her gasp: "Oh!" and a man on the sidewalk grinned.

Thought I: "Folks are all the same; when they're down, they are as meek as Moses, but just fatten 'em up a bit, and they'll sass your head off."

I hadn't thought it of Grizel, and I must say that I was right disappointed. Then I happened to think of the tough time she'd had in the last five years, and I was glad.

Poor little girl, it was her first taste of prosperity; rich, nourishing food, people to wait on her, nice clothes and no work to speak of—I felt like a dog to have been sore with her, even for a passing second.

Volger was waiting for us when we fetched up in front of Perkins' stores, and he came bustling out as important as if he owned the yacht and the car and the best part of Portland.

"Home, Seagrave," says he, as he opened the door of the tonneau. Then maybe because it struck him that he was forging chain a mite, he changed his tone, and said: "S'ppose we go back along the shore, Seagrave, if it's all the same to you."

"All right," I answered, and we started off, Volger chattering away to Grizel about how he wished that Mr. Newell would take a good offshore cruise or make a run to Cowes.

There was nothing, he said, that got on his nerves like mud-holing along shore. With a big, able vessel like the *Nahma*, a man could go anywhere, and it was a shame to be lying at anchor all the time with the pond lilies sprouting from the spars. He was a deep-water man, he said, and hated mucking along the beach—and a lot more of the same sort.

After I'd listened to him for a while—and I couldn't help it because the car ran as smooth as a watch and Volger's ordinary voice was harsh—I began to wonder if the man had ever really been off soundings. I don't know just what it was, but something in the way he talked made me think that he'd never got beyond the hundred-fathom curve.

He was in a right talkative mood, Captain Volger, and from the sea he switched suddenly onto Grizel and her school-teaching. She happening to remark that she taught French, among other things, he opened up his mud valve, and spattered her with French Canadian, and she handed it back to him in the same lingo. After that they talked only French, and there they had it on me, speaking as I did only down-east Yankee.

That may seem strange, considering the chances I'd had for learning the language. But sailors never do take advantage of opportunities. They'll tell you that they speak French or German or Spanish or Portuguese, but as a matter of fact they don't. They know two or three phrases in most tongues, and that's all. In fact, I've been shipmates with men that had no real language whatever; men who'd picked up a smattering of several tongues without being really able to talk in any one of them. There are lots of fellows like this, and sailors usually speak of them as "Dutchmen," because their tongues are a mite thick.

Volger seemed tickled to death to find that he could chin with Grizel in French, and from that time on they never spoke anything else. Canuck was Volger's mother tongue, I guess, for his English had a thick, sticky sort of accent, and if he didn't watch out he was apt to chop the ends of his words. What his blood might be, the Lord only knows, but I had an idea that he might be part French and part Scotch, and that would make just about the sort of mixture you might expect of red wine and whisky—peat-hag whisky, at that.

They chattered all the way home, and when I pulled up under the porte-cochère, Volger helped Grizel out, then turned to me, and said: "That's all, Seagrave," in a tone that made me want to bounce a belaying pin on his black, curly head. I couldn't quite get onto his drift. Why should he want to patch things up with me, then turn around and try to rile me?

So when he said: "That's all, Seagrave," I looked at Grizel.

"Miss McNair," I said, "would you mind asking in the house if the car is wanted before lunch?"

She nodded, and went inside.

Volger got red in the face, then growled:

"No use in bein' so touchy. Nobody's tryin' to put it over you."

The windows were open, and, thinking that there might be somebody in earshot, I didn't answer. Grizel came out to say that there was nothing until the afternoon, so I went on around to the garage. And for the second time, I couldn't help but wonder just what my job was really worth.

CHAPTER V.

As I rolled into the garage, which was a big, well-found place with two pits, bench, lathe drill, and forge, I saw a man pottering around the big car.

"How d'ye do," says he, in a sort of drawling voice. "You're Seagrave, I presume. I'm Mr. Newell's brother."

"How d'you do, sir," said I, and touched my cap, then got down.

"I've been wondering if another car in here would crowd you too much," says he, and his accent was Englisher than most English people talk. "I've bought a sixty-horse-power swifty, and the freight agent has just sent me word that it's at the depot."

"Oh, there's plenty of room, I reckon," said I.

"Of course," says Mr. Newell, and it suddenly occurred to me that this must be the "Mr. Edmond" that Billy said had got a mash on Grizel, "that makes one more car to keep in order. I always drive myself, and any gross reparations can be done at Maguire's place. But if you can find time to look after the oiling and adjusting and all that sort of thing, of course I should consider that as extra work and make it right with you accordingly."

"That's not necessary——" I began, but he made a languid motion with his hand.

"Not a bit of it. Otherwise I'd feel that I ought to get a man of my own, and that's really not worth while. We'll call it an extra twenty-five a month. 'Pon my word, but that will make this family pretty well supplied with cars; four out here and an electric brougham in town. Really, it's the only way, though. You've got to have different cars for different purposes and change 'em just as you do your clothes. They wear better that way. Otherwise you're apt to use your old plug of a limousine to make a hurry call over a rotten road and do your shoppin' with a coughing, panting racer. Cars are like horses, rather; it's not the use that knocks 'em up, but the abuse and the man that drives with a light hand will get the most out of 'em, don't you agree with me?"

"The theory sounds good to me, sir," I answered, and got a-hold of a wipe to clean some mud and water off the searchlights before it dried. Mr. Edmond watched me curiously.

"That's the scrub's work, ain't it?" he asked.

"I suppose it is," I answered, "but he ain't here just this minute, and if that gritty stuff dries, you're apt to scratch the glass gettin' it off."

He nodded. "Good man," says he, "I'm glad you're a Yankee. We've had two Italians and two Frenchmen and a Swiss. Got 'em in Europe, and they didn't do well with the change of climate. Maguire was a perfectly good man, but he couldn't keep away from that garage of his, though he always asked if he might look in there. Trouble was his 'looking in' usually meant about an hour under a car."

He lighted a cigarette, and threw the match where the cement was still wet from a little puddle of gasoline.

"Nothing like absolute cleanliness in a garage," says he. "Now, if that gasoline hadn't been wiped up, I might have set the place afire."

I gave him a curious look as he rambled along in his tired, drawling voice with the heavy English accent. He was a man of about my own age, I reckoned, though I would have passed anywhere as ten years older, thanks to hardship and exposure and having held down rough, responsible billets. But Edmond Newell didn't look so awful young, either, though the lines in his face came, I reckon, from a different sort of wear and tear than what I'd had.

He was over six feet, stoop-shouldered, and looked as if he'd just weathered a pretty bad famine. His nose was high, like his brother's, and his head long and narrow and breedy looking, with small, crisp ears and close-clipped hair with a bit of wave to it.

For all his slab-sidedness he was a sort of handsome man, especially when he braced up a little and tightened his jaw. Most of the time, though, he was loose and sprawly, and wore his chest between his shoulder blades, and acted like he was too tired to finish what he'd started to say. He wore a little mustache waxed up at the corners, and that seemed about the only thing that saved his face from sagging all out of shape.

Looking at him as he sat there on the end of the workbench with his back round and his shoulders hunched and his face like a wax mask that's been held in front of the fire, he didn't strike me as a very dangerous rival, for all his money. Grizel was the sort of girl that would want a *man,* or I'd miss my guess. Just at present, she seemed to think that Volger was a man, but he wasn't, and a girl as bright as she was would be sure to find him out sooner or later.

But it didn't seem possible that anybody could ever take Mr. Edmond for a man. Even his watery blue eyes looked sort of faded and washed out, I thought, and then to make sure, I took another squint. No, they weren't watery; they were just tired and faded looking, and the brows sagged down over the outer corners, like it was sort of an effort to keep them brailed up.

He was sitting there on a piece of newspaper, and his hunched shoulders and long neck and big beak put me in mind of an adjutant bird out on the end of a mud bar in the Irawadi. His arms were crossed in front of him, and he had his cigarette between two fingers, yellow as mustard, and he was toeing in, his long, slim feet about six inches off the floor. I wondered what he thought he was going to do with a racing car. A wheel chair seemed about his measure. The fact was, he didn't look like he had life enough to drive an old blind horse. His pants legs hung like there was nothing inside them.

But talk about clothes. Mr. Edmond sure knew how to crack on when it came to carrying canvas. I'd heard about fellows that dressed like that, but never had a good look at one, close up. It seems he never wore just the ordinary flannels and ducks and tweeds and serges that most people do, but always something smooth and slick and Frenchy.

He had on this day a suit of clothes about the color of a pale, gray pigeon, with the vest cut rather low and the coat falling almost like a shawl, the folds were so easy and graceful. His tie was a different shade of the same color, and so were his socks, and his shirt was lighter, like the bluestone they put on drives when it's dry. Yet there was nothing conspicuous about him. You sort of felt that he was mighty well dressed without noticing anything. In fact, you couldn't think of him as anything but perfectly dressed.

Maybe he saw my eyes piping down his rig, for he smiled in a sort of tired way, and said:

"You are more shipshape than Maguire, Seagrave. I wouldn't have dared sit on this bench before you came. There were grease spots and iron filings and all sorts of filthy rubbish lying about. It seems to me that neatness is the first requisite of efficiency. Still" —he took a deep suck at his cigarette, and held the smoke so long in his lungs that it came out almost colorless— "neatness isn't everything. I try always to be neat, but I can't remember ever having been efficient."

"Maybe you never had to be," said I.

He looked a bit surprised. I think that he was sort of talking to himself, and didn't expect an answer.

"Why, that's just it, I fancy," says he, "and my earnest prayer is that I never will have to be. People are like the good Mother Earth that grows them, Seagrave. When a breed concentrates great productiveness in one generation, the land has to lie fallow for a while. Brilliant men are too apt to blame their sons for being incompetent. That is not fair, and they seem to forget that maybe the sons are resting up from the efforts of their fathers."

He seemed to be talking to himself, so I didn't say anything, but got the feather duster, and began to flick off the car before putting on the cover. I could feel him watching me as I went about it.

"Don't you agree with me, Seagrave?" he asked.

"No, sir," I answered.

He flicked away his cigarette. "What's your point of view?" he asked.

"Your comparison don't strike me as

accurate," said I. "Good ground never has to lie fallow, no matter how rich the yield. I been a sailor most of my life, but I know a mite about farming, too. When there's been a good crop, 'tain't a question of just the soil; it's the conditions of climate, sun and rain and heat and cold and the like. Every farmer has a right to expect a good crop every year, otherwise he wouldn't have the courage to plow and plant. But bad crops——"

"Are the result of what the lawyers call 'hand of God'—and other public enemies," he interrupted, in a sort of sneering voice.

Somehow his tone hit me just wrong. I've never been a religious man, and I've been used to hearing sailors swear and blaspheme and talk rotten. But there was something about the way this rich, well-dressed, educated man spoke that riled me.

Maybe he saw that I was put out, for he said:

"I'll admit that my point wasn't very well taken, Seagrave. Good ground really needn't lie fallow if the farmer is willing to spend a little on fertilizers —and God knows that rich men's sons are sufficiently fertilized. But, just the same, there is such a thing as being born tired—maybe as the result of a tremendous output of energy on the part of the father before he started in to raise a family."

I took another look at him. All of the drawl had gone out of his voice, and a good bit of the heavy accent, too, and there was nothing watery about his eyes. It seemed, too, as if his back had stiffened a mite, and he didn't look so thin and flopsy. It struck me all of a sudden that maybe a bit of ginger was just what he needed, so I said:

"According to history, Napoleon Bonaparte was born pretty tired, but he managed to shift his weariness off onto most of Europe before he quit. General Wolfe captured a city called Quebec, two hundred and fifty miles north of here, and was a mighty sick man when he did it. Abraham Lincoln was never a real robust man, and one voyage across the Pacific I read about the only sea stories that ever struck me as being full of bull meat, and I learned afterward that the author was a man named Robert Louis Stevenson, and was dying of consumption when he wrote them. But maybe these folks' fathers had never been great and famous men," I said, and I said it on purpose because I knew that his own father could never have been anything downright wonderful, or I must have heard of him. Chances are, he was the one big frog in some puddle that wouldn't [illegible] a dipsy lead to fetch bottom.

Mr. Edmond didn't answer right off. Then he gave a sort of short, little laugh.

"I imagine you've about struck it, Seagrave," said he. "After all, so long as the crop hasn't been some poisonous product, like tobacco, there's no particular reason why the ground should rest—is there?"

"I don't know," I answered, "but it seems to me that having rested for a while it ought to produce something pretty good."

He slid off the bench, then sort of shook himself, and started for the door.

"Now you're starting to preach," says he, sort of snappish. "I did think that I might duck that sort of thing in the garage."

I didn't answer this, and at the door he said:

"Will you see about having the new car brought here from the depot? Let them bring it on a truck, and we'll go over it here and try a spin over the road. I promised Miss McNair, the children's governess, you know, that I'd take her out for the first run." And he gave me a nod, and started off toward the boathouse.

I washed up for lunch, although it was still a little early, and was looking over the paper left by Mr. Edmond when I heard a sort of flutter in the doorway, and looked up to see a mighty pretty girl standing there smiling at me. Her little cap and apron showed that she was one of the help.

"Miss Newell sent me down to see if Mr. Edmond was here," says she, and

I knew from her accent that she was English.

"He was here," I answered, "but he went down toward the boathouse about ten minutes ago."

"Oh, then he's found her," she answered, and sort of hesitated as if waiting for me to say something.

She was just as pretty as she could be with hair the color of ripe yellow corn, blue-gray eyes, skin like cream, and that rich coloring that doesn't seem to last long once out of the British Isles. She was a medium-sized girl, about twenty-two I should say, trim built as a new cutter, and she had a sort of mischievous look in her face that was mighty winsome.

"Mr. Edmond came down to tell me that he's bought a new car," said I, as she half turned, giving me a backward look and another smile. "That'll make four in the garage."

Her gray eyes opened as if I'd told her the most interesting thing in the world.

"Really," says she. "What kind of a car?"

"A sixty racer. It's at the depot now," I answered.

"Fancy!" says she. "What fun! Oh!"—she clasped her hands, and rolled up her eyes a little—"how I wish I were a chauffeur instead of a ladies' maid. How ripping, to go tearing over the road at the wheel of a big strong motor! And touring is such sport. Mrs. Newell took me with her all through France and Italy last summer. She chartered a car in Paris. The chauffeur was a Frenchman, and awfully smart. We got to be the best of friends, and I learned quite a bit of French from talking with him."

"Do the Newells cross often?" I asked.

"Almost every year. They have been twice in the *Nahma*. In fact, it wouldn't surprise me if they were to decide suddenly to go next month. You can never tell what they may do. Don't you think they're nice?" And she gave me a curious look.

"Just as nice as they can be," I answered.

"I'm awfully keen about Mr. Edmond," she said, and looked down at the toes of her little low shoes. "He's a bit of a crank, and likes to ape the English and pretend that he's all worn out from the effort of living, but he's really awfully kind. He's—he's been so nice to me." She peeped out from under her long lashes to see how I was going to take this bit of news.

"Most men are pretty nice to you, I guess," said I.

"Oh, now you're beginning to talk like Maguire. He was awfully funny—but not quite—*h'm!*" And she shrugged her shoulders a little.

"Maguire's all right," said I, "only he had to shift for himself when he was about thirteen, and never had much of a chance to improve himself."

She glanced back over her shoulder. "There goes Mr. Edmond," says she. "We don't see much of him since Miss McNair has come. Mrs. Newell is getting rather worried about it. Mr. Edmond has a perfectly horrid reputation with women." She dropped her voice. "He's been mixed up in some dreadful scandals."

I picked up the clothes brush to dust myself off, more because I somehow disliked to listen to that sort of talk than because my clothes needed it. I'd slipped on a loose khaki coat that was cooler than the heavy tunic, and as I gave it a swipe with the brush, *pop* went a button.

"There," says Miss Ladies' Maid, "you've pulled off the button. Give me a needle and thread, and I'll catch it on. I've a minute or two to spare."

"Oh, don't bother," I answered. "Sailors can all sew, and I was a sailor before I turned chauffeur."

"Really? I love sailors. One of my brothers is an engine-room artificer in his majesty's navy," says she.

I'd got out my little "housewife," and was going to slip off the coat, but she stepped up and took the needle out of my hand. "Let me," says she, and went about it as quick and dainty as you like. The button was soon fast, when what does she do but lean over and cut the thread with her teeth, and,

so help me, just at that second who should pass in front of the door of the garage but Grizel, and behind her the two young ones.

Grizel glanced in, and it must have looked to her as if the girl had her head on my chest. Anyway, her own head spun around like a ship's wheel released with the helm hard aport. The next minute she'd passed the door, the children romping after her with a couple of spaniels.

The pretty ladies' maid looked up at me with a rather scared face.

"I wonder what she thought," says she, then smiled and dimpled. Her face was close to mine, and she looked as if she expected something for services rendered. It was partly that and partly because I was hot and sore with Grizel. She'd done nothing but snub me ever since she'd learned that I was going to turn chauffeur, and now she no doubt took it for granted that I was caressing this ladies' maid. I've never been the man to suffer long in silence, nor was I ever much of a martyr when it came to getting the name without the game. So I said to the little English girl:

"The chances are she thought that I was doing this." And I took her rosy cheeks between my two hands and kissed her. "And thank you for sewing on the button," said I.

She sprang back, red as a peony. "How dare you!" she cried, then burst out laughing. "Do you think she'll tattle?" says she.

"No," I answered, "and, anyway, I'll tell her—about the button," I added, with a grin.

"Mind you stop there," says she, and turned on her little high heels, and scampered up to the house, leaving me with the idea that, even if Grizel was inclined to be sassy, the job was not so bad, after all.

CHAPTER VI.

Mr. Edmond's new car was sent over that afternoon, and, as everybody was off on the yacht, I went over her, and got everything ready for the road. She was certainly a beauty, so far as you could see, all the weight being in the motor, just two bucket seats and another behind that you could unship if you liked. The steering pillar was inclined to about twenty degrees, the seats well aft and everything about her rakish and swift. I couldn't help but wonder what use a car like that could be to such a man as Mr. Edmond. The only advantage, so far as I could see, was that he'd drive her practically lying on his back in bed, the cushions were that soft and the springs such as would let you run over a corduroy road like it was a skating rink.

I let the motor turn over for a while, and it was a delight to see how true and even it ran, just like a turbine, and the deep bass hum from the exhaust was a pleasure to hear. I was crazy to take her out for a little run over the road, but Mr. Edmond had told me only to see that the motor ran all right, without saying anything about taking the car out, so I thought I'd better not. It was just as well I didn't, too, for, while I was cleaning the spark plugs after the full slugs of oil I'd given her, he came into the garage. I'd though that he was off on the yacht with the others.

"How does she go?" he asked, in a snappy sort of voice.

"Slick as a torpedo boat, sir," I answered.

"All greased up? Transmission, differential, steering gear, and everything?"

"Yes, sir," I answered, "she's all ready for the road."

"Then shift your clothes, and we'll try her," says he.

I got into my uniform, and Mr. Edmond slipped on a sort of waterproof duster he kept in the garage and a skull-cap with a face mask. I'd never worn goggles, not liking the feel of them, and my eyes being used to wind and weather.

"Where are your goggles?" he asked.

"I don't use 'em, sir," I answered.

He gave me a hard stare. I'd noticed that his tired, logy manner had sort of disappeared, and he seemed like a different man. He was keen and sharp, and instead of the slack lines

around his eyes and cheeks and jaws, there were the hard ones you might see on the face of the mate of a whaler. His eyes had a snap to them, and he wore his chest in front. I wondered what had struck him.

"Seagrave," said he, "you incline me to believe that you have never traveled over the road in a fast car. Either that, or you've got the eyes of a stuffed owl. Look in the pocket of the big car beside the driver's seat, and you will find some goggles. Put 'em on."

I did as he told me, a mite irritated at what he said, though, to tell the truth, I never had done more than fifty an hour, and that only in short spurts. Considering the roads, though, I couldn't see how Mr. Edmond expected to do much better, even supposing he had the nerve, which I doubted. Until a man gets used to speed, he thinks he's going some at forty per.

Mr. Edmond took the wheel, I cranked her, and we started off. And before ever we'd got to the entrance gates, I could see that I was alongside a master driver. Mr. Edmond lounging around the garage and Mr. Edmond at the wheel of a racing car were two different people. It seemed like as if he got some force and power out of the sixty horses cramped down under that hood in front of him that his own complement entirely lacked.

I stole a sideways look at him as we went through the gate. There was a red flush in his lean cheeks, and his eyes were as hard and as bright as blue ice. Yet his hand on the lever was as light as a feather, and he went into his different speeds with a little click like cocking a gun. He was easy with his brakes, too, and slowed against his motor as much as possible. Sparkes had told me that this was faulty practice, but I learned afterward that with a good clutch it was the right thing to do, and saved no end of tires. Mr. Edmond did it all the time, and before we'd gone a mile I'd have backed him with all my money when it came to driving a car.

Talk about speed! Jiminy, I'd never thought a man could travel so fast unless he happened to be standing over an old-fashioned boiler when she blew up. There were stretches where I'll bet we never hit the road three times in a furlong. It wasn't anything to brag of as a road, but the beautiful springs on that car made it feel like asphalt. Mr. Edmond hated his horn as much as he did his brakes, and passed the people we overtook at such a clip that their cusses couldn't overhaul us. And yet he was careful, too, for all his awful hurry. Let a horse act up a little or a cow meander out into the road, and he was down to a footpace and creeping by as silent as the *Flying Dutchman*. I'll tell you, it was an education in driving just to sit there alongside him.

We tore off about twenty miles, and were back to the garage in a little over half an hour. Mr. Edmond slid out, pulled off his driving gear, and looked at me with his face dragged down and his eyes like those of a dead fish.

"What do you think of her, Seagrave?" he asked, in his tired, drawly voice, and fished out a cigarette.

"She seems to poke along all right on the levels, and she climbs right smart," I answered, "but it strikes me that she's a mite sluggish downhill."

He gave me a funny sort of stare, then cackled outright. You'd hardly have called it a laugh. It was so harsh, and sounded like it hurt him.

"You're quite right," says he. "She runs away from her motor on the down grades. They are too steep. That car would be pretty near perfect on a French route where the grades seldom reach nine per cent and the curves are easy. She's too good for these rotten roads. Well, I must go up and get a drink. It gets on my nerves horribly to drive, and yet I rather like it, too. Trouble is, I'm just a bundle of nerves, anyway, and some sort of excitement like driving a swifty or following a hunt—not too far behind"—he grinned—"or stalking a tiger or something of the sort seems to be the only thing that rests 'em; that and an absinth now and then. Please go all over the car, Seagrave, and see that everything's ship-

shape for a run to-morrow afternoon. I've promised Miss McNair to take her out. She thinks it's the trial trip, so don't say anything about our little run to-day. I wanted to make sure that everything was hardened down, and that there was no danger of losing a front wheel or anything like that. And you might set one of the boys to work on the brasses, Seagrave."

And with a short nod he went swaying off to the house as if they'd forgot to send his wheel chair, and he had to make the best weather of it that he could.

The rest of the afternoon I spent at work on the racing car, as there were a number of things needed adjusting, the brakes being a mite slack and the clutch stiffer than it ought to be. Then I got off the front wheels, and had a look to see what held them on, as that remark of Mr. Edmond's had sent sort of a shiver down my back. Think of losing a front wheel when you were doing about sixty-five or seventy an hour! A shipwreck would be a nursery game compared to it, and it has been known to happen, too.

I finished my work, and washed up, and was just putting the cover over the car when there came something between me and the light, and I looked up and saw Grizel standing in the doorway, looking at me without a word. She had on a little light-blue dress with puffy short sleeves that stopped above the elbow, and there was a pale-blue ribbon around her dark, smoky-looking hair. A little wicker basket was hanging from one of her pretty round arms, and she held a pair of long scissors in her hand. I guessed that they had asked her to get some flowers for the table.

"Mrs. Newell would like the big car at nine," says she.

"At nine to-night?" I asked.

"Yes. They are going down to the Reading Room to play bridge."

"Very good," I answered. "It's all ready."

She sort of hesitated for a moment.

"Is that Mr. Edmond's new flyer?" she asked.

"Yes," I answered. "You'll have a chance to see it to-morrow. He told me that he was going to take you for a run."

"He is, if Mrs. Newell permits," she answered.

"Why shouldn't she?" I asked. "Especially as I'll be there to chaperon the party."

She pushed out her chin. "Oh," says she, "are you going, too?"

"Can you see Mr. Edmond shifting one of those big shoes single-handed?" I asked.

"He is not so helpless as you think," she answered sharply. "A man mustn't always have been a sailor to be able to do things. Mr. Edmond seems very well able to do what he sets about."

"That's his reputation, I believe," I answered, "especially when it comes to pleasing the ladies."

Grizel's blue eyes got bluer, and her red cheeks redder. Violets and roses, they were, and it struck me that she didn't need to go to the garden after her flowers.

"So you've been discussing his reputation," says she. "Really, you are learning the tricks of the trade wonderfully fast, Seagrave." I noticed she'd dropped the handle to my name. "And I suppose you got your information from the enterprising Mr. Maguire—or from Ethel, perhaps."

"Who's Ethel?" I asked, for in talking to Grizel I clean forgot my little English primrose.

"What! You don't even know her name? Ethel is Mrs. Newell's maid. She is rather above her station, I believe, as her father is an engine driver on the Great Northern, and she never would have gone into service if it hadn't been that she wanted to see life. You and she would naturally have a good deal in common, being influenced by the same motive. No doubt you can be of considerable service to each other."

"Shouldn't wonder," I answered. "She was of considerable service to me this morning, sewing a button onto my blouse. She was biting of the thread just when you so kindly looked in to

see how I was getting along in my new job."

Grizel's cheeks got even redder, and her eyes looked downright dangerous.

"That was very nice of her. Only I'd advise you to be very careful, Seagrave, as Mrs. Newell is most particular about the conduct of her servants, and you wouldn't wish the poor girl to lose her place on your account. Of course, the man is seldom blamed in affairs of this sort."

I could feel the blood coming up under my collar. "Especially if he happens to be tending to his business and the girl goes out of her way to stir him all up," I said.

The color faded from Grizel's cheeks, and her eyes seemed to get black. She bit her lip, and I could see the shine of her white little teeth. There was no hint just then of the appealing face I used to see in the swirls of mist eddying around the foremast. She looked more as if she'd like to send the scissors into me up to their tortoise-shell handles.

"You are quite right, Seagrave," says she, and her voice had a tremble in it. "I ought to know better myself than to stand here talking to the chauffeur. Especially as I have noticed that Ethel usually runs down this way just before meal time."

"If it's too much of a comedown to talk to the chauffeur," I answered, "and you feel like being sociable, I reckon you'll find Mr. Edmond over by the kennels. Or you might run into Volger down by the boathouse. I saw the launch come in not long ago. Either one ranks the chauffeur, to say nothing of having better manners."

Her eyes blazed out like a blue pilot's light, and for a second I thought that she was going to heave the scissors at me. Then, without a word, she turned on her heel, and walked off toward the flower garden. "Flower Garden" was what Billy had called her. It struck me that maybe "Fireworks" would be a better name for her. Yet, just on account of the natural cussedness of things, I was so crazy about her, even when I was getting in all that knife work, that there was a sort of suffocated feeling under my ribs, and when she went away I could feel my throat tighten and the water coming into my eyes.

I know I ought to be ashamed of the way I behaved, but Grizel had no call to turn to and try to haze me. I'd acted honestly and according to my idea of what was right, where she was concerned, and there didn't seem to be any reason under heaven why she should flout me and try to stir up the mud in me like she did. I was mad in love with her, and knew it, but I hadn't troubled her about it, and why she should put herself out to make me sore and discontented was more than I could fathom. In fact, the only thing that kept me from telling myself that she was geting spoiled and stuck up from the fuss the womenfolks in the Newell family made about her, was a sort of curious little light in her eyes that I can't describe, but that gave me the feeling of burning just for me like the lantern that a fisherman's wife puts in the window of the cottage, up there on the coast of Scotland.

Maguire had told me how the Newells were trying their best to spoil Grizel. They'd given her clothes, and treated her almost like a daughter from the very start, and the little girls were crazy about her and wouldn't mind anybody else.

But I understood even better how Mrs. Newell felt that night when I took them to the "Reading Room," as they called the yacht club. I was pretty tired after my day's work, and fell asleep on the front seat of the car along toward midnight. The car was lying off alongside the big piazza, and pretty soon I was awakened by people talking, as it seemed to me, almost in my ear.

I recognized the voice as Mrs. Newell's, and she said:

"You must remember, Edmond, that Grizel McNair is a very young and inexperienced girl. Also she's a working girl, and working girls are scarcely fair game for rich idlers like yourself."

"But, my dear Madge," says he—

Mr. Edmond, of course—"why do you persist in trying to make me such a villain? You ought to write another book, and call it 'Governesses I Have Fired,' with a subtitle, 'The Lure of Gasoline.'"

"It's not amusing, Edmond," says she.

"Why not call your book 'A Romance of Near Arcadia'? The Bay of Fundy lies in between, you see. Then this is the epoch of near things, and it ought to make a hit——"

"Don't be vulgar, Edmond," says Mrs. Newell.

"I'm not," says he. "I'm literal. The Bay of Fundy—with its eighty-foot tide in the affairs of men——"

She interrupted him mighty short and snappish. "Edmond," says she, "what is it that you take? Morphine or cocaine? Now, don't try to lie about it."

Eavesdropping was never much in my line. The only reason I'd kept quiet so far was because they'd been walking down the piazza and back, and I thought that they were going to turn the corner and go out of hearing range. But just here Mr. Edmond stopped and leaned over the rail, so I roused up and started to get down out of the car. I wasn't more than the distance you could chuck a heaving line, and the night was just as still as it could be. They both kept quiet as I got down, then Mrs. Newell says:

"Seagrave?"

"Yes, ma'am," I answered, and walked over to the piazza.

"Have you been listening to our conversation?" she asked, in a voice like vinegar.

"Yes, ma'am," I answered, and wished I was back on the old *Clarendon.*

"Why did you do that?" she asked. "Why did you not let us know that you were there?"

"I only woke up a minute ago, ma'am," I answered, "about where you started to talk about Miss McNair. Just as soon as I saw that you were going to stop here I got down."

They were both silent for a minute; then says Mr. Edmond:

"Very well, Seagrave."

His voice was sharp and short, as if he'd been a deck officer. I touched my cap and went back to the car. Mrs. Newell said something in a low voice, and they both turned and went back into the clubhouse.

That is all there was to that. I brought them home about an hour later, then rolled into bed, almost wishing that it was my old cozy berth on the *Clarendon,* and that the worst thing that I had to think about was turning out in four hours to go on the bridge.

The next day I took Mr. and Mrs. Newell over to eat lunch with some friends that lived about five miles away, and brought them home about four o'clock. Mr. Edmond was out in the garage looking over his new car when I came in.

"I'm going to take Miss McNair out for a little spin, Seagrave," said he. "Is everything in order?"

"Yes, sir," I answered.

"Then crank up and get in," said he, in a sort of a snappish tone. "We've been waiting for you to get back."

So I started the motor, and got in behind, wondering how he had fixed it up with Mrs. Newell.

The first time that I'd gone out with Mr. Edmond it had seemed to me that he was tempting the Almighty to strike him dead for a speed-crazy lunatic that was tired of life and hadn't the nerve to go out and commit suicide shipshape and proper. But that run was a Sunday-afternoon trolley ride compared to what we got now. Grizel was masked and hooded so that she looked like a diver ready to go down, and she sat tight as a bur, waiting for her heavenly crown, while Mr. Edmond was a sort of devil in his black skullcap and mask. He certainly acted the part, for the moment we got outside the gates he turned loose his power until it seemed as if we were in tow of about sixty nightmares. Once, at the bottom of a long steep hill where we dropped like a dipsey lead, he twisted around in his seat with a sort of diabolical grin.

"She's picking up a little on the down grades, hey, Seagrave?" he hollered back.

"Don't forget there's a lady passenger," I answered, though maybe I shouldn't have.

Mr. Edmond laughed, and unhooked a few more notches, and, looking over Grizel's shoulder, I saw the speed gauge jerking around between sixty-five and seventy as we struck a long tangent where the track was hard and level.

A little later I had a chance to see that Mr. Edmond wasn't all show. We swept around a curve at about fifty per, the road being good, but narrow and timbered thick with stunted pines on both sides. As we soared around, the siren screeching like a cow moose that's sad and lonely, here we came, slap-bang on a herd of cattle just pouring out onto the road from a trail leading into the woods.

No chance to brake against the motor here. Mr. Edmond reached for his hand brake, and, as he threw it on, there came a report like a six-pounder, and the car took a skid that nigh pitched me overboard. For a second I thought that we were going over—about eighteen times, but Mr. Edmond threw off the brake, and, straightening his direction with one hand, shot plump into the herd. How he got through will always be a wonder to me, but a second later here we were on the open road, the cattle astern, and, although I hadn't felt any jar, I looked back as he pulled up, and saw two cows floundering on their backs in the ditch.

Mr. Edmond pushed up his mask, and looked back.

"Tire down, Seagrave," says he, in the brisk voice he used only when driving the car. "Break out another shoe." He looked at Grizel, and laughed. "Like it?" he asked.

Grizel let out her breath. She'd held it since we sighted the cattle.

"I'm not sure," says she. "What happened?"

"Nothing but a burst tire. Those cows aren't hurt; I simply shoved them off the road with the mud guards. Just the same, I'll go back, and give the man something for his fright and to buy tallow to grow the hair again."

So back he went, and we heard a lively argument going on, which stopped mighty suddenly about the time a little money changed hands. Meanwhile I'd got out the jack, and hove up the wheel without a word from Grizel. I was getting off the torn shoe when Mr. Edmond came back, laughing.

"Sorry you couldn't hear his remarks," says he. "They consisted of a sincerely expressed wish that the car had turned turtle, and mutilated the lot of us beyond recognition, then caught fire, and burned our bodies to a crisp. The only thing lacking was that our parents might die of plague and the dogs defile the graves of everybody connected with us. And all because two of his silly cows were scraped a little along the ribs! He shut up, though, when I handed him a fiver and thanked him for his good wishes. I suppose now he'll be drivin' 'em in front of every car that comes along." He held out his hand to Grizel. "Come, Miss McNair," says he, "we'll take a little walk in the woods while Seagrave and our farmer friend shift the tire."

He pulled off his driving coat, and threw it across the seat, then helped her down before she had a chance to make the objection which it was plain she meant to.

"There's a cliff not far from here from which you get a ripping view of the bay," says Mr. Edmond. "We've just about time to stroll over there and back."

Grizel hesitated, but Mr. Edmond still held out his hand. Grizel had pulled off her hood, and looked at me, and I couldn't help frowning. As she caught my eye, Grizel pressed her lips together, and shoved out her chin in the way she had when displeased.

"I should love to," says she, and let him help her off with her wraps. Mr. Edmond led the way into the woods, and on the other side of the ditch he stopped and looked back.

"Start the motor, and give a few toots of the siren when you're ready,

Seagrave," says he, and off they went under the trees.

I've taken many a lee earing in a hard squall off the Cape, and I've wrestled a spare propeller blade that got adrift in the 'tween decks in a gale of wind, and I've cleared a whaleboat and got five hands swept overboard in a typhoon, but let me tell you I never got more of a hustle than I did to shift that tire. Nor, for that matter, did I ever strike aught that seemed fuller of the devil. Even with the farmer helping me, or maybe because of it, a good half hour had passed before I was ready to pump her up. The farmer was handy here, as he wanted to earn his fiver, and pretty soon the tire was hard, and I started the motor and made all the racket I knew how.

Even then it was a good ten minutes before they hove in sight. Mr. Edmond was lagging along, and Grizel's head was held very high, and her eyes looked dangerous.

"Well, Seagrave," says Mr. Edmond, "there's no danger of getting lost in the woods with you in the car."

I didn't answer. Something was boiling over inside me, and I wanted to grab him by his snipe neck and throw him over one of the pines. Maybe he felt it, for he didn't speak again, but wrapped Grizel up, and drove home like the devil was overhauling.

CHAPTER VII.

Two months skimmed by like they were going the other way, and during that time quite a lot of things happened, some of them nice and others not so pleasant.

The best thing about my job was the work itself. I took to driving right from the start, and at the end of the first month Mr. Edmond told me one day that his brother had said at the table that he considered me the easiest driver on the car and on the passengers that he had ever ridden with, and that he had never seen me take a single chance that might result in an accident. This was good hearing, of course, and paid for a lot of unpleasant things I had to put up with.

The work was harder than any one had any idea of. With a lot of driving to do and four cars to keep in order, I had to keep hustling pretty lively. But I was well paid for it, and when there was something that I really didn't have time to get around to, I'd telephone over to Billy, and he'd hop on a motor cycle and run out to lend me a hand. Even then I was often working up to midnight, as some of the family were out most of the day, and even when Mr. Newell or Mr. Edmond drove I always went along.

The Newells had lots of company, and you wouldn't believe the way the tips I got mounted up. At first I thanked whoever wanted to make me a present, and said I'd rather not take it, but Mr. Edmond found out about it, and said to me one day:

"Why do you refuse to accept tips, Seagrave?"

"Seemed to me that Mr. Newell would rather I shouldn't take anything, sir," I answered. "He pays me, and pays me well. I ain't working for these other people."

"I'm glad that's the reason," he drawls. "I was afraid it might be owing to Yankee pride and independence."

"Maybe there's a mite of that, too," I admitted.

"I fancy there is," he answered, "and I think that you make a mistake, Seagrave. There's nothing in the social position of a chauffeur that prevents his taking a tip. Besides, it makes most people a little sore to have their presents refused, and the ones that are secretly glad you don't care about. Now, take Mr. Curtis, for instance; how much did he offer you?"

"Five dollars," I answered.

"I'd have made it ten, in his place," says Mr. Edmond, "seeing that he kept you out late several nights, playing bridge, and then drove the little car himself, and gave you a job readjusting the transmission, as a result. Then there's another thing. There are a good many men like Mr. Curtis who are what you might call 'professional guests.' I'll wager he doesn't pay a board and

lodging bill four months in the year. He counts in his tips as a regular part of his living expenses, and when one is declined he's just that much ahead. He says to himself: 'Here's a blame' fool that is willing to pay five dollars to have me think he's above taking a tip.' "

I sort of scratched my head, and felt a little foolish.

"If that's the case, why, I'm sorry I didn't take it," I answered.

"Take 'em all," says Mr. Edmond. "You earn the money. I haven't come in after midnight once that you weren't on the job. When you get your sleep, I'm sure I don't know, but you seem to thrive at it." He looked me over, from head to foot. "You've got a neck like a broncho and an arm like the oak knee of a sailing ship," says he.

"Would you swap places, Mr. Edmond?" I asked.

He shook his head, slowly blowing the pale-blue smoke from his lungs halfway across the garage.

"No, Seagrave," he answered. "I'm too fond of luxury. The mere thought of any kind of physical work is horrible to me. You may notice that I never play tennis, or swim, or row, or ride a horse. I loathe exertion. And yet it fascinates me to see a strong man at his job. That's the reason I hang around the garage so much. On the contrary, it disgusts me to see a big, burly brute like this Volger floppin' around, and never so much as lifting a hand."

"He's not a strong man," said I; "he's full of mud."

Mr. Edmond shook his head. "He's husky enough," says he. "I saw him get a-hold of the end of a spar one day that two Swedes couldn't lift. He swung it up one-handed, and laid it aside. But he's such a lazy beggar." He yawned, and slid down off the bench, then on the threshold, turned and looked back at me. "Volger's no friend of yours, Seagrave," says he. "Look out that you don't give him any chance to do you a spiteful trick."

"What's that, sir?" I asked quickly, laying down my hacksaw, for I was shortening up a bolt in the vise.

'Servants' tattle," said Mr. Edmond, and shrugged. "I'd rather not repeat it." And he lounged out of the garage and over toward the kennels. He was mighty fond of the dogs, and about the only one they had any respect for.

It was plain enough that he wanted to put me on my guard without seeming to mix up in the gossip.

"No doubt," thought I, "Volger has been trying to stab me in the back while pretending that all is square between us, and that he asks nothing better than to be good friends."

This thought made me all the madder because Volger had been going out of his way to show me good feeling, asking me out aboard the yacht a couple of times to meals and the like. He knew that Mr. Edmond had taken a sort of fancy to me, and the whole household—family, servants, and all—stood a mite in awe of Mr. Edmond. He had a keen way of going straight to the truth of anything that could be pretty bitter, for all his polite way of speaking and lazy, drawling, affected voice.

I wondered what Volger had been saying and where he'd been saying it. The chances were, I thought, that he'd been making some slurs about Ethel and me, as the Sunday before Mrs. Newell had sent the upper house servants out for a ride in the big car, Ethel sitting beside me, and another time I'd taken her and the housekeeper and butler out for a sail in the moonlight, with Mrs. Newell's permission, of course.

Mr. Newell's *valet de chambre*, a fellow named Albert, was pretty well gone on Ethel, and the chances were that Thompson, the new butler, had been trying to plague him a little by telling him how I was teaching her to steer and how she'd been making eyes at me, for Ethel was one of those bright, pretty, lively sort of girls that can no more help flirting than a bird can help singing.

I liked Ethel a whole lot, and, while deep down in the heart of me there was the feeling that I was logged never to care for another woman than Grizel, she'd been so stand-offish and far away that for a month I'd never got in signal

range but once or twice, and then the message wasn't such as did me any great amount of good to read.

What possessed Grizel at this time, I couldn't have said. She was getting lovelier every day, as if she'd needed just that ease and luxury to develop the richness of her mind and body. So far as real work went, her duties amounted to nothing at all, for the little girls were just as good as they could be and adored Grizel, and all she had to do was to tell them what she wanted, and they went ahead and did it.

The older daughter, a mighty nice girl about eighteen, made a real chum out of Grizel, and Mrs. Newell treated her like a daughter. I doubted they'd let her go back to her school, they were all so fond of her, and, sure enough, they didn't.

Mr. Edmond was hard hit, too, but it seemed as if the two women threw a sort of torpedo net around Grizel, and it wasn't often, I guess, that he had a chance to speak to her alone. She liked him, too, but Grizel was a lady, and knew better than to get herself talked about. I saw her chinning with Volger a good many times, down by the boathouse, but nobody seemed to think anything about that. As for my part, there was hardly a day went by that she wasn't in the car, but, aside from that, she avoided me like I had yellow fever. Whenever she did find herself alone with me, she managed to get in a harpoon or two about my seeming to thrive on the soft, shore billet. And yet, there was always that little light in her eyes when they met mine.

Grizel acting like she did, it wasn't strange that I found a sort of contrary satisfaction in carrying on in a harmless sort of way with Ethel. Maybe I forged ahead a little stronger than was correct, considering that standing off and on like that with a girl is always maneuvering in shoal water, but I was sort of half miserable about Grizel all the time, and I certainly meant no harm to Ethel.

Besides, there was Albert, that I had about as much use for as I have for a stingaree. There was no good for Ethel in that skate, and what made me love him even less was his being a friend of Volger's. Mr. Newell always took him on the yacht, and whenever Volger came ashore he'd manage to meet up with Albert and get the hand-out of a cocktail, or the like. I piped down the two of them as pretty near the same breed of galley rangers, only Albert was even less of a man than Volger.

Thought I to myself: "Albert has carried some yarn about Ethel and me to Volger, and Volger has slung loose *his* jaw tackle. The best thing for me to do is to give Ethel a wide berth. When it comes to this sort of trouble, it's just as Grizel once said: 'It's always the girl that pays.'"

Now this was a right sensible point of view on my part, and if I'd managed to stick to it, things might have been different. But luck was against us. That summer was a mighty hot one, and the days were so sultry, come August, that by nightfall the help were pretty well tuckered out. Mrs. Newell, while mighty strict about behavior and all that, was a considerate woman, and she gave orders that we were all free to use the bathhouses and bathing beach before turning in, Mrs. Holbrooke, the housekeeper, always standing watch to see that things went shipshape and proper.

Now, Ethel was a regular mermaid, having grown up 'longshore and being naturally strong-limbed and full-chested. The very first night we went overboard she took a clean dive off the rail of the upper deck of the boathouse, and entered as slick as a porpoise. I followed her, and we struck out in the bridge of a big, full moon, with the ripples all around us like the scales of a fresh-hooked tarpon, and the land breeze bringing off warm, spicy smells that put me in mind of the cinnamon groves of Ceylon.

The water was warm, too, having simmered on the flats all day, and after the heat and work since early morning, it made you feel fresh and strong to stretch out in the cool brine, while the black depths underneath made you feel

like you were a seal or grampus, and belonged in the sea, and nothing on shore mattered "a curse in a gale of wind," as sailors say.

The rest of the party were splashing around in the shallow water, and Mrs. Holbrooke, a broad-beamed, easy-going woman with a mighty level head on her shoulders, was inside, reading the paper by the electric light.

"Where bound, matey?" I hailed, as I hauled up in Ethel's wake.

"Liverpool," she answered, and kicked a shower of silvery spray into my face. "See my homeward-bound pennant?" And she flashed a tress of her long, yellow hair in the moonlight, for she didn't wear a bathing cap, and had let her hair fly adrift, once in the water. Ethel was a bit of a sailor lass herself, having grown up in Liverpool and being acquainted with a lot of seafaring people.

I forged up alongside, and together we swam straight out in the bright track of the moon.

Fortunately Mr. and Mrs. Newell were dining with some company out aboard the *Nahma,* and Albert had gone along to lend the steward a hand, otherwise he'd been hollering at us from the shore. But the others didn't bother us any, and Mrs. Holbrooke was good for an hour, reading the murder news and society scandals, so we started in for a good swim.

Half a mile out lay the *Nahma,* the light streaming from her portholes and dancing down from the riding light. She was a sturdy old packet, though I must say that there was something about the hogged lines of her sheerstrake that made me misdoubt the condition of her amidships frames, but just the same she looked mighty fine out there in the bridge of the moon.

Ethel, a regular duck in the water, no matter how cold it might be, rolled over on her side, and faced me.

"Let's swim around the yacht, Jason," says she.

"Not much," I answered. "Volger would sight us and run tattling to Mrs. Newell, and there'd be no more moonlight swims, let alone getting Mrs. Holbrooke in hot water."

"We can give her a wide berth," says she.

"What's the use?" I answered. "Let the schooner be. We'll swim out to Duck Island, if you like."

"All right," says she, and took a long, overhand stroke, her round white arm flashing like silver.

This Duck Island was no more than a round little clump of rocks and pine trees not more than a hundred yards across. It was about a quarter of a mile offshore, and bore to the southward, the *Nahma's* moorings being a little south of east from the boathouse. It wasn't much of a swim, but as we drew near the water got suddenly like ice, we having swum clear of the warmer belt over the flats.

"Jiminy," said I, "we've struck the arctic current."

Ethel gave a silvery laugh that rippled across the water, and seemed a part of the moonlight.

"Let's land and thaw out," says she. "I'll race you to the beach."

"For a kiss," I answered back, and hand over we went, in for the beach, foaming, laughing, with a trail of moonlight and phosphorescence that looked like a comet's tail. I swarmed up on the beach like a seal, and, without rising to my feet, turned and reached out my arms to her as she came splashing in.

"Won by half a length," I shouted; "pay up."

Now, it happened that on that very afternoon Grizel had sent her knife into me again, up to the hilt, this time to tell me that Mrs. Newell had remarked at the table that I looked sort of used up and that she thought Mr. Edmond ought to get a chauffeur of his own, as his car took more time than the other three together, and that she hated to think that any of the "servants" were taxed beyond their strength. Grizel wound up by saying that she supposed it was Yankee thrift on my part. I had told her: "Yes, I'm trying to get enough ahead to have a home to offer to the girl who might be willing some

day to marry me." She had given me a hard little look at this, and gone out without a word.

So what with the freedom that comes of feeling that, after all, there's no use in trying, and the soft, creamy light of a harvest moon and the smell of pines mixed with salt grass, to say nothing of the prettiest sort of a girl with her yellow hair shining like old gold in that yellow moonlight and her eyes about a hundred fathoms deep, just waiting to be hauled up out of the sea to give you a salty kiss or two, it's no wonder that I put everything else out of mind. The spell of the night gripped us both, and we neither of us saw the coming of the gig from the *Nahma,* nor did we hear her bow grate on the beach. As it was, the first we knew that we were not alone, talking and resting up for our swim back, was when a greasy voice behind us said:

"Good evening. Aw-f'lly sorry to intrude, but Mrs. Newell sent me over to set you ashore."

I swung around, and here was Volger looming up against the pale sky.

"Say," says he, dropping his voice a mite, "what got into you to make so much noise? With this offshore draft, and still as it is, you might jus' as well have been alongside. Now, you've give the whole snap away."

I looked out toward the schooner. She was a good quarter of a mile away, and I doubted that our voices would have carried to her, so that any one could tell who was talking. Still, it was possible.

Ethel never said a word. She was staring across the water toward the sea, her hands clasped around her knees. Presently, says she in a hard, even sort of voice:

"This does for me, I fancy. Well, after all, it might as well be sooner as later. I've done my best." She looked up at me, and held out her hand. I was on my feet, of course, and I gave her a grip, and up she came, light as a feather.

"It's all my fault, Ethel," said I, "and if there's anything that I can do to fix things up, you can just bet I'll do it."

She shook her head. "It's not your fault at all," says she. "I've only myself to thank—but I don't care——" And she gave a little laugh, and did a sort of fancy step across the tiny beach. "If I'm dismissed, I'll go on the stage."

"Say," says Volger, "that ain't such an awfully bad idea, neither. With that shape——"

"Stow all that," said I. "There's no call for Mrs. Newell to interfere like this, and I'll tell her so, with all respect. We had our swim after hours and with permission. If we see fit to cruise offshore a mite, what's the harm?" I tried to look Volger in the eyes, for his face was in the shadow. "You say Mrs. Newell heard us talking and laughing?" I asked.

"Sure," says he, bold as brass, but with a funny sort of note in his voice. "Why, you might ha' been alongside."

That wasn't the place to argue it out, especially as I was getting to like Volger less and less every minute, from the way he was piping Ethel down. So I held out my hand.

"Come on, Ethel," said I. "We'll go in with the captain, and to-morrow I'll ask leave to say a few words with Mrs. Newell."

Volger took me by the arm.

"Don't you do it, Seagrave," says he. "There's nothing foolisher than for a man to stick up for a girl to another woman. You keep out of it."

Ethel laughed. "The captain's right," says she. "You'd best keep out of it, Jason."

So in we went, a mighty sad little swimming party, and found the rest of them still romping in the warm water and Mrs. Holbrooke asleep with a fashion paper on her lap. Volger went off aboard as soon as he had landed us, not giving me a chance to say a word to the Swede who was pulling the dinghy. Then, Mrs. Holbrooke woke up, and we all got dressed, and the rest of them went up to the house.

I hung around the landing, for I wasn't quite satisfied about what Volger had said, and wanted a word with somebody off the yacht. But there was no chance of this, as the party came

ashore about midnight, and the launch went straight back alongside. So I turned in, dead tired, and mighty depressed.

The next morning I was broken out at about six by a Swede named Larsen, one of the quartermasters off the yacht, who came up after some gasoline.

"Larsen," said I, "what quartermaster was on duty last night from eight to twelve?"

"That's me," says Larsen. "I ban on deck for da first watch."

"Did you hear us in swimming?" I asked.

He grinned. "Yas," says he, "I ban hear a gell and fella over on Duck Island."

"Who was on deck at the time?" I asked.

"Yust da skeeper and me," he answered.

That was all I wanted to know. So this was a little game of Volger's. I warned Larsen not to tell that I'd questioned him, then gave him his gasoline and turned to. I was pottering around the cars when I saw one of the grooms going out with the station wagon. A little later I heard him leave the house, and I asked the coachman: "Who is leaving?"

"Ethel," says he, "and a dommed shame, too."

"Ethel!" I echoed, and felt sort of sick around the gizzard. "What for?"

"'Tis yourself should know," says he, and turned on his heel and walked off into the harness room.

I went back to the garage mad clear through. The whole business was clear as the ship's bell. Volger, hearing Ethel and me laughing and talking over on Duck Island, tells Albert, and Albert contrives some way that Mrs. Newell shall know. Mrs. Newell sends Volger after us, and later on learns from Ethel that we two had swum out there by ourselves. That fixes Ethel. She probably gets a month's advance wages and a ticket to Boston. It was that way in the Newells' household. Never had any row nor talk; just the account settled and good-by. All the help drew half again as much wages as they would get most places, and were expected to toe the chalk line or find a new job.

Mr. Edmond came into the garage about half past ten. He must have seen that something was wrong, for pretty soon he said:

"What's the matter, Seagrave? You seem upset about something."

So I gave it to him straight, man to man, telling him all about Volger's dirty trick and winding up with my free-born American opinion of the way Ethel had been used. Mr. Edmond listened without interrupting, but I saw his eyes narrow and harden a little, and reckoned that he didn't care much for my plain way of putting the case. When I'd finished, he took a long inhale of his cigarette, blew the smoke up at the ceiling, and said:

"I hate like the devil to do anything that might interfere with getting that man Volger a licking, Seagrave. Fact is, I'd give a lot to see it. Personally, I detest the brute. But as for Ethel, it's the best thing that could have happened to her. She was quite out of her element as a lady's maid, and was always getting in hot water, one way and another. Mrs. Newell only kept her on because she was so bright and willing and such a scrupulously neat girl."

"But what will she do now?" I asked.

Mr. Edmond blew out another long, thin column of smoke.

"She is going on the stage," says he. "That's been her ambition for a long time. She seems to have most of the requirements of a show girl, and I shouldn't wonder if she were to go a good way."

"But how is she to get a start?" I asked, sort of doubtful.

Mr. Edmond flicked his cigarette into a puddle of grease, then turned to go out. In the doorway he paused, and looked back.

"There'll be no trouble about that," says he. "I've got a good many friends in the theatrical world, and when Albert told me this morning that she was leaving, I gave her some letters, which will no doubt get her what she wants. I've always liked Ethel, and would be very glad to be of service to her."

"Well," said I, "that was very kind of you, Mr. Edmond, and of course it changes things, so far as Ethel is concerned. But it doesn't make what Volger did any different."

Mr. Edmond shrugged. "Just the same, I'd let it drop, Seagrave," says he. "Mr. Newell is sending the yacht to Newport to-morrow, and we won't be bothered with Volger for a month. I was going down with the schooner, but rather than be shipmates with the brute for a couple of days, I shall take the train. If you were to quarrel with him, it would probably cost you your place, and it's not a bad job, as jobs go. Next month you won't be worked so hard, as they will want you to run the *Seal,* and the cars are not used much through August."

And with a little nod, he turned, and went out.

CHAPTER VIII.

Mr. Edmond's advice seemed pretty good to me, and I thought that the best thing to do was to act on it. I always did hate to play the part of a bucko, and in such a high-toned, dignified sort of family it came all the harder. So I kept away from Volger, and that wasn't very hard, as he did all he could to help me.

The yacht sailed a couple of days later, and I think everybody was glad of it, unless maybe it was Albert. He had expected to go with Mr. Edmond, but got fooled, being left behind to make himself generally useless around the house. I often wished I had the lubber on a sailing ship in my watch. He'd have learned lots of things that it would have done me good to have him know.

Mr. Edmond was right when he said that the work was going to get easier. It was too easy, if anything, for what with long hours off and the good living, I began to put on flesh. Some days not a car would leave the garage, for it was an awful hot, dry summer with a cloud of dust hanging over the road. It took the air about half an hour to clear after a car had passed.

So, instead of running on wheels, the family did their errands in the *Seal,* a big, stanch hunting launch with a twenty-horse-power motor. That was a job I loved, and, knowing those waters like I did, I could be a lot of use, not only as engineer, but pilot. Most of the Newells' friends lived along the shore, some on the islands, and I knew a lot of cut-offs that none of the Bluenoses or squareheads off the yacht would have dared to tackle, especially when there was a mite of sea on.

The *Seal* was a dandy boat, laid down in Yarmouth, where they understood how to stick planks together. But her lines had been got out by some fellow that knew his business, and, while she looked something like a peasant's wooden shoe in the water, she could travel like a scared barracouta, and would stay out with the last of them. I brought her through a hole I knew between the Hen and Chickens and the Walrus one day, when it was blowing fresh from the southeast, and never a drop of water on deck.

It was while I was running the *Seal* that I came to know the real Grizel, I think. The girl had the real sea hunger. Nervous and snappy she might sometimes be ashore, but the moment she was afloat she became as sweet and soft as a night breeze off Sumatra. She'd crowd up against the coaming and push her pretty nose with its raking tip into the salty draft coming in off the sea and fill her chest with the fresh air and howl with delight when she caught a spray.

I noticed, too, that she set a lot of store for all the folks that got their living from the sea. She could be tart as lime juice with shore people, shopkeepers, and the like, but let a man be no more than a clam digger, and she seemed to find some use for him right off.

The sea did something to Grizel. I don't know what it was, but it seemed to have a sort of intoxicating effect on her. The Newells were all good sailors, having lived so much afloat, I reckon, and I doubt if Grizel had ever felt a ground swell until she came to

Portland. The lake chop is quite different. Yet I've had a whole party out catching tautogs when Grizel was the only one in the boat that wasn't feeling squeamish, we being at anchor and a swell mounting a mite as it went over the reef. Yes, she took to the sea like a brant, hatched out under a hen somewhere in the alkali desert, and from the time I started in to run the *Seal* and took them through some swash channels where the water looked real wicked, though it wasn't, I noticed a change in her treatment of me.

It was not only that Grizel was crazy about the sea and everything and everybody connected with it, but she had a strong romantic streak where blue water was concerned. You could tell it by the look of her eyes when she was listening to some deep-sea yarn, and she was always reading sea stories.

Just to be a sailor was a good way of working to windward in Grizel's opinion, and as I came to understand that her love of the sea was something pretty real and not only a passing fancy, I could see how disgusted she must have been at the thought of a man giving up a mate's billet to become a dusty, greasy chauffeur. Grizel, like any other woman, could be thrilled enough by a swift run over the road, and she had the right amount of admiration for a really brilliant driver, like Mr. Edmond. But any gurry-smeared fisherman heaving on a warp looked more of a man to her than the winner of the Vanderbilt Cup.

That was a nice month, running around in the *Seal,* and it wasn't spoiled any for me when I learned that Volger had dragged the schooner across a rock down in Narragansett Bay, and that she'd have to be laid up so long for repairs that Mr. Newell decided to put her out of commission, it being then early in September.

Mrs. Newell had persuaded Grizel to stay on with her, which she was glad enough to do, I guess. Mr. Edmond had come back from Newport and gone up to get his camp on Moosehead Lake ready for the family, as the Newells always spent a month up there before returning to town. As they had several motor boats, they decided to take me along, and I must say it was all mighty pleasant, and I would have been happy as a king, except for the state of my feelings about Grizel.

There was no use boxhauling about, I was nigh sick from my want of the girl and the seeming hopelessness of it all. When a man like me gets hit that way, it's like a swat from a gybing main boom, and the chances are about nine to one that he gets knocked plumb overboard.

I fell in love with Grizel the first second my eyes rested on her, aboard the train, and ever since that moment, in spite of her harsh treatment of me and all the rest, I'd been sliding steadily to leeward. The picture of her sweet, eager face and all the promise of the rich nature that it held just kept me in a sort of steady, low fever.

The trouble was, it all seemed so useless. We'd met first on terms of equality; she a school-teacher and I a ship's officer, and both of us from good, sound, respectable, God-fearing families. Since then, we seemed to have been gradually growing apart, so far as our social conditions were concerned.

Grizel was like one of the family now, and quite the fashionable lady, while I was chauffeur, boatman, general utility man, and mechanic. Why, the very first thing I did up there at the "camp," as they called that log-built palace, was a plumbing job in one of the six bathrooms. The Newells had learned by this time that I wasn't one of these finicky fools that has to have his job fenced in by wire netting for fear of straying into the next man's. It was all one to me; I'd a heap rather work than soldier around, and the way I was feeling, the work was all that kept me from something worse; drink, maybe, though I was never an intemperate man.

Perhaps the hardest thing of all to stand was the gradual way in which Mr. Edmond was getting around Grizel. He'd bucked up a lot since the summer, and sometimes I was inclined to think that Grizel was the cause of it. There came a sort of intentness in his eyes

when they rested on her, and a tinge of color in his lean cheeks, and it seemed like his whole body got some ginger into it.

There was no doubt but that he was a very handsome, thoroughbred-looking man, and, though I never saw him do a lick of real hard work, yet when he wanted to he could be downright athletic. He was the slickest hand with a billiard cue I ever saw, and Albert told me that he had all kinds of fencing medals and trophies, and I know that I never saw a better shot. He could ride a horse, too, and his dogs minded him better than most people's.

Yet everything he did was in the same sluggish, tired sort of way, as if he was just about able to finish what he was at before he'd have to take to his bunk and have his rations fetched him. The only time that I ever saw him anyway brisk was when he was with Grizel, and then I'd sometimes see the look in his eyes that you see in a dog's when he's looking at a pet doe.

I was pretty apt to make a third at their excursions, as they went out on the lake a good deal in the canoes or motor boats or in a St. Lawrence skiff that was quite a handy boat. Mr. Edmond had taken a sort of dislike to their regular guides, and seemed to want me to go along. He never insisted on it, but would say: "Seagrave, it's not in your line of work, but if you would like to take Miss McNair and myself out in the skiff, I can't think of any pleasanter way of spending a couple of hours."

Or maybe it might be a canoe, and I'd sail or paddle, silent as an Indian, while those two chattered about anything that came into their heads. Mrs. Newell never insisted on a chaperon when I was along, and the fact is that Mr. Edmond had come to take possession, as you might say, so gradually and carefully that nobody interfered the least mite with what would never have been allowed at first. Besides, things were easier at the camp, and not so formal, and I will say of Mr. Edmond that I never saw him so much as touch Grizel with his hand. Even when she got in and out of the boats he'd usually say: "Grab Seagrave's arm—he's steadier than I am." And sometimes I used to wonder if he never guessed what it did to me when Grizel's firm little hand fell on my arm or wrist.

Yes, this was a mighty sad time for me, and all the beautiful surroundings, the lake and the fall woods and the laughing "campers" that came and went; pretty girls and nice, trim young fellows and the gay goings on seemed to make me worse instead of better. It's apt to be like that, I guess, when a man is crazy about a girl.

Yet with it all I never once regretted having quit the sea. Almighty! when I thought of that stumpy little *Clarendon* plugging away into a hard nor'-wester at about five knots an hour and coming down from the bridge into a stuffy, musty little saloon to tuck away the same old leather-bound meat pie with lobscouse and tea, and that sad, tiresome sound of water swashing around overhead and overside, and the screw racing and spilling your tea every few minutes, then going to your berth to wallop around for about three hours before going up on the bridge to walk up and down, up and down, thinking of the money you're never going to make and the fun you're never going to have and the girls you're never going to know and all the other "never" things —shucks! I'd rather be a farm hand; he sees more of life.

No, that chapter was finished. Just as Billy Maguire said, one day, when they got five-thousand-ton aëroplanes, I'd make application for a billet to pilot one across. But there was nothing for a man with arms and legs, and a thought or two in chasing back and forth on seagoing freight cars, no matter how romantic it might seem to Grizel.

Meantime I'd salted down more money in three months than I'd ever been able to save in a year, and I figured it out, from what Billy told me one day, that I couldn't do better than to put it right into their business. They were doing a lot of good honest work, but had mighty little cash to run on, and

while motor-supply people are easy when it comes to terms, still they have to protect themselves. I'd already turned over a couple of hundred to Billy, and Sparkes, who was a good, clear-headed business man, had issued to me stock in their little company, which looked pretty good to me.

So really, while I was getting farther away from Grizel, socially as you might say, I was coming nearer to her financially. It wouldn't have taken me more than a hundred years or so to have made her the sort of home I wanted to, if I'd stuck to the sea, but by that time things would have changed a mite.

Grizel had changed already, but I wasn't sure that I cared much for the change in her. She seemed to have got kinder and never tried to snub me any more. Trouble was, she treated me too much as Miss Newell did, to suit my taste. And yet there was always that little candle burning in the back of her eyes when she spoke to me—and sometimes when she looked at me. It burned brighter when we were in a boat, and I'd never seen it so bright as once in the *Seal* when we picked up a lobster buoy on the screw, and wound up the line so as to stop us, we drifting onto a mighty wicked ledge in what was left of a sou'westerly gale.

I knew that there was no use anchoring, as there was no good holding ground and the seas mounting as the tide dropped. So I went overboard with a knife and in under, and cleared the wheel and got her going, none too soon. After what I saw in Grizel's face that day, my disease got a lot worse.

Well, there didn't seem to be anything to do about it. I never had much experience of women, but I had common sense enough to know better than to go pestering Grizel with my symptoms when she was like one of the family, and I was the slob. So I just sort of stuck my head down, and plowed away like the old *Clarendon* in a westerly gale. Nobody could discover that she was getting to windward any, and sometimes the taffrail log would be hanging so plumb I'd haul it in for fear of getting it cut by the screw, yet she generally got to port inside of two weeks from the Butte o' Lewis.

After all, though, good and bad times are just matters of comparison. When we got back to Boston, I used to think about Moosehead Lake like it had been some sort of paradise. Once in town the distance between Grizel and me seemed almost out of range of wireless. Up in the country I'd been sort of a hired man, it's true, but my work had taken skill and judgment and a kind of natural ability. But here in town there was no call for anything like that.

I was perched on the bridge of a lumbering electric contraption, upholstered like a hearse on the inside, and able to do at least ten knots an hour, wind and tide permitting. Alongside me was a cockney scrub rigged out just as I was, his mission in life being to hop down with an umbrella when it rained, which it generally did, and to stand like a dummy with a rug over his arm, while Mrs. Newell and Grizel or Miss Newell and Grizel went inside the house. The worst of it was that there was nothing in the work itself. It takes more ability to handle a Fiji Island dugout in a flat calm than to run an electric, especially in Boston, where a cabby waits to be introduced before presuming to cross your bows.

This was the very worst time of my life, even while the easiest. I've been shipwrecked three times, made a whaling voyage, and spent a month in a Chilean jail, but nothing was ever so sort of bleak and cheerless as sitting on top of that electric in a Boston drizzle while the womenfolks made calls. It wasn't much of a job for a man used to bringing a ship up to Cape Charles and through the Straits of Belle Isle in a wicked nor'easter, then down through the gulf in a fog you could cut out in chunks and stack on deck, rounding East Cape by the echo against the lighthouse.

The only thing that tided me through the early winter was that while Grizel might be hull down for me, so far as speaking was concerned, she was where I could see her often and feel her near.

Sometimes, too, I'd catch her eyes resting on me in a funny sort of way, part sad, part questioning, as if she was trying to study out what I did it for. It must have puzzled her a mite, because it was plain that I didn't care for those things that most chauffeurs are always hollering for. My stock was selling high in the Newell family by this time, and Mrs. Newell had even asked me to go to her church, which I was glad to do, the persuasion being the same as mine. It was all one to me what I did when off duty.

The best days I had were those when I made runs over the road with Mr. Edmond. Sometimes I almost thought that he took the sixty out as much for my sake as his own, he knowing how I hated the electric. It was a comfort to get in a real car, and the first few times we went alone, making fast runs to neighboring places, like Gloucester and Salem and Lynn or some country club. Mr. Edmond let me drive on these trips, and would sit there alongside and criticize my caution and try to devil me into killing us both. He had a mighty cross-grained streak in him, had Mr. Edmond, and yet I don't know when I ever struck a man so companionable. He was kind, too, and the only time we'd ever disagreed up to this was when I had flat refused to take his twenty-five dollars a month for doing no more than to look over the sixty about once a week.

Then, one fall day, or early winter it was, but warm, Mr. Edmond persuaded Mrs. Newell to let him take Grizel out for a fast run. Two or three days later, he took her out again, and this time they stopped at a road house for tea. I wondered at Grizel doing such a thing, or at his letting her, for he was always mighty particular about appearances. This happened several times, and I must say it made me mighty miserable.

CHAPTER IX.

I noticed that Mr. Edmond's manner toward Grizel was beginning to change. Up at Moosehead he had always been slow and languid and easy-going, depending on his mind, which was really bright, to interest and amuse her, and never trying to call on the physical part of him, which didn't seem surprising when you came to look him over as a male animal.

But from now on, either because he was really gilled, or because he'd come to understand Grizel better, his whole line of attack began to change, gradually, of course, because Mr. Edmond never did anything with a jolt. He understood women, too, and I wondered in a sick sort of way how long a young, inexperienced girl with the love of life hot in her veins and her mind as fresh to grow new-planted ideas as a virgin soil is to grow alfalfa, how long she could possibly hold out against a rich, intelligent, thoroughbred man like Mr. Edmond.

The weak part of him, as I saw it, had always been his body, but now that Grizel had got him thoroughly awake, it seemed as if he'd got new springs in him. There was a stiffness to his back and a firmness to his jaw and a cut to his voice, and I noticed one day when he got impatient about something that I was doing to the car, that the strength in his fingers was unnatural. He twisted off a nut that I had tried to start, then taken a wrench to.

Every day he seemed to be getting a little closer to Grizel. And aside from his own skill, he was so rotten rich and did everything in such a princely way. I'd heard tell that the two brothers had inherited something over two hundred thousand a year apiece.

Yet, in spite of all, I was getting deeper and deeper in love with Grizel, and the only wonder is I didn't take sick and die of it. Then one day things seemed to brighten up.

Mr. Newell sent for me, and asked if I didn't think it would be feasible to dismount the body of the light thirty so as to carry the car on the yacht. His idea was to lash down both parts on different sides of the deck, both parceled snugly in tarpaulins. He was planning a cruise to Bermuda, Cuba, Porto Rico, and maybe a look into Ormond, and he thought of taking the

car and me to run it. The schooner was being put in commission, and would go to Old Point Comfort to take the family aboard for the run across to the Bermudas, as it was then February, and as the Gulf Stream puts in to about thirty miles off Hatteras, the cold weather could be avoided.

You can just bet that I didn't find any drawbacks to this scheme. If he'd wanted to take the car to pieces and stow her in the forepeak, I'd have sworn there was nothing easier. And I'd have managed it, too.

This was good news, for Boston was wet and nasty, and whenever there came a bright day, Mr. Edmond would come and take Grizel for a walk. The servants' gossip was that the two were going to be married, and that the Newells were quite satisfied about it, liking Grizel and hoping she'd make a man of Mr. Edmond.

It may seem funny that with this sort of gossip going about, and good ground for it, too, so far as Mr. Edmond could furnish it, that I should have kept right on feeling the same about Grizel. Here was I, the chauffeur, lying awake nights to think about the same girl that this millionaire was in love with. It sounds pretty foolish on the face of it, especially as it was my first case, and I had about as much of an idea how to please a woman as a cat knows about the sextant. Here was Mr. Edmond that had only to lean over his shoulder and give an order for most things that a woman is apt to want, and here was I, a chauffeur, with nothing to offer but six feet of lean meat, and a sort of insanity about this one girl.

Then why did I keep at it? Just on account of that one thing that I've spoken of before—the little candle that was always burning in the back of Grizel's eyes, when she looked my way. I can't tell what it was that gave me the idea; certainly it was nothing that she ever did or said. But I could never get over the thought that she was meant for me from the very start.

Maybe it was this feeling that led me to act as I finally did just before we got away for Bermuda. This was early in February, and there had come a streak of clear, crisp weather after a soft, rainy winter. The roads were pretty good, as the frost hadn't started to come out of the ground, and there were only the frozen ruts to bother you, for that year we had practically no snow.

Mr. Edmond was always keen for a run when the chance offered, and he called me up at the garage one bright morning to tell me that he was going to take his niece and Miss McNair out for luncheon at the Golf Club at Manchester, and for me to bring the sixty around to Beacon Street as soon as possible. It didn't take me long to get everything ready, and then, just as I was about to leave the garage, there came another message to say that the party was off, but for me to be ready to go out with the racing car at about three o'clock.

At two, Mr. Edmond came into the garage.

"Crank up, Seagrave," said he. "Miss Newell had to do some shopping for Bermuda, but I'm going to meet Miss McNair downtown and take her for a farewell spin over the road. Only we've got to hurry, as there's only about an hour and a half of daylight left."

Everything was ready, so we went right out, and met Grizel at one of the big shops. Mr. Edmond drove, and I got in behind, and in twenty minutes we were well clear of the city on the road to Marblehead.

Mr. Edmond was driving like a lunatic that day and over those frozen ruts; I was just waiting to hear a tire go, and pretty soon, sure enough, one did. I was pretty useful at changing them by this time, and a workman that came along on a bicycle lent a hand, and we were ready to go on again before many minutes. But the devil seemed to be in it, for scarcely had we done three miles, when *bang!* we were flat again.

It had got mighty cold, for the wind had hauled into the north and the sun was down, and for all of their furs and hoods and masks, I guess all hands were feeling the nip of the frost all right. But, after all, there are lots worse things than a little cold.

"We'll go on about a mile," said Mr. Edmond; "there's a place at the cross-roads called the 'Ark,' where we can keep from freezing to death, and maybe get a nip of tea or something cheerfuler."

Now, I knew all about this Ark, from the loose talk in the garage, according to which it was no place for a man to take a young lady. So when Mr. Edmond told me to start the motor, I said:

"It won't take long to shift a shoe, Mr. Edmond, and, if you're cold, I can soon manage to light a little fire here on the side of the road."

"Thanks, Seagrave," says he, and his voice was dry as punk; "I think we'll go on to the Ark, and you can shift your shoe in the garage."

"It'll knock the rim all to pieces, sir, on this frozen road," said I.

"Never mind the rims," snapped Mr. Edmond; "there's plenty of time to ship a new wheel between now and April."

"There's another thing, sir," said I; "this Ark is a pretty rough sort of a tavern."

"So they tell me," said Mr. Edmond, in that same dry voice, "and yet I've eaten the best chicken lobsters and little-neck clams I ever tested there. The tea is good, too," says he, in that sawdust voice that I'd come to hate. "Don't worry, Seagrave. Noah is an old friend of mine, and he'll give us a quiet corner where nobody can bother us."

Grizel seemed to think that all of this was mighty funny. She was cold, too, I guess, for her laugh had a shiver in it, and I knew that she was just dying for a dish of hot tea, and wanted to warm up a bit. But this Ark place was one of the worst along the road, and I just took it on myself to interfere. Said I to Mr. Edmond:

"The Ark is no place for you to take a lady, sir. We hear more gossip in the garage than the owners do——" And I was going on to explain it, when Mr. Edmond cut in, and his voice was like a whip.

"That will do, Seagrave," says he. "Will you start the motor?"

"No, sir," I answered.

"Well, then," says he, "I suppose I'll have to start it myself." And he pulled off his fur coat, and came walking forward.

"Get out of my way," says he; "I'm going to start the motor."

"No, sir," I answered. "With all due respect, you're not going to do anything of the sort."

"This is what I get for mixing friendly and business relations, I suppose," said Mr. Edmond. "My brother is quite right in saying that I am far too democratic."

"You are too much of a gentleman, Mr. Edmond," said I, "and too kind-hearted a man to do anything which might cost a young girl her reputation. No amount of money can pay for that, Mr. Edmond."

He sort of hesitated for a second, and I had hopes that he was going to be man enough to own up that I was right. But he was too used to having his own way, and no doubt had come to believe, like most very rich folks, that he couldn't be in the wrong. Besides, there was a good deal that was hard as nails under that lackadaisical manner of his, and he couldn't stand being contraried by a hired hand, especially before a lady. The deep lines drew down either side of his mouth, and he stepped forward to get a-hold of the crank.

I saw that he meant business, and that if I wanted to prevent his starting the car I'd have to use force. Mr. Edmond meant fight, and what he couldn't do with his hands he'd try to do with a spanner, if need be. Naturally, nothing was farther from my wishes than this sort of thing, so I turned to Grizel.

"Miss McNair," said I, "why don't you tell Mr. Edmond that you had rather not stop at this road house?"

She looked straight at me, her face white and her eyes big and dark, like they always got when she was put out.

"I think, Seagrave," says she, in a very low voice, "that Mr. Edmond is a better judge of what I ought to do than either you or myself. And I think that you are wrong to try to interfere. It is hardly respectful. Mr. Edmond would be the very last person to let me go

where I ought not be seen, unchaperoned."

I touched my cap, then turned to Mr. Edmond.

"Shall I start the motor, sir?" I asked.

"No, Seagrave," he answered, in a sort of oily voice. "It will never be necessary for you to do anything more for me. I will start the motor myself, and we will run on the rim as far as Lynn, and there we will leave the car in a garage and return on the train."

He stepped to the crank, and the motor started with a roar, and she wasn't any too easy to start, either. Mr. Edmond got in, and took the wheel, and I tucked up Grizel.

"Get in, Seagrave," said Mr. Edmond pleasantly, and I crawled in behind, feeling mighty uncomfortable. When we got to Lynn, I said:

"It won't take me but a few minutes to shift a tire here at the hotel, Mr. Edmond, and if you and Miss McNair——"

"Have you got any money about you?" he interrupted.

"Yes, sir," I answered.

"Then take the train and go back to your job," says he. "I'm not your employer, and I don't want anything more to do with you. I am leaving the car in the garage here, and Miss McNair and I are returning on the train. That's all, Seagrave."

I touched my cap, and turned away. As I did so, my eyes met Grizel's, and somehow it seemed to me as if the candles were burning with a brighter, warmer flame than I'd ever seen before.

It's mighty disagreeable to lose a friend, and when I turned in that night I lay awake a long time thinking about Mr. Edmond and all the kindness he'd shown me, from the very start. Another man, perhaps not nearly as high-toned as Mr. Edmond, might very likely have thought the whole thing over, and decided that I was right and have made it up again. But something told me that Mr. Edmond would never do this. From the time I'd crossed him, he was bound to dislike me, ever afterward. These awful rich people are sort of like the kings that you read about in histories; they can stand almost anything but being crossed. But the difference is that a lot of those kings really stood ready to sacrifice themselves for their subjects, if necessary, while very rich people can't understand any sort of real sacrifice, as you might say. They haven't the herd to take care of, like they had in the old days, and that makes them mean and selfish.

That's the way I was feeling for some days after my disagreement with Mr. Edmond, so you can guess how glad I was when the time came to get ready for the cruise.

I had dismounted the body of the car in the garage and taken off the tires, parceling the wheels and everything that the wash across the deck might touch, after giving it a coat of composition. The body was laced up snugly in oiled duck, and I calculated that nothing short of dropping the whole business overboard could possibly do any damage. So naturally I was a mite put out when Mr. Newell sent for me and said:

"Captain Volger is trying his best to discourage the idea of taking the car on deck, Seagrave. Among other objections, he says that it is almost sure to be damaged either by the salt water or in getting foul of some of the gear, and he claims that there is no way of making it secure. He also says that there is really no room for it. I scarcely know what to do."

"With all due respect to Captain Volger, sir," I answered; "that's all nonsense. The yacht's deck is roomy as a coaster's, and there's plenty of room for the chassis abaft the launch. The body can go abaft the gig. It may be necessary to drop a couple of ringbolts through the deck on either side, but these can be unshipped when they are not needed and the holes pegged. As for the salt water, I'll guarantee that not a drop touches any part of the car, and if the little space taken up interferes with the handling of gear, Volger must have a crew of farmers aboard.

No, sir; it's simply that he doesn't want the bother of loading and discharging."

Mr. Newell gave me a sort of sharp look; then says he:

"I think that you are right. At any rate, we'll try it. I'll make you responsible for the whole undertaking, Seagrave, and give you a line to the captain to say that he is to leave the loading of the car entirely to you. Having been a sailor yourself, no doubt you know more about it than he does—especially as you are a merchantman."

So down I went to the schooner with the car in a truck, and Volger welcomed me with as black a face as you'd care to see. I gave him Mr. Newell's order, which he read, then spat over the side.

"I thought you'd manage to squeeze into this chowder party somehow," says he. "Go ahead, then, and be damned to you. Rip the decks offen her; I don't care."

"That's easy to believe," I answered, "seeing as you didn't mind ripping the bottom off her down in Narragansett Bay."

Some of the crew snickered, and Volger growled out a curse, and walked away forward. I'd brought a ship's carpenter along, and we turned to, and soon had everything shipshape, with chocks for the wheels and a cradle for the body. When I'd got the tarpaulins laced snug and the whole business lashed down, it was as neat a job as you'd wish to see.

"Now," said I to Volger, "if anything gets smashed, it'll be your own cursed clubfistedness. No doubt you'll try your best, but that's what I'm here to prevent, savvy?"

The blood came into his face. "Ho," says he, "you are, hey? Well, then, let me tell you something, Mr. Chauffeur; I'm master here, and what I say goes, d'ye see? You made enough trouble fer me ashore with the owner and Mr. Edmond, but Albert tells me that Mr. Edmond is on to you now, you lantern-jawed lawyer, you. Give your kind rope enough, and it don't take 'em long to hang themselves in it."

I got up quick from where I was pulling out a bight of the tarpaulin, where the lashing had pinched it, and walked up to him. Volger sort of changed color, but he stood fast. That wall-eyed mate of his, Landois, was standing close by, and there was a new bo'sun he'd shipped not far away. Otherwise the chances are he'd have fallen back a mite.

"Listen here, cappy," said I, sweet as a thrush after a shower; "when it's time to talk about dodo's eggs—and rotten ones at that—don't forget that you're not the only liar in the world. There's always your hand-out friend, Albert. But when it comes to facts, try and call to mind a little swimming party you put on the bum. The recording angel has logged that, matey-o, and I'm his earthly correspondent. There's a bird that sailors call a 'stinker,' cappy, but I guess you never saw one, as they live out where the water's deep. That bird would be ashamed of himself if he could see you, you blighter. And now, if there's anything that might seem harsh in what I've said and you feel like you ought to protest, just step out here, man to man, and find out what a real licking feels like. The last I gave you was only a sample for the trade."

For a moment I thought he was going to take me up—probably with the help of a few of his loose scrubs, as he'd manage to drive the good men all ashore, one by one, and had as rotten looking a bunch of beach combers aboard as I ever saw. But he thought better of it, maybe because he saw that it didn't matter much to me how many he called in to help. So he licked his lips, and growled:

"Aw, that's right, flap your jaw, now you know it's worth a man's job to lay hand to you. We gotta take a lot from psalm-singin' young churchgoers in a private job. Sit in Mrs. Newell's pew, don't ye? But just you wait, son; settlin' day may not be so far off yet——"

And with that he turned on his heel, and stumped off forward like he thought he had the best of it. But the look on the faces of the scrubs he'd collected to help him wreck the schooner seemed to show a different opinion.

They were a scurvy parcel of whelps, so far as appearances went, but less tough than mean looking. Volger was a first-class bully, and it seemed likely enough that he'd been to some pains to pick out a crew he could browbeat, when nobody was around, of course. But sailors? I caught sight of one of them coiling down a rope against the clock, and, so help me, if another didn't burn his thumbs when the running end of the whip they were loading stores with got away from him.

They were all in about the same class, I reckoned. Volger went ashore by and by, and one of the hands came over and started to pass another lashing around the chassis of the car, the ones I'd already thrown around not being to his eye sufficient.

"Hold on, son," said I. "You may know every knot they can teach you in the parcel department of the warehouse, but at sea we do them different. Besides, she's all fast now."

We sailed a couple of days later, and I must say the run to Old Point wasn't exactly what the gasoline gang call a "joy ride," so far as I was concerned. There's nothing gets on the nerves of a seafaring man like seeing a vessel badly handled, and for general rottenness, Volger certainly took the prize.

He had all sort of back-ended ways of doing things, and was forever nagging and ragging the hands, usually winding up by telling the steward to fetch a bottle of whisky and serve out drinks to the whole watch on deck. In this way he thought to keep his popularity and establish a reputation as a martinet and hard driver, but a good fellow underneath.

As I didn't bother to turn away my head to hide my grins, and as Volger himself kept his seams tight when the cabin folks weren't aboard, we were just on the verge of a Donnybrook all the way down. I didn't say anything; I just watched and grinned and sometimes laughed outright, but I guess my teeth might have shown a mite under the grin, and Volger never hove things up two blocks. He knew well enough, and so did I, for that matter, that if it had ever come to a knock-down and drag out, we'd both of us certainly lost our jobs.

Mr. Newell was mild of manner and sort of dry and precise, but he wasn't easy-going, by a long shot, when it came to the service which he got. He was always polite to the people that worked for him and paid them well, but he insisted on things running smooth and without friction. Old Hobbs, the butler at Otter Rocks when I first went to work there, was fired for no more than a few loud words.

No, Volger didn't want to lose his job any more than he wanted his face slewed around to port, so for a while he just grinned and bore it. To make matters worse for him, it got around that I was a deep-water man and had been second mate of a whaler, and this made Volger's roustabouts uneasy when I watched them at their flumduddery.

Then, the second day out, I put it over Volger in a way there was no getting around. He'd been running with the wind on the end of his main boom, and by and by he thought he'd like it on the other side for a change, so he gave the order to gybe ship. Volger himself slacked the boom tackle, and the hands were hauling on the main sheet when Volger happened to look at me and saw the expression of my face.

"Well, Mr. Chauffeur," says he, "maybe if this was your vessel, you wouldn't wish to gybe her with the wind near as fresh as what you are, hey?"

The hands stopped hauling to snicker. The mainsail was almost aback then.

"Oh, I don't know," I answered; "I could name some others that ain't any too salt. Only, if this was my vessel, Captain Volger, I reckon I'd slack my weather backstay runner before I helped the wind to shift the boom across the deck. Otherwise she's apt to bust—the boom, I mean, and you might lose a mite of top-hamper, too."

Jiminy, but you should have seen Volger jump for that runner! It was a fact; nobody had thought to slack it,

and if Volger hadn't been mighty spry something would have carried away, for the wind was tolerable fresh.

But he got square the very next day when he set his fisherman's staysail, or the "ringtail," as we call it downeast. The bight of the sheet rope was flying free, and managed to get under the projecting end of the body of the car just as the hands started to haul it home. I saw what had happened, and yelled for them to slack away. Volger saw it, too.

"Haul away!" he bellows. "Sheet her home, lads!"

About three jumps took me into that crowd of tailors, and I shifted them right and left in a way that left a few bruises, I reckon. But it was too late. The mischief was done. I heard a crack, and when I cleared away the tarpaulin and cover to look, here was a big, gaping seam in the enamel; nothing to hurt, so far as use went, but mighty unsightly to the eye.

Was I mad? For a few seconds I saw red, knowing as I did that Volger had done it on purpose. There was no mistaking the light in his eye when he heard me holler to the hands to slack away, and he looked and saw what had happened.

I worked some putty into the seam, and touched it up to match the enamel. It might have escaped notice, being a straight line, but I could just hear Volger telling Mr. Newell how sorry he was that when the bight of the slack staysail sheet bellied to leeward as they were setting the sail, it whipped under the car's body, and when the hands hauled down it split it—and how it was just as he had feared, but some people knew it all——

And sure enough he did, and there was nothing for me to say, for what could I prove? His crew would stand by Volger, after the way I'd hove them out of the way.

Off Atlantic City we got a hard easterly breeze with a lumpy sea, and along in the night I woke up and heard the pumps going. Thought I: "That's mighty funny; a stanch schooner like this oughtn't to make any water." The next morning I asked the steward about it. He was a mean little whelp of a cockney, but civil enough.

"Skipper says it's narthing but a little bilge water," he answered. "Once 'er plainks are wet, she'll tighten orp."

But I thought of that sag in the lines of her sheer strake, and sort of wondered. It had struck me on coming aboard that it was more distinct than it had been during the summer. However, that was none of my business. I was full of my own trouble with that seam in the body of the car.

CHAPTER X.

When we fetched up at Old Point, we found our party waiting for us and in a hurry to be off while the fine weather lasted, but two of Volger's sweeps had proved so slovenly that he was afraid of getting Mr. Newell down his back for having shipped them. So off he goes to Norfolk on the boat, hunting another brace, and we lost another twenty-four hours.

Mr. Edmond had shown up with the rest, although he was not to have gone, and my heart sort of sank at the idea of Grizel's being constantly with him for so long and in such narrow quarters. We were pretty cramped aboard, and I had to double up with the steward, which neither of us cared for any great amount.

Mr. Newell was politely pained to learn of the accident to the car, and it looked for a while as if I might have to make a return voyage with her on the steamer. The only thing that saved me was Volger's rather overdoing his "I told you so" talk, and Mr. Newell being a perverse sort of man, like many rich folks, finally threw it into him that, after all, if the proper care had been exercised, the accident wouldn't have happened, and that the car was to stop aboard, and would Captain Volger kindly detail somebody to see that the bight of the sheet rope was kept clear the next time the sail was set. Volger collapsed, and that was the end of it.

The day we arrived it struck me that the weather was much too hot for the middle of February, and that the glass

was too high for any good to come, but when it got still hotter for the next two days and the glass still higher and unsteady, I made up my mind that there was something behind it all. When finally Volger came aboard with a brace of Norwegian lads he'd bought or stolen off a windmill bark and began to shout orders which might lead in time to our getting under way, I thought to myself: "You'll have a chance to show how little you know about your business before you see Bermuda, my red-faced friend."

Mr. Newell must have felt a mite the same way, I think, he being a yachtsman of considerable experience, who had seen more deep water than Volger ever knew there was. Just before Volger arrived on board, I came up on deck, and saw Mr. Newell, Mrs. Newell, Mr. Edmond, and Grizel sitting aft watching a fleet of oystermen running into Hampton. Mr. Newell caught sight of me, and called my name.

"You have been a seafaring man, Seagrave," says he. "What do you think of the weather outlook?"

"Uncertain, sir," I answered. "The glass is too high, and it's too hot."

"Do you mean that you think there is danger of a storm, Seagrave?" asked Mrs. Newell, in a sort of surprised tone.

"Yes, ma'am," I answered.

"H'm!" said Mr. Newell, and looked thoughtful. "Then I am to understand that if you were to be—ah—consulted, Seagrave, you would not advise going to sea?"

"Since we've already lost three days of good weather," I answered, "I think I'd wait until to-morrow morning to see what the signal station yonder had to report. But of course it might not be anything at all."

"H'm!" said Mr. Newell again. "Thank you, Seagrave."

Mr. Newell must have told Volger what I'd said when he came off aboard with his two towheads, for I heard Volger saying to Landois, the mate, as he meant I should:

"Say, we got not only a chauffeur and a Sunday-school teacher and a whalin' skipper and a sea lawyer aboard, but a weather prophet, too. Ain't it wonderful the talent you can stuff into one hide, what?"

"What's he prophesyin' now?" asked Landois, with a sort of uneasy look at me. The mate never tried to get fresh. He seemed to have an idea that some day something might happen to him if he did.

"Says we're in for a gale," Volger answered, sneering like. "A gale—looks like it, don't it?" And he took a squint around.

So out we went with a fair tide and a nice little northwesterly breeze that lasted until midnight, when it dropped calm for an hour, then came fresh from due north. It was still warm, though, so I knew the slant must be local. Come daylight, back she went to westerly again, and the sea like a lake.

We were in a spur of the Gulf Stream now, but that wasn't enough to account for the heat at that time of year and in that latitude. The glass was still higher than the day before, and when toward the end of the afternoon watch we began to notice a long ground swell heaving in from the south, I was pretty sure we were going to catch something. About the same time the glass started down, slowly but steadily.

During the dogwatches, I saw Mr. Newell talking mighty earnestly to Volger, who seemed to be poohpoohing what he said, but toward nightfall, when the swell began to mount and shorten up and the air to get dead and heavy, Volger began to act uneasy. The sun had gone down looking like an egg whipped up with soot and spider webs, and left a bilious sky that got dark almost at once. The breeze was fitful and baffling, but pretty soon we got a fresh puff from northwest, which I knew was only a gasp, like, and wouldn't last.

All that night we flopped around, the breeze backing and hauling and the spars across the deck every hour or so. Daylight showed a dirty-looking prospect, if I ever saw one. There was no sunrise; only the sort of effect you get

when you stir yellow paint with dark green. The sea was greasy, and the swell was big now, and uneven.

As I was leaning against the fore-rigging taking a look around, Volger came up behind me.

"Well," he growls, "you guessed right, didn't you?"

"There was no guess about it, you swivel-eyed mutt," I answered. "Anybody that had ever been to sea would have known, but I suppose the weather acts different on the canal."

"Still feelin' sassy, ain't ye?" he answered, but in a sort of dispirited way. "Any more cheerful prophecies?"

I swung around and faced him. "Yes," I answered, "want to hear 'em?"

"Pile it on," he answered, with a nasty laugh.

"Well, then," I answered, "I'll tell you something you already must know and something that maybe you suspect. What you know is that this schooner's got a soft spot, either in some of her amidships frames or lower down along the garboard strake. The sag of her sheer strake was bad enough last summer, but the knock you gave her in Narragansett Bay hasn't helped things any. Now what you may *not* know, you being a lubber like you are, is that we're in for all hell with the hatches off. Seen the glass? There's a West Injies hoorayboys twisting our way, and if you don't watch sharp, this joy packet won't live through it. Savvy-voo, mong share monseer?"

Volger turned green around the gills. Then the blood came back with a rush, and he dropped his voice, and handed me a line of talk that would have got him his head stove in at any other time and place.

The first of the real wind reached us about eight bells. It was fresh and damp and gaining weight; and bearing east, like it did, I put the storm center to the south of us, while the average fall of the glass made me think it must be about a hundred miles away. Volger had the schooner close-hauled on the starboard tack, which was all right if we were in the right semicircle, as I believed we were. Sure enough, the next shift of wind was southerly, when what does Volger do but go about and haul by the wind on the port tack.

Mr. Newell and Mr. Edmond were on deck at the time, and I saw them look at each other questioningly. Then they both looked at me, but I made no sign.

"Captain Volger!" called Mr. Newell.

Volger went over to where they were standing, and there seemed to be some sort of argument going on. I guessed that Mr. Newell and his brother knew something about the Law of Storms, and were asking Volger why he didn't try to get off the track as fast as the Almighty would let him. But Volger was one of those pig-headed brutes that wouldn't own up to being wrong, and he was trying to bluff the others out. He must have managed it, too, for they presently nodded and walked away aft, and a little later Miss Newell and Grizel came up, and the four of them stowed themselves away in the lee of a boat and watched the big seas rolling away to leeward.

I leaned against the rail feeling mighty uncomfortable. What I'd told Volger wasn't all exaggerated. I distrusted the soundness of the yacht, after the way she'd sopped up the Atlantic on the run from Boston to Old Point, and I knew that Volger wasn't doing the right thing. To make matters worse, about noon the carpenter came up and said something, and directly Volger gave the order to man the pumps. Thought I: "It's pretty early in the game to start that sort of business."

Mr. Newell thought so, too, and there was another confab, Volger acting mighty sullen and emphatic. He won his point, and we held on as we were going. It was blowing hard now, and the old schooner was under forestaysail, foresail, and double-reefed mainsail.

But the climax came about three of the afternoon, when suddenly Volger gave the order to ease the sheets, then shoved up his helm and started in to run, the wind on his port quarter. What was in his head, I don't know, unless it

was to ease the strain so as to stop her leaking, but the maneuver was calculated to lay us right across the storm track. All of the cabin party were on deck at the time, and Mr. Newell hopped up with his face like a death mask. He called to Volger, and for a minute they had it hot and heavy. Then suddenly Mr. Newell called: "Seagrave, come here——"

I hurried back to the quarter-deck, and as I passed to leeward of Volger, I caught the strong smell of spirits.

"Seagrave," says Mr. Newell, and his voice had a nervous quaver to it, "where would you place the center of this storm that seems to be approaching?"

I told him.

Volger gave me an ugly stare, and seemed about to say something, but Mr. Newell interrupted him with a sort of snarling "Silence, sir!" and he held his gawp.

"What semicircle should you say we were in, Seagrave?" asked Mr. Newell.

"We're still in the right, sir," I answered, "but we'll soon be plumb on the storm track if we hold this course."

"Then, what would you do?" says Mr. Newell.

I started to tell him when Volger broke in. His face was a sickly purple now, and his pale eyes looked downright dangerous.

"Look-a-here," says he to Mr. Newell; "you're the owner, all right, and, once we get in port, I'll tender my resignation. But we're off the three-mile limit now, and I want it understood that I'm the captain of this schooner and the responsible party. What I say goes, d'ye see?"

"That's enough," said Mr. Newell, and his voice sounded sort of thin and dry beside Volger's gruff bass. "I'm the owner, and, what is more, my wife and children are exposed to danger. I have long been of the opinion that you were incompetent, Captain Volger, and now I am convinced of it. You have exposed us to sufficient danger already in not informing me of the true condition of this vessel. You are relieved from command."

Volger stepped forward, and shoved out his jaw. "Ho!" says he, "I am, hey? And who's going to relieve me?"

Mr. Newell turned to me.

"Seagrave," says he, "my orders to you are to take command of the yacht, and do what you can to extricate us from this danger. I myself am the nominal captain of this schooner; Captain Volger is merely the sailing master and subject to my orders."

What happened after that struck down as quick as a squall in the Straits of Magellan. Volger turned, and gave me a look, the hate streaming out of his eyes like poison from the tooth of a snake.

"Try it on, you——" says he, then turned on his heel. "Mr. Landois!" he called. "Bo'sun, there!"

I looked at Mr. Newell. "Those are your final orders, sir?" I asked. "You want me to take charge?"

"Can you?" asked Mr. Edmond. His face was white as chalk, but his jaw was set, and he looked wicked somehow.

"Sure I can," I answered, and looked at Mr. Newell. He gave me a nod.

Volger, backed by Landois and the bo'sun, were coming toward me, and they looked like they meant business. "Get below, you——" growled Volger.

The next minute I was into them. Volger's fist cut me over the eye—an ugly gash from his initial seal ring, but I never felt it. I drove one into his solar plexus, and he went down like a sack of street sweepings. Landois and the bo'sun came together, but I ducked under the bo'sun's fist, and put one on the side of Landois' jaw that would have killed him in his tracks if he hadn't been so close.

The bo'sun had jumped to the fife rail, and jerked out a pin, and, though I was on him like a cat, he had time to strike, and I heard my left forearm crack like a dry stick. But the right was useful, and so was my head. I butted him up against the rail, then threw my weight on him, bent him back, and hammered his face into a pulp.

He might have gone overboard if

Mr. Edmond hadn't jumped forward, caught him by the collar, and flung him onto the deck.

The crew had stood fast, scared and not knowing which way to jump. Halfway through the galley hatch hung the steward, his cockney face like plaster. Not a quiver came from Volger or Landois, but the bo'sun started to struggle up. I kicked him a good one, and he lay still.

"Steward!" I bawled. "Three pairs o' handcuffs."

He got them out of Volger's cabin, and Mr. Edmond snapped them on. I walked aft where one of the Norwegian lads was wrestling with the wheel. Nobody knew my arm was broken.

"Main sheet!" I hollered. "On the jump now, if you don't want me there amongst ye!"

They came running.

"Ready about——" I sang, and a moment later: "Hard-a-lee——"

Around she came, swashing and plunging, and a few minutes later here we were beating it for better weather, close-hauled on the starboard tack.

Well, there was plenty to keep me busy for the next few hours, broken arm and all. Mr. Edmond fished the bone mighty shipshape, and it didn't bother me any. Just as I'd feared, though, the old box was none too sound, so instead of trying to run out, I hove her to under a storm gaff trysail, and kept the hands at the pumps. As the water seemed to be all coming from one spot along the garboard strake, I got a spare riding sail under her, and hove it taut, and this stopped the leak first rate.

We were three days hove to, for I wanted the sea to get down a mite before making sail. It was comfortable enough aboard, for the yacht was a big, beamy tub with a high freeboard, and made splendid weather of it, taking no water on deck to speak of. Most of the time the cabin party were able to come up, well swathed in oilers, and it was on the third day that I had the first chance to say a few words to Grizel that I'd had for a good many months.

The weather was lightening then. Grizel had come up to watch the sea, and was wedged in between two little skylights. I went over, and sat on one of them, and asked how she liked the real thing.

"I adore it," she answered, "fights and all."

I looked at her curiously. Certainly none of the others had seemed to care much for the old-fashioned way of doing things. But Grizel's face was all aglow through the salt rime, and her eyes were like violets in the rain. Some loose wisps of her hair, curly from the damp, were eddying around her forehead like smoke. It seemed to me as if I'd never before appreciated her downright loveliness, and it sort of took away my breath.

For the first time in all these months, I saw in her face what I'd seen that first day, and what I used to see in that dream face from the bridge. There was something else, too. The little candles had never burned so bright, and there was none of that standoffishness that I'd felt before, and that was like the feel of the air when there are bergs about.

"If you only knew," says she, "how much better a ship fits you than a car, you'd never crank a motor again. Oh" —and her voice was impatient—"this is so much bigger; so much more splendid."

"Look here, Miss McNair," said I; "how many children did you have in your room in that Montreal public school?"

She shot me a quick look. "About fifty," she answered sharply. "Why do you ask?"

"And were you paid half as much for your services as you are now?" I went on, looking her straight in the eyes.

"No," she answered, sort of abrupt.

"But the work was two or three times as hard and monotonous, wasn't it? And you never had much of a chance to see how the rich, high-toned

people lived, nor to get out in the big world and meet new and interesting folks, nor to live in big, bright, airy rooms with bathrooms and showers and towels that only needed to be rumpled a mite to be replaced, and the best things to eat and drink that money can buy. Yet up there in Montreal you were working to mold the future lives and thoughts and habits of fifty human beings, for that's what education does, and out of school hours you were your own mistress. To-day you teach two little girls whose future lives are more or less mapped out for them, and you are never your own mistress. Don't it strike you that our positions are pretty much alike, Miss McNair?"

She had got red and bit her lip when I began, but as I went on the rich color faded out, and she clasped her hands, staring out over the sulky-looking sea to windward. Seeing that she was disposed to listen, I went on:

"There is this difference, though, between us. Unless you make a rich marriage, or something of the sort, you are pretty well apt to stay right where you are. There's some future in school-teaching, but there's none in being a nursery governess. And when the children grow up, what then? You stay on as a sort of companion, maybe, and what is that? It comes pretty close to being an object of charity, Miss McNair. Now with me, it's different; I'm a chauffeur only for the time it takes me to get a start on my own hook, and that won't be very long. But taking things as they stand, it strikes me that *you* ought to be the very last person to taunt me with being a chauffeur when I might be master of a vessel."

I'd spoken very quietly and with no wish to hurt her, and it gave me an awful feeling inside when she looked up pretty soon, and I saw that there were tears in her eyes.

"Why did you never say this before, Seagrave?" she asked. "Especially when I was so snippy at the very start?"

"Because I didn't want to hurt you," I answered.

"And now you don't mind?" she asked quickly, but in so low a voice that I could scarcely hear it above the churning under the bows.

"I would rather lose an arm than hurt you," I answered, and there was a tremble in my voice. "It's only that I can't stand having you think that I'm no more than a tight-fisted Yank that cares for nothing but getting on in a money way and has no soul above business matters. I could tell you things that I have felt at sea, thoughts I've had, lovely dreams when I've drifted through enchanted islands, and grim, terrible ones when I've seemed to be fighting with all the furies of hell. I've heard soft voices calling to me, and seen faces in the mist, and sometimes I think I've seen God walking on the waters. I've seen the decks littered with dead men and a ship's crew raving stark mad, howling as they raced up and down the beach of a small, sandy patch of hell where there was no shade, no food, and, worst of all, no water.

"I've seen a lot of strange things, Miss McNair—aye, and I've felt them, too. But I'll tell you one thing—I never saw a sight on land or sea that ever stirred me like the look in your face the first time I saw you on the train. Yours is the face that I'd always seen in my dreams, both waking and sleeping, and yours is the voice that I'd always been waiting to hear and wish to hear always. No doubt other men and better men have told you the same thing, for you're a girl that was made to be loved, God help you. But with me, you have been more of a religion since that first meeting, and it was really to be near you that I quit the sea. So please have the grace not to taunt me with it as though I'd done some shameful thing, Miss McNair——"

And I turned on my heel, and left her, and walked away forward where I stood, and let the spindrift cool my hot face. There—it was out, and I was glad of it. The wound might heal or stay open, as it liked. At any rate, she knew.

Standing by the windlass, I turned and looked back down the sweep of glistening deck. Grizel was still sit-

ting there, huddled in a little heap, leaning forward with her chin in her hands and staring out over the heaving sea. As I watched her, she suddenly straightened up, then scrambled to her feet, and went below.

Our party stood the tossing about first rate. During the gale, I used to go down into the saloon a good deal and talk to the folks and try to sort of cheer them up by saying that we weren't leaking any to speak of, and that there wasn't the slightest danger in the world, and all that sort of thing. I never got another chance to speak to Grizel alone. She took care of that. But sometimes when I was talking or spinning some yarn, I would look up, and find her eyes on me and the little candles like two big, blazing beacons, and I wondered if the fires had been lighted to warn me off a dangerous coast.

When eventually the gale blew out, and we worked into Hamilton, still wearing our bellyband, we found that we'd been through the edge of a record hurricane, and that all sorts of wrecks and marine disasters had been reported. Everybody seemed to think we'd done mighty well to weather it, but as I explained to our people, we weren't directly in its track, and probably missed the worst of it.

Safe in port, Mr. Newell sent for me, and said some mighty nice things, ending up by asking me if I cared to change my billet and take command of a new auxiliary yacht he meant to have. I thanked him, and told him that I would rather keep my present job, as I hoped later on to work from that into something in the motor business that might let me swing to a little bigger scope.

Mr. Newell nodded, said he thought that I was right, and then got thoughtful all of a sudden.

The family went ashore to the hotel, but Mr. Edmond decided to stop aboard until the schooner went into the dock, which wouldn't be for a week. She had stopped leaking, once in still water with the strain off her. Mr. Newell had asked me to stop aboard for a couple of days, too.

That afternoon as I was standing by the rail watching the harbor sights, Mr. Edmond came on deck.

"Seagrave," says he, "we all make mistakes sometimes. I want to apologize for what I said to you on the road that day."

"Don't mention it, Mr. Edmond," said I. "No doubt I did wrong myself. A man has to act according to his feelings sometimes."

"Quite so," says he. "Now, Seagrave, I've been talking things over with my brother, and we've a proposition to offer you. I don't wish to have it known, but the company which puts out my racing car is our concern. It's taking hold in very good shape, and we are prepared to offer you the managership of the new Boston office. The salary to begin with will be twenty-five hundred dollars, with a commission which we will fix later on all sales. I figure that you ought to clean up for yourself in the neighborhood of four thousand a year, at least."

For a moment I couldn't speak—couldn't seem to get my breath. Before I got able to say anything, Mr. Edmond went on:

"You see, Seagrave, it's just as much for our advantage as for yours. We've learned your qualities, and we want to profit by them, so you needn't feel overwhelmed with obligation. And now there's another matter, a very delicate one, and another apology to come from me. I dislike the mere hint of eavesdropping, but one afternoon when we were hove to, I happened to be in the chartroom, and directly under the skylight that you were no doubt beside while talking to Miss McNair. I heard you say to her that it was your first sight of her face that had the most to do with your quitting the sea. Thereupon I went out, extremely thoughtful.

"Of course, this is none of my affair, Seagrave, but if you really care for Miss McNair, it strikes me that your chances are not bad. I don't say that, as a chauffeur, your stock would ever be quoted so much beyond par, but

you have certainly got well to windward in her esteem as a sea captain. She's a very sweet, lovely girl, and the only thing that I have ever had against her was her refusal to be fascinated at any time by my unscrupulous self. Anyway, with your new job, there's no reason why you shouldn't stand as good a chance as the next man. Now, if you'll be so good as to call away the launch, I'll go ashore, and buy a ticket home. I always hated this silly place, anyway."

And with that he turned sharply on his heel, and walked to the companionway, leaving me with everything flat aback and no steerageway.

Somehow, since our landing in Bermuda, my standing seemed to have changed a lot with the Newell fmily. Heretofore I'd always been treated kindly and with consideration, but there had been something in the very politeness which never let me forget that I was, after all, no more than the chauffeur. Mr. Edmond was the only one of the lot who had ever said a word to me which concerned myself and my views, and even he had often done it in a sort of sarcastic way.

Maybe it was during the gale that this ice got broken, and the fact that my chauffeur days were 'most over may have had something to do with it. Anyhow, I found that I was being treated almost like one of the family. But in spite of this, I wasn't happy. When there's just one thing a man wants, all creation ain't enough to satisfy him without it, and after what Mr. Edmond had told me it seemed as if my want of Grizel had changed from a low fever to a high, raging one. She was within my reach now, if I was man enough to win her. And the worst of it was she seemed harder to cut out from her convoy than ever before.

Then one evening, when I was taking a turn of the gardens, I came suddenly on Grizel, all alone. The family had gone to a dinner at Government House, and there was a big ball at the other hotel, so the place was deserted. Somehow, I knew that the white figure coming toward me was Grizel, even before I could really see her in the darkness.

"Good evening, Miss McNair," said I, and Grizel stopped short, and looked to one side, as if she wanted to take a dive into the bays. But she answered me pleasantly enough.

"Do you mind if I walk with you a few minutes?" I asked. "Or perhaps I oughtn't ask."

"Mrs. Newell wouldn't approve," answered Grizel, in a doubtful sort of voice, and then added in a sort of flash of anger: "But I don't care. I'm tired of being told exactly what I may and may not do. You were right when you said that I'd given up my liberty for ease and luxury. I've had enough of it. I'm going back to my school, if they will have me."

"What's wrong?" I asked.

"Nothing is really wrong," says she, "but I'm beginning to long for freedom again. I wasn't made to trot along on a leash."

She stamped her little foot, then laughed, and said in a softer voice:

"Never mind about me. I want to tell you how glad I was to hear of the splendid opening you've got. Mr. Edmond told me. Your ears must have burned these last few days——" And she tilted her head, and looked at me sideways as if to see if they were still smoldering.

"They've been awful kind to me," I answered, "but I'll try to see that they don't lose anything by it."

"Don't feel under obligation," says Grizel quickly. "It's not only that you saved all of our lives in that gale——"

"Oh, nonsense," I interrupted, sort of put out. "If I thought that they were making me manager of the new office on that account, I'd turn the job down."

Grizel shook her head. "No," she answered; "don't refuse the chance of getting on as long as you think that you can earn your hire. Now, in my case it's different. I don't begin to earn my hire, and, as you said the other day, my only chance of getting on is by making a good marriage; I mean, a rich marriage."

"That wouldn't be very hard, if you chose to do it," I answered.

Grizel pulled off a spicy verbena leaf, and began to tear it to pieces. Whenever I smell verbena now, that night comes back to me.

"Since I have been with Mrs. Newell," she said, "I've had three such chances. But what's the use of exchanging one sort of captivity for another? And besides—the men weren't *real* men."

"They weren't sailors, I suppose," said I, "like Volger, for instance."

Grizel turned her face to me, and it looked pale in the dim light.

"They weren't strong men," she said, and something in her voice sent a hot wave through me.

"Strength isn't everything," I answered. "Strong men are apt to be violent."

"I love violence—in a good cause," said Grizel, though her voice was so low I could scarce hear what she said.

"You wouldn't love the sort I mean," I answered. "Maybe you'd call it brutality. Then you've got to remember that, unless a man is born with opportunities, the very violence of his nature, that might some day be the right kind of strength, is apt to drive him where he don't get much chance for a high finish."

"What does finish count for, I'd like to know!" says Grizel. "Mr. Newell has finish, but how much good was it on the yacht? Mr. Edmond has it, too, and a certain amount of strength underneath. Yet he was about as effective as his clothes might have been with nobody inside them."

The very heart of me warmed to hear her speak like this. But it was plain that what she'd been through in the gale had got away with her, and she was putting too much store on what really didn't value much, when all was said and done. Any sea-hardened sailorman that knew his business could do what I'd done, and I knew that it was the memory of this that was making Grizel's eyes shine and her bosom heave, and that was not the sort of credit that I wanted. I wished her to know that I had something better than that to offer.

"Listen," said I, and my voice was husky as a bo'sun with a sore throat. "When it comes to a girl's caring for a man enough to marry him, almost the first thing that she should search his horizon for is how much *he* cares for *her* and what he's willing to go through for her sake. Never mind the size of his chest, or whether he's a lion chaser or can drive a crew of larrikins up and down the deck with a belaying pin. Any man that *is* a man will fight for a woman; the question is, Will he work for her? Will he work and wait and eat his heart out for weeks on end, hopeless and with the very soul of him burned out by jealousy and tenderness and longing? Will he do all that, asking only to be near her and serve her, no matter how? That's the thing for a woman to think of."

I turned to look at her, and my face might have seemed wild in the starlight, for Grizel drew back a little.

"What—do you mean——" she said, and her voice quavered a mite. I reached out, and took her two soft wrists in my hands.

"Oh, Grizel," I said, "don't you know that the heart inside me is nearly dead for the want of you? I've loved you from the moment my eyes fell on your face. It wasn't the first time I'd seen your face; it used to look at me out of the mist when standing my watch on the bridge, and I've dreamed of it, night after night, and seen it in the flames of a driftwood fire when near starvation. From the time I first saw you and knew that you were real, nothing else has mattered for me. I dropped everything, let my sea career slide, and followed. Girl, I love you——" I said, and I said it through my teeth, for she had started to draw away.

Only for a second she held back, not struggling, but breathing hard and staring into my face, as if she were trying to read the soul of me. Perhaps she did, for suddenly she yielded, and I found her in my arms and her face against mine, and I was saying things I never thought men really said.

Later we sat on the nearest bench, and Grizel told me things I could scarce believe. The wonder of it was that she had cared from the first, just as I had, and all of her harsh treatment of me was because she wished to drive me back to what she considered my proper calling, and the one for which I was made.

"After those hours on the train, I couldn't bear to think of you as a sort of menial, Jason," she said. "When I first saw you in your livery, I wanted to cry. I wanted to swear and slam and say the meanest things that I could think of. I purposely treated Volger as your superior, and I tried to make you feel that you were 'way beneath me. Of course, I didn't know that you cared for me——"

"Come, now," I interrupted; "honestly? How could you help but know?"

"Well," says she, "there *were* times when——"

Grizel told me that she had hoped that I would get disgusted and go back to my old billet, when she meant to leave the Newells and take up her school-teaching again, when we could have seen each other every month, each of us free and independent, even if poor.

"But you were right," she sighed. "Think of how long we would have had to wait!"

And as I took her in my arms, the only wonder is that I didn't go clean off my head for sheer happiness.

We have been married three years now, and, as I said at the beginning of this yarn, I've never had any reason to regret quitting the sea to turn chauffeur.

The sweetest of wives, the cutest of kids, a snug home, and a good growing business—what more could any man ask?

HIS REAL CHANCE OF SALVATION

THE famous baseball-player-evangelist, Billy Sunday, tells this amusing story of the attempt which was made to convert a hard-fisted old mountaineer in Kentucky:

"Jim," in addition to being in need of regeneration of every kind, was hard-headed and stubborn, and he resisted all the missionary work that was done in his behalf. At last a leading citizen of the little town made a desperate attempt to save the sinner's soul.

"Jim," he asked sadly, "do you mean to tell me you ain't teched by the story of the Lord that died to save your soul?"

"Humph!" commented Jim, in disgust. "Do you mean to tell me the Lord died to save me, when He ain' never seed me, or knowed me?"

"Jim," responded the neighbor hotly, "it wuz a darned sight easier for the Lord to die for you because He never seed you than if He knowed you as well as we-alls do!"

LIKE A LAMB TO THE SLAUGHTER

HE was a leading citizen of a Southern town, and the Christmas wining and dining had made him excessively nervous. He knew all about the jimjams, the shocking shakes, and the writhing nerves. On New Year's morning he awoke with the consciousness that he had an engagement to take midday dinner with a friend famous for the strength of his alcoholic decoctions.

The leading citizen stood before his mirror, his hand trembling pitifully as he strove to bring his necktie into subjection. His wife began to voice her views on the folly of drinking during Christmas week.

"Madam," he said solemnly and sadly, "do not annoy me. I am adorning the victim for the sacrifice."

A Brand from the Burning

By Clarence L. Cullen

Author of "An Incident of Alcatraz," "The Nurse and the Gentleman Burglar," Etc.

A very striking story partly of men but mostly of a bear—a boxing bear, almost too humanly educated, who acquired a certain human appetite that has brought no small amount of disgrace upon mankind.

I CLINKED my glass against Truckee's drinking bucket of galvanized iron, and gutturaled "Here's how."

I remembered this bear's fondness for succinctness, even in a toast.

He returned the clink with clumsy but well-meant politeness, and threw wide his appalling facial orifice, showing me at least six pounds of gleaming yellow teeth.

"*Jowf!*" exhaled Truckee, giving back the toast.

It was like a yawn out of a newly opened seam in the shuddering earth.

Then, clutching with the terrifying claws of his huge right paw the iron handle which had been riveted to the galvanized pail to make a proper tankard for a bear, Truckee threw his head back and luxuriously emptied the drink into his fevered inner abyss.

The barkeeper had fortified the gallon of acrid steamed beer—that maltous abomination of the San Francisco that was—with a pint of water-front whisky.

As the unspeakable Gargantuan drink trickled down the gulping ursine throat, I imagined that I heard a faint hissing sound proceeding from Truckee's internal mechanism; a sound as of water splashing on a hot rock in a crater's mouth. Perhaps I imagined this because I had been told that Truckee's conduct on the previous night had been unusually abandoned. Moreover, he swallowed with an avidness, wholly apart from mere gustatory enjoyment, that plainly denoted hot coppers.

He drank to the lees of the upturned bucket, and replaced the vessel on the bar with a clank.

"*Jowf!*" he exhaled again.

This time it was a sigh of ineffable satisfaction.

He leaned his left elbow on the bar, placed his left heel on the muddy brass foot rail at the bar's base, and, thus facing me, gazed contentedly and gratefully at me out of red eyes in which a horribly human bleared half drunkenness quickly showed.

Suddenly he noticed that I had replaced my own drink—not a very nocuous one, but still a drink—on the bar, untasted. A crafty, contemplative expression appeared in his bleary eyes, as of one pondering whether it would be the right thing for a bear to abuse the kindness of a man friend who had just treated him to his first satisfying drink of the forenoon.

Desire won. Truckee reached out a stealthy right paw, infolded my glass in a gripping claw clutch, and, once again opening the cavern, shot my drink into his overheated, alcohol-pickled system. I pretended not to have seen this breach of manners until he had replaced my glass on the bar with a furtiveness indicating his belief, or hope, that I was wholly blind. But I felt that he required reproof.

"Bad form, Truckee," I said to him,

not chidingly, but in the tone of one giving a needed lesson in etiquette. "That was out-and-out thievery. You should cut that sort of thing."

For a moment he gazed into my eyes so remorsefully that I feared I had too severely smitten his conscience, or whatever ethereal or of earth, in a bear, corresponds to what we call conscience.

But the light of remorse in his eyes quickly flickered out. It was replaced by a gleam of half-seas-over recklessness.

"Jowf!" observed Truckee.

This time it was jowfed with a sort of sodden defiance. It told me as plainly as a whole string of words that, since I had seen him filch my drink, why, that was all there was to it, and there the matter ended. He needed the drink, and he had taken it. What was I going to do about it? It was like an accused man who, being more than middling drunk, snaps his fingers.

I could see that Truckee's finer sensibilities were rapidly becoming blunted; that the life of dissipation he was leading was callousing the better part of him. I grieved over this, for I remembered his innocent cubhood. Not only that, I was his godfather; and it is a dispiriting thing to see one's godcub going the path that first coarsens and then kills.

Truckee did not give me much time for these dreary reflections. He perceived that I was sorrowing for him; and so, with the artificial heartiness of any alcoholized Thing, he opened his right paw wide, so that the curving, pointed claws would not sink in and hurt, and patted me reassuringly between the shoulder blades. The pats said (*linguæ Ursus*): "Don't take it to heart, old top, if our ways are different. You know your game, and I know mine. Don't be a smug, silly old godfather—and stake me to another drink, won't you?"

There was no need for me to provide further stimulation for him, even had I been disposed to do so—which I was not, seeing his condition. He was still wheedlingly patting me when he received a tremendous whack upon his own back. Truckee, with his back to the door of the groggery, had not seen the entrance of a soldier from a light artillery battery at the Presidio. I had; and I was amazed to see the soldier steal up, tiptoe, back of Truckee, and, drawing back his harness-calloused hand and, winking at me, whack the small of the bear's back with all the might of his open palm.

The soldier obviously was in drink. I had known Truckee, as I say, in his cubhood, and I had christened him; but certainly I should have hesitated to treat my grown-up godcub that way, particularly when he was not himself from the drink. But the soldier—he was a red-haired and red-mustached man with an aggressive chin, eyes drink-bleared like Truckee's—terribly like Truckee's—and with his uniform showing the stains and disorder of the day after pay day—the soldier, it appeared, knew his ground.

Truckee, for all his visible mid-drunkenness, wheeled with a tiger's swiftness, forepaws pulled back, tense and taut, as if to strike, and claws fully extended. He faced the soldier with his lips drawn back from his six pounds of perfect teeth, and the growl in his throat was ominous.

But the soldier grinned unflinchingly in Truckee's abysmal face. This looked like a fine bit of nerve; a decidedly drink-wabbly soldier, not above a hundred and sixty pounds in weight, thus dauntlessly standing, without moving anything but his facial muscles, in front of eight hundred pounds of cinnamon bear of the Sierras—and drunken bear at that.

But it was not nerve. It was familiarity born of a close intimacy. Truckee no sooner discerned out of his drink-misty eyes the blue of the soldier's uniform than the fearsome snarl of his curled-back, beer-slavering lips was replaced by something that looked oddly and tragically like the silly, maudlin grin on the congested face of the light artilleryman leaning on the bar beside him.

And thereupon Truckee, coolly turning his back upon his godfather, cocked

his head sidewise and leered with a certain indescribable archness—if that word can be fixed upon a beast that stood seven and a half feet high—down upon the soldier, at the same time reaching out and patting the artilleryman's back.

Interpreted, the leer and the pats said to the soldier: "You're going to buy, ain't you?"

"Hello, y' pickled ol' pie face of a beeswax-eatin' son of a souse o' th' Sierras," said the soldier, reaching out and shaking the bear's paw. "Tryin' t' bull con me into stakin' y' t' a ball, hey? Well, I'm there, bo. Hey, barkeep"—rapping with his knuckles on the bar—"a hooter f'r Truckee an' one f'r me, an' spin 'em over *mucho pronto, hombre,* f'r the coppers o' both of us is as hot as——"

"Never mind what they're as hot as, swaddie," jocularly cut in the barkeeper. "Truckee's had enough. He's spiffed t' th' eyes now."

"Aw, he's all right," said the soldier. "Truckee ain't got half o' his reg'lar bun on yit. He's standin' up, jus' like I am, ain't he? He ain't stretched out poundin' his ear, is he? Stick 'im out a ball, buddy. He's all right. I'll be 'sponsible f'r 'im. See?"

Truckee, seeming to sense the nature of the colloquy, pricked back his outstanding sole-leather ears.

"Aw, I don't want him rough-housin' around here an' clawin' youse rummies," said the barkeeper to the soldier. "He done enough o' that rough stuff las' night, after a bunch o' youse pay-day drunks had got him all stewed up."

Truckee understood that he was being denied a drink. I would swear to it that he understood. He faced the barkeeper, gazed at him appealingly, placed his forepaws on the bar, and scratched the wood nervously with his claws, lolled his huge head from side to side, and permitted his tongue to hang out as a token of his thirst.

"Nix on them bunkology curves, y' ol' booze-fightin' bum," said the barkeeper to the bear, reaching out over the bar and smartly slapping Truckee across the snout with his open palm. "Yer so lit up now yeh don't know yer name or number. It's youse f'r a ring in y'r nose if you don't watch out. I heard th' boss say las' night he was goin' t' put a hoop in y'r snout an' hobble youse in th' back room, after youse began clawin' th' uniforms off'n them soused sojers from Benecia Barracks."

Truckee, his tongue still hanging out, began to whimper. He put his bear soul into his eyes as he continued to gaze pleadingly at the barkeeper. It was gruesomely like a human derelict of the water front begging for just one drink—"Jes' one, pal, an' I won't bother you no more!"—to ward off the tremens.

"Aw, stake him t' a ball—I'm buyin'," said the soldier to the barkeeper. "Can't y' see th' poor ol' rumdum is burnin' up f'r a ball?"

Truckee's imploring whimper grew louder and more sustained. The barkeeper hesitated. The bear reached over and placed a very gentle paw very lightly on the barkeeper's arm.

"Jow-er-*uff!*" Truckee moaned; meaning, "Please, *please!*"

The barkeeper reached beneath the bar, grabbed Truckee's drinking pail of galvanized iron, clanked it under the steamed-beer spigot, and turned the valve. The bear ceased whimpering, and sighed deeply.

"But yeh ain't a-goin' t' git no redeye stick in it this time, bo," said the barkeeper to the bear. "It's th' hard stuff in yer beer that's chewin' y' up—yeh can't hold it no more like yeh uster. Here"—planting the foaming gallon bucket of beer on the bar before the bear—"dad-bing yeh, heave that intuh y'r carcass an' look happy."

The soldier tossed a silver dollar on the bar with a flourish. Truckee took two long gulps of the beer, then lowered the pail, and looked into it a bit wryly.

"Misses th' slug o' hard stuff," said the barkeeper, winking at the soldier. "He knows ev'ry time w'en his beer ain't loaded wit' th' picklin' juice out o' the redeye bottle."

Truckee gazed intently and reproachfully at the barkeeper.

"Yeh can look sad an' sweet that-away till y'r pelt's made intuh a rug, bo," said the barkeeper, divining Truckee's meaning, "but yeh don't git nuthin' but beer f'r th' rest o' th' mornin'; d'ye git that?" And again the barkeeper shot out a swift palm and slapped the bear across the snout. Truckee understood. He tilted the bucket again and drank the beer to the dregs.

"Now th' towel for them drippin' chops, *hombre,*" said the soldier.

The bear, swaying a bit by this time, reached down clumsily, clutched a dirty bar towel hanging limply from a clamp, and wiped his mouth, both sides, with it. It was shockingly, direfully human.

"Haw, haw!" roared the soldier, poking the bear in the ribs. "I taught yeh t' do that, didn't I, buddy? Come on out now intuh th' back room an' we'll put on th' gloves, y' ol' rum-eater. I gotta new lef' swing I wanta learn yeh."

The soldier led the way to the back room of the groggery, the bear lumbering drunkenly behind him. It was a dim-lit, evil-smelling room. Ranged about, close to the walls, were beer-dripping tables; and at some of these tables drunken men in the final stages of a lingering dissolution slept abjectly, their arms curved on the tables and their sodden, smeared, sad faces resting on their arms.

The soldier dug out of a locker a pair of huge black leather boxing gloves that looked as if they might have been made for the hands of Anak, and laced them on Truckee's obediently outstretched forepaws.

The gloves had been made especially for the bear—"Cost me forty bucks, but look at th' trade his boxin' brings t' th' joint!" Al Black, the owner of the groggery, had said when he got them—and Truckee well knew that if he refused to permit them to be laced on, or, having donned them, declined to take on any of the ruffians that wanted to box with him, the grog that had become such a burning need of his life would not be forthcoming.

And so he teetered back and forth on his hind feet and yawned with the boredness of intoxication while the artilleryman got him ready for the go. The soldier, none so steady on his own pins, took off his blouse, put on a pair of regulation boxing gloves for practice work, and squared off.

It was rough work. It was a hideous thing to see. The man and the bear being equally drunk, there was little to choose between them as to steadiness. The soldier, a fair boxer, had taught Truckee what he knew of the game. Boxing is a game in which the instructor always has the advantage up to a certain point; that point being the occasional superior power, plus the acquired skill, of some pupils; and there the instructor, if he be wise, ceases instructing, and passes such pupils on. Truckee, with his eight hundred pounds of cinnamon-bear weight, and the unimaginable strength of his species, could have broken the backs of all the light artillerymen at the Presidio, taking them as they came.

But Truckee loved liquor. Therefore he permitted this soldier to rush at him and sink his gloves deep into the pit of his liquor-inflamed stomach. The bear would grunt, give ground, and counter lightly, with about one-thousandth of his power; just strongly enough occasionally to send the soldier's head back and make believe that it was a contest. Once, forgetting for an instant, Truckee's lips wrinkled away from his teeth, and he emitted a sort of steamy, hissing yawn as he clenched the claws in the glove of his right forepaw. But the soldier saw the snarl, and quickly stepped back.

"Here, none o' that!" the soldier growled. "Quit that teeth-showin' stuff, or I'll——"

He did not need to finish. Truckee understood. His lips flopped back over his teeth; the foolish, drunken expression came back to his eyes, which for a mere fraction of an instant had cleared and blazed. The soldier, putting all of his weight into his shoulders, shot both gloves thuddingly into the bear's stomach. Then, as Truckee bent forward under the impact, the artilleryman uppercut him savagely with his right. It is no jesting matter when you are up-

percut with your mouth partly open, as Truckee's was; but the bear, after the soldier's warning, merely grunted from the stomach wallops, wagged his head when he took the uppercut, and love-tapped the soldier on the top of his red hair.

Truckee may not have known on which side his bread was buttered. But he knew at which spigot his bucket was filled.

The snoring, tousle-haired down-and-outers sleeping at the tables, with their faces buried in their curved arms, awoke, one by one, at the sound of the thudding blows, the shuffling and scraping of feet and paws on the floor, the gruntings of the beast and the drunken objurgations of the soldier. They stared stupidly at the grisly scene.

One man, becoming immediately wild-eyed and panic-stricken upon awakening, leaped from his chair, and, moaning and muttering, shambled out of the room and made for the street, glancing affrightedly over his shoulder at every few steps. His condition obviously did not permit him to consider the scene as anything but a horrid phantasm, a prelude to the tremens.

The rough men, sailors mainly, drinking at the bar, emptied their glasses and began to filter into the back room; and soon the soldier and the bear respectively slugged and cuffed each other about in an all but intolerable reek of diabolical tobacco smoke, mingled with the effluvia of stale beer and the deep-sea duds of mariners from every quarter of the world.

The word buzzed up and down the water front that Truckee was boxing with his tutor at the glove work, the soldier from the Presidio; and soon the bout was being viewed by a squirming, elbowing crowd of uncouth cosmopolitans.

There were brawny, bronze-skinned, antelope-eyed Kanakas, shivering from the impaling rawness of the water-front air; scowling, evil-eyed Malays, from the crews of British tramps in the harbor; Mohammedan tars from Bombay and Singapore, with dirty, high-rolled turbans; flat-nosed negroes, with rings in their ears, from Barbados and St. Kitts; stolid, red-faced bluejackets, incessantly mouthing their adjective, from a British man-o'-war; sodden, fair-haired Scandinavian sailors, with the crimson congestion of drink marring their blue eyes; a riotously drunken liberty party of gold-blowing American men-o'-war's men from ships at the Mare Island Navy Yard; bustling, rat-eyed, inquisitive Japanese mess stewards and mess attendants, disgracefully clean, trig, and sober for mingling with such a throng; knife-scarred, brooding-eyed Chinese coal heavers from the Pacific mail steamers—a motley of seafarers for whom conflict was as natural as the intaking of breath; and death, no matter how soon it came, a mere incident of release.

For me, the reek in the rear room had become unendurable. I had edged into the barroom, and was talking about Truckee, and his life of sin, with Al Black, the proprietor of the groggery and the miraculous image and double of Bill Sykes, when a coppery lascar sailor—wiry, sullen-eyed, furtive—slouched through the front door and joined the outer fringe of the crowd in the rear room. Black saw the lascar before I did, and nodded toward him to point him out to me.

" 'E'd bloomink better be keepink 'is bloody 'ands clapped atop of 'is bleedink 'ead, if 'e doesn't want Truckee to tear 'is bloody scalp hoff," said Black, himself a deserter, many years before, from a British man-o'-war. "Truckee, 'e 'ates a lascar like the devil 'ates 'oly water. A lascar tried to knife 'im a year ago."

"But," said I, "Truckee wouldn't recognize a lascar if he saw one, would he?"

"Ow, wouldn't 'e!" replied the reincarnation of Bill Sykes. " 'E don't 'ave to see 'im—'e bloomink well smells 'em. 'E's run hevery lascar hinto the street hever since that lascar tried to stick a knife in 'im."

There was a hoarse, strident shriek of terror. The crowd blocking the door leading into the rear room opened as if plowed through by a shot from a

twelve-inch gun. The lascar shot through the opening and raced for the street, howling. Blood was streaming down his coppery face. The top of his head had been hideously clawed. Truckee, clutching the lascar's filthy cap in his right forepaw, his lips pulled back from his teeth, snarling and hissing, lumbered drunkenly through the opening in the crowd, pursuing.

Black, grasping a big club from beneath the bar, leaped nimbly over the counter and brought the club down with crushing force on the bear's head time and again. Truckee stood perfectly still, taking the blows; then, dazed, he slowly turned and staggered to the back room, where, with a groan, he stretched himself out at full length on the floor, in a dim corner, and began to feel of his head, whining plaintively.

"Hi'll 'ave a iron ring stuck through 'is bloody nose this very hafternoon, strike me blind if I don't!" raged Black, depositing his club in its place beneath the bar.

I left to take the ferry for an afternoon of golf at Berkeley.

When I returned, late that night, I looked in again at Black's groggery, which was near the Clay Street wharf. Truckee, snoring horrendously, was sleeping off, in the back room, the chloroform which the veterinarian had given him before passing the iron ring through his nose. A stout rope, passed through the nose ring, was tied to another iron ring which had been set into the wall.

And my god cub had come to this!

All through that night I dreamed persistently of Truckee, not as the alcoholized brute with a ring through his nose, but as the woolly cub that we—myself and my hunting companion—had taken from a soft den of moss under the shadow of Mount Shasta seven years before. We had found him playing over his mother's dead body. The mother manifestly had been riddled by a hunter's bullets while away from the den on a food quest, and had staggered back to her cub to die.

And so, when we returned to San Francisco, we had brought Truckee down with us—I had named him that because at Truckee I had a trifling mining interest which I whimsically but vainly hoped might grow as I knew cinnamon bear cubs grew when they began to forage for themselves.

He was a playful, guileless, fuzzy little chap, with the needle teeth of a puppy, and no definite idea of what to do with them. We had, upon reaching San Francisco, given Truckee to the janitor of our apartment house. The janitor moved away, but not before the cub had grown so immoderately as to be no longer a safe playmate for his children. Upon my return from a stay of several years in Honolulu, I had heard rumors that Truckee, a hopeless drunkard, was the trade-drawing attraction of Black's water-front gin mill.

But, until I had stopped in at Black's, on my way over the bay for an afternoon of golf, I had not seen Truckee since I had held him in the hollow of my arm, a squirmy, fleecy, all but boneless little firkin of butter, and had tickled his stomach with my forefinger to see him draw back his lips from his needle teeth in cub laughter.

A keen sense of his present degradation was strong upon me when I awoke on the following morning and pieced together my dreams of his cubhood. I could not rid myself of a sense of responsibility—even if the responsibility had been shared with another man—for his appalling condition. And so I immediately sought out the other man, my companion of the hunting trip around Mount Shasta, which had been the occasion of Truckee's being taken from his mossy home and brought to San Francisco.

I found my old friend in a state of profound depression. He had but recently returned to California from a prolonged tour of the world with a favorite younger brother, who, after an illness, had become addicted to the morphine and liquor habits. He had undertaken the world tour with the hope of getting the brother cured of his addictions; but the younger man had died in Melbourne. It was natural, in such

circumstances, that my friend, himself an abstemious man, should be a bit bitter on the subject of liquor and such matters. His face clouded as I gave him the details of Truckee's condition.

"I've had it in mind to go down and do something for the poor beast myself," he said to me when I had finished. "You can't guess who was the first man to tell me about Truckee's condition."

I could not guess, and inquired.

"Robert Louis Stevenson," he replied. "I met Louis—you remember what pals we were when he lived here in San Francisco—when I dropped off the Australian steamer at Apia, Samoa. He had seen Truckee, in a bestially drunken state, at the water-front joint before leaving here; and he told me about it, in words of horror, as only he could describe a thing like that. I felt that it was Truckee he was speaking about, though I did not know for sure—I had heard only vague rumors, before leaving the States, of the bear's facile descent to the alcoholic hell. Stevenson was all wrought up about it." He paused for a space. "It's up to us to do something for the poor beggar, old man," he added then.

I agreed with him. We were at the water-front groggery half an hour later. Truckee, blinking sleepily, was pawing pathetically at the strange thing that had been passed through a slit in his nose.

"I'll give you two hundred dollars for the bear," said my friend—he was rich—to Al Black, who shook his head.

"No. 'E's turned out a rotter, but 'e brings trade."

"Three hundred."

" 'E's worth a 'atful of money to me, Hi tell you."

"Four hundred."

"Hi cawn't let the bleeder go for that."

"Last call—five hundred."

"Hi cawn't, Hi tell you."

My friend took out his watch.

"The wagon of the Humane Society will be here in half an hour, Black," he said, in a casual tone. "The wagon will take the bear away from here."

The ruffian with the Bill Sykes phiz blinked.

"Five 'undred, did ye soy, sir? Dish it hout and take 'im, the bleeder!"

The slanting afternoon sun was filtering mellowly through the pines and dappling the yielding moss under our feet, when, with Truckee walking placidly between us, we wound over the vague trail from the valley and ascended to the plateau.

The pungent fragrance of the trees, which whispered sibilantly in the cool breeze that swept down from the mountain, was in the nostrils of the three of us. The soft air was filled with the singing of darting birds; there was the hum of a swarm of wild bees that had hived in the hollow of a fallen spruce.

We came to a bright little clearing, where dwarf ferns reveled in damp, vividly green moss. The westering sun shone full upon us, gratefully warming us through and through. The sky was of turquoise. It seemed a lark merely to live in the glow of such a sun, breathing such air, treading such ground.

Truckee stopped, threw his head back, and sucked in great breaths. The moment for parting had come. I think all three of us felt it simultaneously, as if by telepathic communication.

My friend held out his hand to the bear.

"Adios, hombre," he said, shaking the extended paw.

I did and said the same.

Truckee gazed at us bravely, but, I thought, a bit sadly, too. His eyes had cleared. The drink had gone out of them on the long ride up from San Francisco.

He patted each of us on the back, lowered his great, shaggy head, and nuzzled inside our coats.

Then he stood erect and surveyed us gratefully—I would stake my life upon it that he was more than humanly grateful—for the last time.

"Jowf!" he breathed, in quiet farewell.

Still erect, head back, Truckee turned and passed up the dim trail of moss, and disappeared at the turn of an aisle of straight trees.

Celebrities

HE had written lovely verses, touching hollyhocks and hearses, lotus-eaters, ladies, lilies, porcupines and pigs and pies, nothing human was beyond him, and admiring people conned him, adoration in their bosoms and a rapture in their eyes. He had sung of figs and quinces in the tents of Bedouin princes, he'd embalmed the Roman Forum and the Parthenon of Greece; many of his odes were written in the shrouding fogs of Britain, while he watched the suffrage ladies mixing things with the police.

So we met to do him honor; worshiper and eager fawner begged a tassel of his whiskers, or his autograph in ink; never was there so much sighin' round a pallid human lion, as he stood his lines explaining, taking out the hitch and kink!

All were in a joyous flutter, till we hear some fellow mutter: "Here comes Griggs, the southpaw pitcher, fairly burdened with his fame! He it was who beat the Phillies—gave the Quaker bugs the willies—he it was who saved our bacon in that 'leven-inning game!"

Then we crowded round the pitcher, making that great man the richer by a ton of adulation, in a red-hot fervor flung; and the poet, in a pickle, mused upon the false and fickle plaudits of the heartless rabble, till the dinner gong was rung!

Walt Mason

The Tempting of Tavernake

By E. Phillips Oppenheim

Author of "Havoc," "The Malefactor," "The Lost Ambassador," Etc.

The critics have styled Oppenheim "the master of mystery and intrigue." His peculiar genius was never displayed to better advantage than in this story. It is the romance of a man whose unromantic business was that of buying and selling real estate. He has no use for women in his world till he is compelled by circumstances to take cognizance of the romantic sex. A curious type of fellow this Tavernake. There is nothing of the prig about him. He is not conceited in any way, though he has complete self-confidence, even if it lacks the militant impulse. He is—himself, impervious to surroundings however unusual. A matter-of-fact man but with tremendous faith in himself—and after all that is the essential to success in life.

CHAPTER I.

DESPAIR AND INTEREST.

THEY stood upon the roof of a London boarding house in the neighborhood of Russell Square —one of those grim shelters, the refuge of American curiosity and British penury. The girl—she represented the former race—was leaning against the frail palisading, with gloomy expression and eyes set as though in fixed contemplation of the uninspiring panorama. The young man—unmistakably, uncompromisingly English—stood with his back to the chimney a few feet away, watching his companion. The silence between them was as yet unbroken; had lasted, indeed, since she had stolen away from the shabby drawing-room below, where a florid lady with a raucous voice had been shouting a music-hall ditty.

Close upon her heels, but without speech of any sort, he had followed. They were almost strangers, except for the occasional word or two of greeting which the etiquette of the establishment demanded. Yet she had accepted his espionage without any protest of word or look. He had followed her with a very definite object. Had she surmised it, he wondered? She had not turned her head or vouchsafed even a single question or remark to him since he had pushed his way through the trapdoor almost at her heels and stepped out onto the flat roof. Yet it seemed to him that she must guess.

Below them, what seemed to be the phantasm of a painted city, a wilderness of housetops, of smoke-wreathed spires and chimneys, stretched away to a murky, blood-red horizon. Even as they stood there, a deeper color stained the sky, an angry sun began to sink into the piled-up masses of thick, vaporous clouds. The girl watched with an air of sullen yet absorbed interest. Her companion's eyes were still fixed wholly and critically upon her.

Who was she, he wondered? Why had she left her own country to come to a city where she seemed to have no friends, no manner of interest? In that caravansary of the world's stricken ones she had been an almost unnoticed figure, silent, indisposed for conversation, not in any obvious manner attractive.

Her clothes, notwithstanding their air

of having come from a first-class dressmaker, were shabby and out of fashion, their extreme neatness in itself pathetic. She was thin, yet not without a certain buoyant lightness of movement always at variance with her tired eyes, her ceaseless air of dejection. And withal she was a rebel. It was written in her attitude, it was evident in her lowering, militant expression.

Her long, rather narrow face was gripped between her hands; her elbows rested upon the brick parapet. She gazed at that world of blood-red mists, of unshapely, grotesque buildings, of strange, tawdry colors; she listened to the medley of sounds—crude, shrill, insistent, something like the groaning of a world stripped naked—and she had all the time the air of one who hates the thing she looks upon.

Tavernake, whose curiosity concerning his companion remained unappeased, decided that the moment for speech had arrived. He took a step forward. Even then he hesitated before he finally committed himself. About his appearance little was remarkable save the general air of determination which gave character to his undistinguished features. He was something above the medium height, broad set, and with rather more thick black hair than he knew how to arrange advantageously. He wore a shirt which was somewhat frayed, and an indifferent tie; his boots were heavy and clumsy; he wore also a suit of ready-made clothes with the air of one who knew that they were ready-made and was satisfied with them. People of a nervous or sensitive disposition would, without doubt, have found him irritating but for a certain nameless gift—an almost Napoleonic concentration upon the things of the passing moment, which was in itself impressive and which somehow disarmed criticism.

"About that bracelet!" he said at last.

She moved her head and looked at him. A young man of less assurance would have turned and fled. Not so Tavernake. Once sure of his ground, he was immovable. There was murder in her eyes, but he was not even disturbed.

"I saw you take it from the little table by the piano, you know," he continued. "It was rather a rash thing to do. Mrs. Fitzgerald was looking for it before I reached the stairs. I expect she has called the police in by now."

Slowly her hand stole into the depths of her pocket and emerged. Something flashed for a moment high over her head. The young man caught her wrist just in time; caught it in a veritable grip of iron. Then, indeed, the evil fires flashed from her eyes, her teeth gleamed white, her bosom rose and fell in a storm of angry, unuttered sobs. She was dry-eyed and still speechless, but for all that she was a tigress. A strangely cut silhouette they formed there upon the housetops, with a background of empty sky.

"I think I had better take it," he said. "Let go!"

Her fingers yielded the bracelet—a tawdry, ill-designed affair of rubies and diamonds. He looked at it disapprovingly.

"That's an ugly thing to go to prison for," he remarked, slipping it into his pocket. "It was a stupid thing to do, anyhow, you know. You couldn't have got away with it—unless," he added, looking over the parapet as though struck with a sudden idea, "unless you had a confederate below."

He heard the rush of her skirts, and he was only just in time. Nothing, in fact, but a considerable amount of presence of mind and the full exercise of a strength which was continually providing surprises for his acquaintances, was sufficient to save her. Their struggles upon the very edge of the roof dislodged a brick from the palisading, which went hurtling down into the street. They both paused to watch it, his arms still gripping her and one foot pressed against an iron rod.

It was immediately after they had seen it pitch harmlessly into the road that a new sensation came to this phlegmatic young man. For the first time in his life, he realized that it was possible to feel a certain pleasurable emotion in the close grasp of a being of the opposite sex. Consequently, although she

had now ceased to struggle, he kept his arms locked around her, looking into her face with an interest intense enough, but more analytical than emotional, as though seeking to discover the meaning of this curious throbbing of his pulses.

She herself, as though exhausted, remained quite passive, shivering a little in his grasp and breathing like a hunted animal whose last hour has come. Their eyes met; then she tore herself away.

"You are a hateful person," she said deliberately, "a hateful, interfering person. I detest you."

"I think that we will go down now," he replied.

He raised the trapdoor and glanced at her significantly. She held her skirts closely together and passed through it without looking at him. She stepped lightly down the ladder, and, without hesitation, descended also a flight of uncarpeted attic stairs. Here, however, upon the landing, she awaited him with obvious reluctance.

"Are you going to send for the police?" she asked, without looking at him.

"No," he answered.

"Why not?"

"If I had meant to give you away, I should have told Mrs. Fitzgerald at once that I had seen you take her bracelet, instead of following you out onto the roof."

"Do you mind telling me what you propose to do, then?" she continued, still without looking at him, still without the slightest note of appeal in her tone.

He withdrew the bracelet from his pocket and balanced it upon his finger.

"I am going to say that I took it for a joke," he declared.

She hesitated.

"Mrs. Fitzgerald's sense of humor is not elastic," she warned him.

"She will be very angry, of course," he assented; "but she will not believe that I meant to steal it."

The girl moved slowly a few steps away.

"I suppose that I ought to thank you," she said, still with averted face and sullen manner. "You have really been very decent. I am much obliged."

"Are you not coming down?" he asked.

"Not at present," she answered. "I am going to my room."

He looked around the landing on which they stood, at the miserable, uncarpeted floor, the ill-painted doors on which the long-forgotten varnish stood out in blisters, the jumble of dilapidated hot-water cans, a mop, and a medley of brooms and rags all thrown down together in a corner.

"But these are the servants' quarters surely," he remarked.

"They are good enough for me; my room is here," she told him, turning the handle of one of the doors and disappearing. The prompt turning of the key sounded, he thought, a little ungracious.

With the bracelet in his hand, Tavernake descended three more flights of stairs and entered the drawing-room of the private hotel conducted by Mrs. Raithby Lawrence, whose husband, one learned from her frequent reiteration of the fact, had once occupied a distinguished post in the merchant service of his country.

The disturbance following upon the disappearance of the bracelet was evidently at its height. There were at least a dozen people in the room, most of whom were standing up. The central figure of them all was Mrs. Fitzgerald, large and florid, whose yellow hair with its varied shades frankly admitted its indebtedness to peroxide; a lady of the dashing type, who had once made her mark in the music halls, but was now happily married to a commercial traveler who was seldom visible. Mrs. Fitzgerald was talking.

"In respectable boarding houses, Mrs. Lawrence," she declared, with great emphasis, "thefts may sometimes take place, I will admit, in the servants' quarters, and with all their temptations, poor things, it's not so much to be wondered at. But no such thing as this has ever happened to me before—to have jewelry taken almost from my person in the drawing-room of what should be a well-conducted establishment. Not a servant in the room, remember, from

the moment I took it off until I got up from the piano and found it missing. It's your guests you've got to look after, Mrs. Lawrence, sorry to say it though I am."

Mrs. Lawrence managed here, through sheer loss of breath on the part of her assailant, to interpose a tearful protest.

"I am quite sure," she protested feebly, "that there is not a person in this house who would dream of stealing anything, however valuable it was. I am most particular always about references."

"Valuable, indeed!" Mrs. Fitzgerald continued, with increased volubility. "I'd have you understand that I am not one of those who wear trumpery jewelry. Thirty-five guineas that bracelet cost me if it cost a penny, and if my husband were only at home I could show you the receipt."

Then there came an interruption of almost tragical interest. Mrs. Fitzgerald, her mouth still open, her stream of eloquence suddenly arrested, stood with her artificially darkened eyes riveted upon the stolid, self-composed figure in the doorway. Every one else was gazing in the same direction. Tavernake was holding the bracelet in the palm of his hand.

"Thirty-five guineas!" he repeated. "If I had known that it was worth as much as that, I do not think that I should have dared to touch it."

"You—you took it!" Mrs. Fitzgerald gasped.

"I am afraid," he admitted, "that it was rather a clumsy joke. I apologize, Mrs. Fitzgerald. I hope you did not really imagine that it had been stolen."

One was conscious of the little thrill of emotion which marked the termination of the episode. Most of the people not directly concerned were disappointed; they were being robbed of their excitement, their hopes of a tragical dénouement were frustrated. Mrs. Lawrence's worn face plainly showed her relief. The lady with the yellow hair, on the other hand, who had now succeeded in working herself up into a towering rage, snatched the bracelet from the young man's fingers, and with a purple flush in her cheeks was obviously struggling with an intense desire to box his ears.

"That's not good enough for a tale!" she exclaimed harshly. "I tell you I don't believe a word of it. Took it for a joke, indeed! I only wish my husband were here; he'd know what to do."

"Your husband couldn't do much more than get your bracelet back, ma'am," Mrs. Lawrence replied, with acerbity. "Such a fuss, and calling every one thieves, too! I'd be ashamed to be so suspicious."

Mrs. Fitzgerald glared haughtily at her hostess.

"It's all very well for those that don't possess any jewelry and don't know the value of it to talk," she declared, with her eyes fixed upon a black jet ornament which hung from the other woman's neck. "What I say is this, and you may just as well hear it from me now as later: I don't believe this cock-and-bull story of Mr. Tavernake's. Them as took my bracelet from that table meant keeping it, only they hadn't the courage. And I'm not referring to you, Mr. Tavernake," the lady continued vigorously, "because I don't believe you took it, for all your talk about a joke. And whom you may be shielding it wouldn't take me two guesses to name, and your motive must be clear to every one. The common hussy!"

"You are exciting yourself unnecessarily, Mrs. Fitzgerald," Tavernake remarked. "Let me assure you that it was I who took your bracelet from that table."

Mrs. Fitzgerald regarded him scornfully.

"Do you expect me to believe a tale like that?" she demanded.

"Why not?" Tavernake replied. "It is the truth. I am sorry that you have been so upset——"

"It is not the truth!"

More sensation! Another unexpected entrance! Once more interest in the affair was revived. After all, lookers-on felt that they were not to be robbed of their tragedy. An old lady with yellow cheeks and jet-black eyes leaned

forward with her hand to her ear, anxious not to miss a syllable of what was coming. Tavernake bit his lip; it was the girl from the roof who had entered the room.

"I have no doubt," she continued, in a cool, clear tone, "that Mrs. Fitzgerald's first guess would have been correct. I took the bracelet. I did not take it for a joke. I did not take it because I admire it—I think it is hideously ugly. I took it because I had no money."

She paused and looked around at them all quietly, yet with something in her face from which they all shrank. She stood where the light fell full upon her shabby black gown and dejected-looking hat. The hollows in her pale cheeks, and the faint rims under her eyes, were clearly manifest; but, notwithstanding her fragile appearance, she held herself with composure and even dignity. Twenty—thirty seconds must have passed while she stood there, slowly finishing the buttoning of her gloves. No one attempted to break the silence. She dominated them all—they felt that she had something more to say. Even Mrs. Fitzgerald felt a weight upon her tongue.

"It was a clumsy attempt," she went on. "I should have had no idea where to raise money upon the thing, but I apologize to you, nevertheless, Mrs. Fitzgerald, for the anxiety which my removal of your valuable property must have caused you," she added, turning to the owner of the bracelet, whose cheeks were once more hot with anger at the contempt in the girl's tone. "I suppose I ought to thank you, Mr. Tavernake, also, for your well-meant effort to preserve my character. In future, that shall be my sole charge. Has any one anything more to say to me before I go?"

Somehow or other, no one had. Mrs. Fitzgerald was irritated and fuming, but she contented herself with a snort. Her speech was ready enough, as a rule, but there was a look in this girl's eyes from which she was glad enough to turn away. Mrs. Lawrence made a weak attempt at a farewell.

"I am sure," she began, "we are all sorry for what's occurred and that you must go—not that perhaps it isn't better, under the circumstances," she added hastily. "As regards——"

"There is nothing owing to you," the girl interrupted calmly. "You may congratulate yourself upon that, for if there were you would not get it. Nor have I stolen anything else."

"About your luggage?" Mrs. Lawrence asked.

"When I need it, I will send for it," the girl replied.

She turned her back upon them, and before they realized it she was gone. She had, indeed, something of the grand manner. She had come to plead guilty to a theft, and she had left them all feeling a little like snubbed children. Mrs. Fitzgerald, as soon as the spell of the girl's presence was removed, was one of the first to recover herself. She felt herself beginning to grow hot with renewed indignation.

"A thief!" she exclaimed, looking around the room. "Just an ordinary self-convicted thief! That's what I call her, and nothing else. And here we all stood like a lot of ninnies. Why, if I'd done my duty, I'd have locked the door and sent for a policeman."

"Too late now, anyway," Mrs. Lawrence declared. "She's gone for good, and no mistake. Walked right out of the house. I heard her slam the front door."

"And a good job, too," Mrs. Fitzgerald affirmed. "We don't want any of her sort here—not those who've got things of value about them. I bet she didn't leave America for nothing."

A little gray-haired lady, who had not as yet spoken, and who very seldom took part in any discussion at all, looked up from her knitting. She was desperately poor, but she had charitable instincts.

"I wonder what made her want to steal," she remarked quietly.

"A born thief," Mrs. Fitzgerald declared, with conviction—"a real bad lot. One of your sly-looking ones, I call her."

The little lady sighed.

"When I was better off," she continued, "I used to help at a soup kitchen in Poplar. I have never forgotten a certain look we used to see occasionally in the faces of some of the men and women. I found out what it meant—it was hunger. Once or twice lately I have passed the girl who has just gone out upon the stairs, and she almost frightened me. She had just the same look in her eyes. I noticed it yesterday—it was just before dinner, too—but she never came down."

"She paid so much for her room and extra for meals," Mrs. Lawrence said thoughtfully. "She never would have a meal unless she paid for it at the time. To tell you the truth, I was feeling a bit uneasy about her. She hasn't been in the dining room for two days, and, from what they tell me, there's no signs of her having eaten anything in her room. As for getting anything out, why should she? It would be cheaper for her here than anywhere, if she'd got any money at all."

There was an uncomfortable silence. The little old lady with the knitting looked down the street into the sultry darkness which had swallowed up the girl.

"I wonder whether Mr. Tavernake knows anything about her," some one suggested.

But Tavernake was not in the room.

CHAPTER II.

A TETE-A-TETE SUPPER.

Tavernake caught her up in New Oxford Street, and fell at once into step with her. He wasted no time whatever upon preliminaries.

"I should be glad," he said, "if you would tell me your name."

Her first glance at him was fierce enough to have terrified a different sort of man. Upon Tavernake it had absolutely no effect.

"You need not unless you like, of course," he went on; "but I wish to talk to you for a few moments, and I thought that it would be more convenient if I addressed you by name. I do not remember to have heard it mentioned at Blenheim House; and Mrs. Lawrence, as you know, does not introduce her guests."

By this time they had walked a score or so of paces together. The girl, after her first furious glance, had taken absolutely no notice of him except to quicken her pace a little. Tavernake remained by her side, however, showing not the slightest sense of embarrassment or annoyance. He seemed perfectly content to wait; and he had not in the least the appearance of a man who could be easily shaken off. From a fit of furious anger, she passed suddenly and without warning to a state of half-hysterical amusement.

"You are a foolish, absurd person," she declared. "Please go away. I do not wish you to talk with me."

Tavernake remained imperturbable. She remembered suddenly his intervention on her behalf.

"If you insist upon knowing," she said, "my name at Blenheim House was Beatrice Burnay. I am much obliged to you for what you did for me there, but that is finished. I do not wish to have any conversation with you, and I absolutely object to your company. Please leave me at once."

"I am sorry," he answered, "but that is not possible."

"Not possible?" she repeated wonderingly.

He shook his head.

"You have no money, you have eaten no dinner, and I do not believe that you have any idea where you are going," he declared deliberately.

Her face was once more dark with anger.

"Even if that were the truth," she insisted, "tell me what concern it is of yours? Your reminding me of these facts is simply an impertinence."

"I am sorry that you look upon it in that light," he remarked, still without the least sign of discomposure. "We will, if you do not mind, waive the discussion for the moment. Do you prefer a small restaurant or a corner in a big one? There is music at Frascati's, but

there are not so many people in the smaller ones."

She turned half around upon the pavement and looked at him steadfastly. His personality was at last beginning to interest her. His square jaw and measured speech were indices of a character at least unusual. She recognized certain invincible qualities under an exterior absolutely commonplace.

"Are you as persistent about everything in life?" she asked him.

"Why not?" he replied. "I try always to be consistent."

"What is your name?"

"Leonard Tavernake," he answered promptly.

"Are you well off—I mean moderately well off?"

"I have a quite sufficient income."

"Have you any one dependent upon you?"

"Not a soul," he declared. "I am my own master in every sense of the word."

She laughed in an odd sort of way.

"Then you shall pay for your persistence," she said. "I mean that I may as well rob you of a sovereign as the restaurant people."

"You must tell me now where you would like to go to," he insisted. "It is getting late."

"I do not like these foreign places," she replied. "I should prefer to go to the grill room of a good restaurant."

"We will take a taxicab," he announced. "You have no objection?"

She shrugged her shoulders.

"If you have the money and don't mind spending it," she said, "I will admit that I have had all the walking I want. Besides, the toe of my boot is worn through, and I find it painful. Yesterday I tramped ten miles trying to find a man who was getting up a concert party for the provinces."

"And did you find him?" he asked, hailing a cab.

"Yes, I found him," she answered indifferently. "We went through the usual program. He heard me sing, tried to kiss me, and promised to let me know. Nobody ever refuses anything in my profession, you see. They promise to let you know."

"Are you a singer, then, or an actress?"

"I am neither," she told him. "I said 'my profession' because it is the only one to which I have ever tried to belong. I have never succeeded in obtaining an engagement in this country. I do not suppose that even if I had persevered I should ever have had one."

"You have given up the idea, then?" he remarked.

"I have given it up," she admitted, a little curtly. "Please do not think, because I am allowing you to be my companion for a short time, that you may ask me questions. How fast these taxis go!"

They drew up at their destination—a well-known restaurant in Regent Street. He paid the cabman, and they descended a flight of stairs into the grill room.

"I hope that this place will suit you," he said. "I have not much experience of restaurants."

She looked around and nodded.

"Yes," she replied, "I think that it will do."

She was very shabbily dressed; and he, although his appearance was by no means ordinary, was certainly not of the type which inspires immediate respect in even the grill room of a fashionable restaurant. Nevertheless, they received prompt and almost officious service.

Tavernake, as he watched his companion's air, her manner of seating herself and accepting the attentions of the head waiter, felt that nameless impulse which was responsible for his having followed her from Blenheim House, and which he could only call curiosity, becoming stronger.

An exceedingly matter-of-fact person, he was also by instinct and habit observant. He never doubted but that she belonged to a class of society from which the guests at the boarding house where they had both lived were seldom recruited, and of which he himself knew little. He was not in the least a snob, this young man; but he found the fact interesting. Life with him was already very much the same as a ledger account —a matter of debits and credits; and

he had never failed to include among the latter that curious gift of breeding for which he himself, denied it by heritage, had somehow substituted a complete and exceedingly rare naturalness.

"I should like," she announced, laying down the *carte*, "a fried sole, some cutlets, an ice, and black coffee."

The waiter bowed.

"And for monsieur?"

Tavernake glanced at his watch. It was already ten o'clock.

"I will take the same," he declared.

"And to drink?"

She seemed indifferent.

"Any light wine," she answered carelessly; "white or red."

Tavernake took up the wine list and ordered sauterne. They were left alone in their corner for a few minutes, almost the only occupants of the place.

"You are sure that you can afford this?" she asked, looking at him critically. "It may cost you a sovereign or thirty shillings."

He studied the prices on the menu.

"I can afford it quite well, and I have plenty of money with me," he assured her; "but I do not think that it will cost more than eighteen shillings. While we are waiting for the sole, shall we talk? I can tell you, if you choose to hear, why I followed you from the boarding house."

"I don't mind listening to you," she told him, "or I will talk with you about anything you like. There is only one subject which I cannot discuss; that subject is myself and my own doings."

Tavernake was silent for a moment.

"That makes conversation a bit difficult," he remarked.

She leaned back in her chair.

"After this evening," she said, "I go out of your life as completely and finally as though I had never existed. I have a fancy to take my poor secrets with me. If you wish to talk, tell me about yourself. You have gone out of your way to be kind to me. I wonder why. It doesn't seem to be your rôle."

He smiled slowly. His face was fashioned upon broad lines, and the relaxing of his lips lightened it wonderfully. He had good teeth, clear gray eyes, and coarse black hair, which he wore a trifle long; his forehead was too massive for good looks.

"No," he admitted, "I do not think that benevolence is one of my characteristics."

Her dark eyes were turned full upon him. Her red lips, redder than ever they seemed against the pallor of her cheeks and her deep brown hair, curled slightly. There was something almost insolent in her tone.

"You understand, I hope," she continued, "that you have nothing whatever to look for from me in return for this sum which you propose to expend for my entertainment?"

"I understand that," he replied.

"Not even gratitude," she persisted. "I really do not feel grateful to you. You are probably doing this to gratify some selfish interest or curiosity. I warn you that I am quite incapable of any of the proper sentiments of life."

"Your gratitude would be of no value to me whatever," he assured her.

She was still not wholly satisfied. His complete stolidity frustrated every effort she made to penetrate beneath the surface.

"If I believed," she went on, "that you were one of those men—the world is full of them, you know—who will help a woman with a reasonable appearance so long as it does not seriously interfere with their own comfort——"

"Your sex has nothing whatever to do with it," he interrupted. "As to your appearance, I have not even considered it. I could not tell you whether you are beautiful or ugly—I am no judge of these matters. What I have done, I have done because it pleased me to do it."

"Do you always do what pleases you?" she asked.

"Nearly always."

She looked him over again attentively, with an interest obviously impersonal, a trifle supercilious.

"I suppose," she remarked, "you consider yourself one of the strong people of the world?"

"I do not know about that," he an-

swered. "I do not often think about myself."

"I mean," she explained, "that you are one of those people who struggle hard to get just what they want in life."

His jaw suddenly tightened, and she saw the likeness to Napoleon.

"I do more than struggle," he affirmed. "I succeed. If I make up my mind to do a thing, I do it. If I make up my mind to get a thing, I get it. It means hard work sometimes, but that is all."

For the first time, a really natural interest shone out of her eyes. The half-sulky contempt with which she had received his advances passed away. She became at that moment a human being, self-forgetting, the heritage of her charms—for she really had a curious but very poignant attractiveness—suddenly evident. It was only a momentary lapse, and it was entirely wasted. Not even one of the waiters happened to be looking that way, and Tavernake was thinking wholly of himself.

"It is a good deal to say—that," she remarked reflectively.

"It is a good deal, but it is not too much," he declared. "Every man who takes life seriously should say it."

Then she laughed—actually laughed—and he had a vision of flashing white teeth, of a mouth breaking into pleasant curves, of dark, mirth-lit eyes, lusterless no longer, provocative, inspiring. A vague impression as of something pleasant warmed his blood. It was a rare thing for him to be so stirred; but even then it was not sufficient to disturb the focus of his thoughts.

"Tell me," she demanded, "what do you do? What is your profession or work?"

"I am with a firm of auctioneers and estate agents," he answered readily—"Messrs. Dowling, Spence & Co. the name is. Our offices are in Waterloo Place."

"You find it interesting?"

"Of course," he answered. "Interesting? Why not? I work at it."

"Are you a partner?"

"No," he admitted. "Six years ago I was a carpenter; then I became an errand boy in Mr. Dowling's office—I had to learn the business, you see. To-day I am a sort of manager. In eighteen months' time—perhaps before that if they do not offer me a partnership—I shall start for myself."

Once more the subtlest of smiles flickered at the corners of her lips.

"Do they know yet?" she asked, with faint irony.

"Not yet," he replied, with absolute seriousness. "They might tell me to go, and I have a few things to learn yet. I would rather make experiments for some one else than for myself. I can use the results later; they will help me to make money."

She laughed softly and wiped the tears out of her eyes. They were really very beautiful eyes notwithstanding the dark rims encircling them.

"If only I had met you before," she murmured.

"Why?" he asked.

She shook her head.

"Don't ask me," she begged. "It would not be good for your conceit, if you have any, to tell you."

"I have no conceit, and I am not inquisitive," he said; "but I do not see why you laughed."

Their period of waiting came to an end at this point. The fish was brought, and their conversation became disjointed. In the silence which followed, the old shadow crept over her face. Once only it lifted. It was while they were waiting for the cutlets. She leaned toward him, her elbows upon the tablecloth, her face supported by her fingers.

"I think that it is time we left these generalities," she insisted, "and you told me something rather more personal, something which I am very anxious to know. Tell me exactly why so self-centered a person as yourself should interest himself in a fellow creature at all. It seems odd to me."

"It is odd," he admitted frankly. "I will try to explain it to you, but it will sound very bald, and I do not think that you will understand. I watched you a few nights ago out on the roof at Blenheim House. You were looking across the housetops, and you didn't seem to

be seeing anything at all, really; and yet all the time I knew that you were seeing things I couldn't, you were understanding and appreciating something which I knew nothing of, and it worried me. I tried to talk to you that evening, but you were rude."

"You really are a curious person," she remarked. "Are you always worried, then, if you find that some one else is seeing things or understanding things which are outside your comprehension?"

"Always," he replied promptly.

"You are too far-reaching," she affirmed. "You want to gather everything into your life. You cannot. You will only be unhappy if you try. No man can do it. You must learn your limitations or suffer all your days."

"Limitations!" He repeated the words with measureless scorn. "If I learn them at all," he declared, with unexpected force, "it will be with scars and bruises, for nothing else will content me."

"We are, I should say, almost the same age," she remarked slowly.

"I am twenty-five," he told her.

"I am twenty-two," she said. "It seems strange that two people whose ideas of life are as far apart as the poles should have come together like this even for a moment. I do not understand it at all. Did you expect that I should tell you just what I saw in the clouds that night?"

"No," he answered, "not exactly. I have spoken of my first interest in you only. There are other things. I told a lie about the bracelet, and I followed you out of the boarding house and I brought you here, for some other—for quite a different reason."

"Tell me what it was," she demanded.

"I do not know it myself," he declared solemnly. "I really and honestly do not know it. It is because I hoped that it might come to me while we were together that I am here with you at this moment. I do not like impulses which I do not understand."

She laughed at him a little scornfully.

"After all," she said, "although it may not have dawned upon you yet, it is probably the same wretched reason. You are a man, and you have the poison somewhere in your blood. I am really not bad-looking, you know."

He looked at her critically. She was a little overslim, perhaps; but she was certainly wonderfully graceful. Even the poise of her head, the manner in which she leaned back in her chair, had its individuality. Her features, too, were good, though her mouth had grown a trifle hard. For the first time, the dead pallor of her cheeks was relieved by a touch of color. Even Tavernake realized that there were great possibilities about her. Nevertheless, he shook his head.

"I do not agree with you in the least," he asserted firmly. "Your looks have nothing to do with it. I am sure that it is not that."

"Let me cross-examine you," she suggested. "Think carefully now. Does it give you no pleasure at all to be sitting here alone with me?"

He answered her deliberately. It was obvious that he was speaking the truth.

"I am not conscious that it does," he declared. "The only feeling I am aware of at the present moment in connection with you, is the curiosity of which I have already spoken."

She leaned a little toward him, extending her very shapely fingers. Once more the smile at her lips transformed her face.

"Look at my hand," she said. "Tell me—wouldn't you like to hold it just for a minute, if I gave it you?"

Her eyes challenged his, softly and yet imperiously. His whole attention, however, seemed to be absorbed by her finger nails. It seemed strange to him that a girl in her straits should have devoted so much care to her hands.

"No," he answered deliberately, "I have no wish to hold your hand. Why should I?"

"Look at me," she insisted.

He did so without embarrassment or hesitation—it was more than ever apparent that he was entirely truthful.

She leaned back in her chair, laughing softly to herself.

"Oh, my friend Mr. Leonard Tavernake," she exclaimed, "if you were not so crudely, so adorably, so miraculously truthful, what a prig, prig, prig you would be! The cutlets at last, thank goodness! Your cross-examination is over. I pronounce you 'Not guilty!'"

During the progress of the rest of the meal they talked very little. At its conclusion, Tavernake discharged the bill, having carefully checked each item and tipped the waiter the exact amount which the man had the right to expect. They ascended the stairs together to the street, the girl lingering a few steps behind. On the pavement, her fingers touched his arm.

"I wonder would you mind driving me down to the Embankment?" she asked, almost humbly. "It was so close down there, and I want some air."

This was an extravagance which he had scarcely contemplated, but he did not hesitate. He called a taxicab and seated himself by her side. Her manner seemed to have grown quieter and more subdued, her tone was no longer semibelligerent.

"I will not keep you much longer," she promised. "I suppose I am not so strong as I used to be. I have had scarcely anything to eat for two days, and conversation has become an unknown luxury. I think—it seems absurd—but I think that I am feeling a little faint."

"The air will soon revive you," he said. "As to our conversation, I am disappointed. I think that you are very foolish not to tell me more about yourself."

She closed her eyes, ignoring his remark. They turned presently into a narrower thoroughfare. She leaned toward him.

"You have been very good to me," she admitted, almost timidly, "and I am afraid that I have not been very gracious. We shall not see one another again after this evening. I wonder—would you care to kiss me?"

He opened his lips and closed them again. He sat quite still, his eyes fixed upon the road ahead, until he had strangled something absolutely absurd, something unrecognizable.

"I would rather not," he decided quietly. "I know you mean to be kind, but that sort of thing—well, I don't think I understand it. Besides," he added, with a sudden naïve relief, as he clutched at a fugitive but plausible thought, "if I did, you would not believe the things which I have been telling you."

He had a curious idea that she was disappointed as she turned her head away, but she said nothing. Arrived at the Embankment, the cab came slowly to a standstill. The girl descended. There was something new in her manner. She looked away from him when she spoke.

"You had better leave me here," she said. "I am going to sit upon that seat."

Then came those few seconds' hesitation which were to count for a great deal in his life. The impulse which bade him stay with her was unaccountable, but it conquered.

"If you do not object," he remarked, with some stiffness, "I should like to sit here with you for a little time. There is certainly a breeze."

She made no comment, but walked on. He paid the man and followed her to the empty seat. Opposite, some illuminated advertisements blazed their unsightly message across the murky sky. Between the two curving rows of yellow lights the river flowed—black, turgid, hopeless. Even here, though they had escaped from its absolute thrall, the far-away roar of the city beat upon their ears. She listened to it for a moment, and then pressed her hands to the side of her head.

"Oh, how I hate it!" she moaned. "The voices, always the voices, calling, threatening, beating you away! Take my hands, Leonard Tavernake—hold me."

He did as she bade him, clumsily, as yet without comprehension.

"You are not well," he muttered.

Her eyes opened, and a flash of her

old manner returned. She smiled at him, feebly but derisively.

"You foolish boy!" she cried. "Can't you see that I am dying? Hold my hands tightly and watch—watch! Here is one more thing you can see—that you cannot understand."

He saw the empty vial slip from her sleeve and fall onto the pavement. With a cry, he sprang up and, carrying her in his arms, rushed out into the road.

CHAPTER III.

AN UNPLEASANT MEETING.

It was a quarter past eleven, and the theaters were disgorging their usual nightly crowds. The most human thoroughfare in any of the world's great cities was at its best and brightest. The streets were thronged with slowly moving vehicles, the pavements were stirring with life. The little crowd which had gathered in front of the chemist's shop was swept away. After all, none of them knew exactly what they had been waiting for. There was a rumor that a woman had fainted or had met with an accident. Certainly she had been carried into the shop and into the inner room, the door of which was still closed. A few passers-by had gathered together and stared and waited for a few minutes, but had finally lost interest and melted away.

A human thoroughfare, this, indeed, one of the pulses of the great city beating time night and day to the tragedies of life. The chemist's assistant, with impassive features, was serving a couple of casual customers from behind the counter. Only a few yards away, beyond the closed door, the chemist himself and a hastily summoned doctor fought with Death for the body of the girl who lay upon the floor, faint moans coming every now and then from her blue lips.

Tavernake, whose forced inaction during that terrible struggle had become a burden to him, slipped softly from the room as soon as the doctor had whispered that the acute crisis was over, and passed through the shop out into the street, a solemn, dazed figure among the light-hearted crowd.

Even in those grim moments, the man's individualism spoke up to him. He was puzzled at his own action. He asked himself a question—not, indeed, with regret, but with something more than curiosity and actual self-probing—as though, by concentrating his mind upon his recent course of action, he would be able to understand the motives which had influenced him. Why had he chosen to burden himself with the care of this desperate young woman? Supposing she lived, what was to become of her?

He had acquired a certain definite responsibility with regard to her future, for, whatever the doctor and his assistant might do, it was his own promptitude and presence of mind which had given her the first chance of life. Without a doubt, he had behaved foolishly. Why not vanish into the crowd and have done with it? What was it to him, after all, whether this girl lived or died? He had done his duty—more than his duty. Why not disappear now and let her take her chance? His common sense spoke to him loudly; such thoughts as these beat upon his brain.

Just for once in his life, however, his common sense exercised an altogether subordinate position. He knew very well, even while he listened to these voices, that he was only counting the minutes until he could return. Having absolutely decided that the only reasonable course left for him to pursue was to return home and leave the girl to her fate, he found himself back inside the shop within a quarter of an hour. The chemist had just come out from the inner room, and looked up at his entrance.

"She'll do now," he announced.

Tavernake nodded. He was amazed at his own sense of relief.

"I am glad," he declared.

The doctor joined them, his black bag in his hand, prepared for departure. He addressed himself to Tavernake as the responsible person.

"The young lady will be all right now," he said, "but she may be rather

queer for a day or two. Fortunately, she made the usual mistake of people who are ignorant of medicine and its effects—she took enough poison to kill a whole household. You had better take care of her, young man," he added dryly. "She'll be getting into trouble if she tries this sort of thing again."

"Will she need any special attention during the next few days?" Tavernake asked. "The circumstances under which I brought her here are a little unusual, and I am not quite sure——"

"Take her home to bed," the doctor interrupted, "and you'll find she'll sleep it off. She seems to have a splendid constitution, although she has let herself run down. If you need any further advice and your own medical man is not available, I will come and see her if you send for me. Camden my name is; telephone number, seven hundred and thirty-four Gerrard."

"I should be glad to know the amount of your fee, if you please," Tavernake said.

"My fee is two guineas," the doctor answered.

Tavernake paid him and he went away. Already the shadow of the tragedy was passing. The chemist had joined his assistant and was busy dispensing drugs behind his counter.

"You can go in to the young lady, if you like," he remarked to Tavernake. "I dare say she'll feel better to have some one with her."

Tavernake passed slowly into the inner room, closing the door behind him. He was scarcely prepared for so piteous a sight. The girl's face was white and drawn as she lay upon the couch to which they had lifted her. The fighting spirit was dead; she was in a state of absolute and complete collapse. She opened her eyes at his coming, but closed them again almost immediately—less, it seemed, from any consciousness of his presence than from sheer exhaustion.

"I am glad that you are better," he whispered, crossing the room to her side.

"Thank you," she murmured almost inaudibly.

Tavernake stood looking down upon her, and his sense of perplexity increased. Stretched on the hard horsehair couch, she seemed, indeed, pitifully thin and younger than her years. The scowl, which had passed from her face, had served, in some measure, as a disguise.

"We shall have to leave here in a few minutes," he said softly. "They will want to close the shop."

"I am so sorry," she faltered, "to have given you all this trouble. You must send me to a hospital or the workhouse—anywhere."

"You are sure that there are no friends to whom I can send?" he asked.

"There is no one."

She closed her eyes, and Tavernake sat quite still on the end of her couch, his elbow upon his knee, his head resting upon his hand. Presently, the rush of customers having ceased, the chemist came in.

"I think, if I were you, I should take her home now," he remarked. "She'll probably drop off to sleep very soon and wake up much stronger. I have made up a prescription here in case of exhaustion."

Tavernake stared at the man. Take her home! His sense of humor was faint enough, but he found himself trying to imagine the faces of Mrs. Lawrence or Mrs. Fitzgerald if he should return with her to the boarding house at such an hour.

"I suppose you know where she lives?" the chemist inquired curiously.

"Of course," Tavernake assented. "You are quite right. I dare say she is strong enough now to walk as far as the pavement."

He paid the bill for the medicines, and they lifted her from the couch. Between them she walked slowly into the outer shop. Then she began to drag on their arms, and she looked up at the chemist a little piteously.

"May I sit down for a moment?" she begged. "I feel faint."

They placed her in one of the cane chairs facing the door. The chemist mixed her some sal volatile.

"I am sorry," she murmured, "so

sorry. In a few minutes—I shall be better."

Outside, the throng of pedestrians had grown less, but from the great restaurant opposite a constant stream of motor cars and carriages was slowly bringing away the supper guests. Tavernake stood at the door, watching them idly. The traffic was momentarily blocked, and almost opposite to him a motor car, the simple magnificence of which filled him with wonder, had come to a standstill. The chauffeur and footman both wore livery which was almost white. Inside, a swinging vase of flowers was suspended from the roof. A man and a woman leaned back in luxurious easy-chairs. The man was dark, and had the look of a foreigner. The woman was very fair. She wore a long ermine cloak and a tiara of pearls.

Tavernake, whose interest in the passing throngs was entirely superficial, found himself, for some reason, curiously attracted by this glimpse into a world of luxury of which he knew nothing; attracted, too, by the woman's delicate face, with its uncommon type of beauty. Their eyes met as he stood there, stolid and motionless, framed in the doorway. Tavernake continued to stare, unmindful, perhaps unconscious, of the rudeness of his action.

The woman, after a moment, glanced at the shop window. A sudden thought seemed to strike her. She spoke through the tube at her side, and turned to her companion. Meanwhile, the footman, leaning from his place, held out his arm in warning, and the car was slowly backed to the side of the pavement. The lady felt for a moment in a bag of white satin which lay upon the round table in front of her, and handed a slip of paper through the open window to the servant who had already descended and was standing waiting. He came at once toward the shop, passing Tavernake, who remained in the doorway.

"Will you make this up at once, please?" he directed, handing the paper across to the chemist.

The chemist took it in his hand and turned away mechanically toward the dispensing room. Suddenly he paused.

"For whom is this prescription required?" he asked.

"For my mistress," the man answered. "Her name is there."

"Where is she?"

"Outside. She is waiting for it."

"If she really wants this made up to-night," the chemist declared, "she must come in and sign the book."

The footman looked across the counter, for a moment, a little blankly.

"Am I to tell her that?" he inquired. "It's only a sleeping draft. Her regular chemist makes it up all right."

"That may be," the man behind the counter replied; "but, you see, I am not her regular chemist. You had better go and tell her so."

The footman departed upon his errand without a glance at the girl who was sitting within a few feet of him.

"I am very sorry, madam," he announced to his mistress, "that the chemist declines to make up the prescription unless you sign the book."

"Very well, then, I will come," she declared.

The woman, handed from the automobile by her servant, lifted her white satin skirts in both hands and stepped lightly across the pavement. Tavernake stood on one side to let her pass. She seemed to him to be, indeed, a creature of that other world of which he knew nothing. Her slow, graceful movements, the shimmer of her skirt, her silk stockings, the flashing of the diamond buckles upon her shoes, the faint perfume from her clothes, the soft touch of her ermine as she swept by—all these things were, indeed, strange to him. His eyes followed her with rapt interest as she approached the counter.

"You wish me to sign for my prescription?" she asked the chemist. "I will do so, with pleasure, if it is necessary, only you must not keep me waiting long."

Her voice was very low and very musical. The slight smile which had parted her tired lips was almost pathetic. Even the chemist felt himself to be a human being. He turned at once to his shelves and began to prepare the drug.

"I am sorry, madam, that it should

have been necessary to fetch you in," he said apologetically. "My assistant will give you the book if you will kindly sign it."

The assistant dived beneath the counter, reappearing almost immediately with a black volume and a pen and ink. The chemist was engrossed upon his task. Tavernake's eyes were still riveted upon this woman, who seemed to him the most beautiful thing he had ever seen in life. No one was watching the girl. The chemist was the first to see her face, and that only in a looking-glass. He stopped in the act of mixing his drug and turned slowly round. His expression was such that they all followed his eyes.

The girl was sitting up in her chair, with a sudden spot of color burning in her cheeks, her fingers gripping the counter as though for support, her eyes dilated, unnatural, burning in their white setting with an unholy fire. The lady was the last to turn her head, and the bottle of eau de Cologne which she had taken up from the counter slipped with a crash to the floor. All expression seemed to pass from her face; the very life seemed drawn from it. Those who were watching her, saw suddenly an old woman looking at something of which she was afraid.

The girl seemed to find an unnatural strength. She dragged herself up and turned wildly to Tavernake.

"Take me away!" she cried, in a low voice. "Take me away at once."

The woman at the counter did not speak. Tavernake stepped quickly forward and then hesitated. The girl was on her feet now, and she clutched at his arms. Her eyes besought him.

"You must take me away, please," she begged hoarsely. "I am well now—quite well. I can walk."

Tavernake's lack of imagination stood him in good stead then. He simply did what he was told, did it in perfectly mechanical fashion, without asking any questions. With the girl leaning heavily upon his arm, he stepped into the street and almost immediately into a passing taxicab which he had hailed from the threshold of the shop. As he closed the door, he glanced behind him. The woman was standing there, half turned toward him, still with that strange, stony look upon her lifeless face. The chemist was bending across the counter toward her, wondering, perhaps, if another incident were to be drawn into his night's work. The eau de Cologne was running in a little stream across the floor.

"Where to, sir?" the taxicab driver asked Tavernake.

"Where to?" Tavernake repeated.

The girl was clinging to his arm.

"Tell him to drive away from here," she whispered; "to drive anywhere, but away from here."

"Drive straight on," Tavernake directed; "along Fleet Street and up Holborn. I will give you the address later on."

The man changed his speed and their pace increased. Tavernake sat quite still, dumfounded by these amazing happenings. The girl by his side was clutching his arm, sobbing a little hysterically, holding him all the time as though in terror.

CHAPTER IV.

BREAKFAST WITH BEATRICE.

The girl, awakened, perhaps, by the passing of some heavy cart along the street below, or by the touch of the sunbeam which lay across her pillow, first opened her eyes, and then, after a preliminary stare around, sat up in bed. The events of the previous night slowly shaped themselves in her mind. She remembered everything up to the commencement of that drive in the taxicab. Some time after that she must have fainted. And now—what had become of her? Where was she?

She looked around her in ever-increasing surprise. Certainly it was the strangest room she had ever been in. The floor was dusty and innocent of any carpet; the window was bare and uncurtained. The walls were unpapered but covered here and there with strange-looking plans, one of them taking up nearly the whole side of the room—a very rough piece of work with little dabs

of blue paint here and there, and shadings and diagrams which were absolutely unintelligible. She herself was lying upon a battered iron bedstead, and she was wearing a very coarse night dress. Her own clothes were folded up and lay upon a piece of brown paper on the floor by the side of the bed. To all appearance, the room was entirely unfurnished, except that in the middle of it was a hideous papier-mâché screen.

After her first bewildered inspection of her surroundings, it was upon this screen that her attention was naturally directed. Obviously it must be there to conceal something. Very carefully she leaned out of bed until she was able to see around the corner of it. Then her heart gave a little jump, and she was only just able to stifle an exclamation of fear. Some one was sitting there—a man—sitting on a battered cane chair, bending over a roll of papers which were stretched upon a rude deal table. She felt her cheeks grow hot. It must be Tavernake! Where had he brought her? What did his presence in the room mean?

The bed creaked heavily as she regained her former position. A voice came to her from behind the screen. She knew it at once. It was Tavernake's.

"Are you awake?" he asked.

"Yes," she answered—"yes, I am awake. Is that Mr. Tavernake? Where am I, please?"

"First of all, are you better?" he inquired.

"I am better," she assured him, sitting up in bed and pulling the clothes to her chin. "I am quite well now. Tell me at once where I am and what you are doing over there."

"There is nothing to be terrified about," Tavernake answered. "To all effects and purposes, I am in another room. When I move to the door, as I shall do directly, I shall drag the screen with me. I can promise you——"

"Please explain everything," she begged, "quickly. I am most—uncomfortable."

"At half past twelve this morning," Tavernake said, "I found myself alone in a taxicab with you, without any luggage or any idea where to go to. To make matters worse, you fainted. I tried two hotels, but they refused to take you in. They were probably afraid that you were going to be ill. Then I thought of this room. I am employed, as you know, by a firm of estate agents. I do a great deal of work on my own account, however, which I prefer to do in secret and unknown to any one. For that reason, I hired this room a year ago, and I come here most evenings to work. Sometimes I stay late, so last month I bought a small bedstead and had it fixed up here. There is a woman who comes in to clean the room. I went to her house last night and persuaded her to come here. She undressed you and put you to bed. I am sorry that my presence here distresses you; but it is a large building and quite empty at night-time. I thought you might wake up and be frightened, so I borrowed this screen from the woman and have been sitting here."

"What, all night?" she gasped.

"Certainly," he answered. "The woman could not stop herself, and this is not a residential building at all. All the lower floors are let for offices and warehouses, and there is no one else in the place until eight o'clock."

She put her hands to her head and sat quite still for a moment or two. It was really hard to take everything in.

"Aren't you very sleepy?" she asked irrelevantly.

"Not very," he replied. "I dozed for an hour a little time ago. Since then I have been looking through some plans which interest me very much."

"Can I get up?" she inquired timidly.

"If you feel strong enough, please do," he answered, with manifest relief. "I shall move toward the door, dragging the screen in front of me. You will find a brush and comb and some hairpins on your clothes. I could not think of anything else to get for you, but, if you will dress, we will walk to London Bridge Station, which is just across the way, and while I order some breakfast you can go into the ladies' room and do your hair properly. I did my best to get hold

of a looking-glass, but it was quite impossible."

The girl's sense of humor was suddenly awake. She had hard work not to scream. He had evidently thought out all these details in painstaking fashion one by one.

"Thank you," she said. "I will get up immediately, if you will do as you say."

He clutched the screen from the inside and dragged it toward the door. On the threshold, he spoke to her once more.

"I shall sit upon the stairs just outside," he announced.

"I shan't be more than five minutes," she assured him.

She sprang out of bed and dressed quickly. There was nothing beyond where the screen had been except a table covered with plans, and a particularly hard cane chair, which she dragged over for her own use. As she dressed, she began to realize how much this matter-of-fact, unimpressionable young man had done for her during the last few hours. The reflection affected her in a curious manner. She became afflicted with a shyness which she had not felt when he was in the room. When at last she had finished her toilet and opened the door, she was almost tongue-tied. He was sitting on the top step, with his back against the landing, and his eyes were closed. He opened them with a little start, however, as soon as he heard her approach.

"I am glad you have not been long," he remarked. "I want to be at my office at nine o'clock, and I must go and have a bath somewhere. These stairs are rather steep. Please walk carefully."

She followed him in silence down three flights of stone steps. On each landing there were names upon the doors—two firms of hop merchants, a lawyer, and a commission agent. The ground floor was some sort of warehouse, from which came a strong smell of leather.

Tavernake opened the outside door with a small key, and they passed into the street.

"London Bridge Station is just across the way," he said. "The refreshment room will be open, and we can get some breakfast at once."

"What time is it?" she asked.

"About half past seven."

She walked by his side quite meekly; and, although there were many things which she was longing to say, she remained absolutely without the power of speech. Except that he was looking a little crumpled, there was nothing whatever in his appearance to indicate that he had been up all night. He looked exactly as he had done on the previous day. He seemed even quite unconscious that there was anything unusual in their relations. As soon as they arrived at the station, he pointed to the ladies' waiting room.

"If you will go in and arrange your hair there," he said, "I will go and order breakfast and have a shave. I will be back here in about twenty minutes. You had better take this."

He offered her a shilling, and she accepted it without hesitation. As soon as he had gone, however, she looked at the coin in her hand in blank wonder. She had accepted it from him with perfect naturalness, and without even saying "Thank you!" With a queer little laugh, she pushed open the swinging doors and made her way into the waiting room.

In hardly more than a quarter of an hour she emerged, to find Tavernake waiting for her. He had retied his tie, bought a fresh collar, had been shaved. She, too, had improved her appearance.

"Breakfast is waiting this way," he announced.

She followed him obediently, and they sat down at a small table in the station refreshment room.

"Mr. Tavernake," she said suddenly, "I must ask you something. Has anything like this ever happened to you before?"

"Nothing," he assured her, with some emphasis.

"You seem to take everything so much as a matter of course," she protested.

Why not?"

"Oh, I don't know," she replied, a little feebly. "Only——"

She found relief in a sudden and perfectly natural laugh.

"Come," he said, "that is better. I am glad that you feel like laughing."

"As a matter of fact," she declared, "I feel much more like crying. Don't you know that you were very foolish last night? You ought to have left me alone. Why didn't you? You would have saved yourself a great deal of trouble."

He nodded, as though that point of view did, in some degree, commend itself to him.

"Yes," he admitted, "I suppose I should. I do not, even now, understand why I interfered. I can only remember that it didn't seem possible not to at the time. I suppose one must have impulses," he added, with a little frown.

"The reflection," she remarked, helping herself to another roll, "seems to annoy you."

"It does," he confessed. "I do not like to feel impelled to do anything the reason for which is not apparent. I like to do just the things which seem likely to work out best for myself."

"How you must hate me!" she murmured.

"No, I do not hate you," he replied; "but, on the other hand, you have certainly been a trouble to me. First of all, I told a falsehood at the boarding house, and I prefer always to tell the truth when I can. Then I followed you out of the house, which I disliked doing very much; and I seem to have spent a considerable portion of the time since, in your company, under somewhat extraordinary circumstances. I do not understand why I have done this."

"I suppose it is because you are a very good-hearted person," she remarked.

"But I am not," he assured her calmly. "I am nothing of the sort. I have very little sympathy with good-hearted people. I think the world goes very much better when every one looks after himself, and the people who are not competent to do so go to the wall."

"It sounds a trifle selfish," she murmured.

"Perhaps it is. I have an idea that if I could phrase it differently it would become philosophy."

"Perhaps," she suggested, smiling across the table at him, "you have really done all this because you like me."

"I am quite sure that it is not that," he declared. "I feel an interest in you for which I cannot account, but it does not seem to me to be a personal one. Last night," he continued, "when I was sitting there waiting, I tried to puzzle it all out. I came to the conclusion that it was because you represent something which I do not understand. I am very curious, and it always interests me to learn. I believe that must be the secret of my interest in you."

"You are very complimentary," she told him mockingly. "I wonder what there is in the world which I could teach so superior a person as Mr. Tavernake?"

He took her question quite seriously.

"I wonder what there is myself," he answered. "And yet, in a way, I think I know."

"Your imagination should come to the rescue," she remarked.

"I have no imagination," he declared gloomily.

They were silent for several minutes. She was still studying him.

"I wonder you don't ask me any questions about myself," she said abruptly.

"There is only one thing," he answered, "concerning which I am in the least curious. Last night in the chemist's shop——"

"Don't!" she begged him, with suddenly whitening face. "Don't speak of that!"

"Very well," he replied indifferently. "I thought that you were rather inviting my questions. You need not be afraid of any more. I really am not curious about personal matters. I find that my own life absorbs all my interests."

They had finished breakfast, and he paid the bill. She began to put on her gloves.

"Whatever happens to me," she said,

"I shall never forget that you have been very kind."

She hesitated for a moment, and then she seemed to realize more completely how really kind he had been. There had been a certain crude delicacy about his actions which she had underappreciated. She leaned toward him. There was nothing left this morning of that disfiguring sullenness. Her mouth was soft; her eyes were bright, almost appealing. If Tavernake had been a judge of woman's looks, he must certainly have found her attractive.

"I am very, very grateful to you," she continued, holding out her hand. "I shall always remember how kind you were. Good-by!"

"You are not going?" he asked.

She laughed.

"Why, you didn't imagine that you had taken the care of me upon your shoulders for the rest of your life?" she demanded.

"No, I didn't imagine that," he answered. "At the same time, what plans have you made? Where are you going?"

"Oh, I shall think of something," she declared indifferently.

He caught the gleam in her eyes, the sudden hopelessness which fell like a cloud upon her face. He spoke promptly and with decision.

"As a matter of fact," he remarked, "you do not know yourself. You are just going to drift out of this place, and very likely find your way to a seat on the Embankment again."

Her lips quivered. She had tried to be brave, but it was hard.

"Not necessarily," she replied. "Something may turn up."

He leaned a little across the table toward her.

"Listen," he said deliberately, "I will make a proposition to you. It has come to me during the last few minutes. I am tired of the boarding house, and I wish to leave it. The work which I do at night is becoming more and more important. I should like to take two rooms somewhere. If I take a third, would you care to call yourself what I called you to the charwoman last night—my sister? I should expect you to look after the meals and my clothes, and help me in certain other ways. I cannot give you much of a salary," he continued, "but you would have an opportunity during the daytime of looking out for some work, if that is what you want, and you would at least have a roof and plenty to eat and drink."

She looked at him in blank amazement. It was obvious that his proposition was entirely honest.

"But, Mr. Tavernake," she protested, "you forget that I am not really your sister."

"Does that matter?" he asked, without flinching. "I think you understand the sort of person I am. You would have nothing to fear from any admiration on my part—or anything of that sort," he added, with some show of clumsiness. "Those things do not come in my life. I am ambitious to get on, to succeed and become wealthy. Other things I do not even think about."

She was speechless. After a short pause, he went on:

"I am proposing this arrangement as much for my own sake as for yours. I am very well read, and I know most of what there is to be known in my profession. But there are other things concerning which I am ignorant. Some of these things I believe you could teach me."

Still speechless, she sat and looked at him for several moments. Outside, the station now was filled with a hurrying throng on their way to the day's work. Engines were shrieking, bells ringing, the press of footsteps was unceasing. In the dark, ill-ventilated room itself there was the rattle of crockery, the yawning of discontented-looking young women behind the counter, young women with their hair still in curl papers, as yet unprepared for their weak little assaults upon the good nature or susceptibility of their customers.

A queer corner of life it seemed. She looked at her companion, and realized how fragmentary was her knowledge of him. There was nothing to be gathered from his face. He seemed to have no expression. He was simply

waiting for her reply, with his thoughts already half engrossed upon the business of the day.

"Really," she began, "I——"

He came back from his momentary wandering and looked at her. She suddenly altered the manner of her speech. It was a strange proposition, perhaps, but this was one of the strangest of men.

"I am quite willing to try it," she decided. "Will you tell me where I can meet you later on?"

"I have an hour and a half for luncheon at one o'clock," he said. "Meet me exactly at the southeast corner of Trafalgar Square. Would you like a little money?" he added, rising.

"I have plenty, thank you," she answered.

He laid half a crown upon the table and made an entry in a small memorandum book which he drew from his pocket.

"You had better keep this," he said, "in case you want it. I am going to leave you alone here. You can find your way anywhere, I am sure, and I am in a hurry. At one o'clock, remember. I hope you will still be feeling better."

He put on his hat and went away without a backward glance. Beatrice sat in her chair and watched him out of sight.

CHAPTER V.

INTRODUCING MRS. WENHAM GARDNER.

A very distinguished client was engaging the attention of Mr. Dowling, Senior, of Messrs. Dowling, Spence & Co., auctioneers and estate agents, whose offices were situated in Waterloo Place, Pall Mall. Mr. Dowling was a fussy little man of between fifty and sixty years, who spent most of his time playing golf, and who, although he studiously contrived to ignore the fact, had long since lost touch with the details of his business. Consequently, in the absence of Mr. Dowling, Junior, who had developed a marked partiality for a certain café in the locality, Tavernake was hastily summoned to the rescue from another part of the building by a small boy violently out of breath.

"Never see the governor in such a fuss," the latter declared confidentially. "She's asking no end of questions, and he don't know a thing."

"Who is the lady?" Tavernake asked on the way downstairs.

"Didn't hear her name," the boy replied. "She's all right, though, I can tell you—a regular slap-up beauty. Such a motor car, too! Flowers and tables, and all sorts of things inside. By Jove, won't the governor tear his hair if she goes before you get there!"

Tavernake quickened his steps, and in a few moments knocked at the door of the private office, and entered. His chief welcomed him with a gesture of relief. The distinguished client of the firm, whose attention he was endeavoring to engage, had glanced toward the newcomer, at his first appearance, with an air of somewhat bored unconcern. Her eyes, however, did not immediately leave his face. On the contrary, from the moment of his entrance she watched him steadfastly. Tavernake, stolid, unruffled, at that time without comprehension, approached the desk.

"This is—er—Mr. Tavernake, our manager," Mr. Dowling announced obsequiously. "In the absence of my son, he is in charge of the letting department. I have no doubt that he will be able to suggest something suitable. Tavernake," he continued, "this lady"—he glanced at a card in front of him—"Mrs. Wenham Gardner, of New York, is looking for a town house, and has been kind enough to favor us with an inquiry."

Tavernake made no immediate reply. Mr. Dowling was shortsighted, and in any case, it would never have occurred to him to associate nervousness, or any form of emotion, with his responsible manager. The beautiful lady leaned back in her chair. Her lips were parted in a slight but very curious smile, her fingers supported her cheek, her eyelids were contracted as she looked into his face. Tavernake felt that their recognition was mutual. Once more he

was back again in the tragic atmosphere of that chemist's shop, with Beatrice, half fainting, in his arms, the beautiful lady turned to stone. It was an odd tableau that, so vividly imprinted upon his memory that it was there before him at this very moment. There was mystery in this woman's eyes, mystery and something else.

"I don't seem to have come across anything down here which—er—particularly attracts Mrs.—Mrs. Wenham Gardner," Mr. Dowling went on, taking up a little sheaf of papers from the desk. "I thought, perhaps, that the Bryanston Square house might have suited, but it seems that it is too small, far too small. Mrs. Gardner is used to entertaining, and has explained to me that she has a great many friends always coming and going from the other side of the water. She requires, apparently, twelve bedrooms, besides servants' quarters."

"Your list is scarcely up to date, sir," Tavernake reminded him. "If the rent is of no particular object, there is Grantham House."

Mr. Dowling's face was suddenly illuminated.

"Grantham House!" he exclaimed. "Precisely! Now I declare that it had absolutely slipped my memory for the moment—only for the moment, mind—that we have just had placed upon our books one of the most desirable mansions in the West End of London. A most valued client, too, one whom we are most anxious to oblige. Dear, dear me! It is very fortunate—very fortunate, indeed, that I happened to think of it, especially as it seems that no one had had the sense to place it upon my list. Tavernake, get the plans at once and show them to—er—to Mrs. Gardner."

Tavernake crossed the room in silence, opened a drawer, and returned with a stiff roll of papers, which he spread carefully out in front of this unexpected client. She spoke then for the first time since he had entered the room. Her voice was low and marvelously sweet. There was very little of the American accent about it; but something in the intonation, especially toward the end of her sentences, was just a trifle un-English.

"Where is this Grantham House?" she inquired.

"Within a stone's throw of Grosvenor Square," Tavernake answered briskly. "It is really one of the most central spots in the West End. If you will allow me!"

For the next few minutes he was very fluent indeed. With pencil in hand, he explained the plans, dwelt on the advantages of the location, and from the very reserve of his praise created an impression that the house he was describing was the one absolutely perfect domicile in the whole of London.

"Can I look over the place?" she asked, when he had finished.

"By all means," Mr. Dowling declared, "by all means. I was on the point of suggesting it. It will be by far the most satisfactory proceeding. You will not be disappointed, my dear madam, I can assure you."

"I should like to do so, if I may, without delay," she said.

"There is no opportunity like the present," Mr. Dowling replied. "If you will permit me," he added, rising, "it will give me the greatest pleasure to escort you personally. My engagements for the rest of the day happen to be unimportant. Tavernake, let me have the keys of the rooms that are locked up. The caretaker, of course, is there in possession."

The beautiful visitor rose to her feet, and even that slight movement was accomplished with a grace unlike anything which Tavernake had ever seen before.

"I could not think of troubling you so far, Mr. Dowling," she protested. "It is not in the least necessary for you to come yourself. Your manager can, perhaps, spare me a few minutes. He seems to be so thoroughly posted in all the details," she added apologetically, as she noticed the cloud on Mr. Dowling's brow.

"Just as you like, of course," he declared. "Mr. Tavernake can go, by all means. Now I come to think of it, it certainly would be inconvenient for me

to be away from the office for more than a few minutes. Mr. Tavernake has all the details at his fingers' ends, and I only hope, Mrs. Gardner, that he will be able to persuade you to take the house. Our client," he added, with a bow, "would, I am sure, be delighted to hear that we had secured for him so distinguished a tenant."

She smiled at him, a delightful mixture of graciousness and condescension.

"You are very good," she answered. "The house sounds rather large for me, but it depends so much upon circumstances. If you are ready, Mr.——"

"Tavernake," he told her.

"Mr. Tavernake," she continued, "my car is waiting outside, and we might go on at once."

He bowed and held open the door for her, an office which he performed a little awkwardly. Mr. Dowling himself escorted her out onto the pavement. Tavernake stopped behind to get his hat, and, passing out a moment afterward, would have seated himself in front beside the chauffeur but that she held the door of the car open and beckoned to him.

"Will you come inside, please?" she insisted. "There are one or two questions which I might ask you as we go along. Please direct the chauffeur."

He obeyed without a word. The car glided off. As they swung round the first corner, she leaned forward from among the cushions of her seat and looked at him. Then Tavernake was conscious of new things. As though by inspiration, he knew that her visit to the office of Messrs. Dowling, Spence & Co. had been no chance one. She remembered him, remembered him as the companion of Beatrice during that strange, brief meeting. It was an incomprehensible world this, into which he had wandered. The woman's face had lost her languid, gracious expression. There was something there almost akin to tragedy. Her fingers fell upon his arm, and her touch was no light one. She was gripping him almost fiercely.

"Mr. Tavernake," she said, "I have a memory for faces which seldom fails me. I have seen you before quite lately. You remember where, of course. Tell me the truth quickly, please."

The words seemed to leap from her lips. Beautiful and young though she undoubtedly was, her intense seriousness had suddenly aged her face. Tavernake was bewildered. He, too, was conscious of a curious emotional disturbance.

"The truth? What truth do you mean?" he demanded.

"It was you whom I saw with Beatrice."

"You saw me one night about three weeks ago," he admitted slowly. "I was in a chemist's shop in the Strand. You were signing his book for a sleeping draft, I think."

She shivered all over.

"Yes, yes!" she cried. "Of course I remember all about it. The young lady who was with you—what was she doing there? Where is she now?"

"The young lady was my sister," Tavernake answered stiffly.

Mrs. Wenham Gardner looked, for a moment, as though she would have struck him.

"You need not lie to me!" she exclaimed. "It is not worth while. Tell me where you met her, why you were with her at all in that intimate fashion, and where she is now."

Tavernake realized at once that, so far as this woman was concerned, the fable of his relationship with Beatrice was hopeless. She knew!

"Madam," he replied, "I made the acquaintance of the young lady with whom I was that evening at the boarding house where we both lived."

"What were you doing in the chemist's shop?" she demanded.

"The young lady had been ill," he proceeded deliberately, wondering how much to tell. "She had been taken very ill indeed. She was just recovering when you entered."

"Where is she now?" the woman asked eagerly. "Is she still at that boarding house of which you spoke?"

"No," he answered.

Her fingers gripped his arm once more.

"Why do you answer me always in monosyllables? Don't you understand that you must tell me everything that you know about her? You must tell me where I can find her at once."

Tavernake remained silent. The woman's voice had still that note of wonderful sweetness, but she had altogether lost her air of complete and aristocratic indifference. She was a very altered person now from the distinguished client who had first enlisted his services. For some reason or other, he knew that she was suffering from a terrible anxiety.

"I am not sure," he said at last, "whether I can do as you ask."

"What do you mean?" she exclaimed sharply.

"The young lady," he continued, "seemed, on the occasion to which you have referred, to be particularly anxious to avoid recognition. She hurried out of the place without speaking to you, and she has avoided the subject ever since. I do not know what her motives may have been, but I think that I should like to ask her first before I tell you where she is to be found."

Mrs. Wenham Gardner leaned toward him. It was certainly the first time that a woman in her apparent rank of life had looked upon Tavernake in such a manner. Her forehead was a little wrinkled, her lips were parted, her eyes were pathetically, delightfully eloquent.

"Mr. Tavernake, you must not—you must not refuse me," she pleaded. "If you only knew the importance of it, you would not hesitate for a moment. This is no idle curiosity on my part. I have reasons, very serious reasons indeed, for wishing to discover that poor girl's whereabouts at once. There is a possible danger of which she must be warned. No one can do it except myself."

"Are you her friend or her enemy?" Tavernake asked.

"Why do you ask such a question?" she demanded.

"I am only going by her expression when she saw you come into the chemist's shop."

"It is a cruel suggestion that," the woman cried. "I wish to be her friend; I am her friend. If I could only tell you everything, you would understand at once what a terrible situation, what a hideous quandary I am in."

Once more Tavernake paused for a few moments. He was never a quick thinker, and the situation was certainly an embarrassing one for him.

"Madam," he replied at length, "I beg that you will tell me nothing. The young lady of whom you have spoken permits me to call myself her friend, and what she has not told me herself I do not wish to learn from others. I will tell her of this meeting with you, and if it is her desire, I will bring you her address myself within a few hours. I cannot do more than that."

Her face was suddenly cold and hard.

"You mean that you will not!" she exclaimed angrily. "You are obstinate. I do not know how you dare to refuse what I ask."

The car had come to a standstill. He stepped out onto the pavement.

"This is Grantham House, madam," he announced. "Will you descend?"

He heard her draw a quick breath between her teeth, and he caught a gleam in her eyes which made him feel vaguely uneasy. She was very angry indeed.

"I do not think that it is necessary for me to do so," she said frigidly. "I do not like the look of the house at all. I do not believe that it will suit me."

"At least, now that you are here," he protested, "you will, if you please, go over it. I should like you to see the ballroom. The decorations are supposed to be quite exceptional."

She hesitated for a moment, and then, with a slight shrug of the shoulders, she yielded. There was a note in his tone not exactly insistent, and yet dominant, a note which she obeyed, although secretly she wondered at herself for doing so. They passed inside the house, and she followed him from room to room, leaving him to do all the talking. She seemed very little interested, but every now and then she asked a languid question.

"I do not think that it is in the least likely to suit me," she decided at last. "It is all very magnificent, of course, but I consider that the rent is exorbitant."

Tavernake regarded her thoughtfully.

"I believe," he said, "that our client might be disposed to consider some reduction, in the event of your seriously entertaining taking the house. If you like, I will see him on the subject. I feel sure that the amount I have mentioned could be reduced, if the other conditions were satisfactory."

"There would be no harm in your doing so," she assented. "How soon can you come and let me know?"

"I might be able to call you up this evening; certainly to-morrow morning," he answered.

She shook her head.

"I will not use the telephone," she declared. "I only allow it in my rooms under protest. You must come and tell me what your client says. When can you see him?"

"It is doubtful whether I shall be able to find him this evening," he replied. "It would probably be to-morrow morning."

"You might go and try at once," she suggested.

He was a little surprised.

"You are really interested in the matter, then?" he inquired.

"Yes, yes," she told him, "of course I am interested. I want you to come and see me directly you have heard. It is important. Supposing you are able to find your client to-night, shall you have seen the young lady before then?"

"I am afraid not," he answered.

"You must try," she begged, laying her fingers upon his shoulder. "Mr. Tavernake, do please try. You can't realize what all this anxiety means to me. I am not at all well, and I am seriously worried about—about that young lady. I tell you that I must have an interview with her. It is not for my sake so much as hers. She must be warned."

"Warned?" Tavernake repeated. "I really don't understand."

"Of course you don't!" she exclaimed impatiently. "Why should you understand? I don't want to offend you, Mr. Tavernake," she went on hurriedly. "I would like to treat you quite frankly. It really isn't your place to make difficulties like this. What is this young lady to you that you should presume to consider yourself her guardian?"

"She is a boarding-house acquaintance," Tavernake confessed; "nothing more."

"Then why did you tell me, only a moment ago, that she was your sister?" Mrs. Gardner demanded.

Tavernake threw open the door before which they had been standing.

"This," he said, "is the famous dancing gallery. Lord Clumber is quite willing to allow the pictures to remain, and I may tell you that they are insured for over sixty thousand pounds. There is no finer dancing room than this in all London."

Her eyes swept around it carelessly.

"I have no doubt," she admitted coldly, "that it is very beautiful. I prefer to continue our discussion."

"The dining room," he went on, "is almost as large. Lord Clumber tells us that he has frequently entertained eighty guests for dinner. The system of ventilation in this room is, as you see, entirely modern."

She took him by the arm and led him to a seat at the farther end of the apartment.

"Mr. Tavernake," she said, making an obvious attempt to control her temper, "you seem like a very sensible young man, if you will allow me to say so, and I want to convince you that it is your duty to answer my questions. In the first place—don't be offended, will you?—but I cannot possibly see what interest you and that young lady can have in one another. You belong, to put it baldly, to altogether different social stations, and it is not easy to imagine what you could have in common."

She paused, but Tavernake had nothing to say. His gift of silence amounted sometimes almost to genius. She leaned so close to him while she waited in vain for his reply that the ermine about her

neck brushed his cheek. The perfume of her clothes and hair, the pleading of her deep violet-blue eyes, all helped to keep him tongue-tied. Nothing of this sort had ever happened to him before. He did not in the least understand what it could possibly mean.

"I am speaking to you now, Mr. Tavernake," she continued earnestly, "for your own good. When you tell the young lady, as you have promised to this evening, that you have seen me, and that I am very, very anxious to find out where she is, she will very likely go down on her knees and beg you to give me no information whatever about her. She will do her best to make you promise to keep us apart. And yet that is all because she does not understand. Believe me, it is better that you should tell me the truth. You cannot know her very well, Mr. Tavernake; but she is not very wise, that young lady. She is very obstinate, and she has some strange ideas. It is not well for her that she should be left in the world alone. You must see that for yourself, Mr. Tavernake."

"She seems a very sensible young lady," he declared slowly. "I should have thought that she would have been old enough to know for herself what she wanted and what was best for her."

The woman at his side wrung her hands with a little gesture of despair.

"Oh, why can't I make you understand!" she exclaimed, the emotion once more quivering in her tone. "How can I—how can I possibly make you believe me? Listen. Something has happened of which she does not know—something terrible. It is absolutely necessary, in her own interests as well as mine, that I see her, and that very shortly."

"I shall tell her exactly what you say," Tavernake answered, apparently unmoved. "Perhaps it would be as well now if we went on to view the sleeping apartments."

"Never mind about the sleeping apartments!" she cried quickly. "You must do more than tell her. You can't believe that I want to bring harm upon any one. Do I look like it? Have I the appearance of a person of evil disposition? You can be that young lady's best friend, Mr. Tavernake, if you will. Take me to her now, this minute. Believe me, if you do that, you will never regret it as long as you live."

Tavernake studied the pattern of the parquet floor for several moments. It was a difficult problem, this. Putting his own extraordinary sensations into the background, he was face to face with something which he did not comprehend, and he disliked the position intensely. After all, delay seemed safest.

"Madam," he protested, "a few hours more or less can make but little difference."

"That is for me to judge!" she exclaimed. "You say that because you do not understand. A few hours may make all the difference in the world."

He shook his head.

"I will tell you exactly what is in my mind," he said deliberately. "The young lady was terrified when she saw you that night accidentally in the chemist's shop. She almost dragged me away; and, although she was almost fainting when we reached the taxicab, her greatest and chief anxiety was that we should get away before you could follow us. I cannot forget this. Until I have received her permission, therefore, to disclose her whereabouts, we will, if you please, speak of something else."

He rose to his feet, and, glancing around, was just in time to see the change in the face of his companion. That eloquently pleading smile had died away from her lips, her teeth were clenched. She looked like a woman struggling hard to control some overwhelming passion. Without the smile her lips seemed hard, even cruel. There were evil things shining out of her eyes. Tavernake felt chilled, almost afraid.

"We will see the rest of the house," she declared coldly.

They went on from room to room. Tavernake, recovering himself rapidly, master of his subject, was fluent and practical. The woman listened, with only a terse remark here and there Once more they stood in the hall.

"Is there anything else you would like to see?" he asked.

"Nothing," she replied. "But there is one thing more I have to say."

He waited in stolid silence.

"Only a week ago," she went on, looking him in the face, "I told a man, who is what you call, I think, an inquiry agent, that I would give a hundred pounds if he could discover that young woman for me within twenty-four hours."

Tavernake started, and the smile came back to the lips of Mrs. Wenham Gardner. After all, perhaps, she had found the way.

"A hundred pounds is a great deal of money," he said thoughtfully.

She shrugged her shoulders.

"Not so very much," she replied. "About a fortnight's rent of this house, Mr. Tavernake."

"Is the offer still open?" he asked.

She looked into his eyes, and her face had once more the beautiful ingenuousness of a child.

"Mr. Tavernake," she said, "the offer is still open. Get into the car with me and drive back to my rooms at the Milan Court, and I will give you a check for a hundred pounds at once. It will be very easily earned, and you may just as well take it, for now I know where you are employed, I could have you followed day by day until I discover for myself what you are so foolishly concealing. Be reasonable, Mr. Tavernake."

Tavernake stood quite still. His arms were folded, he was looking out of the hall window at the smoky vista of roofs and chimneys. From the soles of his ready-made boots to his ill-brushed hair, he was a commonplace young man. A hundred pounds was to him a vast sum of money. It represented a year's strenuous savings, perhaps more.

The woman who watched him imagined that he was hesitating. Tavernake, however, had no such thought in his mind. He stood there instead, wondering what strange thing had come to him that the mention of a hundred pounds, delightful sum though it was, never tempted him for a single second. What this woman had said might be true. She would probably be able to discover the address easily enough without his help. Yet no such reflection seemed to make the least difference. From the days of his earliest boyhood, from the time when he had flung himself into the struggle, money had always meant much to him, money not for its own sake, but as the key to those things which he coveted in life. Yet at that moment something stronger seemed to have asserted itself.

"You will come?" she whispered, passing her arm through his. "We will be there in less than five minutes, and I will write you the check before you tell me anything."

He moved toward the door, indeed; but he drew a little away from her.

"Madam," he said, "I am sorry to seem so obstinate, but I thought I had made you understand some time ago. I do not feel at liberty to tell you anything without that young lady's permission."

"You refuse?" she cried incredulously. "You refuse a hundred pounds?"

He opened the door of the car. He seemed scarcely to have heard her.

"At about eleven o'clock to-morrow morning," he announced, "I shall have the pleasure of calling upon you. I trust that you will have decided to take the house."

CHAPTER VI.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS.

Tavernake sat a few hours later at his evening meal in the tiny sitting room of an apartment house in Chelsea. He wore a black tie; and, although he had not yet aspired to a dinner coat, the details of his person and toilet showed signs of a new attention. Opposite to him was Beatrice.

"Tell me," she asked, as soon as the small maidservant who brought in their first dish had disappeared, "what have you been doing all day? Have you been letting houses or surveying land or bookkeeping, or have you been out to Marston Rise?"

It was her customary question, this. She really took an interest in his work.

"I have been attending a rich American client," he announced; "a compatriot of your own. I went with her to Grantham House in her own motor car. I believe she thinks of taking it."

"American!" Beatrice remarked. "What was her name?"

Tavernake looked up from his plate across the little table, across the bowl of simple flowers which was its sole decoration.

"She called herself Mrs. Wenham Gardner!"

Away like a flash went the new-found peace in the girl's face. She caught at her breath, her fingers gripped the table in front of her. Once more she was as he had known her first—pale, with great, terrified eyes shining out of a haggard face.

"She has been to you," Beatrice gasped, "for a house? You are sure?"

"I am quite sure," Tavernake declared calmly.

"You recognized her?"

He assented gravely.

"It was the woman who stood in the chemist's shop that night signing her name in a book," he said.

He did not apologize in any way for the shock he had given her. He had done it deliberately. From that very first morning, when they had breakfasted together at London Bridge, he had felt that he deserved her confidence, and in a sense it was a grievance with him that she had withheld it.

"Did she recognize you?"

"Yes," he admitted. "I was sent for into the office, and found her there with the chief. I felt sure that she recognized me from the first; and when she agreed to look at Grantham House, she insisted upon it that I should accompany her. While we were in the motor car, she asked me about you. She wished for your address."

"Did you give it to her?" the girl cried breathlessly.

"No. I said that I must consult you first."

She drew a little sigh of relief. Nevertheless, she was looking white and shaken.

"Did she say what she wanted me for?"

"She was very mysterious," Tavernake answered. "She spoke of some danger of which you knew nothing. Before I came away, she offered me a hundred pounds to let her know where you were."

Beatrice laughed softly.

"That is just like Elizabeth," she declared. "You must have made her very angry. When she wants anything, she wants it very badly indeed, and she will never believe that every person has not his price. Money means everything to her. If she had it, she would buy, buy, buy all the time."

"On the face of it," Tavernake remarked soberly, "her offer seemed rather an absurd one. If she is in earnest, if she is really so anxious to discover your whereabouts, she will certainly be able to do so without my help."

"I am not so sure," Beatrice replied. "London is a great hiding place."

"A private detective——" he began.

Beatrice shook her head.

"I do not think," she said, "that Elizabeth will care to employ a private detective. Tell me, have you to see her upon this business again?"

"I am going to her flat at the Milan Court to-morrow morning at eleven o'clock."

Beatrice leaned back in her chair. Presently she recommenced her dinner. She had the air of one to whom a respite has been granted. Tavernake, in a way, began to resent this continued silence of hers. He had certainly hoped that she would at least have gone so far as to explain her anxiety to keep her whereabouts secret.

"You must remember," he went on, after a short pause, "that I am in a somewhat peculiar position with regard to you, Beatrice. I know so little that I do not even know how to answer in your interests such questions as Mrs. Wenham Gardner asked me. I am not complaining, but is this state of absolute ignorance necessary?"

A new thought seemed to come to

Beatrice. She looked at her companion curiously.

"Tell me," she asked, "what did you think of Mrs. Wenham Gardner?"

Tavernake answered deliberately, and after a moment's reflection.

"I thought her," he said, "one of the most beautiful women I have ever seen in my life. That is not saying very much, perhaps; but to me it meant a good deal. She was exceedingly gracious, and her interest in you seemed quite real, and even affectionate. I do not understand why you should wish to hide from such a woman."

"You found her attractive?" Beatrice persisted.

"I found her very attractive, indeed," Tavernake admitted, without hesitation. "She had an air with her. She was quite different from all the women I have ever met at the boarding house or anywhere else. She has a face which reminded me somehow of the Madonnas you took me to see in the National Gallery the other day."

Beatrice shivered slightly. For some reason, his remark seemed to have distressed her.

"I am very, very sorry," she declared, "that Elizabeth ever came to your office. I want you to promise me, Leonard, that you will be careful whenever you are with her."

Tavernake laughed.

"Careful!" he repeated. "She isn't likely to be even courteous to me tomorrow when I tell her that I have seen you and I refuse to give her your address. Careful, indeed! What has a poor clerk in a house agent's office to fear from such a personage?"

The servant had reappeared with their second and last course. For a few moments they spoke of casual subjects. Afterward, however, Tavernake asked a question.

"By the way," he said, "we are hoping to let Grantham House to Mrs. Wenham Gardner. I suppose she must be very wealthy?"

Beatrice looked at him curiously.

"Why do you come to me for information?" she demanded. "I suppose that she brought you references?"

"We haven't quite got to that stage yet," he answered. "Somehow or other, from her manner of talking and general appearance, I do not think that either Mr. Dowling or I doubted her financial position."

"I should never have thought you so credulous a person," remarked Beatrice, with a smile.

Tavernake was genuinely disturbed. His business instincts were aroused.

"Do you really mean that this Mrs. Wenham Gardner is not a person of substance?" he inquired.

Beatrice shrugged her shoulders.

"She is the wife of a man who had the reputation of being very wealthy," she replied. "She has no money of her own, I am sure."

"She still lives with her husband, I suppose?" Tavernake asked.

Beatrice closed her eyes.

"I know very little about her," she declared. "Last time I heard, he had disappeared, gone away, or something of the sort."

"And she has no money," Tavernake persisted, "except what she gets from him? No settlement, even, or anything of that sort?"

"Nothing at all," Beatrice answered.

"This is very bad news," Tavernake remarked, thinking gloomily of his wasted day. "It will be a great disappointment to Mr. Dowling. Why, her motor car was magnificent, and she talked as though money were no object at all. I suppose you are quite sure of what you are saying?"

Beatrice shrugged her shoulders.

"I ought to know," she answered grimly, "for she is my sister."

Tavernake remained quite motionless for a minute without speech; it was his way of showing surprise. When he was sure that he had grasped the import of her words, he spoke again.

"Your sister!" he repeated. "There is a likeness, of course. You are dark and she is fair, but there is a likeness. That would account," he continued, "for her anxiety to find you."

"It also accounts," Beatrice replied, with a little break of the lips, "for my anxiety that she should not find me.

Leonard," she added, touching his hand for a moment with hers, "I wish that I could tell you everything, but there are things behind, things so terrible, that even to you, my dear brother, I could not speak of them."

Tavernake rose to his feet and lit a cigarette—a new habit with him—while Beatrice busied herself with a small coffee-making machine. He sat in an easy-chair and smoked slowly. He was still wearing his ready-made clothes, but his collar was of the fashionable shape, his tie well chosen and neatly adjusted. He seemed somehow to have developed.

"Beatrice," he asked, "what am I to tell your sister to-morrow?"

She shivered as she set his coffee cup down by his side.

"Tell her, if you will, that I am well and not in want," she answered. "Tell her, too, that I refuse to send my address. Tell her that the one aim of my life is to keep the knowledge of my whereabouts a secret from her."

Tavernake relapsed into silence. He was thinking. Mysteries had no attraction for him—he loathed them. Against this one especially he felt a distinct grudge. Nevertheless, some instinct forbade his questioning the girl.

"Apart from more personal matters, then," he asked after some time, "you would not advise me to enter into any business negotiations with this lady?"

"You must not think of it," Beatrice replied firmly. "So far as money is concerned, Elizabeth has no conscience whatever. The things she wants in life she will have somehow; but it is all the time at other people's expense. Some day she will have to pay for it."

Tavernake sighed.

"It is very unfortunate," he declared. "The commission on the letting of Grantham House would have been worth having."

"After all, it is only your firm's loss," she reminded him.

"It does not appeal to me like that," he continued. "So long as I am manager for Dowling & Spence, I feel these things personally. However, that does not matter. I am afraid it is a disagreeable subject for you, and we will not talk about it any longer."

She lit a cigarette with a little gesture of relief. She came once more to his side.

"Leonard," she said, "I know that I am treating you badly in telling you nothing, but it is simply because I do not want to descend to half truths. I should like to tell you all or nothing. At present I cannot tell you all."

"Very well," he replied. "I am quite content to leave it with you to do as you think best."

"Leonard," she continued, "of course you think me unreasonable. I can't help it. There are things between my sister and myself the knowledge of which is a constant nightmare to me. During the last few months of my life it has grown to be a perfect terror. It sent me into hiding at Blenheim House, it reconciled me even to the decision I came to that night on the Embankment. I had decided that sooner than go back, sooner than ask help from her or any one connected with her, I would do what I tried to do the time when you saved my life."

Tavernake looked at her wonderingly. She was, indeed, under the spell of some deep emotion. Her memory seemed to have carried her back into another world, somewhere far away from this dingy little sitting room which they two were sharing together, back into a world where life and death were matters of small moment, where the great passions were unchained, and men and women moved among the naked things of life. Almost he felt the thrill of it. It was something new to him, the touch of a magic finger upon his eyelids. Then the moment passed, and he was himself again, matter of fact, prosaic.

"Let us dismiss the subject finally," he said. "I must see your sister on business to-morrow, but it shall be for the last time."

"I think," she murmured, "that you will be wise."

He crossed the room and returned with a newspaper.

"I saw your music in the hall as I came in," he remarked. "Are you singing to-night?"

The question was entirely in his ordinary tone. It brought her back to the world of everyday things as nothing else could have done.

"Yes; isn't it luck?" she told him. "Three in one week. I only heard an hour ago."

"A city dinner?" he inquired.

"Something of the sort," she replied. "I am to be at the Whitehall Rooms at ten o'clock. If you are tired, Leonard, please let me go alone. I really do not mind. I can get a bus to the door, there and back again."

"I am not tired," he declared. "To tell you the truth, I scarcely know what it is to be tired. I shall go with you, of course."

She looked at him with a momentary admiration of his powerful frame, his strong, forceful face.

"It seems too bad," she remarked, "after a long day's work to drag you out again."

He smiled.

"I really like to come," he assured her. "Besides," he added, after a moment's pause, "I like to hear you sing."

"I wonder if you mean that?" she asked, looking at him curiously. "I have watched you once or twice when I have been singing to you. Do you really care for it?"

"Certainly I do. How can you doubt it? I do not understand music, or anything of that sort, of course, any more than I do the pictures you take me to see, and some of the books you talk about. There are lots of things I can't get the hang of entirely; but they all leave a sort of pleasure behind. One feels it even if one only half appreciates."

She came over to his chair.

"I am glad," she said, a little wistfully, "that there is one thing I do which you like."

He looked at her reprovingly.

"My dear Beatrice," he said, "I often wish I could make you understand how extraordinarily helpful and useful to me you have been."

"Tell me in what way," she begged.

"You have given me," he assured her, "an insight into many things in life which I had found most perplexing. You see, you have traveled and I haven't. You have mixed with all classes of people, and I have gone steadily on in one groove. You have told me many things which I shall find very useful indeed later on."

"Dear me," she laughed, "you are making me quite conceited!"

"Anyhow," he replied, "I don't want you to look upon me, Beatrice, in any way as a benefactor. I am much more comfortable here than at the boarding house, and it is costing no more money, especially since you began to get those singing engagements. By the way, hadn't you better go and get ready?"

She smothered a sigh as she turned away and went slowly upstairs. To all appearance, no person who ever breathed was more ordinary than this strong-featured, self-centered young man who had put out his arm and snatched her from the maelstrom. Yet it seemed to her that there was something almost unnatural about his unapproachability. She was convinced that he was entirely honest, not only with regard to his actual relations toward her, but with regard to all his purposes. Her sex did not even seem to exist for him. The fact that she was good-looking, and with her renewed health daily becoming more so, seemed to be of no account to him whatever.

He showed interest in her appearance sometimes; but it was interest of an entirely impersonal sort. He simply expressed himself as satisfied or dissatisfied, as a matter of taste. It came to her at that moment that she had never seen him really relax. Only when he sat opposite to that great map which hung now in the farther room, and wandered about from section to section with a pencil in one hand and a piece of rubber in another, did he show anything which in any way approached enthusiasm; and even then it was always the unmistakable enthusiasm born of dead things. Suddenly she laughed at herself in the little mirror, laughed softly but heartily. This was the guardian whom fate had sent for her! If Elizabeth had only understood!

CHAPTER VII.

MR. PRITCHARD, OF NEW YORK.

Later in the evening, Beatrice and Tavernake traveled together in a motor omnibus from their rooms at Chelsea to Northumberland Avenue. Tavernake was getting quite used to the program by now. They sat in a dimly lit waiting room until the time came for Beatrice to sing. Every now and then an excitable little person who was the secretary to some institution or other would run in and offer them refreshments, and tell them in what order they were to appear. To-night there was no departure from the ordinary course of things, except that there was slightly more stir. The dinner was a larger one than usual. It came to Beatrice's turn very soon after their arrival; and Tavernake, squeezing his way a few steps into the dining room, stood with the waiters against the wall. He looked with curious eyes upon a scene with which he had no manner of sympathy.

A hundred or so of men had dined together in the cause of some charity. The odor of their dinner, mingled with the more aromatic perfume of the tobacco smoke which was already ascending in little blue clouds from the various tables, hung about the overheated room, seeming, indeed, the fitting atmosphere for the long rows of guests. The majority of them were in a state of expansiveness. Their faces were redder than when they had sat down; a certain stiffness had departed from their shirt fronts and their manners; their faces were flushed, their eyes watery.

There were a few exceptions—paler-faced men who sat there with the air of endeavoring to bring themselves into accord with surroundings in which they had no real concern. Two of these looked up with interest at the first note of Beatrice's song. The one was sitting within a few places of the chairman; and he was too far away for his little start to be noticed by either Tavernake or Beatrice. The nearer one, however, Tavernake happened to be watching; and he saw the change in his expression. The man was, in his way, ugly. His face was certainly not a good one, although he did not appear to share the immediate weaknesses of his neighbors. To every note of the song he listened intently. When it was over, he rose and came toward Tavernake.

"I beg your pardon," he said, "but did I not see you come in with the young lady who has just been singing?"

"You may have," Tavernake answered. "I certainly did come with her."

"May I ask if you are related to her?"

Tavernake had got over his hesitation in replying to such questions by now. He answered promptly.

"I am her brother," he declared.

The man produced a card.

"Please introduce me to her," he begged laconically.

"Why should I?" Tavernake asked. "I have no reason to suppose that she desires to know you."

The man stared at him for a moment, and then laughed.

"Well," he said, "you had better show your sister my card. She is, I presume, a professional, as she is singing here. My desire to make her acquaintance is purely actuated by business motives."

Tavernake moved away toward the waiting room. The man, who according to his card was Mr. Sidney Grier, would have followed him in, but Tavernake stopped him.

"If you will wait here," he suggested, "I will see whether my sister desires to meet you."

Once more Mr. Sidney Grier looked surprised; but, after a second glance at Tavernake, he accepted his suggestion, and remained outside. Tavernake took the card to Beatrice.

"Beatrice," he announced, "there is a man outside who has heard you sing and who wants to be introduced."

She took the card, and her eyes opened wide.

"Do you know who he is?" Tavernake asked.

"Of course," she answered. "He is a great producer of musical comedies. Let me think."

She stood with the card in her hand. Some one else was singing now—an or-

dinary modern ballad of love and roses, rapture and despair. They heard the rising and falling of the woman's voice; the clatter of the dinner had ceased. Beatrice stood still, thinking, her fingers clenching the card of Mr. Sidney Grier.

"You must bring him in," she said to Tavernake finally.

Tavernake went outside.

"My sister will see you," he remarked, with the air of one who brings good news.

Mr. Sidney Grier grunted. He was not used to being kept waiting, even for a second. Tavernake ushered him into the retiring room, and the other two musicians who were there stared at him as at a god.

"This is the gentleman whose card you have, Beatrice," Tavernake announced. "Mr. Sidney Grier—Miss Tavernake."

The man smiled.

"Your brother seems to be suspicious of me," he declared. "I found it quite difficult to persuade him that you might find it interesting to talk to me for a few minutes."

"He does not quite understand," Beatrice answered. "He has not much experience of musical affairs or the stage, and your name would not have any significance for him."

Tavernake went outside and listened idly to the song which was proceeding. It was a class of music which secretly he preferred to the stranger and more haunting notes of Beatrice's melodies. Apparently the audience was of his opinion, for they received it with a vociferous encore, to which the young lady generously replied with a music-hall song about "A French lady from over the water."

Toward the close of the applause which marked the conclusion of this effort, Tavernake felt himself touched lightly upon the arm. He turned round. By his side was standing the other dinner guest who had shown some interest in Beatrice. He was a man apparently of about forty years of age, tall and broad-shouldered, with black mustache and dark, piercing eyes. Unlike most of the guests, he wore a short dinner coat and black tie, from which, and his slight accent, Tavernake concluded that he was probably an American.

"Say—you'll forgive my speaking to you," he said, touching Tavernake on the arm. "My name is Pritchard. I saw you come in with the young lady who was singing a few minutes ago, and if you won't consider it a liberty, I'll be very glad indeed if you'll answer me one question."

Tavernake stiffened insensibly.

"It depends upon the question," he replied shortly.

"Well, it's about the young lady, and that's a fact," Mr. Pritchard admitted. "I see that her name upon the program is given as Miss Tavernake. I was seated at the other end of the room, but she seemed to me remarkably like a young lady from the other side of the Atlantic, whom I am very anxious to meet."

"Perhaps you will kindly put your question in plain words," Tavernake said.

"Why, that's easy," Mr. Pritchard declared. "Is Miss Tavernake really her name, or an assumed one? I expect it's the same over here as in my country—a singer very often sings under another name than her own, you know," he added, noting Tavernake's gathering frown.

"The young lady in question is my sister, and I do not care to discuss her with strangers," Tavernake announced.

Mr. Pritchard nodded pleasantly.

"Why, of course, that ends the matter," he remarked. "Sorry to have troubled you, anyway."

He strolled off back to his seat, and Tavernake returned thoughtfully to the dressing room. He found Beatrice alone and waiting for him.

"You've got rid of that fellow, then?" he inquired.

Beatrice assented.

"Yes; he didn't stay very long," she replied.

"Who was he?" Tavernake asked curiously.

"From a musical comedy point of view," she said, "he was the most important person in London. He is the

emperor of stageland. He can make the fortune of any girl in London who is reasonably good-looking and who can sing and dance ever so little."

"What did he want with you?" Tavernake demanded suspiciously.

"He asked me whether I would like to go upon the stage. What do you think about it, Leonard?"

Tavernake, for some reason or other, was displeased.

"Would you earn much more money than by singing at these dinners?" he asked.

"Very—very much more," she assured him.

"And you would like the life?"

She laughed softly.

"Why not? It isn't so bad. I was on the stage in New York for some time under much worse conditions."

He remained silent for a few minutes. They had made their way into the street now and were waiting for an omnibus.

"What did you tell him?" he asked abruptly.

She was looking down toward the Embankment, her eyes filled once more with the things which he could not understand.

"I have told him nothing yet," she murmured.

"You would like to accept?"

She nodded.

"I am not sure," she replied. "If only—I dared!"

TO BE CONTINUED.

The continuation of this story will be published two weeks hence, in the February Month-end POPULAR, on sale January 25th.

BELASCO'S FLOWERY APOLOGY

DAVID BELASCO, who bows with such modesty before the curtain calls that greet the presentation of his dramatic successes, occasionally loses his temper during rehearsals of plays, and when he gets angry he does the thing up brown. For the time being, there isn't a peaceful thought in his fertile brain. When he began the rehearsals of "Sweet Kitty Bellairs," Miss Henrietta Crosman, the star of the piece, warned him that he must not scold her.

A few days before the first public production, however, Belasco broke out in one of his fine tempers, and Miss Crosman, with head in the air, left the stage and the theater. She was walking rapidly up the street when she heard the rush of footsteps behind her. Turning around, she saw the manager, with his arms full of flowers. These he held out to her imploringly.

This tribute effected a reconciliation. On the way back to the theater the star noticed a flower stand completely denuded of its stock. Belasco, in his pursuit of the fleeing actress, had bought all the flowers in sight.

THE SHOES OF A MILLIONAIRE

WHEN it comes to wearing fine shoes, John D. Rockefeller surpasses all the opera queens of modern times. The Standard Oil magnate is a connoisseur in footwear, and has so many pairs of boots, slippers, and shoes that he cannot possibly put them all under his bed. He has them made to order by a Cleveland shoemaker, and regards the leather goods as his one real extravagance. Whenever he has nothing else to do, he puts in an order for shoes, and, if they do not suit him in every particular, he sends them back to the shop.

A Real Square Guy

By William Slavens McNutt

Author of "Modest," "His Brothers," Etc.

Everybody appreciates "squareness." Here old Charley Nelson, the Alaskan gambler, tells of a man who "played square to what his common sense figgered out wuz a man's game"

OLD Charley Nelson, the gambler, sat at one of the poker tables in the Mecca, in Ketchikan, Alaska, reading a week-old Seattle *Times*. At a small side table two longshoremen wrangled listlessly over a game of "coon-can." At another Dick Hesler gnawed his grizzled mustache angrily as he repeatedly failed to win at solitaire. A sudden exclamation from old Charley suspended operations.

"Well, well," he drawled. "Dave Henderson's dead! You knowed Dave in Valdez, Dick?"

"Yep."

Charley read slowly from the paper:

"Dave Henderson, the well-known mining man who struck it rich in the Kuskokwim country, passed away yesterday at his home at Green Lake. Mr. Henderson was a graduate of Yale, and was well known in the North a few years ago. He leaves a wife and four children."

Old Charley dropped the paper, and stared reminiscently into his pipe bowl.

"One real square guy, him," he drawled dreamily. "Yes, sir! One real square guy!"

"Y-e-e-e-e-s?" Dick questioned. "They's them 'd argy it with ye."

"Nope!" said Charley. "They c'n fight it with me. Anybody knocks old Dave from now on c'n git a raise out o' me first whack! I know the talk ye mean—but he wuz square.

"He wa'n't one o' these slob-hearted, sieve-eyed suckers that git a rush o' rain to the face ever' time some barrel-house bum sticks 'em up with a hard-luck yarn fer the price o' the eats an' a snootful. Not him! He played square to what his common sense figgered out wuz a man's game.

"A guy come's through with a gamblin' debt, an' his wife needin' shoes, an' we call him square! He sweetens the hat with a nice piece o' change when it's passed fer some old sport the booze 'as landed, an' his kids wear his old clothes, cut down, to pay fer it, an' we call him square.

"Square! Yah! Say, me that's trained with the counterfeits, I can spot 'em marked 'Genuine' in the middle o' the deck, an' I tip my Stetson to this Dave person.

"He's fell over the Big Hump now, an'——"

He filled his pipe and lit it carefully. "This Dave party," he drawled on, "I met him first winter o' nineteen ——, in Valdez, where him an' his pardner's winterin'. I'm dealin' faro in the Alaskan there. This pardner o' hisn goes agin' the bank right often, an' Dave watches him some, so I git to know him.

"'Never see you buckin' the game none,' I sez to him one day's we sit in the hotel talkin'. 'Y'ever go agin' it?'

"'Not the bank,' he sez. 'But poker—yum, yum!' he kind o' laughs a mite. 'Me an' Bruce'—that's his pardner—'we took four years o' that together at Yale,' he sez, 'an' I sure did learn to love my study! Yes, sir!' he sez, 'they's only three things I like better'n a game o' draw,' he sez, 'a wife an' two kids.'

"'Ye don't think they mingle friendly

in a man's mind, huh?' I sez. 'Yer pardner don't seem bothered that way none.'

"I didn't hanker a whole lot to this pard o' his, an' I reckon I must o' showed it some in my talk.

"'Never mind him,' he snaps at me, sour like. 'He c'n afford it. You deal him a straight game, an' don't worry what he's bothered about.'

"He wuz awful touchy that way. Him an' this Bruce party'd trained together in one o' them college places back East when they wuz younger, an' they wuz sure some thick.

"Come spring o' that year a prospector I knows dropped his whole roll on the bank, an' got nothin' to outfit on. He throws the hooks into me with a line o' gab about a claim that he's got located back on the Susitna, that looks like an acre o' yeller jaundice, it's that rotten with the dust! He'll deed me the half o' this gold farm an' lead me to it fer a grubstake; an' me, havin' a soft berth with a fat per cent in the game I'm dealin', an' the cutest little bank roll, that'd come when I whistled, that I'd ever snapped a band around, why, I'm nutty with the good luck, an' I fall fer this bunk.

"We git together the dogs an' grub, an' hit fer nature.

"We're four months gittin' to where this bonanza ain't. I'm wise to the bluff six weeks out, but I'm that sore at fallin' fer such a whiskered graft, I stick to spite myself.

"I figgered we might hit somep'n at that. We wuz goin' it jest fool blind enough.

"Come late in August, this cyclone liar that's with me wraps his midriff around the last pint o' our whisky on the sly, to steady his legs fer a trip across a bad piece o' ice on a glacier we come to, an' time I git across I'm shy somebody to talk to, three dogs, one sledge, an' a dern sight better'n half the grub. Say, they wa'n't no bottom to that crevasse! I reckon you scratch China ten foot deep in the right spot, you find that guy where he come through.

"Me, I'm two months o' the busiest kind o' mushin' from any place where two-legged things mussed up the scenery; I got scant grub fer a month, one sledge, two dogs, a six-gun, an' a hankerin 'to live a while.

"Six weeks later I'm five days' husky hikin' from the nearest road house on the Valdez trail; I got my sledge, one dog, an' what part o' one hind leg o' the other 't I ain't eat fer breakfast. Then the blizzard hits me, an' I know I'm dead, but I keep on a-hikin' fer pure cussedness. That's the time my ornery contrariness got me somep'n.

"I'm pumpin' along through the snow, figgerin' on which side er my back I'd rather die on, an' all of a sudden my Malemute howls, an' I look up at the roof of a shack stickin' out of a drift, an' sparks is flyin' from the chimbly.

"Dave Henderson, he opens the door fer me. First off I looked at him I located my gun. I needed that there Malemute o' mine, an' I knowed Dave did, too.

"'Grub?' sez 'e, soon's ever the door's shut on us.

"I jest fish out that there chawed dog's leg, an' holds her up, an' he nods kind o' tired, an' sort o' hunches his shoulders.

"Bruce, he's a-layin' on a bunk by the stove, half propped up 'th some sacks; they wuz a leather poke o' gold dust in his lap, an' he wuz wigglin' his fingers round in it, an' yammerin' away like a hop-head with a whole skinful o' smoke.

"'Sick,' sez Dave. 'I dunno what it is. Fever o' some sort. We hit it rich,' he sez, 'an' we stayed in too long tryin' to make a big clean-up. Just had grub enough to make it out. He went bad here—I dunno—five, six, seven days ago. One can o' beans an' a half o' cup o' flour left.'

"'I'll halve the dog with ye if there's any chance fer me to make a get-away inside o' twenty-four hours,' I sez. 'We'll knife him to-morrow.'

"I set down by the stove, plumb dead fer sleep, an' scared to close my eyes. Hungry men's queer, the best of 'em.

"By an' by Dave looks at me funny, an' shakes his head. 'Nothin' doin',

Charley,' he sez. 'I ain't that kind. Turn in an' sleep.'

"I take one fair squint at him, an' roll over on the floor, dead to the world, an' peaceful. I ain't been tryin' to outguess men across the poker table thirty year fer nothin'! I knowed he wuz square.

"It's the dog wakes me up. He's got his nose at the door crack, an' howlin' sweet Jemima!

"'Mebbe somebody stalled outside,' I sez to Dave. 'Better open up.'

"Dave he swings open the door, an' —swo-o-o-osh! That there Malemute he's gone like a fly down a frog's throat! They're cunnin', them dogs. He knowed he wuz due to imitate ham an' eggs.

"Dave shut the door, an' stood lookin' at me. 'That's all,' he sez, 'fer us. The storm's lettin' up, an' you got part o' that leg left. You may git through.'

"'Can't ye git him started, Dave?' I sez, noddin' to Bruce, mutterin' away in his sleep. 'Might's well blow up in a snow bank makin' a try 's to sit here an' wait fer it.'

"'Nope!' he sez. 'No use. He can't git up. Legs won't work.'

"'Say, look-a-here, Dave,' I sez to him. 'You got that can o' beans. Your chance's jest as good as mine to git through. Nothin' in stayin' here to go out with him. Whyn't you——'

"'Why, you durn fool, you!' he yells at me. 'Think I'd leave my pardner? Him? Why, you——'

"''Scuse me, Charley,' he sez, simmerin' down sudden. 'I know you meant right but I couldn't leave him. Why, him an' me's been—— Oh, I couldn't, that's all.

"'They's one chance in a million here,' he goes on, after a bit, 'long's I'm here to keep the fire agoin' we may last four er five days yit, an' some stray outfit with grub might stumble onto us.'

"By an' by he begun talkin' o' the wife an' kids.

"'They ain't got more'n enough money to last 'em through till summer,' he sez. 'The boy's the oldest, an' he's only seven. Poor little woman! She ain't got a soul in the world to turn to. That's tough! Just when I've hit it right.'

"Pretty soon he speaks up sudden.

"'Charley,' he sez, 'I'm gonna give ye directions to that claim we located. There's a good hundred thousand there for the sluicin'. Take half, an' split with the missus.'

"'I'll do it,' I sez.

"'I believe ye will, Charley,' he sez, slow, lookin' at me hard. 'But it's tough goin' out, with yer wife an' family's livin' hangin' on the word of a gambler ye only half know.'

"We set fer an hour, waiting fer the storm to let up enough fer me to mush, an' goin' over the map he drawed out fer me.

"Then this Bruce party he wakes up loonier'n ever, an' starts blabbin' away.

"'We hit 'er at last, hey, Davey, old horse?' he sez, laughin' hard. 'Hit 'er right, hey? I guess I won't make up for these years up here when I git back? I guess I won't rip some floor out o' hell! What? Broadway! Hey, Davey? Broadway! I guess I won't turn the old alley upside down an' spank it! Champagne, old pal! An' girls! Ah, say, girls! 'Member them two juicy peaches from the Chattering Magpie we met when we wuz down to the big town fer Christmas senior year? Hey? Aw, say, Davey, old horse, too bad you're spliced, with all this roll to go through! Too bad, Davey! Ah, say! Girls? I'll buy me the Waldorf an' stock it with 'em!'

"An' he goes ramblin' on like that fer half an hour.

"Dave he sets quiet, not payin' much 'tention, seems like. Bruce's jest beginnin 'to run down when Dave gits up an' goes to the door.

"'Mos' stopped,' he sez.

"He goes to one corner, an digs out his parkay an' snowshoes, slips into 'em, an' rams the can o' beans into his pack. Then he goes over, an' sets down by the bunk, an' takes a-holt o' the other guy's hand.

"'Bruce!' he sez. I jumped a foot when he spoke.

"'Twa'n't loud, but A'mighty! I

never hear a man mean so much in one word!

"It busted that loony spell o' Bruce's like ye'd bust an' eggshell with a trip hammer. He bats his eyes hard, an' looks out of 'em sensible.

"'Oh! Hello!' he sez.

"'Bruce,' Dave goes on, steady as a clock, an' awful gentle, 'old pal, I'm goin' to leave ye.'

"Bruce don't answer none, jest looks at him, but ye c'n tell by his eyes he knows what he's heard all proper. Dave goes on, strokin' his hand:

"'It jest come over me, Bruce; I been seein' things backward. It's the wife an' kids, old pal. I'm all they got, an' I been throwin' them up to stick to you. You're the best friend I got, but, Bruce, old son, ye ain't worth it! They ain't no man worth it! I got to leave ye, old pal. There's mighty small chance fer me to make it through as it is; we'll both be the same in a couple o' days, 'most like. Will ye—give me a good word to go on, Bruce?'

"'Goin' to leave me, hey?' this Bruce party sez. "All right, ye black-hearted —— ——! Go ahead!' An' he turns his face to the wall.

"'I'm sorry, old son,' Dave goes on, gentle. 'I hoped ye'd give me a lift on this. I got the heavy end, old pal. You'll be through with it all pretty quick. If I don't make it out I'll die in a snow bank, feelin' like a dirty cur, an' if I do git away I'll live out the rest o' my life feelin' like I done wrong! But that ain't it, pal. It's the wife an' kids, an' we ain't neither one of us worth them! Lives er feelin's! I know I'm right, but I'll never be able to see it that way if I git out. You know I'm right, son; they's nobody lookin' to you. Won't ye give me the lift of a good word to go on?'

"Bruce don't answer none. Jest lays quiet.

"'Here's yer gun, old pal,' Dave sez, layin' it in the bunk alongside o' him. 'Mebbe—mebbe you'll want it.'

"'I ain't got the nerve!' the other guy mumbles, 'thout turnin' his head. 'You know I ain't.'

"Dave don't say nothin' fer a minute. Then he speaks up, an' his voice is shakin' fer the first time.

"'Old pal,' he sez, 'if ye—if ye want me to——'

"'Go on, you devil!' the feller in the bunk yells. 'If ye're goin', go!'

"'Come on, Charley,' Dave sez, an' we hit the trail. We ain't made two hundred yards, an' he stops.

"'He *ain't* got the nerve, Charley,' he sez. 'He ain't got it! I know him. The fire'll go out, an'——' he shakes his head. 'That ain't square!' he sez. He stands lookin' out over the snow fer a bit, an' all of a sudden takes an awful big breath.

"'Mush on, Charley,' he sez. 'I'll ketch up with ye.'

"I didn't hear nothin' in the next ten minutes. Not me. My ears was plugged. By an' by Dave makes up 'th me, an' we mush on. If I'd knowed what that trip wuz goin' to be I'd stayed in the cabin an' died like a gentleman! 'Nother blizzard caught us four days out, an' we lose each other. He makes one road house, an' I hit another, an' nobody ever knowed we wuz together. I see him three year later in Seattle. What he said about havin' the heavy end wuz right. He showed it. We have a drink apiece, an' jest's I'm leavin' him he sez: 'He give it to me, Charley, the good word!'

"I know! They found his pardner come summer, with a hole in his skull. They suspicioned he shot him! Uhu! Well, the guy knocks Dave Henderson in earshot o' me c'n chuck his dukes an' git busy. He wuz square, him! One real square guy!"

Poison No. 77

By C. E. Van Loan

Author of "Jacob, Up to Date," "Fool for Luck," Etc.

Mr. Steven Mullaley, horseman, suffered from the deadliest poison known. This relates how Mr. Mullaley discovered an antidote to counteract the effects of Poison No. 77, which immediately reacted upon the person of the Coroner. How could that be? Read it and see.

MR. STEVE MULLALEY was not a profane man by habit, but he qualified in the Blasphemers' Stakes when he took a look at the opening prices which "Poison No. 77" brought into the paddock from the betting ring. The little brown mare had opened favorite at three to one, and Mr. Steve Mullaley had confidently expected to get at least fifteen to one against her chances, for Miss Meg was a maiden—which is to say that she had never won a race—and there was nothing in the form charts which justified making her a favorite, even against such inferior horses.

"Well, wouldn't that cork you?" demanded Mullaley indignantly. "*Favorite,* eh? I guess the clockers got onto us, after all!"

Poison No. 77 stood on one foot and then on the other, and there was no help in his bland, Teutonic countenance. Poison's other name was Herman Blatz, and he was called "Poison" because of his luck. Herman had never been known to win a bet upon a race track. If he bet upon an odds-on favorite, that favorite was sure to be beaten.

"The Dutchman poisons 'em, that's what he does; he *poisons* 'em!" said the Half-portion King, who was a bookmaker in a small way, having at least a piece of chalk and an unlimited nerve. And thereafter Herman Blatz was christened "Poison."

The only time the great Sysonby was ever beaten was when he was a three-to-five chance in the Futurity; and it happened that on that day Mullaley liked Artful, at three or four to one. But he would not place his money until he had given Poison twenty dollars and told him to bet it for himself upon Sysonby. When Mullaley saw the ticket in Poison's possession, he went into the ring and handed the bookmakers the entire cash balance on Artful. And Sysonby was beaten by Artful; and to this day Mullaley believes it was because the Dutchman had a bet on the great favorite and stood to win as much as twelve dollars.

After that race, the Half-portion King changed Herman's official designation to "Poison No. 77," which he said was the deadliest poison known.

Herman Blatz was Mullaley's "outside man"—a long way on the outside. He was not smart enough to be of any real value to the young horseman, but he held his job because of his ability to make his employer laugh. When Mullaley took his horses West for the winter, he took Poison along, much as another man might have taken a book of entertaining short stories. It was a bit more expensive, of course; but Mullaley was able to "pay for his fancies."

By a not uncommon circumstance, it happened that Miss Meg was running in the name and colors of Herman Blatz

—at least, so it stated on the program. There was a very good and sound reason for this. Mullaley did not care to pay two dollars a day admission fee in order to secure Poison's attendance. It was much cheaper to enter a horse in the name of Herman Blatz and get an owner's badge for the German entertainer.

"Well, Poison," said Mullaley, "it looks as if somebody knew something about Miss Meg. Three to one in a maiden race! Why, these burglars ought to be arrested! In a race of this kind, it ought to be ten, four, and two, and take your own pick."

"You got a better rider up to-day," suggested Poison. "Maybe he should make the difference, vot?"

"Not enough to make this one the favorite," said Mullaley decidedly. "Pemberton is a fair kind of a jock, Poison; but he ain't any Walter Miller. I guess I'll stroll in and see what the "Coroner" is doing.

The Coroner was the leading bookmaker of the Middle West, so named because there was a suspicion that he trafficked in "dead ones," conveniently deadened for the occasion. He was a small, spectacled, dried-up little man who walked with a cane; but those who presumed upon his physical handicaps lived to be sorry for it. The Coroner had eyes everywhere—eyes and hands and feet.

The brain of this many-tentacled creature lived under the Coroner's old slouch hat; and there were ugly rumors that he was the head and front of a "ring" with "connections" in the jockeys' room as well as in the stables of several impecunious owners. Those outside the ring might beat the Coroner's candidate if they could; but first they must outfigure the crafty old fellow, and figures were his especial gift. It was just such men as the Coroner who killed horse racing in America.

The Coroner held Miss Meg at three to one while an astonishing flow of money made its appearance. Mullaley watched the men who bet. Several of them were strangers whom he had never seen before. The piker contingent, usually strong for a long chance, marched to Miss Meg to the last dollar. Suspicion became certainty in Mullaley's mind.

"Somebody has been touting this mare all over town," he said.

He watched the prices offered by the different books. Miss Meg went from three to one to thirteen to five, and then to eleven to five; but the Coroner held her steady at three to one, and took every dollar that was offered. Just at the last minute, the Coroner chalked up eighteen to five, and took the driblets of coin with both hands. The other bookmakers offered no better than twelve to five.

"No," said Mullaley to himself, "not to-day, Steve. We won't bet on the little brown mare to-day. Too many people betting on her—with the Coroner. But the thing that skins me is, *who touted her to all these people?*"

For, with a better price against her, Miss Meg would have carried at least a thousand dollars of her owner's money. Maiden races for the distance had been run and won in 1.14½; Miss Meg had been working in 1.13½. She was good enough to win lengths in front of her field. Every precaution had been taken to work Miss Meg when there was the least chance of arousing comment; yet if Mullaley had shouted his innermost secrets from the roof of the grand stand, there would have been no such wild rush to play the little brown mare. There was a leak somewhere.

Mullaley was a betting man, but he was also a prudent one. The Coroner had persistently offered the top price on Miss Meg. That meant something.

"It's a job as sure as I'm a foot high," thought Mullaley. "I guess I'll just make an experiment here."

So he walked out to the paddock, and, waiting for the jockey's bell, gave Pemberton instructions, which, if followed, would have insured the winning of the race. The little boy, who was really a clever lightweight rider, listened without blinking.

"You understand, now?" said Mullaley, after he had finished.

"Yes, Mr. Mullaley," said Pemberton. "Yes, sir. Lay off the early pace with her, and set her down from the head of the stretch home."

"And if you win," said Mullaley, "there'll be a nice piece of money for you, because I've got a good bet on this mare to-day.

"Now," said Mullaley, as he leveled his glasses at the starting point, "we will see what we will see."

What he saw confirmed his worst suspicions. Pemberton massed Miss Meg all over the track for the first half mile, got her pocketed in the stretch, pulled her wide in the final eighth, and finished fifth.

"I thought so," said Mullaley. "He didn't try a lick with her. I guess I'll have to do a little detective work around here."

Out in the paddock, Steve Mullaley met Benny Hosmer, a wise little man who hung about the fringe of race-track society with both eyes open.

"You got a rotten ride," said Benny. "Jock Pemberton's friends were in that race. Didn't you know it?"

"How so?" asked Mullaley.

"I'll tell you something, Steve," said Hosmer. "Any time Pemberton, Dorset, T. Hill, or Leek are in the same race, the Coroner is going to name the winner. What have you been doing around here? Sleeping?"

"The old jock combination, eh?" asked Mullaley. "Well, Benny, I'll tell *you* something, too. I smelled it, and I didn't bet a nickel."

"Better ride your own boy next time," said Hosmer. "You'll stand more of a chance."

"I'll see," said Mullaley. "But the thing that worries me, Benny, is that they should make this trick of mine three to one, and then all the boobs in town come up and bet on her. Somebody's been touting, sure."

"Humph!" sniffed Hosmer. "You'll never keep anything under cover around here until you muzzle that fool Dutchman, Poison. He's the most per-ni-cious tout on this race track."

"What?" ejaculated Mullaley. "I'll knock his Dutch head off for that! He's touting, is he?"

"You're the only man on the track that doesn't know it," said Hosmer. "He ain't touting for money, understand; but just because he wants people to think he's a wise fellow. You thought last week, when Bright Eyes won, that you should have got better than six to one on *her*. And this Poison was just breaking his neck to tout everybody on the race track that Bright Eyes was a skinch. If there hadn't been a logical favorite in there, you wouldn't have got any price at *all*. And it would have served you right. Why, Poison keeps the Coroner's outside men posted up about everything that goes on in your stable. And you hollering about prices! I'm surprised at you!"

"I'll kill that Dutchman!" said Mullaley.

"All your own fault," said Hosmer. "You went and entered a horse in his name, and, of course, everybody looks him up to ask him if Miss Meg has got a chance; and he, the sucker, *he tells 'em the truth!* He thinks it makes him a big fellow around the paddock here to be able to chuck out his chest and tout a horse running in his name. Why, if you let him run a full-page ad in a morning paper, he couldn't have reached any more people with the feed-box information that Miss Meg was going to win to-day. A short price? Well, I guess yes! And *all* your prices will be short as long as you let this Poison guy have the toutin' privileges around here. Poison circulates the information to the public, and then you step down and put a burglar like Pemberton on the mare. What can you expect?"

"Pemberton couldn't ride again for me," said Mullaley; "not in a pig race. He snatched that mare, sure!"

"Of course he snatched her," said Hosmer; "and a smart fellow would have known in advance that he would. You know who took all the money in the ring, don't you?"

"I know," said Steve grimly.

There was a long silence.

Poison appeared at the end of the

paddock, followed by three or four importunate citizens.

"There's your Dutchman," said Benny. "He's alibiing himself with some of his customers."

Mullaley grinned.

"Benny," said he.

"What?"

"Benny, I won't kill the Dutchman to-day. I think I'm going to need him around here."

"You'll need to have your head overlooked if you don't watch out," said Hosmer.

"Benny," said Mullaley, "do you know what backfiring is?"

"Sure!" said Hosmer. "It's when a pistol spits back at you and burns your hands."

"Not a bit like it," said Steve. "It's the only way in the world to fight fire —*with* fire; understand? I'm going to use that Dutchman to burn somebody up around this race track; and I guess I'll let you light some of the matches."

Mullaley took counsel with Henry Pape, his trainer. They laid their heads together, examining into the best method of securing an antidote for Poison No. 77.

"They're depending on this mutton-headed Dutchman for the inside information from our stable," said Mullaley; "and, judging by the price they laid against Bright Eyes and the ride we got on Miss Meg, they think he's reliable. Now it's up to us to double cross the Dutchman; and the Dutchman will double cross everybody else on the track without knowing it."

"I don't know," said Pape thoughtfully. "That last bunch of information he handed out put an awful crimp in the sucker public."

"What if it did?" answered Mullaley. "The Coroner is the baby I'm after; and *he* knows Miss Meg could have won the last time out but for that rotten ride. What do we care for the sucker public? It's the Coroner who's got the money."

"There's some truth in that," said Mullaley's trainer.

"We'll have to frame against the Dutchman," said Mullaley.

"How'd it be if we let him find out that Miss Meg was lame, or sore, or something, and didn't have a chance?"

"The very thing," said Steve. "But won't he know that she's been working good?"

Pape snapped his fingers with a sudden exclamation.

"Queenie," he said.

Now, there were two brown mares in Steve Mullaley's stable, Miss Meg and Queenie; but, barring a general resemblance, they stood in no immediate danger of being mistaken for each other. Both, however, had blaze faces and one white stocking.

"Poison could never tell 'em apart," said Pape. "And if he shows up around the stable about work time, I'll point out Miss Meg to him, and ask him if Queenie doesn't look good. He'd fall for that in a minute; and it wouldn't do any harm to drop a few remarks about Meg's bad shoulders."

A week passed, a long, uncomfortable period for poor Poison. His friends who had so eagerly backed his warm tip on Miss Meg eyed him askance. Down to the barber who shaved him and the bootblack who shined his shoes, Poison had touted the mare for one of the best things of the meeting. The only men who retained confidence in him were the bookmakers' "hustlers." Poison, whose simple, kindly nature wilted under black looks and short answers, had but one hope—namely, that the mare would be able to redeem herself the next time out. So he told every one that Miss Meg had been interfered with at the start, cut off on the turn, and pocketed in the stretch.

"Vait till she goes again!" was the burden of his song.

One afternoon, when he could stand the suspense no longer, he asked Mullaley when Miss Meg would "go again."

Mullaley looked very grave.

"I'm afraid, Mr. Blatz," said he, "that you've got a bad horse. She's gone very choppy up forward, and Pape is going to have Doctor Dillon look at her

to-morrow. He thinks she needs something done to her."

"Gone choppy?" repeated Poison blankly. "Vot iss choppy?"

"You're a swell fellow to be owning a horse, you are," said Mullaley. "Her stride's shortened up. She's muscle-bound, you big Dutch pig, muscle-bound. She may have to have setons put in her shoulders."

"Seetuns?" said Poison. "Oh, yes, seetuns."

"And you don't know what a seton is, do you?" demanded Mullaley.

"Vell," said Poison, "I ust' to know, anyhow."

"I'll tell you all about it," said Mullaley. "Sometimes a horse gets muscle-bound and stiffened up. The tissues harden; see? And there's only one thing to do, and that's to loosen them up again. The 'vet' takes a bristle or a piece of catgut, and he runs it in between the skin and the muscle, or sometimes he puts it right through the muscle itself. Then every day or so he moves the catgut enough to produce inflammation. The inflammation loosens up the tissues, pus forms, and—oh, what's the use of trying to explain anything to you? Did you see Queenie work this morning?"

"Sure!" said Poison. "She vorked fine!"

That day a vague, nameless rumor spread about the race track. No man could say from whence it came; but the loafers in the paddock and along the fences "understood" that the maiden, Miss Meg, had "gone stiff up front." Faithful in evil as well as good report, Poison No. 77 was working.

The next afternoon when Herman Blatz brought the prices into the paddock, as usual, he found Mullaley and Pape sitting on the top rail of the low white fence.

"Here!" said Mullaley. "Where have you been all day? What's Flittermouse's price?"

And for the next two minutes owner and trainer discussed horses and betting, Poison standing anxiously by. He was never encouraged to take a part in these arguments; but he made it his business to listen closely, in order that he might be able to pass the information along.

"Flittermouse can't win this race, I tell you," said Mullaley. "It wouldn't surprise me in the least to see him break down. He's been lame the last three times out, and—that reminds me, Henry. What did Doctor Dillon say about Miss Meg?"

"Just what I told you he'd say," answered Pape. "He gave her shoulders a thorough examination, walked her around a bit, looked her over, and then advised me to give her one short, easy race just to limber up her shoulders. He says after that he'll put the setons in; but that we needn't expect to win until it *is* done."

"That's a nice piece of news," said Mullaley regretfully. "I guess it's all off with her for the rest of the meeting."

"I'm afraid so," said Pape. "Shall we start her in that maiden race on Friday?"

"Might as well," said Mullaley. "Start her and get it over with. You'd better wire Haskins and the rest of the boys not to play her in the pool rooms."

Neither man paid the slightest attention to Poison, who drank in every word of the conversation. Mullaley threw him a brief order, and he hurried away toward the betting ring.

Mullaley looked at Pape.

"Think he got that?" asked the owner, with a grin.

"Both ears full," said Pape. "I got a flash at him out of the corner of my eye, and his lower lip was hanging like a carpenter's apron."

"Fine!" said Mullaley. "'Now, Poison, thou art afoot. Take thou what course thou wilt!'"

"What kind of talk is that?" asked Pape suspiciously.

"Mr. Shakespeare wrote it," said Mullaley.

"Afoot!" said Pape, with a chuckle. "It's on horseback."

Herman Blatz was sad as he shuffled back into the ring. Here he had been telling every one he knew that the mare would win the next time out, and now she was laid up with sore shoulders and

hadn't a chance. It was tough luck; but there was only one thing to do, and that was to make the necessary corrections. There would be a lot of people whom he must see. Very well. He would do the best he could. No one should say that Herman Blatz ever let them bet on his mare when she was not trying. This was on Tuesday afternoon.

On Thursday night, Steve Mullaley was sitting alone in the corner of a downtown grill where the cooking was to his taste. He smiled to himself as he glanced at the evening papers.

Benny Hosmer came in, spied his friend, and took the chair on the other side of the small table.

"Hello, Steve!" he said. "I had a bad day to-day. Blow me to the chow."

"Go as far as you like," said Mullaley hospitably.

"Well," said Benny, as he languidly scanned the card, "I see that your fool Dutchman is on the job again."

"Is he?" asked Mullaley. "What's Number Seventy-seven doing now?"

"Oh, nothing," said Hosmer. "Nothing; only running all over the track telling everybody that Miss Meg ain't got a chance to-morrow. I heard him talking to Johnny McGinniss, the Coroner's outside man; and the way Poison gave up to him was enough to make you sick. 'No, Chack,' he says, 'the mare von't vin, and she von't be vun, two, t'ree. She's ripped or something, and Doc Dillon says ve shall start her vunce and limber her up, and then she's got to have seams in her shoulders. Catgut seams!' Setons, I suppose the big boob means. What's wrong with the mare?"

"Benny," said Mullaley, "do you remember what I told you about fighting fire with fire? Good! Well, I want you to help me start a conflagration under the Coroner to-morrow, and I'll give you the matches to do it with. If anybody should find out I was betting, it would be all off with the price again. Meet me at the hotel at noon and I'll give you the stuff, but don't come near me at the track. Savvy?"

Hosmer smacked his hand down on the table.

"By George!" said he. "The Dutchman is going to poison *them* this time, eh? It's a thousand dollars to a handful of ashes that they lynch him!"

"Well," said Mullaley sententiously, "you can't make an omelet without breaking some eggs, Benny."

"No," said Hosmer; "or a killing without killing somebody."

Friday dawned with Poison No. 77 working vigorously upon the sporting blood in the arteries of commerce. The overnight entry blanks brought in many queries from those who wished to know if it was "safe to set it in this time." According to Herman Blatz, it was not only unsafe, but absolutely useless.

"Not a chance," he would answer earnestly. "She gets this race only by der orders of a horse doctor after vitch she gets seams in her shoulders. Ve ain't going to bet a nickel, nor der stable connections vouldn't bet a nickel."

Under these distressing circumstances it seemed quite reasonable that Mullaley should put up his own boy, a tough little lightweight apprentice named Jantzen. What was the use of hiring a good rider like Pemberton or Dorset when a stableboy could limber up the mare's shoulders just as well? And, since Miss Meg was only out for the exercise, and the "stable" did not intend to bet a nickel upon her chances, the change in the riders passed without comment.

So thoroughly did Poison No. 77 take hold upon the investing public, and so faithfully was the word passed from mouth to mouth, that when the Coroner posted six to one as Miss Meg's opening price, and looked about the ring with the peculiar facial contortion which passed for a smile, there was no piker so foolish as to invest. Every one of them had heard about the seams in the shoulders.

"They didn't warm her up before the race," said Billy McGinniss to the Coroner, "and Mullaley ain't going to bet. I heard him telling a couple of friends of his about putting the setons in Miss

Meg's shoulders, so I guess that part of it is all right."

The Coroner immediately lengthened Miss Meg's price to ten, four, and two. Still no customers.

"They won't have her to-day at any price," said he sorrowfully. "Confound that Dutchman! He's tipped off everybody in town again!"

Miss Meg soared to twenty, eight, and four. Then Benny Hosmer walked over and bet the Coroner two hundred dollars on the mare to win. The bookmaker hesitated for an instant, but he took the bet.

"Four thousand to two hundred!" he piped to his sheet writer. "Miss Meg to win. Thank you, sir, thank you."

McGinniss received a signal from his chief and disappeared into the paddock. He came back in a few minutes and climbed up beside the Coroner.

"It wasn't Mullaley's money," he reported. "He's out there in the paddock yet, and his betting commissionr, Cahill, is with him. I can't find out who Hosmer is betting for; but I think it's that rich young fellow from San Francisco. Sucker money, likely."

"I hope so," said the Coroner devoutly.

The Coroner owned five of the books operating in the betting ring. Oddly enough, Hosmer patronized these establishments exclusively, betting in fifty-dollar lots after the opening gun of the campaign; and so persistently did he wage his campaign, that when the horses started for the post every one of the Coroner's books stood to take a terrific thumping should Miss Meg win.

This state of affairs was reported to the Coroner himself; and, as he pondered upon the situation, Poison No. 77 plowed through the crowd and paused beside the block.

"How do you do, Mr. Blatz," said the Coroner heartily. "Some one is betting on your mare to-day. Naughty! Naughty!"

"Any sucker vitch bets on der mare to-day," said Poison, "gets left good and plendy. Mullaley he vouldn't bet himself, and he vires all his New York connections to stay avay from the pool rooms. You know dot mare she's got to have seams put in her shoulders. She's gone choppy up front."

The Coroner heaved a sigh of relief as Poison No. 77 filtered through the crowd.

"I was worried about that mare for a minute!" he said.

Herman Blatz stood on the top step of the grand stand where every one could see him, and addressed his final word to the public as represented by a dozen seekers after information.

"Don't bet a nickel!" he said. "She von't vin. She von't be vun, two, t'ree. After the race, she gets seams in her shoulders."

Ten minutes afterward, Poison No. 77 reeled down the same stairs, dizzy, blind, shaken to the very foundations of his being—reeled into the arms of an outraged following.

"She won, pulled up to a walk!" screamed one piker. "And you, you crooked Dutch bunko steerer! You wouldn't let me bet!"

"You kept me off, too!" snarled a second.

"I came out here to play her, and you steered me to that rotten favorite!"

"I'd have won two hundred if it hadn't been for you!"

"Seams in her shoulders! Where do you get that noise?"

"Vait! Vait!" expostulated Poison. "You ask anybody if I bet. You ask Steve Mullaley——"

"Ask your grandmother!" growled a large, red-faced man. "Come on, boys. Let's give this Dutch tout a party."

"Tar and feather him!"

"Ride him on a rail!"

"Hang him!"

It was then that Poison No. 77 took to his heels, headed straight for the main entrance; and behind him, like a vast paper chase, streamed the infuriated victims of his truthful tongue.

It is sad to tell the truth—or what one believes to be the truth—and then be chased for it.

However, they did not catch Herman Blatz.

"Limpy" Lowry, the Pinkerton sleuth at the gate, brought back an entertaining version of the chase.

"Off in a bunch in the Poison Stakes!" he panted. "At the quarter, it's Poison by ten open lengths, just breezin' an' going away from the field. At the half, Poison leads by an eighth of a mile, ears pricked an' tail wavin' beautiful. At the head of the stretch, Poison tears to the outside rail, jumps the fence, and hits for the open country. They'll never get close enough to him to tell which way he went. Time for the quarter, twenty-two seconds flat. Time for the half, forty-six and one-quarter—and then me stop watch blew up!"

The Coroner was peering about the ring, preparatory to chalking up the opening prices on the next race. He was silent, for he had used all his surplus language when he saw Miss Meg rolling home all alone in the stretch. Steve Mullaley tugged at the skirt of the old man's coat.

"Hey, look here!" he said. "I want to call your attention to something."

And Steve riffled a handful of tickets under the Coroner's nose. The bookmaker glared but said nothing. There was nothing for him to say.

"Oh, by the way," said Steve. "This fellow Blatz has been giving you a lot of good information about my horses. If you want to use him any further, you'd better turn out the Pinks and rescue him. They run him off the track with a rope just now."

"I hope they hang him," said the Coroner. "And you, too."

"The same to you," said Mullaley, "and many of 'em."

THE DIPLOMATIC YOUNG MAN

AT a dinner party at the White House one evening the conversation turned on the giving of presents and the art of making a gift appropriate.

"That reminds me," said President Taft, "of the marvelous astuteness of a young man I knew when I was a newspaper reporter in Cincinnati. This fellow was very much in love with a girl who worked in a candy store eight hours every day. They quarreled, and, in the hope of making peace, he decided to send her a present.

"'I sent it to her,' he informed me one morning, with an air of pride.

"'What was it?' I inquired.

"'Two pounds of candy,' he said brightly.

"After I stopped laughing, I told him:

"'As a diplomat, you're a wonder! It's a novel idea to try to please a girl by sending her candy when she works in a candy shop. It's like sending mortar to a bricklayer as a peace offering.'"

HOW ANNE WARNER GOT HER START

MRS. ANNE WARNER FRENCH, better known to the world as Anne Warner, since she uses the latter as her pen name, made her first venture in the field of letters because of a chance meeting with an old maid.

"Well, I think I'll get married," remarked the spinster. "I'm going to set about it right away."

The idea seemed so funny to Mrs. French that she went home and wrote a humorous story about it. Since then she has written hundreds of short stories and nearly a dozen books.

Guns—and a Girl

By Robert Welles Ritchie

Author of "Under Strange Stars," "Gibbs' Footnote to History," Etc.

A sidelight on the Mexican revolution, with three finely drawn characters to absorb your interest—Split-nose Gonzales, chief of the gun-running junta; Pelton, of the secret service, on mission to protect the neutrality of the Texas border; and—the girl.

THE band of the Third Regiment of Zapadores was playing the "March Benito Juarez" there in the little band stand sprouting from the cannas in the middle of the plaza. Around and around the graveled walks on the four sides of the plaza strolled the caballeros and the señoritas of Nuevo Laredo. The young men marched in groups of twos and threes, always from right to left. The laughing, half-veiled girls, daring to cast eyes and flick their fans flirtatiously, paced the four walks of the plaza in an opposite direction. Quick whispers were passed, sly glances exchanged when group passed group.

Mammas and duennas sat on the benches in the shadows. Their eyes were never once beguiled by the studied carelessness of the señoritas on parade. Nor did the little airs of bravado, the covert glances of the young caballeros who passed in opposite formation escape them. The gallant of Nuevo Laredo, as of all Mexico, is ever under fire of a battery of eyes.

So the band played the "March Benito Juarez"; then, finishing the quick time, slipped into the languorous, halting measures of a waltz—all fire, seductive, breath of orange flowers and acacia. Music and laughter were there in the plaza of Nuevo Laredo, yet out in the mesquite wilderness, only fifteen miles away, lay six hundred men of the revolution, awaiting precious guns for the attack upon the town.

Out there under the dust of summer stars José and Gabriel de los Santos, the jackals of the Maderistas in Tamaulipas State, waited, ready to strike if only the guns would come from over the border. There in Nuevo Laredo a block from the plaza stood the dingy cuartel, in which General Bernardo Alvarez Garcia, the old lion of Puebla, held some three hundred and fifty soldiers of Diaz in iron grip—waiting.

Thus it had been for two weeks. The mesquite wilderness delayed launching its crop of steel and death at the town. The little cuartel guarded close its ranks of defenders. Not a rifle was seen outside its loopholed walls. Only a bugle sounded muffled within its hidden barricades night and morning to tell Nuevo Laredo that Porfirio Diaz was still supreme commander of that town at least.

Pelton sat on one of the benches with the mammas and the duennas while the band played and the chattering señoritas passed and repassed. He sat with his feet sprawling out and his hands in his pockets. His battered straw hat was pushed back from his forehead, and on his bony, deeply etched face there was not a flicker of expression. He smoked one corn-husk cigarette after another languidly.

Nobody could know better than Pel-

ton that his attitude was not correct. He would not have sprawled that way in the lounge room of the University Club back on Fifth Avenue. But Joseph Warren Pelton, B. A., Harvard, Rumpty-umph, in the lounge room of the University Club in New York was one man, and Pelton, secret agent, treasury department, U. S. A., on a plaza bench in Nuevo Laredo, Mexico, was quite another. Why Joseph Warren Pelton, of Harvard, should have elected to be Pelton of the secret service on mission to protect the neutrality of the Texas border is purely Pelton's business, and does not enter here.

One might reasonably wonder what right a secret agent of the treasury department had to sit on a plaza bench over the river in Mexico. In his capacity of secret agent none, to be sure. His province ended on the north side of the international monument in the middle of the bridge linking the Laredo of Texas with the Laredo of Tamaulipas; the Rio Bravo was his boundary. But when Pelton had come to Laredo of Texas, more Mexican in its partisanship than Mexican Laredo itself, he crossed the bridge one night, and had a little confab with old General Garcia in the cuartel. The lion of Puebla was naturally enthusiastically in sympathy with Pelton's mission, which was to prevent gun running from the Texas shore of the river, and so, any night he pleased, Pelton was privileged to put his straddling legs in front of a bench on the plaza, even though he wore a queer silver shield pinned to one suspender band.

As the brass music sobbed in waltz measure and the shuffling streams of promenaders passed him, Pelton cast an occasional glance at the lighted clock dial over the Palace of Justice. When the minute hand slipped past the hour of nine-thirty, he stopped smoking his corn-husk cigarettes, and sat tensely alert. The clock pointed nine-forty, nine-fifty-five, ten. Pelton's eyes had been the more keenly scrutinizing the passing faces during the latter moments. When the last stroke of ten sounded, he rose, pulled his gangling frame together with an odd, hitching movement of the shoulders, and slouched off through a bypath until he was out of the circle of the paraders and in one of the dark side streets.

There the secret agent quickened his pace, and walked surely through a tangle of narrow streets until he came out upon a road ending abruptly at the bluff's edge over the river. Across the black Rio Bravo the lights of Laredo shone. The huge arc of the international bridge blurred the star glow.

Pelton stopped before the last adobe house at the road's end. He stepped into the shadow of the thick wall that surrounded the house, and whistled once very lightly. No sound but the gurgling of the river over its sand bars. Pelton waited a full five minutes, then pushed open the garden gate, and entered.

A short path, bordered by sunken beer bottles, led through the beds of hollyhocks and marigolds to the door of the adobe dwelling. There was no light in the two front windows. The door, half opened, cut a slice out of the deeper blackness of the interior. The American started up the path toward the door. A sudden metallic glint of light struck up from one line of the bottle border near where a little wilderness of rank hollyhock stalks fringed the path. Pelton stopped, and looked down.

A bared human foot and portion of ankle rested stiffly on the butts of the sunken bottles. Pelton knelt with a sharp intake of the breath, and touched the foot. His hand jumped away, smeared and sticky. He fumbled for a match. The flame split the shadows cast by the hollyhocks.

The foot that he saw was shod with a mule's shoe. The steel was clamped tightly to the sole. Nail points protruded through the flesh over the arch.

Another bare foot, from which a mule's shoe sprung grotesquely, was drawn up under the ankle of the first. Both feet sprouted abruptly from the jungle of the hollyhocks.

Pelton seized the ankles, and pulled a body out onto the path. It was that of a Mexican youth, maybe eighteen

years old. A black silk handkerchief was bound tightly over the mouth. The eyes were opened wide, pupils rolled far back. Pelton felt for the heart. It was thudding at crazy intervals. He unbound the gag, and as he did so he felt the crackle of paper under his fingers.

Another match. Pelton saw a little wisp of paper protruding from one nostril. He pulled it out, and the flare of the match showed traces of script on it. With quick fingers, he unrolled the paper tube, and held the light close. This was written there:

> The gringo's little messenger will not be at the plaza to-night to tell what he knows. He is going far away, and he needs shoes for the hard roads of hell. Viva Madero! Viva revolution! SPLIT-NOSE GONZALES.

As if in hasty afterthought, this line was added beneath the signature:

> Shoes like this will fit the gringo if he does not keep out of Mexico.

Pelton was not a man of squeamish nerves, but the sight of those steel-shod, bloody feet, propped on the butts of the mule shoes, sent a sudden chill spasm sweeping down his back. Instantly his mind reconstructed a scene of agony there before the darkened adobe house—a handkerchief muffling screams; the clink-clink of a hammer driving steel nails through tortured flesh and bone; brutal hands holding a writhing body still until the work of bitter jest should be completed.

So this had been the way of Split-nose Gonzales, chief of the gun-running junta across the river, to convey evidence of his disfavor of Pelton's business along the Rio Bravo! Manuel had been made to pay—Manuel, the colorless little roustabout of the Eagle Hotel over in Laredo, who had been easily persuaded to play the informer for a little, a pitiful little, of the treasury department's money. Pelton's hand once more reached to feel the labored tapping of Manuel's heart. He lit another match, and looked carefully at the turned back eyes.

"Nearly out," he muttered; then he slipped the sinister note of Split-nose Gonzales into his pocket. He caught the sound of voices and a girl's laughter from over the wall. At the gate he met a girl and an elderly woman. At sight of him the girl started, and smothered a scream with a hurried gesture of her mantilla-draped arm. Pelton stumbled blindly in his beginner's Spanish.

"Do not scream, señorita—I am a friend—I am—it is——"

"Speak in English, Señor Americano," interrupted the girl; "I understand it more better than I speak." Her voice was rich with the peculiar contralto timbre of the Mexican woman's speech. Excitement strained it, but it did not break.

"Manuel Rosarios, he is your brother?" Pelton strove for words to make softer the thing he had to tell.

"*Si, señor,* and thees, hees mother—our mother. But what——"

"Tell your mother, señorita, to go in to him—there on the garden path. He is——"

"Ah, señor—señor—not—he ees not dead!" Pelton felt a hand clutch his sleeve, and even in the darkness the whites of two startled eyes shone below his. The elder woman, catching only the hint of fear in the speech she did not understand, began to supplicate the Virgin.

"He is hurt—badly hurt," Pelton said. "You cannot help him except to take me to a doctor. No, no; don't go in! Come with me for a doctor." Pelton took the girl by the shoulders, and turned her away from the gate when she made a step to enter. Instantly she whirled on him.

"Gringo, your hands on me!" The words cut like a whipcord. Then came instant repentance. "My pardon, señor"—the voice was low and pleading—"come, we go for thees doctor." She spoke a few hurried words to the mother, who pushed open the gate. Pelton took the girl's arm, and hurried her down the dark street.

"*Madre Dios!*" The shrill scream rasped out of the dark behind them terribly. Señorita Rosarios sobbed and clung with both shaking hands to Pelton's arm. She asked no questions, but

as they stumbled together over the uneven road toward the lights of the town, she murmured choking prayers in Spanish.

They found a doctor. Pelton whispered to him apart, and he fetched his instrument case, his face puckered in horror. The house was alight when the three of them returned. Neighbors were standing in silent groups before the adobe wall. A priest in black cassock hurried through the gate ahead of them.

Pelton passed through and down the path before he relinquished the girl's arm. As she stepped into the shaft of light streaming from the opened door for the first time, he glimpsed her face. Just in that second he caught the picture of two great, black eyes, wide with terror and the look of pleading of a child that fears a hurt; a rounded cheek, over which fugitive tendrils of black hair had slipped; full lips parted in the nerve strain of excitement; a strong, well-molded throat and neck, the color of rose on ivory. Then the shutter of darkness snapped over the picture. Pelton was alone in the garden.

Some undefined sense of remorse for the part he had carelessly played in this eerie tragedy, an impelling recognition of the fitness of things, kept him in the garden until the end he knew to be inevitable should come. He found his way to a rude seat under the black shadows of a fig tree, from one limb of which a great olla hung. The swaying water jar looked like some body in chains on a gallows tree.

Pelton caught himself whispering the grim lines of Villon's "Epitaph" as he sat near the round bulk. He felt the significance of that night's horror poignantly. The threat against himself he ignored completely; only the devilish humor and cowardly retaliation of this Gonzales—Split-nose was the familiar sobriquet of the ex-brigand and smuggler along all the Texas border—were things which Pelton pondered there in the black garden.

During the month that he had been at Laredo, groping blindly to find the secret channels of the junta's gun trafficking, at every turn the sinister shadow of Split-nose Gonzales had faded just beyond the grip of his hands. Now he was in secret conference with the revolutionaries in José Bodega's saloon in Laredo; now he was slipping through the mesquite wilderness and over some ford of the Rio Bravo to carry a message to the brothers De los Santos on the Mexican side. Always he was so near, yet his face—his brutally marked face—Pelton had never seen.

Fortuitously little Manuel Rosarios, who blacked shoes at the Laredo hotel, had dropped a random word that gave Pelton his only ally. Manuel cared nothing for politics, but he knew much, and silver dollars were so large in Manuel's eyes that he could not see around their milled edges. Manuel had been so unobtrusive, so innocent in his nocturnal ramblings from meeting place to meeting place of the Laredo plotters. Through his reports, Pelton had finally begun to know the men and the haunts of those with whom he had to deal.

It had been Manuel who, between dabs of the blacking brush, had that very morning sent Pelton's heart pounding at double time. The secret agent recalled now the bobbing black head of the youth and the words that had been jerked cautiously from the roustabout's mouth:

"Guns are coming, señor—two hun'erd—I know everything—to-night—to-night, señor—at plaza. Be there, ha' pas' nine."

Pelton spoke aloud:

"But to-night Manuel is shod for the rough roads of hell—and he knows everything—he *knew* everything!"

For more than an hour he sat by the hanging olla, watching the occasional figures that passed the single lamplit window visible to him, hearing the low murmur of neighbors' voices outside the wall and the occasional poignant outburst of women's wailing within the house. Then he saw the white dress of the Señorita Rosarios in the yellow light at the door. The girl clung weakly to the doorposts, her eyes striving to search the blackness of the garden.

Pelton arose quickly, and hurried to her.

"Do you want—me, señorita?" He stepped into the path of light hesitatingly. The girl's eyes jumped to his. One hand went to her throat as if to still the torture of grief that stopped her speech.

"Yes, you," she answered, in a dulled monotone. "Come—away from these eyes—of people."

Pelton led her to the seat under the fig tree. For a minute she strove to check the sobs that slacked in her throat. Then: "Why were you here—in the garden—to-night?" she asked.

Pelton was choosing the words of his explanation. It had been the necessity of this explanation that had kept him there, yet now he stumbled.

"Señorita—I—your brother——"

She did not wait.

"Who did thees things? You know."

"Yes, I know, señorita."

"Queekly—queekly——" There was a catch of hysteria in the heavy contralto of the girl's voice. "Before he ees dying I will know."

"It was Gonzales," Pelton answered slowly—"Gonzales, called Split-nose."

"Ah!" Pelton felt her two hands grip his arm. He felt them tremble. Rather clumsily he covered both of them with one of his.

"Gonzales, *el Diablo!*" she whispered. "And why, señor? Why?"

Then Pelton told her. He found the task difficult, embarrassing to mortification. In the telling he sensed a burden of responsibility pressing down and down, ever more ponderously. He did not try to justify himself; simply told her of how he had hired Manuel to do spy work. The girl sat very still until he had finished, even to the finding of the boy in the hollyhocks.

Then she rose suddenly, and stood facing Pelton. He saw her eyes, very wide and luminous in the dark. He saw her two hands clenched and flattened against her breast.

"Murderer!"

The white face was thrust forward so close that Pelton could see the teeth under the lips curled back.

"Murderer of my brother! Gringo, buyer of boys' souls for money! When he—with nails in hees feet—when he ees finished dying, it will not be Gonzales with bloody hands—ah, no—no—no!

"Gringo, your hands are making red! Gringo, your silver pesos are bloody—with Manuel's blood!"

The girl swayed and caught at the hanging olla to steady herself. Her words, checked but an instant, volleyed forth again, burning, vibrant:

"Two weemen are left alone, gringo! They are two weak weemen, having none of your pesos to buy blood. Look at me! I am thees one of them to make a cross from Manuel's blood on you. See me; I do it now!"

The girl raised her white arm, and against the blackness of the garden her hand, with a pointing finger, moved swiftly in making the sign of the cross.

"Now, go!" she said.

Pelton had no word to answer. He left the garden, left a white-blurred figure standing alone by the hanging olla.

A telegram lay under his room door in the Eagle Hotel. It read:

> Two hundred marked Laredo Farm Implement Company left Galveston last night billed harrows car No. 13,136, way bill No. 769,510. Look out! GAINES.

Gaines was division superintendent of the secret service along the border, with his office in San Antonio.

Pelton studied the telegram. Two hundred coming, said Gaines. Two hundred rifles billed as harrows shipped ostensibly to Laredo; yes, but to be dropped somewhere off in the brush at a flag station. Gonzales and his men would be there to spirit the rifles through the mesquite, over a ford in the Rio Bravo, and out to the camp of the De los Santos. But where, when would those guns be dropped; what would be the secret path through the miles square wilderness of the eternal mesquite to feel the touch of laden horses' hoofs; what shallow, sandy bar in the river would offer a safe passage over the border on a black night?

Aye, but Manuel knew—and Manuel was——

Pelton shook his head in weariness as he lay in his ovenlike room for dragging hours, before his eyes the picture of a white arm puncturing a black curtain of darkness to trace up and down, right and left, a cross.

Two nights had passed since his bitter hours in the garden. On this, the third, Pelton was desperately ranging the streets of Laredo, hoping against hope that out of the blank walls of the adobe houses, from the heavy thickets of the scented oleanders some whisper, some sign might come to give him a clew to action. The freight clerk at the depot, the telegrapher, both Americans and sympathetic aids in this strangely un-American town, he had interviewed. They knew nothing of the whereabouts of those rifles, billed as harrows, No. 769,510, that were coming slowly down through the night somewhere off there where the low-hanging Texas stars made a white line of the horizon.

Pelton turned down into the single lighted main street which passes up the hill from the international bridge to skirt the plaza, duly laid out there when Laredo was a town of the old Mexican State of Tejas. The cathedral is on one side of the plaza; on another are the little stalls and booths of the Mexican hucksters, lighted by sickly flares at night; a moving-picture theater, which in summer is just a tin-roofed inclosure with canvas sides and fitted with rough benches like a circus arena.

Sole retreat of entertainment in the town, this moving-picture establishment was the center of night life. Between films row upon row of well-pleased spectators would pass out, grabbing return checks at the door, to line up before José Bodega's bar next door. The revolutionary junta had its unofficial headquarters in a back room of José Bodega's cantina, and its members amused themselves o' nights in the film shed. Every gun runner who was not out in the brush could be found after dark in one or the other of the two places. Bodega's was barred to Pelton for obvious reasons of policy; the moving-picture show was his chief reconnoitering place, therefore.

This night he sat far back on an obscure bench off a side aisle, whence in the periods when the lights were on he could see who passed in and out. Two stories of wild life on the plains, as conceived and executed in Sheepshead Bay, New York, had rippled past on the sheet, and the lights went up again. A man and a woman rose from seats far down in front, and began to walk up the aisle, passing Pelton's seat. The electric clusters overhead threw a strong light on their faces.

The woman was Señorita Rosarios. The man with her, who walked with an exaggerated swagger and clicked his spurs at every step, wore a wide-springing black mustache, waxed and curled. The nose above the mustache was splayed and flattened against the face; a white scar ran from the tip up over where the bone of the bridge should have been and on the length of the retreating forehead to the shadow under the wide sombrero. A devilish insolence was in the narrow black eyes.

There was but one such face on the border. This was Split-nose Gonzales.

As Pelton watched the two approach, his surprise tensing all his nerves, he saw Gonzales slip his hand under the girl's arm with a patent air of proprietorship and whisper in her ear. Señorita Rosarios nodded and smiled.

Pelton turned his face away as they approached him. His precaution was unnecessary, for the lights flicked out that instant, and the spidery figures began to dance across the sheet. In the dark, Pelton rose, and followed the two. He lingered on the fringe of the crowd about the ticket seller's window long enough to see Gonzales and his companion cross over to the plaza and disappear in the shade of the magnolias.

He arrived at the edge of the plaza's shadows just in time to see the two pass under the single sputtering arc light at the opposite corner of the square and turn into the black angle of Cathedral Street.

Pelton followed at a safe distance, keeping well within the shadow line of the adobe houses and guided, now by the sound of Gonzales' quick laughter,

now by the flash of the girl's white dress, when light from an open door cut her figure out of the superlative darkness.

Two yellow points of light moved down the street many blocks away, and the clatter of horses' hoofs sounded. Even as the secret agent let his anxiety overcome caution and quickened his steps, the advancing yellow lights stopped a block ahead. Pelton just caught the glimmer of lights on carriage wheels, saw the señorita's white dress flick under the feeble radiance, and heard the slam of a carriage door. He was under an overhanging oleander bush not thirty feet away.

"Por el Nido, Francisco!" It was Split-nose Gonzales' voice.

The hack turned and rolled up a dark lane. Pelton did his best to keep up. He saw one yellow side light as the vehicle swung around the next corner; then the driver urged the horse into a trot, and Pelton stopped, panting. Against the wall of a low store building beside him was a wooden sign. *"Calle Rio Bravo,"* it read. It marked the river road that runs east and south from Laredo, out into the mesquite wilderness and skirting the river mesa.

Down the river road at night and with Split-nose Gonzales, Señorita Rosarios was riding—and *"por el Nido"—"por el Nido."*

"Nido—Nido; what the devil does *'Nido'* mean?" Pelton furiously strove to flog his imperfect knowledge of Spanish into answering. Here he was on the edge of getting something—he had it, and he didn't have it, and the moments were racing by.

"'El Nido'—the dog house? Certainly not. Well, then, the—the—*el* hencoop—*el*—— Something to do with a roost, a perch all right! Hey! *El* Bird's Nest!"

Out of the dark the printed line in his "Spanish for Beginners" hit Pelton squarely in the face. There it was, in black-face type, *"El nido";* in italics, "the bird's nest." No doubt about it. "See the bird's nest, children," and all that rot.

"For the Bird's Nest, Francisco." That was the direction Gonzales had given the driver.

As Pelton walked back through the dark streets toward the still-lighted plaza, his mind wrestled with the sharp problem of contradictions that had suddenly popped out of the moving magic of the film shed. This girl, sister of little Manuel with the steel-shod feet, the girl who had called him murderer there in the garden and promised vengeance upon him, riding out into the night with the ruffian who had tortured and slain the brother! Why—why? And what was the Bird's Nest? Where was it? How could he——

A chance—a single, desperate chance! The inspiration came in a flash. Could he do it? Yes, if luck was with him. Hot with the desire to dare everything, Pelton hurried over to where the crowd was just beginning to eddy out from the moving-picture theater. Three dilapidated hacks were at the curb directly in front of José Bodega's cantina, their drivers half asleep over the reins. Pelton opened the door of one from the street side so that he could not be seen from the sidewalk, and as he slammed the door with unnecessary violence he called:

"Por el Nido, 'Tonio!"

A query came in a sleep-heavy voice from the box.

"Si, por el Nido!" Pelton answered sharply. There was a heavy minute of suspense, and then the hack began to move. Pelton took a long breath. "It worked," he murmured.

The hack swayed and rattled through the narrow streets of town, and then in a few minutes its wheels sank into the muffling dust of the country road. The fare filled its black interior with the smoke of many corn-husk cigarettes, while his mind raced ahead down the starlit road to where somewhere in the mazes of the mesquite a healthy night's adventure awaited the coming of a special agent of the treasury department. What he would discover; what he would do when he did discover—these were entertaining speculations that kept Pelton company through the dark. He slipped a holster around from

under his jacket so that the big heavy butt of a forty-five rested handily to the front. So the journey continued for the better part of an hour.

Suddenly the hack stopped with a jolt. Pelton heard an exclamation from the driver, and he put his head out of the side window. Far up the road and approaching with wild pitching and yawing were two yellow lights. A faint clangor of chain traces and thudding of hoofs was audible. Pelton jumped down to the road. The driver addressed him excitedly in Spanish. Then out of the near darkness the two lights brought the bulk of a flying hack. A man stood on the driver's seat, holding the reins far out over the dashboard and yelling at a horse, which plunged in a clumsy gallop, head wagging from side to side at each straining leap.

"Asesinato! Asesinato!" The driver of the careening rig bellowed to the stars as he pulled his beast back on its haunches. Pelton's driver yelled back interrogatives in excited staccato, then turned and addressed some blurred Spanish to Pelton. As he did so he caught sight of the long, white face of the secret agent in the circle of lamplight, and his jaw dropped. Pelton went over to the driver of the flying specter.

"What's the trouble?" he asked.

The man gurgled in his excitement, and pointed back to the black interior of his hack. Pelton's driver, spurred by contagion of the other's hysteria, brought one of his carriage lamps, and held it with a shaking hand up over the sill of the cab-window space. Then Pelton looked in.

The shape of a man lay sprawling between the seat and the floor. His face, thrown back against the cushion, was yellow-white, and the mouth beneath a wide-springing black mustache was twisted into the grisly caricature of a grin. Pelton shifted the light, and looked closer. He saw a splayed nose and a blue-white scar that bisected the forehead.

"Split-nose Gonzales!"

"Si—si, señor," the hackman gasped. *"Señor Gonzales, asesinado!"*

The light from the carriage lantern sparked against something silver white that stuck out from the middle of the velveteen jacket. Pelton moved the lamp down. The silvery stalk sprouting from the jacket was the pearl handle of a dirk, over the heart. Pelton turned, and looked into the wide eyes of the driver.

"The girl—where is she?"

The cochero's eyes suddenly narrowed, and his face became blank under the level gaze of the American. Pelton caught his own driver flashing a message to his fellow Mexican with a quick hand.

"The girl who was in this hack—where is she?" Pelton repeated the question sharply.

Then the Mexican fell back upon the old subterfuge: *"No sabe Ingilessa, señor. Dispense me—no sabe!"*

"But you *sabe* this?" Pelton patted the stock of his gun. "Now you turn around and drive back to *el Nido,* and" —this to his own driver—"you drive behind him—*pronto!*"

The Mexicans exchanged quick glances, but Pelton stood in the road with the thumb of his right hand crooked over his belt very near the butt of the .45. That was potent argument. The driver of the murdered Gonzales turned his hack with much effort, and started back on the road down which he had so recently come on the gallop. Then the secret agent climbed into his own conveyance, choosing this time to sit with the driver, and the little procession moved off up the aisle of the feathery mesquite.

After about fifteen minutes of traveling, the leading hack turned off into a still narrower alley through the brush. The two hacks twisted, and turned between barricades of the rank cactus, black and menacing in the starlight, and the plumes of the mesquite whipped the sides of the ancient structures. All the while Pelton sat with his elbow in his driver's ribs, and his hand on the grip of his revolver where the driver could see it if he chose.

Abruptly a long, low house lifted from the black wilderness. It stood in a little clearing, and the rails of a horse

corral crisscrossed the star field on a little rise behind the house. Not a light anywhere along the shadow bulk of the house front; not a sound. The two hacks stopped on the edge of a clearing at some distance away, and Pelton's driver turned and looked at him with insolence scarcely veiled.

"Well, señor?"

"You and your friend get down," Pelton ordered. "You tell him. There, all right. Now come with me. And walk ahead of me up to the house."

The two obeyed with a surly show of indifference. They crossed to the house, and Pelton pounded with his revolver butt on the front door. No answer. He tried the wooden shutters that covered the two front windows; they were secured from within. Just as he stepped off the low porch, the saw-tooth voice of a burro out in the corral was lifted in lamentation. The sound shattered the silence uncannily.

After a moment's thought, Pelton started toward the corral, still enforcing the ungracious company of the two Mexicans with a significant hand on his weapon. As he topped the rise of the little hill, he saw a half mile or so away the dim, black ramparts of the river mesa on the Mexican side, and below them, running black as a stream of tar, the river itself. Nearer at hand were a dozen and more strange shapes, all sharp blocks and angles, which stirred and shifted restlessly in a dim line along the rail fence of the corral. A horse whinnied. A bell tinkled softly.

In another minute Pelton was at the fence. There he found, tethered all in line, a string of pack burros. They were all packed; the bulks of long boxes overtopped the ears of the little beasts, and gave each a distorted, bizarre appearance as if he had been built out of dominoes.

A sudden ejaculation caused Pelton to turn his head; the Mexicans were conversing together in excited whispers. The American's pulse was pounding hard, and a strange sense of exultation gripped his heart as he struck a match and held it to the end of one of the roped boxes on a burro's back.

"Remington" was stamped there in black.

Joseph Warren Pelton, of Harvard, never did quicker thinking than at that moment. Here were the guns; there, a half mile away, was the river—and beyond, Mexico! But where were the gun runners who had made everything ready for the quick dash over the river? Was it that—yes, by everything beautiful, it must be! They had gone ahead to cross the ford and get in touch with the insurrectos across the river. Gonzales—Gonzales back there in the hack—was the one who had been delegated to take the pack train down to the river and over to the Mexican side. They must be waiting for Gonzales, even now off there in the dark.

Pelton pulled his revolver from the holster, and dropped the play of armed truce between himself and the two cocheros.

"Go find that horse we heard, and bring him to me," he commanded.

The one who had been his driver quailed at the sight of steel, and hurried down the line of tethered beasts. He was back in a moment, leading a saddled broncho. Pelton swung into the saddle, and, sitting there with the long snout of the revolver across the pommel, he spoke again with dry incisiveness.

"Now, you, 'Tonio, you'll leave your hack here and come with me to show me the way back to the river road. Then you'll come back here, and you and the other fellow will stay here until morning. Both of you stay here, *sabe?* And if you follow me, I'll have to shoot you; that's all."

"*Si, señor;* but Gonzales?"

"Oh, they"—Pelton pointed over to the river cañon—"they'll tell you what to do with him when they come back. Now cut those burros loose, 'Tonio; bring the bell burro to me, and then you trot ahead as fast as you can down to the river road. And, 'Tonio, look here! Remember this will be pointing at you all the way—at your back. So don't play any tricks!"

The burros were cut loose; the bell burro trotted at the end of the tether

rope behind Pelton's broncho, and so, at a trot, the weird procession of misshapen beasts passed the yellow eyes of the hacks, passed Split-nose Gonzales smiling under his black mustache, and was swallowed up in the maw of the thicket.

Pelton rode close behind the Mexican, who, half running and with his head bent against the flailing of the mesquite, found the trail. Pelton heard his rasping curses, and kept him closely covered. He rode with every nerve at wire tautness, fearing that each moment would bring a challenge out of the dark, the whanging of revolvers.

Nothing but blind chance, he said, to himself, could order it that this stealing of the guns from under the very noses of the junta's coyotes should be accomplished. He strained his eyes at the dark, and believed that he could already see horsemen, puzzled at Gonzales' delay, swinging their horses from the river brink, and putting them to the trail back to the hacienda to learn the cause. Then pursuit would follow.

Gray light tipped the mesa when the Mexican stopped, panting, and pointed to the broad wheel tracks of the river road. Pelton nodded, and as he marshaled his pack train into the road he waved his hand back toward *el Nido.*

"Remember," he called, "you'll get shot if you follow."

A rock struck Pelton's straw hat, and sent it spinning into the dust. The Mexican had the last word.

As fast as the little bell burro's feet could pace, Pelton urged his broncho. He turned in his saddle, and looked back. Twelve grotesque little peaks, sharp-cornered and high-topped, bobbed and swayed behind him. The light was strong enough now to let him see the nodding heads and pronged ears of those nearest. He laughed.

"Now, if I could only turn the corner into Sherry's and get each of these checked at the door. Hey—up there, Alcibiades!"

But Pelton's hilarity was more hysterical than genuine. The swift reel of events that night had brought tragedy and menace; menace was pressing close yet. And mystery; yes, mystery as sinister as Gonzales' smile.

Pelton attacked the rebus of that night. Why had the Señorita Rosarios chosen to go out into the dark with a cutthroat, the murderer of her brother, if it was not to kill him? But did she kill him? How did she disappear, then? When did the driver discover that a dead man nodded alone in his hack? Did the driver connive at murder; had he hidden the girl, or was it possible that she herself had met death in the dark?

The brooding dawn, gray-white and stealthy in approach, made mystery tangible, clothed bush and cactus skeleton with garments of the unreal. And on the road behind the grudging shadows cloaked—what?

"Hup! Hey—hup there, Alcibiades!"

The east was banded now with pale stripes of rose; they blushed to cherry, to garnet, and the nearer stars burned out. Night was pushed back like a curtain. The morning scent of dew on flowers hung low over the green wilderness, and the mourning dove sent a hail to the new day. The single horseman in the dawn turned again and again to look back to where the ribbon of road led out into the pale radiance. Did shadows move back there against the sky line, or were those dots that rose and fell, rose and fell over the wall of the mesquite, only the nodding flower clusters of the yucca?

"Hooey, back there! Hump yourself!"

Pelton rounded a sharp bend in the road, and his horse shied. A girl, clad in white, jumped to her feet from a bank of purple lupines by the roadside, and stood irresolute, seeming ready to run into the near-by thicket, yet daring to stay. Her face, turned over one shoulder, was chalk white and haggard.

"Señorita Rosarios!" Pelton reined in, and sprang to the girl's side.

"Santa Maria! You, Señor Americano?"

Terror was in her voice, and, too, a broken, helpless note. The girl hid her eyes with her arms, and her body shrank before Pelton's approach.

"Away from me! Away from me!" she cried chokingly.

"Listen, señorita"—Pelton spoke hurriedly, and with a hard note of command. "They are behind—Gonzales' men. They are riding to catch me—and you. They know—I know—about Gonzales"—the girl sobbed and crossed herself—"and they will kill you and kill me if they catch us. Come!"

Pelton took her arm, and started to pull her toward his horse.

"But—but—I would like to keel you once." The girl was wrestling to free herself. "Heem—Gonzales—first, an' then you."

With no other word, Pelton suddenly caught Señorita Rosarios in his arms, and lifted her to the saddle. He swung up behind her, and with one arm he kept the struggling girl on the horse, while he groped with the other behind him for the bell burro's tether rope.

"Get a-going, Al, old boy! Quick there, you bell rabbit!"

The girl ceased to struggle, and tried to sit very stiffly away from Pelton. He could see her shoulders shake with an occasional spasm of sobbing, but she said nothing; nor did he.

There was dust against the face of the dawn behind them, and he had seen it!

Five long minutes passed; ten. No sound but the jangle-jangle of the bell and the padding of many little hoofs on the road.

"Halt!"

A cavalryman in brown khaki turned his horse out into the road from the bushes, and the muzzle of his carbine bore on Pelton.

"Don't make a move until I come up to you!"

The trooper whistled, and three other brown campaign hats blossomed from the mesquite as horses moved from cover out to the road.

"Open my coat in front here"—Pelton's voice thrilled in spite of himself—"and you'll find my badge. I am an officer of the treasury department. This outfit here is guns. I took them back there in the mesquite on the river mesa."

The trooper did take a squint at Pelton's badge, and a very frank look at the girl, who was on the saddle in front of him. The others were crowding around him by this time, congratulating in high-pitched, eager voices and estimating the number of guns in the cases the burros carried.

"Your outfit sure did advertise itself, brother," a lengthy, weather-tanned corporal said. "We was a-comin' out from the post to ride the river road, lookin' for just what you picked up, and we heerd you comin' lickety-split. So we natch'ly laid low, and allowed we was going to do a little ambushin' of you."

Hurriedly Pelton told then of the pursuers who, he was certain, were on his back road. The corporal told off two cavalrymen to ride slowly along the road and see what they could see.

"And now," Pelton concluded, "I'll leave the guns for you to take in to the post. Tell Colonel Glynn with my compliments that I'll be around later in the morning to report on them. I have—that is, this young woman helped me make the raid, and I must take her to her home."

The corporal took the lead rope of the bell burro, grinning understandingly; then Pelton kicked the flanks of the broncho, and he and the girl were soon by themselves again.

During the brief colloquy, Señorita Rosarios had sat stiffly erect, her head turned away from the troopers. Pelton had seen the blood mount to her cheek when she had been referred to; so close she was to him that the ripples of the red flush on her neck and cheek played like sunlight through fragile porcelain right under his eyes. Nor did she turn her eyes to his or speak, now that they were again on their way. He respected her silence, and said nothing. It was the girl who finally broke silence.

"Señor"—her voice was low and vibrant; her eyes held resolutely to the front—"Señor, what now do you do with me?"

"I will take you over the ford, the second ford below town," Pelton answered, "and then I will leave you—in

Mexico. It will not be far to your home."

Many minutes passed. The sun popped over the mesas behind them of a sudden, and the rosy light struck through the girl's thin white gown. The tint of her neck and shoulders—tint of rose on old ivory—deepened and warmed.

"You take me to Mexico, señor; you —do not arres' me?" Still the voice came low, but her head did not turn. "I am—I did—I have keel Gonzales. You know I do thees thing—an' you do not arres' me?"

"No, señorita. Nobody knows but I and the cochero, and he does not know your name, your face, even."

They had turned from the river road, and were descending the trail to the river. The roofs and white walls of the two Laredos, a mile away, were all green and red gold in the new sunlight.

"But—but——" The girl's voice broke for an instant, then steadied. "You, señor, also I was make my vow to keel—for Manuel's death. First Gonzales—then you, as I tole you."

"Yes."

"An' you are taking me to Mexico —you de-liver me, señor?"

Pelton made no response. He put the sturdy little broncho to the shallow ford, and when the water rose to the saddle girth he lifted the girl in his arms so that she should be dry, and thus he held her for many minutes. She steadied herself with an arm that passed around his neck, first haltingly, and then with simple assurance. The broncho's footing was sure. He climbed to the low, sandy shore where the feathery mesquite dipped its branches to the yellow current. There was a trail leading from the bank by zigzags up to the top of the mesa. Pelton jumped off the saddle, and raised his hands to assist the girl to the ground.

Her face was turned to his now for the first time. It was flushed. Her eyes, purple black like the fruit of the aguacate, seemed filmed and misty with a sudden passion of longing, of half-formed resolve. Morning light made more red the lips parted for speech that would not be voiced. She took Pelton's hands, and dropped lightly to the ground. Still she held his hands with a tightening grip. She swayed toward him ever so slightly, then caught herself, and the rose on her cheeks grew deeper.

"Señor — Señor Americano — I — I cannot say—I cannot——" A subtle note of pleading and of tenderness crept into her voice. "Plees, señor, plees—I may kees you—for go'by?"

Her arms flashed up, and her hands locked behind his neck. She drew his face down, and she kissed him fair upon the mouth. Then, blushing scarlet, she turned and ran up the trail.

Pelton saw a flash of her white skirt through the greenery, heard the clatter of a pebble loosened—then he was alone.

THE VERSATILE MR. REID

WHITELAW REID, American ambassador to England, did a lot of things before he became a diplomat. As far back as 1858 he edited a newspaper in Xenia, Ohio. In 1861 he was a war correspondent, and after that served as an aid-de-camp on the staff of General Rosecrans. After the war he held several government positions in Washington, was a cotton planter in Louisiana, and worked as a newspaper editor in New York. It was not until 1889 that he became a diplomat by accepting the appointment to the position of United States minister to France.

NO TRICK MONEY FOR THEM

The Ringlings, who are top-notchers in the circus business, do not believe in trying to make their earnings do circus tricks. Every dollar they make is invested in good old government bonds.

Mr. Sweeny Entertains

By Charles R. Barnes

Author of "Sweeny, the Detective," "Miss Sweeny," Etc.

The Howling Hoofs turn a perfectly respectable flat into a madhouse—and all because that genial host, Dan Sweeny, hadn't the heart to turn anybody away from his doorstep

THIS is the story of the Howling Hoofs, as Mrs. Sweeny told it to the Boarder, on a rainy November afternoon. The Boarder had been to a minstrel show the night before, and had entertained the gambler's widow with a recital of dialogue between the eternal Mr. Bones and the middle man.

"Them minstrel fellers is as queer as the Chinese flag sometimes," Mrs. Sweeny said. "They're alwus busted, and if you'd give 'em steady jobs countin' the ten-dollar bills in a bank and lettin' 'em keep every third one, they'd quit the work to troup on a shoestring salary. I know, b'cause my poor dead husban', Danny, knowed a bunch of 'em, and they hung 'round the house here some. There was the 'Howlin' Hoof,' now——"

"The what?" interrupted the Boarder.

"The Howlin' Hoof," she repeated. "Howlin' Hoofs is song-and-dance men. They howl and they hoof, as you might say, and that there term is real regular in the perfession, like 'leven-forty-fives and——"

The Boarder looked puzzled.

"My dear Mrs. Sweeny," he protested, "you speak a strange language."

"Oh," she exclaimed wearily, "w'y don't you get out and mix with the bunch? 'Leven-forty-fives is high hats. You know all minstrel parades starts at 'leven-forty-five, and, bein' that the men wears them high lids, then, it ought to stand to reason that tall bonnets gets called 'leven-forty-fives. But them things ain't got nothin' to do with this here story, which is about Howlin' Hoofs. I mentioned 'em b'cause I'm talkin' about the show business, and I just can't help droppin' into the talk that b'longs to it. And if you hear me say a guy is end in the first part and doubles on bass, for the love of Mike let it go at that, for I can't be stoppin' all the time to explain puffecly natural things to a hick, like you seem to be at times, even if you did spend forty thousand dollars on a college education that gets you fifty a week now."

The Boarder promised to bear up uncomplainingly under any combination of words that might issue forth, and so Mrs. Sweeny plunged into her yarn.

"My Danny," she explained, "knowed all sorts of people, as I've told you b'fore. Him bein' a bookmaker at the race tracks throwed him in with everybody from Mike the Rat to the Gulf of Algiers——"

"The Bey of Algiers," corrected the Boarder.

Mrs. Sweeny took no notice of his words.

"As I was sayin'," she continued, "Danny knowed 'em all, for every kind of folks that there is plays the ponies. Lots of show folks does, and among them people was the Howlin' Hoof. His reg'lar name was Kelly, but Danny never called him nothin' but the Howlin' Hoof, and I come to know him by that title. Danny usta say of him:

"'Belle,' he says, 'that there guy is one fine feller. I can tell,' he says, 'bein' a fine judge of human nature.

I'd give him my shirt,' he says, 'if he needed it, and he'd give me hisn. You ought to hear him shout a rag and see him dance. Gee,' he says, 'but the Howlin' Hoof has class to him.'

"Yes, mister, that's the way my husban' would go on about his fr'en', tellin' how gen'rous and big-hearted he was and ravin' over the way he could do his turn.

" 'Howlin' Hoofs,' he says, 'ain't so well paid as they ought to be, and so that there grand pufformer fr'en' of mine don't have money reg'lar. And w'en he does have any,' Danny says, 'he saves it, for I don't never see him buyin' nothin' for nobody,' he says, 'w'ich is a fine way to be. Some time the Howlin' Hoof is goin' to be rich. Say, Belle,' he says, 'it makes me tired to see a lot of boobs flingin' their money 'round in the gang,' he says, 'like they was feedin' hay to chickens,' he says.

"You see, mister, Danny, bein' city raised, didn't know much about farmin' and would of started in by dockin' the cows' tails if he was put to work on a farm. But he knowed pretty much everything else, he did, and the thing he prided hisself on was the way he could size up men.

" 'Belle,' he says, 'I never miss in my readin' of 'em, and that's w'y I've took so to the Howlin' Hoof,' he says. 'That feller,' he says, 'is one big man in his character,' he says.

"And, mister, things was like that w'en the Howlin' Hoof met Danny on the street one day and ast him could he leave his dress-suit case at our house for a few days, havin' left his boardin' house and bein' unsettled about w'ere to go.

" 'Sure you can leave it,' Danny says, 'and you can make one big bet on it that the missus and me will take as good care of it as if it was a orphing child,' he says, 'without no father or mother,' he says, 'and no place to go,' he says. And so the Howlin' Hoof fetches his dress-suit case out to our house, and I put it away in one of the bedrooms.

"This is the same flat we had then, mister. There's a livin' room and a dinin' room and a kitchen and two bedrooms for reg'lar people and one for the maid. It's comfort'ble livin' quarters for two people, and there's enough room for a overflow, like the folks from back home that comes to the city and camps out on you to save hotel bills. So there was plenty of space for a dress-suit case that didn't have nothin' much in it but a celluloid collar and a dickey and some socks that the feets was all wore out of. I didn't have to look to know that, for I was a Mrs. Wisenheimer about the habits of them Howlin' Hoofs and minstrel men. Lots of times we'd kept one of 'em at our house for a day or two. Yes, sir, I knowed all about 'em.

"The Howlin' Hoof told Danny, and Danny told me that him and some more Howlin' Hoofs had a grand tip on a horse that was bein' saved up to win a race two weeks away. The horse's name was Miss Lizzie, and them Howlin' Hoofs had got together about fifty dollars to put down on her, at w'at was sure to be fifty to one or better.

" 'They're goin' to win a barrel of money,' Danny tells me, 'for I know the owner and his plants alwus goes through. It goes to show you how good-hearted the Howlin' Hoof is; he tells me about Miss Lizzie b'cause he's my good fr'en', and his heart's as big as a gas tank. Give me them perfessional people every time,' he says.

"You know, mister, that I ain't the kind of a pusson to let my heart run away with myself, and so I didn't echo in on that hurrooy stuff about them crazy the-ats. I'd saw enough of 'em to be pretty sure that most of 'em was bugs; but Danny roared and roared them encores on the Howlin' Hoof till I believed w'at he says. And just to satisfy myself that I was standin' by my husban', I dusted off that there dress-suit case two times the day it was brought. I didn't want the Howlin' Hoof to have no kick over the way my Danny carried out a trust. And b'fore we flopped in the hay that night, I went out, and give it a look, makin' sure that it hadn't been stole.

"I guess it musta been one o'clock

that night when our bell rings. I wakes up Danny, and he opened the door. The Howlin' Hoof was there, and he says:

"'Mr. Sweeny,' he says, 'I hate to trouble you, but I come to get a collar out of my dress-suit case,' he says. 'I want it for in the mornin', b'cause the one I got on has got spots on it—ink spots that's due to a guy gettin' fresh and thinkin' it's funny to hurl a pen full of ink around the room,' he says. 'I've washed and washed at them spots, Mr. Sweeny,' he says, 'but they won't come off, and that means I got to buy another collar—a guy ought to have two collars,' he says, 'so he can make a hurry change if one of 'em goes on the bum,' he says.

"Of course, Danny, bein' big-hearted, lets the guy in, and sicks him onto that dress-suit case. The collar was in it, sure enough, and then that Howlin' Hoof wants pummission to go in our bathroom and wash it, for he'd forgot to scrub it after he'd wore it last. 'Go to it, kid,' says Danny. And so the collar got a wash, and it looked as if the Howler didn't have no more excuse to stick 'round. But he wasn't ready to go.

"'Mr. Sweeny,' he says, 'b'fore I go, I wish't you'd direct me to a place w'ere I can get a cheap room,' he says. 'I been paving it all day long,' he says, 'searchin' for quarters fit for a gent'm'n, but w'at,' he says, 'do I get? Nothin',' he says, 'and it's so late now, that mebby nobody will let me in,' he says.

"Danny took that there line of talk to his bussom, and hugged it, and then ate it up.

"'Kelly,' he says, 'no fr'en' of mine is goin' out in the night huntin' a bed,' he says. Then he turns to me, hollerin' into the room.

"'Belle,' he says, 'get some of my pajamas for the Howlin' Hoof here, for I'm goin' to put him to bed in the spare room,' he says.

"And be-lieve me, mister, he done that very thing. The Howlin' Hoof goes to bed, and gets up at twelve the next day. I fed him, and he went out, thankin' me most perfuse for w'at me and my husban' had did. But I noticed that he left his dress-suit case, and somehow a turrible load of worry come and set on my mind. It seemed like there was disaster lurkin' in the air—the same feelin' you get w'en you know your ice box has leaked and you're waitin' for the pussons in the flat below to come across with the dismal yelp—you remember how it was the last time our ice box leaked?"

"Yes," replied the Boarder.

"And how nervous I was?"

The Boarder nodded.

"Well," Mrs. Sweeny went on, "I felt somethin' like that w'en I seen that the Howlin' Hoof hadn't took away his suit case. I slipped a tell to myself that he wasn't in the class that never comes back. And you can just take it from me that ladies' intuitions is great things. Me and Danny was fast asleep that night w'en the bell gets busy and Danny opens the door. B'fore he went, I says to him:

"'It's the Howlin' Hoof,' I says, 'comin' back for another flop.'"

"'He can have it, then,' says Danny, 'for perhaps the poor feller is down and out and needs to be took care of.' And, as soon as he had the door open, he hollers:

"'Welcome to our city, Kelly,' he says. And then he didn't say much more that night, for w'at do you think had come off?"

The Boarder gave it up.

"It's the honust truth, mister," Mrs. Sweeny assured him, "that the Howlin' Hoof had brung another Howlin' Hoof with him. And he says:

"'Mr. Sweeny,' he says, 'this here gent is a fr'en' of mine,' he says, 'that ain't been able to find lodgin's suitable to a gent'm'n, so I ast him to come and share my bed,' he says, 'that you so kindly let me have last night. I felt sure that I could come back,' he says, 'for two nights in a bed,' he says, 'don't hurt it no more than one,' he says. 'And be-lieve me, Mister Sweeny,' he says, 'you won't regret your kindness, for this guy is on the Miss Lizzie bet, and, w'en we cash, we're goin' to do

somethin' handsome at you and your wife,' he says.

"Danny didn't say much, but he ushers them two Howlin' Hoofs into the spare bedroom. And the next day at noon our hired girl got a peevish look on her face over there bein' so much comp'ny in the house. That disaster feelin' of the day b'fore got most cruel intense in me. Honust to John, it did. There was two Howlin' Hoofs in the house, both of 'em seemin' to like the place.

"The only consolation I got out of it was that soon they was to have a barrel of money and mebby they might give me and Danny some beautiful present, like a cookoo clock or a nice rug or p'r'aps a chafing dish with words of fr'en'ship engraved on it. A lady alwus likes to get somethin' for nothin', even if it does cost board and room for a couple of Howlin' Hoofs."

"Why did you put up with them?" asked the Boarder.

"They was fr'en's of Danny's," Mrs. Sweeny replied, "and he wasn't a man to have it said of him that he throwed two homeless Howlin' Hoofs out on the street. And besides, there was that there bet on Miss Lizzie. It kinda had me goin'. If them fellers won, they'd have quite a little roll of money. And there wasn't any sayin' w'at they'd do with it.

"Suppose they was to hang 'round till the race was run and then come to me and say: 'Here, Mis' Sweeny, is fifty. Go buy yourself a new lid. You been good to us, and this is a little token of appreciation at w'at you done.'

"That would listen good, I guess, though, of course, I didn't need the money. But, as I said, a lady alwus likes to get somethin' for nothin'—presents, for instance. That's w'y gels falls for fellers that sends 'em flowers and boxes of candy. It's a instinct born in ladies, like runnin' 'round in the mornin' lookin' so bum that their husban's wonders w'at they ever married 'em for. But you, not bein' a married man, can't 'preciate that."

"I've heard my friends talk," said the Boarder.

"Then," Mrs. Sweeny continued, "you've got the idea. But let's get back to them Howlin' Hoofs. That night, 'way after twelve, they come back, and they had another one with 'em. Danny welcomes 'em like they was burglars, but it never hands nothing of a jolt to that there Mr. Kelly.

"'Mr. Sweeny,' he says, 'I've found another Howlin' Hoof,' he says, 'that is without a furnished room, at present, b'cause this here town don't seem to have no places to live that classes up to his station in life. Be-lieve me, Mr. Sweeny, he stood 'em up in Oskaloosa, last time he showed there, and he is some song-and-dance artist. So, admirin' his professional ability as I does,' he says, 'I ast him to share my bed with me and my fr'en' here. We can sleep crossways,' he says, 'and it won't hurt the bed none, for I examined it thorough, and it's as strong and healthy as a prize fighter,' he says.

"And Danny let that line of argument get by with him, and them three Howlin' Hoofs went in our spare bedroom and passed away. It was the usual twelve-o'clock stunt next mornin'. They all come out to the dinin' room, and finds me with a young frost on my face.

"'Mis' Sweeny,' says Kelly, 'we don't want to be no bother to you, but if you could let us have a cup of coffee, we'd be that grateful.'

"'And a couple of soft-boiled aigs,' says one of the other guys.

"'If there's a old piece of liver and bacon,' says the newest of the bunch, 'or a shopwore steak that you don't want, or mebby some broiled ham, we could use it. We don't want to be no trouble, as my fr'en' here was sayin', but we'd 'preciate just a bite b'fore we go downtown and get breakfast,' he says.

"Well, there wasn't nothin' to do but feed 'em, and, while they was eatin', they kep' talkin' 'bout the good times that was comin' w'en the big bet was cashed.

"'We don't make no secret of it,' they says, 'that we ain't e'zactly Hotel Astor trade now, but you know, Mis'

Sweeny, a bum rehearsal makes a good show, and we'll come through jinglin' like a row of sleigh bells,' they says. And after that they goes out.

"I thought we was in bad enough as it was, but the worst was yet to come. It seemed like them fellers had a habit of roustin' 'round half the night. I guess they wouldn't of went to bed at all, if they hadn't figgered that mebby me and Danny wouldn't stand for 'em breezin' in at eight in the mornin'. So they come home at w'at, to them, was a respectable time.

"At half past two the next mornin', our bell buzzes again, and, as Danny told me afterward, the hall outside of our flat looked like we was a bookin' office, and all the Howlin' Hoofs in the world was hangin' 'round for jobs. There was five of 'em, all told; and Kelly, he says:

"'Mr. Sweeny,' he says, 'durin' my stay with you,' he says, 'I took particular notice of a fine bed davenport that is in your sittin' room,' he says. 'And knowin' your kind-heartedness, I took it on myself to fetch a couple more of the boys to my home. They can sleep on that there davenport,' he says, 'and they won't be no trouble, for only one of 'em snores, and he only does it w'en he ain't lookin' at hisself, so to speak. Come on in, boys,' he says, 'and meet Mr. Sweeny, the grandest man in the world,' he says.

"And with that they all marched in, Danny doin' nothin' but hold the door open for 'em. He didn't have as much to say as a man with a mouth full of mush. Two more pairs of pajamas come out of the drawer, and he went to bed with them Howlin' Hoofs and a turrible laundry bill starin' him in the face.

"I've told this story b'fore, to show people, mister, and they tell me it's true to life. If it is, I'm truly thankful that my husban' wasn't no Howlin' Hoof, and that you ain't one. Their habits is something fierce."

"In what respect?" asked the Boarder.

"They ain't got no sense of the fitness of things, and there might as well be no clock," explained Mrs. Sweeny. "I guess it musta been a hour after they turned in, b'fore I heard folks skurryin' 'round the house, and pretty soon there's a argument started in the livin' room. Them Howlin' Hoofs was all there, and they was talkin' about a song one of 'em had learned and was goin' to put on as soon as he got a job. The talk goes like this:

"'It won't get across,' says one.

"'It sure will,' says the feller that was goin' to sing it, 'for it's just like 'Mary Was Shooing the Chickens,' and that was a knock-out. It's got everything in it for a hit, I tell you. Take the piano, Kelly, and I'll sing it.'

"And, mister, that's w'at they done. It didn't make no difference to 'em that it was nearly four o'clock in the mornin'. Not them. *Bing, bing, bing* goes the piano, and the Howlin' Hoof yowls at the top of his voice:

Agnes was a farmer girl,
Farmer girl, farmer girl,
Agnes was a farmer girl,
Hair a-curl, yes, a-curl;
And she took me by the hand,
By the hand, by the hand,
I could not but understand,
That these words she'd say:

Country girls is better for to be a young man's wife,
Living by the haymows beats the city and its strife,
I can harness horses and make currant jell and such,
City girls wear store-bought hair and don't amount to much;
So Jack, you take my good advice—I told her that I would—
A country girl shall be my bride, for they're all to the good.

"Imagine it, mister, them Howlin' Hoofs yelpin' them bum songs in our house at four o'clock in the mornin'! It beat anything I ever heard of, and I was so fidgety about the call-down I was sure to get from the janitor in the mornin' that I kept turnin' over in my bed till I was so dizzy I fell out. The idee of them Howlin' Hoofs turnin' my puffec'ly respectable flat into a madhouse—and w'at was the neighbors goin' to say? Gee! It certainly had me goin' like the car ahead in a automobile race. Danny went out, and

stopped 'em, but they didn't seem offended.

"Kelly says: 'Mr. Sweeny,' he says, 'mebby we did start somethin' in your 'ristocratic flat,' he says, 'but, take it from me, it was for the best that we all got out of bed, for one of my fr'en's here had just set fire to the bed with a cigarette butt,' he says, 'and it was a act of providence,' he says, 'that we went in and woked him up and put the fire out. Now we'll all go back and flop again,' he says, 'and as soon as Miss Lizzie brings home the money,' he says, 'this here gang is a-goin' to show Mr. and Mrs. Sweeny that our breasts is full of gratitude,' he says.

"And with them words on his lips, the feller and his pals went back to bed.

"I guess that mob was hangin' 'round our house for pretty near two weeks, and all the time they kept talkin' about the bank roll they was goin' to pull down w'en Miss Lizzie beat the field to the wire.

"Then come the day w'en Miss Lizzie was to run. The Howlin' Hoofs all breezed downtown to a pool room, and first thing I knowed I was called to the telephone. Kelly was doin' the talkin' at the other end.

"'Mis' Sweeny,' he says, 'I called up to say that they're off, and the gang has put it up to me to let you know how the race is a-goin',' he says. 'They're off to a good start,' he says.

"'Thanks,' I says. And pretty soon comes his voice again.

"'Mis' Sweeny,' he says, 'they're at the quarter,' he says. 'Mamie G. leads, Cross Patch is second, and Miss Lizzie is runnin' strong close up to the leaders,' he says.

"There was quiet for a minute, then Kelly says again:

"'They're at the half, Mis' Sweeny. Miss Lizzie passes Cross Patch, and is closin' up on Mamie G.,' he says.

"I begun to get a little bit excited, mister, for it looked like them Howlin' Hoofs was goin' to get their money. That there Miss Lizzie seemed to be workin' well, and there didn't seem to be no good reason w'y she wouldn't win. I waited real anxious for Kelly to do more talkin'. In a minute he's barkin' over the line again.

"'Miss Lizzie leads,' he says, 'and she's runnin' like a kid to a fire,' he says. 'Just a minute,' he says, 'and she'll be in.'

"His voice quit, and there I was, all fussed up. That horse was sure goin' to fetch them five young fellers twenty-five hunderd dollars, at the price they'd got, and you can get a real nice present for just a little slice of that. I found myself standin' on my tiptoes, waitin' for the answer. It come, buzzin' over the wire real glad.

"'Mis' Sweeny,' says Kelly, 'we cash. Miss Lizzie wins by three lengths, and this here is one happy day.'"

Mrs. Sweeny arose from her chair, and, going over to a window, looked out. The Boarder grew impatient.

"What was the outcome of it all?"

"The outcome," was the reply, "supprised me and Danny big. We didn't hear nothin' from them Howlin' Hoofs for three days; then we got a letter from 'em that run something like this:

Feelin' a deep sense of gratitude for bein' took care of by you and harborin' kind thoughts for all you done for us, we want to show in a mutterial way how we appreciate your big-heartedness. Consequently it is our pleasure to invite Mr. and Mrs. Sweeny to join us in eatin' up as much chop suey, Thursday night, as the two of you can wrap yourselfs around. To show that there ain't nothin' cheap about us, second helpin's ain't barred. Meet us in front of the Metropolitan Hotel at half past eight, and we'll sure show you the time of your life. Hopin' for a prompt acceptance of this here invite, we sign ourselfs, MARTY KELLY AND PALS.

"That," remarked Mrs. Sweeny, "was the answer. I got the letter, and opened it. And w'en I showed it to Danny, w'at do you s'pose he said?"

"What did he say?" the Boarder asked.

Mrs. Sweeny's upper lip curled.

"He didn't say nothin' but just this:

"'My gee!'"

Mrs. Sweeny chats about the Samaritanism of Danny in the month-end POPULAR, on sale January 25th.

Love Lyrics of a Ranch Girl

By Robert V. Carr

Disappointment

I WATCHED this afternoon a while
For him to come. I know his style
Of riding and the reckless way
He has. I wonder if he may
Have hurt himself or got a fall!
He might drop in, if just to call
On Dad. It's getting dark—oh, hum—
And lonely, too. He will not come—
He will not come. I feel—oh, dear!—
As if I cared—I do—I fear.

Trail Talk

RODE out to-day; I don't know why
I felt so restless; thought I'd try
A lope across the flat and pick
Some roses growing 'long the crick.
And actually I just turned pale
As he came riding up the trail.
"Nice day," he said, and looked at me.
I turned away, and said, "It be."
"A-riding far?" I shook my head.
"Can't I go 'long?" "No—yes," I said.

Pride

HE is the boldest rider that
You ever saw. He wears a hat
That cost twelve dollars like as not;
His teeth are white and he has got
Broad shoulders and a little waist,
And just the el-e-gan-test taste
In neckties that a boy e'er had.
Besides, the other day dear Dad
Said he was "sober, straight, and fine."
Dad's views 'most always are like mine.

Buggy Riding

HE came and took me out to-night
A buggy riding by moonlight.
He drove real slow, yet somehow we
Got home before we knew it. He
Reached up and helped me to the ground,
And gently slipped his arm around
My waist, and whispered in my ear
Two words that sounded like "my dear,"
And held me for a minute tight,
And then he *kissed*—kissed me "Good night."

Evelyn

MISS EVELYN lives up in town,
Her father is the Banker Brown;
They met to-day at the picnic
Old settlers held down on the crick.
He looked at her in such a way—
I really don't care to say
Just how I felt; for well I know
She has more style than me and so
If she can give him happiness,
That's all I ask—that is—I guess.

Heart Song

HE wrote a note and asked of me
To meet him by the old lone tree.
I slipped down through the shadows dark,
And once I stopped to bend and hark,
To hear him singing soft and low,
"You are the dearest girl I know."
He ran to me—true, strong, and tall—
But that hain't all, oh, that hain't all.
He kept a-singing soft and low,
"You are the dearest girl I know."

This series of Ranch Girl Lyrics began in the January Month-end Popular, which can be obtained at any news dealer's.

This is the second part of a great story of the West. If you haven't read the first part, ask your news dealer for the January Month-end POPULAR, published two weeks ago.

Good Indian

By B. M. Bower

Author of "Chip of the Flying U," "Lonesome Land," Etc.

SYNOPSIS OF OPENING CHAPTERS

Because he stood between the two races of men, the Indians on his mother's side, the whites on his father's, Grant Imsen's social status was a subject always open to argument. And this notwithstanding his home was the Peaceful Hart ranch on the Snake River; that Phœbe and Peaceful Hart were his foster parents; and that the five Hart boys called him brother. Riding down to Hartley, the little railroad station nearest the ranch, Grant, or as he was called by the Indians, "Good Indian," is introduced to Miss Georgie Howard, the new telegraph operator, express agent, and station mistress. Absolutely indifferent to women, he pays little attention to her, but she is immediately interested in the tall, good-looking, rather somber young rancher. As he leaves the general store he steps on an Indian dog which promptly bites him. Good Indian thereupon lassoes him, ties him to his saddle horn, and gallops off to the Indian village with the unfortunate dog in tow. Arriving there he rides down a couple of wikiups, causes a general hub-bub, turns his prisoner loose, and canters back to the ranch. As a result several of the indignant squaws go to the Hart ranch to protest to Phœbe, but she laughs at the adventure and sends them away. Evadna Ramsey, a young cousin of Phœbe's, who has just come to live on the ranch, is an interested observer of this interview and she makes up her mind that she is not going to like Grant. She even tells him so. He is not affected to any great degree, which, of course, increases her feeling against him. That night two of the boys are aroused by mysterious noises in a grove which is supposed to be haunted. They awaken Grant and he investigates. Seeing a white figure he shoots and hits Evadna, who is playing ghost. The wound is a mere scratch, but the incident does not improve her feelings toward Good Indian. And then a visitor arrives at the ranch to go fishing—one Johannes Baumberger, a big, loose-lipped, gross-minded lawyer, who is later to prove a most disturbing factor in the lives of all on the ranch.

CHAPTER IX.

PEPPAJEE JIM had meditated long in the shade of his wikiup, and now, when the sun changed from a blaring ball of intense, yellow heat to a sullen red disk hanging low over the bluffs of Snake River, he rose, carefully knocked the ashes from his little stone pipe, with one mechanical movement of his arms gathered his blanket around him, pushed a too-familiar dog from him with a shove of moccasined foot, and stalked away through the sagebrush.

On the brow of the hill, just where the faint footpath dipped into a narrow gully at the very edge, almost, of the bluff, he stopped, and lifted his head for an unconsciously haughty stare at his surroundings.

Beneath him and half a mile or so up the river valley, the mellow green of Peaceful's orchard was already taking to itself the soft vagueness of evening shadows. Nearer, the meadow of alfalfa and clover lay like a soft, green carpet of velvet, lined here and there with the irrigation ditches which kept it so. And in the center of the meadow, a small, barbed-wire inclosure marked grimly the spot where lay the bones of old John Imsen. All around the man-made oasis of orchards and meadows, the sage and the sand crowded, jealously close, emphasizing by sharp contrast what man may do with the most unpromising parts of the earth's surface, once he sets himself heart and muscle to the task.

With the deliberation of his race, Peppajee stood long minutes motionless, gazing into the valley before he turned with a true Indian shrug and

went down into the gulley, up the steep slope beyond, and then, after picking his way through a jumble of great bowlders, came out eventually into the dust-ridden trail of the white man. Down that he walked, erect, swift, purposeful, his moccasins falling always with the precision of a wild animal upon the best footing among the loose rocks, stubs of sage roots, or patches of deep dust and sand beside the wagon road, his sharp, high-featured face set in the stony calm which may hide much of the elemental passions beneath and give no sign.

Where the trail curved out sharply to round the Point o' Rocks, he left it, and kept straight on through the sage, entered a rough, narrow opening in the huge rock tongue, and came out presently to the trail again, a scant two hundred yards from the Hart haystacks. When he reached the stable, he stopped, and looked warily about him, but there was no sight or sound of any there save animals, and he went on silently to the house, his shadow stretching long upon the ground before him until it merged into the shade of the grove beyond the gate, and so was lost for that day.

"Hello, Peppajee," called Wally over his cigarette. "Just in time for supper."

Peppajee grunted, stopped where he was in the path two paces from the porch, folded his arms inside his blanket, and stood so while his eyes traveled slowly and keenly around the group lounging at ease above him. Upon the bulky figure of Baumberger they dwelt longest, and while he looked his face hardened until nothing seemed alive but his eyes.

"Peppajee, this my friend, Mr. Baumberger. You heap *sabe* Baumberger—come all time from Shoshone, mebbyso catchum heap many fish." Peaceful's mild, blue eyes twinkled over his old meerschaum. He knew the ways of Indians, and more particularly he knew the ways of Peppajee Jim; Baumberger, he guessed shrewdly, had failed to find favor in his eyes.

"Huh!" grunted Peppajee noncommittally, and made no motion to shake hands, thereby confirming Peaceful's suspicion. "Me heap *sabe* Man-that-catchum-fish." After which he stood as before, his arms folded tightly in his blanket, his chin lifted haughtily, his mouth a straight, stern line of bronze.

"Sit down, Peppajee. Bimeby eat supper." Peaceful invited pacifically, while Baumberger chuckled at the Indian's attitude, which he attributed to racial stupidity.

Peppajee made no reply whatsoever. He did not even indicate that he heard or, hearing, understood.

"Bothered much with Injuns?" Baumberger asked carelessly, putting away his pipe. "I see there's quite a camp of 'em up on the hill. Hope you've got good watchdogs—they're a thieving lot. If they're a nuisance, Hart, I'll see what can be done about slapping 'em back on their reservation, where they belong. I happen to have some influence with the agent."

"I reckon yuh needn't go to any trouble about it," Peaceful returned dryly. "I've had worse neighbors."

"Oh—if you're stuck on their company!" laughed Baumberger wheezingly. "'Every fellow to his taste, as the old woman said when she kissed her cow.' There may be good ones among the lot," he conceded politely when he saw that his time-worn joke had met with disfavor, even by the boys, who could—and usually did—laugh at almost anything. "They all look alike to me, I must admit; I never had any truck with 'em."

"No, I reckon not," Peaceful agreed in his slow way, holding his pipe three inches from his face while he eyed Peppajee quizzically. "Don't pay to have any truck with 'em while yuh feel that way about it." He smoothed down his snow-white beard with his free hand, pushed the pipestem between his teeth, and went on smoking.

"I never liked the breed, any way you look at 'em," Baumberger stated calmly.

"Say, you'll queer yourself good and plenty, if you keep on," Wally interrupted bluntly. "Peppajee's ears ain't plugged with cotton—are they, Jim?"

Neither Peppajee nor Baumberger made reply of any sort, and Peaceful turned his mild eyes reproachfully toward his untactful son. But the supper summons clanged insistently from the iron triangle on the back porch, and saved the situation from becoming too awkward. Even Baumberger let his tilted chair down upon its four legs with a haste for which his appetite was not alone responsible, and followed the boys into the house as if he were glad to escape from the steady, uncompromising stare of the Indian.

"Better come and eat, Peppajee," Peaceful lingered upon the porch to urge hospitably. "You no get mad. You come eat supper."

"No!" Peppajee jerked the word out with unmistakable finality. "No eat. Bimeby mebbyso makum big talk, you."

Peaceful studied his face, found it stern and unyielding, and nodded assent. "All right. I eat, then I talk with you." He turned somewhat reluctantly, and followed the others inside, leaving Peppajee to pass the time away as pleased him best.

Peppajee stood still for a moment, listening to the clatter of dishes from the kitchen, and then with dignity and deliberation seated himself upon the lowest step of the porch, and, pulling his blanket tight around him, resettled his disreputable old sombrero upon his head, and stared fixedly at the crimson glow which filled all the west and made even the rugged bluff a wonderful thing of soft, rose tints and shadows of royal purple. Peaceful, coming out half an hour after with Baumberger at his heels, found him so and made a movement to sit down beside him. But Peppajee rose and stalked majestically to the gate, then turned and confronted the two.

"I talk you. Mebbyso no talk Man-with-big-belly." He waited impassively.

"All right, Jim." Peaceful turned apologetically toward his guest. "Something he wants to tell me, Baumberger; kinda private, I reckon. I'll be back in a minute, anyway."

"Now, don't mind me at all," Baumberger protested generously. "Go ahead just as if I wasn't here—that's what'll please me best. I hope I ain't so much of a stranger you've got to stand on ceremony. Go on, and find out what the old buck wants; he's got something on his mind, that's sure. Been stealing fruit, maybe, and wants to square himself before you catch him at it." He laughed his laziest, and began leisurely to fill his pipe.

Peppajee led the way to the stable, where he stopped short and faced Peaceful, his arms folded, one foot thrust forward in the pose he affected when about to speak of matters important.

"Long time ago, when yo' hair black," he began slowly, "yo' all time my frien'. I yo' frien' all same. Yo' no likum otha white man. Yo' all time *bueno*. Yo' house all same my wikiup. Me come eat at yo' house, talk yo' all same brotha. Yo' boys all same my boys—all time my frien'. Me speakum all time no lie, mebbyso?"

"No," Peaceful assented gravely, "you no tell lies, Peppajee. We good friends, many year."

"Huh! Man-that-catchum-fish, him no yo' frien'. All time him speakum lies—tellum frien' yo', no frien'. Yo' no more tellum stop yo' wikiup. *Kay bueno*. You thinkum frien'. All time him have bad heart for yo'. Yo' got ranch. Got plenty hay, plenty apple, plenty all thing for eat. All time him think bad for yo'. All time him likum steal yo' ranch."

Peaceful laughed indulgently. "You no *sabe*," he explained. "Him like my ranch. Him say, long time ago, pay much money for my ranch. Me no sell—me like for keep all time. Baumberger good man. Him no steal my ranch. Me got one paper from government—you *sabe?*—one paper say ranch all time b'longum me. No can steal ranch. Steal paper, no good. Ranch b'longum me all same. Big white chief say ranch b'longum me all time. I die, ranch b'longum my boys. You *sabe?*"

Peppajee considered. "Me *sabe*," he said at length. "Me *sabe* paper, *sabe* ranch all time b'longum yo'. All same,

him ketchum yo' ranch. Me hear much talk, him talk Man-that-coughs, him ketchum ranch. Much white man come, so——" He lifted one hand with thumb and fingers outspread, made a downward gesture, and then raised three fingers. "Catchum ranch."

Peaceful shook his head while he smiled indulgently. "No can do. Mebbyso much men come, heap fight, mebbyso killum me, ranch all same b'longum my boys. Men that fights go to jail, mebbyso hangum." He indicated by signs his exact meaning.

Peppajee scowled, and shook his head stubbornly. "Heap *sabe*. All same, ketchum yo' ranch. Man-that-catchum-fish *kay bueno*. Yo' thinkum frien', yo' damfool. Him all same rattlesnake. Him foolum yo'. You see. Yo' thinkum Peppajee Jim heap big fool. Peaceful Hart, him all time one heap big damfool. Him ketchum yo' ranch. Yo' see." He stopped and stared hard at the dim bulk of the grove, whence came the faint odor of smoke from Baumberger's pipe.

"Yo' be smart man," he added grimly, "you all same kickum off ranch." For emphasis he thrust out a foot vigorously in the direction of the house and the man he maligned, and turned his face toward camp. Peaceful watched until the blanketed form merged into the dusk creeping over the valley, and when it disappeared finally into the short cut through the sage, he shook his gray head in puzzlement over the absurd warning, and went back to talk politics with Baumberger.

CHAPTER X.

Came midnight and moonlight together, and with them came also Good Indian riding somewhat sullenly down the trail to the ranch. Sullen because of Evadna's attitude, which seemed to him permanently antagonistic and for very slight cause, and which made the ranch an unpleasant abiding place; sullen also because of the attitude of Miss Georgia Howard, which, on the other hand, was frankly friendly—and for even slighter cause—and made him more uncomfortable in Hartley than at the ranch.

He decided that he would not stop at the ranch, but would go on up the valley to where one Abner Hicks lived by himself in a half dugout, half board shack, and by mining a little where his land was untillable and farming a little where the soil took kindly to fruit and grasses, managed to exist without too great hardship. The pension he received for having killed a few of his fellow men at the behest of his government was devoted solely to liquid relief from the monotony of his life, and welcome indeed was the man who brought him a bottle of joy between times. Wherefore Good Indian had thoughtfully provided himself with a quart or so and rode with his mind at ease so far as his welcome at the Hicks dwelling place was concerned.

Once again the Peaceful Hart ranch lay in brooding silence under the shadow of the bluff. A few crickets chirped shrilly along the trail, and from their sudden hush as he drew near marked unerringly his passing. Along the spring-fed creek the frogs croaked a tuneless medley before him, and, like the crickets, stopped abruptly and waited in absolute silence to take up their night chant again behind him. His horse stepped softly in the deep sand of the trail, and, when he found that his rider refused to let him stop at the stable door, shook his head in mute displeasure, and went quietly on. As he neared the silent house, the faint creak of saddle leather and the rattle of bridle chains were smothered in the whispering of the treetops in the grove, so that only the quick hushing of night noises alone betrayed him to any wakeful ear.

He was guilty of staring hard at that corner of the house where he knew Evadna slept, and of scowling over the vague disquiet which the thought of her caused him. No girl had ever troubled his mind before. Miss Georgie Howard did not, though she was pretty also, and her friendship was almost as pronounced as the other's dislike, and when he was near her, almost as disquieting.

There was the difference, however, that, once away from Miss Georgie, he could put her out of his mind. But Evadna obtruded, even upon his thoughts of other things.

The grove was quiet, and he could hear Gene's unmistakable snore over by the pond; the only sound, save the whispering of the trees, which went on, unmindful of his approach. It was evident, he thought, that the ghost was effectually laid—and on the heels of that, as he rode out from the deep shade of the grove and on past the garden to the meadows beyond, he wondered if, after all, it was again hardily wandering through the night; for he thought he glimpsed a figure which flitted behind a huge rock a few rods in advance of him, and his eyes were not used to playing him tricks.

He gave a twitch of his fingers upon the reins, and turned from the trail to investigate. He rode up to the rock, which stood like an island of shade in that sea of soft moonlight, and, peering into the shadows, spoke a guarded challenge:

"Who's that?"

A figure detached itself without sound from the blot of darkness there, and stood almost at his stirrup.

"You Good Injun—me likum for talk yo'."

Good Indian was conscious of a distinct disappointment, though he kept it from his voice when he answered:

"Oh, it's you, Peppajee. What you do here? Why you no sleepum yo' wikiup?"

Peppajee held up a slim, brown hand for silence, and afterward rested it upon the saddle fork.

"You heap frien' Peaceful. Me heap frien' all same. Mebbyso we talk. You get down. No can see yo', mebbyso; yo' no likum bad man for see." He stepped back a pace, and let Good Indian dismount; then with a gesture he led him back into the shadow of the rock.

"Well, what's the row?" Good Indian asked impatiently, and curiously as well.

Peppajee spoke more hastily than was usual. "Me watchum Man-that-catchum-fish. Him hee-eeap *kay bueno.* Me no *sabe* why him walk, walk in night—me heap watchum. *Kay bueno.*"

"You mean Baumberger? He's all right. He comes down here to catchum many fish—trout, up in the Malad, you *sabe.* Heap friend Peaceful. You no likum?"

"*Kay bueno.*" Peppajee rested a forefinger upon Good Indian's arm. "Sun up there," he pointed high in the west. "Me go all same Hartley. Come stable—Pete stable—me walkum close—no makum noise. Me hear talk. Stoppum—no can see—me hear much bad talk. All time me hear, heap likum for steal this ranch. Me no *sabe*"—his tone was doubtful for a space—"all same, me hear stealum this ranch. Man, you callum——"

"Baumberger?" suggested Grant.

"Him. All same Baumberga, him talk Man-that-coughs. All time say stealum ranch. Makum much bad talk, them mans. Me come ranch, me tellum Peaceful, him all time laugh, me. All time shakum head. Mebbyso thinkum I lie!"

"What more you do?" Good Indian, at least, did not laugh.

"Me go camp. Me thinkum, thinkum all time. Dat man have bad heart. *Kay bueno.* No can sleep—thinkum mebbyso do bad for Peaceful. Come ranch, stop all time dark, all time heap watchum. Bimeby, mebbyso man—all same yo' callum Baumberga—him come, look, so——" He indicated, by a great craning of neck in all directions, the wariness of one who goes by stealth. "Him walk still all time, go all time ova there." He swept his arm toward the meadows. "Me go still, for watchum. Yo' come, mebbyso make heap much noise—*kay bueno.* Dat mans, him hear, him heap scare. Me tellum, yo' mebbyso go still." He folded his arms with a gesture of finality, and stood statuelike in the deep gloom beside the rock.

Good Indian fingered his horse's mane while he considered the queer story. There must be something in it, he thought, to bring Peppajee from his

blankets at midnight and to impel him, unfriendly as he usually seemed, to confide his worry to him at once and without urging. And yet, to steal the Peaceful Hart ranch—the idea was ludicrous. Still, there was no harm in looking around a bit. He sought a sagebush that suited his purpose, tied his horse to it, stooped, and took the clanking Mexican spurs from his heels, and touched Peppajee on the shoulder.

"All right," he murmured close to his ear, "we go see."

Without a word, Peppajee turned, and stole away toward the meadows, keeping always in the shadow of rock or bush, silent-footed as a prowling bobcat. Close behind him, not quite so silent because of his riding boots which would strike now and then upon a rock, however careful he was of his footing, went Good Indian.

So they circled the meadow, came into sand and sage beyond, sought there unavailingly, went on to the orchard, and skirted it, keen of eye and ear, struck quietly through it, and came at last to the place where, the night before, Grant had overtaken Evadna—and it surprised him not a little to feel his heart pounding unreasonably against his ribs when he stopped beside the rock where they had sat and quarreled.

Peppajee looked back to see why Grant paused there, and then, wrapping his blanket tightly around him, crawled through the fence, and went on, keeping to the broad belt of shade cast upon the ground by the row of poplars. Where the shade stopped abruptly, and beyond lay white moonlight with the ranch buildings blotching it here and there, he stopped and waited until Good Indian stood close beside him. Even then he did not speak, but, freeing an arm slowly from the blanket folds, pointed toward the stable.

Grant looked, saw nothing, stared harder, and so, feeling sure there must be something hidden there, presently believed that a bit of the shadow at that end which was next the corral wavered, stopped, and then moved unmistakably. All the front of the stable was distinctly visible in the white light, and, while they looked, something flitted across it, and disappeared among the sage beyond the trail.

Again they waited; two minutes, three minutes, five. Then another shadow detached itself slowly from the shade of the stable, hesitated, walked out boldly, and crossed the white sand on the path to the house. Baumberger it was, and he stopped midway to light his pipe, and so, puffing luxuriously, went on into the blackness of the grove.

They heard him step softly upon the porch, heard also the bovine sigh with which he settled himself in the armchair there. They caught the aromatic odor of tobacco smoke ascending, and knew that his presence there had all at once become the most innocent, the most natural thing in the world; for any man, waking on such a night, needs no justification for smoking a nocturnal pipe upon the porch while he gazes dreamily out upon the moon-bathed world around him.

Peppajee touched Grant's arm, and turned back, skirting the poplars again until they were well away from the house, and there was no possibility of being heard. He stopped there, and confronted the other.

"What for you ride more past stable?" he questioned bluntly. "What for you no stoppum ranch, for sleep-um?"

"I go for stoppum Hick's ranch," said Good Indian, without any attempt at equivocation.

Peppajee grunted. "What for you no stoppum all same Peaceful?"

Good Indian hesitated, suddenly scorned a subterfuge, and spoke truly. "That girl, Evadna, no likum me. All time mad me. So I no stoppum ranch, no more."

Peppajee grinned briefly and understandingly, and nodded his head. "Me heap *sabe*. Yo' all time heap like for catchum that girl, be yo' squaw. Bime-by that girl heap likum yo'. Me *sabe*." He stood a moment staring at the stars peeping down from above the rim rock

which guarded the bluff. "All same, yo' no go stoppum Hicks," he commanded. "Yo' stoppum dis ranch all time. Yo' all time watchum man—yo' callum Baumberga." He seemed to remember and speak the name with some difficulty. "Where him go, you go, for heap watchum. All time mebbyso me watchum Man-that-coughs. Me no *sabe* catchum ranch—all same, me watchum. Them mans heap *kay bueno*. Yo' bet yo' life!"

A moment he stood there after he was through speaking, and then he was not there. Good Indian did not hear him go, though he had stood beside him; neither could he, catching sight of a wavering shadow, say positively that there went Peppajee.

He waited for a space, stole back to where he could hear any sound from the porch even if he could not see, and when he was certain that Baumberger had gone back to his bed, he got his horse, took him by a roundabout way to the stable, and himself slept in a haystack. At least, he made himself a soft place beside one, and lay there until the sun rose, and if he did not sleep it was not his fault, for he tried hard enough.

That is how Good Indian came to take his usual place at the breakfast table, and to touch elbows with Evadna and to greet her with punctilious politeness and nothing more. That is why he got out his fishing tackle and announced that he thought he would have a try at some trout himself, and so left the ranch not much behind Baumberger. That is why he patiently whipped the Malad riffles until he came up with the portly lawyer from Shoshone, and found him gleeful over a full basket and bubbling with innocent details of this gamy one and that one still gamier. They rode home together, and together they spent the hot afternoon in the cool depths of the grove.

By sundown Good Indian was ready to call himself a fool and Peppajee Jim a meddlesome, visionary old idiot. Steal the Peaceful Hart ranch? The more he thought of it, the more ridiculous the thing seemed.

CHAPTER XI.

Good Indian was young, which means that he was not always logical, nor much given to looking into the future very far except as he was personally concerned in what he might see there. By the time Sunday brought Miss Georgie Howard and the stir of preparation for the fishing trip, he forgot that he had taken upon himself the responsibility of watching the seemingly harmless movements of Baumberger, or had taken seriously the warnings of Peppajee Jim; or if he did not forget, he at least pushed it far into the background of his mind with the assertion that Peppajee was a meddlesome old fool and Baumberger no more designing than he appeared—which was not at all.

What did interest him that morning was the changeful mood of Evadna. It is true that he kept his interest so well hidden that no one suspected it—not even the young lady herself, who, being a woman, was no doubt endowed with that peculiar feminine instinct which discovers such things and so puts a man to rout in utter bewilderment. It is possible that if Evadna had suspected that Good Indian's attitude of calm oblivion to her moods was only a mask, she might have continued longer her rigorous discipline of averted face and frigid tones. As it was, she thawed toward him as he held himself more aloof, until she actually came to the point of addressing him directly, with a flicker of a smile for good measure; and, although he responded with stiff civility, he felt his blood pulse faster, and suddenly conceived the idea that women are like the creatures of the wild. If one is very quiet, and makes no advance whatever, the hunted thing comes closer and closer, and then a sudden pounce—he caught his breath. After that he was wary and watchful and full of his purpose.

Within ten minutes Evadna walked into the trap. They had started, and were fifty yards up the trail, when Phœbe shouted frantically after them. And because she was yet a timid rider

and feared to keep the pace set by the others, it was Evadna who heard first and turned back to see what was the trouble. Aunt Phœbe was standing beside the road, waving a flask while she called out perfectly unintelligible explanations.

"It's the cream for your coffee," she cried, going to meet Evadna. "You can slip it into your jacket pocket, can't you, honey? Huckleberry is so steady —and you won't do any wild riding, like the boys."

"I've got my veil and a box of bait and two handkerchiefs and a piece of soap," the girl complained, reaching down for the bottle nevertheless. "But I can carry it in my hand till I overtake somebody to give it to."

The somebody proved to be Good Indian, who had found it necessary to stop and inspect carefully the left forefoot of his horse, without appearing aware of the girl's approach. She ambled up at Huckleberry's favorite shuffling gait, struck him with her whip—a blow which would not have perturbed a mosquito—when he showed a disposition to stop beside Grant, and then, when Huckleberry reluctantly resumed his pacing, pulled him up, and looked back at the figure stooped over the hoof he held upon his knee. He was digging into the caked dirt inside the shoe with his pocketknife, and, though Evadna waited while she might have spoken a dozen words, he paid not the slightest attention—and that in spite of the distinct shadow of her head and shoulders which lay at his feet.

"Oh—Grant," she began perfunctorily, "I'm sorry to trouble you—but do you happen to have an empty pocket?"

Good Indian gave a final scrape with his knife, and released the foot, which Keno immediately stamped pettishly into the dust. He closed the knife, after wiping the blade upon his trousers leg, and returned it to his pocket before he so much as glanced toward her.

"I may have. Why?" He picked up the bridle reins, caught the saddle horn, and thrust his toe into the stirrup. From under his hat brim he saw that she was pinching her under lip between her teeth, and the sight raised his spirits considerably.

"Oh, nothing. Aunt Phœbe called me back, and gave me a bottle of cream, is all. I shall have to carry it in my hand, I suppose." She twitched her shoulders, and started Huckleberry off again. She had called him Grant, instead of the formal Mr. Imsen she had heretofore clung to, and he had not seemed to notice it even.

He mounted with perfectly maddening deliberation, but for all that he overtook her before she had gone farther than a few rods, and he pulled up beside her with a decision which caused Huckleberry to stop also; Huckleberry, it must be confessed, was never known to show any reluctance in that direction when his head was turned away from home. He stood perfectly still while Good Indian reached out a hand.

"I'll carry it—I'm more used to packing bottles," he announced gravely.

"Oh, but if you must carry it in your hand, I wouldn't dream of——" She was holding fast the bottle, and trying to wear her Christmas-angel look.

Good Indian laid hold of the flask, and they stood there stubbornly eying each other.

"I thought you wanted me to carry it," he said at last, pulling harder.

"I merely asked if you had an empty pocket." Evadna clung the tighter.

"Now, what's the use——"

"Just what I was thinking!" Evadna was so impolite as to interrupt him.

Good Indian was not skilled in the management of women, but he knew horses, and to his decision he added an amendment. Instinctively he followed the method taught him by experience, and when he fancied he saw in her eyes a sign of weakening, he followed up the advantage he had gained.

"Let go—because I'm going to have it anyway, now," he said quietly, and took the flask gently from her hands. Then he smiled at her for yielding, and his smile was a revelation to the girl, and brought the blood surging up to her face. She rode meekly beside him at the pace he himself set—which was not

rapid, by any means. He watched her with quick, sidelong glances, and wondered whether he would dare say what he wanted to say—or at least a part of it.

She was gazing with a good deal of perseverance at the trail, down the windings of which the others could be seen now and then galloping through the dust, so that their progress was marked always by a smothering cloud of gray. Then she looked at Grant unexpectedly, met one of his sharp glances, and flushed hotly again.

"How about this business of hating each other, and not speaking except to please Aunt Phœbe?" he demanded, with a suddenness which startled himself. He had been thinking it, but he hadn't intended to say it until the words spoke themselves. "Are we supposed to keep on acting the fool indefinitely?"

"I was not aware that I, at least, was acting the fool," she retorted, with a washed-out primness.

"Oh, I can't fight the air, and I'm not going to try. What I've got to say, I prefer to say straight from the shoulder. I'm sick of this standing off and giving each other the bad eye over nothing. If we're going to stay on the same ranch, we might as well be friends. What do you say?"

For a time he thought she was not going to say anything. She was staring at the dust cloud ahead, and chewing absently at a corner of her under lip, and she kept it up so long that Good Indian began to scowl and call himself unseemly names for making any overture whatever. But, just as he turned toward her with lips half opened for a bitter sentence, he saw a dimple appear in the cheek next to him, and held back the words.

"You told me you didn't like me," she reminded, looking at him briefly, and afterward fumbling her reins. "You can't expect a girl——"

"I suppose you don't remember coming up to me that first night, and calling me names, and telling me how you hated me, and—and winding up by pinching me?" he insinuated with hypocritical reproach, and felt of his arm. "If you could see the mark——" he hinted shamelessly.

Evadna replied by pushing up her sleeve and displaying a scratch at least an inch in length and still roughened and red. "I suppose you don't remember trying to *murder* me?" she inquired, sweetly triumphant. "If you could shoot as well as Jack, I'd have been killed very likely. And you'd be in jail this minute," she added, with virtuous solemnity.

"But you're not killed, and I'm not in jail."

"And I haven't told a living soul about it—not even Aunt Phœbe," Evadna remarked, still painfully virtuous. "If I had——"

"She'd have wondered, maybe, what you were doing away down there in the middle of the night," Good Indian finished. "I didn't tell a soul, either, for that matter."

They left the meadowland and the broad stretch of barren sand and sage, and followed, at a leisurely pace, the winding of the trail through the scarred desolation where the earth had been washed for gold. Evadna stared absently at the network of deep gashes, evidently meditating very seriously. Finally she turned to Grant with an honest impulse of friendliness.

"Well, I'm sure I'm willing to bury the tomahawk—er—that is, I mean ——" She blushed hotly at the slip, and stammered incoherently.

"Never mind." His eyes laughed at her confusion. "I'm not as bad as all that; it doesn't hurt my feelings to have tomahawks mentioned in my presence."

Her cheeks grew redder, if that were possible, but she made no attempt to finish what she had started to say.

Good Indian rode silent, watching her unobtrusively and wishing he knew how to bring the conversation by the most undeviating path to a certain much-desired conclusion. After all, she was not a wild thing, but a human being, and he hesitated. In dealing with men, he had but one method, which was to go straight to the point regardless of consequences. So he half turned in the saddle and rode with one foot free of

the stirrup that he might face her squarely.

"You say you're willing to bury the tomahawk; do you mean it?" His eyes sought hers, and when they met her glance held it in spite of her blushes, which indeed puzzled him. But she did not answer immediately, and so he repeated the question.

"Do you mean that? We've been digging into each other pretty industriously, and saying how we hate each other—but are you willing to drop it and be friends? It's for you to say—and you've got to say it now."

Evadna flung up her head at that. "Are you in the habit of laying down the law to every one who will permit it?" she evaded.

"Am I to take it for granted you meant what you said?" He stuck stubbornly to the main issue. "Girls seem to have a way of saying things whether they mean anything or not. Did you?"

"Did I what?" She was wide-eyed innocence again.

Good Indian muttered something profane, and kicked his horse in the ribs. When it had taken no more than two leaps forward, however, he pulled it down to a walk again, and his eyes boded ill for the misguided person who goaded him further. He glanced at the girl sharply.

"This thing has got to be settled right now, without any more fooling or beating about the bush," he said—and he said it so quietly that she could scarcely be blamed for not realizing what lay beneath. She was beginning to recover her spirits and her composure, and her whole attitude had become demurely impish.

"Settle it then, why don't you?" she taunted sweetly. "I'm sure I haven't the faintest idea what there is to settle—in that solemn manner. I only know we're a mile behind the others, and Miss Georgie will be wondering——"

"You say I'm to settle it, the way I want it settled?"

If Evadna did not intend anything serious, she certainly was a fool not to read aright his ominously calm tone and his tensely quiet manner. She must have had some experience in coquetry, but it is very likely that she had never met a man just like this one. At all events, she tilted her blond head, smiled at him daringly, and then made a little grimace meant to signify her defiance of him and his unwarranted earnestness.

Good Indian leaned unexpectedly, caught her in his arms, and kissed her three times upon her teasing, smiling mouth, and while she was gasping for words to voice her amazement he drew back his head, and gazed sternly into her frightened eyes.

"You can't play with *me*," he muttered savagely, and kissed her again. "This is how I settle it. You've made me want you for mine. It's got to be love or—hate now. There isn't anything between, for me and you." His eyes passed hungrily from her quivering lips to her eyes, and the glow within his own made her breath come faster. She struggled weakly to free herself, and his clasp only tightened jealously.

"If you had hated me, you wouldn't have stopped back there, and spoken to me," he said, the words coming in a rush. "Women like to play with love, I think. But you can't play with me. I want you—for my wife. And I'm going to have you. Unless you hate me. But you don't. I'd stake my life on it." He kissed her again.

Evadna reached up, felt for her hat, and began pulling it straight, and Good Indian, recalled to himself by the action, released her with manifest reluctance. He felt then that he ought never to let her go out of his arms; it was the only way, it seemed to him, that he could be sure of her. Evadna found words to express her thoughts, and her thoughts were as wholly conventional as was the impulse to straighten her hat.

"We've only known each other a week!" she cried tremulously, while her gloved fingers felt inquiringly for loosened hairpins. "You've no right—you're perfectly horrid! You take everything for granted——"

Good Indian laughed at her, a laugh

of pure, elemental joy in life and in love.

"A man's heart does not beat by the calendar. Nature made the heart to beat with love ages before man measured time and prattled of hours and days and weeks," he retorted. "I'm not the same man I was a week ago. Nor an hour ago. What does it matter? I am—the man I am *now*." He looked at her more calmly. "An hour ago," he pointed out, "I didn't dream I should kiss you. Nor you, that you would let me do it."

"I didn't! I couldn't help myself. You—oh, I never saw such a—a brute!" The tears in her eyes were, perhaps, tears of rage at the swiftness with which he had mastered the situation and turned it in a breath from the safe channel of petty argument. She struck Huckleberry a blow with her whip which sent that astonished animal galloping down the slope before them, his ears laid back and his white eyelashes blinking resentment against the outrage.

Good Indian laughed aloud, spurred Keno into a run, and passed her with a scurry of dust, a flash of white teeth and laughing black eyes, and a wave of his free hand in adieu. He was still laughing when he overtook the others, passed by the main group, and singled out Jack, his particular chum. He refused to explain either his hurry or his mirth further than to fling out a vague sentence about a race, and thereafter he ambled contentedly along beside Jack in the lead, and told how he had won a hundred and sixty dollars in a crap game the last time he was in Shoshone, and how he had kept on until he had "quit ten dollars in the hole." The rest of the boys, catching a few words here and there, crowded close, and left the two girls to themselves, while Good Indian recounted in detail the fluctuations of the game; how he had seesawed for an hour, winning and losing alternately; and how his luck had changed suddenly just when he had made up his mind to play a five-dollar gold piece he held in his hand and quit.

"I threw naturals three times in succession," he said, "and let my bets ride. Then I got Big Dick, made good, and threw another natural. I was seeing those Spanish spurs and that peach of a headstall in Fernando's by that time; seeing them on Keno and me—they're in the window yet, Jack, and I went in when I first hit town and looked them over and priced them; a hundred and fifty, just about what we guessed he'd hold them at. And say, those conchos—you remember the size of 'em, Jack?—they're solid silver, hammered out and engraved by hand. Those Mexicans sure do turn out some fine work on their silver fixings!" He felt in his pocket for a match.

"Pity I didn't let well enough alone," he went on. "I had the price of the outfit, and ten dollars over. But then I got hoggish. I thought I stood a good chance of making seven lucky passes straight—I did once, and I never got over it, I guess. I was going to pinch down to ten—but I didn't; I let her ride. And *shot craps!*"

He drew the match along the stamped saddle skirt behind the cantle, because that gave him a chance to steal a look behind him without being caught in the act. Good, wide hat brims have more uses than to shield one's face from the sun. He saw that Evadna was riding in what looked like a sulky silence beside her friend, but he felt no compunction for what he had done; instead he was exhilarated as with some heady wine, and he did not want to do any thinking about it—yet. He did not even want to be near Evadna. He faced to the front, and lighted his cigarette while he listened to the sympathetic chorus from the boys.

"What did you do then?" asked Gene.

"Well, I'd lost the whole blamed chunk on a pair of measly aces," he said. "I was pretty sore by that time, I'm telling you! I was down to ten dollars, but I started right in to bring back that hundred and sixty. Funny, but I felt exactly as if somebody had stolen that headstall and spurs right out of my hand, and I just had to get it back pronto. I started in with a dol-

lar, lost it on craps—sixes, that time—sent another one down the same trail trying to make Little Joe come again, third went on craps, fourth I doubled on nine, lost 'em both on craps—say, I never looked so many aces and sixes in the face in my life! It was sure *kay bueno,* the luck I had that night. I got up broke, and had to strike Riley for money to get out of town with."

So for a time he managed to avoid facing squarely this new and very important factor which must henceforth have its place in the problem of his life. So absorbed was he in avoiding thought that he might the longer enjoy the intoxication of pure emotion, that he did not see how anxious Evadna was to avoid him; nor did it occur to him to doubt that because he was once master he would be always master. For him the thing was "settled" for good and all.

CHAPTER XII.

Three hundred yards up the river, in the shade of a huge bowlder, round an end of which the water hurried in a green swirl that it might the sooner lie quiet in the deep, dark pool below, Good Indian, picking his solitary way over the loose rocks, came unexpectedly upon Baumberger, his heavy pipe sagging a corner of his flabby mouth, while he painstakingly detached a fly from his leader, hooked it into the proper compartment in his fly book, and hesitated over his selection of another to take its place. Absorption was writ deep on his gross countenance, and he recognized the intruder by the briefest of flickering glances and the slightest of nods.

"Keep back from that hole, will yuh?" he muttered, jerking his head toward the still pool. "I ain't tried it yet."

Good Indian was not particularly interested in his own fishing. The sight of Baumberger, bulking there in the shade with his sagging cheeks and sagging pipe, his flopping old hat and baggy canvas fishing coat, with his battered basket slung over his slouching shoulder and sagging with the weight of his catch; the sloppy wrinkles of his high, rubber boots shining blackly from recent immersion in the stream, caught his errant attention, and stayed him for a few minutes to watch.

Loosely disreputable looked Lawyer Baumberger, from the snagged hole in his hat crown where a wisp of graying hair fluttered through, to the toes of his ungainly, rubber-clad feet; loosely disreputable, but not commonplace and not incompetent. Though his speech might be a slovenly mumble, there was no purposeless fumbling of the fingers that chose a fly and knotted it fast upon the leader. There was no bungling movement of hand or foot when he laid his pipe upon the rock, tiptoed around the corner, sent a mechanical glance upward toward the swaying branches of an overhanging tree, pulled out his six feet of silk line with a sweep of his arm, and with a delicate fillip sent the fly skittering over the glassy center of the pool.

Good Indian, looking at him, felt instinctively that a part, at least, of the man's nature was nakedly revealed to him then. It seemed scarcely fair to read the lust of him and the utter abandonment to the hazard of the game. Pitiless he looked, with clenched teeth just showing between the loose lips drawn back in a grin that was half snarl, half involuntary contraction of muscles sympathetically tense.

That was when a shimmering thing slithered up, snapped at the fly, and flashed away to the tune of singing reel and the dance of the swaying rod. That was when the man grew suddenly cruel and crafty and full of lust; and Good Indian, watching him, was conscious of an inward shudder of repulsion. He had fished all his life—had Good Indian—and had found joy in the sport. And here was a man self-revealed, repelling, hateful; a man who gloated over the struggle of something alive and at his mercy; to whom sport meant power indulged with impunity. Good Indian did not try to put the thing in words, but he felt it nevertheless.

"Brute!" he muttered aloud, his face eloquent of cold disgust.

At that moment Baumberger drew the tired fish gently into the shallows, swung him deftly upon the rocks, and laid hold of him greedily.

"Ain't he a beaut?" he cried, in his wheezy chuckle. "Wait a minute while I weigh him. He'll go over a pound, I'll bet money on it." Gloatingly he held it in his hands, removed the hook and inserted under the gills the larger one of the little scales he carried inside his basket.

"Pound and four ounces," he announced, and slid the fish into his basket. He was the ordinary, good-natured, gross Baumberger now. He reached for his pipe, placed it in his mouth, and held out a hand to Good Indian for a match.

"Say, young fella, have you got any stand-in with your noble red brothers?" he asked, after he had sucked life into the charred tobacco.

"Cousins, you mean," said Good Indian coldly, too proud and too lately repelled to meet the man on friendly ground. "Why do you ask?"

Baumberger eyed him speculatively while he smoked, and chuckled to himself.

"One of 'em—never mind placing him on his own p'ticular limb of the family tree—has been doggin' me all morning," he said at last, and waved a fishy hand toward the bluff which towered high above them. "Saw him when I was comin' up, about sunrise, pokin' along behind me in the sagebrush. Didn't think anything of that—thought maybe he was hunting or going fishing—but he's been sneakin' around behind me ever since. I don't reckon he's after my scalp—not enough hair to pay—but I'd like to know what the dickens he does mean."

"Nothing probably," Good Indian told him shortly, his eyes nevertheless searching the rocks for a sight of the watcher.

"Well, I don't much like the idea," complained Baumberger, casting an eye aloft in fear of snagging his line when he made another cast. "He was right up there a few minutes ago." He pointed his rod toward a sun-ridden ridge above them. "I got a flicker of his green blanket when he raised up and scowled down at me. He ducked when he saw me turn my head—looked to me like the surly buck that blew into the ranch the night I came; Jim something-or-other. By the great immortal Jehosophat!" he swore humorously, "I'd like to tie him up in his dirty blanket and heave him into the river—only it would kill all the fish in the Malad."

Good Indian laughed.

"Oh, I know it's funny, young fella," Baumberger growled. "About as funny as being pestered by a mosquito buzzing under your nose when you're playing a fish that keeps cuttin' figure eights in a hole the size uh that one there."

"I'll go up and take a look," Good Indian offered carelessly.

"Well, I wish you would. I can't keep my mind on m' fishing—just wondering what the deuce he's after. And say! You tell him I'll stand him on his off ear if I catch him doggin' me ag'in. Folks come with yuh?" he remembered to ask as he prepared for another cast into the pool.

"They're down there getting a camp fire built, ready to fry what fish they catch," Good Indian informed him, as he turned to climb the bluff. "They're going to eat dinner under that big ledge by the rapids. You better go on down."

He stood for a minute, and watched Baumberger make a dexterous cast, which proved fruitless, before he began climbing up the steep slope of jumbled bowlders upon which the bluff itself seemed to rest. He was not particularly interested in his quest, but he was in the mood for purposeless action; he still did not want to think.

He climbed negligently, scattering loose rocks down the hill behind him. He had no expectation of coming upon Peppajee—unless Peppajee deliberately put himself in his way—and so there was no need of caution. He stopped once, and stood long minutes with his head turned to catch the faint sound of high-keyed laughter and talk which drifted up to him. If he went higher, he thought, he might get a glimpse of them—of *her,* to tell his thought hon-

estly. Whereupon he forgot all about finding and expostulating with Peppajee, and sought only a point of the ridge which would give him a clear view downstream.

To be sure, he might as easily have retraced his steps and joined the group, and seen every changing look in her face. But he did not want to be near her when others were by; he wanted her to himself, or not at all. So he went on, while the sun beat hotly down upon him and the rocks sent up dry waves of heat like an oven.

A rattlesnake buzzed its strident warning between two rocks, but before he turned his attention to the business of killing it, the snake had crawled leisurely away into a cleft, where he could not reach it with the stones he threw. His thoughts, however, were brought back to his surroundings so that he remembered Peppajee. He stood still, and scanned carefully the jumble of rocks and bowlders which sloped steeply down to the river, looking for a betraying bit of color or dirty-gray hat crown.

"But I could look my eyes out and welcome, if he didn't want to be seen," he concluded, and sat down while he rolled a cigarette. "And I don't know as I want to see him, anyway." Still, he did not move immediately. He was in the shade, which was a matter for congratulation on such a day. He had a cigarette between his lips, which made for comfort; and he still felt the exhilarating effects of his unpremeditated boldness, without having come to the point of sober thinking. He sat there, and blew occasional mouthfuls of smoke into the quivering heat waves, and stared down at the river rushing over the impeding rocks as if its very existence depended upon reaching as soon as possible the broader sweep of the Snake.

He finished the first cigarette, and rolled another from sheer force of habit rather than because he really wanted one. He lifted one foot, and laid it across his knee, and was drawing a match along the sole of his boot when his eyes chanced to rest for a moment upon a flutter of green, which showed briefly around the corner of a great, square rock poised insecurely upon one corner, as if it were about to hurl its great bulk down upon the river it had watched so long. He held the blazing match poised midway to its destination while he looked; then he put it to the use he had meant it for, pulled his hat brim down over his right eye and ear to shield them from the burn of the sun, and went picking his way idly over to the place.

"*Hul*-lo!" he greeted, in the manner of one who refuses to acknowledge the seriousness of a situation which confronts him suddenly. "What's the excitement?"

There was no excitement whatever. There was Peppajee, hunched up against the rock in that uncomfortable attitude which permits a man to come at the most intimate relations with the outside of his own ankle, upon which he was scowling in seeming malignity. There was his hunting knife lying upon a flat stone near to his hand, with a fresh, red blotch upon the blade, and there was his little stone pipe clenched between his teeth and glowing red within the bowl. Also there was the ankle, purple and swollen from the ligature above it—for his legging was off and torn into strips which formed the bandage, and a splinter of rock was twisted ingeniously in the wrappings for added tightness. From a crisscross of gashes a sluggish, red stream trickled down to the ankle bone, and from there drip-dropped into a tiny, red pool in the barren, yellow soil.

"Catchum rattlesnake bite?" queried Good Indian inanely, as is the habit of the onlooker when the scene shouts forth eloquently its explanation, and questions are almost insultingly superfluous.

"Huh!" grunted Peppajee, disdaining further speech upon the subject, and regarded sourly the red drip.

"Want me to suck it?" ventured Good Indian unenthusiastically, eying the wound.

"Huh!" Peppajee removed the pipe, his eyes still upon his ankle. "Plenty

blood come, mebbyso." To make sure, however, he kneaded the swollen flesh about the wound, thus accelerating slightly the red drip.

Then deliberately he took another turn with the rock, sending the buckskin thongs deeper into the flesh, and held the burning pipe against the skin above the wound until Good Indian turned away his head. When he looked again, Peppajee was sucking hard at the pipe, and gazing impersonally at the place. He bent again, and hid the glow of his pipe against his ankle. His thin lips tightened while he held it there, but the lean, brown fingers were firm as splinters of the rock behind him. When the fire cooled, he fanned it to life again with his breath, and when it winked redly at him he laid it grimly against his flesh.

So, while Good Indian stood and looked on with lips as tightly drawn as the other's, he seared a circle around the wound—a circle which bit deep and drew apart the gashes like lips opened for protest. He regarded critically his handiwork, muttered a *"Bueno"* under his breath, knocked the ashes from his pipe, and returned it to some mysterious hiding place beneath his blanket. Then he picked up his moccasin.

"Them damn' snake, him no speakum," he observed disgustedly. "Heap fool me; him biteum"—he made a stabbing gesture with thumb and finger in the air by way of illustration—"then him go quick." He began gingerly trying to force the moccasin upon his foot, his mouth drawn down with the look of one who considers that he has been hardly used.

"How you get home?" Good Indian's thoughts swung round to practical things. "You got horse?"

Peppajee shook his head, reached for his knife, and slit the moccasin till it was no more than a wrapping. "Mebbyso heap walk," he stated simply.

"Mebbyso you won't do anything of the kind," Good Indian retorted. "You come down and take a horse. What for you all time watchum Baumberger?" he added, remembering then what had brought them both upon the bluff. "Baumberger all time fish—no more." He waved his hand toward the Malad. "Baumberger *bueno*—catchum fish—no more."

Peppajee got slowly and painfully upon his feet—rather, upon one foot. When Good Indian held out a steadying arm, he accepted it, and leaned rather heavily.

"Yo' eyes sick," said Peppajee, and grinned sardonically. "Yo' eyes see all time squaw-with-sun-hair. Fillum yo' eyes, yo' see notting. Yo' catchum squaw, bimeby mebbyso see plenty mo'. Me no catchum sick eye. Mebbyso me see heap plenty."

"What you see, you all time watchum Baumberger?"

But Peppajee, hobbling where he must walk, crawling where he might, sliding carefully where a slanting bowlder offered a few feet of smooth descent, and taking hold of Good Indian's offered arm when necessity impelled him, pressed his thin lips together, and refused to answer. So they came at last to the ledge beside the rapids, where a thin wisp of smoke waved lazily in the vagrant breeze which played with the ripples and swayed languidly the smaller branches of the near-by trees.

Only Donny was there, sitting disgruntled upon the most comfortable rock he could find, sulking because the others had taken all the fishing tackle that was of any account and had left him to make shift with one dulled hook, a lump of fat pork, and a dozen feet of line.

"And I can ketch more fish than anybody in the bunch!" he began complainingly and without preface, waving a dirty hand contemptuously at the despised tackle when the two came slowly up. "That's the way it goes when you take a lot of girls along! They've got to have the best rods and tackle, and all they'll do will be to snag lines and lose leaders and hooks, and giggle and squeal. Aw—*darn* girls!"

"And I'm going to pile it on still thicker, Donny," Good Indian grinned down at him. "I'm going to swipe

your Pirate Chief for a while, till I take Peppajee into camp. He's gentle, and Peppajee's got a snake bite. I'll be back before you get ready to go home."

"I'm ready to go home right now," growled Donny, sinking his chin between his two palms. "But I guess the walkin' ain't all taken up."

Good Indian regarded him frowningly, gave a little snort, and turned away. Donny in that mood was not to be easily placated, and certainly not to be ignored. He went over to the little flat, and selected Jack's horse, saddled him, and discovered that it had certain well-defined race prejudices, and would not let Peppajee put foot to the stirrup. Keno he knew would be no more tractable, so that he finally slapped Jack's saddle on Huckleberry, and so got Peppajee mounted and headed toward camp.

"You tell Jack I borrowed his saddle and Huckleberry," he called out to the drooping little figure on the rock. "But I'll get back before they want to go home."

But Donny was glooming over his wrongs, and neither heard nor wanted to hear. Having for his legacy a temper cumulative in its heat, he was coming rapidly to the point where he, too, started home, and left no word or message behind; a trivial enough incident in itself, but one which opened the way for some misunderstanding and fruitless speculation upon the part of Evadna.

CHAPTER XIII.

Few men are ever called upon by untoward circumstance to know the sensations caused by rattlesnake bite, knife gashes, impromptu cauterization, and, topping the whole, the peculiar torture of congested veins and swollen muscles which comes from a tourniquet. The feeling must be unpleasant in the extreme, and the most morbid of sensation seekers would scarcely put himself in the way of that particular experience.

Peppajee Jim, therefore, had reason in plenty for glowering at the world as he saw it. He held Huckleberry rigidly down to his laziest amble that the jar of riding might be lessened, kept his injured foot free from the stirrup, and merely grunted when Good Indian asked him once how he felt.

When they reached the desolation of the old placers, however, he turned his eyes from the trail where it showed just over Huckleberry's ears, and regarded sourly the deep gashes and dislodged bowlders which told where water and the greed of man for gold had raged fiercest. Then, for the first time during the whole ride, he spoke.

"All time, yo' sleepum," he said, in the sonorous, oracular tone which he usually employed when a subject held his serious thought. "Peaceful Hart, him all same sleepum. All same sleepum 'longside snake. No seeum snake, no thinkum mebbyso catchum bite." He glanced down at his own snake-bitten foot. "Snake bite, make all time much hurt." His eyes turned, and dwelt sharply upon the face of Good Indian.

"Yo' all time thinkum squaw-with-sun-hair. Me tell yo' for watchum, yo' no think for watchum. Baumberga, him all same snake. Yo' think him all time catchum fish. *Huh!* Yo' heap big fool, yo' thinkum dat. Rattlesnake, mebbyso sleepum in sun one time. Yo' no thinkum *bueno,* yo' seeum sleep in sun. Yo' heap *sabe* him all time *kay bueno* jus' same. Yo' heap *sabe* yo' come close, him biteum. Mebbyso biteum hard, for killum yo' all time." He paused, then drove home his point like the true orator. "Baumberga catchum fish. All same rattlesnake sleepum in sun. *Kay bueno.*"

Good Indian jerked his mind back from delicious recollection of one sweet, swift-passing minute, and half opened his lips for reply. But he did not speak; he did not know what to say, and it is ill-spent time—that passed in purposeless speech with such as Peppajee. Peppajee roused himself from meditation brief as it seemed deep, lifted a lean, brown hand to push back from his eyes a fallen lock of hair, and pointed straight away to the west.

"Las' night, sun go sleepum. Clouds come all same blanket, sun wrapum in blanket. Cloud look heap mad—mebbyso make much storm. Bimeby much mens come in cloud, stand so—and so—and so." With pointing finger he indicated a half circle. "Otha man come, heap big man. Stoppum 'way off, all time makeum sign, for fight. Me watchum. Me set by fire, watchum cloud makeum sign. Fire smoke look up for say, 'What yo' do all time, mebbyso?' Cloud man shakum hand, makeum much sign. Fire smoke heap sad, bend down far, lookum me, lookum where cloud look. All time lookum for Peaceful Hart ranch. Me lay down for sleepum, me dream all time much fight. All time bad sign come. *Kay bueno.*" He shook his head slowly, his leathery face set in deep, somber lines.

"Much trouble come heap quick," he said gravely, hitching his blanket into place upon his shoulder. "Me no *sabe*—all same, heap trouble come. Much mens, mebbyso much fight, much shootum—mebbyso kill. Peaceful Hart him all time laugh me. All same, me *sabe* smoke sign, *sabe* cloud sign, *sabe*—Baumberga. Heap *ka-a-ay bueno!*"

Good Indian's memory flashed upon him a picture of bright moonlight and the broody silence of a night half gone, and of a figure forming sharply and suddenly from the black shadow of the stable and stealing away into the sage, and of Baumberger emerging warily from that same shadow and stopping to light his pipe before he strolled on to the house and to the armchair upon the porch.

There might be a sinister meaning in that picture, but it was so well hidden that he had little hope of ever finding it. Also, it occurred to him that Peppajee, usually given over to creature comforts and the idle gossip of camp and the ranches he visited, was proving the sincerity of his manifest uneasiness by a watchfulness wholly at variance with his natural laziness. On the other hand, Peppajee loved to play the oracle, and a waving wisp of smoke, or the changing shapes in a wind-riven cloud meant to him spirit-sent prophecies not to be ignored.

He turned the matter over in his mind, was the victim of uneasiness for five minutes, perhaps, and then drifted off into wondering what Evadna was doing at that particular moment, and to planning how he should manage to fall behind with her when they all rode home, and so make possible other delicious moments. He even took note of certain sharp bends in the trail, where a couple riding fifty yards, say, behind a group would be for the time being quite hidden from sight and to all intents and purposes alone in the world for two minutes, or three—perhaps the time might be stretched to five.

The ranch was quiet, with even the dogs asleep in the shade. Peppajee insisted in one sentence upon going straight on to camp, so they did not stop. Without speaking, they plodded through the dust up the grade, left it, and followed the dim trail through the sagebrush and rocks to the Indian camp which seemed asleep also, except where three squaws were squatting in the sharply defined, conical shadow of a wikiup, mumbling desultorily the gossip of their little world, while their fingers moved with mechanical industry—one shining black head bent over a half-finished, beaded moccasin, another stitching a crude gown of bright-flowered calico, and the third braiding her hair afresh with leisurely care for its perfect smoothness. Good Indian took note of the group before it stirred to activity, and murmured anxiety over the bandaged foot of Peppajee.

"Me no can watchum more, mebbyso six days. Yo' no sleepum all time yo' walk—no thinkum all time squaw. Mebbyso yo' think for man snake. Mebbyso yo' watchum," Peppajee said, as he swung slowly down from Huckleberry's back.

"All right. I'll watchum plenty," Good Indian promised lightly, gave a glance of passing, masculine interest at the squaw, who was braiding her hair, and who was young and fresh-cheeked and bright-eyed and slender, forgot her the instant his eyes left her, and made

haste to return to the Malad and the girl who held all his thoughts and all his desire.

That girl was sitting upon the rock which Donny had occupied, and she looked very much as if she were sulking, much as Donny had sulked. She had her chin in a pink palm and was digging little holes in the sand with the tip of her rod, which was not at all beneficial to the rod and did not appear even to interest the digger; for her wonderfully blue eyes were staring at the green-and-white churn of the rapids, and her lips were pursed moodily, as if she did not even see what she was looking at so fixedly.

Good Indian's eyes were upon her while he was dismounting, but he did not go to her immediately. Instead, he busied himself with unsaddling, and explained to the boys just why he had left so unaccountably. Secretly he was hoping that Evadna heard the explanation, and he raised his voice purposely. But Evadna was not listening apparently; and, if she had been, the noise of the rapids would have prevented her hearing what he said.

Miss Georgie Howard was frying fish and consistently snubbing Baumberger, who bulked loosely near the camp fire, and between puffs at his pipe praised heavily her skill, and professed to own a ravenous appetite. Good Indian heard him as he passed close by them, and heard also the keen thrust she gave in return; and he stopped and half turned, looking at her with involuntary appreciation. His glance took in Baumberger next, and he lifted a shoulder and went on. Without intentionally resorting to subterfuge, he felt an urge to wash his hands, and he chose for his ablutions that part of the river's edge which was nearest Evadna.

First he stooped and drank thirstily, his hat pushed back, while his lips met full the hurrying water, clear and cold, yet with the chill it had brought from the mountain springs which fed it, and as he lifted his head he looked full at her.

Evadna stared stonily over him to where the water boiled fastest. He might have been one of the rocks, for all the notice she took of him.

Good Indian frowned with genuine puzzlement, and began slowly to wash his hands, glancing at her often in hope that he might meet her eyes. When she did not seem to see him at all, the smile of a secret shared joyously with her died from his own eyes, and when he had dried his hands upon his handkerchief he cast aside his inward shyness in the presence of the Hart boys and Miss Georgie and Baumberger, and went boldly over to her.

"Aren't you feeling well?" he asked, with tender proprietorship in his tone.

"I'm feeling quite well, thank you," returned Evadna frigidly, neglecting to look at him.

"What *is* the matter, then? Aren't you having a good time?"

"I'm enjoying myself very much—except that your presence annoys me. I wish you'd go away."

Good Indian turned on his heel and went; he felt that at last Evadna was looking at him, though he would not turn to make sure. And his instinct told him withal that he must ignore her mood if he would win her from it. With a freakish impulse, he headed straight for the camp fire and Miss Georgie, but when he came up to her the look she gave him of understanding, with sympathy to soften it, sent him away again without speaking.

He wandered back to the river's edge—this time some distance from where Evadna sat—and began throwing pebbles at the black nose of a wave-washed bowlder away toward the other side. Clark and Gene loitered up, watched him lazily, and, picking up other pebbles, started to do the same thing. Soon all the boys were throwing at the bowlder, and were making a good deal of noise over the various hits and misses, and the spirit of rivalry waxed stronger and stronger until it was like any other game wherein full-blooded youths strive against one another for supremacy. They came to the point of making bets, at first extravagant and then growing more and more genuinely in

earnest—for we're gamblers all, at heart.

Miss Georgie burned a frying pan full of fish until they sent up an acrid, blue smoke, while she ran over to try her luck with a stone or two. Even Baumberger heaved himself up from where he was lounging, and strolled over to watch. But Evadna could not have stuck closer to her rock if she had been glued there, and if she had been blind and deaf she would not have appeared more oblivious.

Good Indian grew anxious, and then angry. The savage stirred within him, and counseled immediate and complete mastery of her—his woman. But there was the white man of him who said the thought was brutal and unchivalrous, and reminded the savage that one must not look upon a woman as a chattel, to be beaten or caressed, as the humor seized the master. And, last of all, there was the surface of him laughing with the others, fleering at those who fell short of the mark, and striving his utmost to be first of them all in accuracy.

He even smiled upon Miss Georgie when she hit the bowlder fairly, and, when the stench of the burning fish drifted over to them, he gave his supply of pebbles into her two hands, and ran to the rescue. He caught Evadna in the act of regarding him sidelong, just as a horse sometimes will keep an eye on the man with the rope in a corral; so he knew she was thinking of him, at least, and was wondering what he meant to do next, and the savage in him laughed and lay down again, knowing himself the master.

What he did was to throw away the burnt fish, clean the frying pan, and start more sizzling over the fire, which he kicked into just the right condition. He whistled softly to himself while he broke dry sticks across his knee for the fire, and when Miss Georgie cried out that she had made three hits in succession, he called back: "Good shot!" and took up the tune where he had left off. Never, for one instant, was he unconscious of Evadna's secret watchfulness, and never, for one instant, did he let her see that she was in his thoughts.

He finished frying the fish, set out the sandwiches and doughnuts and pickled peaches and cheese, and pounded upon a tin plate to announce that dinner was ready. He poured the coffee into the cups held out to him, and got the flask of cream from a niche between two rocks at the water's edge. He said "Too bad," when it became generally known that the glare of the sun upon the water had given Evadna a headache, and he said it exactly as he would have spoken if Jack, for instance, had upset the sugar.

He held up the broken-handled butcher knife that was in the camp kit, and declaimed tragically: "Is this a dagger that I see before me?" and much more of the kind that was eery. He saw the reluctant dimple which showed fleetingly in Evadna's cheek, and also the tears which swelled her eyelids immediately after, but she did not know that he saw them, though another did.

He was taken wholly by surprise when Miss Georgie, walking past him afterward on her way to an enticing pool, nipped his arm for attention and murmured:

"You're doing fine—only don't overdo it. She's had just about all she can stand right now. Give her a chance to forgive you—and let her think she came out ahead! Good luck." Whereupon she finished whatever she pretended to have been doing to her fishing tackle, and beckoned Wally and Jack to come along.

"We've just got to catch that big one," she laughed. "so Mr. Baumberger can go home and attend to his own business!" It took imagination to feel sure there had been a significant accent on the last of the sentence, and Baumberger must have been imaginative. He lowered his head like a bull meditating assault, and his leering eyes shot her a glance of inquiry and suspicion. But Miss Georgie Howard met his look with a smile that was nothing more than idle amusement.

"I'd like nothing better than to get

that four-pounder on my line," she added. "It would be the joke of the season—if a woman caught him."

"Bet you couldn't land him," chuckled Baumberger, breathing a sigh which might have been relief, and ambled away contentedly. "I may not see you folks again till supper," he bethought him to call back. "I'm going to catch a dozen more—and then I thought I'd take 'em up to Pete Hamilton; I'm using his horse, yuh see, and——" He flung out a hand to round off the sentence, turned, and went stumbling over a particularly rocky place.

Miss Georgie stood where she was, and watched him with her mouth twisted to one side and three perpendicular creases between her eyebrows. When he was out of sight, she glanced at Evadna—once more perched sulkily upon the rock.

"Head still bad, chicken?" she inquired cheerfully. "Better stay here in the shade—I won't be gone long."

"I'm going to fish," said Evadna, but she did not stir, not even when Miss Georgie went on, convoyed by all the Hart boys.

Good Indian had volunteered the information that he was going to fish downstream, but he was a long time in tying his leader and fussing with his reel. His preparations were finished just when the last straggler of the group was out of sight. Then he laid down his rod, went over to Evadna, took her by the arm, and drew her back to the farther shelter of the ledge.

"Now, what's the trouble?" he asked directly. "I hope you're not trying to make yourself think I was only—— You know what I meant, don't you? And you said yes. You said it with your lips, and with your eyes. Did you want more words? Tell me what it is that bothers you."

There was a droop to Evadna's shoulders, and a tremble to her mouth. She would not look at him. She kept her eyes gazing downward, perhaps to hide tears. Good Indian waited for her to speak, and when it seemed plain that she did not mean to do so, he yielded to his instinct and took her in his arms.

"Sweetheart!" he murmured against her ear, and it was the first time he had ever spoken the word to any woman. "You love me, I know it. You won't say it, but I know you do. I should have felt it this morning if you hadn't cared. You—you *let* me kiss you. And——"

"And after that you—you rode off and *left* me—and you went away by yourself, just as if—just as if nothing had *hap*-pened, and you've acted ever since as if——" She bit her lips, turned her face away from him, plucked at his hands to free herself from his clasping arms, and then she laid her face down against him, and sobbed.

Good Indian tried his best to explain his mood and his actions that day, and if he did not make himself very clear—which could scarcely be expected, since he did not quite understand it himself—he at least succeeded in lifting from her the weight of doubt and of depression.

They were astonished when Wally and Jack and Miss Georgie suddenly confronted them and proved, by the number of fish which they carried, that they had been gone longer than ten minutes or so. They were red as to their faces and embarrassed as to manner, and Good Indian went away hurriedly after the horses, without meeting the quizzical glances of the boys, or replying to certain pointed remarks which they fired after him.

"And *he's* the buckaroo that's got no use for girls!" commented Wally, looking after him, and ran his tongue meditatively along the loose edge of his cigarette. "Kid, I wish you'd tell me how you done it. It worked quick, anyhow."

"And thorough," grinned Jack. "I was thinking some of falling in love with you myself, Vad. Soon as some of the shine wore off, and you got so you acted like a real person."

"*I* saw it coming—when it first heaved in sight," chirped Miss Georgie, in a more cheerful tone than she had used that day; in too cheerful a tone to be quite convincing, if any one there had been taking notice of mere tones.

CHAPTER XIV.

"I guess that bobcat was after my ducks again last night," commented Phœbe Hart when she handed Baumberger his cup of coffee. "The way the dogs barked all night—didn't they keep you awake?"

"Never slept better in my life," drawled Baumberger, his voice sliding upward from the first word to the last. His bloodshot eyes, however, rather gave the lie to his statement. "I'm going to make one more try, 'long about noon, for that big one—girls didn't get him, I guess, for all their threats, or I'd have heard about it. And I reckon I'll take the evening train home. Shoulda gone yesterday, by rights. I'd like to get a basket uh fish to take up with me. Great coffee, Mrs. Hart, and such cream I never did see. I sure do hate to leave so many good things and go back to a boardin' house. Look at this honey, now!" He sighed gluttonously, leaning slightly over the table while he fed.

"Dogs were barking at something down in the orchard," Wally volunteered, passing over Baumberger's monologue. "I was going down there, but it was so dark—and I thought maybe it was Gene's ghost. That was before the moon came up. Got any more biscuits, mum?"

"My trap wasn't sprung behind the chicken house," said Donny. "I looked, first thing."

"Dogs," drawled Baumberger, his enunciation muffled by the food in his mouth, "always bark. And cats fight on shed roofs. Next door to where I board there's a dog that goes on shift as regular as a policeman. Every night at——"

"Oh, Aunt *Phœ*-be!" Evadna, crisp and cool in a summery dress of some light-colored stuff and looking more than ever like a Christmas angel set a-flutter upon the top of a holiday fir in a sudden gust of wind, threw open the door, rushed halfway into the room, and stopped beside the chair of her aunt. Her hands dropped to the plump shoulder of the sitter. "Aunt Phœbe, there's a man down at the farther end of the strawberry patch! He's got a gun, Aunt Phœbe, and he's camped there, and when he heard me he jumped up and pointed the gun straight *at* me!"

"Why, honey, that can't be—you must have seen an Indian prowling after windfalls off the apricot trees there. He wouldn't hurt you." Phœbe reached up, and caught the hands in a reassuring clasp.

Evadna's eyes strayed from one face to another around the table till they rested upon Good Indian, as having found sanctuary there.

"But, Aunt Phœbe, he *wasn't*. He was a white man. And he has a camp there, right by that tree the lightning peeled the bark off. I was close before I saw him, for he was sitting down and the currant bushes were between. But I went through to get around where Uncle Hart has been irrigating and it's all mud, and he jumped up and pointed the gun *at* me. Just as if he was going to shoot me. And I turned and ran." Her fingers closed upon the hand of her aunt, but her eyes clung to Good Indian, as though it was to him she was speaking.

"Tramp," suggested Baumberger, in a tone of soothing finality, as when one hushes the fear of a child. "Sick the dogs on him. He'll go—never saw the hobo yet that wouldn't run from a dog." He smiled leeringly up at her, and reached for a second helping of honey.

Good Indian pulled his glance from Evadna, and tried to bore through the beefy mask which was Baumberger's face, but all he found there was a gross interest in his breakfast and a certain indulgent sympathy for Evadna's fear, and he frowned in a baffled way.

"Who ever heard of a tramp camped in our orchard!" flouted Phœbe. "They don't get down here once a year, and then they always come to the house. You couldn't know there *was* any strawberry patch behind that thick row of trees—or a garden, or anything else."

"He's got a row of stakes running clear across the patch," Evadna recalled suddenly. "Just like they do for

a new street, or a railroad, or something. And——"

Good Indian pushed back his chair with a harsh, scraping noise, and rose. He was staring hard at Baumberger, and his whole face had sharpened till it had the cold, unyielding look of an Indian. And suddenly Baumberger raised his head and met full that look. For two breaths their eyes held each other, and then Baumberger glanced casually at Peaceful.

"Sounds queer—must be some mistake, though. You must have seen something, girl, that reminded you of stakes. A stub off a sagebush maybe?" He ogled her quite frankly. "When a little girl gets scared—— Sick the dogs on him," he advised the family collectively, his manner changing to a blustering anxiety that her fright should be avenged.

Evadna seemed to take his tone as a direct challenge. "I was scared, but I know quite well what I saw. He wasn't a tramp. He had a regular camp, with a coffeepot and frying pan and blankets. And there *is* a line of stakes across the strawberry patch."

Before, the breakfast had continued to seem an important incident temporarily suspended. Now Peaceful Hart laid hand to his beard, eyed his wife questioningly, let his glance flicker over the faces of his sons, and straightened his shoulders unconsciously. Good Indian was at the door, his mouth set in a thin, straight, fighting line. Wally and Jack were sliding their chairs back from the table to follow him.

"I guess it ain't anything much," Peaceful opined optimistically. "They can't do anything but steal berries, and they're most gone, anyhow. Go ask him what he wants, down there." The last sentence was but a feeble sort of fiction that his boys would await his commands; as a matter of fact, his boys were outside before he spoke.

"Take the dogs along," called out Baumberger, quite as futilely, for not one of them was within hearing.

Until they heard footsteps returning at a run, the four stayed where they were. Baumberger rumbled on in a desultory sort of way, which might have caused an observant person to wonder where was his lawyer training and the deep cunning and skill with which he was credited, for his words were as profitless and inconsequential as an old woman's. He talked about tramps, and dogs that barked o' nights, and touched gallantly upon feminine timidity and the natural, protective instincts of men.

Peaceful Hart may have heard half of what he said—but more likely he heard none of it. He sat drawing his white beard through his hand, and his mild, blue eyes were turned often to Phœbe in mute question. Phœbe herself was listening, but not to Baumberger; she was permitting Evadna to tuck in stray locks of her soft, brown hair, but her face was turned to the door which opened upon the porch. At the first clatter of running footsteps on the porch, she and Peaceful pushed back their chairs instinctively.

The runner was Donny, and every freckle stood out distinctly upon his face.

"There's four of 'em, paw!" he shouted, all in one breath. "They're jumpin' the ranch for placer claims. They said so. Each one's got a claim, and they're campin' on the corners, so they'll be close together. They're goin' to wash gold. Good Injun——"

"Oh!" screamed Evadna suddenly. "Don't let him—don't let them hurt him, Uncle Hart!"

"Aw, they ain't fightin'," Donny assured her disgustedly. "They're chewin' the rag down there, is all. Good Injun knows one of 'em."

Peaceful Hart stood indecisively, and stared, one hand gripping the back of his chair. His lips were working so that his beard bristled about his mouth.

"They can't do nothing—the ranch belongs to *me,*" he said, his eyes turning rather helplessly to Baumberger. "I've got my patent."

"Jumping our ranch!—for placer claims!" Phœbe stood up, leaning hard upon the table with both hands. "And we've lived here ever since Clark was a baby!"

"Now, now, let's not get excited over this," soothed Baumberger, getting out of his chair slowly, like the overfed glutton he was. He picked up a crisp fragment of biscuit, crunched it between his teeth, and chewed it slowly. "Can't be anything serious—and if it is, why—*I'm* here. A lawyer right on the spot may save a lot of trouble. The main thing is, let's not get excited and do something rash. Those boys——"

"Not *excited?*—and somebody jumping—our—*ranch?*" Phœbe's soft eyes gleamed at him. She was pale, so that her face had a peculiar, ivory tint.

"Now, now!" Baumberger put out a puffy hand admonishingly. "Let's keep cool—that's half the battle won. Keep cool." He reached for his pipe, got out his twisted leather tobacco pouch, and opened it with a twirl of his thumb and finger.

"You're a lawyer, Mr. Baumberger," Peaceful turned to him, still helpless in his manner. "What's the best thing to be done?"

"Don't—get—excited." Baumberger nodded his head for every word. "That's what I always say when a client comes to me all worked up. We'll go down there and see just how much there is to this, and—order 'em off. Calmly, calmly! No violence—no threats—just tell 'em firmly and quietly to leave." He stuffed his pipe carefully, pressing down the tobacco with the tip of a finger. "Then," he added with slow emphasis, "if they don't go, after—say twenty-four hours' notice, why, we'll proceed to serve an injunction." He drew a match along the back of his chair, and lighted his pipe.

"I reckon we'd better go and look after those boys of yours," he suggested, moving toward the door rather quickly, for all his apparent deliberation. "They're inclined to be hot-headed, and we must have no violence, above all things. Keep it a civil matter right through. Much easier to handle in court, if there's no violence to complicate the case."

"They're looking for it," Phœbe reminded him bluntly. "The man had a gun, and threw down on Vadnie."

"He only pointed it at me, auntie," Evadna corrected, ignorant of the Western phrase.

The two women followed the men outside and into the shady yard where the trees hid completely what lay across the road and beyond the double row of poplars. Donny, leaning far forward and digging his bare toes into the loose soil for more speed, raced on ahead, anxious to see and hear all that took place.

"If the boys don't stir up a lot of antagonism," Baumberger kept urging Peaceful and Phœbe, as they hurried into the garden, "the matter ought to be settled without much trouble. You can get an injunction, and——"

"The idea of anybody trying to hold our place for mineral land!" Phœbe's indignation was cumulative always, and was now bubbling into wrath. "Why, my grief! Thomas spent one whole summer washing every likely spot around here. He never got anything better than colors on this ranch—and you can get them anywhere in Idaho, almost. And to come right into our *garden,* in the *night*—and stake a placer claim!" Her anger seemed beyond further utterance. "The idea!" she finished weakly.

"Well—but we mustn't let ourselves get excited," soothed Baumberger, the shadow of him falling darkly upon Peaceful and Phœbe as he strode along, upon the side next the sun. Peppajee would have called that an evil thing, portending much trouble and black treachery.

"That's where people always blunder in a thing like this. A little cool-headedness goes farther than hard words or lead. And," he added cheeringly, "it may be a false alarm, remember. We won't borrow trouble. We'll just make sure of our ground, first thing we do."

"It's always easy enough to be calm over the other fellow's trouble," said Phœbe sharply, irritated in an indefinable way by the oily optimism of the other. "It ain't your ox that's gored, Mr. Baumberger."

They skirted the double row of

grapevines, picked their way over a spot lately flooded from the ditch, which they crossed upon two planks laid side by side, went through an end of the currant patch, made a detour around a small jungle of gooseberry bushes, and so came in sight of the strawberry patch and what was taking place near the lightning-scarred apricot tree. Baumberger lengthened his stride, and so reached the spot first.

The boys were grouped belligerently in the strawberry patch, just outside a line of new stakes, freshly driven in the ground. Beyond that line stood a man facing them with a .45-.70 balanced in the hollow of his arm. In the background stood three other men in open spaces in the shrubbery, at intervals of ten rods or so, and they also had rifles rather conspicuously displayed. They were grinning, all three. The man just over the line was listening while Good Indian spoke; the voice of Good Indian was even and quiet, as if he were indulging in casual small talk of the country, but that particular claim jumper was not smiling. Even from a distance they could see that he was fidgeting uncomfortably while he listened, and that his breath was beginning to come jerkily.

"Now, roll your blankets and *git!*" Good Indian finished sharply, and with the toe of his boot kicked the nearest stake clear of the loose soil. He stooped, picked it up, and cast it contemptuously from him. It landed three feet in front of the man who had planted it, and he jumped and shifted the rifle significantly upon his arm, so that the butt of it caressed his right shoulder joint.

"Now, now, we don't want any overt acts of violence here," wheezed Baumberger, laying hand upon Good Indian's shoulder from behind. Good Indian shook off the touch as if it were a tarantula upon him.

"You go to the devil," he advised chillingly.

"Tut, tut!" Baumberger reproved gently. "The ladies are within hearing, my boy. Let's get at this thing sensibly and calmly. Violence only makes things worse. See how quiet Wally and Jack and Clark and Gene are! *They* realize how childishly spiteful it would be for them to follow your example. They know better. They don't want——"

Jack grinned, and hitched his gun into plainer view. "When we start in, it won't be *sticks* we're sending to His Nibs," he observed placidly. "We're just waiting for him to ante."

"This," said Baumberger, a peculiar gleam coming into his leering, puffy-lidded eyes, and a certain hardness creeping into his voice, "this is a matter for your father and me to settle. It's just—a—trifle—beyond you youngsters. This is a civil case. Don't foolishly make it come under the criminal code. But there!" His voice purred at them again. "You won't. You're all too clear-headed and sensible."

"Oh, sure!" Wally gave his characteristic little snort. "We're only just sticking around to see how fast the cabbages grow!"

Baumberger advanced boldly across the dead line.

"Stanley, put down that gun, and explain your presence here and your object," he rumbled. "Let's get at this thing right end to. First, what are you doing here?"

The man across the line did not put down his rifle, except that he let the butt of it drop slightly away from his shoulder so that the sights were in alignment with an irrigating shovel thrust upright into the ground ten feet to one side of the group. His manner lost little of its watchfulness, and his voice was surly with defiance when he spoke. But Good Indian, regarding him suspiciously through half-closed lids, would have sworn that a look of intelligence flashed between those two. There was nothing more than a quiver of his nostrils to betray him as he moved over beside Evadna—for the pure pleasure of being near her, one would think; in reality, while the pleasure was there, that he might see both Baumberger's face and Stanley's without turning more than his eyes.

"All there is to it," Stanley began

blustering, "you see before yuh. I've located twenty acres more as a placer claim. That there's the northwest corner—ap-prox'm'tley—close as I could come by sightin'. Your fences are straight with yer land, and I happen to *sabe* all yer corners. I've got a right here. I believe this ground is worth more for the gold that's in it than for the turnips you can make grow on top—and that there makes mineral land of it, and *as* such, open to entry. That's accordin' to law. I ain't goin' to build no trouble—but I sure do aim to defend my prope'ty rights if I have to. I reelize yuh may think diffrunt from me. You've got a right to prove, if yuh can, that all this *ain't* mineral land. I've got jest as much right to prove it *is*."

He took a breath so deep it expanded visibly his chest—a broad, muscular chest it was—and let his eyes wander deliberately over his audience.

"That there's where *I* stand," he stated, with arrogant self-assurance. His mouth drew down at the corners in a smile which asked plainly what they were going to do about it, and intimated quite as plainly that he did not care what they did, though he might feel a certain curiosity as an onlooker.

"I happen to know——" Peaceful began, suddenly for him. But Baumberger waved him into silence.

"You'll have to prove there's gold in paying quantities here," he stated pompously.

"That's what I aim to do," Stanley told him imperturbably.

"*I* proved, over fifteen year ago, that there *wasn't*," Peaceful drawled laconically, and sucked so hard upon his pipe that his cheeks held deep hollows.

Stanley grinned at him. "Sorry I can't let it go at that," he said ironically. "I reckon I'll have to do some washin' myself, though, before I feel satisfied there ain't."

"Then you haven't panned out anything yet?" Phœbe caught him up.

Stanley's eyes flickered a questioning glance at Baumberger, and Baumberger puffed out his chest and said: "The law won't permit you to despoil this man's property without good reason. We can serve an injunction——"

"You can serve and be darned." Stanley's grin returned, wider than before.

"As Mr. Hart's legal adviser," Baumberger began, in the tone he employed in the courtroom—a tone which held no hint of his wheezy chuckle or his oily reassurance—"I hereby demand that you leave this claim which you have staked out upon Thomas Hart's ranch, and protest that your continued presence here, after twenty-four hours have expired, will be looked upon as malicious trespass, and treated as such."

Stanley still grinned. "As my own legal adviser," he returned calmly, "I hereby declare that you can go plumb to *Hel*-ena." Stanley evidently felt impelled to adapt his vocabulary to feminine ears, for he glanced at them deprecatingly and as if he wished them elsewhere.

If either Stanley or Baumberger had chanced to look toward Good Indian, he might have wondered why that young man had come, of a sudden, to resemble so strongly his mother's people. He had that stoniness of expression which betrays strong emotion held rigidly in check, with which his quivering nostrils and the light in his half-shut eyes contrasted strangely. He had missed no fleeting glance, no guarded tone, and he was thinking and weighing and measuring every impression as it came to him. Of some things he felt sure; of others he was half convinced; and there was more which he only suspected. And all the while he stood there quietly beside Evadna, his attitude almost that of boredom.

"I think, since you have been properly notified to leave," said Baumberger, with the indefinable air of a lawyer who gathers up his papers relating to one case, thrusts them into his pocket, and turns his attention to the needs of his next client, "we'll just have it out with these other fellows, though I look upon Stanley," he added half humorously, "as a test case. If he goes, they'll all go."

"Better say he's a *tough* case," blurt-

ed Wally, and turned on his heel. "What the devil are they standing around on one foot for, making medicine?" he demanded angrily of Good Indian, who unceremoniously left Evadna and came up with him. *"I'd* run him off the ranch first, and do my talking about it afterward. That hunk uh pork is kicking up a lot uh dust, but he ain't *getting* anywhere!"

"Exactly." Good Indian thrust both hands deep into his trousers pockets, and stared at the ground before him.

Wally gave another snort. "I don't know how it hits you, Grant—but there's something fishy about it."

"Ex-actly." Good Indian took one long step over the ditch, and went on steadily.

Wally, coming again alongside, turned his head, and regarded him attentively.

"Injun's on top," he diagnosed sententiously after a minute. "Looks like he's putting on a good, thick layer uh war paint, too." He waited expectantly. "You might hand me the brush when you're through," he hinted grimly. "I might like to get out after some scalps myself."

"That so?" Good Indian asked inattentively, and went on without waiting for any reply. They left the garden, and went down the road to the stable, Wally passively following Grant's lead. Some one came hurrying after them, and they turned to see Jack. The others had evidently stayed to hear the legal harangue to a close.

"Say, Stanley says there's four besides the fellows we saw," Jack announced rather breathlessly, for he had been running through the loose, heavy soil of the garden to overtake them. "They've located twenty acres apiece, he says—staked 'em out in the night and stuck up their notices—and every one's going to *stick*. They're all going to put in grizzlies and mine the whole thing, he told dad. He just the same as accused dad right out of covering up valuable mineral land on purpose. And he says the law's all on their side." He leaned hard against the stable, and drew his fingers across his forehead, white as a girl's when he pushed back his hat. "Baumberger," he said cheerlessly, "was still talking injunction when I left, but——" He flung out his hand contemptuously.

"I wish dad wasn't so——" began Wally moodily, and let it go at that.

Good Indian threw up his head with that peculiar tightening of lips which meant much in the way of emotion.

"He'll listen to Baumberger, and he'll lose the ranch listening," he stated distinctly. "If there's anything to do, we've got to do it."

"We can run 'em off—maybe," suggested Jack, his fighting instincts steadied by the vivid memory of four rifles held by four men, who looked thoroughly capable of using them.

"This isn't a case of apple stealing," Good Indian quelled sharply, and got his rope from his saddle with the manner of a man who has definitely made up his mind.

"What *can* we do, then?" Wally demanded impatiently.

"Not a thing." Good Indian started for the little pasture, where Keno was feeding and switching methodically at the flies. "You fellows can do more by doing nothing to-day than if you killed off the whole bunch."

He came back in a few minutes with his horse, and found the two still moodily discussing the thing. He glanced at them casually, and went about the business of saddling.

"Where you going?" asked Wally abruptly, when Grant was looping up the end of his latigo.

"Just scouting around a little," was the unsatisfactory reply he got, and he scowled upon Good Indian when he rode away.

TO BE CONTINUED.

The continuation of this story will be published, two weeks hence, in the month-end POPULAR, on sale January 25th.

The Goat of the Alice R's

By Maryland Allen

Socrates afloat. The story of the maiden cruise of the *Alice R.*, and how her new captain got the "goat" of his fighting crew and was never a whit the wiser

CAP'N WESTON was absolutely without a spark of imagination. To him mutiny, shipwreck, sunsets, and moonlight were well described in the dictionary and all in the day's work which it was most proper to efface by a stiff go of grog and a good night's sleep. He had sailed for Adler & Son for twenty years, and never lost a ship. What happened between ports those who did not gossip with the crew never found out. Cap'n Weston discharged what he brought, got what he went for, and took it where it was to be delivered. His log book read like Mark Twain's immortal diary: "Got up and washed and went to bed." And to him it was as it should be. He never had any trouble with his crew. Even the most ambitious seemed to find it difficult to make trouble successfully with a two-fisted man with no imagination.

Cap'n Weston was also a widower. After three years of ardent striving to find a crevice in which to cling upon the smooth surface his nature presented, his wife broke her fiery, imaginative heart, and died. The poor cap'n was left stricken and bewildered, with a baby two years old. He took William with him on all his voyages, and the youngster grew up more familiar with the sea than with the land. In all, the lad got just three years of schooling. During that time he thrashed every boy he stood up with, and rejected everything presented him but hard facts.

At the end of those three years, the cap'n shipped his son as an able seaman. And he was. So able that his father's stern sense of justice did not suffer in the least when he recommended William for mate. Then Adler & Son built the schooner *Alice R.*, for the Puget Sound trade, and Cap'n Weston went to the office to say that William was a good man for the new berth.

There were difficulties. "Old Man" Adler said he did not believe in giving a new ship to an untried man. The cap'n touched lightly but tellingly upon his years of faithful service, and mentioned also that he begot William and trained him from his birth. The rich port wine of the Old Man's heavy face took on a deeper shade, and he hesitated, in a manner very foreign to his usual impetuosity. The cap'n shot a keen glance about the dingy room. He saw that Son, from behind the rampart of his elegant mahogany desk, was watching the Old Man very steadily.

"Oh, it's you, is it?" thought Cap'n Weston. "You're the nigger in this woodpile, are you? *You* don't want him to have it. I'll settle *you*.

"You have no good reason for refusing, Mr. Adler," he said, and he looked at the Old Man hard. "Unless," he added pointedly, "unless you have let Mr. George promise the berth elsewhere."

The Old Man jumped then, and the fine, crusted port of his complexion looked like the bottle had been set in the shade. His contempt for the business ability of his finickety, purse-proud heir was a byword along all the water fronts where Adler & Son's blue-belted funnel or shabby house flag was a familiar sight. But the cap'n's calm as-

sumption that he would allow Son to settle so important a matter stung him to fury.

"You make yourself responsible for him then," he began, with a snap of his undershot jaw.

"I'll do *that,*" broke in the cap'n.

Then they shook hands upon the agreement, and Cap'n Weston stole a sly glance at the superb mahogany desk. But the junior member's head had vanished.

Son was very angry. He remained behind his desk until the cap'n was gone and afterward. He felt William Weston's appointment a bitter insult, but he was too wise to attempt an argument with the Old Man. That night he sat very late at his club, with a yellow-backed novel held upside down in his hand, as a warning to conversationally inclined friends. Next morning he slipped quietly down to the water front, where the spars of big ships peer in at the bright, cocky little windows of "Uncle" Meyer's.

"Jim Slade?" said Uncle Meyer doubtfully. "N—well, yes, he's here."

The boarding-house keeper was a big, handsome Jewess. She was young, with a hearty manner and a strong arm for cleanliness and order in her small establishment There was a fairly popular rumor that she supported a brother and sister, whose smartness was the last cry in the most exclusive social set. But it was only a rumor, after all, and proportionately vague. Uncle Meyer knew Son very well—by sight, and it may be remarked that the reserve was not entirely upon the part of Son. She turned to the red curtain which concealed the stairway.

"He's been keeping pretty quiet since he came in on the *Newcastle,*" she remarked over her shoulder. "But I'm sure he'll see you; that man's been out of the hospital for nearly a week now. Better knock, though, and say who y' are. Third door to your right."

Son was wise enough to take her advice; for the business aboard the *Newcastle* had left slugging Jim Slade slightly uncertain as to the number and appearance of his friends.

"But I ain't seen th' bloke," he objected, when Son was through talking.

"Well, he's big enough," replied George Adler, "but he's an A-one mutt. He looks like a three-months-old Newfoundland pup, and he never left his parpar before. Anyway," a trifle impatiently, "what do you care! Look at your fists, man!" And Slade grinned in sheepish appreciation.

"I'll put the money in bank this very day," continued Son. "And I'll telegraph it to you, my expense, as soon as his resignation comes from Tacoma. But you've got to put him clean out of business, you hear? Have him ready to pass along the berth as soon as she ties up. And no mutiny, mind! I won't stand behind that, and you know well enough where ructions end and mutinies begin."

Slade answered with a fierce glare from his hot black eyes. "Wot about th' crew?" he whispered hoarsely.

"The crew?" echoed Son. "Oh, pick 'em out yourself, and send 'em round to get the job. That part's easy." He stood up, with a yawn.

Slade arose, too. "You're th' boss, all right," he answered, grinning, "an' I'm th' man t' deliver th' goods."

The day of the schooner's departure, Son went down to the dock. He had remained discreetly invisible behind the shining ramparts of his mahogany desk when Slade first came to the office, and spoke for him very briefly when he was gone. But he knew the Old Man's high-handedness about the captain would result in his being very easy concerning the mate. So it was with a heart brimming with malicious satisfaction that Son stood upon the dock and watched Slade hector the brawny crew. Cap'n Weston was there, too; for the *Melinda* was still loading.

The relations between the two men were slightly strained. But Son, looking up at the deck of the *Alice R.,* felt in a wonderfully forgiving frame of mind, and the cap'n's faith in William was the kind that moves mountains. After an exchange of civilities with an elaborate display of courtesy

on both sides, the cap'n went aboard. Immediately Slade swaggered down the plank, and spat into the greasy water that shouldered about the piles.

"Well?" said Son.

"Well," rejoined the mate enthusiastically, "it's a bully job!"

"What?" ejaculated Son. *"What* did you say?"

"He ain't no Noofun'lan' pup!" exclaimed Slade. "He's own brother to a ding-dang pile driver, let me tell *you!* I got a' appetite fer th' job sence I seen 'im, I have. I ain't no bloody murderer," he glared at Son reproachfully. "God couldn' ha' asked fer a fairer fight than that on th' ol' *Newcastle.* I jus' naturally pounded 'im too hard. No, sir, all I ask is a stone-fisted chap up against me, a clear deck, an' go to it by th' rules of th' bes' game I knows. Same way with them fellers up there," he jerked his thumb over his lumpy shoulder. "They'll fight to th' las' grunt, but they're square. No danger o' mutiny there, nor a drop o' bad blood. I picked 'em fer those qualities —an' say, li'l' William fell fer every chap I sent around. Your money's gone, Mr. George Adler, Son." He grinned, and walked back up the plank.

Then the cap'n returned to the *Melinda,* and a small tug came bustling officiously across the harbor. So the *Alice R.* sailed away to the port of Tacoma on Puget Sound, with a cargo of steel rails and nails.

Once on the sea Slade did not find it so easy to make good his boasting promises to Son. There was something daunting about William's perfect calmness. That lack of imagination which left him motherless at such a tender age sent him soberly about his new duties absolutely unconscious of the tornado of emotion which swept above and below the untried decks of the *Alice R.* William was immune to atmospheres. To him the air was hot or cold according to latitude, close or pleasant according to the porthole. He had known the discipline of the sea since his babyhood. A sailorman to William Weston was a sailorman, however eccentric, paid to obey him as *he* was paid to give the crew orders. He never looked for anything. His business in life was to "make good," so—he did it.

Slade, on the other hand, was a big brute with a temperament. William's quiet indifference rasped upon his nerves like sandpaper, and the thought of the big roll of money that Son had put in bank kept them twanging like overstrained fiddle strings. He cursed the fair wind that nipped the fleet heels of the *Alice R.,* cursed the long miles that slipped away behind; harangued the crew by stealth, and cursed them all for ornamentally ancestored cowards. And still there seemed no way to make a beginning. The men looked to the mate, and, though he sparred manfully for a legitimate opening, he bumped only the smooth surface which had broken the heart of William's mother and proven the despair of all the cap'n's crews.

Around the Horn the *Alice R.* made heavy weather. The seas ran high, the great clouds seemed to press upon the swollen water, and the icebergs were close aboard. William slept little. He thought of the time when he was mate of the *Melinda* and how, forever beaten back by hostile winds, she had fled up and down like a caged fox for two desperate months before she won her passage and wearily climbed the hill to San Francisco. He studied the barometer at all hours, hoping for a change, and Slade watched his captain as closely, waiting for an opportunity to beat in his face.

It was written that in one short afternoon each man was to have his wish fulfilled. William, looking up from his log book, saw that the barometer had begun to rise. He hurried upon deck. A flying handful of spray caught him across the eyes, and at the stinging slap he slipped and staggered. That was the crevice in the smooth wall. To see him stumble and falter like an ordinary man released from bondage the minds of the Alice R's.

Fearful of losing a moment, and forgetting all his promises of caution, Slade let fly a heavy wrench, and

rushed aft, summoning the crew as he ran. As William recovered his balance the weighty tool struck upon the stiff brim of his sou'wester, nicked the rail, and shot into the sea. Hard upon this forerunner of battle the Alice R's descended in a flying wedge.

Such a thought as mutiny did not enter William's practical head. Your sailorman is proverbially eccentric, and William had been constantly in their company since his second year. He braced his muscles for a fist fight merely.

"One at a time," he shouted, "one at a time. I'll fight each man, beginning with Mr. Slade, and I ask fifteen minutes' rest between each turn."

At this undeniably sporting proposition the crew held back, and Slade came on alone. The mate, according to his admirers, possessed a right which was "fair to middlin'," and a "turrible left." William experienced a stunning visitation from both, and saw the only stars that ever bothered his level head. The Alice R's set up a hoarse cheer. But before they could draw breath for another Slade went down in a limp heap and William hung by the rail while the bos'n counted the swift passage of each minute in the precious fifteen.

When it came the timekeeper's turn he handed the watch to the steersman, whose face showed signs of severe punishment, and who stood with a sullen back to the losing battle. The bos'n stood up just eight minutes. The cook was last. He rushed forward raging against his cowardly mates, furious, determined. But after six crashing minutes he began to lose confidence.

"Let up!" he screamed. "Let up! 'Oo's agoin' tuh bring on t' pea soup if yuh bash muh? Let *up!*"

William answered with a sizzling uppercut, and staggered to his place by the rail.

"Come, men," he shouted; "fifteen minutes more to be ready for duty. Mr. Slade, if you will sluice me off I will be glad to do the same by you."

Sheepishly enough the mate obeyed, and a sudden burst of sunshine showed the storm was over.

Then a fair wind filled the sails of the *Alice R.* Long bright nights followed long bright days. The men nursed their bruises, and talked the matter over, and Jim Slade was profuse in the perfectly good reasons for his defeat.

"You wait!" he urged.

"Wait?" shrieked the cook. "Wait! You goin' at that—you goin' at 'im *again?*"

"Again?" The muscles on Slade's great shoulders began to lift. "Are yer callin' me a piker an' a coward?"

"Piker an' coward in yuh eye!" crisped the cook. "He's got your 'goat,' that pahty has."

"Wha-at?" roared Slade. "Wha-at, you slew-footed, pie-faced son——"

The cook fled to his refuge among the pots and pans, and added a superfluous cup of salt to the pea soup.

"We cain't come back," he muttered temperamentally. "I know we cain't. He's got our goat, that pahty has."

For this pusillanimous pessimism he was completely ostracized. But he remained passionately unconvinced until there was some talk of absorbing his share of the purse offered by Son. Then his belief weakened, and he meekly begged forgiveness. But the seeds of doubt had already been sown, and lay fallow, waiting the time to sprout.

Some three weeks after the fight the fair wind suddenly veered, and the *Alice R.* rammed her nose into a roaring black tempest. The wind blew in a fierce, steady blast, and beat the waves into terrific mountains that thundered unceasingly upon the *Alice R.* At intervals wild squalls of rain and hail swept like a scourge of scorpions across the driven seas. The schooner groaned along heavily with her decks awash, and every hour seemed weighted with her death.

William encouraged his mate with good whisky and cigars, and heartened the men with rum. He served his trick at the wheel with the rest, and wherever he gave an order he lent a willing hand. The Alice R's were a prize crew. They stood sturdily at his shoulder, and worked like well-oiled machinery. But

they watched Jim Slade, and he did his work with a sharp eye for an easy opening.

On the sixth day of the hurricane the barometer again began to rise. Again William stepped upon deck with his cheerfulness immensely improved. He turned his head barely in time. The mate's huge, calloused fist smote the salt-driven air, and before he could draw it back he was dropped like a shot to the deck. This time there was no fifteen minutes' grace asked or allotted. But——

"One at a time!" yelled William—he knew there was no accounting for the eccentricities of sailormen. "One at a time. Fight square!" Very nobly the Alice R's responded.

As William caught the bos'n on the point of the chin he steadied him with his arm.

"Go look at the barometer!" he shouted to the gasping man. "The wind is coming up stronger."

Then the carpenter struck him beneath the left ear, and his practical mind expanded with a marvelous sense of exhilaration. Scraps of poetry rose to his unimaginative lips.

"'Sweet airs blow seaward,'" he murmured, and laid the carpenter out.

The cook leaped for him, and fought like a blood-crazed tiger. It was not the thought of Son's generous purse that gave such fury to the man's blows. He dreaded the pirating of the precious goat. He split William's short upper lip in three places, with a frenzied burst of profanity for each split. Then he felt the battle going against him, and began to shout to keep up his courage. Bawling defiantly, he went down, and the bos'n returned to say the barometer, too, had fallen.

There was no time even for court-plaster. The fierce, bitter winds and towering seas scourged the black bruises to weather-beaten redness, and healed the cuts. The schooner rolled and floundered like a wounded horse; her strained timbers shrieked in agonized protest, and daily the little company of men stared into the grim face of death.

But signals of distress and last messages in bottles were not mentioned. For William was busy trying to save his first ship, and the Alice R's waded breast high in trouble infinitely more daunting than dissolution. The seeds the cook's pessimism sowed had sprouted, and the men were bent beneath the burden of the harvest. The anguish of it stayed with them through the long, terrible watches upon deck, and broke their short, unsatisfactory snatches of sleep. It tasted in the hot, heavy food; they saw it in each other's eyes, and looked away furtively.

"He's got our goat," dirged the cook, and slid the salt pork and beans into the rack upon the table.

The mate's strained nerves gave a jerk that nearly lifted him from the chair. "He ain't!" he screeched.

The cook fled staggering along the heaving deck. Slade watched him go, and set his haggard jaw. "He ain't!" he gritted. He went out, and stood by the man at the wheel. The steersman looked away from the binnacle, and met his eyes.

"He *ain't!*" vowed Slade, and he drew a hard breath that was like a sob.

None spoke of it after that, and they held no more councils of war. In the hourly toil and peril and the mental anguish that they suffered they even forgot how it all started. They thought only of the impossibility of life with the goat which proved their right to the title of free fighting men at large, forever in captivity.

And all the while William endeavored to keep the *Alice R.* upon her course, reflecting calmly that she was already ten days overdue, and made the briefest entries in the log. Not he nor the crew could know that Son had broken down under the long, anxious days of waiting, or that the Old Man, after a most lurid interview, had sent a lengthy telegram to "Pop" Crandall, agent for Adler & Son in Tacoma, which Pop studied with increasing interest each morning, after telephoning to Port Townsend for news of the missing schooner.

Up the Pacific Coast fled the *Alice R.*,

and the bitter winds scourged sea and sky, and the men avoided each other's eyes, and worked in desperate silence. The mate's nerves were flayed to ribbons by the continuous tempest without and within, and he was hardly human. William's great frame grew thin and gaunt, deep lines plowed his ruddy face like furrows, but still he held the schooner on her course, and made the briefest entries in the log.

They whirled into the Straits on the wings of a screaming hurricane. The *Alice R.* toiled up towering mountains, rushed down giddy precipices, rolled through narrow, watery valleys, and her decks were swept by rain and sea. They heard the bell upon the channel buoy, the light at the Head flared out and was smothered in the blanket of the storm. William strained his bloodshot eyes for another flash, and suddenly and silently the lookout let drive a salty fist against his haggard jaw. The blow took him unawares. He staggered back, and instantly the crew came running.

Scourged and wrung by the bitter sea, the schooner tore on, and the wind howled like a soul in torment. The roaring of the thunder shook the clouds, the lightning poured down in a river of blue flame. William set his back against the deck house, and warily planted blow after blow with cool, methodical care. His opponents fought in superstitious desperation with a wild avalanche of frenzied shoots and cuts that spelled failure by their very fury.

At last there came a lull. William, bleeding, deathly sick from a surfeit of fighting and loss of sleep, saw that only the cook stood up clutching hard the straining spokes of the wheel. Blindly he staggered and tore them from his grasp.

"Coffee for all hands!" he shouted.

By morning the storm had blown by. Puget Sound spread her blue waters smoothly; and it was a very quiet tow the *Sea Gull* picked up off Port Townsend. The fire was just beginning to burn when William looked in at the galley. His left eye was blue-black, a fourth cut ornamented his short upper lip, and his right ear was sadly hacked.

"Fix Mr. Slade up something nice this morning, Sawyer, please," said he. "He seems a bit under the weather. It *has* been a tedious trip, and then he'd been ashore some little time when he shipped. That always makes a difference to a man. Fix him up something good now."

Sawyer cooked up that breakfast in a trance.

Later he came to in a panic, and pictured their probable fate with an eloquence most moving. Mutiny, he groaned, and almost wept, that's what that pahty would call it. He had had the fun o' lickin' 'em, he'd got their goat, now he'd jail 'em for mutiny. To slip over the side was their cue, slip over the side and swim for it, and he cursed the mate with the fervor of a priest at prayer. But a sullen apathy clogged the brains of the Alice R's. They watched the cook's passionate palpitations in noncommittal silence, and the schooner came alongside the wharf at Old Town.

William was collecting his papers most systematically when the cook thrust in his head.

"Mr. Crandall, sir," he announced, "come aboard."

This unusual performance on the part of the agent gave William a sensation of mild surprise.

"Ah?" he interrogated. "Ask Mr. Slade to step here, if you please, Sawyer. I think he's somewhere forward."

He had no inkling of the agent's visit, but considered it proper to send for the mate. The message held a very different meaning to the unhappy cook.

Then Pop Crandall stumbled over the brass-bound coaming, with the Old Man's telegram fluttering in his hand.

"Hello, William!" he chuckled, and stared hard. "Say, you *are* knocked up. The weather, eh?" He grinned facetiously.

"We had a head wind," replied William. "This is my mate, Mr. Slade."

Pop Crandall looked from the mate's broken head to William's mixed countenance and back to the telegram in his hand. "'Do, Mr. Slade," he ducked. "Will you call in the men?"

Slade's battered body moved with a strong jerk, and he shot a savage glare into the agent's face.

Crandall saw and understood. "Old Man's orders," he declared, and smoothed out a lurking grin. His eyes opened very wide indeed when the men filed in. He looked over at William, and whistled softly.

"Now, cap'n," he drawled, flipping the telegram with his thumb, and thoroughly enjoying the situation, "the Old Man has wired me that as it's been a long voyage, and you're all new to the job, he wanted me to see you and the men together, and ask for any complaints. Do you speak for the men, Mr. Slade, or do you?" He looked straight at the cook.

Sawyer drew back with a horrified gulp, the mate glanced about sheepishly and nodded.

"Well," said Pop Crandall, "any kick on the cap'n?"

This time the mate did not look around. He merely shook his bandaged head. The crew shuffled their feet, and breathed loudly. Crandall turned his sharp eyes from their bruised, downcast faces to William's unhealed scars.

"Any complaint to make of these chaps, cap'n? What?"

The crowded little room became suddenly charged by an electric current. A fearful strain, impossible to be endured, showed in the battered faces of the Alice R's. Even the agent was affected, and the lively curiosity in his eyes was touched with sudden soberness. But William was immune to atmospheres. He stared at Pop Crandall in a maze of mild surprise.

"Complaint?" he exclaimed, "complaint to make of *this* crew? Well, if you're going to splitting hairs, I might say they're an active bunch, and they don't seem to care much for variety, and I don't know but what that's a good thing."

He arose and held out the papers he seemed to imagine the agent had come to secure. Like a keen, steel blade Crandall's gaze played over his calm face, seeking the slightest indication of double meaning or concealment.

"Nothing the matter with my crew," said William proudly. "I never sailed with a finer lot."

Vague shufflings and suppressed sighs broke the strain of the terrific silence. The mate's beaten face worked strangely, and he looked as if he would weep.

"He means it," thought Pop, his fingers closed almost convulsively over the neat packet extended toward him. "Chucked-over-and-damned-twice, the chap means it."

"My Gawd!" breathed the cook. He looked across his shoulder as he turned to go, and trod on the heels of the man in front. "My Gawd!" he gasped again. He did not feel the loss of the goat so much, after all.

When the Old Man heard from Crandall he bayed like a full-throated bloodhound on a hot trail. Then he told the whole story at his club—told it so well that Son decided to take six months abroad. Jim Slade is still mate of the *Alice R.*, and sometimes, behind the third door on the right at Uncle Meyer's, he wonders what did happen, after all.

THE STATE OF SINGLE BLESSEDNESS

MAUDE ADAMS was one day discussing with her old negro "mammy" the approaching marriage of a friend.

"When is you gwine to git married, Miss Maudie?" asked the mammy, who took a deep interest in her talented young mistress.

"I don't know, mammy," answered the star. "I don't think I'll ever get married."

"Well," sighed mammy, in an attempt to be philosophical, "they do say ole maids is the happies' kind after they quits strugglin'."

The Cast Bread

By Frank Condon

Author of "Hiram in Search of a Gold Brick," "Police," Etc.

The help which Mr. Baird, of New York, gave to a poor fellow who had been bumped by an automobile was in a sense "cast bread," but unlike the Egyptians' he had no thought of its returning to him after many days. But it did—in a fashion that will astonish you

NORTHWARD, where the Harlem River ambles onward to the sea, and where existence is calm, restful, and inexpensive, there is a stretch of country known as the Bronx, fair to gaze upon and full of two-family houses. A famous boulevard called Jerome Avenue traverses the western edge of the Bronx, and persons addicted to the open-air habit motor over it in gilded ease or saunter along its shaded walks into the open country beyond.

On a certain autumn afternoon, a motor car, large, arrogant, sneering, and quick in its movements, turned away from New York proper, and entered New York improper, the same being the maligned and malignant section of the community referred to.

A young man whose face was as brown as the paper the butcher wraps around steaks, sat behind the wheel, and gazed upon the face of Nature with a serene smile. The young man was Dudley Baird. He had, that morning, removed from the febrile clutches of Wall Street some fifteen or twenty thousand dollars.

His smile was not directly concerned with the morning's pleasant result, because, to Mr. Baird, slipping the greased harpoon into the moaning Street and drawing its lifeblood was a more or less commonplace occurrence. He smiled because he was healthy and prosperous and contented; because he had intimately associated himself a half hour before with an impeccable lunch, preceded by a clover-club cocktail; because he loved motoring and the open road.

He observed, as he passed into the thinly settled community above Macomb's Dam bridge, that the keen air of the fall afternoon, the bright sunshine, and the general desirability of the day, had drawn the athletes from their lair. Runners in half-portion breeches and low-neck shirts passed him at intervals, their hands swinging stiffly under their chins; cyclists scurried along the side paths, their eyes glued to the narrow strip of cinders, and their legs working like twin pistons.

Occasionally young Mr. Baird noticed a walker speeding along, or a hammer thrower at work in the yard of a road house, for, be it known, Jerome Avenue is the home of the professional who trains for almost any sort of sporting event. It contains innumerable road houses, fitted with the paraphernalia needed in all sorts of athletic endeavor; it is a desirable road, because there are few houses, the traffic is light, and the open country is near at hand.

Mr. Baird skimmed along contentedly, and soon he left the pavements behind. The road led through rocky country, and several times he slowed up as he approached abrupt turns. At one of these danger points, a two-passenger, underslung car slipped up behind him, and passed by with roaring engine and in a cloud of gasoline vapor.

Almost at the same instant, a bare-

legged figure sprinted around the sharp turn in the direction of the oncoming cars. Baird threw on his emergency brake, and skidded to a sudden stop. The low-hung car swung to the outside of the road, preparing to take the curve at high speed, and, as the runner dodged aside, the radiator struck him squarely. He went into the air, and, when the cloud of smoke lifted, Baird saw that he had fallen into the ditch, and was lying without movement. The car that struck him was already disappearing in the distance.

Baird hesitated; a feeling of rage came over him, and he instinctively released his brake, intending to give chase to the flying car. Then he jumped from his machine, and ran to where the body lay. The man was breathing. Baird lifted him, dragged his limp form up the short declivity, and stretched him out on the grass. In another moment, he had forced the neck of his brandy flask between the unknown's teeth, and the fiery liquid trickled down his throat. After a short time, the victim shuddered, gasped, and then struggled up on an elbow.

"Well, you're not dead, anyhow," Baird said cheerfully. "Swallow some more of this."

The man winked rapidly, and patted himself on the chest with an investigating hand.

"Gee!" he said finally.

He sat up. He looked about him slowly, and a sudden wave of anger seemed to overwhelm him.

"Where's that car?" he shouted. "Where's the guy that hit me?" He made several other important and forceful statements.

"I should say he's about nine miles up the road by this time," Baird answered. "You ought to be glad he didn't finish you."

"I'm a tough nut," replied the runner. "Gimme another pull at that flask, and I'll be joggin' along. It don't seem as though I had any busted bones."

"Don't want me to give you a lift in the car?" Baird asked good-naturedly.

"Nothin' doin'. I'm much obliged to you for the booze, but I'll be on my way. I don't like the buzz wagons, and they don't like me, neither. Much obliged. S'long."

He limped down to the road, and started off. Baird watched him amble out of sight at an uneven pace.

"He was rather lucky not to get it worse," he mused.

Then he climbed into his machine, and resumed his pleasant journey into the country. The birds sang gayly, and the sunshine drifted through the trees in a most alluring manner; after a long time, Baird met friends, and dined sumptuously. He related the story of the lone runner on the road, and all were surprised that the man was not killed.

Wall Street has an unfortunate habit of doing something totally unexpected at almost any hour of the day or night. This characteristic of the Street is what supplies it with its uncanny interest. In the next few weeks, Dudley Baird found himself as continuously occupied as a yellow pup with Asiatic fleas. The Street had decided to hand Dudley a wallop, and he was equally certain that the Street would do nothing of the kind. Therefore, he was engrossed and busy.

Stocks that he wanted to go up came down, and vice versa. Being a cool-headed young man, he avoided haste or the habits of the panic-stricken, and in the course of time matters began to take on a more roseate complexion. It was along about the first of Otcober that Crandall and Wilson first interested him in the straight-betting proposition.

There was one thing Wall Street never worried over. It was that, whenever anybody desired to make a bet, there would be no delay about the details. If you wanted to wager that Tuesday, the fourteenth of the month, would be a rainy day, you simply hunted up Dudley Baird's office in the telephone book, and told him you would be right over. Similarly, if you felt a hunch that the fourteenth would be a bright, sunny day, you merely told Dudley your theory, and he instantly bet you the other way.

It became known in time. People from all over New York were wont to wander into the Baird offices, and put up money on all sorts of gambling chances. There were hundreds and thousands bet each season on the probable position in which the baseball teams would finish the season. No big college football game passed without the appropriate wagers at Dudley Baird's office.

He bet on prize fights, horse races, the time the *Mauretania* needed to make the westward passage, on aviators, some of whom could actually fly, and others who confined their activities to newspaper interviews; on the number of hits Ty Cobb might accumulate in a season, and on any sporting event that looked as though the parties to the bet had an even chance.

When the big colored man thrashed the big white man at Reno, Baird took down bets that swelled his bank balance by forty thousand dollars, most of which he immediately lost on a college boat race on the Hudson.

Crandall was a known gambler, with a reputation none too savory, and Wilson was his right-hand man, messenger, and general assistant. It was Wilson who notified Dudley that a twenty-round fight had been arranged for Madison Square Garden, and that, as a betting proposition, nothing better had come to light in a long time.

The two bruisers were McCarthy and Owen. They had previously fought two ten-round draws, and on those occasions they had seemed very evenly matched.

"I suppose you'll be willing to make a few bets on the fight," Wilson ventured. "It's going to be one of the greatest betting fights we've had around here for years."

"Surest thing," Dudley answered. "Only I've got to know a little more about it than I do. How are people betting?"

"The newspapers call it even money. Crandall figures that Owen is due to knock McCarthy out. Whatever we bet will go down on Owen."

"Come in, and see me in a day or two," Dudley answered. "If I'm doing any betting on the other man, you'll find it out then."

In the course of the next twenty-four hours, he held several casual conversations with friendly sporting editors of various newspapers, and his information convinced him that McCarthy had an excellent chance to lay the other man out cold. There was nothing certain about it, the experts told him, but, owing to the unusual length of the fight, a knock-out could be expected.

When Wilson appeared, Mr. Baird informed him that he had any part of ten thousand to bet on McCarthy. Mr. Wilson was pleased.

"I'll take the entire ten thousand," he said, "and we will probably have some more, if you care for any of it. Crandall seems to have a hunch on this big lad, Owen, and his friends have chipped in liberally. Would you be in a position to accept additional bets?"

"You know me," Dudley replied, laughing. "Come around to-morrow, and I'll probably have fresh information—and fresh coin."

Gear appeared that same afternoon, in reply to a telephone call. Gear had come from college with Dudley, and had elected the law for a livelihood, but in many of their affairs, business, sporting, and social, the two men traveled side by side.

"You know Referee Whalen," Dudley told him, "and you have a number of disreputable friends who may be able to help out in a business matter. I'm putting up a small bunch of coin on McCarthy in this coming twenty-round fight. The sporting writers tell me there's an even chance, and that my bet is as good as a bet on Owen. Wilson is coming back here to-morrow with more Owen money, and I wish you'd find out what Whalen thinks of McCarthy's chances. If you can get any other inside dope on the fight, it will help me."

"All right," Gear answered. "I'll put in a few hundred myself if the going looks good. Looking back over the records, it seems to me it's just about the same as throwing up a coin and

betting on the fall. Both of these men are second-raters, but they're evenly matched. I'll look around and tell you what I find out."

In the morning, Wilson dropped into Baird's office with a satchel full of yellow bills. Dudley greeted him cheerfully. Gear's information was simply to the effect that a bet on McCarthy was an even one and that he might knock out Owen or might go under himself. When Wilson left, an additional bet of fifteen thousand dollars had been made, and Dudley stood to win or lose twenty-five thousand. In the course of the next week, a number of brokers, all of whom were known to Baird, swelled the size of the bets, dropping in with a casual two or three thousand commission to be placed on Owen. If McCarthy won, Dudley would profit to the extent of thirty-five thousand dollars.

Gear had ventured five hundred of his own cash on the fight, and he discussed the prospects of winning in many places, arguing with friends and strangers alike on the prowess of the two fighters. In a little dark room on West Twenty-third Street, in front of which is a high fence advertising the existence of an open-air garden, he discoursed with a moon-faced person, who seemed to know fighters and fighting. They talked at length. When Gear arose and left the garden, he aimed himself straight for Baird's Broad Street office, into which he burst in a state of considerable excitement.

"Now we've done it!" he said explosively. "We're being skinned alive on this fight, like a couple of rubes. We're jays, because we might have suspected something. Do you know what's going on?"

"What's the matter with you?" Dudley asked.

"Oh, not a thing. You've got thirty-five thousand on McCarthy, and I've got five hundred, and that five hundred is mighty blamed important to me. McCarthy is going to get knocked out in the fourteenth round."

"How do you know that?"

"I've been talking to a yap in a Twenty-third Street saloon. He's a relation or friend or something of Lewison, McCarthy's manager, and, when I told him I thought pretty well of McCarthy in the coming fracas, he got friendly, and slipped me the tip. It was simply to get a wad down on Owen. He wouldn't say why at first, but after I had fed him a few hard drinks in rapid succession, he confided that Lewison has been fixed by Crandall. Lewison gets three thousand five hundred, and McCarthy gets fifteen hundred for running into a knock-out punch in the fourteenth round. That's all there is to it, except that Owen and his manager don't know anything about the frame-up, and Owen will try to win all the way through."

"Do you believe the story?" Dudley asked, without the excitement Gear expected.

"Certainly, I believe it."

"Then, why hasn't Crandall forced the betting harder?"

"I presume you think thirty-five thousand is just bean money," Gear remarked, "and you've got to remember that this is Tuesday, and the fight takes place on Thursday. Crandall has two more days, and, if he doesn't send Wilson over here with a last-minute bet, I'll eat your hat. At any rate, what are we going to do about it? Are we going to stand for the gouge? Let's call off all bets and raise a scandal."

"And lose a wad of money, eh? You have about as much pinch-hitting ability as a prune. If you'll telephone for the machine, I'll close up office for the day and see if we can't do something profitable. This is a new angle of the fighting game, and I'd like to do a bit of thinking. While you're at the phone, find out where we can have a quiet chat with this McCarthy person, whose morals seem in danger."

Gear remonstrated. He expressed a desire to go at once to Crandall's office, find that citizen, and try out the efficacy of punching him on the nose.

Dudley quieted him.

"One would think," he suggested, "that you were betting real money, instead of five hundred."

An hour later, the Baird car steamed away from Broad Street, carrying its owner and Gear. The former was thoughtful, and not communicative.

The driver skimmed through downtown traffic, and selected a broad avenue for the run through the city. In less than an hour he was up where the houses are few. His directions from Dudley were explicit, because he neither hesitated nor asked questions. In the course of a half hour more, he drew up before a rambling, unpainted building, over the entrance to which hung a sign that indicated the immediate presence of Thompson's Road House.

"Here we are," Dudley remarked.

"Yes, and we're practically alone," Gear commented. "I don't see anybody around."

The car stopped before the doorway, and Dudley leaped out.

"You stay here, and I'll look the place over," he said. "There must be a caretaker around."

At the back of the building, he found a man sitting on the uncomfortable edge of a rain barrel industriously filing his finger nails. Dudley addressed him politely, and the man looked up. He was the individual of the running pants whom the low-hung motor car had whacked.

"Why, hello," Dudley said, in some surprise. "Do you remember me?"

The nail filer ceased activities a moment, and grinned.

"Yeh," he said. "You're the fellow who pulled me out of the ditch that day."

"I'm glad to see that your injuries weren't permanent."

"Not a bit. I'm too hard."

"Can you tell me where I can find McCarthy, the fighter?"

The man grinned.

"Yeh, I can tell you," he said.

"Where?"

"Right here."

He patted himself softly on the stomach, and grinned afresh.

"So you're McCarthy, are you? I'm glad to meet you. There's something rather important I want to talk to you about."

"Go right ahead, mister," McCarthy answered.

"You're going to fight Owen the day after to-morrow, aren't you? My name is Dudley Baird, and I have an office in Broad Street. I'm rather interested in your coming fight because I have bet thirty-five thousand dollars on you."

The fighter ceased his finger operations, and stared at Dudley with interest.

"It has come to my knowledge that the fight is going to last fourteen rounds and that Owen will win. I guess you can see where that leaves me, can't you?"

McCarthy stopped grinning, and stuck a large, knobby thumb in the corner of his mouth.

"Where'd you hear that?" he asked calmly.

"Through a friend who stumbled over the information. You're to get fifteen hundred dollars for the job, and your man Lewison is to draw down three thousand five hundred. I was just wondering whether it wouldn't be possible for you and me to make another arrangement about this fight. Supposing you were *not* to lay down in the fourteenth? Supposing you were to go on through the fight and knock out Owen as soon as possible? Supposing such a thing could be arranged, what sum of money from me to you would be satisfactory?"

McCarthy reassumed his grin, and whittled meditatively at his little finger. Finally he said:

"Gee! It's kinda funny, ain't it, that you should be the fellow to be bettin' on me; ain't it?"

Dudley nodded, somewhat impatiently.

"Would you take five thousand from me to fight as hard as you can?" he said shortly.

There was a long silence from the rain barrel. McCarthy at length arose, and lumbered over to where Dudley stood.

"I'll tell you what, mister," he said slowly. "Things sometimes happen funny like. Of course, now that I know you're the man who stands to lose

that wad of money on me, and now that I remember back to when you pulled me up on the bank and shot the drinks into me, why, it ain't likely that I'll lay down. I was to get fifteen hundred and Lewison thirty-five hundred, just as you said. I'll take your fifteen hundred, same amount, instead of the other man's, and I'll knock Owen's block off as fast as I can."

"What about Lewison?"

"He's out of this deal. In the first place, he'd let out a howl, and squeal to his friends about it; and in the second place he wouldn't let me do it, if he knew anything about it. I'm a funny guy, because I don't forget little things, like you're stoppin' to help me when I got bumped. So we'll call it a deal for fifteen hundred, and nobody but us two will know anything about it. I'll knock his block off."

"Do you know where Remboldt Park is?" Dudley asked.

McCarthy nodded.

"You be there to-morrow morning at ten o'clock, and I'll have the money for you in twenty-dollar bills. You could have had five thousand just as well."

"I'm makin' just as much extra as I would have made, and I'm paying back a good turn," McCarthy answered. He resumed his polishing process, and Dudley returned to the car, in which Gear was becoming somewhat impatient.

"Have you found him?" he asked.

Dudley nodded.

"It's all fixed up," he answered. "Let's start back, and I'll give you the details. Your precious five hundred is saved."

At three o'clock the following afternoon, Wilson announced the receipt of a fresh ten thousand to be bet on Owen.

"Will you take it?" he inquired over the phone.

"Yes," Dudley replied jovially, "and, if you can dig up another ten thousand, I'll take that, too."

"I think you're taking some mighty large chances," Gear moodily informed him. "There's no telling what this McCarthy will do when he gets in the ring. He may be making a sucker out of you."

"I'm a pretty good judge of human nature," Baird replied. "I had a talk with this big Irishman, and had a good look at him, and listened closely to what he said. I'm willing to gamble fifty-five thousand on my judgment of the particular brand of human nature he's supplied with."

Wilson brought twenty thousand more, and the bets were recorded. Wilson was a white-faced chap, who rarely smiled, but, as he turned and left the Baird office, the faint, wan shadow of a smile crossed his saturnine countenance.

The fight was a very lively, entertaining one. Madison Square Garden was packed to the steel roof beams, and the sounds of shouting resounded, and welled over into the park outside.

McCarthy knocked Owen out in the fourteenth round.

On their way uptown to the club, Gear chattered joyously.

"I'm five hundred ahead," he murmured. "If I weren't opposed to sure-thing betting and had your easy lack of scruples, I'd have made a lot more, but I'm happy, anyhow. You took an awful chance, at that. Suppose, even though McCarthy was fighting his head off, that Owen had clipped him one on the chin with the sleep punch. Where would your little fifty-five thousand be?"

"It wouldn't happen," Dudley answered.

"Why not?" Gear insisted.

Baird pulled serenely at his cigar for a moment without answering.

"You know," he said soothingly; "there are a lot of Owens in the city directory. One of them lives with his family in a little brown house over in Williamsburg. It isn't so far—not so very far, if one has a good motor car."

"Do you mean!" Gear gasped in astonishment.

"I don't mean anything," Dudley replied, "except that in fighting wolves like Crandall, you've got to use fangs and claws. Here's the club."

The Saintsbury Affair

By Roman Doubleday

Author of "The Red House on Rowan Street," "The Hemlock Avenue Mystery," Etc.

CHAPTER XV.

THE OUTLAW.

I SHOOK my head at Clyde, and returned to the sitting room.

"Have you seen Clyde since the news came out, Mr. Hilton?" the energetic reporter demanded, as I was passing the cigars around.

"I have been out of town. I only returned last evening."

"It seems that he left his office without any instructions, and nobody knows how to get his orders. And at his home nothing is known. He simply walked out of the door and disappeared."

"Then the chances are that he is far enough away by this time."

"But he'll be caught," the man said confidently. "It is one of the hardest things in the world for a man to be lost in this world of rapid communication. His description has been wired all over the country. The police in every city in the land will have their eyes open. Sooner or later—and the chances are that it will be sooner—some one will tap him on the shoulder, and say: 'You're wanted, Mr. Clyde.' And he'll forget himself, and answer to the name. They all do it. Sooner or later."

"That's so," chimed in the others, and story after story was told of the unconscious way in which men in hiding would betray themselves.

It was entertaining enough, but I was on needles to have them go, and I got rid of them as soon as I could. I waited until I saw them actually leave the building before I dared let Clyde out of the bedroom. He came out smiling and undisturbed.

"Are your prophetic friends safely out of the way?" he asked.

"All gone. How in the name of mystery did you get in here?"

"You look more surprised than hospitable."

"And more anxious than either, I dare say, if my looks show my feelings. How are you going to get away?"

"Walk away. And very soon. But, first, I wonder if you could get me something to eat. Absurd how dependent we civilized beings are on our meals! There may be more serious matters to be considered, but at present my chief anxiety is as to whether you happen to have a box of crackers and a piece of cheese in your rooms."

"We'll do better than that," I answered, and I promptly telephoned to a near-by restaurant for a substantial meal.

"Now, while we are waiting, tell me how you got in," I said.

"Oh, that was easy. I simply walked up. I thought I should find you, but you are an abominably early riser. The maids were cleaning the rooms, and so I simply watched for an opportunity to slip into one room while they were in the other. You have comfortable diggings here, and I commend your taste in pictures, but I vow I never saw so hungry a place in my life."

"Have you really had nothing all day?"

"Nothing since yesterday noon. It was about the middle of the afternoon yesterday that a fellow came to my office—a man I had never seen. He told me that he was a typesetter on the *Samovar*. 'Beg pardon,' he said, 'but

This story began in the first January POPULAR. Back numbers can be obtained from any news dealer.

you're Mr. Clyde, aren't you?' I acknowledged it. He said: 'I'm a machine operator on the *Samovar,* and I had a take just now that had a story about you in it. Some dirty story about your having been convicted of murder, and escaping before you were hung.' 'Indeed!' I said. 'It was kind of you to warn me. To whom am I indebted?' He looked down, and shuffled his feet. 'Oh, I'm nothing but a machine operator, but I don't want to see a man that is bucking the ring knifed.' And that is all that I know about him."

"Some local politician, probably."

"Yes," he laughed. "It is a queer world, the way we are bound up with each other. If I hadn't accepted that nomination on the Citizens' ticket, that bow-legged little machine man, who probably had to lose a day's wage to get away and warn me, would never have bothered. He took the trouble because I was *his* candidate."

"By the way, I saw Miss Thurston today. She gave me this letter to get to you if I should have a chance." And I gave him her letter, and turned away to arrange his supper while he should read it.

I rather fancy he forgot his hunger for a few minutes. I could guess something of what Miss Thurston must have written by his face. It was white with emotion when he finished. He put the letter into his pocketbook carefully. Then he turned to me, half laughing, but without speaking, and wrung my hand. We understood each other without anything further.

"What, specifically, did you come back for?" I asked, while he was eating.

"Well, partly because the enemy would be looking for me elsewhere, but chiefly because I had to get some money. How much have you about you?"

I emptied my pockets, and spread the loot before him.

"Not so bad," he said. "I'll give you a check for it, and date it yesterday. Then I should like to have you, as my lawyer, take possession of the papers in my desk. There are insurance policies that have to be taken care of, and some other matters that can't be neglected. And the Lord knows when I can come back."

"No one else knows," I assured him.

He smiled. I could see that he was too uplifted to really care very much about such trivialities as I had my mind upon.

"You don't advise me to stay and brazen it out, then?" he said quizzically.

"On the contrary, I advise you to clear out. I don't see the ghost of a chance for you if the law gets its hands upon you."

"Then a judicial error can never be corrected?"

"The only thing that would give us any excuse for reopening the case would be some new evidence having a bearing on the situation. Have you any reason to suppose that you can unearth any significant facts now which you could not discover when the affair was fresh in the memory of every one?"

He shook his head. "No. That looks hopeless, I must admit. You advise me, then, to bury myself somewhere beyond reach of the extradition laws?"

"Exactly. And, considering everything, I can imagine worse fates."

He smiled. "So can I," he said musingly. For a man with a price on his head, he seemed singularly happy. It was clear that the letter in his pocket was the most potent writ in the world just then.

Then he put dreams aside, and gave me specific directions as to certain matters of business that he wished looked after. It was on toward eleven o'clock before our talk was finished, and he rose to his feet.

"What are your plans now?" I asked.

"To get out of town, first. I must walk. Let me have that stick of yours, will you? I think I shall have to go stooping over a cane, to escape notice. And when I have an address to give you, I'll let you know."

"All right," I agreed.

He pulled his hat into a bedraggled shape over his ears, and walked stiffly about the room, bent over the cane. I had not guessed him so good an actor. I walked with him down the street a

few minutes later—and I knew that he carried a lighter heart into exile than he had carried through all the popularity and success of the last fifteen years. After making sure that he was not followed or observed, I left him, and returned home.

I took a different route, one that brought me through a little park, where a fountain splashed in the soft night air, and the trees bent over the benches whereon homeless tramps and cozy "twos" enjoyed the last minute of freedom. As I crossed the park by one of the diagonal asphalt paths, my eye was caught by the familiar aspect of the drooping shoulders of a man who sat beside a girl on a secluded bench. It looked like Fellows. He moved slightly, and I saw that I was not mistaken.

That he should be spending the evening in the park was not remarkable, but that he should be in close conversation with a girl was distinctly surprising. But I was very glad to see it. A girl would be the best panacea for his moodiness. I would not embarrass him by giving any sign of recognition.

I therefore walked past with my eyes ahead. But just as I came opposite, the girl moved, and the light of the street lamp fell on her face. I had seen her before—for a minute I could not remember where. Then it came to me. She was Minnie Doty, Mr. Ellison's housemaid. How in the name of wonder had Fellows picked up an acquaintance with her?

I wished afterward that my delicacy had not led me to go by without speaking.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE GIFT-BOND.

For some days I was so much occupied with Clyde's affairs, and other business matters which demanded my professional attention, that I saw little of any of my friends in a social way, but toward the end of the week Mr. Whyte asked me over the telephone to come up to dinner. I was only too glad to go, but I confess that when I saw Jean was not expected, I was so disappointed that I began wondering how I could cut the evening short enough to give me a chance to run in at the next door.

"I asked Jean to come over," said Mrs. Whyte, unconsciously answering my unspoken question, "but the dear child had something else on for this evening."

Mr. Whyte chuckled without disguise. "Jean has a beau," he said, with an air.

"And if she has, Carroll," Mrs. Whyte took him up, with instant sex championship, "it is nothing to make remarks about. Jean is quite old enough to receive attention, and he is an exceptional young man. I don't think it is delicate of you to make comments."

"Who is making the comments?" he demanded good-humoredly.

"Well, you *implied* comments, and I don't want you to do it when Jean is around. When a girl has no mother, and is, besides, as willful as Jean is—and she *is* willful, Katherine, although I admit she is charming about it, and I should be in love with her myself if I were a man—the sooner such a girl is married to a steady young man, the better."

"Is the steady young man Mr. Garney?" I asked. The annoyance with which I had observed his prostration before Jean probably betrayed itself in my voice, for Miss Thurston looked up to answer reassuringly.

"Oh, it is not a serious matter. Mr. Garney was a friend of Eugene's, and Jean, bless her heart, would listen to a jointed doll if it could say 'Gene.' Besides, it was Mr. Ellison who asked him to come over this evening. He seems to have quite taken Mr. Garney up—has him over frequently."

"By the way, Clara," said Mr. Whyte, "I asked Ellison for that contribution to your Day Nursery. You would have done better to ask him yourself. He turned me down hard—said he had just had to make a thousand-dollar payment unexpectedly, and was hard up."

The talk shifted, but I confess it had made me uncomfortable. I had had nothing against Garney until I saw him bowled over by Jean, and then I immediately took a violent dislike to him.

Yet she probably regarded his devotion merely as pleasantly flattering.

I was uncommonly glad, therefore, to find Jean waiting for me in my office the next afternoon. Fellows was away, and she was sitting at my desk in a stillness that was more than patient. It was tense. An odd-shaped package was clasped in her hands.

"Well, little storybook girl, are you waiting for the prince?" I hailed her. There was something in her sweet absurdities that always made me feel as though we were playing a game.

"I was waiting for you," she said sedately.

"Lucky me! And poor, disappointed prince! I can see him, in a green velvet suit, with a long, dejected feather in his drooping cap, waiting around the corner of your imagination for you to give a glance in his direction. That's all that would be necessary to bring him to life. Instead of that, you are wasting your thoughts—wasting them according to *his* notion, of course, not mine!—on a chap who is already alive!"

She smiled perforce at my foolery, but her smile was a trifle tremulous. I felt a trouble back of it.

"Is there anything the matter, Miss Jean?" I asked.

"There's Gene!" she said, a little reproachfully. Her eyes searched mine.

"Oh, I know! Of course! But there isn't anything new?"

She hesitated the barest moment. "That's enough," she breathed.

"But *that* is coming out all right," I said reassuringly.

She turned her questioning eyes upon me again, and her look went deeper than ever before. It suddenly struck me that I was foolish to insist upon regarding and treating her as a child. Her eyes were unfathomable, but the mystery that veiled them belonged to womanhood, rather than to childhood.

"Do you say that just to keep me from fretting?" she asked gravely. "Or do you really know anything that is going to save Gene? Really and truly clear him, and—and give him back to me?"

The seriousness and maturity of her manner had so impressed me—I was on the point of saying "had so imposed on me," and I don't know but what that would be the right word—that I took the hazard of answering her with the bare and simple truth.

"No, I don't *know* anything that is going to clear your brother. But I have a confidence which I feel sure is going to mean a victory. I can't say anything more. But it is a long time yet to the trial."

She seemed to shiver a little at the word, and withdrew her eyes. I waited for a moment, thinking that if she had any special anxiety on her mind she would of necessity betray it if left to herself, but when she spoke it was on a totally different matter.

"You are going away?" It was a statement rather than a question.

"What makes you think that?" I parried. I had, indeed, a very definite intention of going away, but I hadn't mentioned it to any one, and I didn't care to have my plans known.

"Why, I thought you would probably go to hunt up Mr. Clyde. When you find him, I wish you would give him this." And she handed me an old letter in a faded envelope.

"But you are quite likely to see Mr. Clyde as soon as I do," I protested.

"I'd rather you had it," she said vaguely. "There is no hurry. Some time he would like to have it. It is an old letter that my father wrote to my mother many years ago. He mentions Mr. Clyde in it, and says nice things about him, so I thought he might like to keep it."

"I am sure he would," I said warmly. "You are a dear little girl to think of it. And if you really want me to take charge of it, I will. I shall probably see Mr. Clyde some time, or at least hear from him. But I shall be jealous of Mr. Clyde pretty soon. Here you give me an interesting letter, to be handed on to Mr. Clyde. And Miss Thurston gives me a lovely thick letter—but not for me at all, only for me to hand to Mr. Clyde. Happy Mr. Clyde!"

She listened with an uncertain smile and wistful eyes, as though she were

holding back some brooding thought. There was something odd in her manner that half worried me.

"I have something for you, too," she said, after a moment. "I have been looking through an old trunk of keepsakes that I keep at Uncle Howard's—things that belonged to my mother mostly—letters and presents from my father, and all marked. She had kept that letter because it was written on her birthday, once when he was away from home. And then——" She hesitated a moment, and then extended the package to me. "This is for you, if you will please take it, as a keepsake."

"How sweet of you!" I murmured. But when I unwrapped the packet, I was dumfounded. It was a beautiful mother-of-pearl cigar case, mounted in silver, and set with an elaborate monogram in small diamonds. "Why, child," I exclaimed in protest.

"It was my father's," she explained. "It was a presentation thing—he was always getting them. You see, he was always doing splendid things for people. I like to remember that he was that kind of a man."

"But shouldn't it go to Gene?"

"No. He gave it to me for my very own, because I was so proud of it. I want you to have it—to remember me by."

"I'm not going to forget you—ever," I said, taking both her hands in mine. Forget her! I realized at that moment that I had taken her for granted as belonging in my life permanently. I simply could not imagine having her go out of it. The idea raised a queer sort of tumult within me.

"Then you will take it," she said, again pressing the case upon me. "Because I want you to have it—I *want* you to."

"I am very proud to have it," I said gravely. To refuse that urgent voice, those beseeching eyes, would have been impossible. I'm not a graven image. She beamed at my acceptance. It was exactly like a rain-drenched flower lifting its head again.

"And I want a good-by present from you to me, too," she said, with a sort of breathless haste, leaning toward me in her eagerness.

"A 'good-by' present! Why, my going away is not serious enough for all that ceremony. I shall be back before you really know that I have gone."

"But you'll give me something, won't you?" she persisted, putting my disclaimer aside. "Some little thing, you know! Your pencil, or something like that."

"I can do better by you than that," I cried gayly. I opened my office safe, and took from it the locket with the emerald heart of which I have already spoken. It was the only thing I possessed which could by any stretch of courtesy be considered a worthy exchange for the cigar case. Her eyes widened like a child's at the sight of the trinket.

"But not for me, surely," she cried.

"For no one else in the world. I got it, intending it for this portrait of my mother—which you see I am going to take out. It doesn't fit very well; and then I discovered that my mother hated the idea of emeralds. So you see it hadn't been intended for her, really. It was waiting for you—if you will accept it. You don't dislike emeralds?"

She did not answer except by a little choked laugh, but her face was eloquent for her. Suddenly she lifted the locket to her lips.

"Oh, come!" I cried, feeling that I must somehow break the tension under which she was laboring. "Perfume on the violets is nothing to such extravagance as kisses on the emeralds. Speaking of violets, let us go down and see if Barney has any to-day. If he has, we'll buy him out."

I picked up the cigar case to put it away, and I confess I was on the point of putting it into my safe, when some instinct struck me between the eyes, and I pretended I had only gone there to lock up. I brought the case back in my hand, then formally transferred the cigars from my own case to it, tossed that into the wastebacket, and slipped the bediamonded thing into my pocket as calmly as though diamonds were my daily wear. She beamed, and for the

first time the trouble that had been hovering in her eyes seemed to melt quite away.

"Oh, thank you!" she cried. "You *do* understand beautifully. I think you are a storybook man yourself."

"Do you know, I always have felt that I had undeveloped capacities in that direction," I admitted confidentially. "Only it took a storybook girl to find them out. Come, we will celebrate the day with violets."

Barney had heaps of violets fortunately, and we had great fun finding places to fasten them upon her. Barney needed only a crumb of encouragement to show himself up picturesquely, and I was glad to set him going, for I wanted to see the shadow on Jean's face entirely disappear. They had become good friends on their own account, it seemed, and Jean was cheeking him delightfully in return for some of his sly remarks, when suddenly she stopped, and I felt a little shiver run through her.

Another man had stopped before Barney's stand—Mr. Garney, the Latin tutor. His eyes were so eagerly intent upon Jean that he hardly took note of my presence.

"You look like Flora herself, Miss Benbow," he said, raising his hat. "Are violets your favorites?" I saw that he was laying the information away for future reference, and I wanted to choke him on the spot.

"They are to-day," she answered demurely. "But I may prefer something else to-morrow." Wasn't that neat and dear of her?

I was very glad to have this opportunity of seeing Jean and Mr. Garney together, because I admit that Mrs. Whyte's gossip had disturbed me. I therefore made no move to hurry Jean away, but pretended to talk to Barney while I watched the other two together. I fancy Barney understood the situation pretty well, for he glanced shrewdly from me to Mr. Garney and back, as though he would see if I, too, understood.

But the result of my observation of their mutual attitude was wholly reassuring. Garney was crazy about her, of course—that was obvious. But Jean was heart-whole and unimpressed. Of that I felt quite sure, and I recognized the fact with a relief that measured my previous disturbance. So long as *she* was not dazzled, no harm could come of it. He couldn't marry her against her will!

How well I remember all the trivial events of that afternoon! After loading her down with violets, we went to a confectioner's and had some gorgeous variety of ice cream, and I did my best to restore her to her usual rose-colored view of life. She responded beautifully, and we had a very gay time. But when I left her at her own door the wistfulness returned.

"You *are* going away, aren't you?" she asked.

"Why, I shall have to, in order to feel that I have a right to keep that cigar case, since it was given to me as a good-by present."

She stood very still for a moment, searching me with her deep eyes. Then she put out her hand impulsively.

"Good-by," she said breathlessly, and fled into the house.

CHAPTER XVII.

A VOICE FROM THE PAST.

The next day brought me a strange letter from William Jordan, the defrauded farmer whom I had left in Eden Valley. He wrote:

DEAR MR. HILTON: I don't know as I ought to say anything, because maybe it ain't you, after all, and if it be you, I suppose you don't want me to know or you would have guve your name, but at the same time I don't see who else it could be, and I ain't used to taking presents without saying thank you. This is what I mean. I got a letter from the First National Bank at Saintsbury the other day, and there was a cashier's check for $1,000 in it for me, and nothing to explain why they sent it. I wrote to find out if it was a mistake and they say no they sent it per instructions but can't give no names. I suppose it is meant to make up for the thousand that Diavolo got, but nobody knows about him but you. Anyhow I am very thankful, and if you don't want the thanks yourself you can pass them on to the right party if you know who he is.

Yours respectively,

WILLIAM JORDAN.

I wrote promptly to Mr. Jordan, telling him that I was not his unknown benefactor, and that I was almost as interested as he could be in learning who the donor was. It was clearly significant. Whoever had sent it *knew!* Whether the restitution was prompted by remorse or by benevolence, it indicated knowledge of the loss. I laid the situation before Fellows, who already knew about Jordan.

"Do you think you can possibly discover who bought that check?"

He look dubious. "Bank business is always confidential."

"Well, it's up to you, because I am going away for a trip. But I'll give you a starter. Howard Ellison's account may possibly show a similar debit."

"Mr. Ellison has been buying some new microscopes and other apparatus," Fellows said casually.

"How in the world do you know that?"

He flushed and looked embarrassed. I did not press the point, because I knew if he didn't want to answer he wouldn't.

"Ellison certainly had some connection with Barker," I said, watching him. "There was a check of Ellison's in Barker's pocket when he was killed."

Fellows looked up with interest. "Then that would belong to his widow. If he has one," he added, as an afterthought.

"Undoubtedly it would."

"May I ask if you know the amount?"

"Two hundred and fifty."

He looked disappointed.

"You think that isn't enough to induce her to come forward?"

"Oh, I suppose it might be worth claiming," he said slowly. "But I think his widow's chief gain is in her freedom from a rascal."

"You can't help sympathizing with the man who shot him, can you?" I said.

His cheek twitched. Perhaps it was a checked smile.

"I sympathize with him, and I think he did a service to the community," he said, in a low voice.

"You are probably quite right," I mused. "And yet the law would not see it in that light."

"Oh, the law!" he said, with the contempt that the blind goddess never failed to arouse.

Jean had been right in guessing that I meant to go away, but she was wrong in thinking that it was on Clyde's account. Probably I should have taken her more into my confidence, but it is always my impulse, both personally and professionally, to work out my theories by myself, without discussing them. The truth of the matter was that I was still on the trail of Diavolo.

I had found, in my accumulated mail, a report of his appearance in a small Missouri town at a date somewhat later than the shows on the route I had already traced. It struck me that there might be significance both in the date and the distance. The Jordan coup had probably frightened them a little. They had jumped to this far-away point for one engagement, and then had retired to private life, Barker coming to Saintsbury. On the bare chance of discovering some particulars that might have significance, I set out for this town. I believe that I was upheld secretly by a feeling that somewhere, somehow, sometime, the truth would be revealed, if I only followed the trail long enough.

At first I was met with the same baffling haze of obscurity. The local manager had taken Diavolo on as an emergency to fill a blank caused by the illness of a scheduled performer for that week. He doubted that he had appeared anywhere else in the State. He had never heard of him before, but was persuaded by Barker's fluency to give him a show, especially as his price was cheap.

"That manager of his, Barker, said that Diavolo was a great man, who had given shows long ago, but was getting too high up in the world now to have his name connected with the business. Said he was really out of the business, but was making a little tour incog to get some ready money, and as he had the newspaper reports to show from other places, I took him on."

"Did he make good?"

"You bet. He's the goods, all right. Say, it's a funny stunt, isn't it? I'm

used to fake mysteries, of course—I see enough of that sort. But when you run up against the real thing, like what Diavolo put up, it makes you feel the devil is in it, for a fact. Don't it, now?"

"It does. And I want to catch him. Do you know anything that would help me to identify him? If you wanted him again, how would you go to work to find him?"

"Look up Barker."

"But Barker is dead, and his knowledge has died with him."

The manager shook his head. "You've got your work cut out for you, then. Barker was the only one to come into the open. Diavolo always stood back, and let Barker do the talking. Might have thought Diavolo was deaf and dumb for all you heard of him until he stepped out on the stage. Then he talked all right—stage patter, of course, but clever."

"You think, then, that this was not his first appearance on the stage?"

"Hard to say. Barker said he was an old un, but that he had given it up to go into something else—something respectable. I didn't believe it at the time, on general principles, but maybe he was giving it to me straight."

I then followed the trail to the hotel where Diavolo had stopped, and here I encountered a girl who had her wits about her, and knew how to use her eyes. She was the daughter of the landlady, and she acted as clerk, waitress, or chambermaid, as occasion required. She looked up with more than professional interest when I mentioned Diavolo's name.

"You mean that dude that was here in the summer, and read people's thoughts at the Orpheum? Say, wasn't he great! Know him?"

"Not so well as I hope to. What did he look like?"

"Oh, he had black hair and a beard, and eyes that kind of looked through you. Say, it's hard to describe a man, you all look so much alike—oh, *dress* so much alike, you know. But Diavolo was different, though I don't just know how to explain it. He was a sure-enough swell off the stage, wasn't he?"

"What makes you think that?"

"Why, I heard that man that was with him—Barker, his name was—I heard him say—you see, I was in the hall, and the transom of that room won't shut, so you just can't help hearing—and Barker had a high voice, anyway, and he said: 'You're a fool to give it up.' I didn't know what he was giving up, of course, but Barker went on: 'You can make money at this business hand over fist if you let me manage things, and you aren't making any money being respectable. What's respectability compared to the coin?' I often thought of that afterward. There's something in it. And still, respectability is worth something," she added thoughtfully.

"Was that all you heard? What did Diavolo say to that?"

"Oh, I couldn't hear anything he said, because he spoke so low, but Barker said, kind of laughing: 'Just remember that I've got you on the hip, my boy. If I mention in the right place that you and the hypnotist Diavolo are one and the same, where will you be then?' And Diavolo must 'a' said something angry, for I heard Mr. Barker say, kind of sarcastic: 'No, you won't kill me, nor you won't do any other fool thing. You'll join in with me for good and all, and we'll gather in the shekels.' And then I heard something that sounded uncommon, like a chair swung over a man's head—I've seen them do that in the barroom when they got excited—and Mr. Barker popped out of the room in a hurry. He was pretending to laugh, but I could see that he was some scared inside. And I don't blame him. When Diavolo looked at you, you didn't want to say that your soul was your own unless he gave you leave."

"Did he ever look at you?" I asked curiously.

She tossed her saucy head. "That's different! No, he didn't try any hypnotizing tricks on me."

"Did you see any signs of bad feeling between them afterward? Was there any more quarreling?"

"Not that I heard. I guess the little man knew better."

"Which one do you mean by the little man?"

"Oh, Mr. Barker, of course. Not that he *was* much smaller than Mr. Diavolo if you weighed them, perhaps, but you know what I mean. Mr. Barker made me think of the man showing off the tiger at the circus. You could see that for all his show of not being afraid, he didn't dare turn his back for a minute."

That remark seemed to me to express the situation very vividly, and I had no doubt that her native shrewdness had correctly grasped the relation between the two men. And her positive testimony that Diavolo had threatened to kill Barker if the latter divulged his identity was certainly significant. Was it not most probable that that was what had happened later? How Eugene Benbow had become involved in the fatal affair I could not even guess.

After my interviews with the manager and the landlady's daughter, I seemed to have sucked Oakdale dry so far as information concerning Diavolo went. But instead of returning at once to Saintsbury, I determined to run on to Houston. I wanted to go over the records of Clyde's trial there, with a view to seeing whether there was any flaw or technicality of which it might be possible to take advantage. Clyde was probably fleeing the country as fast as he could make his way by the underground, but there was always the possibility that his affairs might be brought to a sudden climax.

I thought that the critical moment had arrived with unceremonious haste when, after registering in a Houston hotel, I looked up, and saw Clyde himself crossing the lobby to take the elevator. For a moment I hesitated whether to accost him or not, but he saw me, and at once came over.

"Hello! You here?" he said easily. "Come on up to my room, if you aren't busy."

"All right," I responded, making an effort to match his casual manner.

When we reached his room, I saw that despite his self-possession he looked harassed and worn. The long inner strain had suddenly come to the surface.

"You didn't come for me?" he asked nervously, as we shook hands.

"Certainly not. I had no idea that you would be so rash—to use no stronger word—as to come here."

He threw out his hands with a helpless gesture.

"I couldn't help it. It seemed all along as though I *must* be able to find some evidence in my favor if I came myself. I didn't dare to come before, for fear of a chance recognition, but now that the danger had appeared, I was driven to taking chances."

"How long have you been here?"

"Twenty-four hours."

"You are lucky to have remained undetected so long. Now I hope you'll stay in your room till night, and then get away as quickly and quietly as possible."

"There's nothing else to do," he said heavily. "I have been to Lester. The places are all changed, and the people are new. Everything has passed away—except the official record of the trial and the sentence."

"Of course it would all be changed," I said, as lightly as possible. "But I am going to examine the account of the trial, and see if there was anything in the procedure which will give us a loophole. But you mustn't stay here to complicate matters. You must get away—as I have told you before."

He did not answer for a moment, but sat with bent head. Then he spoke slowly:

"I wonder if life would be worth having on the terms you suggest. Expatriation, separation from everything that you care for, every one who makes your public, from all your associations and ambitions——"

"You could establish new associations. You would see life from a different angle, and that is no small advantage. And—pardon me—you would not need to go alone."

He looked up swiftly at that. "Never! Do you think that I would let—*any one* make so mad a choice?—dower her with such a life as I must live hence-

forward, dodging in the shadows, afraid of hearing my own name, an outlaw and a skulker? If I regard life for myself as of dubious value under such conditions, do you think I am so hopelessly mean as to ask any one to share it with me?"

Of course I could understand his point of view, though he looked so handsome as he repudidated the idea that I guessed Miss Thurston would not have regarded the lot as wholly forlorn.

"No," he said, walking restlessly up and down the narrow room. "I'll take my medicine, but I won't involve any one else. I'll make as good a fight as I can, and I won't skulk——"

He was interrupted. There was a tap at the door, and immediately it was opened and a police officer stepped inside. He glanced from me to Clyde, and picked his man unerringly.

"Mr. Clyde, I presume?"

Clyde nodded. "Yes. You want me?"

"Yes, sir," deprecatingly.

"You mean I am to go with you now?"

"Yes, sir," firmly.

Clyde smiled at me wryly. "I suppose I ought to know something of the etiquette of these affairs, but I am afraid I am not up. How about my personal papers? Will I be allowed to turn them over to you?"

"Certainly, unless the officer has a warrant for them," I said, with an assured air, intended to impress the officer.

Clyde took from an inner pocket a packet of letters, old and worn. "These are the letters that took me back from Lester," he said, with a smile. "They were in the bag which I had left in my room at Houston. That was the only reason I went back that morning. If—well, if the time should come when you think best, give them to K. T., and tell her that I have carried them always. She will understand then——"

"I will not fail," I said, much moved. So it had been Katherine Thurston all the time! "And that reminds me that I have here a letter which Miss Benbow charged me to give you—an old letter written by her father. She thought you might care to keep it. Perhaps, under the circumstances, you'd better read it, and then return it to me for safe-keeping."

"I remember Senator Benbow very well—a fine man!" Clyde said. He spoke absently, and I guessed that his mind was on other matters, but I had no intention of letting him disregard Jean's remembrance, or of letting the letter which she had treasured go into the hands of any careless court official.

"It concerns you, she said. Read it, and then I will take charge of it."

I handed him the old letter in its faded envelope, and turned to speak to the officer while Clyde should read it. The detective had watched us closely, but so long as Clyde made no move to leave the room—or to draw a revolver—he showed no disposition to interfere with our arrangements.

"How did you get information about him?" I asked the officer, merely to leave Clyde to himself for a moment.

"From Saintsbury. The police there are looking for him, and they wired us to be on the lookout."

"Then you agree with the theory that the villain always returns to the scene of his crime in the last act?" I said.

"I'm not so sure about that." The man looked doubtful.

A faint sound from Clyde made me turn. He was standing, supporting himself against the table, with a face so marked by emotion that I was startled into a cry. Whether his emotion was terror or joy or merely awe, I could not tell from his look, his face was so curiously changed. He held out to me the letter which he had been reading, and when I took it he dropped into the chair by the table, and let his head fall upon his arm. I felt that it was the unconscious attitude of prayer, and I unfolded the letter with more anxiety than I can express. This is what I read:

On the train, near Lester, Texas,
August 30, 1895.

MY DEAR LOVE: Midnight has just blown across the sky, and here is the thirtieth—the day for which I always stay awake so that I may send a birthday greeting on the very first minute of time that has a right to carry

it. I am throwing a kiss in your direction now, and if you are not conscious of it this minute, you will know when you receive this missive that although your devoted husband was traveling (and dead tired) he waited awake for the express purpose of saying "Happy Birthday" to you into space.

I left Houston an hour ago on my way to St. Louis, and we have just passed Lester, a little way station and our first stop. Whom do you think I saw there, of all persons in the world? Kenneth Clyde! I didn't know that he was in this part of the country, and I can't imagine what he could want of Lester, which, to judge from what I saw of it, consists of a platform, a freight shed, and three houses. He evidently had come up from Houston on my train, though I didn't know it until I saw him jump off at Lester and rush for the station agent who was lounging by the shed. Whatever he wanted he didn't get it, for he was rowing the agent so hard that he didn't see or hear me, though I hallooed to him. I suspect that he found he had got on the wrong train by mistake and wanted to get back. If so, he will have to wait until morning when the local comes along—long enough to cool his fit of temper. I like Kenneth and believe he has the makings of a man in him, for all that he is somewhat unbroken. If I ever have a chance to hold out a helping hand to the boy, I'll certainly do it.

I'll be home in a fortnight, and I count the days until I shall see you, my own. Kiss the two ingenious Gene-iuses for their dad.

JOE.

I caught Clyde's hand and wrung it. "It's a miracle! That is, it is the new evidence which will give us a chance to reopen the case. And it is conclusive. Man, there could never have been anything more complete. And to come now, at this moment!"

"It is the helping hand that he offered," Clyde said, with an unsteady laugh. "And little Jean sent it to me, you say?"

"Yes. She had been looking over some old momentos of her father, and she merely thought this letter might interest you because you were mentioned in it."

The officer apparently thought we were taking too much time mooning over old family letters. "If you are ready, Mr. Clyde," he suggested courteously.

"Yes, all right. I'm ready. You will take the necessary steps, Hilton?"

"Of course. I can't at this moment think of anything that would give me more pleasure. I'll go down with you at once."

But I didn't. As we stepped into the hall, a boy with a telegram came toward me. It was a forwarded message from Oakdale, where they had failed to find me:

Come back to onct. There is a trouble on the girl. BARNEY.

"He means Jean," I exclaimed, handing the slip to Clyde. "I know he means Jean. Confound him for not being more explicit! What can have happened?"

"You'll go at once, of course?" said Clyde promptly.

"I can't go till a train starts." And then I remembered how my going would affect Clyde. "I'll have time to lay this letter of yours before the court before I go, in any event. And I shouldn't want to take any chances of a train wreck with that document in my pocket."

But you can imagine the fever I was in till I could get off. I saw the proper officials, and took the necessary steps to secure judicial recognition of the important paper which was to restore Clyde's life, liberty, and happiness, and though he could not, of course, be released at a moment's notice, I had the satisfaction of seeing the procedure started that would enable him in a short time to face the world a free man, with the secret terror that had shadowed his life for fifteen years forever laid. But I went through it all like a man in a dream. Through all that was said and done I was hearing every moment, like a persistent cry:

"Come back at once! Jean needs you—Jean needs you!"

After leaving the courthouse I still had hours—ages!—to wait at the station, and the pictures my imagination conjured up were not soothing company. I had telegraphed Barney that I was coming, but after that I could do nothing but fret myself to a fever waiting. I got off finally, but all through the night and all the next day the singing wheels of the train were beating out the refrain:

"She *needs* me! She *needs* me!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

A RESCUE.

I had rather expected that when I reached Saintsbury Barney would be on hand to give an explanation of his urgent message, but no Barney was to be seen. I took a taxi to my office, which was across the street from Barney's stand. For the first time within my memory, Barney's stand was shut up, and the owner gone. I told the chauffeur to wait, and went up to my office. Perhaps Fellows could throw some light on things—unless he, too, had disappeared.

Some one was there. I heard talking before I entered—the loud and unfamiliar tones of a man's voice. I went in without knocking. Fellows was there, at my desk. His start of surprise turned into unmistakable confusion as he saw me. His own chair was occupied by a pretty girl, whom I recognized at once as Minnie Doty, the houseworker at Mr. Ellison's, and the girl whom I had seen with Fellows in the park. The third person in the room was a tall man, who stood before the window, hat in hand. Evidently he was the man whose voice I had heard.

"Well, I must be going," he said now, after a moment's awkward pause, and moved toward the door. As he turned from the window the light fell upon his shaven jaw, blue-black under the skin, and I recognized him. He was the man Barker had addressed with a taunting question about his marriage.

"Don't leave the room," I said quietly, keeping my position before the door. "Fellows, introduce me."

A gleam of amusement crossed Fellows' sardonic countenance. Leaning against the edge of my desk, he indicated the seated girl with a slight gesture. "Mr. Hilton, allow me to present you to Mrs. Alfred Barker."

"How do you do?" the girl said nervously, trying to rise to the social requirements of the occasion.

"How long have you known this fact, Fellows?" I asked, watching him closely.

"For some time," he said easily. "Miss Doty—Mary Doherty her name was originally, but she changed it to Minnie Doty when she ran away from her husband, and got a position as houseworker at Mr. Ellison's—she answered our advertisement for Mary Doherty, to learn something to her advantage. I talked with her—she didn't want to be known as Barker's wife, or in any way connected with the inquest, so I agreed to keep her secret for a short time, because——

"Because she was afraid this man, whose name I don't know——"

"It's Timothy Royce, and I'm in the fire department. Anything else you would like to know?" the tall man threw in defiantly.

"Yes. I'd like to know if it was you who telephoned to Miss Doty, early in the morning after Barker was killed: 'Barker is dead, and now you must marry me.' Was that you?"

"Oh, Tim!" cried Miss Doty—or whatever she preferred to be called. "Oh, Tim, I knew they would find it out!"

"What of it?" said Royce doggedly. "Anybody is welcome to know that I want to marry you."

"I see. And when Barker asked you in the hall that day if you were married yet, and you drew back to hit him——"

"It was his devilishness," said Royce concisely. "He had just spotted Min and me, and he knew well enough I couldn't marry while he was above ground, and he was rubbing it in. That night that he was killed, Min and I had gone out to talk things over. I wanted her to run away with me, but she said she couldn't while he was alive, and the next morning, when the patrolman on our beat told me Barker was dead, I tried to telephone Min. I couldn't go to her, because I was on duty. I knew it would break her up, being a woman, even though he was ugly as sin to her. Women are that way, I suppose. She even saw about getting him buried. But she was scairt to death of having to come forward and tell things, and be talked about, and have to appear at the inquest and all that, and letting it be known about her and me——"

"Where were you the night that Barker was killed?" I asked abruptly. The man looked honest, there was an honest ring in his voice—but suppose that, after all, I had the real murderer here in my office, covering his trail with palaver? Fellows' eyes were on the floor.

"We went out to Lake Park on the electric, Min and me," he answered promptly. And then he added unnecessarily: "We went out on the seven o'clock car, and stayed there all evening."

"Now I know you are lying," I said coolly. "Minnie was at home a few minutes before seven. I saw her let Miss Benbow in."

"There's a lie somewhere, but I'm not fathering it," Royce retorted hotly. "Miss Benbow was waiting in the back entry to be let in when we got there, and it was nearer three than two, because the power gave out, and we were tied up for over two hours halfway between here and the park, waiting every minute to go on."

"Good heavens! Was Miss Benbow waiting outside till three in the morning?"

"Not ouside—in the back entry. It seems that she came home unexpected, and, finding the house shut up, she waited, thinking of course Min would come home some time. And so she did. You see, everybody was away from home that evening, so Minnie was free. But Miss Benbow is a good sort, all right. When Min said she'd lose her place if Mrs. Crosswell found out about her going off, Miss Benbow said right off that she wouldn't tell."

I held down any adequate expression of my feelings. I merely asked: "What sort of a place is the back entry?"

"Oh, it was quite clean and nice," Minnie spoke up from the depths of her handkerchief. "There's an old rocking-chair that I sit in to peel potatoes and things like that. She went to sleep in the old chair, and didn't come to no harm. We leave the entry unlocked, so that the iceman can get at the refrigerator in the morning."

The thought of Jean cooped up in that dark back entry until three in the morning, even admitting the comfort of the old rocking-chair, was sufficiently disturbing, but aside from that there was something perplexing about the story. Somehow it did not fit in with my previous idea of the events of that night. I struggled to fix the discrepancy.

"How about Mr. Benbow?" I asked Minnie suddenly. "You told me you saw him leave the house."

"I did!"

"When? If you were away from the house before seven——"

"It was just as I was taking Min back home—a little before three," Royce interrupted. "Just as we were going along the side of the house, past the room Min said was the library, the door opened, and Mr. Benbow came out and ran down the steps. Min didn't want him to see her, so we stood still in the shadow till he was in the street. Then we went on to the back of the house."

"You gave me to understand that it was earlier in the evening," I said reproachfully.

"I didn't say when," she murmured miserably. "And I couldn't tell you it was at three o'clock, or it would all have come out! And it is nobody's business, anyhow. I wish I had never answered that advertisement of yours!"

Fellows stirred slightly, and his eye met mine. I caught his hint not to frighten the timid Minnie if I wanted to get any information from her.

"Did you tell Miss Benbow that you had seen her brother leave the house at three?" I asked, to fill time.

"Not then," she said meekly. "I didn't think about it. I told her the other day."

"Well, now you know the whole story, and I guess Min and I will go," said Royce—and this time I did not try to prevent his departure. "Min wanted me to come, because that young man was hanging around to make her tell about things, and she didn't know what she had ought to tell and what not. But there ain't nothing we need to be afraid of coming out, only Min hates to be in the papers."

"Good day," I said. "And thank you for coming." As the door closed behind them, I turned to Fellows.

"Follow them. Don't lose sight of him. I don't feel sure yet that he has told the truth. We may need him."

"All right," said Fellows. "I've been having her watched for weeks to find out who her young man was. I just worked it out yesterday, and got them here five minutes before you came in."

"Well, make sure that we can locate him if necessary," I said. This was not the time to discuss his methods of handling things.

The door had hardly swung shut behind him when it opened again, and Barney stumped in—an anxious-looking Barney.

"You're here! I missed you," he said.

"Barney, what is it?" I cried. To wait for him to put what he had to say into words seemed suddenly next to impossible.

"I don't know wot it is, sir, but it's trouble," he said doggedly. "She guv me a letter for ye, and here it is."

I tore it open, and behind the incoherent words I seemed to hear Jean's serious, appealing voice:

DEAR MR. HILTON: I just *must* write to you, because I couldn't bear it if you should ever think back and feel hurt because I hadn't. I can't tell you all about it, but I want you to remember that I have a *reason*, a very important reason, for what I am going to do. I can't explain, but it is on account of Gene. You will know afterward what I mean.

But there is one other thing I want to tell you. I have just found out that Minnie told you she saw Gene leave the house that night, as she was coming in. That is a mistake—I didn't tell her so, because I didn't know what difference it might make. But Gene was fast asleep on the couch in the library when Minnie and I came into the house—and that was three o'clock—so if she saw some one going off by the side door just before, it wasn't Gene. You see, it was this way: When I ran back to speak to the girl I thought was Minnie, I found it wasn't Minnie but a friend of hers who works in the next house, and she said Minnie had gone out but would be right back, so I went into the back entry and waited for her, because I *wouldn't* go to Mrs. Whyte's when she was having a party. And Minnie didn't come till three. When we got in I saw a light in the library, and I went in, and there was Gene asleep. I kissed him very softly, but I didn't wake him up, because you know how boys are, wanting their sisters to be so awfully dignified. And though I was perfectly safe and comfortable waiting beside the refrigerator, it wasn't exactly dignified, and Minnie was scared to death about being found out. So I didn't wake Gene. And it has been a great comfort ever since to me to remember how peaceful he looked, because that shows he felt innocent in his mind and not with a guilty conscience to keep him awake like Lady Macbeth.

I can't say anything more, because I have promised over and over again not to say a thing about the plan to save Gene, but I will just say this: If you should happen to hear that I was married, will you please, *please* understand and believe that it was to help Gene, and that of course I must do anything for him.

Yours faithfully (a blot made it look like "tearfully"), JEAN BENBOW.

It was incoherent enough—except for the part about Gene, which I put aside in my mind to think out later—but one thing seemed clear—that she was married, or about to be married, and that she had been lured into this madness by some delusion that in this way she was going to be able to help her brother. I glanced at the envelope.

"When and where did you get this, Barney?"

"Yisterday, yer honor. She brought it to me herself. An' she wanted to bind me by great oaths out of a book that I wouldn't give it to you till afther to-day had gone by. Sez I, 'How can I give it to him till he comes here, an' his office man sez he won't be here for a week yet'—for I had been to find out on my own account—God forgive me for deceivin' the innocent."

"It wasn't her letter, then, that made you telegraph, if you only got it yesterday. Was there anything else?"

His eyes fell, and he shifted his weight on his crutch uneasily.

"I saw her cryin' and I knew she was carryin' sorrow," he said at last defiantly.

"When? Where? Tell me everything, can't you? Did you know anything of her plan to be married? Do you know where she is?"

"I know only what I see—an' that was that she was unhappy. It was this

way: She came by my stand many a time, asking this about you and that about you, an' when would you be back, an' I c'u'd see that there was more on her heart than a gurrul like her should be carryin'. Then one night I saw her cryin'——"

"Where?"

"'Twas in her own home, sure. Her head was down on the windy sill, an' it was dark, and she never mistrusted there was anybody about the place watchin'—an' no more there was, seein' I wouldn't count an old codger like meself anybody. She was sobbin' and talkin' aloud to herself——" He broke off and looked at me with fierce reproach. "I telegraphed for ye then, sor."

"And I came at once. Then this letter—she brought you this yesterday?"

"That was it. An' if you hadn't come by this train, sor, I would have opened it meself." He looked at me defiantly.

"She says here—at least, I think she means to say, that she is going to be married—and in mad foolishness. Wait till I see what I can learn by telephone."

I got Mr. Ellison's house first. Mrs. Crosswell, who answered, was sure that Miss Benbow was not at home, but did not have any idea where she was. Did not know whether she had taken anything with her when she left the house or not. I then called up Mrs. Whyte, explained that a letter from Jean suggested a possible elopement, and begged her to go over and see if she could find out where Jean went, when she left the house, and whether she had taken any things that would indicate a contemplated permanent departure.

I then took my head in my hands and thought, holding down the terror that surged up every other moment and almost made thinking impossible. "If you hear that I am married," she had said. Was it Garney? Never mind. Garney or any one else, people could not be married without certain preliminaries, without leaving certain records. There must have been a license. I took Barney with me in the cab, and we whirled up to the courthouse.

"Have you any record of issuing a marriage license for Jean Benbow within the last few days?" I demanded of the clerk.

Why has the Lord made so many stupid people? My question had to be handed on from one clerk to another, and record after record after record examined—and here every wasted minute was wearing away this "day," this critical day, over which Jean had wished her secret to be kept. I held my watch in my hand while they searched. At last they found it.

"Looks like Jack put this memorandum where it wouldn't be found too easy," the successful searcher said significantly to his fuming superior.

It was quite possible—for the memorandum showed the issue of a license for the marriage of Allen King Garney and Jean Benbow, and it was dated the day before. She had stipulated with Barney that I should not receive her letter till after to-day, which meant that this was *the* day. And here it was drawing toward five o'clock.

Then, out of the intense anxiety which fused all thought and feeling into one passionate *will* to save her, came the inspiration. She had said, on that drive when I took her and old William Jordan out into the country, that if ever she were married it would be *there,* in the vine-covered church of the old suburb where her mother had stood a bride. The recollection was almost like a voice —"Don't you remember?" I did—oh, I did! Every word, every look.

My hand was shaking as I turned the pages of the city directory, trying to identify the church, which I knew only by its location, and to discover the name of its minister. Then I turned again to the telephone. There was no connection with the church, but I succeeded at last in getting the minister's house.

"No, Mr. Arnold is not at home," a gentle feminine voice answered. "He has gone to the church to perform a marriage ceremony."

"Can you catch him? Stop him? Is it too late?" I cried desperately over the wire.

"Oh, the wedding was at four o'clock," the shocked voice answered.

"Oh, is there anything wrong? I am sure Henry didn't know—we thought it so romantic, a secret wedding——" I hung up the receiver, regardless of her emotions, and went back to my cab on the run, while the listening office force enjoyed the sensation.

"Go to the little church at the corner of Olympia and Hazel Streets," I said to the chauffeur. "And get there as soon as you can without being arrested. *Get* there!"

Then I told Barney what I had discovered. There was no reasonable ground for supposing that I would be in time to prevent disaster, yet I must go on, even against reason. And surely Providence would interfere to save her! I could so easily understand how she had been misled. Garney had made her believe that he could help Gene. Perhaps he had suggested that I was not giving the case proper attention. He had offered some impossible assistance if she would marry him, and she, with her romantic, schoolgirlish, unreal ideas of the way things were done in the world, had consented all the more readily because it involved a sacrifice on her part.

The cab swung up to the curb, I jumped up the church steps, and pushed my way through the swinging baize doors. The room was dim, but I could see a group of three before the altar—Garney, yes; and the minister; and Jean. They turned to look as I stormed down the aisle, and moved slightly apart. I caught Jean's hands in mine, and looked into her eyes.

"Jean! Are you married?"

A mist of tears dimmed the brightness of her eyes. "Oh, I'm *glad* you've come," she said quiveringly.

Still holding her hands, I turned to the minister. "Have you married these two, sir?"

"Not yet. The young lady appears to have been detained——"

"I took the wrong car! I was just explaining——"

For a moment the room swam before my eyes. I was in time!

"It was just an accident," Jean was saying. "Then when I found I was wrong, I came back as soon as possible, and—now I am ready!"

"Ready!" I crushed her hands until she drew them away with a little gasp. I turned impatiently to Garney, who stood motionless, white-faced, watching her. Of course, he knew the game was up, but he did not move.

"Go!" I said. "I'll settle with you later."

I don't know whether he heard me. His eyes were fixed upon Jean with mingled anger, longing, and despair.

"You waited till he should come! You left word for him to follow you!" he said pantingly. "In spite of your promises, you never meant to keep your word. You do not care about your brother. You thought you could trick me——"

"Oh, no, no!" she cried, breaking from me and going to him with hands extended. "I am here! I am ready! I will marry you now——"

"Jean!" I cried.

"You don't understand," she said, turning breathlessly to me. "He is going to help us save Gene. He knows something—he said he would tell me if we were married——"

"Nonsense! It was a trick. If Mr. Garney has any information that will benefit your brother——"

"He might hand it over to you, I suppose!" Garney said, with a sneer. "Very well, I will. Investigate that ex-convict that you keep in your office. You may find something that will be of interest. But if you hadn't come——" He moistened his dry lips, then turned abruptly and walked up the aisle. I saw that he tried to hurry, but he walked unsteadily, and steadied himself by the pews. I once saw a gambler who had staked everything on a desperate game, and lost, stagger like that from the room.

"What did he mean about an ex-convict?" Jean asked, in a shocked voice. "Not Mr. Fellows? And what would he have to do with it?"

"Nothing," I said promptly, putting certain uncomfortable recollections out of my mind. "Don't you see that Mr. Garney was merely deceiving you? He had nothing to tell, no help to give you.

He merely wanted to marry you. Jean, Jean! How could you do so mad a thing?"

"For Gene!" she said reproachfully. "Why, I'd do anything. And Mr. Garney said he surely would tell me when we were married, and if I cared for Gene I would do it. He wouldn't tell me beforehand, because he—he doesn't like you!" She dropped her eyes in delicious confusion. "You see, he is—*jealous* of you! He didn't want me to wear this!" She touched the locket she wore on a chain about her neck—the locket I had given her just before leaving Saintsbury.

"How did he know I had given you the locket?" I asked.

"I don't know. He just guessed." She looked shy and conscious—and charming. But something puzzled me.

"You didn't tell him? You are sure of that?"

"Why, yes," she said, looking surprised. "I never told anybody. Not anybody at all. It was a kind of a—secret."

How do ideas come to us? I thought I was wholly absorbed in Jean, and was conscious merely of a desire to soothe and calm her by taking things naturally, but now something seemed to nudge my attention, and to urge: "Don't you see what that means? Don't you see? Don't you see?"

I did see—in a flash. That locket! It had not been out of my locked desk until I gave it to Jean, except once—the night of Barker's murder. I had taken it to Mrs. Whyte's that evening, and had shown the portrait to Miss Thurston for a moment. I was sure she had not even seen the outside of the case, which was out of my hand but a moment. But later that evening, while I sat in Barker's office waiting, I had taken the locket from my pocket, and had sat under the gaslight examining it—in full view of the concealed murderer, who had watched me from the dark inner room, and who, a few minutes later, shot Barker from that same concealment. The whole thing flashed before my mind.

"Wait here," I said, and dashed for the door by which Garney had left. He was a block away, evidently waiting for a street car, which I could see approaching.

"Take me down to that car," I said to the chauffeur, and we were off at the word. Barney was still in the cab. "You go back with the cab, Barney, and take Miss Benbow home. I must see Garney before he gets away."

We reached the street just as the car, which had halted to take on Garney, started up again. I sprang from the step of the cab to the rear platform of the car. Garney turned and looked at me with surprise, that changed quickly to anger.

"Are you following me?" he demanded, under his breath.

"I told you we should have to have a settlement."

"Settle what? You've won," he said, with a shrug. He went inside, while I remained on the platform, thinking out a plan of action. When the conductor came for my fare I said a few words to him. He looked amazed.

"When we pass a policeman, slow up a bit," I continued. "If the man tries to get off before we pick up an officer, help me stop him. That's all."

We swung around a corner, saw a policeman standing outside the curb—and the car stopped without signal. I jumped off, and explained the situation to him in a word. He at once boarded the waiting car with me, and approached Garney.

"You're wanted," he said quietly.

Garney rose, furious, but also frightened. He looked at me.

"What damn foolishness is this?" he said, trying to bluster. "I haven't time for any nonsense. I have to catch a train. I'm going away."

"Come on, and don't make a disturbance," the officer said.

"But I tell you it is a mistake. You'll suffer for it. It is not a criminal offense to try to get married."

"Perhaps not," I said, taking the word from the police officer without warrant. "You are under arrest because I charge you with the murder of Alfred Barker."

I never saw a man faint before. He

crumpled up like a collapsed balloon. We lifted him to the sidewalk so that the car could go on, and the patrolman called up the wagon. But before Garney came back to consciousness, I had lifted the mustached lip that masked his narrow jaw. The crowded teeth were pushed out on each side to form a V, exactly like the model made from the apple bitten in Barker's office.

CHAPTER XIX.

CARDS ON THE TABLE.

The crowd dispersed as the patrol wagon took Garney and the officer away, but one man lingered, and fell into step with me as I turned away. It was Mr. Ellison. I had not noticed him in the crowd.

"What's all this?" he asked, twisting his head to look up at me, bird-fashion.

"Walk with me, and I'll tell you," I said. "I am going down to see Benbow."

And as we walked I told him of the surprising developments of the last few hours—that Garney, the Latin tutor, and Gene's friend, was the man with crooked teeth who had been eating apples in Barker's inner office while waiting for his victim, who had observed and recognized my locket; and that Garney was Diavolo, the hypnotist, who had threatened to kill his partner, Barker, if his identity was disclosed.

I may say here, to anticipate events which befell later, that this identity was absolutely established by Doctor Shaw, the dentist who had extracted a tooth for Diavolo—the first case in the law reports, I believe, where identity was established by the teeth. By that time every link was so clear that Garney's confession was hardly needed—though he did break down in the end, and make a plea of "Guilty."

Ellison listened with his peculiar interest—an interest in events rather than in persons, and in ideas more than either. At the end he nodded his alert head rapidly.

"Yes, I knew Garney had practiced hypnotism, but I thought it was years ago. Barker told me, in strict confidence."

"Barker!"

He nodded. "Yes. I didn't say anything about it, because people seemed to think it wasn't good form for me to have any civil relations with the man who had killed my second cousin, but, as a matter of fact, I knew him fairly well. Gene would turn white at the mention of his name, so I didn't mention it. That check for two hundred and fifty dollars—you remember?"

"Yes."

"Well, that was to pay for a course of lessons in hypnotism. He promised to get me a practical teacher who had been a public performer—Garney, in fact. He hadn't made the arrangements yet, but he was confident that he could bring it about. And I was eager to have the opportunity to investigate the matter, scientifically, you understand. If he could teach me how to do it, I would understand the thing—the rationale of it, I mean. But it was strictly confidential, because of Garney's position in the university."

"Did he know you knew?"

"No. Barker was killed before he could arrange it. I went to his room the next day, to see if I could by chance recover that check, which hadn't been presented at the bank, but his dragon landlady gave me no chance—and then you told me that you saw it in his pocket the next day."

"Somebody did break into his rooms that night," I said. "That has never been cleared up."

"Garney!" said Ellison shrewdly. "He has in his possession certain books which I know Barker had in his room the day before. He undoubtedly removed them, with any papers or other matters that might have connected him with Barker or revealed his practices."

"How do you know he has them?" I asked, amazed.

"Oh, I have made a point of seeing a good deal of Garney lately. You see, I am interested in the occult—scientifically. And since Barker couldn't act as go-between, I have been cultivating Garney on my own account."

"Yes, and given him a chance to work on Miss Benbow's feelings," I groaned.

"Why, it never occurred to me that he was interested in her," he said blandly.

"That was too obvious to attract your attention, doubtless," I could not refrain from saying. "Well, you have cleared up a good many points, Mr. Ellison, but I'd like to ask another question: Did you send a thousand dollars to William Jordan, and if so, why?"

For the first time he looked embarrassed.

"Why, yes," he said, nodding his head deliberately. "Jean told me about him and his loss. It struck me that it was an unnecessary piece of hard luck that he should suffer as an individual for an advancement of knowledge which will benefit the race. *He* didn't care anything about hypnotism scientifically. I did. I had fostered its development, so far as lay within my power. So, in a manner, I was responsible for his loss. Not immediately, of course, and yet not so remotely, either, since I was encouraging Barker. At any rate, I felt that I should be more comfortable if I made it up to the old farmer. When hypnotism is no longer a mystery, but an understood science, such things won't happen!" He beamed with enthusiasm, and I saw that I had never understood the man. He was an idealist.

"I hope they won't," I said doubtfully. "But hypnotism seems to me devil's work, both for the hypnotizer and the victim. Think of Jordan, and look at Garney! Aside from his crimes, the man is somehow abnormal. He has the look of a haunted man. He faints like a woman when he is discovered. No, no hypnotism for me, thank you. But, in any event, your action in reimbursing poor old Jordan does you credit."

He waved that aside. "What I should like to know," he said, changing the subject, "is how Gene became involved in this affair. If Garney shot Barker, why did Gene say *he* did? He isn't as fond of Garney as all that. You don't suppose——" He stopped suddenly and looked at me hard. "You don't suppose that Garney hypnotized him, *and sent him to shoot Barker!* That would be neat! Damnable, of course, but damnably neat!"

"I don't know," I said slowly. I had been afraid to face that idea myself. "I am going to see him now. Perhaps, with the news of Garney's arrest for a lever, I may get the truth from him. If you don't mind, I want to see him alone."

"All right. I'll leave you here."

But as he turned away, Fellows came up from behind, and fell into step with me. I think he had been watching for the chance.

"Royce's story is all right, Mr. Hilton," he said. "The cars *were* tied up on the park line the night that Barker was shot. And I have seen the conductor. He knows Royce, who is a fireman at engine house number six, and he remembers seeing him on the stalled car, with a girl."

"A good alibi, but he won't need to prove it now," I said. "We have found Barker's murderer. It is a man named Allen Garney."

"Oh, ho!" Fellows exclaimed, in obvious surprise.

"Do you know him?" I asked, recalling the damaging charge which Garney had made against Fellows.

"I know who he is, and I know that there was something between him and Barker in the old days—on the quiet. Garney didn't care to be seen with him, but in a way they were pals. In fact, I went to see him the other day to make some inquiries about Barker's past. He was rather rude in getting rid of me."

"You frightened him. He didn't want to be identified as having any connection with Barker. I see. That's why he used your name as a scapegoat to turn my attention from himself. He suggested that you might have shot Barker yourself, Fellows!"

"Did he?" said Fellows grimly. "Well, if I had, it would only have been the execution of justice. Barker was a murderer."

"You mean in killing Senator Benbow?"

"More than that. Do you remember

the story that the *Samovar* printed about Mr. Clyde?"

"Well, rather!"

"It brought to my mind a story that Barker once told me. When I was a fresh kid from the country, and he was teaching me the ways of the world and of the race track, he told me that he had once stabbed a man in a Texas hotel for cheating at cards. He said that he and three other men were playing in the room of one of them, and that was the one that was killed. He told me that another man was arrested, tried, and convicted, while he sat in the courtroom and watched the proceedings."

"What a monster!"

"He told the story merely to point out that every man had to take his chances—good luck or bad—just as it came. He was a great believer in luck. It was his luck to escape, and the other man's luck to be convicted by mistake. But he said that the man escaped, and was not hung. The Clyde story was so much like Barker's story that I wondered whether it might not be the same, and I went to Garney to ask if he knew whether Barker was the man who killed Henley. He would not admit knowing anything, but he let slip a word in his first anger that he could not take back. It *was* Barker."

"The villain! And he claimed to be merely a spectator in the courtroom, and that that was how he came to recognize Clyde. He probably studied his face pretty carefully during the days when he was watching Clyde in the dock, where he knew he should have been himself! I don't wonder he recognized him. What a man!"

"I wonder if we can prove it," exclaimed Fellows.

"We have just discovered an old letter which will completely establish an alibi for Clyde—I'll tell you the details later. But whether we can get your story before the court or not, it is undoubtedly the inner truth of the matter, and it rounds out the story of Barker's villainy very completely. And he met the treachery he dealt out to others. He was slain by the hand of the false friend he trusted."

"But if Garney killed him, what about Benbow?"

"I am going to see him now, and see if I can find out what it is that he is concealing. I'm glad I don't have to swear out a warrant against you, Fellows!"

Fellows smiled quite humanly as he turned away.

I found Benbow thinner, more nervous, and less self-possessed than I had ever seen him before. I was glad to see these signs of disintegration in his baffling reserve.

"I have had a strenuous afternoon," I said, as we shook hands. "Since four o'clock I have discovered Barker's widow, spoiled an elopement, and had your Latin tutor, Garney, arrested."

He looked surprised, naturally, but nothing more. "What for?" he asked.

"For complicity in a murder," I said, watching him closely.

"Oh, impossible!" he exclaimed. "Not Mr. Garney!" His natural manner, his genuine look of surprise and inquiry, were disconcerting. I saw I must work my way carefully.

"Did you know that Mr. Garney had hypnotic powers?" I asked.

Ah, there my probe went home! His telltale face flushed, and his eyes evaded mine.

"I can tell you nothing about that," he said, with dignified reserve.

"Perhaps I may be able to tell you something that will be news to you, even though you knew of his practices. He is known on the vaudeville stage as Diavolo, and he has toured, giving exhibitions in hypnotism."

"I didn't know that," he said—and I could not doubt his sincerity. "It must have been a long time ago."

"No longer ago than last summer. He kept his own name from the public. But I infer that you did know something of his practices in private?"

"Yes," he said hesitatingly.

"Did you ever allow him to hypnotize *you?*" I asked abruptly.

He was obviously discomposed, but he tried to cover his embarrassment by assuming an air of careless frankness. "Oh, yes. I believe I was a good sub-

ject. Mr. Garney was trying to develop my mental powers by hypnotism. He told me some remarkable accounts of idiots who had been mentally stimulated by hypnotic suggestion to do creditable work in their classes."

"Was that the direction in which his suggestions were made?" I asked, as casually as possible. I must try to get from him, without disturbing his sensibilities, as clear an account as he could give me, or would give me, of his peculiar relations with Garney.

"Oh, yes. It was just to help me with my Latin. And it did help," he added defensively. I could see that he was not entirely at ease over the admission.

"How often did you put yourself under his influence?"

"Oh, I don't remember. Half a dozen times, perhaps."

"Did you remember afterward what he had said or done to you while you were hypnotized?"

"Not a thing! I just went to sleep, and woke up. It isn't different from any other kind of sleep," he explained, with a youthful air of wisdom, "only that a part of you stays awake inside, and takes lessons from your teacher while you don't know it."

"So I understand," I said gently. His assumption of superior knowledge touched me. "Was it hard to go to sleep?"

"The first time it wasn't easy. Something inside of my brain seemed to snap awake just as I was going off—over and over again. But at last I went off. After that it was easier each time. Once he hypnotized me in class, and I found I had been making a brilliant recitation, though I didn't remember anything about it myself. And once he hypnotized me while I was asleep, and I never knew it at all until he told me afterward, and showed me some things I had written while asleep."

"Did Mr. Garney ever speak to you of Alfred Barker?"

"No." His manner froze, as it always did at any mention of Barker.

"You did not know, then, that there was enmity between the two men?"

"No. I didn't know that Mr. Garney knew—*him*—at all."

He swerved from pronouncing the name.

"Yes, Barker had acted as his business manager in the vaudeville business, and they had quarreled. Now, tell me something else. Did Garney hypnotize you the day that you hunted up Barker to shoot him?"

"No." A look of dawning uneasiness and indignation crossed his face.

"Did you see him that evening at all?"

"No," he said, with obvious relief.

"Now, will you tell me again just what happened that evening—the order of the events?" My object really was to see whether he would change his story. I had no need to refresh my own memory, as his former account was entirely clear in my mind.

"Beginning with the banquet?" he asked.

"Yes, begin there."

"Well, everything went smoothly until Jim Gregory mentioned seeing Barker on the street. That spoiled the evening for me. I got away as soon as I could."

"Alone?"

"Yes."

"Just where did you go? What streets?"

"Oh, I don't know. I didn't notice. I went home, and threw myself down on the couch in the library, and read Cicero to get my mind quiet. Things were whirling so in my brain!"

This was new! Evidently his memory was clearer than when he made his first statement to me. "Do you remember what you were reading?" I asked, to pin his recollection definitely.

"Yes; it was 'De Senectute,' an English version Mr. Garney had lent me."

I stopped to think. That was the book young Chapman had had in his hand the day I hunted him up—the day after the murder.

"Are you certain it was that book and no other you read?" I asked. I felt that I had a thread in my fingers—a filmy thread that might break if I did not work carefully.

"Quite sure. I picked it up at first just to read anything, because it was lying there. Mr. Garney had left it that afternoon. And then I became interested in it. It was quieting. It made me feel that, after all, life is short, and what was the use of cherishing ill will and bitterness toward—well, even a rascal like Barker? It would all be over so soon."

"And with that thought in your mind, you went off and shot him, did you?" I asked, with a smile.

He looked perplexed, and did not answer.

"You didn't have another copy of 'De Senectute' about? I want to be sure."

"I *am* sure. Mr. Garney left it with me that afternoon, and asked me to pass it on to Chapman when I had looked it over."

"And you did?"

"No. I—I haven't been back to the house, you know, since—since that morning."

"But Chapman had it the next day. He said Mr. Garney had given it to him."

Gene looked puzzled and thoughtful. "I don't see——"

"As I understand it, the servants were away that evening. Mr. Garney could not have come in unless you yourself admitted him, could he?"

"Oh, for that matter, he had my latchkey for the side door—directly into the library. He used to drop in——" He hesitated, and his momentary embarrassment gave me the clew.

"When he came to try his hypnotic stunts?" I asked lightly.

"Yes," Gene nodded, looking relieved at my manner.

"But he didn't come that evening?"

"No. I dropped asleep. I slept awfully hard. When I woke up the gas was on full blaze." He caught himself up and looked startled.

"It was morning, then?" I said quickly.

"Yes," he said slowly, evidently trying to puzzle something out. "I must have gone to sleep—again."

"But you don't remember that, do you?" I asked. "You think you must have—but do you *remember* it, as you do the first?"

The perspiration sprang out on his white forehead. "I remembered when I woke up that I had killed Barker in the night."

"You remember that you thought in the morning that you had killed Barker in the night," I said sharply, "but do you remember killing him? Do you remember, as a matter of fact, going to his office? Tell me something you saw or did, to prove that you actually remember the events of the night."

His face was pitiable. "I can't! I remember going to sleep over the 'De Senectute,' and I remember waking up in the morning, with the gas burning in the sunshine—and I know, of course, that I went out in the night and killed Barker, *but I can't remember it!* Do you suppose I am losing my mind?"

"I think you are just recovering possession of it," I said unsteadily. "By the way, I told you a few minutes ago that Garney had been arrested for complicity in a murder. You don't ask whose."

"Whose?" he demanded, startled.

"Alfred Barker's."

"I don't understand—at all," he faltered.

"Garney was in Barker's inner office the night Barker was shot. If you were there, you saw him."

He shook his head. "I did not see him."

"Did you see me?"

"Where?"

"In Barker's outer office."

"No."

"Yet I was there. I was the strange man who came in and waited. Do you remember you told me you saw a stranger come in?"

"I—remember that I told you."

"But you don't remember what the man looked like? You didn't recognize me as the man?"

He put his hands up suddenly, and clutched his head. "Do you think I was out of my head that night? Was I—was I—under his influence? Was I hypnotized when I shot Barker?"

"That is what I have thought possible,

but I have changed my mind on that point. Benbow, I don't believe that you were out of your room that night after you returned from the frat supper."

He was shaking so that he could not speak, but I saw the piteous questioning of his eyes.

"I'll tell you briefly the points that have made the matter at last clear, in spite of yourself," I said reassuringly. "Tell me this, first: When you came into the house that evening, after you left the boys at the banquet, was the house lit up or dark?"

"Dark. I lit the gas in the library. I did not go into the rest of the house."

"Exactly. Well, I saw the gas lit in the library that evening, and it was just a few minutes before ten. I had supposed that your sister and at least one servant were in the house, but I have learned they were not. Therefore, when I saw the light flare up just before ten in the library, you were there."

"Yes," he said, trying to follow.

"You threw yourself down on the couch and read Cicero from a book which the next day was in the hands of Chapman. You don't know how long you were reading, but you were sound asleep on that couch at three o'clock the next morning, for your sister came in and saw you."

"Jean?" he murmured perplexedly.

"Yes, Jean. Never mind the details. Now, it is not humanly possible that after reading yourself quiet at ten you could have reached Barker's office by foot before I reached there in a taxicab so as to secrete yourself in the inner room before I came. Neither is it humanly possible that after shooting him at eleven, you could have fled for your life down the fire escape, skulked through the streets, and then come home and gone composedly to sleep by three, only to wake at six and remember for the first time that a gentleman who has had the misfortune to shoot a man is in honor bound to give himself up to the law."

He drew his hand over his eyes in a dazed fashion.

I went on: "Minnie, the maid, and her escort came home at three that night, and saw a man leaving by the library door. She took for granted that it was you. But your sister came into the room a few minutes later, and saw you asleep on the couch. The man who left the house was not you."

"Who was it?" he asked, very low.

"It was the man who had your latch-key to the library door. It was the man who picked up the 'De Senectute' which you had been reading, and passed it on to Chapman the next day. It was the man who knew how to hypnotize you in your sleep, and make your brain believe what he wished it to believe. *It was the man who had just shot Barker from his inner office, and who impressed upon your dormant brain the scene he had just been through, and made you believe you had acted his part in it.* It was Allen Garney."

Benbow looked too paralyzed to really understand the situation. That didn't matter. All the missing pieces of the puzzle were now in my hands, and I saw that I could prove my case, and clear Gene, in spite of his false confession and his traitorous memory. I thought of Jean! It was another and the most convincing indication of Garney's abnormality that he should have desired to wed the sister of his victim. That was strangely revolting.

"The chances are that hypnotizing you was not a part of his original plan," I said thoughtfully, going over the links in my own mind. "He shot Barker because Barker knew too much about his past, and was not to be trusted to keep it a secret. And his suspicion was justified. Barker had already given his secret away to Mr. Ellison. Whether he knew that instance of bad faith or not, he evidently felt that there was no real safety for him until Barker was dead. So he laid a careful plan to kill him, and carried it out. But an unsolved murder mystery never ceases to be a menace to the murderer. The police would make investigations, and his past connection with Barker might possibly come out. The fact that he searched Barker's rooms the next night shows that he was not easy on that point even then. There might have been pa-

pers in Barker's possession which would turn inquiry upon him. So—you offered him the opportunity of making him secure."

"I! How?"

"He saw the light burning in your study. He came in—perhaps to establish an alibi, perhaps merely to get away from himself. He found you asleep—a condition in which he had already hypnotized you. He saw his opportunity. By making you believe that you had shot Barker, by making you confess, he would forever turn the possibility of inquiry from himself. There would be no mystery to provoke backward inquiries along the past. And, if I may say so, you had made it easier for him to fix that idea in your mind because, as a matter of fact, you had harbored ideas of vengeance against Barker. The thought of killing him was not wholly alien to you. You had prepared the way for the impression Garney wanted you to have—and he knew that fact. You had revealed that side of your mind to him. He used the bitterness which was already there as the foundation for the idea of revenge. Therefore, when you awoke, and came back to your senses, the idea that you had shot Barker did not strike you as an impossibility. You remembered it dimly, but there was no intrinsic impossibility in it. Do you see that?"

"Yes," he said, in a low voice. "I never could understand why some points were so clear and positive in my mind, and yet I would not remember the connecting links. It was like remembering spots in a dream."

"Those spots were the points Garney had emphasized to you, undoubtedly. He took you with him mentally, step by step, but things he failed to touch upon would be blank in your mind. How about your revolver, Gene? Did he know where you kept it?"

"Yes. I showed it to him that afternoon."

"Then undoubtedly he took it away when he left. And he remembered to impress upon you the thought that you had thrown it away. He was careful—yet he betrayed himself unconsciously. Those apples which he ate without thought were a stronger witness against him than his careful tissue of lies. But it's all right now. Take my word for it. It was the cleverest scheme a criminal brain ever worked out, but the righteousness on which the world is built would not permit it to triumph. As soon as we can get the matter before the court, you will be free."

"Mr. Hilton, there is a telephone call for you at the office," interrupted an attendant.

I shook hands with Gene, and went to the office, where I found the receiver down, waiting for me. I hardly recognized Katherine Thurston's voice at first.

"Is that you, Mr. Hilton? Oh, thank goodness I have found you! Jean has gone away. I'm terribly worried——"

"What makes you think she is gone? Didn't Barney bring her home in a cab an hour ago? I told him to."

"He did. I was waiting at Mr. Ellison's for news when she came. She told me everything—the poor child had been terribly imposed on. That man made her believe that he could clear Gene and save——"

"So he could have done, if he had wanted to!"

"Well, that is what she believed, and so she consented to marry him. But of course she was dreadfully worked up over it all, and when she came home with Barney, and told me about your coming and saving her at the last moment, she was so excited that she was hardly coherent. So I made her lie down and try to rest, and I left her in her room. Just now I went back to see her, and she has gone. Minnie says she went away, with a hand bag, immediately after I left, and said that she was not coming back. When I remember the nervous and excited state she was in, I am dreadfully worried."

"How long ago did she leave the house, according to Minnie?"

"Nearly an hour ago. Do you think she could possibly have gone to that man?"

"Not at all," I said promptly. "He is in custody."

"But he might have some agents——"

"I think not. And Jean is a wise child in her own way. The chances are that she is safe somewhere. But I'll let the police know, and I'll go down to the railway station myself. I'll call you up from time to time to see if you have any news."

I reported the matter to police headquarters, and while I could see that they were not greatly impressed with the urgency of discovering a young woman of twenty who had been lost sight of for less than an hour, I confess that I felt more apprehensive than I had admitted to Miss Thurston. You see, Jean wasn't a reasonable young woman. She was—Jean.

CHAPTER XX.

THE ULTIMATE DISCOVERY.

Jean had so few acquaintances in Saintsbury that there was little chance of finding her off on a visit. I went to the railway station, and tried to discover whether any one there had seen her or sold a ticket to Dunstan, but I found nothing. I believe it was superstition more than anything else that sent me finally to Barney. He was at his stand, selling papers as calmly as though this chaotic day were like any other.

"Barney, Miss Benbow is lost," I said, without preliminary. "She has left Mr. Ellison's house, and told the maid she was not coming back. I have been to the station to inquire. For Heaven's sake, suggest something that I can do."

Barney listened sympathetically, but without any manifestation of concern.

"Gone, has she? And not coming back! And I'll warrant you haven't had a chance to talk to her since I got her home from the church."

"Of course I haven't. I've been at the jail. Barney, we've arrested Garney, and he is the man that killed Barker, and Benbow will be cleared. But I am not going to talk about anything until I find that girl. So don't ask questions. Tell me something to do."

Barney's eyes grew round as saucers, but he was an old soldier. He knew when to obey. But he would do it in his own way.

"I'm thinking, Mr. Hilton, that if ye mind your own affairs, ye'll best be mindin' hers."

"Is that impertinence, Barney?"

"Divil a bit, your honor, and you with a face on you that would scare a banshee into saying prayers!"

"Then, I am in no mood for guessing riddles."

He gave me a glance that made me feel inexpressibly young.

"I'm thinkin' I saw the young leddy go up yonder," he said, nodding toward the building where I had my office. "If she was goin' away forever, maybe she wanted to say good-by!"

Could it be possible? I dashed across the street, and up the stairs without waiting for the slow elevator. I opened the door—and there lay a pathetic little heap on the Daghestan rug on my floor.

It was a moment before I realized that the tired child was merely asleep. I had dropped down beside her, and lifted her head upon my arm, when she opened her eyes with a start. Then something wonderful and dazzling swam up from her unconscious eyes to meet my gaze—and I knew in a bewildering flash that it was no child, but a woman that I held in my arms. My heart went from me. I did not realize that I had kissed her.

She lay quite still for a moment, but her white eyelids fell slowly to hide her eyes from mine.

"Thank Heaven you are safe!" I murmured. "How could you frighten me so?"

She withdrew herself gently from my arms and rose. Her hat was on my desk, between the inkstand and the mucilage. She picked it up, and proceeded to stab it to her head.

"I must have fallen asleep," she murmured, keeping her downcast eyes from me. "I just came in to say good-by, and I waited, and told Mr. Fellows he could leave the door unlocked, because I was sure you would come, and I was so tired that——"

"Good-by indeed! Where do you think you are going?"

"I am going back to Miss Elwood's School," she said, with the gentle inflexibility I always enjoyed. "I seem to do nothing but get into trouble when I am away from there. I didn't tell any one but Minnie, because I didn't want to have to argue about it, but I thought I ought to say good-by to you before——"

"I am glad you remembered to be polite to me," I said, getting possession of her hands, "because I have a lot of things to tell you. That is, if you will promise to marry me first!"

"Don't!" she said breathlessly, drawing away. "You—forget!"

"Forget what?"

"The other girl!"

"There is no other girl—never was, and never will be," I protested. "What in the world do you mean, child?"

She looked at me with troubled eyes. "Katherine Thurston said that you said there was—some one."

"Oh!" I gasped. That foolish, forgotten incident of the locket! I felt myself blushing—at least I had that grace.

"Let me explain, dear. When Mrs. Whyte introduced me to Miss Thurston, I thought she would be more willing to be friends if she were assured that I was not going to bother her with any love-making. So, just to make things pleasant, I showed her a miniature which I had in my pocket, and told her that it was a picture of the only woman in the world to me."

"And wasn't that true?" she asked gravely.

"It was—but it isn't true now. Darling, it was my mother's face—the one I took out of this locket." I touched the jeweled trifle which lay upon her breast.

"Oh!" A look of terror came into her eyes, as though she drew back from an abyss. "Oh, and I might have married that man!"

"Jean! Did that have anything to do with it?"

"Why, I thought that, since I should never marry any one else, it would be awfully selfish to refuse to save Gene," she said simply. "And if you were going to marry some strange person, why—it didn't matter. That's what I *thought.*"

"Oh, Jean, Jean!" I cried, taking her into my arms. What was the use of talking common sense to a creature like that? I gave it up, and talked her own tongue instead! But after a while she looked up under her lashes.

"Was I foolish to believe Mr. Garney?"

"Of course you were, my darling. But perhaps it was a *guided* foolishness. Jean, what you told me about his recognizing that locket gave me a clew to the man who shot Barker. Dear, it was not Gene. It was Mr. Garney himself."

"Oh, can it be true?"

"Only too true." I told her some of the strange, disconnected links which had at last been knit into a strong chain of evidence.

"Was that what he meant to tell me when we were married?" she asked, her eyes full of horror.

"No, I do not believe he ever meant to tell you anything—or at most some wild tale like that one about Fellows—which might have made trouble for him, too, if the real discovery had not come so soon. He merely wanted to get you to marry him, by hook or crook. He felt perfectly safe, I am sure. He thought he had the whole thing in his hands when he forced Gene to believe and to confess what would forever close future investigation."

"And Gene will now go free?"

"Perfectly free—free to dance at our wedding. Don't forget that," I said.

"Then everything has turned out happily except for poor Mr. Clyde!" she said, clasping her hands hard together.

"Oh, my precious child, I quite forgot all about Mr. Clyde! He is just as happy as the rest of us. That letter of yours, you angel of all good tidings, is going to save him. It was from your father, you know, and it proves that Mr. Clyde was not in Houston that fatal night. I had to leave him to come back to look after you, but that is going to be all straightened out in a very short time. All because of that letter, dear."

She looked at me, breathless, bewildered, trying to understand all these marvels. Then suddenly she burst into nervous tears. It was just as well. It relieved the emotional strain—and it gave me a chance to comfort her.

It was some time before I remembered that Miss Thurston and Mr. Ellison and Mrs. Whyte and the police department were still uninformed that Miss Jean Benbow need not be the object of further search.

"You see!" I pointed out to her. "You put all the rest of the world out of my mind. Now stand here and tell me what I shall say to Mrs. Whyte." And I took down the office telephone.

"Tell her that since I have lost my train, I'll come back for a while," she said demurely.

"Is that your only reason for staying, young lady?"

"Isn't that enough?"

"There are other trains!"

"But I have lost the one I wanted!"

"What have you found instead?"

She would not answer.

"What have you found?" I insisted, drawing her to me.

But what my storybook girl told me I shall not repeat.

THE END.

The Sunset Trail

OUT along the sunset trail
Life was never dull er stale;
You could allus take a chance
Find adventure an' romance,
Where the mountains climbed so far
Knockin' up agin' a star!
Seems as if I had to go
When the past is callin' so,
Got to answer to the hail
From the pals I used to know
Out along the sunset trail!

Out along the sunset trail
Life was something new an' glad,
There weren't no distinctions pale,
Good was good an' bad was bad—
(Bad was extry double bad!)
There was women there an' men
Like we'll never see again,
Swaggerin' an' quick an' proud,
Loyal, laughin', rough, an' loud;
Buckin' any game they played
Like they thought they couldn't fail;
They weren't pikers er afraid,
Out along the sunset trail!

Out along the sunset trail
Life was swift an' blood was red.
Now them flamin' days is dead,
Things is quiet like an' pale.
Yet I reckon if it came
To a p'int where there was need
They could play the same old game,
Play it with the same old speed;
They could fight an' work an' love
Like the folk I'm singin' of;
Women still are women—brave,
Kind, an' tender to the grave,
Men are big an' true an'—male!
Out along the sunset trail!

BERTON BRALEY.

A Dull Afternoon

By H. W. Richards

Author of "The Making of a Jockey," Etc.

Can you conceive of anything more dull than a hamlet in the country when the rest of the inhabitants have gone to a picnic? Curious how Fate sometimes selects a time like that to pile up excitement. Here is a pen picture of a rural community that isn't often the topic of stories.

SOME one must stay at home and look after things," announced Winthrop Ames firmly, and, seeing there was to be a protesting chorus from the family, hastened to explain: "You know that I did a lot of gadding in my younger days, and in my old age it won't hurt me to be a bit sedate. You can all go and have a good time, and stay as long as you like; I'll keep house while you are gone."

It was the October picnic—the last outdoor social gathering of the year—and sure to be a success. Winthrop's son urged his father to go—all the old friends and neighbors would be there inquiring for him.

"And a cheap lot of politicians with their rope-factory cigars, promising, if elected, to put every man who votes for them on the jury list," was the scornful comment. "I know what a man who enjoys a good smoke suffers at a fall picnic. You must take mother with you. Good thing she does not smoke and can't vote, or I would keep her at home with me. I want to keep bachelor's hall this afternoon; it will seem like old times."

"Win, you'll have a dull, lonesome day while we are enjoying ourselves," lamented his wife, as he lifted her into the wagon. "I can't understand it. You always liked excitement and company. I wonder if you are really getting old. This is the first symptom I have noticed."

"You know, mother," he laughed, "I am three score years and ten."

She looked at him proudly and admiringly. Mrs. Ames was twenty years younger than her husband, and, though she retained her good looks and youthful appearance in a remarkable degree, knew he did not look ten years her senior. He was big and tall, with gray hair, though there was not a thread of silver in his beard, and his big brown eyes were clear and bright. Besides, he was as erect as in the days when he wore a soldier's uniform.

In a clump of lilac bushes—completely hidden from sight—Winthrop Ames carefully placed a chair, and slowly filled his meerschaum. There was a friendship of long standing between pipe and man—over forty years—and the big bowl was dark and brown from ministering to his comfort. He smoked carefully and deliberately, indicative of a man who never allows the pipe to become heated.

"If mother only knew why I stayed at home," he mused, "she wouldn't think I had lost my old liking for excitement. I have an idea, almost a premonition, there'll be lively times this afternoon—just about as interesting and exciting as I want to see, and I am not so easily suited."

Yet, as he sat there, none could have seen anything suggestive of excitement. The atmosphere, rich and dusky, the orchards bending with apples, the vines thick with grapes, the blades of the young wheat just peeping through the earth, the meadows luxuriant with the second growth of grass, the pastures rich in October feed, the long white roads shaded with big trees—all made the landscape peaceful and listless. The only signs of life were the cows in the pasture, the cluck of the hens working in the earth, or the faint and occasional footfalls of the horses as they fought flies in their stalls. Perhaps there was not a human being within six miles of him, every one had gone to the picnic unless—and that was why he had stayed at home.

Soldier at nineteen, a full-fledged major when mustered out at twenty-three, a wanderer on the plains until twenty-five, marshal of a frontier town for two years and sheriff of the county for three, at thirty a prospector and at thirty-two a miner, finally to return and take charge of his father's farm, Win Ames could not be forced to admit his life had been more than ordinarily adventurous. He liked farming, and insisted the life was not monotonous.

He thought as he sat there the farm had its hardships, dangers, and exciting times. The work was harder than any he had ever done. There were the long drives to market—he had made forty miles a day for weeks. Three times had he been stopped by highwaymen, and once there had been a battle. Chicken thieves had once shot at him, and he captured the fellows, and had them sent to prison.

There was Tony Zimmer with his broken nose, the work of his fist the night he had caught him stealing oats. The blow had made Tony an honest man; at any rate, he had not been suspected of thieving since that night. For years thieves had left his property alone. He smiled proudly at the thought. The breeze brought the smell of ripening grapes, and his teeth closed hard on the amber.

That was why he had stayed at home.

Three nights before, thieves had taken one hundred pounds of grapes from that vineyard. He was the one to make the discovery, and his keen eyes had decided they had taken five big baskets. His son did not worry about the loss half as much as he. Young Winthrop had much to do, and the father had time to kill, and, for this reason, had thought about the matter more than all others. He had come to the conclusion that the thief was Joe Zimmer, a son of old Tony. Winthrop guessed that the thieves would return—and what better chance would they have than on the day of the picnic? If they did come, he was going to see them.

It would not do to tell his son of his intention. The boy was very hasty, and lacked judgment in such matters. Like all men with a quick temper, Winthrop Ames believed that he himself was slow to anger.

Again he filled his pipe, and was in an argumentative mood. Life and property were no safer in the country than in a mining camp, frontier town, or a big city. He was certain the country contained more petty thieves than a mining camp. In the mines he had found one thing—the sucker tenderfoot was, nine times out of ten, a city product. Then farmers, as a rule, did not ask the law to protect them. Nor did they want it known that their neighbors were thieves. Give a neighborhood a hard name, and land values shrink. Then the thief, if detected, might set fire to buildings.

He roused himself, and looked at his watch. It was nearly two o'clock, and if they were coming they would soon be along. He looked at the vineyard which was in front of the orchard, guarded by a hedge. Then came the barns, the big farmhouse, the old home. His house was on the opposite side of the road, and had, at one time, been used by the tenants. When he gave up the farm to his son, Winthrop had remodeled it, and moved across the road. On his side was another long hedge. And this hedge was an important factor in his plans

Far up the road he saw a wagon coming, the team under a brisk trot. When it came nearer, Win recognized Joe Zimmer and his man.

"He intends to take a good load," mused the old man; "I thought he would bring along an assistant. The more the merrier."

When they reached the vineyard, the horses were checked to a walk, the two evidently admiring the grapes. Win's nostrils quivered. Opposite the driveway, they stopped, and studied the tracks, drove by, and stopped again. The man got out, and walked toward the house.

"That settles it," commented Win. "If they were on honest business, they would have driven in. That boy is very careful—too careful to suit me. He got out on the grass, and is walking on the turf to conceal his tracks. It is very plain to me Joe Zimmer has been in this some time. He has learned how to hide his trail."

From the house, the man went to the barn. At last he came back, again walking very carefully on the grass.

"What did you find?" eagerly asked Joe.

"Both house and barn are locked," slowly announced the man. "I looked in the windows. There's nobody at home."

They drove down the road, looking sharply at Win's house, though they did not stop.

Win laid down his pipe. "They can't see me," he commented. "Still, it is best to be prudent. They might smell the tobacco."

As the team passed the driveway, he heard Joe say: "They drove in and got the old folks. We are the only ones who did not go."

"I wanted to go," sullenly said the man.

"So did I," admitted Joe, "but I could not spare the time. This is the best chance we'll get. Business before pleasure."

The man hung his head, and made no answer—it was evident he did not like the business methods of his employer.

They drove on until they reached a crossroad, and, turning carefully around, came back.

"He's as cautious as a Pawnee," said Winthrop, with a chuckle. "That turn will leave no trail. The next thing will be the inspection of my shanty. They'll find just where I stepped into the wagon." And the old man grinned.

They stopped at the driveway. Joe came up on the grass, rapped at the front door, and, getting no response, went to the side doors, and tried them. "No one there," he announced when he returned to the wagon. After a pause: "Not a soul within six miles of us. We have lots of time. Still, it is safer to get away early."

"It is safest not to steal at all," growled the man. "I don't like this business."

"What do I pay you for?" savagely demanded Joe.

"You hired me to do farm work."

"You'll do what I tell you, or you won't get your pay," threatened Joe. "I hired you to do what I asked you to do, not to argue."

"*You* may want to get caught stealing Winthrop Ames' grapes—I don't," growled the man.

"We won't get caught. I saw the team go up the road to the picnic. No one's at home, and there's a track in and out of both driveways. What more do you want?"

"But his father——" began the man.

"He went with them," insisted Joe, as he climbed into the wagon. "But he is an old man, and don't count. What could he do with us?"

"You mustn't hurt him," said the man firmly. "I won't stand for anything like that. You might as well know it now."

"There will be no trouble." Joe was persuasive now. "I don't want to hurt any one. Why, I saw where the old man stepped into the wagon. What ails you?"

"Nothing ails me. All I want to know is: What will you do if you get caught?"

"Chuck a bluff."

"But suppose it won't work?"

"Why, then it is fight or pay up," boasted Joe, and added in a burst of confidence: "I am prepared for either. I carry a gun, and have always fifty dollars in my clothes."

The man hung his head. "Come," said Joe impatiently; "we're wasting time. Drive on."

They turned the wagon on the grass, and, stopping close to the hedge, threw out a score of twenty-pound baskets, and jumped over the fence into the vineyard.

With interest, Winthrop had listened to this conversation. When the wagon moved, he again filled his pipe, and, though the puffs were deliberate and slow, his teeth gritted the stem.

"Rather interesting," was the old man's sarcastic comment. "It is a fine thing to have good eyesight and hearing. Now I counted twenty baskets, say four hundred pounds, and that will mean five trips to the vineyard—an hour's work for two first-class men, maybe an hour and a quarter, provided always there is no interruption. It is my fixed opinion there will be none until the load is on the wagon."

He had looked at his watch when the two men had leaped the hedge.

"If it takes them fifteen minutes for the first trip, I can count on twelve minutes for each of the others," he calculated. "They will pick faster when they strike their gait—get settled in their stride." Then with confident grimness: "I have all the advantage. I know just what they will do; that's what comes from indiscriminate conversation. Joe Zimmer must pay fifty dollars for five hundred pounds of grapes—just ten cents a pound. My good son will find his father is a first-class salesman and collector."

He chuckled, and took several vigorous pulls at his pipe.

"Nothing hard in this job," he went on. "The boy will not fight. He is not vicious, only in bad company. Joe has a hold on him. Maybe he has made him think no one would believe him, even if he told the truth. If that is the case, it will soon be different. There they come. Just sixteen minutes."

The two came to the hedge, each carrying two baskets—Win would have taken four—leaned over, and looked up and down the road. Satisfied none was in sight, they returned to the vines.

Winthrop knocked the ashes from his pipe, placed it carefully in its case, and, when he saw the two disappear, arose and went into the house. That he was prepared for an emergency was apparent. On the dining-room table was a paper thrown carelessly. This he laid aside. Under it was a tablecloth, which he moved with caution, revealing a revolver and a monkey wrench. The old man carefully placed the pistol in the right-hand pocket of his sack coat, and carried the wrench. He closed the house door, and the lock clicked. A close observer would have noticed Winthrop Ames, though very deliberate, had not made an unnecessary move.

Cautiously, and yet as rapidly as possible, he made his way to the hedge—no easy task, for Winthrop's great height made him assume a low crouch. There was not one chance in twenty that either man would raise his head from his work, but the old man decided to take no risks. The old days came back; he was again a frontiersman, and Win liked to think of those days. When he reached the ditch, the work was easier. There was a deep ditch inside, dry and grass-grown. Here he could walk quite rapidly. Passing the wagon, he walked some thirty yards above, where he sat down and waited. He looked at his watch, and knew the men had been in the vineyard ten minutes.

"I'll wait until they go back the third time. Then I'll get to work," he decided.

The two came to the hedge again. After inspecting the road, Joe said: "They're fine grapes. Easy picking, isn't it?"

"Would be if it were not stealing," sullenly said the man.

Joe paid no attention to the protest; in fact acted as if he had not heard it, for he added regretfully: "I was just thinking I ought to have brought along

ten more baskets. We will have time to pick ten, yes, twenty more."

"We'll be here long enough," gloomily commented the man; "I don't like this job. Young Ames is a decent fellow."

"So he is," admitted Joe. "I like him all right, but I like his grapes better. There is no friendship in business—I have lived long enough to find that out. Why, I'll sell these grapes for a dollar a basket. Then I may want a few bushels of those apples. They look fine. But come, get to work."

Win heard this last statement with increasing rage. "Maybe you won't get those apples," he thought, as he watched the two go back to work.

Quickly he crossed the road, then stepped close to the hedge, and came to the wagon. "Guess I can hide my trail," he grinned. There was method in all this. When the climax came, he knew neither man would walk up, but down, the road. Not that he thought the caution he was taking was necessary, but simply prudent.

Once beside the wagon, the old man worked rapidly, removed the hub nut from the outside hind wheel, placed a big stone directly in its path, and returned to the opening in the hedge.

"That wheel will come off before they can go two wagon lengths," he muttered, "and then I will be a collecting agency."

He stepped into the ditch, and walked toward his house. Just before reaching the wagon, he looked at his watch. It was nearly time for them to come with the baskets.

"I'll squat," he said, as he sat down and waited.

"Not a soul in sight," announced the man, as he looked over the hedge, "and yet I am getting nervous."

"I can't see what there is to be nervous about," said Joe, though Winthrop was sure there was a slight quaver in the voice. "Two more trips, and we'll load up. In a half hour we'll be on our way. This is easy. You have more nerve in the nighttime." And the two went back again.

"Your time to get nervous is soon to come, Joseph," grimly thought the old man, as he placed the wrench and nut in the hedge.

Leisurely he returned to his chair in the lilacs, and filled his pipe. The smoke put him in a contented mood, and he waited patiently for the time when he would have to act. They soon deposited four baskets beside the hedge.

"One trip more and the fun begins," grinned the old man. Then he was dreaming. He was no longer thinking of the two thieves, but of the days when he was sheriff and the mob came to make him give up a prisoner. It was the only time he had ever shot a man, and, thank God, the shot was not fatal. Perhaps some of his bullets in the war had killed—if they had, he did not know it. He had been hit a score of times, but never received a serious wound.

The thieves came to the hedge for the last time. Joe needed assistance to surmount the fence, and this disgusted Win, for he could vault it easily. The man handed Joe the baskets. Joe started the team. There was a lurch, and the wagon wheel rolled into the middle of the road. The horses jumped, but soon were under control.

Winthrop was now interested. He saw Joe examine the hub, and heard his curses. To Win's surprise, Joe was angry with the man, and blamed him for the accident. The latter angrily protested his innocence. After a long wrangle, the two started back to look for the nut. Win laid away his pipe, and sauntered to the road. Though he took no care to conceal his movements, neither saw him. They had turned back, and were going toward the wagon, when Win stepped into the roadway. The man had picked up a big stick, and was poking the grass with it.

"It was all your fault," cried Joe. "I told you to try every one of the nuts before we went out."

"And I tell you I did," sullenly retorted the man. "I know every nut was tight."

"Looks like it, you fool!"

They had reached the wagon. Joe

knew the search had failed. The man voiced his thoughts when he said: "That nut never became loose. Some one took it off. That's all there is to it."

They were now standing beside the wagon. A bland voice asked: "Had a breakdown, boys?"

There stood Winthrop Ames, smiling and solicitous. Both thought the old man never looked so big and tall. Joe knew he was red in the face, though he tried bravely to smile.

"Glad you had sense enough to drive out on the grass," continued the old man. "Some horses are frightened when they see a wagon standing in the road. Our folks are at the picnic, and will be coming home soon. Why didn't you go?" suddenly asked Win.

"I had business—work that kept me. I had to stay home," stammered Joe.

"Singular, very singular," commented Win. "You are a good two miles from home now." As Joe offered no explanation, the old man asked: "What is the matter?"

Joe eagerly explained the accident. "That's so," affirmed the old man, though he did not look at the wheel, but stared in the wagon box. "Fine lot of grapes you have there. They should bring a good price."

"Oh, yes, about two or three cents," was Joe's reply.

"Worth more than that. I rather think they will bring, if properly marketed, ten cents, and they will be cheap at that, dirt cheap."

"You can have them for five." Joe thought he saw a chance—perhaps the old man had not seen them, after all. "Yes, I'll do better. You can have the four hundred pounds for fifteen dollars. That is a good fair offer."

"But I do not want to buy grapes," blandly explained the old man; "I'm selling."

"What do you mean?" asked Joe, trying to appear unconcerned, though his face was pale and his voice shaking.

"You can have these four hundred pounds for forty dollars," quietly said the old man. "Then there are one hundred pounds which you took three nights ago and neglected to pay for, an additional ten dollars. That makes fifty dollars, if I have figured correctly."

"Do you think I am going to stand for this?" blustered Joe. "Why, it's highway robbery. What have you to say about it, anyway? You don't own the grapes. Better mind your own business."

"Might be highway robbery under ordinary circumstances, I'll admit, but no thief, caught in the act, should question the price when made to pay for what he steals," calmly said the old man. "No, they are not my grapes; they belong to my son. However, just now I am acting for him. Really, if you want to settle with him, you can wait until he comes. Perhaps it would be better. Suit yourself."

"I'll not do it," angrily shouted Joe. "You are an old man, and I don't want to hurt you, but if you butt in on me you are going to get what is coming to you." Joe's hand went to his pistol. It was his last play—he had no intention of shooting—he simply meant to scare him—and then he stopped. In an instant, Winthrop Ames had changed. His dark face was ghastly white, the brown eyes grew black as jet, the mouth became a slit in his cheery face.

"I wouldn't."

The voice was as soft as that of a woman. Joe Zimmer was quite noted as a brawler, and had a fair amount of courage. In an instant he was unnerved. A cold sweat came out on his face and forehead, his under lip dropped. The anger of Winthrop Ames unnerved them.

The old man spoke—spoke so soft and low, and yet how painfully distinct:

"My interesting idiot, hand over that gun, butt end out, or you drop in your tracks. You are a clumsy fool with firearms. I ought to shoot you—not kill you—just shoot off a hand at a time. Don't you know enough to shoot first and tell of it afterward when you make a gunplay? Hand me that gun, and be very careful how you do it."

With shaking hand, Joe passed over

his pistol. He looked at his man appealingly, but the latter shook his head.

"Might do to scare women and babies," was Win's sarcastic comment, as he pocketed the revolver. "Why, a man of my size would not need a doctor if hit with a bullet from that. A bit of court-plaster would do all the surgical work needed. Now the money. Better be quick. I am tired of showing a cheap thief civility."

Joe glanced at his man. The latter gravely shook his head. "There is nothing else to do. He has a gun in his pocket, and besides he has your own. You had a close call."

For a moment Joe was cool and collected, and carefully counted out the money. Winthrop was puzzled. Could it be that Joe was a game man, after all? Then Joe broke down, and sobbed.

"But you'll t-tell," he blubbered; "you'll—tell."

"Sure I'll tell," said Win lightly. "When my son comes home, I'll tell him I sold five hundred pounds of grapes, and, if he gets curious, I'll say I didn't think it worth while to ask the buyer's name and he didn't tell me."

Then the old man went on sternly: "But this work must stop. If we miss anything more, I'll come and collect what is coming. You ought to know I charge a good, stiff price. If you conclude to take any apples, they will be ten dollars a barrel. Should I come, and you decide you want an argument, mental or physical, you'll be accommodated. And yet, Joe, you are not wholly to blame. Your father was a thief. His nose will show where I hit him."

Joe stared. His father had always said a cow's horn had broken his nose, and the story had never been doubted. Strange the old man had always spoken very highly of Winthrop Ames. And Joe wondered if he would do likewise, not now, but in the days to come.

"Our business is ended," announced Winthrop quietly. "You two get the wheel, and I'll find the wrench and nut."

He stepped to the hedge, came back, and in a few minutes the wheel was in its place. They were ready to go.

"My son," advised Winthrop gravely, "you are in bad company. It is time to make a change."

The man hung his head, but made no response.

"You were wise to tell Joe he must not harm me," went on the old man. "You see, if I had been forced to contend with two men, I would have taken no chances. Now you can get into the wagon."

Joe was wondering what was to come. Hardly had his man taken his seat than the right hand of Winthrop Ames fell heavily on Zimmer's shoulder, the right caught his leg, then a hip lock, and he was lifted high in the air, and slammed roughly into the seat.

"Drive on," commanded Winthrop; "I think now you have a respect for old age."

Joe at first groaned with pain, and then lamented his bad luck. It all came from going back a second time. Then he said he was now over three hundred dollars ahead of the game, and a man must expect to have losses. He admitted there was no reason for stealing, and added he was worth over thirty thousand dollars.

Suddenly he wailed: "If this is found out and anything in the neighborhood is stolen, it will be laid to me. That is the worst of it."

"No, that is not the worst of it," gloomily contradicted the man. "They'll say I was with you."

When his son came home, Winthrop went to the barn with him. He informed "the boy" what he had done, and handed him twenty-five dollars. The men didn't give their names, and he hadn't asked them. If they wanted more grapes, they knew where the place was, and could come again. He didn't think it advisable to say anything to the folks about it, for this was one of those matters of which the least said the better.

The son understood him. For a moment he looked proudly at his father, and then asked: "Was this what you stayed at home for?"

"I was well paid for my self-denial."

"But you are too old to take such chances," protested the son. "You should have left the matter to me."

"You are too hasty," gravely insisted the old man. "They were not extraordinarily violent. You won't say anything."

"Not if you want the matter kept quiet." He thought a moment. "I'll find out who they were. But keep the money. You have earned it."

"Why, I have kept half for my trouble. See here. You give your wife the money. She'll tell mother, and that will give me an excuse to do as well by her."

The son laughed. "I guess that is the best way out of it. But when I see any one walking about with a cane or carrying a black eye, I'll have a pretty fair idea of who took the grapes."

"I kept my temper, my son. I didn't break any bones, nor hit any one. If you see anything suspicious, don't mention it."

When the son, a few days later, saw Joe Zimmer limping about and explaining that he had tried to lead two cows at once, young Winthrop said nothing, though he did inform his father about the accident.

"The Zimmers always had bad luck with cows," declared the old man. "Old Tony says a cow's horn broke his nose. Remarkable coincidence."

"I don't understand. You must explain."

"In confidence I'll tell you. The identical cow which broke Tony Zimmer's nose was the one responsible for Joe's lameness. That is my theory, though I would prefer you say nothing about it."

The son was surprised. His father had never told of the encounter with Tony. "If you have kept Tony's misfortune a secret all these years, it looks as if I ought not doubt Joe's word," was all he said.

Of course the old folks stayed to supper, and it was quite late when they went home. Win took his pipe, and sat in the deep east porch—as he always did on moonlight nights—and mother came out and sat beside him. There was scarcely a breath of wind, the air was heavy with the odor of apples and grapes. "A very comfortable night," Win thought, as he looked at a full moon through a hazy cloud of smoke.

Mrs. Ames became talkative.

"I was just thinking," she began, "how much nicer it is in the country than in the city. No noise, no dust, and such air! Then how much safer life and property are here. Now, if we were in the city and had gone away as we did to-day, there would have been some sense in your staying at home. If the house had been left alone, it would have been broken into and robbed."

"Possibly," cautiously admitted Winthrop, firm in the belief her conversation might become unpleasantly interesting.

"Then think of yourself. Here you were all alone for six long hours, and any one could have killed and robbed you."

"They have not done the trick yet," began Win.

"Of course not. How could they? How could you be alive if they had killed you?" And she laughed.

"Quite true. Never thought of that." Then followed the mental query: "What is she driving at? It is best to be a little cautious."

"What I mean, Winthrop"—the old man started, for when Mrs. Ames addressed him as Winthrop she was about to say something impressive, or so at least she imagined, and that was just as bad—"what I want to say, and that is what I was thinking about—in this neighborhood where we all know one another, where we know every one is to be trusted, it is a delight to live. Why, the only ones not at the picnic were you, Joe Zimmer, and his hired man. Joe wanted to go, so Mrs. Zimmer told me, but he could not—he had so much to do. She would like to have seen you."

She paused, and Win commented verbally: "She's getting close to the powder."

"It would not be so in the city. There the neighbors don't even speak. What I like about the country is we are not

afraid to be sociable. Every one here is honest, trustworthy, and respectable."

"Very." Win felt that he must say something.

"And you must have found it very dull. Of course you smoked."

"Of course." The admission was made promptly and cheerfully.

"And you didn't see a soul?"

Win pulled desperately at his pipe, glad it was nearly out; it gave him a chance to prepare his answer. Finally he cautiously admitted: "A team and two men went by at two o'clock. I saw them. There was no one else."

"And I was thinking of you at that time. How you did not have anything to excite, amuse, or interest you."

"It was not lonesome, mother," protestingly.

"How could it be? There were the cows, horses, hens, the apples, grapes, and——"

"Grapes, yes, the grapes," gaspingly.

"And the team——"

"The team," echoed Win.

"And the two men——" She paused, but Win was discreetly silent.

"To amuse you," finished Mrs. Ames. "It must have been very interesting and exciting."

"It was," began Win, but stopped suddenly, for the clock was striking ten.

"Winthrop Standish Ames," she said severely, "that was ten o'clock. Don't you know it is bedtime?"

She had arisen while speaking. Win said meekly: "Yes, mother, when I finish this pipe." As she went inside, he muttered:

"I would have liked to explain matters, but it won't do. Mother would tell the two grandsons what a brave man I am, and they'd lick the Zimmer boys for what their father tried to do to me. Then mother wouldn't go away again and leave me alone—that ain't her style, for I know she is a mighty brave woman. But I just wished I dared to tell her the truth—I know it is the opportunity of a lifetime. Great Scott! What a chance I had to win an argument with her. If mother only knew what took place this afternoon, she wouldn't think all of our neighbors were so mighty trustworthy and honest, and life in the country so peaceful and quiet. Quiet? This afternoon was exciting enough to satisfy me, and I am a trifle particular about excitement."

With a smile, he knocked the ashes from his pipe, and put it in its case. He knew it had gone out while she was speaking.

THE DIFFERENT KINDS OF COLDNESS

WHEN Walter Wellman first became interested in the project of trying to sail to the north pole in a dirigible balloon, he frequented a poker game in which Colonel "Bill" Sterrett was a player. Wellman was a careful gambler, following the old motto: "Play 'em high, but cautious," and he was often bluffed out too easily.

One day he confided to the Texan his excellent plan for keeping warm in the arctic regions.

"Well, Walter," commented Sterrett, after listening patiently to the outline of the scheme, "we have now heard how you propose to keep your face warm, but I don't see how you're going to provide against cold feet."

THE SACCHARINE MR. HITCHCOCK

Frank H. Hitchcock, the postmaster general of the United States, has a sweet and luscious taste in music. The orchestra of the hotel where he takes most of his lunches strikes up "Kiss Me, My Honey," whenever he enters the dining room, for that is his favorite tune.

Mahaffey's Lie

By Charles Neville Buck

Author of "The Key to Yesterday," "The Quality of Mercy," Etc.

New York expects every policeman to do his duty. Mahaffey did it for forty-five years. He had the longest record among the ten thousand. Did he gain promotion? He did not. Why? For one thing he was unimaginative, he was devoid of initiative, and—above all—he was honest to the core. Yet Mahaffey told one lie.

OFFICER MAHAFFEY was an institution. To the duty of walking a beat he brought certain elements of paternalism in government. When he had ceased to be an anonymous shred in the cable with which Grant had lashed together the broken nation, he had donned the livery of the city's standing army. In certain restless souls, the taste of war awakens a lust. Some integers of the fire-baptized regiments found flatness in a stage set for peace. A few of the more imaginative sought foreign enlistments—and became soldiers of fortune.

Mahaffey had no imagination. He had only the soldier's instinct, which cried out for a discipline to obey and a work to do—and his simpler trend turned him into the less picturesque platoons of the police.

For forty-five years he had answered roll call, as Patrolman Mahaffey. He had seen the city grow. He had seen many juniors pass him by, along the road to promotion. These things had failed to excite him. He had a vague realization that some men had retired as captains with more money than should logically have come from the city's pay roll. He did not question how they acquired this money, for Patrolman Mahaffey liked to like mankind, and was himself cut to so rigid a pattern of honesty that to distrust others would have wounded him.

He was devoid of initiative. When directed to perform a duty he performed it, and awaited the next order. Now, with the longest service record among the ten thousand, and more than one medal for gallantry, he had come within a month of retirement, with no shoulder strap on his tunic, and no chevron on his sleeve.

But the veteran had his compensations. He had walked varied beats. He had known more than a few men. The passing procession of city life brought to him many cordial nods and smiles. Those at the fore of divers vocations and professions had once been "his boys," and when their nurses had sought to impress upon them the extreme majesty of the law, the formula employed had been: "I'll tell Mr. Mahaffey." Children, refusing to accept command from less authoritative lips, had hearkened to him.

Being of simple sort and common clay, the policeman did not construe this to mean that he had exerted an influence. He did not know that he had quite humbly been a force for upbuilding, and that these men who swept by in limousines bore somewhere on the mintage of their characters the stamp of his early lawgiving.

Shortly after his induction into office, the new commissioner sent for Mahaffey.

"Mahaffey," he said, with a show of sternness, which his twinkling eyes belied, "when I was a kid you used frequently and brutally to drive me off the grass in the park."

"Mr. Commissioner," the patrolman solemnly replied, with an answering glint of amused memory, "you was, if I may say it, sir, a very headstrong young gentleman."

"I used to think you were a great bulwark of the law," went on the superior. "How does it happen that I find you, after all these years, still a patrolman?"

Mahaffey blushed.

"I don't know, sir."

"I should like," mused the commissioner, "to see you retire with a higher rank. I have looked into your record. For integrity, competency, and courage it is unimpeachable."

Mahaffey awkwardly shuffled his feet.

"Thank you kindly, sir," he replied, "but I'd rather stay on as I am."

The commissioner lighted a cigar. Across its end he looked at Mahaffey with a puzzled expression. He had heard of Cæsar refusing a crown—and subsequently reconsidering his decision. The idea of a policeman declining promotion was altogether new.

"But, if I may make so bold as to speak of it," went on Mahaffey, clearing his throat, as though his embarrassment strangled him, "I'd like to be after havin' a promotion by proxy."

The head of the department lifted his brows.

"You see, sir," went on the patrolman, somewhat haltingly. "I've got a boy, Denny by name. You may have heard of him, sir?"

The commissioner gathered from the prideful timbre of the old man's voice that not to know Denny would be to acknowledge himself unversed in modern history. Yet he, like old Mahaffey, was honest. He had to shake his head.

"I thought, maybe," suggested Mahaffey, "that you'd seen his name on the eligible list. Denny is sergeant in our district, sir."

"Oh!" exclaimed the enlightened chief. "Is Sergeant Mahaffey your son? Why, he's your own superior officer!"

Old Mahaffey flushed brick red with paternal pride.

"Yes, sir," he admitted. "I reports to him when I makes me post."

"Sit down and tell me about him," kindly suggested the new commandant of the helmeted corps.

Thus encouraged, the veteran seated himself on the edge of a chair, and proceeded with enthusiasm: "If I do say it meself, who shouldn't, Denny's got the makin's of a man in him. He's the only young one the wife an' me has left. We lost three. We've give him the best education we knew how. His mother used to have notions of Denny's bein' a priest." The father chuckled. "I never said a word. Raisin' kids is a woman's business, but when the boy wanted to get on the force, I was tickled."

As Mahaffey's mounting ardor overwhelmed his diffidence, he lapsed into a brogue hardly noticeable in calmer moments.

"He told me he would go to th' top. Sure, Denny's got ambition—he's up to date—he's eddicated. As fer meself, Mr. Commissioner, Oi'm ould an' illitherate. Oi wouldn't know what t' do wid shoulder straps if Oi had 'em, but Denny ain't loike me. If ye could see y'r way clear t' help 'im——" the old man broke off suddenly and began mopping his forehead—abashed by his own boldness.

The young commissioner sat for a time in silence.

"Mahaffey," he said at last, in a tone which was convincingly earnest, "I know you want straight talk. I'm not here to play favorites. I'm here to straighten out a tangle. This office belongs to the people of the city. But I want to say this: When I was a kid, like all other kids, I had my heroes. One of them was a cop on our beat. He had a straightforward way of talking to children. I guess it was because he was simple and big-hearted enough to understand the heart of a child. Anyhow, that's the way ideals are

planted. I owe a good deal to that hero worship, and to you—its object. I'd like to get back at you. I'll keep my eye on your boy. Everything that I can fairly do shall be done. It's up to him."

When Sergeant Dennis Mahaffey arrived that evening at the station house, the old patrolman led him out to the pavement to impart his tidings.

"An' he says, Denny," joyously concluded the narrator, "that he's got his eye on you. He says it's up to you."

Sergeant Mahaffey took off his cap, and mopped his forehead. He was a young man with a military slenderness of waist and breadth of shoulder. His face was clean-cut and resolute.

For some reason he now failed to demonstrate the elation which his father had anticipated.

"I'm not so dead sure, pap," he said, "that it's a good stunt to ask favors of the commissioner. Recommendations have got to come through the regular channels. Captain Fowlett is the man I've got to make a hit with. I'm in this game to go to the top, and I want to play my cards right. Old-fashioned ways don't work out so well to-day as they did in your time."

Old Mahaffey was obviously grieved.

"But, son," he explained, "I knew the commissioner when he was a little kid. He sent for me, and of course I told him I wanted you to get boosted along."

"Much obliged, pap," acknowledged the sergeant coolly. "I guess it's all right, at that." The representative of the newer generation turned and went into the muster room, leaving the veteran on the pavement with a sense of distinct disappointment.

At the same moment "Kid" Mayhew, whose picture is in the Rogues' Gallery, sauntered through the swinging door of a corner saloon, and strolled aimlessly along the street. A second man overtook and fell into step with him. For a half block the two walked together. The second man chanced to be George Scanlon, of Inspector Perry's plain-clothes squad.

"Kid," said Scanlon quietly, "Mr. Perry would like to see you."

To be summoned before the inspector is not auspicious if one's name is on the "Suspect List."

The Kid gave no indication of surprise.

"Sure," he rejoined pleasantly. "When does he want to see me?"

"Better drop in to-morrow morning. So long." The plain-clothes man turned into a crosstown street, and the Kid, with a nod, continued on his way, stopping now and then to gaze idly into shop windows.

When, on the following morning, he had been admitted to the Presence, his manner of calm assurance remained with him.

"Now," began the inspector, going to the point without persiflage, "which of these covered-up gambling joints are you working in, and who are some of your fellow employees?"

The Kid raised his brows.

"Honest, inspector," he said, with a laugh of frank amusement, "you've got the wrong steer this trip. I haven't had a job in a joint since the tracks around New York closed down. I can prove that."

For a moment the inspector coldly studied his visitor. Kid Mayhew sustained the gaze without flinching. In point of fact the inspector had known all along that Mayhew held no such employment as he charged. He had chosen to open the interview with an accusation merely as a method of indirection.

"You expect me to believe that?" he inquired, with an assumed skepticism of the withering sort.

The Kid shrugged his shoulders. "I'm handing you straight facts," he asseverated.

The inspector allowed his vis-à-vis to sit for a while under a steady gaze, which he fondly believed to be disconcerting. Then he resumed: "Several days ago, a boob was trimmed in a fashion that suggested your technique. I suppose you know nothing of that, either?"

"I hadn't heard about it," was the prompt and imperturbable response.

The next words from the official lips

were ominous. "I guess I could come pretty near pinning it to you. Do you get me?"

Kid Mayhew was studying the pattern of the carpet. A smoldering and resentful sullenness clouded his eyes.

"Yes, I get you, all right," he replied slowly. "Whenever a trick is turned, some guy has got to go to the stir. It don't make much difference who the guy is, so long as the department makes a showing. It's up to me to do the stool-pigeon thing—or else take this guy's medicine. Yes, I get you."

"Very well." The inspector turned back to the papers on his desk. "Drop in here to-morrow or next day at the latest. When you come, I want definite information about the pool rooms in your neighborhood. Otherwise it may be the Island or up the river for you. Good morning."

Kid Mayhew turned and went out, plunged deeply in meditation. He might have given information without leaving the inspector's office. In the end he knew he should have to give it, but caution always prevailed in his reckonings. It could not hurt to avail himself of any time margin allowed him. Only yesterday he had made an ineffectual effort to secure such employment as that with which the inspector had taxed him. From a "club" where Michael O'Rourke operated a pool room, a roulette wheel, and minor accessories behind the fortification of ice-box doors, he had been turned away to reënlist in the army of the unemployed.

O'Rourke had owed him certain recognition. In consequence, the rebuff had stung, leaving behind it a sear of resentment. To be sure, O'Rourke had explained that the Kid was his personal preference for sheet writer, but that Police Captain Fowlett, being of a suspicious nature, had insisted on nominating a man of his own choosing. Protection must be paid for on a percentage basis, and the police officer under whose wing the enterprise must thrive or languish might demand an agent watchful of his interests. Nevertheless, the man selected was the Kid's enemy. If he must "turn up" a pool room, this one would serve as well as any, yet to do so would involve him in all the embarrassment of a dilemma.

To save himself with the inspector he must give authentic information. To give authentic information he must arouse the wrath of the police captain in the district.

That night as he was passing along the street near the station house he met Scanlon, who was talking with the two Mahaffeys.

"Hello, Kid," hailed the plain-clothes man. "See the inspector?"

"I seen him," was the curt reply.

"Tip off anything?"

"Not yet."

Two afternoons later a squad of men flung themselves against the outer doors of Michael O'Rourke's "Club." Their coming was tumultuously acclaimed with a battering of axes and a splintering of panels. While the ever-inquisitive crowds gathered, the shivering timbers gave way, and a handful of men boiled up the inner stairs. Others executed a highly spectacular flanking movement by means of a stepladder forcibly borrowed from the barber shop next door.

By this method they gained a second-story balcony, where, to the immense diversion of the onlookers, they assaulted windows blankly expressionless behind drawn blinds. Under the showering blows of the axes, shattered panes and shredded blinds unveiled the further defense of iron gratings like cell doors of a prison.

Fifteen minutes later, the perspiring invaders, having found only empty rooms, void of men or paraphernalia, trooped out empty-handed and crestfallen. The elbowing crowd voiced its derision in a long and jeering chorus of laughter.

But Kid Mayhew, waiting in near-by ambuscade to identify the captives of the raid, did not laugh. For him the situation held elements of grave seriousness. He had failed to deliver the goods. Yesterday, when he gave his information, the place had been in active operation. Should he be unable to convince the inspector of this, his status

would be that of the stool pigeon who had "double-crossed," and invited, thereby, the wrath of the powers that regulate.

His mind, under the pressure of the exigency, worked fast, striking back into the past for the solution. Some one had given warning. Unless he could saddle the blame upon a logical scapegoat, it must rest upon his own shoulders. He remembered his few words with Scanlon in the presence of the two Mahaffeys. They were both men in Captain Fowlett's district. He did not dare to intimate that Fowlett himself was "in on the deal." Yet he knew it to be true, and, knowing it, what was more reasonable than to assume that one of these "harness bulls" had "snitched"? At all events, he would employ the names of the two Mahaffeys in self-defense.

So it came to pass that on the ensuing day, vague rumors filtered through to the station house that the two Mahaffeys must repair to headquarters, there to explain the failure of the raiders. It was Sergeant Mahaffey's day off, but Patrolman Mahaffey, still on duty, presented to his fellows the aspect of a stricken man. The hint of disgrace had never before held for him the possibility of a personal application. It was the sentiment of the district force that neither would find it a difficult matter to clear his skirts. To Mahaffey, Senior, treachery would be as impossible as cowardice, and as for the sergeant—well, he was old Mahaffey's boy—a chip of the old block.

As the old man went about his duties, the arteries stood out corded on his temples, and it seemed to him that every passer-by pointed sneeringly to the officer who must answer the charge of disgracing his uniform.

Sergeant Mahaffey occupied a diminutive apartment in a model tenement building. To its familiar entrance the older man hurried his steps at the earliest possible moment. Even in his anxious haste, he was more than once halted by ragged children, who would not suffer him to pass without the customary greeting. He was afraid Denny might take it hard. Denny was such a sensitive boy. That was the natural result of his education. Denny's wife had never been strong since the birth of the second baby. He wanted to get there and cheer them up. It was eight o'clock when he entered the small room which served the combined purposes of living room, dining room, and kitchen.

The place was usually as neat as a hospital ward. At this hour the children should be asleep; Denny should be absorbed in the baseball extra, and Denny's wife quietly sewing.

Now the oldest boy, a two-year-old, sat screaming in neglect on the floor, his small cheeks smeared and stained. Denny's wife, also dissolved in bitter tears, seemed oblivious to the plaintive wailing of her offspring. Denny himself sat staring ahead with his face white and hard. From the kitchenette came a confused view of unwashed dishes.

The old man's entrance elicited no greeting except that the baby left off screaming when he took it in his arms.

He launched at once into his message of reassurance. The thing was groundless slander, and would fail of its purpose. His words, however, brought no response. He repeated them, but Denny vouchsafed only an inarticulate and impatient growl, and Denny's wife, rising abruptly, took the child from his arms and left the room.

"Sure, it'll come out all right, Denny, boy," insisted the patrolman for the third time. "It's a lie, and we'll nail it. Don't worry."

Denny rose, and began an agitated pacing of the floor.

"For God's sake, stop talking," he blustered. "You're quitting the force, anyhow, in a few days. It's different with me. I'm just starting. I've got a wife to keep, and two kids to raise. Things were lookin' good. I was solid with the captain. I was going up to the top of the ladder, and now, because some snitch gives the snap away, I've got to walk the plank."

"No, you don't, son," insisted the father patiently. "We can prove it's a lie."

"Oh, can that soft talk," stormed Denny. "How am I going to prove it's a lie?"

"Why, Denny," argued the patrolman weakly, "because it is a lie."

The young man halted in savage exasperation before his father, and clenched his hands at his back.

"It ain't no lie," he defiantly announced. "It's true."

The old policeman reeled back as though he had been stunned by a blow from a blackjack. For a moment he gasped; then, as he stood rocking on his feet, he could only echo in a hoarse whisper: "It ain't no lie? It ain't no lie, you say?"

"No, I done it. Oh, of course, I done it by the cap's directions, but the cap can't admit that. I'm the goat."

The old man stood for a moment looking at his son through dazed eyes. His face was gray. He opened his lips, but no words came. Then he dropped into a chair, and his outstretched fingers, covering his face, clawed spasmodically at his sparse hair. For a while the younger man stood looking down, then the defiant hardness of his set expression melted. His next words were weakly defensive.

"It was Fowlett that was getting the hush money—not me. I had to stand in with the cap. He needed a man he could trust——"

The old man sat suddenly up, electrified at the word.

"Trust!" he exclaimed. "Trust to do his filthy work! Do you reckon the cap or any other livin' man would have asked me to do a thing like that?"

"No," said Denny slowly. His face hardened again under the taunt. "No, I don't hardly reckon they would—and for forty-five years you've been walkin' a beat. I don't see where you've got any license to blow."

"For forty-five years I've been on the level. In five years you've let them ruin you. You've let them turn my son into a crook." Old Mahaffey rose, trembling with wrath.

"I played the game the only way there was any chance to beat it," reiterated the sergeant doggedly. "I took my risks—and I got caught."

"Then take what's comin' to you!" Old Mahaffey started, lurching unsteadily toward the door. Before he reached it Denny's bravado had once more dissolved into contrite misery.

"Pap," he pleaded despairingly, "maybe it's comin' to me, but it ain't comin' to *her*. It ain't comin' to the kids. You don't understand. You know I ain't naturally no crook. I was just a damn fool. The cap took a likin' to me. He had me come to his house—it's a swell place—an' he started out without a dollar. He talked to me. He said I had the brains to make good, if I'd only use 'em. He said honesty is a word with a lot of different meanings. Everybody'd rather be on the level—if they had a chance, but politics, says he, is a game of wits, where everybody's double-crossin' everybody else. He argued that to get along you had to be practical, and fight the devil with fire.

"He said the other kind of fellers is suckers. He showed me how much better I could raise the kids with money. He said you were the honestest man on the force—and the best policeman—an' what did it ever get you?

"It was all a pack of lies. I see that now, but I fell for it. Before God, pap, I was thinkin' most of her—an' the kids. An' it's goin' to kill her, I'm afraid—God knows what'll happen to the kids."

Denny Mahaffey turned away and broke into a violent storm of sobbing, which shook and racked his broad chest. It was not a pretty thing to watch.

The old man came slowly back to his chair.

"Yes, that's right—there's the kids," he said, in a dead voice. "I've got to help you out, I reckon—if I can." He sat for a time in thought, then rose again with an effort. "You let me talk to the commissioiner first, to-morrow," he commanded. "I'll see if I can do anything."

On the following morning the young commissioner ordered the patrolman to be brought before him while the sergeant waited. The Mahaffey who silently presented himself was in appear-

ance much older than the Mahaffey who had entered this same room several days before. The chief turned upon him a face in which genuine concern was masked under the disciplinarian's impersonal sternness.

"Mahaffey," he said crisply, "you know why I sent for you?"

"Yes, sir."

"You asked me a few days back to keep my eye on your boy. He's made a bad beginning."

Words of defense for Denny rose to the policeman's lips, but lying came unfamiliarly to his tongue, and he found himself standing silent. The commissioner went on:

"I am absolutely certain of your innocence in this affair. Your examination is a mere formality. As to the sergeant, the case seems cloudier."

"But, sir——" protested Mahaffey. The other silenced him with a gesture.

"Wait! You may not understand the full significance of this affair. I am a new man in office. Unfriendly newspapers have intimated that under my régime certain phases of vice will have little to fear. Those newspapers will make capital out of this incident, and smirch the very beginnings of my administration. That this tip leaked through a police officer seems certain. Inspector Perry reports that you and your son overheard a remark made by a stool pigeon."

Mahaffey stood silent for a time. His lips worked spasmodically, but he schooled them into steadiness, and forced his words with the labored effort of a bashful boy who has painfully memorized a recitation.

"One of two officers gave away this tip to the pool room. The two was me and my boy. It wasn't Denny—it was me."

The commissioner came to his feet.

Old Mahaffey, holding his shoulders rigid, stood waiting. For an instant there was a hushed stillness upon which the official's voice broke, at last, volcanically:

"Mahaffey, if that is true I'll call in every man at headquarters, and break you before them all! I'll tear the buttons and service bars from your tunic! I'll drive you out into the street, disgraced!"

Old Mahaffey continued to stand in the strained attitude of a man facing a firing squad.

"I guess, Mr. Commissioner," he said, "you'll have to do it."

With his finger hovering over a call bell, the superior hesitated.

"No—wait a moment," he exclaimed suddenly, as though to himself. Then he touched a second button, which brought a secretary to the door.

"Send in Sergeant Mahaffey," ordered the commissioner.

"No!" broke out old Mahaffey, in a tone of poignant protest. "Don't do that, Mr. Commissioner—for God's sake! I've told all there is to tell!"

"Silence!" commanded the chief.

Sergeant Mahaffey entered. He had been debauched in integrity, but not cowed. He came with neither bravado nor trembling. He saluted, and stood waiting the superior's pleasure.

"Your father tells me that you are innocent," said the commissioner.

Denny made no reply.

"He admits that it was he, and not you, who revealed our plans," went on the head of the department.

Then Denny wheeled and spoke vehemently. "He's lying—to protect me. It was me that tipped off the raid."

The commissioner looked from one to the other.

"Do I understand that you were both in on this?" he inquired.

"No," hastily interrupted old Mahaffey. "Denny's just tryin' to take the blame on himself." But the younger Mahaffey broke in with equal emphasis. "My father had nothin' to do with it. He's thinkin' of my kids——"

The commissioner went back to his desk, and sat down. "There is something back of all this," he said slowly, "that will stand looking into. You may go for the present. Charges will be preferred against you both."

The two Mahaffeys turned, and went together out of the place. Neither spoke. The morning tide of traffic was running at its height as they walked

silently up Broadway. Trucks, vans, and motors were working and seething in slow congestion like fermentation.

At Canal Street, the cross-town current had the right of way. The up-and-down procession stood marking time. A sharp and staccato outcry rose shrilly over the street's roaring. As the two men reached the curb the cause of alarm appeared. An empty delivery wagon, drawn by a runaway horse, lurched diagonally across the street. The traffic officer made a dive for the bit—and stumbled.

Old Mahaffey threw himself at the horse's head, caught it, and was dragged. He clung on until he was thrown under the careening wheels. The wagon went skidding and clattering on, while the street tried desperately to clear itself. The vehicle rocked crazily, while the horse, in the madness of increasing panic, menaced the traffic.

Denny Mahaffey had caught the tail-board, and had swung himself to the rear of the wagon. Attaining the driver's box, he leaned out and successfully clutched the dangling reins.

The crowds cheered him, but Denny Mahaffey did not hear them. He was approaching the elevated line, and his passage under the superstructure monopolized his attention. He must thread the traffic and escape the piers. Then a just possible space opened, an old woman, who was crossing the street, became panic-stricken. She halted with senile uncertainty, started forward, then hesitated again, and stood in the paralysis of terror at the center of the clear runway.

To the left rose the steel pier. It was an ugly choice and a quick one. Denny Mahaffey dropped the right rein, and dragged with every ounce of his strength on the left. He had a momentary sense of skidding—a wide swerve, and a crash as the stunned horse came to its knees, and the wagon piled up with a splintering impact of wrecked timbers. In the city many things occur at once.

While the ambulance was coming for Denny, Kid Mayhew presented himself at Inspector Perry's office, and begged an immediate interview. One eye was closed and discolored. He carried one arm in a sling. Upon being admitted, he spoke heatedly.

"I'm ready to spit up the whole thing now," he announced. "I was a little leary of Fowlett at first. Last night I got laid for by a gang of rough-necks, and beat up. Fowlett was behind that, O'Rourke's pool room has moved three doors up the street, and it'll be running full blast to-day. The sheet writer there is Fowlett's man. That tip came from Fowlett in the first place. I don't know who his messenger was, but Fowlett is the man that's protecting the joint. That's straight. I'm sore now; I'm just sore enough to tell it all. I want to see him broke, and I'll take my chances."

When Inspector Perry called on the commissioner late that afternoon, he had the report of a successful raid to convey. Moreover, he had in the capture of the sheet writer a strong link of evidence as to Fowlett's protection. The commissioner listened.

"If I may make a suggestion," hazarded the inspector. "It's been my experience that where you've got the main culprit it's sometimes just as well to be a trifle blind as to the subordinate—particularly after the subordinate pulls a stunt like that." He pointed to an afternoon paper, whose headlines linked, in inch-tall type, the name Mahaffey with the word heroism.

"I'm glad," replied the commissioner gravely, "that you think so. It's a time when it's helpful to be guided by older experience."

"Of course," continued Perry, "the old man wasn't quite so heroic—but he would have been—given the chance. His record proves that. By the way, both will recover."

"So you called up the hospital, too, did you?" laughed the commissioner. "Old Mahaffey did nothing except tell one lie. I sometimes think that in a long life a man may perhaps be privileged to tell one lie—if it be in a good cause. As for me, I'm going to the hospital to shake hands with Denny and the grand old liar."

The Light Ahead

By Mayn Clew Garnett

Author of "The Cyanide Lance," "The Lone Sperm Bull," Etc.

"When the lights you see ahead, port your helm and show your red." It's a good saw, as all seamen know, and if Mr. James, chief mate of the big steamer, had had his mind on his business the catastrophe Garnett tells about would not have occurred

RED light on starboard bow, sir," came the hail from forward. The man was Jenson, a "square-head" of more than usual intelligence and of keen eyesight.

"All right," said the mate softly, with no concern. He gazed steadily at a point two points off the starboard bow, picked up the night glass, and took a quick look. Then he left the pilot house where he had been, and walked athwartships on the bridge.

He was a young man. His eyes squinted a little under the strain of night work and showed the wrinkles at their corners. His hair was black and curly, and his bronzed face, strong-lined and handsome, was full of the strength and vigor of youth. He had gone to sea at fifteen. He was now twenty-five and a chief mate in a passenger ship, a first-class navigator, a good seaman. And the company liked him. He was a favorite, a young man rising in the best ships. Five feet eight in his white canvas shoes and white duck uniform, he looked short, for he was very stout of limb; a powerful man who had gained his strength by hard work in the forecastle and upon the main deck of several windjammers whose records in the Cape trade were well known to all shipping men.

It was the midwatch. Mr. James had been upon the bridge about half an hour only. It was the blackest part of the night, the time between one and two, in the latitude north of Hatteras. James rubbed his eyes once or twice, brushed his short mustache from his mouth with his fingers, and felt again for the night glass just within the pilot-house window, which was open.

"How does she head?" he asked the helmsman softly.

"West, two degrees north, sir," said the quartermaster at the steam steering wheel.

James looked again, and, replacing the glass, walked to the bridge rail and stopped.

The point far ahead to starboard was showing plainly. It was the red light of some steamer whose hull was still below the horizon. Her funnel tops just showed like a black dot, darker than the surrounding gloom. Her masthead light was very bright, shining like a star of the first magnitude that had just risen from a clear sky. He knew she was a long way off. Not less than twelve miles separated the vessels. There was plenty of time for a change of course. He began to ~~hum~~ softly:

"When the lights you see ahead,
Port your helm and show your red——

"Yes," he muttered, "it's a good old saw—poetry of the night. I wonder if *she* knows of the poetry of—of—the sea——"

His mind went back to the days ashore, the last days he had spent upon the beach with her.

"And I have worked up to this for you," he had told her with all the feeling he could muster, the strong passion of a strong man asking for what he

desired most. "I have worked up to this for you, just you."

The words rang in his ears. The scene was there before him. The beautiful woman, the woman he loved more than his life. He could tell her no more than that—he had done all he had done just for her, just to be able to call her his own.

The dead monotony of the life before him hung like a black pall, heavy in the night. He saw all the lonely years he must face, all the hard life of the sailor, for she had simply laughed lightly, looked him squarely in the eyes—and shook her head.

"No," she had said gently. "No, you mustn't think of it—I mean it——" And he knew that what he had done was as nothing to her, nothing at all—what was a mate to a woman like that?

The steady vibration of the engines below made the steel rigging shake. The low drone of the side wash as the surf roared from the bows made a soft murmur where it reached his ears. It made him drowsy, dreamy, and sullen. He cared for nothing now. What was a mate, after all? Any corner groceryman was far better in the eyes of most women. Perhaps he had been mistaken. Perhaps the position he had ideals of was not much. Yes—that was it; he had been mistaken. And he gazed steadily out into the dark future, and subconsciously he saw a long, dreary life of toil and trouble, without the woman he loved to relieve the dark solitude.

Before him rose the lights. The red was now well up and rising fast. It had been but a flickering spark at first, showing soon after the bright headlight had risen. It was upon the port side of that vessel's bridge and high above the sea. It was electric, for no ordinary oil burner would show so far with color. The ship must be a liner of size, and must be going fast. Suddenly he saw a flash of green. It was the starboard light of the approaching ship. Then for an instant both side lights shone brightly.

The vessel then was not crossing his bows, after all. The green was her starboard light, and that was the one she must show. It was all right then. He would not change the course. If she swung out, she must be coming almost head on now, for her red had shone but two points off the bow, and the converging courses must be drawing together.

All right then. If they crossed before the ships met it was well and good. There would probably be a mile or more to spare, and he was even now crossing her course, for he saw her green light, which showed him he was right ahead of her, and his rate of speed would take him over in a few moments. Then her green would be upon his right or starboard side, showing that she was passing astern of him. It was simple, plain as could be. He paid little or no attention any longer.

And then suddenly the green light faded and the red shone again. It caused the officer to stop in his walk, which he had begun again to keep in action.

"Port your helm a little," he ordered as he realized the positions.

"Aye, aye, sir—port it is, sir," came the monotonous response from the pilothouse window; and the clanking of the steam gear sounded faintly upon his ears.

The giant liner swung slowly to starboard, swung just a little; and, as she did so, the loom of a monstrous figure rose right ahead in the night. The glare of the bright headlight shone close aboard. The red of her port light was a dangerous glare; and at a space to port flickered a moment the fatal green of the starboard side light, flickered, and then went out, shut off by the running board as the vessel swung across the bows of the ship, where the mate stood gazing at her.

"Hard aport," he yelled savagely.

"Hard aport, sir," came the response from the wheel, and the voice showed more or less concern now.

There was an instant of suspense, a moment of silence, and the two giant shapes came close with amazing speed. The liner swung to her port helm, and her bows pointed clear of the light

ahead. But the speed was awful. Both going at twenty-five knots an hour, making the closing speed nearly a mile a minute, brought the giants too close to pass clear.

There was a hoarse cry from forward. The mate knew he was not going to clear, and the roar of his siren tore the night's silence. Then the huge fabrics came in collision. There was a gigantic crash, a thundering shock, and a tearing, ripping sound as steel tore steel to ribbons.

The shock made the rigging sing like a giant harp under the strain, and the "ping" of parting steel lines sounded in accompaniment to the tumultuous crashing of wood and iron. The cries of men came faintly through the uproar from forward, and this was followed almost instantly by frantic shrieks from aft as the effect of the shock was felt by the women passengers.

The liner had failed to clear, and, swinging too late to port, had cut slantingly into the other ship's quarter and tore away the greater part of her stern. Tearing, grinding, ripping, and snapping, the huge shapes ground alongside for a few moments as their headway took them along without reducing speed. Too late the reversing engines, too late the telegraph for all speed astern. The ships had come in contact. The mate had run into another ship that had shown him her red light to starboard. There was no mistake about it. The cry of the seaman on watch had been heard by fifty persons.

"Red light on the starboard bow, sir——"

It rang in the officer's ears. It sounded above the terrible din of smashing steel and beams, and even above the roar of the sirens telling of the death wound that had been given a marine monster of twenty-five thousand tons register.

The awful feeling of responsibility paralyzed the mate. The terror of what he had done numbed him; stunned him so that he stood there upon the bridge like a man asleep. Fifteen hundred human souls were sinking in that ship, which was now drifting off to port in the night with their cries sounding faintly through the blackness, even rising to be heard through the roar of the steam. He thought of it. It was ghastly. Fifteen hundred souls; and he knew how badly he had wounded the ship. He knew the terrific power of the blow he had delivered—shearing off the after part of that vessel and letting in the sea clear to the midship bulkhead. There was no chance for her to float. The wound was too deadly. It was as bad as though he had rammed her with a battleship's ram.

The half-dressed form of the captain rushed to him—his captain.

"What happened?" he whispered hoarsely. He seemed to be afraid to ask the question loudly. "Great Heaven, did you hit her?"

The mate stood gazing at the huge shadow, and his tongue refused to answer the question. Then the voice beside him seemed to gain its power. It roared out:

"Bulkheads, there—close them, quick!" And the automatic device, worked from the pilot house, was pulled savagely.

The captain rushed into the pilot house. The man at the wheel who had left it to throw the lever to close the bulkheads sprang back to his post.

"How'd you do it?" asked the master again, in a low voice full of passion and strained to the utmost. "How'd you strike—don't you know you killed at least five hundred men? You murdering brute—you were asleep." Then he raised his voice again, and bawled down through the tube to MacDugal, the chief engineer.

"How is she—quick—get the pumps going—collision—keep the firemen cool, and for God's sake don't let them panic—keep them at their posts until we see what's up. We've run down the express steamer *Blue Star,* of the Royal Dutch Line——"

The master turned to the pilot house again and looked out of the window. His chief officer was still standing where he had left him.

"In Heaven's name, Mr. James, what's the matter with you to-night?"

he broke out wildly, in passionate tones, almost sobbing. "It's all hands—get 'em out quick!"

He was a strange creature standing there in his undershirt and drawers, with his long gray beard streaming down across his breast. The man at the wheel even looked at him for a moment, but did not smile. It was tragedy, not comedy.

"Is she full speed astern?" asked the master quickly.

"Yes, sir, full speed astern, sir," said the man. His face was white, and his hands shook a little while he held the spokes of the wheel. There was death for many that night, and he knew it. It would be hard to tell who would survive in the rush that was sure to come if the ship went down. Yet his seamanship told him that much was to be hoped from the forward bulkhead. It would hold her up if it could stand the strain.

In two minutes there was a rush of hundreds of feet upon the decks below the flying bridge. The second officer came up half naked, dressed in shirt and trousers, without shoes or stockings. He was a powerful man and short, with a tremendous voice, a real Yankee bos'n voice; and he roared out orders for the men, who jumped to their stations automatically.

The captain came again to the bridge and took command. He yelled to the boat crews below, and strove to quiet the crowding passengers who pushed and fought about the boats in spite of the after guard and seamen.

"Get down there and wade into that mess, Wilson," said the master to the second officer; and he jumped down and went bawling through the press, pushing and pulling, striking here and there a refractory passenger who would insist upon trying to fill the small boats.

"There is no danger—no danger whatever," roared the captain again and again from the bridge. The petty officers took up the cry, and gradually the press about the starboard lifeboats grew less. The boats upon the port side had been all carried away or smashed to bits. Ten boats were left.

A man rushed up the bridge steps coming from aft.

"She's sinking, sir," he panted, pointing to the dim shadow of the rammed ship drifting astern. The steady roar of her siren told of the danger, and seemed to be a resonant cry for help.

The master gazed aft. Then he rushed to the pilot-house window and took up the night glass hanging there. He looked hard at the ship now lying astern and riding with her bows high in the air. The man was right. She was rapidly going down. Ten minutes at the most would tell the whole story.

"Get the starboard boats out, Mr. James," called the captain in an even tone, "and let no one but the crews in them. The first man who attempts to get in will be shot. Go to the vessel and bring back all you can—quick——"

But the form there had vanished before he had finished speaking. The chief officer had awakened at last from his stupor. His responsibility came back to him with a rush of feeling. But an instant before he had faced the end. He had decided to kill himself at once, and was just about to go to his room for his gun. He was too ashamed to face the ordeal, the ordeal of the officer who has run down a ship in a clear night. There had been literally no excuse for him. He could not plead ignorance of the laws; his license as officer made that impossible. He knew what to do when raising a light to starboard when that light was red. The rules were plainly written. Every common waterman knew them by heart. He had disobeyed them by some mischance, some mistake he could not exactly define; but he knew that under it all was that dull, sullen apathy from a wrong, or fancied wrong, that had caused him to be negligent.

He would not go upon the witness stand and say that, because a woman did not love him, he had allowed his ship to ram a liner with fifteen hundred souls aboard her in a clear night. No! Death was a hundred, a thousand times better than such ignominy, such miserable, cowardly sort of excuse. He would blow his brains out just as soon

as he saw the finish, just as soon as he knew his vessel would float. Then came the captain's voice of command:

"Get out the starboard boats and save all you can——"

Yes, it was his duty; his above all others. He was at number one boat before the master had finished his orders.

Six good men were at their stations. The falls were run taut, the boat shoved clear, and down she went with a rush into the sea. Nine others followed within a minute, and ten boats pulled away into the darkness astern, where the roar of the siren still sounded loud and resonant—a wild, terrible cry of death and destruction.

James met a boat coming toward him before he reached the ship. She was full. Sixty-two men and women filled her, and she just floated, and that was all, her gunwales awash in the smooth sea. The swell lifted her, and she rose high above him, a dark object against the sky. Then she sank slowly down into the trough, and disappeared behind the hill of water that ran smoothly from the northeast in long, heaving seas.

The night was still fine, and the wind almost nothing at all. The banks of vapor rising in the east told of a change; but the change was not yet. James noticed the weather mechanically, as a good seaman does, from a small boat when at sea at night; but he was thinking of the huge shadow which now drew close aboard.

As the boat came under the port side, he could see the passengers crowding the rail in the waist, where the lifeboats were being filled and sent away as fast as men could work them. Seven boats were alongside full of human beings. Two more were being lowered. Three came from under the stern as he drew alongside.

There was a mass of people still to be taken off. He saw at a glance that the liner had twenty large lifeboats for her complement. One was smashed. There was every reason to believe she would send out nineteen with at least a thousand people in them. There would be several hundred more to take besides these. The life rafts might do it, but he knew the danger of life rafts in the furious struggle in a sinking ship.

The thing would be to save the passengers with his own boats. This he might do if the ship floated long enough. She was sinking fast, as he could see by her rising bows. She was probably even now hanging solely by her midship bulkhead, and that would most likely be badly smashed by the collison, for he had struck the ship far enough forward to do it damage, although his vessel had only cut into her well aft. The blow had been slanting. A little more time, perhaps a few seconds, and the ships would have swung clear.

He came alongside and hailed the deck.

"Send them down lively—come along now, quick!" he called up in his natural voice. It was the first time since the collision he had spoken. It sounded strange to hear his own tones coming natural again.

In a few moments he was crowding and seating the women and children in his boat. Then came the men from everywhere. They crowded down the falls, jumped into the sea, and swam alongside, begging to be hauled aboard, or climbed over the high gunwales themselves. One powerful young man, stripped to the waist, dived clean from the hurricane deck, and almost instantly rose alongside. Then he swung himself into the boat, and stood amidships hauling others in until the craft settled down to her bearings and the men at the oars could hardly row.

"Shove off—give way," ordered James.

The boat started back slowly, the men rowing gingerly, poking and striking the passengers in the backs with the oars until the crowd settled itself. Then she went along slowly toward the ship, and the women in her prayed, the men swore, and the children wept and sobbed. And all the time the fact that he was the cause of it all impressed James queerly. He could not understand it, could not quite see why he had done it, and yet he knew he had. One man spoke to the athlete who had dived.

"They should burn a man who would sink a ship like this on a clear night; they should burn him to a stake—the drunken, cowardly scoundrel——"

And James sat there with the tiller ropes in his hand; sat silent, thoughtful, and knew in his heart the man had spoken the truth. If he could only be sure of the passengers—he would not give them a chance to say anything more. His boat came alongside his own ship. The crowd above cheered him—they did not know—he was a hero to them, the first boat with the rescued. How quickly they would change that cheer when they learned the truth! He almost smiled. His set face, strong-lined, bronzed, and virile, turned away from the people in the boat. He gave orders in the usual tone. The passengers were quickly passed aboard. Then he started back for another load.

By this time the sides of his ship were crowded with boats. She was taking aboard over a thousand people, and the sea was still smooth.

The swell heaved higher as the small boat went back toward the sinking steamer. James noticed it. The sky to the eastward was dark with a bank of vapor. The air had the feeling of a northeaster. It was coming along, and there was plenty of time, for it would come slowly. The last of the passengers would be either sunk or aboard his own ship before the breeze raised to a dangerous extent.

The men rowed quickly. They were anxious. The horror of the whole thing had fallen upon them like a pall; but they strove mightily to do their share. James found his boat to be the last to reach the sinking ship.

The liner was well down now by the stern and her deck was awash aft. She rose higher and higher as he gazed at her, her decks slanting, sloping, and she rolled loggily in the growing swell. Her siren stopped. A dull, muffled roar from the sea, a smothered explosion told of the end of the boilers. She would go in a moment. The passengers were clinging, grabbing to anything to hold on. The deck slanted so dangerously that many were slid off into the sea where they plunged, some silently and hopelessly, others screaming wildly with the terror of sudden death.

James watched them. He saw many die, saw many go to their end. Others swam; and he strove to pick them up, forgetting himself in the struggle.

He picked up sixteen in this manner, steering for them as they swam about in the night calling for help. The last one was a girl, a beautiful girl of twenty or less. He hauled her into the boat.

A sudden, wild yelling caused him to look. The sinking liner stood upon end, her forefoot clear of the sea. She swung loggily to and fro for a moment, settling as she did so. Then, with a rush, she plunged stern first to the bottom, the crash of her bursting decks as the air blew out being the last sound he heard.

The ship was very close to him. Her swing as she foundered brought her closer. The vortex sucked his boat toward her, drew the craft with a mighty pull. A spar, twisting, whirling in the swirl, struck the boat, and instantly she was a wreck, capsized, engulfed in the mighty hole the sinking liner made in the sea with her last plunge.

James found himself smothered, drowning, drawn downward by a great force he could not fight against. The whole ocean seemed to pull down upon him and crush him into its black depths.

The whole thing took such a small space of time, he hardly realized his position. The utter blackness, the salt water in his eyes and mouth, all paralyzed his mind for a few moments. Then he thought of his end. It was just as well. He was drowning, going to the bottom. He must soon go, anyhow; he could not face those wrecked passengers; and with the thought came a grim peacefulness, a satisfaction that the fight was all over. He could now rest at last.

But nature within him was very strong. He was a powerful man. When he gave up the struggle, his natural buoyancy lifted him to the surface of the sea. He came up, his head appearing in the air, and he breathed again in spite of himself. Then the old, old

fighting spirit, the desire to survive which is so strong within the breast of every young animal, took charge. No, he would not go down yet. He must see the finish, the end of things in which he was concerned.

He swam about aimlessly. The swell heaved him high up, dropped him far down; and he noticed that now the sea was running, the small combers rising before a stiff breeze. These burst upon his face and head and smothered him a little. He turned his back to them, and swam on, on, and still on into the darkness.

He saw nothing. The ship, the boats had all gone. Once he was about to cry for help; but the thought was horrible, distasteful to the last degree. He had no right to call for help. He would not. But he swam and tried to see something to get upon.

Something struck him heavily upon the head. Stars swam before his eyes. He reached upward with his hands, and they met a solid substance. Then he sank slowly down, down—and the blackness came upon him.

The object that had hit him was a small boat. In it were a man and a girl, the girl James himself had picked up from the sea a short time before. The man was a seaman, and he heard the boat strike. He reached over the side, caught the glimpse of a human form as it struck the boat's side and sank.

The seaman took up the boat hook and was about to poke the body away. He was sick of dead men, sick of seeing corpses floating about. He had met half a dozen already that night. But this one seemed to move, and the hook caught in his clothes. He pulled the body up, and saw the man was not dead, but dazed, moving feebly in a drunken way. Then he pulled James into the boat.

James regained his senses after half an hour; and during that time the boat ran before a stiff squall of wind and rain that swept it along before it into the darkness. The seaman steered with an oar, and kept the boat's head before the wind. The mate opened his eyes, and in the gray of the early dawn he saw a man he did not know, a seaman from the sunken liner, steering the boat calmly before the gale that was now coming fast with the rising sun. Near him in the bottom of the boat lay the girl huddled up and moaning with cold and fright, and fatigue.

James arose and staggered aft.

"How'd I get here?" he asked.

"I pulled you in, sir," said the sailor. "Are you from the ship that sank us?"

"Yes. I'm the mate, the chief officer."

"Well, if I'd 'a' know'd it, I mightn't have taken the trouble," said the seaman.

James said nothing. There was nothing for him to say. He knew the sailor was right. He knew the officers of his ship were men to scorn, to hate—but he would not say it was himself alone who had done the terrible deed. Something stopped him. It might have been sheer shame—or fear. He looked at the girl. Then he went to her and raised her, placing her upon a seat and trying to cheer her up.

"We'll be picked up soon—don't worry about it. Our ship will stand by and hunt for all the missing——"

"But I'm dreadfully cold," said the girl, with chattering teeth.

"Put my coat on, then," said James; and he took off his soaked coat and made her put it on.

The man grinned in derision.

"Say," he said, "who was on watch when you hit us?"

James took no notice. He would not answer the question. Then the girl spoke up.

"Yes, whose fault was it? You belong to the other ship, you'll know all about it. They ought to hang the man who is responsible for this awful thing—my poor mother and father—oh——" And she broke into a sob.

The man at the steering oar smiled grimly.

"Yes, miss, that's right, they sure ought to hang the officer who runs down a liner on a clear night when he's bound to see the lights plainly. I don't make no excuses for him—it's more'n murder."

"You were on watch, on duty—you are dressed?" said the girl.

"Yes, I knowed it when I first seen you," snarled the seaman. "I reckon you're the man who did it—what was the matter? Couldn't you keep awake, or what?" The tone was a sneer, an insult, yet the sailor did wish to find out how so unusual a thing could happen as the running down of a ship on a clear night when her lights could be seen fifteen miles or more.

James tried to defend himself. It was instinctive. The contempt of the sailor was too much. On other occasions, he never allowed the slightest insolence from the men of his own vessel. But now the officer was numb, paralyzed. He was guilty—and he knew it.

For hours they sat now in silence, the seaman holding the boat steady before the northeaster, which grew in power until by nine in the morning it was blowing a furious gale, and the sea was running strongly with sweeping combers. There was nothing to do but keep the boat before it. To try to head any other way meant to risk her filling from a bursting sea. The exertion of steering was great. The seaman, with set face, held onto the oar, and James could see the sweat start under the constant strain, but he said nothing—he waited.

"You'll have to take her, sir—a while—I'm getting played out," panted the man.

"All right," said James, "give her to me—now——"

He took the oar during the backward slant as she dropped down the side of the sea that passed under her. He was ready for the rush as she rose and shot forward again upon the breaking crest of the following hill. The exercise did him good. It made him think clearly, it took his mind from the hopelessness of his life.

All that day the two men took turns keeping the small boat before the sea; and they ran to the southward a full half hundred miles before the gale let up. Both were too exhausted to talk, too thirsty to even speak—and there was neither water nor food in the boat. Her ration of biscuit and water had been lost when she had been drawn down by the sinking liner.

The sailor had righted the boat after great effort, aided by the sea; and owing to the smoothness of the swell at the time he had managed to get her clear of water. Then he had picked up the girl who had been floating about, swimming and holding onto fragments of wreckage since James' boat had gone under.

The mate noticed that, although the girl had not spoken to him again after knowing he had caused the disaster, she still wore his coat. He studied the matter, the inconsistency of women, and he thought it strange. The sun shone for a moment before it set that evening; and in the glowing light James gazed steadily at the woman. She was very beautiful. She had not made a complaint since the morning. The sea was still running high, although the wind was going down with the sun, yet the girl had not been seasick; nor had she shown any suffering.

"How do you feel now?" he whispered, as he waited his turn at the oar.

"I'm all right, thank you. Do you think we will get picked up?" she said.

"We'll be picked up to-morrow—sure," said the officer. "We are now right in the track of the West India ships, and will sight something by daylight when we can set a signal. Are you very thirsty?"

"Tell me first, how did this accident occur? Were you really asleep, or just what? I can stand the thirst, and I'm warm enough now. This water is like milk in comparison with the air, it's so warm."

"We are in the Stream," said James; "the Gulf Stream, and that is about eighty along here—it's better than freezing in the high latitudes."

"You haven't answered my question," said the girl.

"I don't know—I don't remember what it was. I must have lost my head—been asleep—or something—yes, I was on duty, on watch—it was my fault entirely. I saw your ship, saw her red light to starboard—the right, you know. She had the right of way under the

rules. I intended to swing off, waited a few minutes to see her better—then her green light showed—and—then it was too late. I went hard aport, did my best—but hit her—we were going very fast—both ships were going twenty-five knots—making the approaching speed fifty miles an hour—nearly a mile a minute—I must have lost my head just a moment—maybe I was dreaming——"

"I know you are not to blame," said the girl, placing her hand in his. "You have told me the truth, a straight story—but yet I don't see how it all happened. I'm not a sailor, anyhow; perhaps I couldn't understand. But I feel you didn't do it on purpose——"

"No, no," whispered James. "How could a man do a thing like that on purpose?" He could not tell her the truth. He was ashamed to mention a woman, to say he was sullen, depressed, stupefied at the loss of a love he bore a woman.

He took his place at the oar for the last time that night. The sea was no longer dangerous. They spoke of rigging a drag with the oar and thwarts, making a drag by the aid of the painter or line, which still was fast to her forward. They had finished this before dark, and then they lay down, exhausted. The girl stood watch. In the dim dawn the girl gave out. She had stood watch all night, and she was exhausted.

"I understand," she muttered to herself, "this poor fellow, this officer was tired out—he slept—I don't blame him at all, it was not his fault."

The sun shone upon the three sleeping, the boat riding safely and dry to the drag made of the oar and thwarts. James aroused himself first, awakening dimly with the warmth of the sun. He sat up. The two others slept on. The girl was breathing loudly, almost panting, and her parted lips were blue. Yet she was beautiful. James knew it. She was exhausted, and help must come soon for her.

He sat and gazed at the horizon, and when the sea lifted the boat, he stared hard all around to see if anything showed above the rim. Hours passed in this fashion. The girl moaned in her sleep. The sailor shifted uneasily, and grunted, snored, and murmured incoherently. They were all very thirsty.

It was about ten o'clock in the morning that James saw something to the northward. It was just a speck, just a tiny dot on the rim of sea; but he knew it was a ship of some kind, a vessel passing. The minutes dragged, and he was about to rouse the sailor to get him to help watch. Then he remembered how the fellow had striven so manfully the day before when they rode out the gale. No, he would let them sleep.

By noon, the vessel was close aboard and coming slowly with the wind upon her port beam. She was a schooner bound south. James could see the lumber on her decks. Her three masts swung to and fro in the swell, and she made bad weather of the sluggish sea. The foam showed white under her forefoot, and told of the speed being at least a few knots an hour. James called the sailor.

"Get up—turn out—there's a schooner alongside," he said. The man moved slightly, and slept on. James shook him roughly.

"Lemme alone," muttered the seaman.

"Ship ahoy!" yelled the mate as the schooner came within a quarter of a mile and headed almost straight for them. He stood up and waved his arms. Nothing came of it. The girl awoke. She sat up and realized the position. In a moment she had taken off her skirt and handed it to the mate. He waved it wildly; and his yelling finally awoke the exhausted seaman. The man stood up and bawled loudly. Then he washed his mouth with salt water, and yelled again and again. James swung the skirt. The girl prayed audibly.

The schooner stood right along on her course. She had not noticed the boat. Passing a few hundred fathoms from them caused all three to become frantic. The men bawled, cursed, and begged the schooner to take them in.

The captain of the vessel, coming on deck, happened to look in their direc-

tion. He spoke to the man at the wheel, who for the first time seemed to take his eyes from the compass card. Then, taking his glass, the captain saw that three living souls were in the small boat. The next instant he was bawling orders, and the schooner hauled her wind and came slatting into the breeze.

Six men appeared on her deck. James saw them working to get the small boat clear from her stern davits. Then they seemed to realize that this was unnecessary, and the schooner, flattening in her sheets, worked up to them slowly, rising and falling into the high swell. She stood across to windward, and then came about, easing off her sheets and drifting slowly down upon the boat.

She drew close aboard.

"Catch a line," yelled the captain from her deck.

James waved his hand in reply, and a heaving line flaked out and fell across the boat's gunwales.

In another moment they were being hauled aboard.

Explanations came at once. The master of the schooner was bound for South America.

"Of course, I'll put you all aboard the first homeward-bound ship I fall in with," said he.

"But you surely will put us ashore at once," said the girl, after she had drunk tea and changed her clothes. They were eating gingerly of ship's food and drinking water ravenously.

"That I cannot do, miss," said the captain. "I'm bound to Rio with cargo, and I must take it there."

"But we will pay you to take us ashore—pay you anything, for I am very rich," said the girl.

The master smiled sadly. The effects of the forty hours in the open boat were evidently having their effect upon the young woman.

"No," he said, "you go below, and the steward will give you all you want to eat, and your clothes will be dry enough to put on again before night. We might fall in with a ship bound north any time now. Then you'll have a chance."

James knew the man was within his rights, of course. He was glad to be in the schooner. The sailor didn't seem to mind where he went. One ship was very much like another to him. The consul would be bound to ship him home, anyway. The girl was given a stateroom in the after cabin; and she soon slept the sleep of the exhausted.

The mate stayed on deck. The whole thing had a strange look to him. He had decided to kill himself. He dared not go back to the States, anyhow, to face the charges that would be made against him. He might slip overboard any night on the run down, and no one would be the wiser.

The fact that the schooner was bound to South America seemed to give him a respite. There was no hurry to commit the desperate act that he felt he must, in all honor and decency, do. He might live a month at least before dying.

After the awful struggle through the gale and shipwreck, he felt a desire to live more than before. The whole affair was more distant, almost effaced. And now he was not going back, anyhow.

The captain asked him few questions regarding his wreck, seeming to feel a certain delicacy about it. The day passed, and the next and the next, and no ship was sighted going north. They were now drawing out of the track of vessels, and a strange hope arose within the mate that they would not meet one.

The girl sat with him often, and they talked of other things than shipwreck. She was beautiful—there was no question about it. The glow of returning strength made her more lovely. James found himself wondering at her. She had been the only human being so far that would condescend to speak to him without contempt. He was lonely, very lonely, and the girl seemed to feel he needed some one to cheer him up. She did not realize his weakness. He was very strong to her; a strong man who had suffered from an accident, due, perhaps, to his carelessness, but not to criminal negligence. But he knew, he knew, and could not tell.

The days passed, and the terror of the thing he had in his mind began to fade slightly. He knew he must die.

The sailor, his shipmate who had been picked up with him, had told every one in the schooner that he, James, was on watch and was responsible for a terrible disaster, the death of half a hundred persons. James saw it in their looks. He knew he would never get a ship again, never hold a place among white men. Yes, he must die.

It gave him a sort of grim satisfaction to feel that he was just to live a certain length of time, that he would cut that short at the last moment. He wondered how a prisoner felt when the sentence of death was pronounced upon him. He had pronounced it upon himself. It was a genuine relief, for the vision of those terror-stricken, drowning passengers was always with him night and day, except when he was in a dreamless sleep. That sleep seemed to be portentous of what he would face.

The days turned to weeks and the weeks to months. The voyage was long and the winds light. They were ninety days to the latitude of the Falklands when they struck a furious "williwaw" from the hills of Patagonia. The schooner was in a bad fix. She was lightly manned; and, in spite of the addition of James and the seaman from the wreck, she held her canvas too long.

The struggle was short but terrific. The foretopsail blew away and saved the mast; but the main held, and the topmast buckled and finally went by the board. The headsails had been lowered, but they blew out from the gaskets, and the jibboom snapped short off under the tremendous threshing of flying canvas. The maintopmast, hanging by the backstays, fell across the triatic stay, and the steel of the backstays cut into the spring until it finally parted under the jerks, and the mizzen was left to stand alone. It went by the board, and the great mast, snapping short at the partners, went over the side, and smashed and banged there at each heave of the ship.

There was desperate work to do to save the vessel. Her master did wonders and showed his skill; but the most dangerous and deadly task of going to leeward to cut adrift the lanyards was left to James. No one else would go.

James was a powerful man, and had won his way to an officer's berth by endeavor, not by nepotism. His hope was that he might be killed in the struggle. He dared anything, tried to do the impossible—and did it. How he succeeded in clearing away the wreck of that mast remains a mystery to those who watched him. He was almost dead when dragged back and the schooner floated clear.

The girl had seen the whole affair from the glass of the companionway. She had held her breath, almost fainted again and again at the sight of James in that fight for life. To her it was simply grand, tremendous—she had never been touched by a man's heroism before.

When it was all over and the schooner, dismantled and storm-driven, lay riding down the giant seas that swept around the Horn in the Pacific Antarctic Drift, she watched over and attended the officer as he lay in his bunk with a broken arm, a cut across the head, and the toes of one foot gone. She knew that there was something behind the will to do as James had done. But she could not fathom it, could not tell why he was unresponsive. He lay silent mostly, and seldom looked at her. Yet he was sane in his conversation, not delirious in any way. It worried her. It caused that peculiar thing that is in every woman to make the man she admires responsive. And the more she showed her feelings, the less he seemed to care. It ended the way it usually does under such conditions. She fairly worshiped him.

After that storm the weather grew very calm. The dark ocean seemed to be at rest for a spell. The schooner was now to the south'ard of the Falklands, and the captain decided that he would not venture around the Horn in the desperate condition he was in. Stanley Harbor was under his lee, and he bore away for it. Then, with the perversity of the southern zone, the wind hauled to the eastward and blew steadily for a week; blew right in their faces.

James came on deck before they were within a hundred miles of the land. He sat about in the cold of the evening

wrapped up in rugs, and the girl waited upon him, brought him anything he wished. In the long hours of daylight —for it was light enough to read until midnight—they sat near the taffrail. The captain said nothing; he would not notice. He liked the man who had saved his ship. The girl was sympathetic, and James often held her hand. She did not attempt to withdraw it.

But he would not tell her he cared for her. That was absurd. He had already sacrificed his life. He was as good as dead. Yet he wondered at the passion that had brought him into such desperate trouble and had caused so much ruin and death. He pondered silently, and now often watched the girl furtively.

Into the beautiful harbor, the great fiord of Port Stanley, they came, the schooner making fairly good way in spite of her crippled condition. Her arrival was greeted with joyous acclaim by the land sharks, who smelled the wound and saw the damage. They would make a good haul. Ships didn't come often—but when they did, well, they paid.

The governor was notified of the arrival. He was told everything but the relation of the passengers to the ships to which they originally belonged. The master was generous; and, besides, it was not America they were now in. It was an outlying foreign colony at the edge of the world, a place where one seldom went or heard from. They might go ashore if they wished. The seaman asked to remain aboard. He was allowed to do so, and consequently did not go ashore and talk too much.

James passed that last night in high spirits. He was going out on his last voyage. He was going to die, going to leave the woman who he knew loved him, who had been so sympathetic, so lovable. They were on deck a long time that evening, and the captain, being wise and old enough to understand, did not molest them.

"Good night," she said finally. "Good night. I'll see you to-morrow before we go ashore. We can take the ship across to the straits, and meet the regular liner as she comes through from Punta Arenas. We'll be home again in a few weeks."

"Good-by," he said simply. That was all. She went below.

Shortly after four bells—two o'clock in the morning—James, with set face and grim resolution, stole on deck. He gazed up at the Southern Cross for a few moments, at the beautiful constellation that he would see for the last time; then at the grim, barren hills back of the settlement.

It was a farewell look, his farewell to things in this world. He was determined not to be disgraced. He would die like a man, as he could no longer live like one.

Then he dropped softly over the side, and sank down—down into the quiet waters of Stanley Harbor.

The instinct of woman is often more certain than her reason. The girl had noticed something strange in the man's behavior. She had woman's instinct to divine its cause. She had not gone to bed that night, but waited to see just what might happen to the man who owned her very soul. She had not realized before that she loved this officer, this man who had confessed partly to his disgrace. The realization awakened her wits. She would see what he meant.

At the slight splash, she was on deck in an instant. Her first thought was to call for help. Then she knew to do so was to call for an explanation; and she realized the disgrace that would follow instantly upon the explanation. She seized a life buoy always hanging upon the taffrail, and with it dropped over the side.

She swam silently toward a spot that showed disturbed water rapidly drifting astern with the tide. Within a minute she had reached the form of James, who had not placed enough weights in his clothes to insure quick sinking. He was lying silently upon his back, waiting—waiting for the end that must come shortly.

"Swim with me," she pleaded. "You must—come with me—we'll swim ashore together."

Before the morning dawned, the pair

were upon the beach, several miles distant from the schooner. James saw he was doomed to life. He could not even die. Then the beauty of the woman, the sympathy, the love he could not deny, had its way with him, and they decided to vanish into the country, to disappear together.

This might or might not have been hard to do in the islands where every one is well known. But it happened that Captain Black, of the whaling station situated near the entrance of the fiord, was on deck that morning. He saw an amazing thing, a woman and a man swimming together, and finally making the land near the point.

Calling a couple of men, he started for them in his whaleboat, and caught up with them before they had gone more than a few fathoms from the shore. They were chilled through, cold and exhausted. He took them aboard the whaling steamer, and soon saw that he had a seaman of parts in Mr. James. Men were hard to get. All of his crews were convicts or ticket-of-leave men; and the addition of a man even with a wife was something to be taken advantage of.

He took James aside and asked him a few questions. He was satisfied that he would not get into trouble by giving the officer a billet; and he forthwith made him one of the company in charge of a small boat. The affair would be kept secret, and the governor would be told nothing. He probably would not ask too many questions, anyhow.

"I shall ship you both to the north'ard station, fifty miles up the coast. You can have a shack there—plenty of peat for fires and good grub—I'll inspect you once a month. Johnson will be in charge of the station. You can take this letter to him. Your wife can go with you if you wish."

James looked at the girl. She nodded her head.

"Is there a priest about here?" asked James.

"Yes. Why?" asked Black.

"Well, if you'll kindly send for him, he can marry us before we start."

Back of the northward station, on the ramp that rises sheer back from the beach like a table-land, there are a few cottages. These are occupied by the crews of the whaling station and their families. In one of them is a handsome woman with two little tots—happy-faced and smiling she is. But she seems a bit out of place in her surroundings. Mrs. James Smith they call her, and she is apparently very happy, very happy indeed, in spite of it all.

James Smith is the best gun pointer in the fleet, the best harpooner with the gun-firing harpoon. He is a sober, quiet, steady man, who has nothing now of the ship's officer about him. He never talks of wrecks. If some one starts a conversation regarding them—and they are much hoped for in the Falklands—he goes away.

Sometimes in Jack's saloon down at Stanley, he has been known to sit and stare out over the dark ocean, to sit and often mutter:

"Was it right, after all—was it worth while—was it?"

But he is a sober, quiet, industrious man, who goes about his duties without enthusiasm, without effort.

A Chat With You

TWO weeks ago we said that we intended to do a good deal more than keep THE POPULAR up to the standard we have set for ourselves. We said that beside doing this, we would be able in each issue, for some little time to come, to announce something new and unexpected, something out of the ordinary. After all, the man who is contented to do an ordinary day's work and let it go at that seldom achieves anything more than a very ordinary degree of success. It's the things you do that you don't have to do that count the most, the overtime work. That line of verse about successful people who, "while their companions slept, were toiling upward through the night," may or may not be good poetry, we don't pretend to be judges—but it is the truth. The promise we made to you a fortnight ago is a pretty large order. Inasmuch as we are filling it and delivering the goods we want to call attention to the fact.

WE announced the latest and best of Oppenheim's novels, "The Tempting of Tavernake." You have the first installment in the present issue. You probably read it before you turned to these pages, so we don't need to say anything about it. It's one of those stories we don't have to talk about. The readers do the talking. We told you we were going to give you a big story. You know now that we were right. We are just calling your attention to the fact. All of which is just an introduction to the announcement of another big story.

THIS new serial which starts in the next issue of THE POPULAR, out on the news stands two weeks from to-day, is called "The Under Trail." It is one of the strongest, most vital, most compelling stories we have read in years. In describing stories or anything else the easiest way to give the impression is by comparison. To tell what the thing isn't like and what it is like. We have tried hard to think of some other novel to compare with "The Under Trail." Its setting is the Virginia mountains. It is a really big book and it strikes a new note.

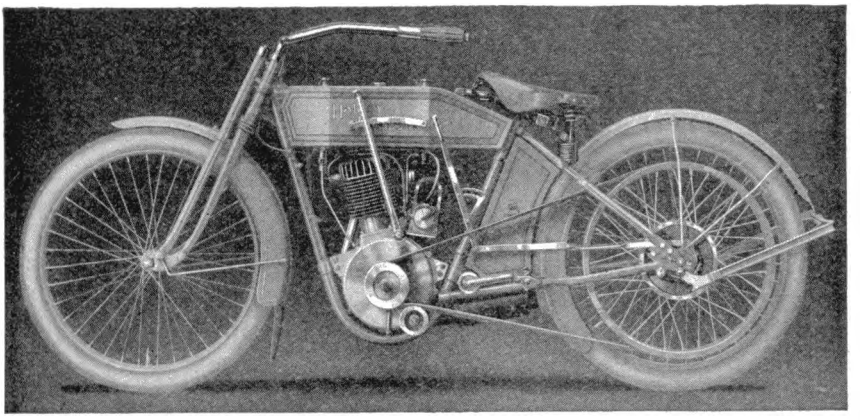
WHAT makes it big is hard to put in words, hard to express, but for one who has read the story easy to understand. It is full of color, vitality, and life. It is essentially a tale of action and adventure. It deals with the big, broad, human emotions of hate and love and aspiration that every heart knows and thrills to. It is a story of real people who live in the flesh for you as you turn the pages. It is unusual, distinctive, commanding in its scope and originality. Have we given you any idea of what the tale is like? "The Under Trail," which will appear serially, is the work of A. A. Chapin, an author whose work has heretofore appeared in

Harper's Magazine, and who is now introduced to the readers of THE POPULAR.

THE complete novel which opens the next issue of THE POPULAR is "Bugs Brashares," by Donald Francis McGrew. You have already had some of his short stories. This novel has for its scene an up-to-date town in the Philippines; the central figure is a United States soldier. It is a tale of the secret service, of the army, of a native rising. It has color, action, incident, and men who are real human beings as well as soldiers. You won't lay it aside until you have finished it.

WE have also to announce for the next issue of the magazine the first of a series of short stories by Peter B. Kyne. We regard him as one of the best and foremost writers of short stories in America to-day. He is a Californian, and a good many of his tales are laid on the coast. Perhaps it has never occurred to you, but California has produced more than its share of great fiction writers. Begin with Bret Harte, and think how many you can name. Kyne is a newcomer to THE POPULAR, but he belongs in the list of really great writers of short fiction. His first story is called "The Long-Tailed Coat," and you will be interested in all his work after that. There is lots of it coming. You will find a story by Kyne in practically every issue of THE POPULAR for the coming year, beginning with the next issue.

A NEW series of aëroplane stories also starts in the next number of the magazine. "Two In a Life Buoy" is the first of a new series of tales of the exploits of Danbury Rodd, aviator by profession, pursuer of romance by inclination. They are written by Frederick Palmer, whose first aviation stories appeared in *Scribner's Magazine*, and who has since written for us a complete novel, published last summer, which we think you are likely to remember—"Sir Chaps." Also in the coming number is a splendid short story by another well-known writer whom the readers of THE POPULAR will meet for the first time, Melville Davisson Post.



At Last—A Comfortable Motorcycle—

THE NEW

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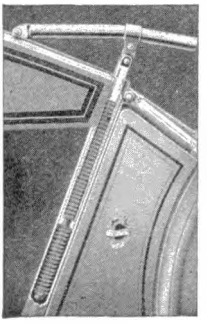
"The Silent Gray Fellow."

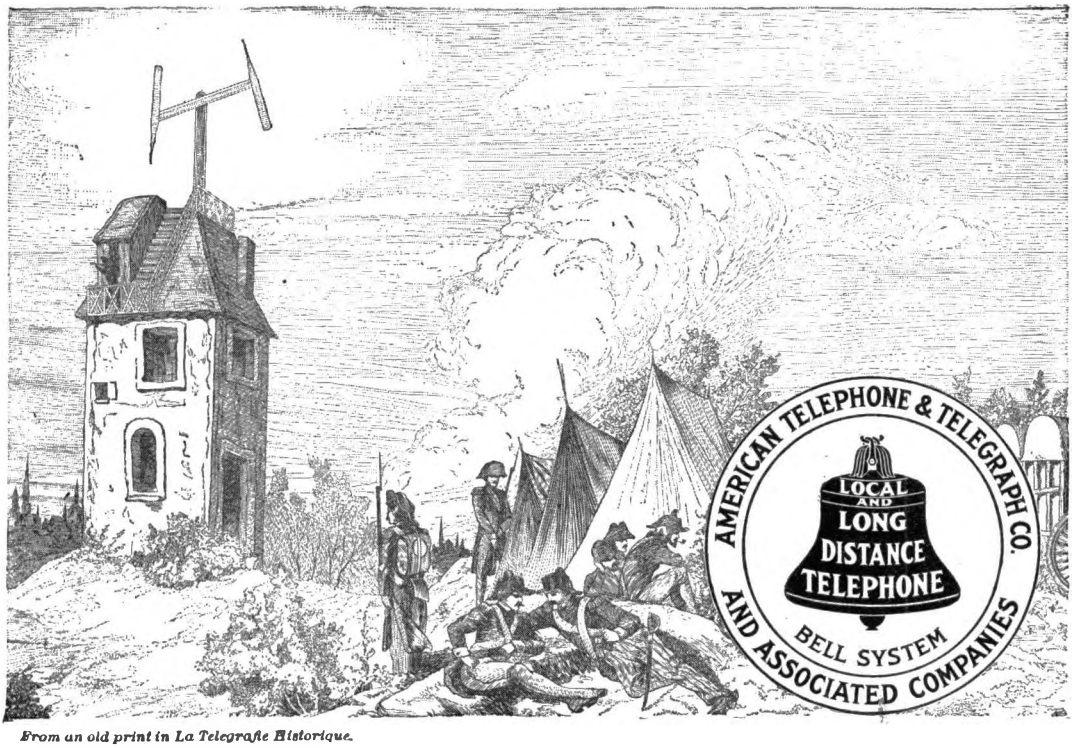
THE seat springs on the ordinary motorcycle have about one-half inch action either way. This means when the rider strikes a stone or crossing, say 3 inches high, that the ordinary motorcycle saddle springs absorb only the first ½ inch of the jolt, and the rider's back bone gets the rest. These jolts, and in fact all vibrations, are entirely eliminated in the new Harley-Davidson by the incorporation of a *Ful-Floteing* Seat, the greatest comfort device ever built. The saddle springs, the only shock absorbers of the ordinary motorcycles, are retained, and these, combined with our *Ful-Floteing* Seat, give a range of action of about 4 inches as against the scant 1 inch of the ordinary motorcycle. This means that the new Harley-Davidson is four times as comfortable as any other motorcycle on the market. For four years the Harley-Davidson has held the world's official record for economy. It has won more races, more hill climbs and more endurance contests than any other stock machine made. Nevertheless, the Harley-Davidson is not a racing machine, but is built primarily for comfort and service. In addition to the *Ful-Floteing* Seat, the new Harley-Davidson incorporates the *Free-wheel* control, the latest and greatest invention of Mr. Wm. S. Harley, the world's foremost motorcycle designer and engineer. This ingenious device has done away with the hard pedaling or the necessity for running alongside the machine, and permits the Harley-Davidson to be started like an automobile. Send for catalog.



Sectional view of
Ful Floteing Seat

HARLEY-DAVIDSON MOTOR CO.

209 B Street, MILWAUKEE, WIS.



From an old print in La Telegrafie Historique.

Napoleon's Visual Telegraph

The First Long Distance System

Indians sent messages by means of signal fires, but Napoleon established the first permanent system for rapid communication.

In place of the slow and unreliable service of couriers, he built lines of towers extending to the French frontiers and sent messages from tower to tower by means of the visual telegraph.

This device was invented in 1793 by Claude Chappe. It was a semaphore. The letters and words were indicated by the position of the wooden arms; and the messages were received and relayed at the next tower, perhaps a dozen miles away.

Compared to the Bell Telephone system of to-day the visual telegraph system of Napoleon's time seems a crude makeshift. It could not be used at night nor in thick weather. It was expensive in construction and operation, considering that it was maintained solely for military purposes.

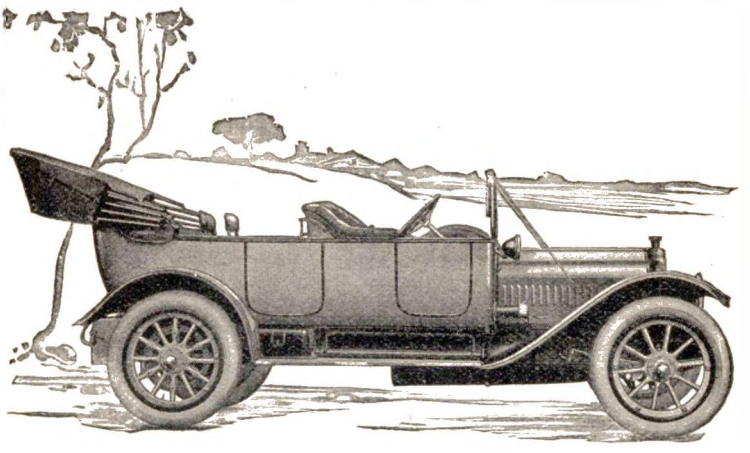
Yet it was a great step ahead, because it made possible the transmission of messages to distant points without the use of the human messenger.

It blazed the way for the universal telephone service of the Bell System which provides personal intercommunication for 90,000,000 people and is indispensable for the industrial, commercial and social progress of the Nation.

AMERICAN TELEPHONE AND TELEGRAPH COMPANY

AND ASSOCIATED COMPANIES

One Policy ***One System*** ***Universal Service***



Are You One Who's Wondered?

PERHAPS you are among the hundreds of automobile enthusiasts — owners, drivers or just "lookers on" — who have wondered what The White Company would do were it to produce a six-cylinder car. Probably you've come to have a splendid respect for any car The White Company might produce as you have watched their models year after year since the automobile industry began. Perhaps you are prejudiced, but it's such a splendid prejudice, reaching back over years of actual performance, during which the name of "White" stood as a bulwark for reliability and thorough building. If you had this curiosity, to-day we are ready to satisfy it — in a six-cylinder "White."

It's hardly necessary to tell you the details of this car. The highest engineering authorities in the gasoline-engine world have reached very definite conclusions, and any car designed to-day would imitate closely the mechanical features of this six-cylinder "White."

The Simplest "Six" — The White

OF course we take considerable pride in telling you that it's built on the same identical lines as our "30's" and "40's" — it has the same marvelous simplicity which tells more than any word description of ours — that practically total absence of the paraphernalia that litter most engines, especially the more powerful types. Regarding the details of finish, body lines and equipment, The White Company would not be outdone. This six-cylinder "60" White is all a car should be in these respects — possibly just a little more — because it has the advantage of being produced to-day instead of yesterday. Built as we like to build motor cars, there is only a limited number of these cars to be produced this season. They're going pretty rapidly, order after order having been filled without even a photograph, a blue-print or a car to show. This isn't a cry of "wolf" but just a plain statement to our friends — to those who want this highest expression of an automobile as interpreted by the great White factory. We would not disappoint you if we could help it — you can help it by getting your appointment for a demonstration early.

Appointments for demonstrations in all principal cities on or after January first.

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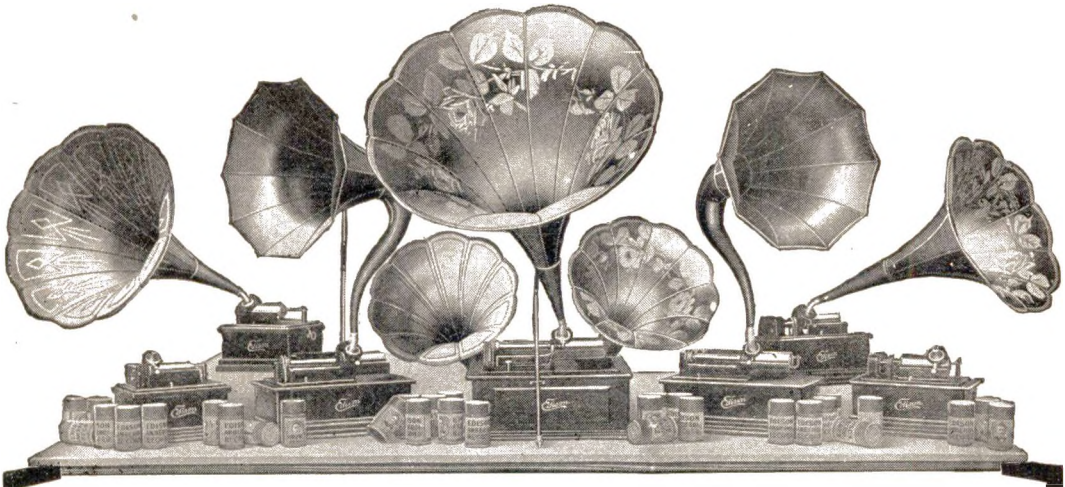

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Just Take Your Choice

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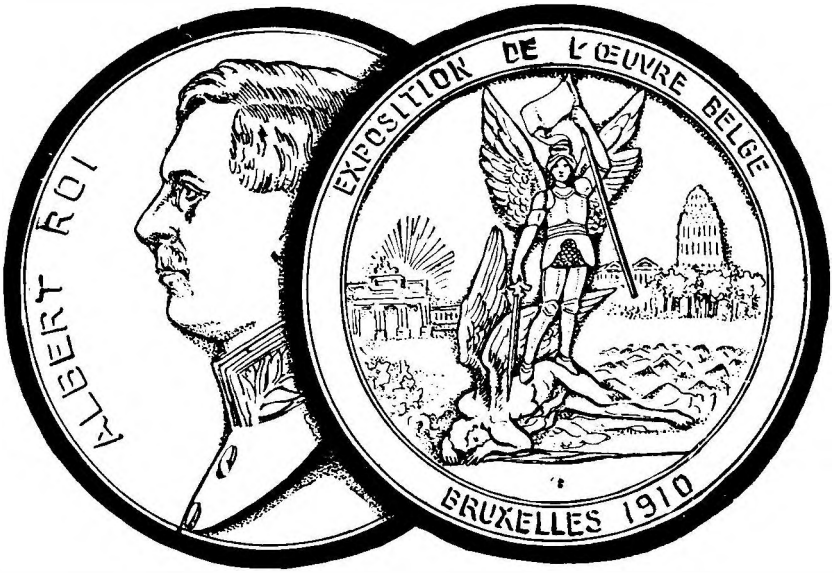

Lean, lank, skinny, scrawny men and women should take advantage of this ten-day Free offer before it expires.

Nothing is more embarrassing than extreme thinness.

It is the plump, well-developed man who "cuts the melons" and has the fun socially.

Scrawny, skinny women are seldom popular. We all admire fine figures. No dressmaker can hide a bony, skinny form.

Here is a chance to test free the one guaranteed reliable treatment which has "made good" for years in this country, which has just been awarded a gold medal and diploma of honor at Brussels, Belgium.

Nothing in history has ever approached the marvelous success of this new treatment, which has made more thin folks plump than all the "tonics" and ineffective medicines for fifty years.

There's a reason. Plump, well formed men and women assimilate what they eat. Thin, scrawny ones do not.

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It renews the vigor, re-establishes the normal, all in nature's own way.

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Best of all—the flesh "stays put."

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No one need know what you are doing until your gain in weight causes complimentary comment.

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2R62—**A Beautiful Waist,** one of the smartest of the new Spring models, developed in handsome Japanese embroidery, exquisitely worked on sheer lawn with heavy mercerized silk floss. The pattern of the embroidery is in graduated dot effect, with a wide border in a most attractive compass pattern. This border is artistically applied in surplice effect in front, contributing a delightful touch of individuality to the waist. At the top is a little V-shaped yoke of German Val. lace insertion, topped by a collar of Val. and lawn. The dainty elbow sleeves are edged with a chic Marie Antoinette frill of lawn and Cluny lace, joined to sleeve by a row of Val. insertion. Like many of the really smart waists this season, the sleeves are set in, the armholes being outlined by Val. insertion as pictured. The back of the waist is made entirely of all-over polka dot embroidery. Waist buttons in back. White only. Sizes 32 to 44 bust measure. **PRICE, MAIL OR EXPRESS CHARGES PAID BY US** **$1.00**

2R64—**A Delightfully Becoming and Absolutely New Model** made of the best quality all-over floral embroidery, in an exquisite bordered effect. The waist has the fashionable short sleeves daintily tucked in clusters and finished with a finely tucked cuff, edged with Val. lace, and attached to sleeve by dainty crochet insertion. Crochet lace also outlines the graceful set-in sleeves, which are a noticeable feature of the best New York styles this season. The front of the blouse shows clusters of tucks to yoke depth, while the back, where the garment fastens under a plait, is also tucked. The collar is formed of three rows of crochet insertion to match that used on the sleeves. White only. Sizes 32 to 44 bust measure. **PRICE, MAIL OR EXPRESS CHARGES PAID BY US** **$1.00**

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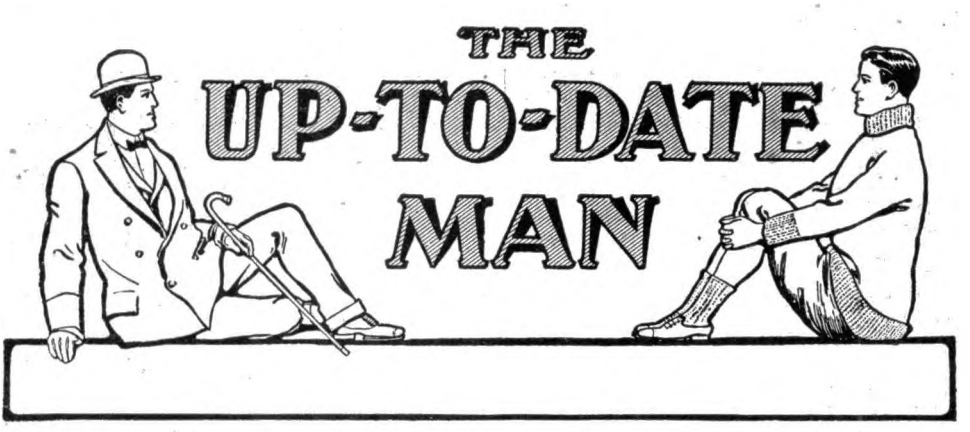
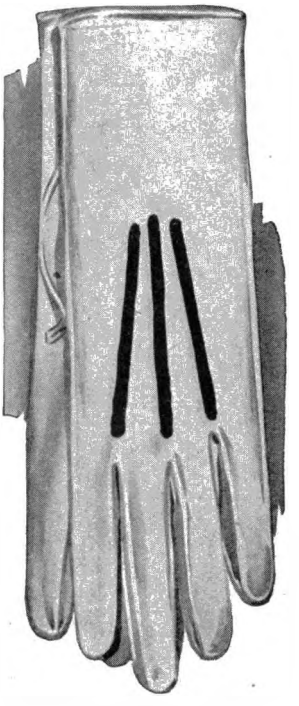


The readers of the magazine may write to this department about any problem of dress. Every question will be promptly answered, provided that a stamped, self-addressed envelope is enclosed.

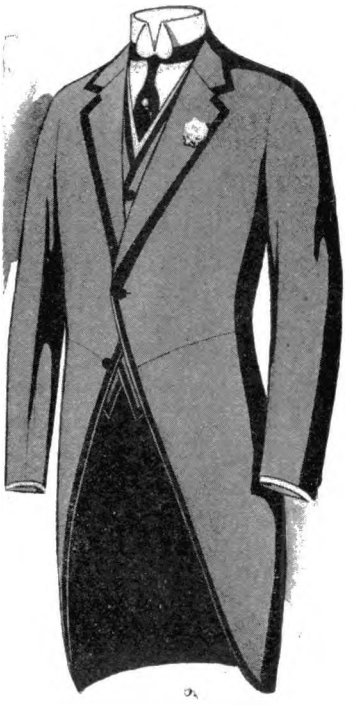
MORE than any other garment, evening clothes should be soft and pliant in drape. As one of the great tailors puts it aptly, if exaggeratedly, "They should be supple enough to pull through a keyhole." Hard, stiff lines spoil the whole effect of the suit, giving it a "machine-made" look that makes the wearer seem not to belong to it or in it. The least possible "stiffening" is used in evening coats, so as to lend an aspect of studied ease and grace. The coat front is left so yielding that it could be gathered into the fingers and crushed like a pocket handkerchief. The well-cut suit hugs the figure. Indeed, the effort of the tailor is to have the clothes so entwine with a man's personality that they become an integral part of it. To wear an evening suit well depends on two—the man and the suit. One should be unself-conscious of one's "gala" clothes and feel that having them on is not an event, but a habit.

The liking for soft cloth hats will not "down." There's no end to the range of stuffs and shapes, though the colors are usually sober gray, mellow olive, or staid brown. One of the newest modes is a fabric with a tufty surface, having a wide ribbon of the same material. The brim is quite broad and flat, and the crown is worn sharply indented in front, so as to lend a more peaked look "fore" and "aft." Happily the atrocities in green, that were commonly worn and common in the wearing some years ago, have been dropped. They suggested a hostler in his "Sunday best." Cloth hats are primarily for the country, and not at all suited to town. However, the free-and-easy spirit that has crept into dress of late has made the cloth hat more tolerable in the city, if not more fashionable. It is a tiptop hat, though, for traveling, and much to be preferred to a cap in which only the "hundredth man" looks well. Moreover, it goes well with any sport, from shooting up and aëroplaning down.



Black-embroidered Evening Gloves.

Whatever variety looms up in evening dress is almost wholly in waistcoats. These can be ornate and luxurious as one's fancy prompts. The fabrics may be simple linen or cotton or the richest of silks. Not long ago diamond waistcoat buttons were "the last cry," but as this was too distastefully like wearing a bank book, they



Fashionable Cutaway Coat.

have lost caste, except among that class vaguely called the "newly rich." Plain gold buttons, however, are not so over-obtrusive, and they are still worn. A fashionable waistcoat has four rows of silk stitching that adorn the edges and pocket rims. The garment is collarless, has three buttons, and peaked bottom corners. The bosom opening is "U"-shaped, and the sides are well arched over the hips. Worn with a straight-standing collar and a long, narrow tie, this waistcoat capitally interprets the fashion of the hour.

While the conventional pearl-colored and white Ascots are quite correct for the afternoon, there is a dawning fad for black-and-white Ascots, diagonally striped. They are very simple in theme, the richness being altogether in the silk. These Ascots are tied very large, and very large pins, usually pearl, accompanying them. Sometimes coral pins are worn. Always the stem of the pin is hidden, and only the jeweled head is noticeable. Gray suède gloves are often embroidered with the heavy black silk stitching now so fashionable on both day and evening gloves. This, if not overdone, is a crowning touch of adornment that the best-dressed set is partial

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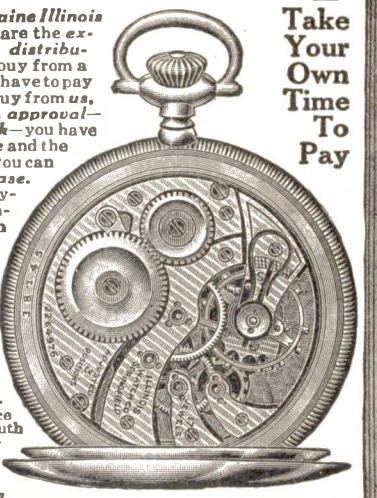

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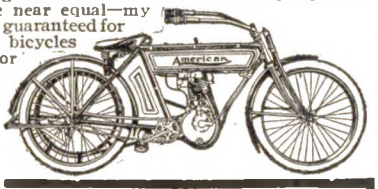

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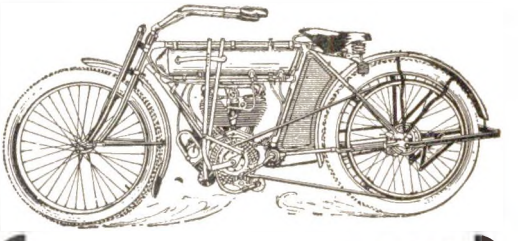

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1720 Fernwood Ave., Toledo, Ohio

to. Wing collars may be worn with the Ascot, but the impeccable knotting of this cravat of ceremony requires the "poke" with its ample scarf room, as well as its engagingly formal air. Save for the evening, the straight-standing collar has fallen into disuse. Its "ministerial" aspect is a bit against it, though, to some men, it is decidedly becoming.

It is becoming the mode again to wear a muffler with one's greatcoat. These mufflers are not intended for "bundling up" à la brigand in the play, but are more to protect collar and scarf. Their fleck of color gives them a picturesqueness which is most agreeable. A new muffler is of Angora wool, broadly striped. It may be had in mixtures of gray and white, red and white, blue and green, and the like. The ends are fringed. Angora is a silky soft wool that is much in vogue just now for mufflers, waistcoats, and sporting jackets. The ordinary silk muffler went out of fashion long ago. With the introduction of cloth collars on greatcoats and lapels that button up under the chin, the silk muffler was dropped. Except for motoring, field, and evening dress, a muffler is of little practical use. And yet, in the vivid sporting colors, now approved, the resurrected muffler looks undeniably "smart."

When evening pumps were introduced, they were regarded wholly as dancing shoes. One tucked them into the pockets of one's greatcoat, carried them to the house of host or hostess, and put them on in the dressing room. This, however, became irksome, and then pumps were made with higher heels and thicker soles, so that they could be worn for walking and to the theater, the club, or any place after sundown. To-day pumps are accepted as distinctly evening shoes, and their lightness and softness are an agreeable relief from the "clumpy" heaviness and stiffness of high-buttoning boots. While flat-ribboned pumps are quite correct, the newer ones have eyelets through which a wide silk lace is slipped and knotted into a soft bow. These pumps have low, broad heels for comfortable sauntering, and the omission of the usual ornate toecap conduces to make the foot seem shorter and slimmer.

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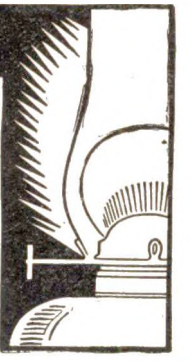

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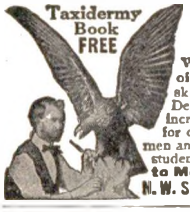

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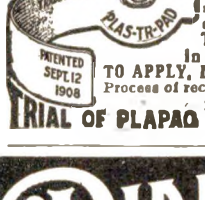

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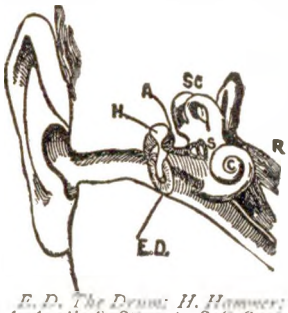

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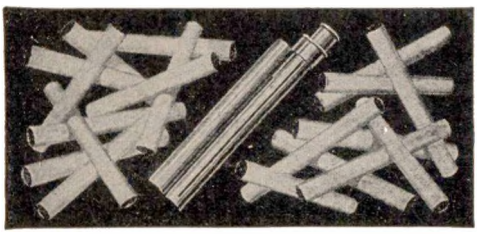

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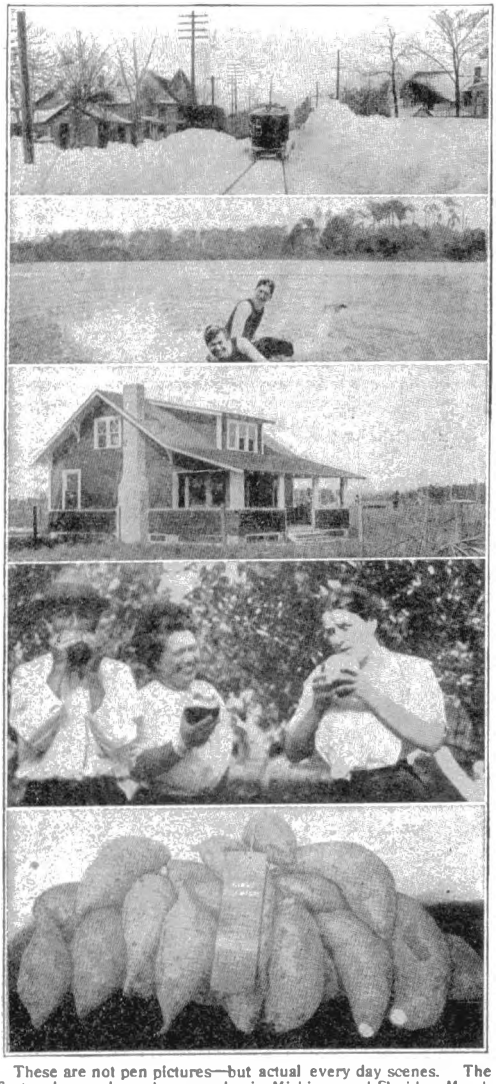

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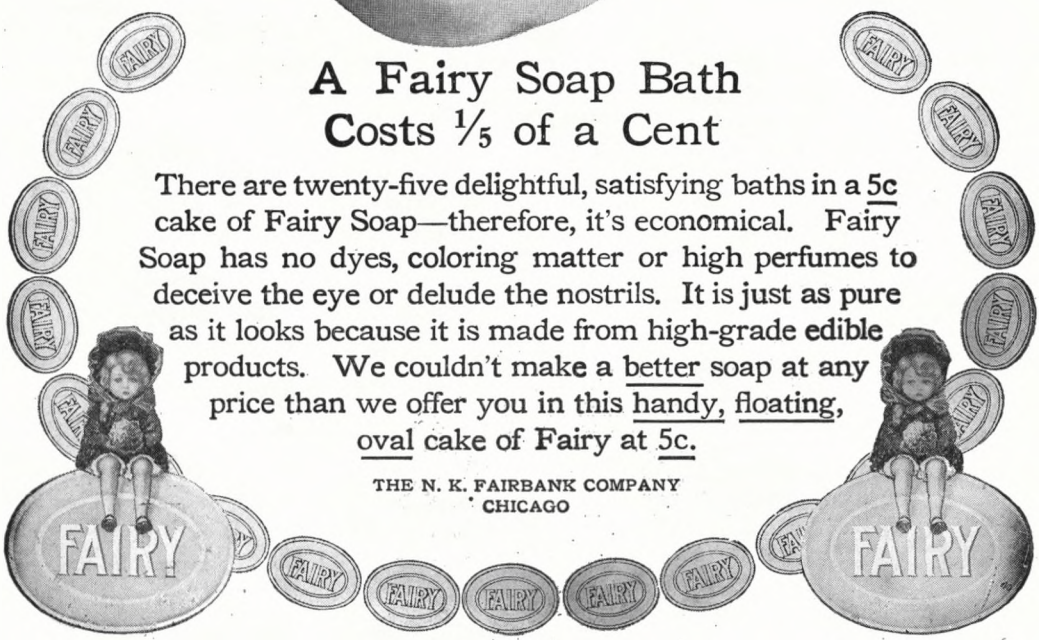

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