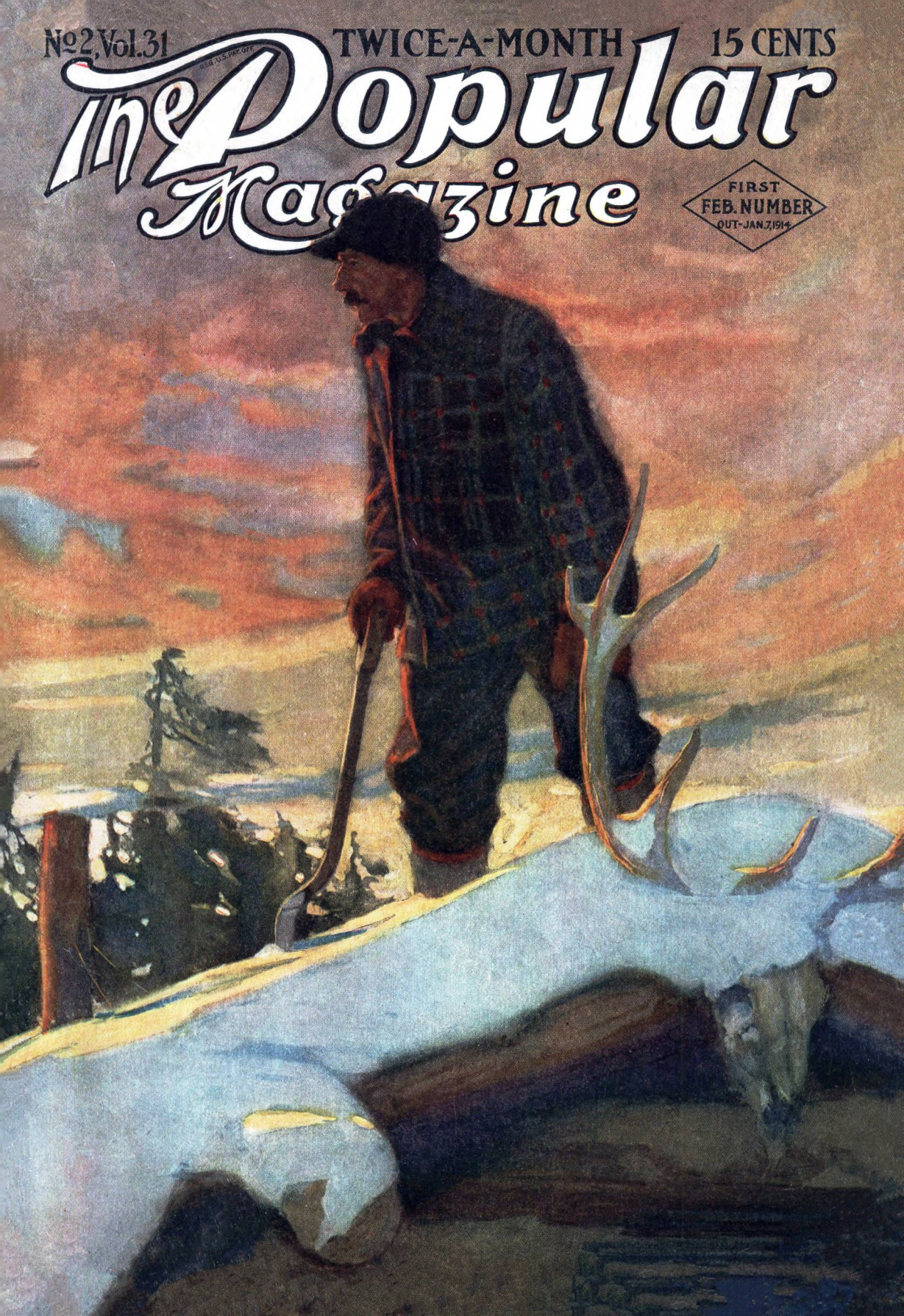
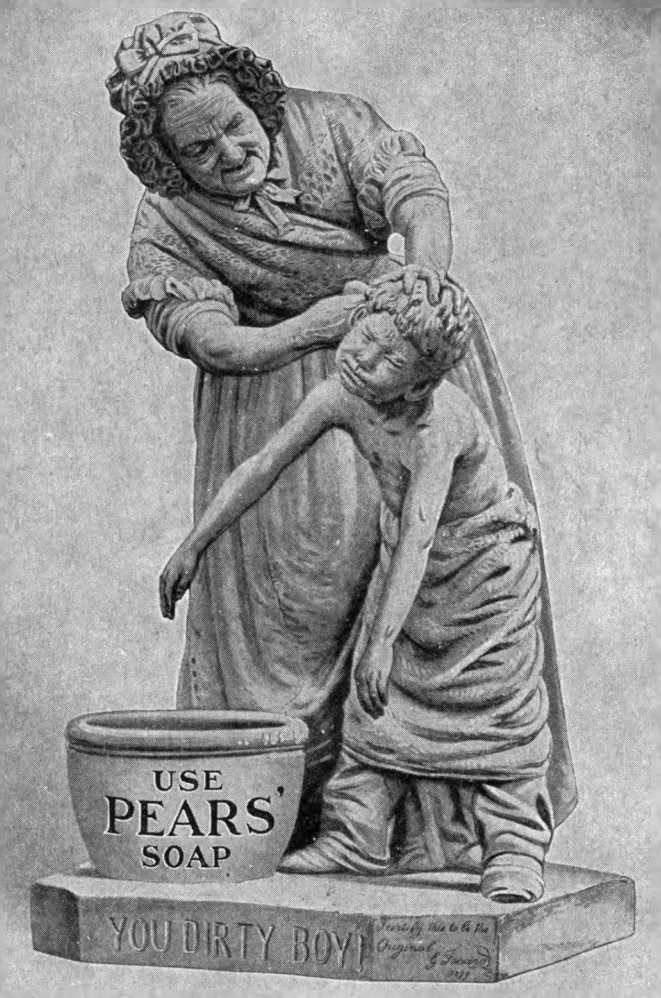
No. 2, Vol. 31 TWICE-A-MONTH 15 CENTS

The Popular Magazine

FIRST FEB. NUMBER OUT-JAN. 7, 1914





Pears' Soap is good for boys and everyone—It removes the dirt, but not the cuticle—Pears keeps the skin soft and prevents the roughness often caused by wind and weather—constant use proves it "Matchless for the complexion"

OF ALL SCENTED SOAPS PEARS' OTTO OF ROSE IS THE BEST.

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING SECTION

Rate, $1.25 a line, or $2.61¼ a line, which includes AINSLEE'S and SMITH'S Magazines, making a total of 4,000,000 readers—the cheapest and best Classified Advertising medium on the market. Next issue of POPULAR closes Jan. 12th.

Agents & Help Wanted

FREE ILLUSTRATED BOOK tells of about 300,000 protected positions in U. S. service. Thousands of vacancies every year. There is a big chance here for you, sure and generous pay, lifetime employment. Just ask for booklet S 11. No obligation. Earl Hopkins, Washington, D. C.

GOVERNMENT positions pay big money. Get prepared for "exams" by former U. S. Civil Service Examiner. Free booklet. Patterson Civil Service School, Box Y, Rochester, N. Y.

AGENTS — Handkerchiefs, Dress Goods. Carleton made $8.00 one afternoon; Mrs. Bosworth $25.00 in two days. Free Samples. Credit. Stamp brings particulars. Freeport Mfg. Company, 45 Main St., Brooklyn, N.Y.

300 TO 400% Profit to Agents selling our guaranteed U. S. Fire Extinguishers. Tremendous demand. Orders repeat. Exclusive territory to County and District Managers. United Mfg. Co., 1023 Jefferson, Toledo, O.

$30 WEEKLY Selling Easy Suction Sweeper. Wheels operate cylinder creating powerful suction. All metal. No pump; no bellows; low price; guaranteed; Sample Free; write quick. Foote Sweeper Co. Box 2083, Dayton, O

SONG POEMS WANTED. Send us your song poems or melodies. A hit will bring big money. We guarantee Acceptance of All Available Work for Publication and secure copyright in your name. Write for Free Instructive Booklet. Marks-Goldsmith Co., Dept. 70, Washington, D. C.

AGENTS sell guaranteed Hosiery, Underwear, and Sweaters for largest manufacturer in America. Easy work. Big pay. Complete outfit free. Write Madison Mills, Dept. 5A, 486 Broadway, New York City.

AGENTS MAKE BIG MONEY and become sales managers for our goods. Fast office sellers. Fine profits. Particulars and samples free. One Dip Pen Company, Dept. 9, Baltimore, Md.

AMBITIOUS Men and Women over 18,—Get Government Jobs. Write for list of positions now available. Franklin Institute, Dep't B-6, Rochester, N.Y.

AGENTS—Men, Women sell raincoats cheaper than stores, big profit, establish permanent growing business, good money for right parties. Empire, 2829 3rd Ave., New York.

Agents and Help Wanted—Continued.

AGENTS—Get Particulars of One of the Best Paying Propositions Ever Put On the Market. Something no one else sells. Make $4,000 yearly. Send postal today for particulars. E. M. Feltman, Sales Mgr., 6721 Sycamore St., Cincinnati, O.

AGENTS WANTED; best paying agency proposition in U. S.; assures you $1500 yearly; inexperienced taught how to make $75 to $200 monthly; let us show you. Novelty Cutlery Co., 14 Bar St., Canton, O.

AGENTS—MAKE BIG MONEY SELLING OUR NEW GOLD letters for office windows, store fronts and glass signs. Any one can put them on. Write today for free samples and full particulars. Metallic Sign Letter Co., 426 N. Clark St., Chicago.

WE PAY $80 A MONTH SALARY and furnish rig and all expenses to introduce our guaranteed poultry and stock powders. Address Bigler Company, X369, Springfield, Illinois.

POETS AND SONG WRITERS—We will compose music to your verses, publish, advertise, copyright in your name and pay you 50 per cent of profits if successful. We pay hundreds of dollars a year to amateur writers. Send us your poems or melodies today. Acceptance guaranteed if available. Examination and advice Free. Dugdale Co., 256 Dugdale Building, Washington, D. C.

AGENTS—$300 every month selling our wonderful 7-piece Kitchen Set. Send for sworn statement of $12 daily profit. Outfit free. Thomas Mfg. Co., 260 Third St., Dayton, O.

$100 to $300 weekly profits for you. Special mail order plan you can run from your own home during spare time. I get you started and furnish everything. Experience unnecessary; your success guaranteed. Write for particulars. Harry B. Brown, Suite 700, Swartz Bldg., Omaha, Neb.

MEN OF IDEAS and inventive ability should write for new "Lists of Needed Inventions," Patent Buyers and "How to Get Your Patent and Your Money." Advice Free. Randolph & Co., Patent Attorneys, Dept. 46, Washington, D. C.

Business Opportunities

FREE FOR SIX MONTHS.—My Special offer to introduce my magazine "Investing for Profit." It is worth $10 a copy to anyone who has been getting poorer while the rich, richer. It demonstrates the real earning power of money, and shows how anyone, no matter how poor, Can acquire riches. Investing for Profit is the only progressive financial journal published. It shows how $100 grows to $2,200. Write Now and I'll send it six months free. H. L. Barber, 408, 20 W. Jackson Blvd., Chicago.

WOULD you like to own a good paying mail order business? We have a line that gets repeat orders all the time; you can start in spare time; invest a dollar or two a week and soon own a nice business of your own. Write for particulars. Nadico, 1659 Belmont Ave., Chicago, Ill.

MAIL Order Dealers and General Agents. $25.00 to $50.00 a week. Results proven. Send for our Free Offer. Make your own test at Home. Don't take our say-so. A large line of Patented, Not sold to the Store Trade, Quick Repeat order Money Makers Manufactured by us. A New profit making Leader every month. You are seeking a Profit-making Business Builder. We have a test offer which will interest you. New Leader ready. Positive Proof and Sworn Statement of results. Big Profits. Quick Sales and Steady Income. Mail Order Instructions and all printed matter Free. Kimo Mfg. Co., 141 Kimo Bldg., Buffalo, N.Y.

Patents and Lawyers

PATENTS SECURED OR FEE returned. Send sketch for free report as to patentability. Guide Book and What to Invent, with valuable List of Inventions Wanted, sent free. One Million Dollars offered for one Invention. Patents secured by us advertised free in World's Progress, sample free. Victor J. Evans & Co., Washington, D. C.

PATENTS THAT PROTECT AND PAY. Advice and books free. Highest references. Best results. Promptness assured. Send sketch or model for free search. Watson E. Coleman, Patent Lawyer, 624 F Street, Washington, D. C.

IDEAS WANTED—Manufacturers are writing for patents procured through me. 3 books with list 200 inventions wanted sent free. Advice free. I get patent or no fee. R.B.Owen, 39 Owen Bldg., Washington, D. C.

Patents and Lawyers—Continued.

PATENTS, TRADE-MARKS AND Copyrights. Our hand book on patents will be sent free on request. All patents secured through us are described without cost to the patentee in the Scientific American. Munn & Co., Patent Attorneys, 373 Broadway, New York. Washington Office, 625 F Street, Washington, D. C.

PATENT your ideas. $9,000 Offered for Certain Inventions. Book "How to Obtain a Patent" and "What to Invent." Sent free. Send rough sketch for free report as to patentability. We advertise your patent for sale at our expense. Established 16 years. Address Chandlee & Chandlee, Patent Attys., 966 F St., Washington, D. C.

Typewriters

TYPEWRITER—All makes—Agents wanted, prices from $5.00 to $50.00. All guaranteed. Free trial allowed. Send for illustrated catalogue. Ribbons 4 for $1.00. Carbons $1.00 per 100. Harlem Typewriter Exchange, Dept. P 27, 217 W. 125th, New York.

Games & Entertainment

PLAYS, Vaudeville Sketches, Monologues, Dialogues, Speakers, Minstrel Material, Jokes, Recitations, Tableaux, Drills, Entertainments. Make Up Goods. Large Catalog Free. T. S. Denison & Co., Dept. 19, Chicago

Motion Picture Plays

WRITE Moving Picture Plays; $50 each; all or spare time; correspondence course unnecessary; details free. Atlas Publishing Co., 313, Cincinnati, O.

Motion Picture Plays—Continued

MONEY EASILY EARNED writing for the Movies. Experience unnecessary. Booklet free. N. Y. School of Photo-Play Writing, 1315 Astor Theatre Bldg., Broadway, New York.

Music and Song Poems

SONG POEMS Wanted—Send us words or music. Big money in successful Songs. Book Free. Hayworth Music Pub. Co., 614 G, Washington, D. C.

SONG POEMS WANTED. Send us your song poems or melodies. A hit will bring big money. Past experience unnecessary. Our proposition is positively unequalled. We guarantee acceptance of all available work for publication, and secure copyright in your name. Send us your work today, or write for valuable instructive booklet—it's free. Marks-Goldsmith Co., Dept. 15, Washington, D. C.

SONG POEMS WANTED: I've paid writers thousands in royalties. Send me samples of your work for free criticism, or write for valuable Free Booklet and most liberal, legitimate proposition offered. Absolute protection. Est. 16 years. Numerous successes. John T. Hall, Pres., 18 Columbus Circle, New York.

POEMS AND SONGS WANTED—We will compose music to your verses, publish, advertise, copyright in your name and pay you 50 per cent of profits if successful. We pay hundreds of dollars a year to amateur writers. Send us your poems or melodies today. Acceptance guaranteed if available. Examination and advice Free. Dugdale Co., 741 Dugdale Building, Washington, D. C.

Telegraphy

THE Omnigraph Automatic Transmitter. Sends you telegraph messages. Teaches in the shortest time. 5 styles $2 up. Circular free. Omnigraph Mfg. Co., 39 N Cortlandt St., N. Y.

Coins, Stamps, Etc.

$2. to $600. paid for hundreds of old coins dated before 1895. Send 10c at once for New Illust'd Coin Value Book, 4x7, showing prices we guarantee to pay. Get posted. Clarke & Co., Coin Dealers, Box 132, Le Roy, N. Y.

COINS: I PAY $1 TO $1500 FOR thousands of rare coins, mint marks, paper money, books, stamps to 1901. Get posted. Don't sell a $2000 coin for $20. Send stamp for illustrated circular. Von Bergen, The Coin Dealer, Dept. K, Boston, Mass.

$25.00 FOR DIME 1894 S. Mint. $50 for 1853 $\frac{1}{2}$, no arrows. $750 for certain $5 Gold, no motto. We pay cash premiums for all rare money. Many valuable coins in circulation. Send 2c for Illus. Coin Circular. The Numismatic Bank, Dept. 25, Fort Worth, Tex.

Miscellaneous

MYSTERIES OF ASTRONOMY—Send stamped self addressed envelope and birthdate for horoscope reading by the stars. Mme. Betta Lane, Moberly, Mo., Dept. 3.

Semi-Tropic Florida Development Year Book 1914 ready. Illustrated magazine 160 pages 10½x14 inches. Authentic information. 25c a copy. Tampa Morning Tribune, Tampa, Fla.

WORTH-WHILE STORIES

TWICE-A-MONTH
The Popular Magazine

The next issue of the POPULAR—on the news stands January 23rd—will have at least a dozen memorable features, but we wish to call special attention to three stories of unusual caliber:

Ambassadors to Albania

By FRANCIS WHITLOCK

This is a long novel by the author of the famous Lost Legion yarns. In it a sturdy, fearless young legioner is sent to the Balkans in search of a dozen pink lizards that sing, and his hair-raising adventures in pursuit of the musical reptiles are apt to make the reader forget eating, drinking and sleeping.

The Mating Impulse

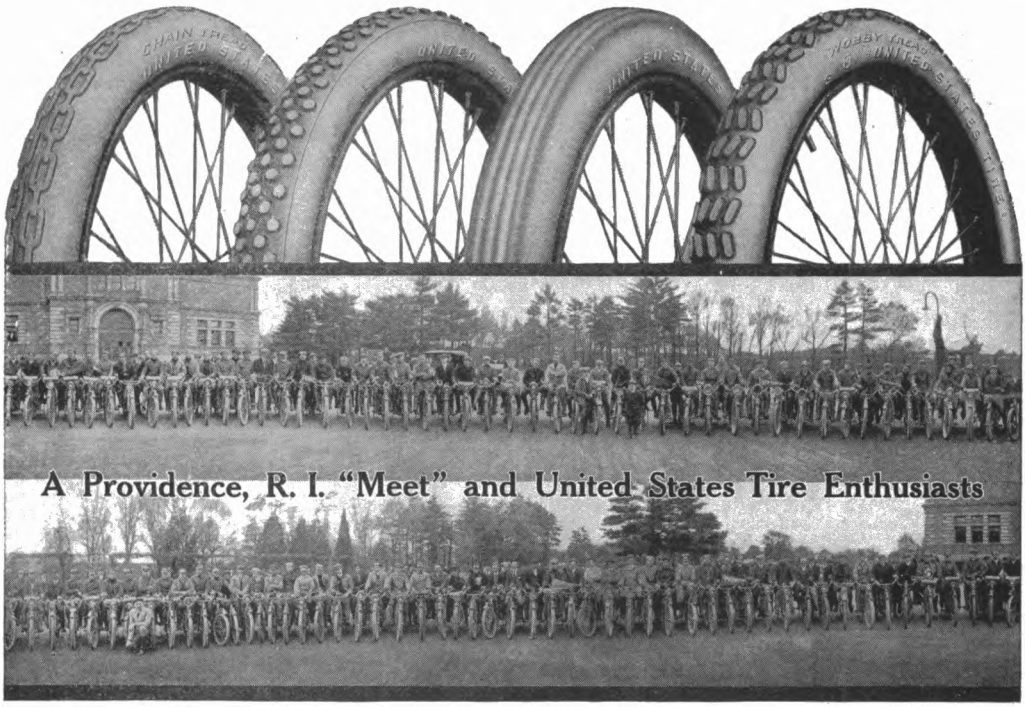
By EDWIN BALMER

Did you ever hear of the cat-and-mouse act as applied to the English suffragette? Here is the amusing story of how an American interfered with it.

The Fall of the Play

By PETER B. KYNE

Relates the experiences of a pair of professional gamblers whose gentle pursuit of the other man's dollar is suddenly blocked by the law. And it is their determination to become simple sons of trade that provides complications and surprises.



The Motorcycle is today one of Man's most economical and useful servants, and United States Tires have done much to make it so

The motorcycle of today is a thing of joy in its simplicity—its economy of operation—its sturdiness—its pleasure and its usefulness.

We, the makers of UNITED STATES TIRES, have kept step with the advance of the motorcycle.

We have constantly studied the tire requirements of the motorcycle from every point of view.

We have built our tires to meet every condition of motorcycle tire wear.

We have solved the motorcycle tire problem.

Today UNITED STATES MOTORCYCLE TIRES stand alone, in a class absolutely by themselves, and are acknowledged to be the standard motorcycle tires.

Their overwhelming popularity is a known fact.

In one year—1913—the sales of UNITED STATES MOTORCYCLE TIRES increased 139 per cent.—an increase that is without a parallel in motorcycle history

NOTE THIS:—Dealers who sell UNITED STATES MOTORCYCLE TIRES sell the best of everything

United States Motorcycle Tires

Made by the

Largest Rubber Company in the World

Newest Ideas In Watch Cases!

Just Out!

The latest products of the craft. Exquisitely beautiful. Your own initials handsomely engraved on the superb gold strata case—guaranteed for 25 years. Your choice of *Inlay Enamel Monograms, Block and Ribbon Monograms, Diamond Set, Lodge, French Art, Dragon Designs.* Open face or hunting cases, ladies' or gentlemen's 12 and 16 sizes. A watch to suit every taste. And—DIRECT—at the rock-bottom price.

The masterpiece of watch manufacture—19 jewels—adjusted to the second—adjusted to positions—adjusted to temperature—adjusted to isochronism.

These Exquisite New Designs

in watch cases are winning favor everywhere. And wherever the great Burlington Watch has been introduced it is noted for its wonderful time keeping qualities. Ask any railroad man what he thinks of the Burlington Watch. Ranchmen, engineers, and men in all walks of life whose duties require them to put a watch to the hardest tests prefer the Burlington because they know they can depend upon it.

In the U. S. Navy

every fighting vessel has the Burlington Watch aboard. The S. S. Connecticut alone has over 200 Burlingtons aboard; the Battleship Georgia has 159 Burlingtons; the new dreadnought Wyoming already has over 100 Burlingtons. Many other battleships, such as the New Hampshire, North Carolina, Minnesota, have over 100 Burlingtons aboard.

Think of the constant vibration, the extreme heat in the boiler rooms, the salt air and the change of climate from the Arctic to the Tropical; if a watch will stand up and give accurate service aboard a man-of-war it will stand up everywhere.

Special

A Remarkable Special Offer

For reasons explained in our letter to you (special trade reasons) you can now get *direct* the superb Burlington Watch at the rock-bottom price—the same price that **even the wholesale** jeweler must pay—and in order to encourage everybody to secure this watch at once, purchasers may pay this rock-bottom price *direct* from us either for cash or $2.50 a month on this great special offer! We send the watch on approval, *prepaid.*

Sent--No Money Down--Prepaid.

Remember, the highest grade watch *direct* (for special reasons, now) at the same price that even the wholesale jeweler must pay! You risk absolutely nothing—you pay nothing, not one cent—unless you want this *exceptional* offer after seeing and thoroughly inspecting the watch.

Send Coupon for Our New Book of Watch Designs

Burlington Watch Company

Dept. 1142. 19th St. & Marshall Blvd., Chicago

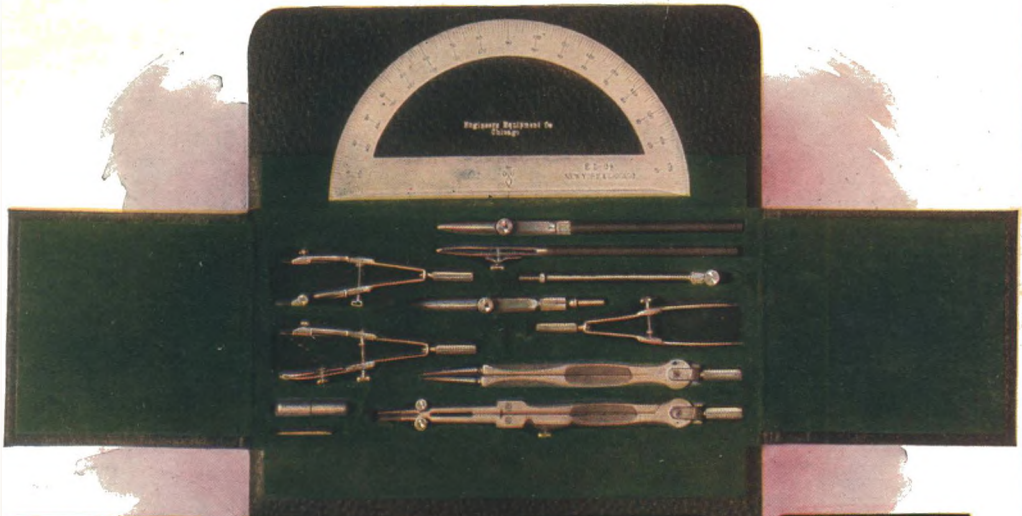
Book Coupon

Burlington Watch Co. Dept. 1142. 19th St. & Marshall Blvd. Chicago, Ill.

Please send me (without obligation and prepaid) your free book on watches with full information of your cash or $2.50 a month offer on the Burlington Watch.

Name_____

Address_____



FREE

$15.00 Draftsman's Complete Working Outfit

Yes, sir. I will give you a complete draftsman's outfit absolutely free. It does not cost you a penny. Besides these German Silver Draftsman's Instruments shown here I also give you absolutely free a 20x25 inch drawing board, a 24 inch T square, 12 inch rule, supply of drawing paper, 2 triangles and French curve, pencils and eraser, drawing ink and thumb tacks, etc., etc.

This is just the kind of an outfit I use myself. Genuine working instruments. You couldn't get this outfit anywhere for less than $15.00. But you must hurry. I cannot give these outfits away to everyone that writes but will consider the names in the order in which they are received. Send the free coupon. Act quick.

Be a Draftsman

Earn $125 to $175 a Month At Once

Thousands of positions paying big money are open right along. All over, concerns are constantly wanting trained men. They pay big money. Hundreds of positions open paying from $75.00 to $100.00 weekly. A prominent *Chief Draftsman* will give you just the kind of training that you need, practical training the kind demanded by firms that pay the biggest salaries. You can learn to become a draftsman in your own home—during your spare time—by mail. I will give you personal instruction until you are in a position drawing $125 to $175 a month. Write for full particulars.

Make More Money

Working at Home — Earn While Learning

I will give you paying work to do as soon as you enroll. Practical drafting work will give you experience and put you in the big money making class. Start earning money as soon as you are my personal student. You may earn $5.00 a day as soon as you enroll. Big opportunity for men who act at once. Send the free coupon for full particulars—now. Do not delay. Write immediately.

I Guarantee

To instruct you until competent and placed in a position at a regular salary paying from $125 to $175 per month and furnish you free $15.00 Working Outfit at once.

Chief Draftsman Will Instruct You Personally

For 20 years I have been doing the highest paid expert drafting work as Chief Draftsman of a large and a well known company. I will train you personally and give you just the kind of practical training that you need to hold one of the biggest paying positions. I know what the big firms demand and I will give you this kind of training so long as required during your spare time, in your own home. Send me the free coupon at once. Do not delay. Write today—now.

Pay as You Wish Don't bother about the money. If you are ambitious and want to become an expert draftsman, don't worry about the money. Write to me now and we will fix it up.

SEND FREE COUPON TODAY

For Free New Book Just fill out the free coupon and mail it to me at once. I will send you absolutely free and prepaid, a new book, "SUCCESSFUL DRAFTSMANSHIP." Tells you all about the profession and the wonderful opportunities that are now open. Here is your chance to get into the big money class. The first step is to send the free coupon or a letter or a post card.

Chief Draftsman, Div. 1142 Engineer's Equipment Co., Chicago, Ill.

Free

Outfit Coupon

Chief Draftsman
Div. 1142
Engineer's Equipment Co.
Chicago, Illinois

Please mail your book "Successful Draftsmanship" and also full particulars of your liberal "Personal Instruction" offer to a few students. It is understood that I am obligated in no way whatever.

Name _____

Address _____

"AMBASSADORS TO ALBANIA"

FRANCIS WHITLOCK'S NEW NOVEL OF THE LOST LEGION, IN THE NEXT ISSUE

VOLUME XXXI — NUMBER 2

TWICE-A-MONTH

The Popular Magazine

CONTENTS

FEBRUARY 1, 1914

Twice-a-Month Publication Issued by STREET & SMITH, 79-89 Seventh Avenue, New York.
ORMOND G. SMITH and GEORGE C. SMITH, Proprietors.

Entered at New York Post Office as Second-class Matter, under Act of Congress of March 3, 1879.
Canadian Subscription, $3.72. Foreign, $4.68.

YEARLY SUBSCRIPTION $3.00 — SINGLE COPIES 15 Cents

FEBRUARY MONTH-END POPULAR ON SALE JANUARY 23rd

The Raise

What would a raise in salary mean to you?

The satisfaction of going home with a good-sized raise should mean more to the ambitious man than anything else. It means more than money—*it means success.* It means that you are a better man this year than you were the year before. It means that you are capable of new responsibilities. It also means that you are a big man now and important where you were a small man and unimportant before.

SALARY GUARANTEE

THE AMERICAN SCHOOL OF CORRESPONDENCE GUARANTEES that you will receive an increase of fifty per cent over your present salary within three years from the date of your enrollment; or, failing in this, the School guarantees to refund to you the full amount paid for your course.

Your Opportunity Coupon

Mark the position you want and mail the coupon now

....Electrical Engineer	....Lawyer
....Elec. Light & Power Supt.	....Bookkeeper
....Electrical Wireman	....Stenographer
....Telephone Expert	....Private Secretary
....Architect	....Accountant
....Building Contractor	....Cost Accountant
....Architectural Draftsman	....Cert'f'd Public Acc'nt
....Structural Draftsman	....Auditor
....Structural Engineer	....Business Manager
....Concrete Engineer	....Fire Ins. Inspector
....Civil Engineer	....Fire Ins. Adjuster
....Surveyor	....Fire Ins. Expert
....Mechanical Engineer	....Moving Picture Op'r
....Mechanical Draftsman	....Sanitary Engineer
....Steam Engineer	....Irrigation Engineer
....Municipal Engineer	....Textile Boss
....Gas Engine Engineer	....College Preparatory
....Gas Tractor Engineer	....Auto. Mechanician

NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

Pop. Mag. 2-1-14

Special Salary Guarantee Offer

This is the most wonderful offer ever made by any educational institution. We positively guarantee to raise your salary or refund every penny you have paid us for your course. This guarantee is backed by our sixteen years' experience in correspondence instruction—by a school that has succeeded because it has been true to its principles of giving the students the instruction for which they enrolled.

Just say to yourself: "I am tired of earning a small salary; I am tired of sticking at the same old job—tired of seeing other men get good positions and big pay while I seem to be simply tagging along behind. I am going to sign this coupon now and see what AMERICAN SCHOOL OF CORRESPONDENCE can do for me. I am going to accept their salary guarantee and make good."

Thousands of young men have accepted this offer and we have raised their salaries over fifty per cent. What we have done for these men, we can do for you. Just think of it! Your success in life may depend upon whether you sign and send this coupon today or not. Why not do it right now—before you turn the page and forget it?

American School of Correspondence, Chicago, U.S.A.

This school has no connection with any other school using the name "American"

THE POPULAR MAGAZINE

VOL. XXXI. FEBRUARY 1, 1914. No. 2.

The Reata

By Roy Norton

Author of "Arroyo Jones," "Threads," Etc.

A cow-puncher in a corral of canvas. The story of "Beauty" Jones, plainsman and reata artist, who broke away from the range and joined the all-star aggregation of performers in Bigger's Biggest—a circus whose fame was world-wide.

(*A Complete Novel*)

HE had nothing in his personal appearance to recommend him, as he stood, disconsolate and broken in purse, in the grateful shadow cast by the overhanging eaves of the dingy little railway station in Wyoming, and saw the long, rattling train come to a halt. His sinewy neck, with its huge lump of an Adam's apple, his red and freckled ears, his suntanned face, his gaunt, muscular, angular frame, and his wiry, tousled, dun-colored hair, had earned for him the facetious sobriquet of "Beauty Jones," something that he accepted as he did everything else, with a wide grin.

It was told of him that once, when caught by a Diaz band of rurales in Mexico, and condemned to be shot at sunrise as a modest importer of arms, the local judge had been entranced by that same broad-mouthed grin, the soldiers had come to love him for it, and, at the last moment, he had grinned his way into the good graces of the firing squad, who had merely loaded the wall behind him and assisted him to escape when night shadows had gathered over the old adobe structure at whose feet he rested for a full eighteen hours, motionless, supine, and through veiled eyelids watching the buzzards that circled and swirled above him.

With an almost boyish interest, he stared at the train, for it was one of the sort that he had never seen—a dingy, battered string of cars flaming announcements for Bigger's Biggest Show on Earth, some of them strangely shaped to make room for strange animals, some mere flats with canvas-covered lumps that would disclose gaudy chariots at the next stop and street parade. From frowsy coaches at the back, frowsy heads protruded, gasping for air; and, last of all, a coach somewhat better than those that had preceded it and a little "doghouse" caboose, from which a perspiring conductor swung off as the train came to a halt. Out of the coach tumbled a man with a derby hat jammed to a decisive angle over his head, and an angry look in his eyes. He joined the conductor, who ran forward, and the language that he panted forth in his haste caused Beauty Jones to cast an appreciative grin in his direction.

"He sure does show signs of a fine

trainin'," observed Beauty admiringly. "Never know'd but one man that could do a job of cussin' like that, and he was hanged down in Sonora for triflin' with another man's live stock! Gee! Wish I could use language that way—because there's been a heap of times I'd like to have said all them things!"

He saw the man with the derby and the trainmen collect around a stock car, get on their knees, make a long inspection, and again the man with the derby indulged in a flight of language that was little less than pyrotechnical. The station agent had joined them, and now Beauty heard him say: "Well, there's a good stock car down there on the siding. Better pull down onto the switch so's to clear the main line for the Flyer, and I'll get the glad news in to the dispatcher."

Beauty wondered what the fuss could be about, and was more than happy that some accident had given him this rare privilege for inspection. Doubtless there were animals, strange ones, and Beauty loved all animals he had ever met. He saw the train maneuver to get to the switch, and then, his curiosity getting the better of his usual phlegm, he sauntered slowly down to the stock car beneath which the train men were working. The cause of their annoyance was plain; for a drawhead had been pulled out at one end, and the forward trucks seemed about to part company. The wreck of a brake beam was dragging, and he heard the conductor explaining to the agent that a dislodged rock had caused the damage; but what interested Beauty the most was the occupant of the car, a particularly magnificent bull buffalo, which was sniffing deep, hungry inhalations from the sweeping plains, in an agony of homesickness. Beauty understood.

"Poor old cuss!" he said sympathetically, addressing the bull through the nearest opening. "Want to git out, don't you, bo?"

The bull snorted by way of answer, and Beauty gave him advice:

"Say! It's a heap better for you to stick to your job! You wouldn't be loose more'n a couple of days now before some feller'd fill you full of slugs. Times has changed right smart since you been away from us, I reckon. The old home ain't what she used to was."

Any reply the buffalo might have made was interrupted by a sudden movement of the train that mysteriously parted from the point where a brakeman had unfastened the chains that served as a temporary drawhead, and the crippled car lurched and wabbled ahead. The Flyer occupied Beauty's attention for a few swift, excited moments, as it tore past like a blurred, rapidly thrown film with a hot wave for a background, and then he saw that the buffalo car had been "cut out," and the train brought to rest on the main line. He bethought him of Baldy, his pet cayuse, with a start, and hastily angled back to the shaded side of the little red station, communing to himself: "Psho! 'Most forgot Baldy. Mebbe he's got a sniff of this menagerie, and just gone plum loco and hit for the hills!" But Baldy was still sleeping peacefully, and as securely anchored by the reins dropped to the ground, as if they had been tied to a pier. Beauty said: "Hello! Sun comin' this way, ain't it, pardner! Let's move up to the far end where she's cooler. Reckon I'll be detained here quite some time. You see, I got quite a lot of business to attend to," he concluded apologetically, and the scarred, tough-looking Baldy seemed to leer at him out of the corner of his eye. "Well, I have," insisted Beauty, "and don't you gimme no back talk. Yes, you did! I heard you call me a red-headed liar! And don't you do it no more, or I'll just naturally lam you one! That's what I'll do!"

His anger must have been assumed, however, for he stopped long enough to pat the pony's neck, and playfully pull an ear before returning to the delightful mysteries of "Bigger's Biggest." He gawped at a window in a coach through which he could see all sorts of garments swinging, like a Chinese laundry on a busy day, and by standing on a pile of ties and stretching his neck, turkey fashion, to its utmost, discovered that three very surly-looking men, in

undershirts, and with huge muscles exposed, were deeply involved in a game of cards with a sinewy-looking lady whose hair was a trifle more golden than that of the regulation angel.

"You're shy a cent. You didn't ante. You know you didn't!" the lady exclaimed, and Beauty grinned pleasantly as he recognized the game being played. He tried to get high enough on his pile of ties to see the table between them, and unfortunately attracted her attention. She poked her head through the window and remarked pleasantly: "Say, you gutta-percha-necked son of a turkey buzzard! What're you hangin' around here for? Ain't you never saw a lady before?"

Beauty Jones got red beneath his tan, and nearly fell from his perch, much to the delight of others looking from the coach windows, and under a volley of scathing remarks retreated rather precipitously to the scene of the buffalo transfer. Roustabouts and trainmen were building a miniature stockyard of the movable sections of fence that stood round, and had slipped a cattle runway against the door of the crippled car, this being the only method of loading and unloading available in a station that had no stockyard, and consisted of a water tank, one saloon, post office, and general store combined. Beauty cast an appraising eye at the captive, who was still sniffing the free air, and, forgetting his late humiliation, grinned softly to himself, and thought: "By Gosh! If that were my bison, I wouldn't take no chances on turnin' him loose in that flimsy. Might do to hold a lot of fence-busted steers, but I sort of reckon that when Old Man Buffalo gits out of that car there'll be a heap of things doin'—all at once!"

And then his face sobered, and a new eagerness spread over it, when he remembered some of the weird tales of the veteran cow-punchers whom he had admired by many and varied camp fires. In particular he remembered how he had always sustained a sneaking envy for "Old Rodeo" Smith for one of his oft-repeated and quite prodigious exploits, impossible to duplicate. With a sudden gleeful determination, Beauty turned and tramped back toward Baldy, the rowels of his spurs clinking as they emerged from the sand at each step, and the quirt that he carried at his wrist wriggling its thongs like an excited snake. He surprised Baldy by bringing the double girths up to a full cinch, and overlooking his saddle gear, after which he flipped a leg over the saddle and drew a deep sigh of relief, as of a man returning home to rest; for Beauty was never graceful nor quite at ease when standing on his own high-heeled feet. He sometimes thought that a saddle must have been his father, due, perhaps, to the fact that he could not remember the time when life had not been made up of saddles, merely attached to different animals that humped, side-jumped, buck-jumped, somersaulted backward, or tried to roll over on him.

A very hopeful-looking man he was, as he galloped with a rocking horse gait back to the edge of the scene of activities, and then casually twisted himself sidewise until he was almost resting on one stirrup with an elbow on the big pommel, a hand supporting his chin as if his head needed rest, and the stump of a cigarette drooping from one corner of his lean, roughly cut, sun-tanned face.

"Throw that door open, you razor-back!" he heard the commanding voice of the man with the derby, who did not seem in a very good temper. "Get a hustle on you! We're goin' to be late for the next stand unless some of you fellers wake up. Lively, now, you!"

A man with a short crowbar was wrenching at the door behind which stood the captive, and suddenly it slid open. Long vistas of delight were exposed to the eager little eyes behind the open space. Always, until now, the bars had restrained him, and for tiresome years he had not seen the long, rolling sand dunes, and felt the long sweep of air from wide, familiar spaces. It was out there, the land of dimming memories, just beyond the horizon, where others of his kind fought, and mated, wallowed and grazed in countless numbers, until their backs, in

flight, were like the rolling, billowing seas over which he, the captive, had been conveyed in his trying journeys; but it was too good to be true! It was impossible! Suddenly he lifted his massive head, snorted madly, eyed the runway at his feet, and charged down at a gallop, his rounded, diminutive hips thrusting him forward in an ecstasy of movement. At the bottom he descried the puny barrier, and waving, shouting men behind it. It angered him. He dropped the big head lower, shut his eyes, and charged straight across the inclosure, reckless of any contact, knowing only that away out there beyond was an open space he had seen from his prison, and that, could he but reach it, and run, and run, there was some place left for freedom.

Beauty Jones heard the shouts and curses, and straightened back into the saddle. Old Rodeo Smith should have nothing on him! Rodeo had sworn that he had "roped" a buffalo. So would Beauty Jones!

Down around the makeshift corral, men were waving frantic hands, and yelling like a band of Indians on the warpath. Suddenly, at the side nearest Beauty, they scattered wildly, and fled, tumbling over one another in their anxiety to reach safety, and the barrier resounded with a terrific blow. Splinters and broken pieces of boards flew into the air. Whole sections of the fencing wove tremulously and fell, and straight through the open path charged the great bull, with head down and ponderous shoulders gathering to their stride.

"Stop him! Stop him!" shrieked the man with the derby hat, and his storm of oaths was drowned and lost in the babel of excited, helpless voices.

Beauty saw the big buffalo charging toward him, and Baldy gathered himself in surprise and went up into the air. Beauty did not "touch leather," although at the moment he was pretending a great calmness and rolling a cigarette. Out of the corner of his eye he saw that the platforms of the sleeping cars were crowded with performers who had rushed out to discover the cause of the excitement, and among them the cow-puncher observed the woman with the brilliant hair, and took a grim satisfaction in the knowledge that now he could at least appear unembarrassed and at home. There was a fine twinkle in his humorous eyes, and something approaching a swagger in his attitude as he deliberately finished lighting his cigarette, and stared at the escaping "Monarch of the Plains."

He suddenly swung Baldy round on his heels, stooped over the pommel saddle, and unloosened a reata, and bent forward in his seat. Baldy appeared to shoot through the air, then to spread himself low over the ground, with outstretched neck and tail, and ears laid flat against his head. Man, horse, and rope were all a part of each other, and the excitement around the shattered corral and on the steps of the coaches grew apace.

Some of the performers climbed hastily to the hot tin roofs of the cars, and shaded their eyes with their hands. They voiced their approval of the race in enthusiastic shouts that followed Beauty in a diminuendo as he approached the bull, who was madly lumbering toward the open range. Almost languidly the reata opened up a big coil that flew snakelike through the air. It fell cleanly, and open, over the massive head and shoulders, slipped back, and then downward, and Baldy suddenly planted himself with his forefeet braced. There was a desperate swirl of sand that lifted itself slowly upward into the air, and the menagerie men in pursuit, led by the man with the derby, came up to find the prize exhibit wallowing, and bellowing, and struggling to rise, while a very tow-headed cowpuncher carelessly smoked his cigarette and directed his pony with his knees.

An enthusiastic cheer went up from the spectators at the coaches, and Beauty waved his hat in response; but it was not until the disappointed bull had been hauled back to the car with numerous ropes, against which he dragged and strained in desperation, that Beauty received any word of commendation from the man with the derby. After the monarch had been in-

stalled in his new car, and stood subdued and disappointed, the man turned to where Beauty sat crosswise in his saddle, and said: "Good for you, young fellow! Maybe this'd square it?"

Beauty looked down, and saw a new ten-dollar greenback in the upheld hand, and shook his head.

"Not for a little thing like that," he said. "That's nothin'."

"Looked like something to me," said the man with the derby. "Do that kind of stunt very often?"

"Reckon you ain't seen much ropin'," said Beauty, trying to appear modest, and seeing at the same time that the golden-headed woman was among those who had crowded round admiringly. Also, there was a little dark-eyed girl, who looked different from the others, who clung to the arm of a grizzled veteran, and for her Beauty had a quick embarrassment. "Ropin'! Humph!" he said to the man with the derby. "Why, say, boss, I was born with a reata in my hands. I could rope a cat if I had a good-enough lariat."

"Suppose you hand us out something," said the man with the derby, with a thoughtful look on his face. "I'm the manager of this show. I'd like to see some of what you call real good work."

Nothing loath, now that the dark-eyed girl was looking at him so respectfully, Beauty laughed softly, and swung Baldy out toward an open space. Up went the rope in long swirls, and now the big loop flew and Baldy danced through it at a short canter.

"Been done before," said the golden-haired one, in a weary voice that reached Beauty's ears.

He twisted from his saddle until his outer foot was sustained by the stirrup, his back was against Baldy's side, his left hand flung up behind to clutch the pommel, and then his right began throwing the loop backward and over them as surely as if it were a hoop through which man and horse again did a hurdle while going at an easy lope. This time the spectators were for an instant too much amazed to applaud, and then their recognition of an artist in his line was loud and free. It spurred Beauty to a further endeavor, and this time he dropped to the ground, clung to the pommel with one hand, and, running with long leaps beside the cantering Baldy, again did a loop over both without pausing, after which he leaped to the saddle, stood erect, and still kept the big loop lazily working like a jumping rope. He suddenly brought his mount to a halt, dismounted, and now sent the rope upward in great spirals, never falling, in the center of which he danced on the sand, the jingling of his rowels accenting the time. He ended his performance by so throwing the reata that when it fell it appeared to coil itself in his outstretched hand, after which he tossed it carelessly over the pommel, and grinned at the manager of Bigger's Biggest Show.

"Can't all of 'em pull that stuff!" Beauty exulted, proud of the sensation he had created. "Not even with a ten-spot in sight."

"But would a ten-spot a day fetch it?" abruptly asked the man with the derby. "Just think of it, man! Ten bucks a day, every day, Sundays and all. Seventy dollars a week for just that sort of work."

It was Beauty's turn to gasp. This man must be crazy! Ten a day when the biggest salary he had ever received was forty dollars a month.

"Didn't know there was that much money," he said, grinning.

"There's that much in it for you," declared the man with the derby, "if you'll come along with us."

"And chuck?" asked Beauty, almost in a whisper, and doubting his senses.

"Sure!" said the manager, and Beauty failed to notice that as they talked, the man with the derby had walked him away from the "circus people," and did not know that an angry scowl he had bestowed on them had driven them back toward the coaches. Beauty was thinking of that wondrous sum of money and also of the dark-eyed girl. It was really the latter fascination that decided him.

"How long does this job last?" he demanded, facing the manager.

"Five years," said the latter.

The cow-puncher shook his head sorrowfully.

"Nope," he said. "Cain't see it. I ain't never stayed in one job that long, and somehow I don't want to. Now, if you said you was hiring me by the month, I reckon I'd have fallen for it; but——"

"Then say three months—till the end of this season," insisted the manager. "I'd have to get your paper out, and ——" He rattled off a lot of stuff that was all Greek to Beauty Jones, who was slowly becoming intoxicated with the thought of adventure. "And we can put your horse aboard right now, and—let me see—yes, I'll give you a berth in Number Fifty car, where you can have a section all to yourself, and—say—I'll treat you like a king, and all for the two shows a day that you and me'll rig up to get your act straight."

"Done!" said Beauty. "Get that runway up to the car. I'm on."

He rode across to the store, and reappeared in a few minutes with a roll of blankets and a canvas bag that contained all he had acquired in his thirty years of life, and shouted a hurried "So long!" to the storekeeper who followed him to the door, disbelieving.

And when the train with its queer cars pulled out, rattling and bumping hurriedly, as if to make up for lost time, the storekeeper watched it from sight, and scratched his stubbly chin and said: "Lord all Hemlock! They's a fool borned every minute, they say; but who'd 'a' thought they was ever such a sucker as the circus feller that'd take Beauty Jones with him, and pay him for nothin' at all but makin' a plain, cussed fool of hisself and old Baldy!"

CHAPTER II.

Beauty Jones found it difficult to sleep, for there were strange noises around him, and whirling sounds under him, and an occasional stop that disturbed him, and once in a while he awoke when the car lurched.

"Gee, Crackey!" he muttered once, when nearly pitched from his berth. "That engineer is certainly runnin' like a scared wolf!"

And he wondered at such recklessness, not knowing that worried dispatchers were marking off the miles as Bigger's Biggest whirled westward for its next opening, and that a circus knows no such event as delay. When he did finally fall asleep, it was to sink into such profound repose that he was not even aware when the train stopped. He slid the window shade upward, and a shaft of early sunlight smote him in the face, and he blinked at his surroundings. Number Fifty car was on a siding in a railway yard, and from somewhere, off in another car, Beauty heard the rattle of a typewriter, furiously beating out something that he did not in the least suspect was press stuff conjured from the elastic brain of the press agent.

Beauty was pleased to find a washroom in the end of the car, and a porter to bring him clean towels, and him Beauty addressed as to the whereabouts of the manager.

"Him? De ole man? Oh, he's dun out on de lot 'most an houah, Ah reckons," was the reply.

"Lot? What lot?" demanded Beauty, perplexed, and the porter grinned at such ignorance.

"Dat's whah dey had de show—de groun'—de place whah dey fusses up de rings, an' tents, an' such," explained the porter. "De ol' man dun tuk a pow'ful fancy to you, boss, Ah reckon. Said you-all was to eat in dis cyah, with him and Marse Williams, till you get uster it."

"Good!" said Beauty, unabashed by this great honor that he accepted as a matter of course, and not in the least understanding that the manager of a circus and the press agent are persons of rank, a sort of king and royal prince assistant, who seldom unbend with their subjects. "Good! I can eat ham and eggs. Lots of 'em. Ain't had no ham for a month of Sundays. And coffee! Lots of it! Black and strong!"

By the time he was shaved and

dressed, his order was waiting for him, and he ate silently, trying to accustom himself to the idea that he was now a plutocrat. He looked through the plate window over the switch yards, and wished that some of the men with whom he had worked on various ranges could see him, and know that he, Beauty Jones, was having a negro to wait on him, was dining aboard a private car, and was actually drawing seventy dollars a week salary. Why, that was more than most foremen of cow outfits got for a whole month's work! Beauty was afraid that he dreamed, and grimaced at himself in the mirror that confronted him to be certain that he was awake. Surely that was the homely face of Beauty Jones that twisted, and grinned, and winked back at him!

After he had finished his breakfast, he went from the car, cautiously passing the one adjoining, whence issued the sounds of the typewriter, but craning his neck to inspect the place through a crack.

"I'd sorter like to see in there," he said to himself. "I seen one of them machines once, but didn't get a right good look at it. Gee! But that young woman I see in there can whack it some!"

He loitered a moment, long enough to be amazed at the storehouse beneath Number Fifty, and made friends with the cook, who was arranging some stores on the ice. He paused to see a switchman make a deft coupling between two box cars in the yard, and when they came together with a bang, was certain that the man had been killed. He sustained a great wave of admiration for the switchman, and thought that not for worlds would he, Beauty, do anything so daring, little appreciating that the switchman would have considered the clinging to a running horse's side as the pinnacle of recklessness; but all the wonders of this experience were to be outdone when, like a boy, he came in sight of the lot.

Never in his life had he seen such a spread as this. True, he had seen dog and pony shows, and once, when very small, he had visited and stared, entranced, at the marvels of a show that had one ring, and a half dozen animal cages; but here, before him, were tents that would have held a good-sized "round-up" from the range; tents that would hold more people than he had ever seen gathered together; tents inside of which the whole Ninth Cavalry might have paraded, while all the cowpunchers that Beauty had ever known could have had ample room in one corner to exhibit their skill.

High peaks of dingy canvas, surmounted by gay bunting, and flags that Beauty could not identify; smaller tents at the sides with real "hand-painted" pictures of enormous size depicting ladies with snakes, ladies dancing on bottles, ladies who were inordinately fat, and ladies with exaggerated whiskers, held him spellbound. Surely paradise had come to earth, and he, plain Beauty Jones, was one of the angels that belonged to it!

Beauty was seized with a panic, lest "the old man" forget him, and cast him out, even as a certain bad angel was cast from that other paradise in the beginning of things; but on the way to find his employer, for whom he had conceived a sudden awe and respect, as due the master magician who was boss of such a magnificent, splendid creation, he heard the shrill whistle and whine of a peanut roaster, and peanuts were something that Beauty could not resist.

He stopped in front of the vehicle of delight, and bought a bag with the sole piece of change in his pocket, and was vastly aggrieved at the quantity contained therein. Surely the man had dropped a few peanuts into that paper receptacle, then carefully blown the bag up to a vast plumpness, as if in preparation for bursting it in a palm. Beauty suddenly remembered that he had a lonely five-dollar bill carefully sequestered in the worn leather wallet in his hip pocket, and that, being a millionaire with an income of seventy dollars a week, he could afford to buy several bags. He ordered a dozen, and put his hand around to the rear, and then paused, as if transfixed.

Something was wrong with that

pocket. He twisted his hips and his neck, and took a look at it, to discover that it had been neatly slit down one side, and that, although the flap was still buttoned, he had been robbed.

Forgetful of his high estate, he let out a yell that brought a crowd around him, and proceeded, to the limit of his vocabulary, to express his indignation. Some one laughed at his distress, and jostled him. Beauty promptly tipped himself to his toes, and lunged forward with a hard fist and a finely developed punch that knocked the insolent one back against those in the rear; then, suddenly bethinking himself of jails he had involuntarily graced for disturbing the peace, and that his new job probably depended upon his good behavior, dropped to his knees, toppled a Mormon farmer over in surprise, thrust another man into the group to add to the confusion, and tore through the crowd until he was safe from pursuit. He was quite sorry that he had been compelled to upset the peanut roaster, even though the man had filled the bags by lung power, and hoped the proprietor would not suffer much loss.

Over in the rear of the lots, Beauty discovered a particular commotion, and decided to investigate. Chariots were drawn up in some sort of formation, bandmen were climbing to their seats, a muchly painted woman that he afterward learned was a ten-thousand-dollar beauty was arranging her skirts on a gilded throne, a stable boss was roaring commands to his assistants, a parade master was giving a driver instructions, and Beauty was dazzled by the glory of it all. He decided that the best vantage point would be up at the head of the forming procession, and excitedly made his way thither to discover the manager, his friend, standing with a watchful air, as if to inspect the parade.

Beauty edged around to the rear of the great man, and looked at him with a new-born respect. The derby hat was at the same angle, the stub of a cigar was held between close-shut teeth, and, now and then, heads of departments came up to report or ask for orders.

The parade master appeared and took his seat in an automobile, and a "barker" crawled in beside him. A chauffeur in a Roman helmet and brass armor cranked up his machine, and the parade master turned in his seat and blew a shrill blast on a whistle. The machine started forward, a chariot with a band swung in behind, from somewhere under that misty cloud of canvas huge, ungainly elephants came sedately forth, there were shouts, the cracking snap of whips, the hollow trundling of wheels, and the clattering of accouterments as dazzling knights and ladies appeared, curbing restive mounts. Beauty was still further entranced.

The chariot conveying the haughty ten-thousand-dollar beauty came trundling forward, with six fine white horses pulling it, and the driver was having trouble with a restive leader. He flicked out a long lash, and the manager, standing stockily, heard an exclamation of disgust behind him, and turned to recognize his latest find.

"What's matter?" he asked, staring at the cow-puncher.

"Matter? Didn't you see that mucker try to touch a lead horse with a whip? Humph! He welted everything from the wheel horse up!"

"Well?" demanded the manager curiously.

"Why, say," declared Beauty, "if he did that where I've handled six, he'd of got his time and been yanked down off that gold wagon so fast his head would have struck first! A man's no driver until he can touch up the horse he wants to without hittin' the rest."

"So you think you can handle a whip, eh?" demanded the manager half absently, and keeping his eye on the parade that was filing past.

"Sure!' declared Beauty. "I've driven ore wagons in places where such a mutt as that sheep-herder would have——"

He paused abruptly and in disgust, for the manager had dashed forward to shout something to one of the petty bosses, and did not return. Beauty caught a plaintive little smile from a girl on a beautiful black horse, and rec-

ognized her as the one in whose eyes he had discovered friendliness and sympathy on the day before. There passed his friend of the gilded hair, now attired as a Roman lady, and driving a chariot. Behind the chariot, walking haughtily, was a black-haired, swarthy-skinned man, twisting up his foreign-looking mustache, and adjusting a leopard skin thrown across his prodigious shoulders and breast. Beauty gave a soft whistle of admiration. Never had he seen such terrific arm muscles, such pillarlike legs, such breadth of shoulder.

"That's Margovin, the strongest man in the world," he heard a boy behind him shout ecstatically.

The men who had played poker in the car on the previous day were now gallant-appearing knights, with waving plumes, and a sad-faced man the adventurer had observed at the time the manager was offering to hire him was barely recognizable in the mask of a merry clown who was perched on a high seat behind the smallest burro Beauty had ever seen. A calliope broke into a shrill diapason of sound, and Beauty, enraptured, fell in with the small boys behind it, and sedately marched with them, staring up at the wonderful operator of so noisy an instrument.

"By Jiminy!" he exclaimed to himself. "If they pay me seventy for just chuckin' a rope, I guess they must give that feller four or five hundred. Wish I could play a tune on that thing."

There was no stranger that lined the streets of the parade that day who was more interested than Beauty Jones, a member of the vast aggregation. He bubbled over with it when he succeeded in finding his way back to the car after the parade was over and hunger warned him that it was time to hunt what he called "the chuck wagon." The manager was there, eating as calmly as if nothing unusual had taken place, an attitude that filled his new employee with profound admiration. And by deft questions he led Beauty on and appeared to enjoy his comments. The press agent seated himself with them, and now and then laughed, much to Beauty's embarrassment, until he decided that Williams meant no harm.

"Suppose, Williams," said the manager, "that you get Jones out into the ring with his horse before the wagon opens, and see if you can't think of something to help his act."

"Glad to," replied the press man, whose imagination leaped far faster than that of the doughty manager.

And so it was that after the meal was finished, Williams conducted Beauty to the huge "big top," and said: "There's your pony. Now let's see what you can do."

Over in one of the rings, a family of acrobats, looking very commonplace in their undershirts, trousers, or plain short dresses and old gymnasium shoes, were practicing a new act. In the ring at the extreme end of the vast canvas-roofed place, he saw the soft-eyed girl attempting a daring double somersault from a springboard beside the ring with the object of alighting on the back of a broad-hipped, patient horse, driven by the man with the gray hair. Around her body was a belt with swivels at the sides, to which were attached flexible ropes, running up through pulleys. The ends of these were held by two men, whose duty was, it seemed, to prevent her from falling heavily to the ground in case of failure. Here and there, roustabouts were clearing up the litter of final preparation for the performance, and canvas men were making some adjustments.

Beauty enjoyed having the broad outer ring to himself, and performed miracles of riding and handling a rope. He did his final ground work on the platform between the rings, and succeeded in executing a very creditable "hoedown" as his reata twisted and writhed above him. He was fairly astonished, when he concluded, to discover that he had a considerable audience, all the performers and some others having stopped their work to see the "new find" rehearse. There was a burst of applause, and shouts of "Good work! Bully boy!" and he was rather abashed for a moment, until he discov-

ered the manager in the group, with a pleased smile on his grim lips.

"How's that, boss?" demanded Beauty, grinning at him.

"Good! But how about that whip?" asked the big man. "Here, you, Bryant! Where's the whip I told you to bring?"

A man respectfully handed over a whip that Beauty thought was the identical one he had seen the clumsy driver use. He caught and balanced it in his hand, and then, as the performers opened out, let the whiplash into the air two or three times with a snapping report and looked back at the manager, who was smoking a fresh cigar, and from the corner of his mouth talking in a low tone to Williams. A spirit of deviltry seized Beauty, and he walked backward, snapping and whirling the long lash as if gauging an exact distance. Every one waited to see what new surprise he had for display, and then suddenly the manager started back with a startled oath, and looked at the cowman with an expression that was plainly a struggle between bewilderment and indignation. The manager took the cigar from his mouth, and inspected its end, as if still uncertain.

"Took the ash clean off the end of your cigar without knocking it from your mouth! How's that? I saw him do it!" exulted Williams.

"Humph! That's nothin'," asserted Beauty. "If I could find any one that had nerve enough to take a chance, I could do that off'n Baldy's back."

There was a moment's silence, in which he saw one of the acrobats wink at another, his whole attitude expressing the belief that the cowboy was, after all, a boaster.

"Well, it's so," declared Beauty, earnestly defending himself. "Here, boss, lend me that cigar after that ash grows out again. I'll show you."

He watched the manager as the latter puffed vigorously and blew clouds of smoke outward like an engine, and then when the ash again appeared, Beauty took the cigar and stuck it in a hole in the side of a piece of convenient paraphernalia, mounted Baldy, and rode rapidly around the ring. He made one attempt that failed, and then, with Baldy loping steadily beneath him, sent the lash out with a snap, and for the second time proved himself the master of the whip.

He leaped to the ground, and the well-trained pony planted his hoofs and came to an abrupt stop.

"Stand still, Williams!" shouted Beauty, and, before the press agent could realize what was coming, the long lash neatly coiled itself around the crown of his derby hat, and it was jerked into the air, deftly caught by the frontiersman, and politely handed back. Almost without stopping, Beauty twisted round, saw a white paper-filled hoop through which some rider had intended to leap, and now, with sharp reports, rapid and true, he used the hoop as a target, and deftly cut hole after hole in its surface, forming the letters "B. B."

"Now," said Beauty, coiling his whip and advancing to Williams, "if you're tired of lookin' at this monkey business, maybe you'll be good enough to tell me what I'm to do in this bunch to earn my money. I ain't much of a tumbler, but I suppose I could learn to ride. I don't think I want to learn none of them things up there by the roof. They're too high."

And no man was ever more astonished than Beauty Jones when told that all he had to do to earn his money was to just keep on doing what he had already done. Nor did he know that while he was watching the afternoon performance the manager of Bigger's Biggest was holding a consultation with the press agent, as to how it would be possible to delude the most novel find in years into signing a contract for life at a salary far less than he could command within a month after the news of his marvelous skill had reached the booking agents.

CHAPTER III.

The first week of his life with Bigger's Biggest passed like a delirium of delight for the adventurer. It was not until the novelty began to wear off that

he was even able to comprehend the significance of the splendid organization by which he was surrounded. Moreover, he found himself in a peculiar position before the week was over, inasmuch as every one connected with the circus recognized his exceptional talent, and also that he was a hand-in-glove favorite with the Napoleonic manager and the powerful press agent. That he lived in Number Fifty in itself proved that he "stood in," and for a week there was more respect given him than he liked; after which time nearly all connected with the great caravan, finding him so intensely democratic and unassuming, began to like him and to admit him into their confidence.

From razor backs to star performers, and from canvas men to animal trainers, he was a favorite. But, with singular perversity, he chose from all the hundreds of men connected with the show none other than the clown, Jim Paxton, for his particular crony. Perhaps the beginning of this intimacy was due to Paxton's air of hopeless melancholy and his apparent loneliness; but later, the instinct of the frontiersman led him to recognize something of breeding and erudition in this strange wreck of a man who, through lack of initiative and ill fortune, had drifted from higher callings to the mere motley of a clown.

Imperceptibly, Beauty began to come to Paxton for advice, and to accept him as a mentor in many ways. His respect and liking for the big man of the show —"the boss"—grew apace; but the big man was too busy to waste time on amicable conversation save in those brief intervals when he paused to take his meals.

It was Jim Paxton who did more to whip Beauty's act into shape than any one else connected with the show.

"The trouble with you is," said the clown thoughtfully, on the second evening, when Jim was rehearsing rather foolishly, "that you don't string it out enough. What you need is system. Fiddle around a while when you first come in, boy, and do the easiest stunts until you work up to where you hang to the horse's side and throw the loop. Then dismount and do your ground work, and stretch that out a little longer, and have the whip in reach. You must have one made with a white lash, so that the audience can see it as it goes. Make one thing follow another faster, and faster, up to the stunt with the target. Have the target papered with black, and have two of them, so that people on both ends can see it done. Before doing it, have the spieler come out with his silk hat to tell what you will do. Probably he will stop all bands and all other acts. He surely will when you do that mounted-cigar stunt."

"But most of it doesn't amount tc nothin'," insisted Beauty.

"It doesn't matter whether it does or not, so long as you can make people believe it does," sagely retorted Paxton. "I should say that to flick the ash from a cigar in a man's mouth, while riding a horse at a gallop, did amount to something."

"Man's mouth!" exclaimed the cowboy. "There's ain't goin' to be no man! That'd be too risky."

"But it could be done, couldn't it?" asked the clown quietly.

"Yes—but—well, it's too dangerous."

"That is just what people come and pay a dollar for," said Paxton. "Difficulty and danger are what they demand. They want thrills. They want the spectacular. This act depends on convincing those who watch that it is difficult, and that it is perilous to the man who holds the cigar. There is nothing dangerous or spectacular if the cigar is fastened to something inanimate that can't be hurt. Circus audiences like to shudder. Your act certainly requires this feature for a finish."

The plainsman shook his head doubtfully, and the little man came closer to him and added: "I want to see you make a success. You're young and I'm old. I know what it means to fail. You don't. It's a pretty hard world, boy, in its judgments. It's all very pleasant and smooth as long as you're a success, but when you fail, it's hell! Nobody can say yet, even with the most dangerous trick of all included, how the

public will take this act of yours. You're living in the manager's car now for two reasons: One, that he is amused, and has taken a hard liking to you, which I can understand, and the other because he thinks you're a big winner; but if you come out in front of a crowd and fall down two or three times in succession, you'll be dropped off at some tank town with as little ceremony as if you were a can of garbage being dumped overboard. Circuses are like everything else in the world; they have no use for anything which has been proved useless."

Beauty suddenly looked grave, and began to learn the lesson that this strange life into which he had entered was not entirely a traveling rose carnival. He looked so palpably distressed that Jim Paxton smiled softly, but not without pity.

"Lordy!" exclaimed Beauty. "I sure am in bad, and it looks to me like it's gettin' worse every minute. Got to have a man hold the cigar! It's only about two inches from the end of that cigar to the man's face, and the least bit of a mistake might let that lash go too far. Do you know what would happen then? Well, I'll tell you. The tip of that lash, laid that way on a steer's back, would lift a piece out of his tough hide just about the size of a silver dollar—slick and clean—as if cut with a sharp knife. It would take a man's eye out, or amputate his nose, a heap quicker than any doctor could do it."

He waited, but Paxton appeared unimpressed.

"I suspected that," he said patiently.

"There's somethin' else," Beauty went on desperately; "I might get rattled, and that whip stunt ain't a job for a man who is the least bit shaky."

"But you must not," replied his inexorable mentor.

"Maybe I can't help it," objected the plainsman. "I've been sort of ashamed to speak about it, but I'm goin' to tell you. I ain't ever been afraid of anything in my life, but it's kind of come over me, the last day or two, that I'm goin' to feel mighty queer when I get out there with everybody lookin' at me. Now you tell me to have the band and all other acts stop while I try to do the hardest thing of all! Jim, I'm afraid. I think I'll go and tell the Old Man to fire me, because I don't dare do it."

Paxton looked at him anxiously, and laid a hand on Beauty's arm.

"Jones," he said earnestly, "that will never do. You can't afford to be a quitter. You've got to go through with it. You've got to keep your nerve, and do the biggest feature that you can put into an act. I'll tell you what you do: You go and tell the boss that you want me to work with you. I'll hold the cigar."

"Good Lord, man! Ain't I made it plain to you?" expostulated the cowpuncher. "It's dangerous if I happen to lose my nerve. If I've got to hurt anybody round here, I'd rather it'd be somebody besides you."

"And, on the other hand," retorted the clown, in his kindly voice, "if anybody here's to be hurt, I'd rather it were me."

Beauty still looked doubtful and distressed.

"Moreover," continued Jim, "I've got an idea that you wouldn't be in quite such danger of getting what we might call 'stage fright' if I were there in the ring with you. You must do it, young fellow. You've got to go through with it. Why, you'll get used to it in no time at all, and after that, it'll be easy. We'll take the chance! Go ahead now and arrange it."

He turned and walked quietly away, a mere drooping little figure of a kindly, broken man, a failure himself, but striving to his utmost to assist another to success.

Beauty Jones shook his head in a puzzled way, then shut his lips, banged one fist into the other palm, and remarked aloud: "Now, that's what I call game. By Crackey! I'll put this thing over now if I have to get the 'Old Man' by the throat and choke him to let me have what I want!"

Already familiar with the habits of the manager of Bigger's Biggest, he knew that this was the most propitious time to interview him, so plunged di-

rectly out toward Number Fifty car which, at this stand, happened to be quite close to the lot. All his doubts had vanished when he blundered into the door of the great man's moving office, and, to that gentleman's amazement, slapped his worn white hat on the floor, and declared: "Well, boss, we've got it! I'm goin' to make it the biggest act that anybody ever saw. I'm goin' to stand them on their heads!"

The manager, quite accustomed to hearing performers boast of what they were going to do, tolerated his strange find, smiled, and suggested: "Well, suppose you tell us what it is!"

Beauty Jones had never been famed for convincing or overflowing speech; on this occasion he outdid himself. He expatiated in the most unusual manner on what he proposed to do, quite evidently to the manager's approval; and then, almost as unexpectedly to himself as to the manager, became crafty. He sat down and assumed an air of intense gravity.

"The only trouble," he said, "is this: I'm afraid we'll have to cut the whip trick out—that one with the cigar."

The manager of Bigger's Biggest sat up and roared an expostulation, whereupon Beauty not only explained but exaggerated the dangers of that performance; until he had the manager shivering at thought of his own narrow escape. Beauty frowned thoughtfully at the floor of the car, and then, as if suddenly thinking of an emergency, asked: "By the way, what pay does Jim Paxton, the clown, get?"

"Paxton! Jim Paxton!" demanded the master of a little army of men. "What do you want to know for?"

"He's the only man I've seen in all this outfit that I'd trust to stand up there in front of me, day after day, to do that trick," asserted Beauty. "He's got nerve, boss, that feller has. Say, I'll bet that little man would tackle the fires of hell with a waterin' can! Never saw anything like it!" And then, to the manager's amazement, Beauty blundered through an entirely fictitious recountal of what Jim Paxton, the melancholy little clown, was said to have done.

The manager pressed a button, and sent the porter bearing a note to the wagon, where the treasurer was supreme, after which he kept the plainsman in doubt for several minutes. The porter reappeared with a reply, at which the big man glanced, then said: "He gets thirty dollars a month."

"Well," remarked Beauty pleasantly, "we'll just double that salary of his and put him in this act."

For an instant, the manager sat in utter amazement at such temerity.

"Well, you've got a gall, I must remark, young fellow!" he blurted. "Who do you think you're talking to? Since when did you start to help me run this show?"

"Just this minute," cheerfully responded Beauty. "You need somebody around, looks to me, and I'm the man. You know, if you don't like it, I can quit 'most any time." He grinned with that frank, entrancing smile of his, until the man who directed the destinies of the huge undertaking had to succumb, and, in mock anger, shouted: "You get out of here. The first thing I know, you'll be raising the pay of every man on the job and taking my place!"

"But about Paxton?" insisted Beauty, as he started toward the door, confident, however, that he had carried his point. "Does that sixty a month go?"

"Yes, it does if you make good," replied the manager.

"Then," said Jim, as he slammed the door, "I'll make good or bust a leg tryin'," and carelessly whistled his way toward the huge dressing tent where he thought he would probably find his melancholy friend patching tattered raiment.

Now he began his work in earnest, and, three days later, following Paxton's advice, suggested to his amused employer that he would like to appear at the next performance; but it was with a fearful mind that he made his entry. For a moment, as he rode Baldy round the outer ring, his heart was in his mouth, and he felt terribly conspicu-

ous; but, feeling the play of the distended muscles beneath him, and the touch of the familiar saddle between his legs, he gained courage to begin the course of evolutions that Jim and he had so carefully mapped out. Considering them child's play, he worked almost automatically. He wondered, when he came to the climax of his act, whether any one would be fool enough to be interested in seeing Beauty Jones out there on Baldy doing a lot of stunts that, to him, were very simple, and merely the results of continued practice on broad, open plains when alone and with nothing save a lot of entirely disinterested steers to watch him. Indeed, he was quite surprised when that vast crowd of spectators applauded wildly, and rose from their seats to voice their approval. He did not even know that over by an entrance the Old Man and Williams, the press agent, were bubbling over with joy at this latest addition to the marvels of Bigger's Biggest.

He was happily aware, when he dismounted and began doing his dance on the resounding boards of the central platform, that Jim Paxton, in a new make-up, a grotesque caricature of a cowboy, was there to assist him. He was glad when some of Jim's antics drew a burst of merriment, and openly laughed with the rest of the spectators.

Out at the entrance, Williams turned excitedly to the manager and exulted: "By Jove! This looks like a double find! That fellow Paxton can be made into another Slivers. Must add him to the billing; for of course you'll tie him up with a contract."

Suddenly everything came to a pause, and Beauty, looking around, saw the announcer with his hat doffed and a hand raised for silence. All other acts abruptly came to a halt, the band ceased playing, and the huge megaphone roared a message to the four quarters of the tented world that Bigger's Biggest, ever striving for the most sensational acts, was about to offer a feature that did not appear on the bills. The announcer magnified its difficulties, expatiated upon the possibilities of a gruesome accident, and ended by requesting the spectators, in any emergency, to retain their seats.

He bowed deferentially, and turned toward Beauty with a gesture of introduction, and the latter was painfully aware that he stood there with every eye watching him expectantly. For an instant, he looked at the heavily loaded whip, longer by several feet than was customarily used, and his eyes followed its long white lash as it rested like a slender serpent on the ground. It looked unaccountably strange and cruel. He felt himself trembling, and his knees rattling, and almost staggered to Baldy's side, where, mechanically, he climbed into the saddle, but did not urge the nervous, but obedient pony forward.

He lifted his eyes miserably and saw Jim Paxton standing alone in the center of the ring and puffing vigorously at a very black cigar that he had drawn from a capacious pocket. At a distance, the clown's face appeared a comical mask of rouge and paint; but to Beauty, less than twenty feet away, the illusion was lost, and he could observe nothing but the melancholy, encouraging smile and the dark eyes that watched him attentively.

It all came to him suddenly that Jim Paxton, out of all the hundreds that he had met in this outlandish world into which he had stumbled, was the only one for whom he had conceived an affection. Jim Paxton, the unheeded clown, the wreck of perversity, and yet a man who had thought and tediously worked the way for his, Beauty's, success. The peril, the danger of inflicting pain, of possibly blinding a friend for life, came to him appallingly. Suppose he made an error of judgment in the distance! What if Baldy, usually so steady, were to swerve!

His face grew white, and he gasped for breath, abruptly realizing, as if for the first time, that he was surrounded by curious and terrifying faces, little white dots in a motionless distance, and all intent on what he was about to do. He tried to voice his fear, but nothing save a queer, gurgling sound came from his throat, and he was almost overwhelmed with a desire to escape—to

ride madly from this place of terror and out into the open. He looked down at Baldy beneath him, patiently awaiting the touch of spurs.

For an instant everything in Bigger's Biggest wavered, and the crowd of performers, watching from the entrance, looked at one another in sympathy, recognizing the signs of stage fright.

"Steady! Steady, old man! For God's sake, steady!" he heard the clown exclaim; and then, as he did not move, heard the voice change to one of appeal.

"Brace up! Think what it means to you now!"

But it was not a selfish thought that made Beauty Jones tighten his hold on the whip and start Baldy forward; it was the recollection that Jim Paxton wanted him to "make good." A queer and confident but grim and desperate determination invaded him as he urged the pony to an easy lope and swung the long, heavy lash overhead with measured, rhythmical whirls.

He saw nothing of the crowd; it was shut out of existence. He saw nothing of the performers who were now nodding with approval, nor the manager and his press agent who had grasped the situation and were relieved. All that he saw was the attitude of the little man constantly facing him, and who, with fingers in the armholes of his vest, was pretending to enjoy the cigar, half burned, and puffing the smoke from the corner of his mouth.

Three times Baldy galloped around the ring and the swift twirling overhead increased; then, from across the ring, the lash, appearing to the spectators a long, white thread, snapped viciously through the air. Beauty was astounded, and felt like a man coming from a dream when the band shrilled into a heavy boom of sound, mingled with the wild cheers of the crowd, and he saw other performers, in response to a shrill whistle, rushing forward to take their parts.

With an immense relief and exultation, he turned toward the exit, when, suddenly remembering Jim Paxton, his friend, he swerved and seized the astonished little man round the waist as he rode past him, jerked him over the pommel of the saddle, and made an exit so unexpectedly daring, and so unique, that even the manager and the press agent outside clapped their hands. The act was a success.

As they dismounted and the noise of the applause behind was dying away, the performers in the trapping room crowded round Jim to voice their congratulations, and again he was embarrassed.

"I owe it all to Jim, here," he asserted, over and over again. "Why, do you folks know that for about a whole year in there I'd sure have run away if it hadn't been for him!"

Paxton slipped hastily away to the segment of the tent constituting the men's dressing room, and when Beauty looked for him, to pat him on the back, was nowhere in sight. The blond-headed woman was there, in the silken tights and spangles of the flying gymnast, a dressing gown thrown over her shoulders.

She looked speculatively at the modest man who had achieved a triumph, and, as she shook hands with him, whispered: "You're handin' it all to Paxton; but he nearly spoiled your act. What you need to make it a sure-enough go is a woman with you. I want to talk to you about something when we get a chance." And then, observing that one of her fellow aërialists was looking at her, she hastened away.

The little, dark-eyed girl came next almost timidly, and put up a small, firm hand, which he took, and unintentionally held.

"You're splendid!" she said. "You've no idea how I wish that I might ride like you, because I have had to work so hard, all the time, to do what I do."

Beauty found himself tongue-tied, and strangely seeking for words. It was the first time she had ever addressed him directly, and he had been too bashful in all that wonderful week, now past, to make any overtures, although each day he had found a place

where he might stand alone and watch "Mademoiselle Zoe," the "world's greatest rider," as she did her turn. That she was one of the lead performers of Bigger's Biggest had had nothing whatever to do with his temerity; only that she seemed too dainty, and too sweet, for a mere cow-puncher to approach.

"That's mighty good of you!" he blurted, and then turned a wholesome red beneath his tan, and fled incontinently, fearing that he would say too much.

Her few words of praise were, for some reason that he could not in the least explain, the most appreciated of any that he received in that hour of victory.

When the Old Man and Williams met him at the table that night, with a quite new look of respect and flattery in their attitude, he received their praise in a diffident manner. All he said to the mighty man was: "Humph! I knowed I could do it! That's nothin'. But I want to tell you something: I've decided that sixty dollars a month ain't enough pay for Jim, and I'm goin' to think it over before I decide how much he really ought to get." Whereupon the doughty manager, in his turn, said "Humph!"

CHAPTER IV.

"That Mademoiselle Zoe is a mighty pretty little girl," ventured Beauty to Jim, as he watched the latter putting the finishing touches to his make-up on the following afternoon.

The clown glanced around to make certain that none of those near were listening, and said: "That girl is as fine a one as there is with Bigger's. Poor little thing! What a pity that she can't have a chance!"

"Why, I thought she was one of the stars—the ones that get the biggest pay, I mean," Beauty said, as if salaries were the only consideration.

"She is," assented the clown, dabbing a long, straggling mustache to his upper lip; "but that father of hers is a holy terror. The old man's all right when he's sober, but once about every three months he breaks loose and—well, I'm afraid he abuses little Marie. That's her real name—Marie Barber. Once, while Dick was on a bender, she appeared with a black eye that was pitiable."

Beauty swore softly, and asked: "Why don't she shake him? She's of age, ain't she?"

"You don't understand these people," replied Jim, in his gentle, tired voice. "Loyalty is not a virtue with most of them. It's inherent. They never think of any other course. Now, here is Marie. She is no more than an adopted child of Dick Barber's, and he does nothing more than act as her manager, and draw her wages, and all that; but he is all she has. She's a good girl. From babyhood, when Dick was not too old and heavy to ride, he taught her. And he did a good job, too, as you can see, for she's the very best in the business. Most all of them admit it. She's not afraid of anything in the world. If he told her to jump from a flying trapeze to a horse's back, she'd leap. She does the most daring and the most dangerous stunts that any human being has ever tried with horses."

Beauty remembered his amazement when first he saw her handling her six white horses in a hippodrome act, riding sometimes one, then two, and catching the reins of the others as they passed beneath her until they were stretched out in a long tandem line. That did not seem so difficult; but only yesterday he had seen her do those flying somersaults from the springboard without anything to save her in case of a fall, and so nodded an understanding head.

"She's got other things, too, besides that dad of hers to annoy her, I think," added Jim, still talking in the same even tone. "A fellow living the way I do notices a good many little occurrences that are none of his business. I've an idea that Margovin, the Austrian, is bothering around her. He's entirely too chummy with old Dick for any good purpose."

Beauty scowled savagely upward at the ridge of the tent, started to speak, then said nothing; but even when doing his own turn that afternoon, he thought of the little Marie, and was glad that she was there on the borderland to see him work. There was scarcely any doubt of it now that he was destined to become the feature of the show, and, by way of an extemporaneous surprise, he "roped" a dog that blundered across the ring, and then good-naturedly applauded when Jim promptly seized the occasion to lead the dog back and deliver it to its owner. For the first time, he studied the act of the strong man, when the famous Margovin permitted an automobile to run over a bridge he supported on his back, and swung a dozen men on a plank across his shoulders.

The plainsman did something unusual for him after the performance was over —loitered around, eagerly looking for Marie. Almost by accident, he found her in her street garb, hurrying away from the lot. She smiled a recognition, and he made bold to walk beside her.

"I was just hurrying up to the shops to buy some things I need," she said almost timidly, and Beauty promptly assured her that was just what he wanted to do.

She glanced at him doubtfully, but seemed reassured by his frank, honest eyes, and permitted him to accompany her without protest. He was intensely disturbed when some small boys recognized him, and followed after, pointing him out to others, and he also discovered that every now and then some man or another turned to look at him. He had not realized until then that he had the picturesqueness of the real cowboy in his everyday clothes. Before he knew it, he had made his promised intention good by buying a less conspicuous hat and a suit of clothes.

"I'm goin' to dude it a little," he explained to the dark-eyed girl who went with him, and laughed with the shopkeepers at his quaint remarks. Already they were on easy terms of friendship, and on their return they loitered like a pair of children in front of display windows, and ignored the curious ones who saw them.

Their enjoyment of the little release was disturbed by the blond woman, who sighted them from across the street, and promptly intercepted and accompanied them back toward the city of tents. She fairly crowded Marie into the background with her conversation, and gave him no further chance to talk to the dark-eyed girl until they were back on the lot, so that he was rather disappointed when he started to walk toward Number Fifty for his dinner. On the way, he met Jim hurrying in from the fields, where he spent every spare moment in what Beauty considered the quite unmanly occupation of studying plants and beetles through a microscope.

"Jim," said the rider abruptly, "What's that yellow-headed girl's name? The one that does the trapeze stuff along with three other women?"

"Oh, you mean Cora Butts!" answered the melancholy little clown. "Why?" he asked, with a little twinkle in the corners of his grave eyes.

"Nothin'. Only she does!" savagely remarked Beauty, as he continued his way.

To the surprise of the manager who had witnessed his quickness in turning the dog to account in the afternoon's performance, and wished to tell him that he considered it "good business," Beauty ate his supper almost in silence, and left the car immediately after to loiter around alone. Usually, at this hour, it was his chief delight to visit the animals in the menagerie, carrying to the bear, for whom he felt a vast sympathy, a frame of honey, and pausing to explain to the big buffalo that no injury had been done by returning him to the big show, where he was sure of three square meals a day without danger. The lions also fascinated him, and, despite the jeers of Jim, Beauty was convinced that Mike Burns, their trainer, billed as Signor Frateni, was certainly the bravest man on earth.

In the trapping room, that night, he came in contact with the first sign of ill will that had manifested itself since he

2A

joined the show. Margovin was standing there, moodily awaiting his turn, with a bath towel thrown over his immense shoulders, and scowling at every one who came near. He seemed to have added an extra curl to his black hair, that, parted in the middle, was brushed carefully into hornlike peaks behind his temples. As he came hurrying into the tent, Beauty heard the giant say to one of his assistants, in a sneering tone: "There goes the what you call cowpuncher, eh? Is it not?"

The foreign intonation did not strike Beauty at the moment so much as the sneering tone. He walked slower, and caught another remark:

"Pouf! What is he to make the such a fuss over? Nothings! He is not, as I, a big performer. I could snap his neck—so!"

And Beauty, hurt and angry, caught the sound of a finger snapped across a thumb; but he had no time to spare just then, having learned that the gravest crime in circusdom is lack of punctuality, so hurried onward to make his change.

The tent in which performers changed for circus work was an oblong, across the center of which was a canvas partition dividing it in half. The rear half was again divided by canvas, leaving thus a quarter of the tent for the men's dressing section, and the adjoining quarter for the women. The quarter apportioned to the women was again divided so that principals were allotted their own private places, where they might open the trunks, each of which contained a mirror, a chair, and smaller belongings. The male performers had no such privacy. The undivided half of the tent was called the trapping room, and it was there that the riders, garbed, received their mounts and waited, preparatory to the call that was to send them out through the big swinging curtains into view of the spectators.

At the entrance to the women's side, sat the wardrobe mistress, "The Circus Mother," so called, like a dragon, protecting her flock from intrusion, and, when Beauty returned, she nodded to him in a friendly way, and made a gesture of contempt at the back of the strong man who was just passing out. The cowboy grinned appreciatively as he walked across to where stood Baldy, held by a groom.

As Beauty waited, with an arm thrown carelessly over the horse's neck, watching performers come hurrying back through the swinging curtains, and others hastening out, the bizarre scene had lost its glamour. Yesterday he had gone his way, happy and careless, feeling that he had accidentally fallen into a splendid and joyous life; but now he discovered other things: That it was possible for one man to hate another, though no injury had been inflicted or meditated. Moreover, fearless as he was, the cowboy knew that he was on strange ground, and was consequently afraid of conflict with this abnormally developed cave man who could bend iron bars, break chains, and play with cannon balls so enormous that Beauty, who had surreptitiously tried, could not lift them.

Back there in the hills that he had known from boyhood, or on some of that long and wild stretch of the world that he had bravely adventured over, a gun would have been an arbiter for insult that would place them on equal terms; but here, in a city of the Pacific coast, he was as helpless as a child. He was suffering the queer and brutal side of the law, that failed to make all men equal in physical ability, yet debarred them from finding means to place themselves on equality. He was learning the lesson that so many had learned before, that the so-called barbarous codes of the so-called barbarous West had their merits. Here he was, "hog-tied," as he would have expressed it, because he dared not say anything to a hairy brute who could murder him with bare hands, even though he had done nothing to merit injury, and the law would compel him to act the part of a poltroon and submit to insults and sneers such as he had just heard.

Beauty's performance that evening was lacking in zest, though he saw his new friend Marie watching him, and back of her the insistent Cora, who

strove to attract his attention and smirked when he came through the curtains with the fantastic Jimmy sprawling and kicking in front of his saddle.

Down the coast they went, in the following days, playing inland towns, where the heat was so intense that the animals, whose native habitat was in the far Northern climes, sweltered in their cages, and those from tropical regions reveled in the warmth.

At times, the sleeping cars, into which the tired performers wearily crawled at the close of the evening's show, were insufferably hot, despite the movement of the trains, and in the daytime, as they stood on the sidings, their metal roofs glowing with heat, those who dwelt in them avoided them as much as possible, and sought the shade wherever it might be obtained.

Down in the orange belt, the new performer, for the first time, saw himself depicted in bills. He had not in the least expected such honor; but there he stood, in a big poster, sufficiently lifelike to surprise himself and cause him to wonder where the likeness could have been obtained until he learned that Williams had snapshotted him on that day when he recaptured the buffalo.

He was not nearly so delighted with his own fame as he was with that which had been accorded to Paxton, who, in his grotesque garb, appeared on the other side with a small likeness of himself as he really was in the corner.

Beauty was depicted in the very act of hanging to Baldy's side, whereupon, to the amusement of some of the other members of Bigger's Biggest he promptly went around to the horses' tent and brought the pony to the front of the first big bill, firmly convinced that Baldy, too, would appreciate himself portrayed in such magnificent color. In Beauty's mind, no masterpiece ever painted could have compared with that lurid piece of lithography, and he straightway begged Williams to secure one for him, which he folded up and put in the bottom of a suit case purchased especially for this purpose. That veteran performers laughed at him made not the slightest difference to Beauty, who openly admitted that he was very proud of the picture and regarded it as the finest one he had ever seen.

Margovin's increasing sneers, however, were so open that he could not ignore them, and there were times when his whistle was not so free and careless as he wandered around through the menagerie, or seized small opportunities to ride beyond the borders of dusty towns to get what he called a "snootful of fresh air." He had begun to suspect that the Austrian's dislike was not entirely for professional reasons, but was possibly stimulated by the fact that the plainsman lost no chance to talk to Marie Barber, for whom his admiration steadily increased.

Cora, the aërialist, had begun a more open campaign, and at times assumed an intimate air that he could not escape. She occasionally spoke to him in front of the others, calling him "dear boy," and a few other pet appellations in a manner intended to be highly coy and captivating. She even attempted to caress Baldy, hoping thus to win her way into Beauty's good graces; but that wise animal, resenting a touch from anybody save Beauty, who insistently took care of him, or the little clown, who fed him with lumps of sugar, snapped so viciously at the gilded lady's face that she fled in terror.

By the time the show had reached Los Angeles, where it was to make its last long stand on the coast, Jim had become so thoroughly inured to his new life that he felt completely at home; and Los Angeles was destined to stand out in his memory, for it was there that he had his first day alone with the little Marie.

Sunday in that city was a day off; but few of the performers had exercised their privilege of lodging in hotels, and inasmuch as old Dick Barber had mysteriously disappeared on the night before, Beauty found the girl in a receptive mood when he called her to one side and begged her to accompany him to Santa Monica for the day. He could not understand why she made her acceptance provisional upon his meeting her at a rendezvous up in the city

and quite distant from the lot; for he would have been proud to have let the other members of Bigger's Biggest see them as they departed. And this was more than ever so when he met her at the appointed place, clad in her finest, and instantly decided that she was the most beautiful girl he had ever talked to or been seen with.

Down along the lovely beach he walked with her, glancing from the corners of his eyes at passers-by, and surprised that everybody did not stop and look at a being so beautiful as Mademoiselle Zoe.

For a long time he had decided that she had the ten-thousand-dollar beauty of the show "backed off the boards," and now, at this seaside resort, he added the conclusion that, despite the boasting and well-deserved fame of the Los Angeles beauties, Marie was far finer than any of them. To those who watched them, she was simply a sweet-faced young woman, with eyes rendered unusually attractive by a touch of sorrow, and a lithe, well-rounded young figure that betrayed the perfection of health, while the man beside her was particularly noticeable for his well-set figure, and the sunburned, good-natured face under a shock of hair that was ridiculously tow-colored. His lack of self-consciousness and disregard for formalities made him appear more ridiculous to those accustomed to seaside resorts, for he entered into every enjoyment with the zest of a boy making his first big trip to Coney Island.

With Marie by his side, he tried everything from flying swings to shooting galleries, and in the latter won the disapproval of the proprietors by such remarkable marksmanship that the places were wrecked. In a fit of boyish exuberance, almost amounting to intoxication, he even shot a hole through two mirrors, and was sobered by the price he had to pay. They went swimming together, where he found himself sadly outclassed, having passed all his life in places where rivers and lakes were scarce; yet consoled himself by admiring the excellence of Marie's art.

They had planned to return on a late-afternoon train, but succumbed to the night glories of the place, and dined together in the balcony of a restaurant whence they could look upon the sunset and the sea. The Pacific was justifying its name, and only the light swells racing languidly up the exquisite beach kept them aware that they were facing an ocean instead of a great lake. The glory of the sunset died away from dull red into deep purple, and here and there a star appeared, seemingly quite close, and unduly bright. The moon was rising as if she had crept up over the sea for their benefit when they reluctantly turned away, purposing their return.

"Well," said Beauty despondently, "I suppose we've got to go now; but somehow or another it seems like a clean waste of all the good Lord's given us to go back."

"I wish we never had to," said the girl at his side, with a slight shiver, as if loathing to return to her hard and humdrum life.

Beauty suddenly caught her arm through his, turned resolutely away, and led her back to the white, firm sand of the beach.

"We'll not go back until the last train," he declared, "and if anybody says anything, they'll have to talk to me."

Something of the mood of the night seemed to have involved them, and all the gayety of the day gave place to an earnest thoughtfulness as they trudged on and on over the moonlit sands, until they were beyond the crowd, the noise of voices, and the sounds of the resort. They found a huge rock, back on a dune above the highest reach of the tide, and for a long time sat there, speechless, watching the never-ending curl of the waves that raced toward them with their brilliant silver crests and then receded, as if apologetically leaving them to their solitude.

"Do you realize," she said suddenly, as if she had been thinking of him, "you are the strangest man I've ever known. It may be because I've met so few who are not performers. Sometimes it seems to me that you're the first one I've ever known from that big, outside world,

where people do things that amount to something. And sometimes, too, I feel something else: That you are too big and fine to be in this business. It's poison, Beauty."

He looked at her curiously, as if striving to comprehend what she meant by her condemnation of the life that to him appeared so alluring.

"I don't see why you say that," he rejoined; "it looks mighty fine to me. Maybe it's because it's all so new; but, you see, it's the biggest chance I ever had in my life. I'm what the boys call 'a rope neck.' I never saw a real big circus till I saw this one. I never had an idea that I could make as much money as I'm makin' now. Why! Do you know, little girl, that the biggest month's wages I ever drew before the Old Man picked me up was a whole lot less than I'm getting now every week! Why, I didn't know what money was!"

"But there's no money that can make up for home," she said wistfully.

He laughed a little bitterly.

"I don't know about that," he said gravely. "You see, I never had one. My father and mother were what we used to call movers. Lucky thing, I suppose, that I was the only kid, because they died within a week of each other, of typhoid, in a little bit of a camp over in Montana. Some neighbors came around and got me because they couldn't very well see a seven-year-old starve to death, and they loaded me off to the nearest poorhouse. Then a rancher and his wife came along in a couple or three years and took me. I thought it was mighty kind of them, at first, until I found out that this rancher was lookin' for cheap labor, and from that time on, until I was about seventeen, I didn't know anything except get up in the mornin' at four o'clock, work till seven, and then get a mighty mean breakfast, then work some more till noon, then get a little lunch, and work till dark, then do some more chores, milking cows till my arms ached, and bedding down horses, and splitting kindling, and by that time it was usually about nine o'clock. And by that time, too, I was always so dog-goned tired I'd be falling asleep. If I left anything undone, the old man's pet method of reminding me of it was to start the next morning with a hame strap. I've got scars on my back now where the buckle walloped over and cut through the flesh. No, I don't go much on this home business."

He turned and smiled at her, as if time had obliterated all the hardness of his boyhood save the memory, and her eyes were big with sympathy, and her face quite grave.

"Go on," she said softly, "tell me the rest of it."

"There's nothin' more to tell," he said carelessly, "because when I got seventeen I was a heap huskier than the old man thought. I'd been waitin' then for several years, sayin' to myself all the time: 'I'll stay here until I'm big enough to lick you, and then I'm goin'.' Maybe one thing that delayed it was my hand."

He stretched his left hand out toward her, and, in the moonlight, she discovered for the first time that it was knotted and distorted.

"That," he said grimly, "happened in the year of the big blizzard. I used to have to pull up water for the stock with a windlass, and the thermometer was somewhere away below zero when that happened. My fingers ached so from the cold that I was cryin', and couldn't hold the handle any longer, and it flew loose and broke all those knuckles. I went up to the house, grittin' my teeth with the pain, and you can't guess what the old brute did! It was sixteen miles to the nearest doctor, and this foster father of mine said I'd have to wait until the blizzard was over, and maybe if they put a bandage round my hand I could finish watering the stock!

"That's the only time I ever knew the old lady to say anything to him, because he used to beat her about as often as he did me. She cried, and begged him to do something, and to hitch up a team and take me to town, until he finally gave in enough to say: 'Well, if the fool has to go, I'll lend him a horse and he can ride in; but I'm not goin' to hitch up any team for a poorhouse runt

that don't earn his salt nohow.' So I got on the horse, with her helpin' me, and rode away sixteen miles with the snow and ice cuttin' me in the face, sometimes hangin' to the reins with my teeth when my hands got so cold and hurt so bad I couldn't hold up any longer, and most of the time cryin' with pain and reelin' around in the saddle until I thought I'd fall off.

"The old man had to treat me better after that, though, because this doctor —God bless him!—took me back in his own sleigh, and told this fine foster daddy of mine that if ever he heard of my bein' abused again he'd organize a vigilance committee and hang him to the first thing big enough to hold his weight; and the last thing he said when he went out of the shack we called home —which wasn't one-tenth as good as the barn the old man kept his stock in—was to tell me that if ever the old man laid a hand on me again I was to come and tell him, the doctor."

Beauty laughed a little, as if at some pleasant recollection, glanced at Marie, then looked back over the side sweep of the moonlit ocean.

"Well," he said, with an under note of enjoyment, "at seventeen, I was a pretty big kid; ganglin', maybe, and almost as awkward as I am now, but, my goodness, I was strong! The old man gave me a cussin' one night out by the barn, and I thought it all over durin' the night; so the next mornin', when he came out, I called him inside and shut the door, and maybe you think I didn't tell him of all that had been boilin' up in me for all those years!

"'You'd better get off your coat,' said I, 'because I think I'm 'most big enough now to give you all that's comin' to you.'

"He didn't wait to peel down, but just went for me, and I was right about it, because when I got through with him, that old cuss was snivelin' and beggin' for mercy, and yellin' for help like a Piute Indian who's fallen into a hornets' nest, and got tangled in a barbed-wire fence at the same time. I had to take him out and duck him in the cattle trough to bring him to, and, after that, I just walked up to the house and kissed the old lady good-by, and trudged away. I was goin' out to drift, and I've drifted ever since.

"Sometimes the hills called to me, and sometimes it was the prairie. I don't suppose you'll understand that; but they did. Why, I've heard the trees up on the slopes, miles away, whisper to me in the night, and I've heard little brooks talk. I've heard the wind on the grass come whisperin' toward me to say that there was some place away over beyond the edge of things where I could find somethin' fine and interestin'. I've had birds perch around my camp fire and tell me all kinds of things, that sort of made me happy and glad because I was alive. I've seen them fly away when the winter came, and heard them sing 'Good-by, Beauty Jones! We like you because you're clean, and decent, and you ain't done no one any wrong.' It's all I've got to brag about, that is, that no one can say, unless he lies, that, aside from that old man who abused me, I never did any one, or any livin' thing any harm, unless forced to it. I've fought, and I've gambled, and I've taken my chance, but I reckon the good Lord isn't goin' to hold any grudge against a feller for them things, so long as He knows that he always tried to do the square thing."

He could not understand, when he turned and looked at her, why she clapped both her hands over those maimed knuckles and faced him with eyes that were luminous and glistening with unshed tears of sympathy.

CHAPTER V.

Beauty was not accustomed to sympathy. It rendered him helpless and awkward. He fought against sentiment of any sort, his life being a perpetual struggle against impulse; so he arose abruptly, and said: "Seems to me, little girl, that I'll be gettin' you into an awful row if we don't turn back. Let's go and forget all about this foolish story of mine."

The star equestrienne of Bigger's Biggest got to her feet reluctantly, and

took his arm of her own volition as they started to retrace their steps down the course of the long white beach; but the spell of his hard youth was still in her imagination.

"Didn't you ever see them any more?" she asked, as if loath to leave the subject.

"Yes," he said. "That is, I saw her once more. That was when I got hold of quite a little fortune for such as me—three thousand dollars—and went back. The old man was gone to where he couldn't beat boys any more. The ranch was rented out, and she was livin' in that same old house that wasn't fit for Baldy to stay in. So I blew the money in fixin' her a place that was decent. Every once in a while I write to her. She was right grateful, and always calls me her boy. I write to her about once a month. I suppose I'll go back and see her again. She's gettin' old, and, somehow, as one goes along, things look different. I see now that she did the best she could for me. Another time I sent her a little money I had, thinkin' she might need it, but she sent it back and said all she wanted was for me to come and see her. So I suppose I'll go sooner or later, now that I'm just like a millionaire and got all I want.

"There's a whole lot happened since I left there. There's a town sprung up right on the ranch I used to work on, and where I was beaten and abused. I'd be sorry to hear that, if the old man was alive, but somehow it does me good to know that the only person that was ever very kind to me when I was a boy don't need to worry any more over money, and I'm glad of it."

They were back to where they were meeting scattered promenaders of the night crowd. Either in pairs, or laughing groups, they passed them, strangers all, living apart from those who traveled in tents and made their livelihood by their skill.

The girl's words came back to Beauty until, he, too, felt almost a man apart from all those who lived in that other world.

Down in front of one of the shooting galleries, as they passed, they heard a commotion, and turned curiously to see the cause, only to discover Margovin blustering his way out of the place. The girl caught Dick's arm, much to the plainsman's surprise, and drew him hurriedly away. He heard a coarse shout in that unmistakable foreign accent following after them, like something evil from an evil mind.

"What was that?" the girl demanded, suddenly pausing; but the man at her side suddenly lost his attitude of comradeship, shut his jaws grimly, and hurried her along.

"Oh, nothin' much!" he replied; but in his mind Margovin's words were not forgotten, and his companion wondered, as they returned to the city, why he was so silent and preoccupied. He bade her good night as he assisted her up the steps of the sleeping coach, where all was silent and still, and she, with a whispered return, vanished through the open door with a wave of her hand that appeared white and childlike in the gloom of the overhanging eaves.

He walked slowly away in the direction of Number Fifty, and then paused irresolutely. That portion of the broad yards was silent. Off in the distance, the intermittent puffing of a switch engine told that labor had not come to rest, and that the demands of traffic were being fulfilled, pausing neither for night nor the Sabbath. Away beyond, showing dimly under the moonlight, like a misty painting of an Oriental encampment, the tops of the tents loomed up against the purple background. Only the chattering of the laughing hyena, and the occasional rumble of a discontented lion told him that those animals of the South lands wandered restlessly, crying for freedom in the open fields. To the right of him, towering up against the sky line, tier on tier, were the dark shapes of the skyscrapers of this "city of the Angels," where the show had paused. Back of him lay Pasadena, embowered in palms and orange trees, and he knew that still back of that slumbered the mountains for which, of a sudden, he yearned.

For a few minutes, his mind was

filled with the artist's and poet's appreciation, inherited from some unknown ancestor, perhaps, unfostered and undeveloped, but refusing to die despite all the hardness of Beauty's rough and perilous past.

His memory, swept back over the vast, bleak spaces of his life, some of them filled with a profound misery by comparison with which his present surroundings seemed perfection; yet, somehow, he hungered spiritually for other places he had known, and was filled with a vague unrest. He was not quite certain that being a star performer in one of the biggest shows on earth was his ideal; but one thing he knew: That between him and the strong man there could be no friendship. For more than an hour, he wandered aimlessly up and down the beaten cinders of the yards, making a decision, and it led him to wait for Margovin to appear.

The strong man came, at last, looming huge and gigantic in the night, as he made his way toward one of the coaches. His strong hands were already on the polished rails, preparatory to mounting the steps, when he was arrested by a voice from behind, and turned.

The plainsman was standing but a short distance from him, having come unobserved around the end of the car.

"Margovin, or whatever your real name is," drawled the quiet voice, "before you get up in that coach, I've got something to say to you."

The Goliath released his hold on the rails, and turned with an air of surprise.

"Oh, it's the little what-you-call cowpuncher," he said disdainfully, "and what does the little man want with me?"

Beauty refused to be angered by the tone of contempt or the strong man's attitude.

"What I want to say," he said, "is this: When Miss Barber and I walked past you down there this evening, there on the beach, you know, you yelled something after us that I didn't exactly like; and, when I got to thinkin' it over, I made up my mind that I'd got a few remarks to make to you before I could go to sleep."

He took four or five steps, covering the intervening space, and suddenly looked up at the giant with a face that appeared very determined in the light, and out of which glared two level, unflinching eyes that to the Austrian seemed baleful.

The big man, fearless as he was, and a bully by instinct, drew back, and clenched his fists, as if anticipating an attack.

"No need to do that," said Beauty, in the same quiet, restrained drawl, "because I'm not goin' to fight you for two reasons: One is that fightin' with fists would give me no chance, and the second is that it is not my way. Margovin, when I fight a man, one of us dies. The thing I wanted to say to you was this: That the very next time that you ever yell anything at me when I'm out on the street, or on the beach, either alone or with any woman, you want to begin to make a will and order your coffin. You understand me, don't you? That goes!"

Before the astonished Austrian could grasp the full meaning of this or sputter a reply, the frontiersman had turned on his heels, walked around the end of the sleeping car, and vanished.

Margovin hesitated for an instant, then started as if to run after him; but something in the swing of the shoulders and an air of preparedness in that moving shape checked him. He mounted the car steps with a derisive oath, and when Beauty looked back from the side of Number Fifty, the strong man had disappeared.

For a moment the plainsman stood in a thoughtful pose, and was preparing to ascend when he sighted another figure hastening along between the rails. Something unusual in the man's gait made him pause. The oncomer advanced at a more rapid gait, and now Beauty identified him as Jim Paxton, staggering a trifle, as if under the influence of liquor, and sustained an alternating moment of disgust, surprise, and anger that changed to pity.

"Never thought it of Jimmy!" he said to himself, and started to meet his assistant.

It was not until Beauty was almost against him that the clown recognized his friend, and said brokenly: "Jones! Beauty! Help me!"

There was nothing of intoxication in the voice, and Beauty hastened to Paxton's side, then started back in surprise. The face that was lifted toward his was smeared with blood, and the nose was pitifully battered and swollen. The little man threw a hand up on the cowboy's arm, as if to prevent himself from falling.

"For—for the Lord's sake! Who did that?" Beauty shouted, his voice hoarse with impetuous anger. "I'll get even with the man that did that, if you can't!"

Jim seemed to pull himself together, and tightened the hold on his friend's arm.

"Then," he said quietly, "I'll not tell you. I'll not let you make a fool of yourself on my account. Help me to get a surgeon out to fix this nose up. It's broken."

The necessity for attending to one in pain calmed the Westerner more than any command to keep the peace, and he almost carried the smaller man back out across the rails that lay glistening beneath them, and, following the directions of a patrolman, found a surgeon's house, and aroused him.

Something in the smaller man's silence and patience, some refinement in the battered face and grave eyes, appealed to the surgeon as he ministerd to his patient.

"Who did this?" he asked. "Who are you, anyway?"

"A clown! Just that, doctor." was all the reply that Jim made; and Beauty, who had been straining forward in the hope of learning the particulars of the injury, drew back, disappointed.

On their return to the cars, Beauty insisted on knowing the particulars of the assault; but Paxton refused to talk.

"Maybe I'll tell you, some time," he said. "And maybe I shan't."

And Beauty had to be content with that, but went to sleep wondering who could have been so heartless as to strike such a kindly, retiring, unobtrusive man as his friend.

There were still certain points of circus business with which Beauty was not familiar, and with one of these he was to come into conflict on the day after Jimmy's injury. Early in the morning, he visited the clown, whose bandaged face was now discolored, swollen, and painful, and was certain that for at least a day or two the little man would be unable to work, despite the concealment afforded by his make-up. Paxton was still reticent, refusing any information whatever as to the assault, or his assailant.

Beauty knew enough of the conduct of a circus, however, to understand the necessity of informing the ringmaster of the clown's plight, and of notifying him that the most startling feature of the whip act would have to be cut out.

"What is it?" demanded the ringmaster. "A case of being drunk and falling down? Or did he just naturally go out looking for trouble and find it?"

Beauty attempted to shield his friend, but had no information to give, and this truth was so speedily wormed from him that his effort to protect his friend was a failure. All he could say was: "I have told you all I know about it," and then turn away, lest he make matters worse by saying either too much or too little.

He had barely passed out when the blondined Cora appeared before the ringmaster, and, with an apparent attempt to be of service, volunteered to take the clown's part in holding the cigar.

"It would make a bigger hit, anyway," she asserted, "to have a good-looking woman do that stunt, and I told Beauty Jones so one time; but he couldn't see it because he wanted that drunken little reprobate, Paxton, to work with him."

"What's that?" demanded the voice of the ringmaster. "Drunken reprobate, you say! Does he drink?"

"Sure he does!" she answered brazenly. "They all do."

With a grunt of anger, the ringmas-

ter turned on his heel. "I'll teach him something," he growled, "that'll sober him for a while. I'll send him to the wagon. A fine of a week's salary would do that guy some good. Yes, you go on if you don't mind, and take on that part of the act. We can't lose that. I'll tell Jones to expect you."

Cora disappeared with a highly satisfied smile, but the ringmaster failed to notify Beauty of the substitution, with the result that when the cowboy appeared in the ring to do his turn he was surprised to find the sprightly aërialist present with what was intended to be a very winning smirk, and doing her best to gain some recognition from the spectators.

For the first time since he had known her, Beauty had a friendly feeling toward the gymnast, and smiled in return, whereupon she doubled her efforts. So accustomed was he by this time to the crowd and its clamor he had no fear of an accident, and did his famous lash trick without accident or tremor, pausing only to reassure her in words so lowly uttered that the sound could not reach the spectators.

"Don't be afraid," he said quietly, "because I'll be mighty careful. Why, I'd rather cut my right hand off than mark you after your bein' so kind to poor old Jim and takin' his place!"

The act went off without a failure, although, much to the aërialist's disappointment, the applause was weak and scattered compared with that usually accorded the performance when the little clown was present. It was beyond her intellect to understand that there is a vast incongruity between the smoking of a big, long, black cigar by a woman clad in silk tights, and a clown made up with special reference to the act.

Beauty's gratitude, always overflowing and exaggerating trivial kindnesses, led him to seek his substituted assistant immediately after the performance to thank her. He found her in the trapping room, and regarded it merely as her way when she succeeded in getting him to a corner where, with his back toward the other waiting performers, she looked up at him, and gave the greeting the appearance of an extremely confidential tête-à-tête.

Margovin was behind them, scowling blackly at the cowboy's back, and still brooding over the speech of the night before. A group of acrobats were over on the other side watching them curiously, and at this very inauspicious moment Marie came past the mistress of the wardrobe, prepared for her turn. Margovin, as if by accident, got in her way, and muttered in a hoarse rumble: "What do you think of that? This cowboy man is what you call the 'lady-killer,' is it not? But all the time it's different women. Pouf! Well, others shall know of the kind they are."

The astute Cora Butts, discovering that the little equestrienne was looking in her direction with a strangely troubled face, suddenly put her arm up on Beauty's shoulder, and, to his utter astonishment, elevated herself on her tiptoes and gave him a playful peck on the cheek with her lips.

The little Marie did not wait long enough to see the plainsman suddenly whirl round with a look of surprise and annoyance, and back away from the aërialist as if she were poison; nor did she hear the remark that suddenly subdued the effervescent Cora.

"You cut that out! None of that stuff goes with me! I'm thankful to you for helpin' out poor Jimmy Paxton; but if you want to kiss anybody, you'd better hunt round for your daddy, or your sweetheart!"

Rebuffed and angered, the gymnast stepped back from him.

"Better men than you," she said, "would have been glad to have had me done that!"

"Well, go to them, then!" said Beauty, "because, you see, I don't like it, and they do!"

He was suddenly aware that he had been rude to one who had done him a favor, and so attempted to palliate his offense with a good-natured grin; but he gave her no further opportunity for speech, and sauntered carelessly away and out toward the horse tent, as was his custom, to make certain that Baldy had been properly cared for.

The hour of relaxation between the afternoon and evening performances dealt him a strange blow, for, seek as he might, he could not find the dark-eyed girl for whom he had conceived such a warm liking. He utilized the time, therefore, by visiting his friend Jimmy, and sympathizing with him over his injury; but when he told the little clown of the kindliness of the aërialist, the latter merely smiled.

At the evening performance, Beauty waited in the entrance to watch Mademoiselle Zoe in her act, and to meet her, as usual, coming out; for this had become one of his never-failing delights, and he was troubled and surprised when, instead of speaking to him gayly as was her wont, she merely nodded with a set face and hurried past him. Hurt and distressed, he watched her as she passed through to the trapping room and disappeared. He turned to discover the strong man grinning at him malevolently, and his sentiments changed to anger. He started toward the latter impetuously, but was interrupted by another friend of his—an acrobat—who stopped him with a whisper.

"Did you hear the news?" the acrobat asked, scarcely above a whisper. "Old man Barber's gone off on a bust again! Ain't it a cussed shame what that poor little girl has to put up with!"

Beauty stopped suddenly, and all of his anger melted into sympathy.

"When did it begin?" he asked.

"Oh, two or three days ago, I think," answered the acrobat. "Old Barber has to have them about so often, and when he goes on a toot, he's about as rotten a subject as anybody ever saw. If it was not for the girl, the boss would have left him in jail a dozen times. Why, back in Chicago, he had the snakes; but the only way they could keep Marie—that's Mademoiselle Zoe, you understand—from leaving the show was to take the old man along. Why she sticks up for him the way she does I don't know. No other woman in this world would stand for it! He ought to be in a drunkard's home," he concluded, with the true acrobat's contempt for any man in the business who drank.

A call abruptly terminated the interview, and the acrobat hastily ran toward the curtains to enter with his fellows, while Beauty was left alone.

"Poor little girl! Poor little girl!" he said to himself. "No wonder she acted that way! I wonder if I could do anything to help her? No, I reckon she don't want a big, awkward, homely slob like me stickin' his nose into her affairs in anything like this; but, Lord Almighty! How I wish I could help her!"

Rather aimlessly, he wandered outside. The spread of the canvas was rapidly disappearing, with that marvelous system which characterizes such a vast moving caravan. Gasoline flares here and there, where the rays of the arc lamp did not reach, showed the roustabouts and canvas men hastily dismantling the traveling city. Trodden grass and gaping holes exposed the work of demolition. Within a few hours, Bigger's Biggest would have vanished as mysteriously as it came, and snorting locomotives would be pulling it away to the next scene of ephemeral existence. The clank of chains, the trundling of wheels, and the clink of harness resounded through the air.

Out in the distance, the elephants, with their heavy head pads, were being led away by the mahouts toward the tracks on which stood the waiting cars. Already Beauty could see one of them bunting the chariot of the ten-thousand-dollar beauty forward, while, from the opposite side, the shouts of a driver urged horses to their work. Everything was being utilized. Everything to the uninitiated appeared an aimless rush; but those familiar with the big show knew that every man and every animal was doing exactly what he had done throughout the season. Order and haste, traveling like twins, worked everywhere.

For a few minutes, Beauty idly watched them and thought of Baldy, by this time safely ensconced in his little stall in a car, an object of special attention inasmuch as his master had most

liberally tipped one of the stablemen to give him extra care.

It was the acrobat who interrupted Beauty's reverie and joined him, now appearing a stocky man in a badly fitted suit of clothes, and wearing a cheap derby hat.

"Well," he said cheerily, "we're jumpin' back home ag'in, aren't we? Goin' through Texas now."

"Yes," answered Beauty absently, "home for you fellers, I suppose. Texas wouldn't be exactly home for me."

His attitude was so absent-minded and self-centered that the athlete sought a new topic of conversation.

"Too bad about Jim Paxton, ain't it?" continued the acrobat. "The ringmaster sure did soak him good. A whole week's salary's a pretty big fine!"

"Fine? A whole week's salary? What do you mean?" demanded Beauty, suddenly interested. "I don't quite get you!"

"Why, they fined him a week's salary on account of that row he got into for not showing up. You know—in your act. What happened to him?"

Beauty stood gaping with surprise, his wide mouth open, and frowning.

"Why, I didn't know they ever did such things!" he said.

"Sure they do; they always fine us if we're not on time, and when you don't show up at all you get it in the neck good and plenty."

It was the custom of the manager on leaving one stand for another to have a midnight supper served on board the car, and Beauty, knowing this habit, left the acrobat and indignantly made his way back to Number Fifty, whose steps he climbed without a pause. Apparently, the big man was in high good humor, for Bigger's Biggest had been doing an exceptionally profitable business throughout the entire route, having come in contact with prosperous people who seemed eager to spend their money.

"Well, Jones," he said, looking over his plate with humorous eyes, "what in the deuce is the matter? Big top fallen down, or has somebody picked your pockets again?"

"It's about Jim," said the cowboy gloomily. "Jim Paxton. Somebody beat him up the night before last—caved his face in, and you can't guess what the ringmaster's done. Went to work and fined Jim a whole week's salary! What do you think of that?"

The big man laid his knife and fork beside his plate, and lost his air of good humor.

"Well?" he asked.

"Why, don't you see," patiently explained Beauty, "they're goin' to make poor little Jimmy pay for somethin' that wasn't his fault."

"How do you know it wasn't?" snapped the big man. "They're always fighting, and I want to say this: That if it had been me, I'd have fined him a month's wages!"

He banged his fist on the table in front of him. "I'll put a stop to all this rowing if I have to can every man who gets in a mix-up. We hadn't been out a week before they began it, and now after a couple of months it seems they've begun again. It's got to stop!" As the cowboy said nothing, he added: "Here is this Paxton that you got into the best job he's ever had in his life, and whose pay you got me to boost from thirty a month to thirty a week, who is the first one to go out and raise the devil!"

Beauty did not move, and still stood just inside the door with a dogged air of patience.

"I'm right sorry about that," he said. "It's too bad the way men act; but Jim don't drink, and he's too measly small to fight, so I think we'd better cancel that fine."

For an instant the manager of the show looked at him coldly, aghast at the mere thought of any one attempting to override his will.

"Look here, Jones," he said icily. "Don't you think you've interfered about enough in my business?"

Most of the big man's employees would have shivered at that tone, and promptly abandoned any desire for further argument; but this strange man

from the West was of a different type than those others, and was one of those who decline to accept any one as master.

For the first time since that day he had come aboard the car, a delightfully frank and independent character, unusually patient and good-humored, there flashed in his look something that the manager of Bigger's Biggest had not seen. There was a perceptible stiffening of his neck, a little higher lift to his chin, and the gray-blue eyes suddenly became cold and determined. He stepped forward until he rested his knuckles on the table in front of the manager, put his hat on his head, and said, in a quiet but incisive tone: "Mister, you've been right good to me. I've got no kick comin', and I like you first rate; but this ain't a case for any palaver. I'd stick to you till hell froze over, but I'll be hanged if we ain't come to a turn in the trail where I'm either goin' to have my way, or else take my little grip in one hand, and my horse Baldy in the other, and ride away from the shebang."

There was a tense silence while the manager studied this peculiar type of man leaning toward him, only to be convinced that the threat would be kept, and that the star performer of Bigger's Biggest, the man for whom he had conceived a warm liking, would keep his word.

"But your contract," he protested.

"Forget it!" was the quick response. "There's neither contracts nor money can hold me when it comes to makin' good for a friend."

And the manager believed that, too.

The steward of the car offered him relief by suddenly opening the door, and he seized this occasion as a means of letting himself gracefully out of his predicament.

"Go out," he said, "at once, and find the ringmaster and bring him here right away."

"He's outside here now, sir, waiting to give you his reports," replied the steward.

"Then bring him in!" growled the manager, and when the ringmaster appeared, he looked up at him and said abruptly: "Do you know anything about this Paxton business?"

"Paxton, the clown, working in the Number Eight act? Yes. I fined him a week for getting drunk and failing to show up."

"That's a lie!" roared Beauty, suddenly swinging round on the astonished man, who drew back and said: "Well, I was told that he got drunk."

"Who told you that?" demanded the frontiersman, doubling his fists as if to force the truth from the ringmaster.

"Yes, who told you that he was drunk?" asked the manager, still groping for a way to accede to Beauty's request without lowering his own authority.

"Cora Butts, the aërialist, who works in Number Eleven turn," was the reply, and Beauty, as if some one had slapped him in the face, took a step or two backward, started to speak, shut his lips, then faced the manager, who was watching him.

"Boss," he said, hoarse with repression and earnestness, "I can't call a woman a liar; but I can say this: She was mighty badly mistaken. Why, little Jim never takes a drink! I know that. I'd swear to it! I didn't see him before he got smashed up, but the surgeon that fixed him up told me himself that there was no liquor on Jim. It's true, of course, that Jim wouldn't tell me how it happened, so I don't know; but, boss, can't you fix it up so's his feelin's won't be hurt, by just charging this fine to me? I won't let Jim know nothin' about it. You see, he wouldn't let me give him the money if he knew that I was doin' this; but that thirty a week means an awful lot to the poor little cuss, because he's been havin' a mighty hard row of it, I reckon, and the boost of pay just means everything in the world to him. Put it on me, can't you?"

The manager of Bigger's Biggest looked at the cowboy with a queer expression in his eyes, and said to the ringmaster: "Just tell the wagon to cut that fine out. I'll attend to this thing myself. Now go! You can give me your reports to-morrow morning."

Beauty watched until the door closed, then reached in his pocket and took out a greasy, worn wallet, from which he extracted three ten-dollar bills, and laid them on the table. But the manager of Bigger's Biggest shoved them back at him, and growled: "You put them back in your pocket. Let's forget all about it." And then almost aimlessly blurted out: "Jones, you're just about as near impossible as any man I ever had work for me, but, by the Lord Harry! I want to say this: That I wish I could get together a hundred like you, because, if you are nothing else, you're a good, true friend! And I want to keep you as such."

CHAPTER VI.

At the next stand of the show, Beauty appeared in the trapping room before he was due for a call, and stood as if waiting for some one, his face grave and unsmiling. Cora, the aërialist, came at last from the woman's dressing tent, and walked rapidly toward him, with an air of possession, but lost her smile as she approached and discerned his looks.

"I've been waitin' for you," said Beauty quietly. "And I hate to say what I've got to, but I must. I've just left the ringmaster and told him that you weren't goin' to do anything with me, now or never. I didn't tell him why. Just left him thinkin' you was tired of it, and that I couldn't get you to go on."

"What do you mean by that?" she asked, growing red and white with anger, and seeing her hopes of becoming a partner in a big act vanish so surely.

"I had sort of hoped that you wouldn't ask," replied Beauty patiently, "because I thought you ought to know. But you it was that got that poor, harmless little Jimmy, that never said an unkind thing about any one in his life nor ever did an unkind thing, so far as I know or suspect, fined a week's salary because you said he was drunk."

Out of the dressing tent, and looking straight at them, the aërialist saw Marie, looking plaintive and dejected, and the sight of the girl angered Cora beyond caution.

"Well," she asked, in a harsh tone, "what of that?"

"Just this," came the candid reply, "no one, man or woman, could ever work with me who—well, who handles the truth that carelessly. I didn't want to have to tell you that, either, but you've made me, and——"

The aërialist saw that the little equestrienne had come closer and was staring at them in astonishment, and, beside herself, swept into a fury of words.

"So you've decided that I ain't good enough for you, eh?" she screamed. "You greasy cow-puncher, who never knew what a square meal or a dollar was in your life till you blundered into the business by luck! Can't work with you, eh? Why, you big farmer! You boob! Both you and your little pet Paxton can go to the devil for all I care!"

"That's kind of you, anyhow," drawled Beauty, with a grin.

Speechless with rage, she made one more attempt to speak and failed, then turned and ran back to the dressing room, almost brushing Marie Barber out of her way; but Jim had no opportunity of speaking to the latter, for when she saw him approaching, she, too, hurried away, leaving him standing there, deserted and disconsolate.

"It's a mighty funny old world," said Beauty to himself. "And, somehow or another, I never did understand women."

For the first time he began to fear that he had done something to anger the girl who had walked so confidently with him on the beach, and he was perturbed and heartsore, remembering no fault of his own that could have caused a breach. The new life was losing its charm, and he felt decidedly alone as he met the groom leading Baldy, and stood stroking the faithful muzzle that was held out toward him for a caress.

"Old man," he whispered, "maybe it's all a mistake. You and me don't seem to belong here, nohow. We're sort of lonesome for each other and the days when we was together all the time, back there on the range, or up in the hills

where there wasn't much of anything to bother us at all, and nobody dared treat us mean, or lie about us or our friends. We're in a mean little world, with a corral of canvas all around us, and we don't want to stick around too long, or we'll never get out."

He entered the ring, wondering how the act would go without any one to assist him, and was well into it when he saw, made up so that the bandage appeared a part of his mask, a small man with a crutch, and bandages around a leg, an arm, his head, and his face, and pulled Baldy to a stop, only to discover that some one had conveyed the news to Jimmy, the faithful, who had risen to the necessity, and was there to do his best.

Beauty gave a loud shout of recognition, heedless of who might hear, and outdid all previous efforts at trick riding and roping, feeling that such fidelity merited a reward; but immediately after the performance he insisted on Paxton's return to bed, and good-naturedly scolded him for coming at all.

"Who told you?" he asked, referring to news having been sent the clown that the act was likely to fall somewhat flat without an assistant.

"Marie—little Marie sent me word," mumbled the clown, and Beauty felt a great glow of gratitude.

"By Jingoes! I might have known it!" enthused the plainsman, and straightway hurried off to thank her; but she was nowhere to be found, and another stand passed before Beauty could speak to her. And then it was under sorrowful circumstances.

Word passed around the moving city that one of its inhabitants would not be seen again, and it was in an old border town, where Mexican adobes strove to hold their own against encroachments of modern buildings, that it was told throughout the cars that old Dick Barber was dead. It had whipped him, at last, as it whips all those who dare fight it, the unbeaten king—Liquor. It had ruined him as a performer, and robbed him of finer sense, and driven him to live from the earnings of his daughter, and hurried him out in a delirium that his wasted frame could not resist.

Up on the knoll where the spare grass grew and fought for existence, and where many were buried and forgotten, they buried him, with the strange crowd of circus men, and the gaping crowd of townsmen standing around; the latter in their frontier garb and the former in their clothes that bulged where overdeveloped muscles displayed themselves, an odd intermingling of the wanderers of the civilized parts of the world, and the wanderers of the wide and uninhabited frontiers. Almost without volition of his own, Beauty Jones found himself standing by Marie's side, with hat doffed, and yearning to comfort her. It was his friend, the manager of Bigger's Biggest, who stood on the opposite side, escorted her back to the carriage, the only one available, climbed in beside her, and with her rode down the hill.

The great show moved on that night, but it was the plainsman who tapped on a car window sill before the train started, drew himself up with his sinewy hands, and whispered: "Marie! Marie! Little girl! Don't feel alone. It's tough luck, but there's lots of us here, all around you, that are mighty sorry. And there's some of us, Marie, that'd give their lives for you—to make you happy, and make you feel that what has to happen has got to go through. I wish I could help you. It's me. Me, Beauty Jones, hangin' here to the window sill, and tellin' you not to cry!"

A white hand crept from the shadow and rested on his maimed knuckles, and, as his strength gave way and he dropped back to the ground, something hot dropped on the other hand, and a voice murmured: "Oh, Beauty, Beauty! I can't thank you—I am—I am——"

And that was all; but as he walked away the cowboy kissed again and again the spot where that single tear had fallen, and knew, as if by a flash of understanding that had come in a blaze, that he loved her, and wanted to shield her from all roughness and all harm.

A sense of delicacy kept him from intruding during the next few days, and Bigger's Biggest had entered Texas,

playing the single dates. Jim Paxton was back in the act, plaintive as ever, melancholy, scarred, and joyfully occupying himself with his microscope and ever-increasing entomological collection. Jim avoided Margovin, and quietly bore the sneers and side remarks of Cora Butts, whom he did not permit to annoy him. It was on the day of his greatest triumph that he suffered other tortures than those anticipated.

Biggers had come to a place where, once, in his wandering career, Beauty had been at home, and all the forenoon and before the afternoon performance he had met old friends and acquaintances. Williams, understanding, had slipped him a handful of passes for the emergency, which Beauty passed out with profligate generosity, well knowing what a dollar meant to those men of the ranges between round-ups.

An unexpected feature nearly disrupted Bigger's that afternoon, when, at the conclusion of the plainsman's act, there was a wild salvo of guns discharged in the air, and from the reserved seats with their uncomfortable, red-bound backs, full two score men rushed down, broke into the ring, and with a grand flourish presented to their erstwhile comrade a gorgeously cut Mexican saddle, silver bound, engraved, carved, and a bridle and set of spurs to match. Their spokesman's speech lacked nothing in vigor, as he faced the crowded benches.

"Ladies and gents," he said, "this here Beauty Jones, which ain't so much for lookin's, after all, sort of belongs to us. You-all has seen some ridin' and ropin' here to-day, and they ain't nobody can hold a candle to him; but you ain't seen nothing about that we-all knows—and that is that he's a game buck, clean through and through, the kind that never goes back on his word nor his friends. He is the sort that——" He floundered in his speech that had been most carefully prepared in the back end of Joe Brewster's saloon, and abruptly ended with: "Well, he's a regular hell tooter, Beauty is!"

And owing to the interruption, Bigger's performance was just twenty minutes behind schedule that afternoon, while Beauty grinned and held the saddle, excited performers broke rules and crowded out to a vantage point, and Williams shouted himself hoarse and said to the gratified manager: "Biggest press stuff yet! He's a find! I'll send telegrams ahead that the show was disrupted by cowboy demonstration acknowledging Beauty king of the lariat. Special press stuff East. Newspapers quoting speech. Prophet that gets honor in his own country and busts all rules! Great!"

As Beauty bowed himself out, and his friends resumed their seats, he saw that Marie had reappeared to resume her turn in the performance, and was glad. Now she would forget.

The evening performance passed less riotously, although many of his friends with whom Beauty had passed the afternoon interim were still there, and he had bidden them all good-by and turned toward Number Fifty when he found Jim waiting for him.

"Come take a little stroll," the clown said, "before you tumble in. Got something to tell you."

And Beauty, wondering, walked with him to the shadow of an outlying adobe, against which they leaned.

"It's about that big brute Margovin," said the little man quietly. "And I wouldn't tell you about it, only that it worries me a little. He's been after Marie."

Beauty started angrily, and said: "Been botherin' her, has he? I'm mighty sorry to hear that! What did he do?"

"This afternoon," replied Paxton gloomily, "I came back from the fields out there, and, as you know, it had been pretty hot; so I sat down in the shade of an old ruin—a big adobe, it was—that had fallen and left a patio that was full of wild flowers and stuff that was rather promising. Pretty soon I heard some one walking toward me; but before the person turned the corner he stopped. I wasn't quite certain it might not be a greaser snooping round to steal something, so stood up quietly and looked through a crack in the wall. It

was the Austrian, and I surmised at once he was waiting for some one.

"Before I could get away or let him know I was there, she came along—Marie, I mean—and she was carrying two or three pieces of beadwork that she had evidently bought at one of the curio stores. She didn't see Margovin until she was almost in front of him, and started to pass, after saying 'Good day; interesting town, isn't it?'

"The Austrian stopped her by reaching over and taking some of the beaded purchases she had made, pretended to be interested in them for a few minutes, and then the big, ignorant chump had the nerve to refer to Dick Barber's death; something that nobody with any decency would have done, considering that we buried poor Dick less than a week ago.

"He told her that she had nobody to team with, and said that she had better hook up with him. I think that at first Marie was merely startled, because she flushed up a little bit, and then stepped back a little way in the shade, and said: 'What do you mean by that? I don't believe I understand you.'

"I couldn't quite get what Margovin mumbled; but all of a sudden she backed away from him, and started to leave.

" 'What I meant,' he said hurriedly, 'was that we should be married. You have no one now, neither have I. We are in the same business, Miss Barber, and you need a manager.'

"And then he swelled that big chest of his out, and said to her: 'Who is there like the great Margovin? Ah, miss, I'm the strongest man in the world, me; I break chains to pieces. I throw cannon balls that weigh two hundred pounds. Pouf! Just like that! It would be very good for the little Mademoiselle Zoe to be able to marry so great and strong a man as Margovin!'

"It tickled her so that she fairly bent over and laughed, and it took Margovin a full half minute to comprehend that she didn't quite set such a valuation on him as he placed on himself. You know what he is. Animals of that kind have nothing but strength and ill temper. 'You laugh at me, miss,' he said, trying to appear dignified; but I could see by his very back that he was bristling with anger, and I could also see by her face that, realizing the situation had become ugly, she developed some temper of her own.

" 'Certainly, I do!' she said to him. 'Why not? What in the world makes you think I'd want to marry you? Who ever put it into your head that I needed a manager? Don't you think I've been managed about long enough, and had every dollar I earned squandered over bars?'

"And then she tried to be friendly with him, because I suppose she didn't want this big stiff bothering her with mean tricks, and held out her hand toward him, saying: 'Oh, Margovin! You don't understand at all how funny you are! There is one very great reason why I would never marry you, and that is that I don't love you. That should be sufficient. Don't be angry! Let's be friends.'

"I was sorry that she went that far, but I was something more than sorry—in fact, I was angry—when he refused to take her hand, and turned himself loose. He shook one of his big fingers under her nose, and in English that was pretty badly spattered, and broken, accused her of loving some one else who had cut him out. Had the nerve to assert that he could have married her if some one else hadn't come between them, and then promised to get hold of this some one else at the very first opportunity, and tear him limb from limb until there wouldn't be enough of him left to bury.

"She drew back from him, but kept her temper admirably, still hoping, I suppose, to avoid his enmity; but when he had gone this far she asked: 'Who do you mean?' and he yelled a foul name, coupled with yours.

"I wish you could have seen her! Why, say! That little woman wouldn't be afraid of the devil! She went right up in the air. She crowded up toward that big Austrian, and her eyes were blazing. She dropped the beaded bags on the ground, and, clenching both

hands, held them at her sides, as if she was about to strike him. Foot by foot, she just backed him up against the wall on the other side of which I stood.

"'What of it?' she said. 'Beauty Jones is worth an army of such as you. You keep your ugly tongue away from him, because, if you don't, I'll tell him, and you can be sure of one thing, that if ever I do, all your big muscle and your bullying won't be worth that!' She snapped her fingers under his nose.

"He started in on some more blasphemy, and swore by high heaven he'd get her yet.

"'Marry you—you great, cowardly beast!' she said. And then she turned loose; and never in my life have I heard a man ripped and torn to pieces by a woman as she did him. By Jove! It was well done!

"I was afraid he would lay hands on her; so I stooped down and tore one of those big adobe bricks from the ruins at my feet, and climbed up on top of the wall with the intention of smashing his head in. I had an idea that if I could hit him right, I could kill him at the first smash; but when I got to the top she was going down the street, and he had got so far away that I couldn't reach him. He was pouring epithets and abuse on her, and that's why I decided to tell you about it; because he swore that he would get even with her if he had to do something to her while she was in the ring. 'It's easy enough,' he shouted after her. 'Just a little slip in that act of yours, and it'll be all up with you. You call me a beast and say I have no brains. I'll get you!'

"Right up by the corner where she turned out of sight she stopped long enough to look around for an instant and frown at him, and from where I was, in that bright sunlight, I could get every line of her face. It may have been imagination, but it seemed to me that in spite of her scorn of this big hulking animal, mere beast that he is, she was afraid of him. I made up my mind that you ought to know about it, so the pair of us could keep an eye on him. What do you think about it?"

He looked up at the frontiersman, who was leaning against the wall as rigid and motionless as if stricken to bronze; but he did not know that the latter had assumed an attitude which men who had known him longer would have dreaded as portending something far more deadly than the swift, venomous stroke of the rattlesnake.

For a moment, the little man was disappointed, inasmuch as he had apprehended an outburst of anger, and the possibility of having to check the younger man's impetuosity. Instead of a picture of a flaming indignation, he saw but a face that appeared suddenly to have become graven into immobility, with close-shut lips, an inert attitude, and an air of waiting. It was not until the younger man slowly turned his eyes upon him that he drew back involuntarily. There in the moonlit night, so luminous and brilliant that the shadows of the old adobe walls were defined as if with an artist's pencil, he read for the first time the soul of Beauty Jones. The eyes betrayed an inflexible determination of which there was no mistaking.

"Jones! You mustn't kill him!" almost pleaded the clown, more grotesque, if possible, as he stood there, small and insignificant, than in the motley garb which created shouts of laughter around the ring.

"Kill him? Oh, you needn't worry about that!" was the other man's reply, but in a voice so quiet and self-contained that it deceived even his friend. "No," he added grimly, "there won't be any trouble, Jim, only—only—we'll watch, you and me will. You did quite right to come and tell me about all this. We'll—we'll not do anything, will we, Jim? Only—only we'll just keep an eye on Margovin, won't we?"

And to the little man's surprise, he suddenly burst into a loud, harsh laugh that resounded hollowly from the deserted street in which they stood, and slapped him on the back. "You just quit thinkin' about it now," he said. "I'll 'tend to Margovin. I'll just watch." He turned on his heels and walked rapidly toward the waiting cars that appeared as immovable as if

planted there in the moonlight, and then paused to call over his shoulder: "We'll go to bed now. Been a big day, hasn't it? Good night."

CHAPTER VII.

In the days that followed the memorable conversation in the Texas border town, Paxton could discover no change in his friend, save that he and Marie appeared to find more opportunities of being together, and that seldom did she enter for her turn when the plainsman was not to be seen somewhere in the proximity. Jim decided that the Austrian's threats had been merely the result of temper and a boastful mind, so gradually lost anxiety as the big show by steady stages progressed eastward. It may have been, too, that Beauty's vigilance relaxed, or that he underestimated the strong man's animosity. For himself, he cared not at all, his intrepid spirit and career of vicissitude having made him impervious to fear of any man who did not act first and do his talking afterward. It was the West and the East confronting each other, and neither comprehending the other.

A strange bashfulness had overcome the cowboy, as the show swung eastward like a pendulum returning over its arc, and he bore in mind the rebuff the girl had given that other suitor, and dreaded lest he, too, make a blunder. His discernment was blunted by love. He did not in the least presume to believe that Marie Barber had come to lean upon him for protection. He did not know that she was happier than she had ever been, in all her sordid life, passed in sordid, fictitious surroundings intended to englamour and deceive a crowd, and that, with her harsh foster father's death, all obligations, save to herself, had ceased.

Wise in the life of those who dwelt in canvasdom, she was ignorant as a babe of all who lived outside. Vaguely she knew that they did something, and that by some mysterious means they accumulated enough to buy tickets for a show; for what reason she could not understand. Why any one should be so foolish as to part with money, merely to sit on a hard bench and see a few trained persons do their stunts, evening and afternoon, seemed quite incomprehensible.

Old Dick Barber, unfortunate victim to appetite, and yet wise, had done more for her than she then appreciated, for he had insisted on her studying at all odd times, and when his own limit had been reached had employed a broken-down school-teacher to trail along with the show to carry her farther.

After that unfortunate's departure, her developing, groping mind had traveled ahead irresistibly, until, had she but known it, she was erudite in many lines, though deficient in others. Thus books had told her something of the lives of those who dwelt outside, and there had been awakened in her some sense of longing for that other existence of which she read. Childhood had passed, and judgment had come with its cold reasoning and truth, to tell her that from the canvased fields to the hearthstone where woman is happiest was a far cry.

Neither Beauty nor the faithful little clown knew it, but twice on that Eastern journey the Austrian threatened her, and always he terrified her with his malevolent attitude. It was in Philadelphia that he seized an occasion when she was alone to say to her: "The time is near, Miss Lady, when you come to the end! Just one leetle slip! Just one! And—there you are! Maybe in the ring—flat-smashed! Then the hospeetals, and the herr doctors, and—ah! Such flowers Margovin shall send! But they will on a coffin be!"

It was beginning to wear on her nerves, this incessant suggestion, and the little equestrienne was glad that she did not have to ride that night, and that Bigger's Biggest would make its next stand at Madison Square Garden, the acme of all places in America for a performance, rivaled only by the great Coliseum in Chicago.

For weeks the people of the show had been quietly discussing this stand as an event. Williams had disappeared, and gone ahead to make his arrangements. The famous Kiralfy was working up a

spectacle where hundreds and hundreds of women would form a grand ballet. Biggers had prospered, and the Old Man had "turned things loose" to make this New York production the most notable that had ever been known in the circus world. Money was being poured out to the press like water, and the billboards of the great American entrepôt were to scream the attraction, while electric signs were to blink a message into the night.

The tired performers, however, knew but one thing: That they were to have an opportunity of seeing old sights, and a few weeks of comparatively easy life, without parades, and domiciled in places they regarded as homelike. There would be dressing rooms worth while that beat tents in many ways. Then would come a swift Westward jump, for Biggger's Biggest, daring in its prosperity, had chosen to invade the Orient and work thence down to Australia. It would turn northward after passing Chicago, and strike those cities of the northern boundary line of the United States, so frequently overlooked by the great shows, until again it arrived at the Pacific coast, where it would find transportation. But all of that was far in the future, as these heedless children of Bigger's world regarded it, living as they did from day to day. There would be no winter quarters for this season, but fifty-two weeks of steady salary in one straight year. So they rejoiced.

Beauty had passed a wonderful day in that dreamland of New York of which he had always heard but had scarcely hoped to ever see, and particularly under such auspicious circumstances. He had wandered up Broadway, spent an hour or two at the Aquarium, looked across at the Statue of Liberty, and held long conversations with the animals in the Bronx Zoo before it was time for him to seek Baldy and appear at the performance.

He was almost dazzled with the spectacular opening, and confided to Jimmy, the faithful Achates, that he had never dreamed there was anything so beautiful, nor that there were so many beautiful women in the world. Helen of Troy and Achilles paraded before his eyes, and, later, the wonderful Achilles, a famous stock actor, passed a low lying island on the stage at the east end of the garden from which mermaids recruited from the East Side of New York disported themselves, and chorused a waltz-time song. Greek galleys with papier-mâché oars swept over canvas waves in company with papier-mâché ships that worked on well-oiled wheels. The steam calliope that had been Beauty's delight gave way to a compressed-air organ that shrieked and tooted ragtime songs.

Down in the basement, long rows of animal cages were arrayed against the wall, and a herd of elephants swayed to and fro in a great apartment of their own. The freaks were in a room to themselves, so large that they were almost lost in the open spaces. The giraffes, particular pets of Beauty's, leaned across high network cages, and stared with inquisitive, sorrowful eyes at those who passed beneath them. The baby lions, quite American, having been born in Philadelphia, were, with their mother, accorded a special cage before which animal lovers might congregate and express their interest in subdued tones. There were palm trees clustered here and there, refreshment gardens, and concessionaires, and men who sold knickknacks to the unwary. In that mammoth building was housed not only Bigger's Biggest, but a horde of others, gathered from where Williams, the press agent, only knew.

There was but one thing to distress Beauty, which was that in the necessity for finding room for so many additional performers in the ballet, he and Jim were allotted to dress in a separate room with Margovin. Beauty received this order quietly, and said nothing, although Paxton assumed a grumpy silence, and wondered why the Fates should have been so unkind as to arrange such quarters.

Number Fifty car was lost somewhere over in that distant land called Hoboken. Beauty and Jim, as befitted star performers, found lodgings in a near-by hotel, and were to behave like

gentlemen, dressing themselves after the performance and languidly strolling toward their abode.

Beauty saw the show from the front that day until it was his turn to take a part, and was duly impressed, and wondered what had become of the Old Man whose stature had suddenly increased to magnificent proportions. He almost envied those days when they had dwelt together in the Number Fifty, and could not understand why it was that he had not more fully appreciated the standing of one so great.

The new bills were out, the bills conceived by the press agent, in which Beauty was hailed as the Monarch of the Lariat, and the very speech made by his friends in that far distant town of Texas was quoted there in a crude handwriting, as if it had been written. He was described as the wonder of the age, and another picture had been added, in which there were so many sheets that his rope appeared to be hundreds of yards long, and the end of it was carelessly snapping the ashes from a half-burned cigarette, held by Jim's grotesque lips, while Baldy had become a fiery Arabian steed. Accustomed to fiction in paper as he was, Beauty was driven to laugh at this exaggeration. He wondered, as it came time for his turn, how the people of New York would accept it!

That afternoon passed in a daze. All Beauty knew was that he was given satisfactory applause. He tried to induce Marie, who for a reason he could not understand appeared distressed and nervous, to accompany him in an expedition farther up the island; but she declined on the ground that she had to meet a friend, and he had no further opportunity of seeing her until the evening performance. The turns had been shifted to meet the exigencies of the Garden and the additional performances, so that he was compelled to leave the wonderland of the front at an early hour and seek his dressing room.

Margovin had preceded them, for which both the cowboy and the clown were thankful. Beauty came up to the entranceway at the east end of the Garden just as Marie was starting her horses out for the hippodrome act, which preceded her single horse vaults; but was not in time to speak to her as she passed.

He was suddenly aware that Margovin was there ahead of him in a particularly ugly mood and waiting beside the curtains at a point where he could look out into the ring. Beauty heard the giant speak as the equestrienne rode by him, but could not understand the significance of his words, being ignorant of those other occasions when the Austrian had threatened her.

"You must be careful to-night, Miss Marie," said the strong man meaningly, "for I have a dream had that to-night you finish."

All that Beauty saw was that the girl looked back with a swift, terrified glance, almost dropped her reins, and appeared nervous as she swept into the arena driving the six white horses tandem in front of her. For a moment, he was so angry with the giant that he could scarcely contain himself; then, exercising the prerogative of a privileged character, he hastened out until he was at the border of the nearest ring.

The girl had made a complete turn of the huge circle, and was now bringing her horses back in a swift trot preparatory to that portion of her act in which she stood upon the lead horse, caught the one following, drew him abreast, did a spread, and caught the reins of the others as they came running beneath her. Beauty gave a gasp, for he saw that she was taking the most spectacular part of the performance at the extreme east end of the garden and was probably excited, otherwise she would have waited until well up the side and in front of the stalls before doing this piece of work. He had no time to think of more; for at that very instant a panorama of horror flashed before his eyes, incredibly swift, entirely unexpected, and with many participating characters.

The white horses, shining like battle chargers, and highly strung, sensed the nervousness of the master hand, and

broke into an excited gallop, at which critical moment the questrienne turned her head with a frightened start.

Beauty saw it all! Saw that Margovin had stepped from behind the curtains in that crucial instant and attracted her attention with a gesture that conveyed malevolent triumph; saw her struggle to check the second horse, and attempt to plant her foot on its smooth, rippling back; saw her failure and desperate struggle to regain equilibrium! And then she plunged downward, still clutching the reins of the lead horse and dragging it, resisting, into that maddened confusion beneath which she lay, trampled by bewildered, random hoofs as the frenzied horses charged one another and strove to extricate themselves.

Above the thudding turmoil, there arose, in sharp crescendo, the screams of women, the shouts of men, and the cries of performers who rushed in as the great white horses broke loose and tore wildly around the arena.

The band stopped playing, the huge organ lost a note, and Beauty ran forward with an oath, half prayer, half agony, on his lips, and stooped above the piteously wounded girl that lay in the tanbark, a shapeless, motionless little thing, ensanguined from wounds through which the blood streamed, her brilliant garb torn and disarrayed, and her long hair tangled across her face.

Quite slowly he picked her up in his arms and held her to his breast. Dim-eyed, yet stalwart, and muttering incoherent words, he carried her from the ring. He scarcely knew that behind him other performers and ring men were capturing the running horses and bringing them to a halt, that the band had suddenly come to its senses, and in fear of a panic had swung into a popular march, and that Jim Paxton, clown and seasoned performer, appreciating the danger, had gayly rushed onto the central platform, where he was doing a grotesque jig—dancing a jig with a broken heart! All Beauty knew was that in his arms he carried, with feverish tenderness, the little Marie. Down through the tunnel-like entrance he ran, crowding his way between the excited performers and brushing aside those who interfered.

"A doctor!" he called. "A doctor! For God's sake, get some one quick!" And there was that in his voice that drove those horrified ones to action and sent them scurrying, sometimes aimlessly, on the quest.

In his bewilderment, he carried her to his own dressing room and laid her gently on a blanket. He threw a brawny arm outward and shoved back those who followed, whispering: "Air; give her air, can't you? In God's name, where's the doctor? Isn't there one left in the world? Why, she may be dying even now! Go, all of you, get one quick! Can't you understand? She's dying! Marie, little Marie!"

When the surgeon came, her head was resting on the plainsman's knees, and he was attempting to straighten the hair from her forehead with one hand and with the other wiping the blood from a cut in her temple with his handkerchief. He relinquished her reluctantly to the surgeon's ministrations, and, obedient to the latter's command, called for women and with dragging steps passed through the door. He shut it carefully behind him, as if vainly fearing the noise of its latch might disturb the unconscious girl on the floor.

Up and down the narrow corridor outside he walked, with his maimed fingers clutching those of the other hand, and big drops of sweat, cold as if cast from an icy heart, dripping from his forehead over his eyes. Out in the far distance, the band came to a flourish as another act concluded, and the unheeding crowd, convinced that nothing serious had happened, applauded gayly. He turned and shook his fist in the direction of the sound, and muttered to himself: "How can you? How can you be happy when she's in there?"

The seconds were minutes, and the minutes hours, piling upon each other pell-mell, as he tramped to and fro in his agony, and then his finely attuned ear caught a strange note. It was that of an ambulance bell that had hastily come to a halt outside the entrance of the Garden. Uniformed attendants

were coming, strangers whom he did not know and had never seen in the circus before.

Bewildered, but feeling that they meant something, he stepped aside and saw them pass through the entrance from where he was barred. Two of them ran out, and speedily returned, carrying something in a roll, and it was but a moment until again they passed; only, this time, there was a vast difference, for between them they supported on a stretcher a quiet figure enshrouded in a white sheet.

It seemed to Beauty that it took ages for him to comprehend that the burden was Marie, and that the man who walked behind her, grave-faced, quiet, and wiping his hands on a handkerchief, was the surgeon who had been called from the audience.

With a hoarse cry, he started to follow them, but was checked by the ambulance surgeon in white, who put a hand against him at the rear door of the Garden, and said: "Steady, old man! Steady! Get hold of yourself!"

Beauty brushed a hand across his eyes, as if trying to wipe away a film of unreality.

"Doctor Matthewson says that she's not dangerously hurt so far as he can see, and that's the way it looks to me. I'm the ambulance surgeon. But you mustn't bother us now. We're going to take her to the Postgraduate Hospital. If you wish to, you can call me up there in an hour or two and I'll tell you how she's getting along."

He whipped a card from his pocket and thrust it at Beauty, who held it in his hands and watched the attendants as they carefully slid the white figure into the black depths of the big, heavily springed car, saw the surgeon swing himself up by the brass rails behind, heard the swift, accelerated pur of the motor, and saw it speed down the street with a clamorous gong calling loudly for right of way.

She was gone, and all at once he knew that everything in life that he held dear had been carried away—cruelly thrown into the scales of fate—passed to the Great Arbiter of life and death.

"Doctor Matthewson says that she's not dangerously hurt so far as he can see!" The words seemed to ring back to him as if burdened with a message of hope. Who was Doctor Matthewson? Had he understood correctly? Not dangerously hurt? Maybe they lied? They have taken her away. Marie! His mind groped in review.

For another age he leaned against a partition, dimly striving to coördinate his faculties. Men passed him, callously indifferent to his tragedy; others came, whispering of the event, and still more stopped to look at him and then hastened onward, terrified or saddened by the look in his eyes that saw nothing save the piteous wreck of the hippodrome. It was a hand and a voice that roused him from his stupor.

"Beauty! Beauty! It's our turn," some one said, and he looked down at Jim Paxton as if never before in all his life had he seen that little man in the motley garb.

Quite obediently, and almost mechanically, the cowboy permitted himself to be led away toward the entrance. Long afterward he wondered what had become of that night. They told him that never in all his connection with Bigger's had he performed so well, and yet he, the performer, could remember nothing of it, save that he mounted the running pony, ran around the ring at breakneck speed, reckless of falls or appearance, whirling his reata, and doing perilous feats of horsemanship. Everything was unreal, untrue, and dreamlike, a phantasmagoria of faces in swirling lines and a clash of sound in which he, a stricken man, found relief from agony by excess of physical exertion. The old skill could not leave him, the old habit held true. He was a maddened man performing miracles in a world of his own, striving by attention to unheard-of feats, to drive from sight and mind the recollection of the narrow stretcher on which lay something white and still.

"Come on back! Come on back, man! They want you!" he heard a voice, and

saw that it was the ringmaster clutching him by the arm.

Again he obeyed as a bewildered child obeys a master, and stepped back into the glare of light and blur of sound, and stood quietly, an undeferential figure that gave neither bow or recognition. Twice and three times they led him back, and each time he did the same; and then as if remembering something, and thinking that hours instead of minutes had passed, he broke away from them and ran like a madman, inquiring of every one he met where a telephone might be found.

He was not aware until then that, through all those long ages, there had clung to his arm the diminutive figure of the little clown, whose make-up was streaked with tears, and whose voice was filled with an infinite sorrow when he spoke.

"Jimmy! Jimmy!" Beauty said, as if recognizing him for the first time. "Call them up for me! You know who I mean! He said in an hour or two they'd know. You know what I mean! Here, take this!"

Paxton took from the plainsman's hand a crumpled card and sprang to the phone. "The Postgraduate Hospital," he called. "No! I don't know the number! I forgot to look it up! That's it!"

And for an instant his words piled over one another in a conversation that was meaningless to the man who heard, but didn't understand.

All of a sudden, the clown hung the receiver on the hook, leaned back against the wall of the telephone booth in which he stood, and muttered: "Thank God!" And then, in a louder voice, as if speaking to some one bereft of hearing, shouted his words: "The doctor tells me she'll live. She's got a lot of little wounds, some broken ribs, and a bad scalp wound. One of the horses trampled her thigh, and another mangled her arm, but she'll live, Beauty! She'll live!"

He bent forward with an exclamation, for the frontiersman, who had waited in the open doorway, had suddenly crumpled to the floor and lay inert.

CHAPTER VIII.

On the day following the accident, it became certain that the equestrienne would recover within a comparatively short time, and, with his highly developed publicity instinct, Williams made the most of it in press notices. Beauty tried to avoid the clown on that morning, and the latter came upon him seated in Madison Square Park, absently staring across at the big tower, and heedless of those who passed. There was something strange and grim in the plainsman's attitude, some peculiar intensity and gravity that caused the little man distress.

"Are you all right, Beauty?" he inquired solicitously.

"Yes,' replied the latter. "Only I'm thinkin' of somethin' I'm goin' to do. Maybe I'll let you know about it this evenin', Jimmy."

There was that in his voice that told the clown that Beauty wanted to be alone to work over some problem, so for a time they sat without saying anything, the one abstracted, the other quietly watching the crowds in the streets or the birds in the trees.

"Jimmy,' said Beauty, at last, without looking at his companion, "I'm a tenderfoot. I'm a stranger in a strange land. I've come against a proposition that has got to be worked out so I can get away with it. It's been with me for quite a long time now, and I'm sort of hatin' myself for not attendin' to it sooner. It's about what I'm to do with that——"

A shadow paused in front of them and interrupted. They looked up to see the acrobat who had been one of Beauty's first friends, and he started in to tell them some of the circus gossip. Beauty made no replies; but the clown, thinking it wise to keep the cowboy from brooding, talked cheerily to distract his attention. The ruse failed, for the plainsman got up and sauntered away, declaring that he had something to do and must leave them.

When it came time for him to change

his garb for the afternoon, he appeared in his dressing room barely in time. The clown was there waiting; but Margovin was not present, nor did Beauty see him when changing back to street clothes at the conclusion of his turn. If he noticed the strong man's absence, he said nothing, but busied himself for a minute tumbling over the contents of his suit case, as if seeking something; then hurried away, leaving the perturbed Jimmy to his own devices.

Evening came, but this time Beauty loitered somberly out at the rear of the big building, staring moodily across the street and at the cars that slipped backward and forward like looms on a shuttle weaving a web the length of Fourth Avenue. He surprised Paxton in the dressing room by asking in a quiet tone of voice, almost devoid of curiosity, where Margovin was.

"They've changed him on the program," answered Jim, turning toward the cowboy. "He is almost the last number."

"That's good!" said Beauty.

"Why?" curiously asked his companion.

"Oh, nothing! Maybe I'll tell you later."

The clown looked at him thoughtfully as if apprehending something; but, sensing Beauty's disinclination to converse, said nothing, and finished his preparations. Their act met with the same approval that had distinguished its opening, and again Beauty departed the moment his change was effected; but Jim, emerging from the building a few minutes later, discovered him outside the door, quietly smoking.

"Oh, Jim," Beauty said. "I've been waitin' for you."

"Well, here I am," responded the clown, hopeful that his partner was in a happier mood.

"I wish you'd go back inside there and find somethin' out for me," the cowboy said, in a low tone of voice, as if fearing that some one might overhear him. "I want to know the time Margovin's act runs, and the time it quits. Also, if any of the dressing rooms near us are likely to have any one in them."

"What for?" asked Paxton mildly, and suspecting the plainsman of some ulterior motive.

"Never mind. You find out and come back here and let me know. Then I'll tell you," Beauty insisted.

Jim, palpably fearful and distressed, yet smiling a little harshly, did as bid, hoping that affairs between his friend and the strong man had not come to an open fight, and trusting to his own influence over the younger man to restrain him.

"Gets off the last act," he said, when he returned. "Nothing follows him but the chariot and pony races."

"But about the other thing?" Beauty asked.

"Well, of course that means that there will be no one near our dressing room that late; but—Beauty! What are you thinking of doing? You surely don't intend to fight that giant, do you? Why, boy, he'd kill you as easily as he would a bird!"

Beauty slipped his arm through Jim's and led him around toward the Twenty-Sixth Street side of the building where there were but few pedestrians before he answered.

"No, Jimmy," he said, "it hasn't come to that yet; but it's come to a place where I'm goin' to give that cur a talk. Now, when I get through, you'll understand why I didn't want any one around to overhear; because I want to 'tend to Margovin myself. Do you know why Marie happened to fall last night?"

The clown, beginning to surmise the truth, looked up at Beauty with astonished eyes.

"No!" he exclaimed. "You don't mean—it can't be possible that—that Margovin——"

"Yes," replied Beauty angrily. "Just that! I can see now how it was worked. He has been annoyin' her and threatenin' her, I have an idea, ever since that time down on the border. She was afraid to tell us because she thought there might be an open row. She just went ahead and stood for it, gettin' a little more afraid of him every day. Last night, as she went on, I heard him

tell her to be careful because he had had a dream that she would be hurt. Don't you see, if any one else had heard him say that, they would have thought it just a caution to her; but that wasn't what Margovin meant it to be, and that's just what it wasn't! It had just exactly the effect he wanted it to have. It rattled her. I saw her face and ran out, hoping to brace her up by showing her that she had a friend there, and by saying somethin' to her if I could, but I was too late."

The little clown went into a burst of rage that rendered him almost inarticulate.

"I'll tell the other boys in the show!" he declared wildly. "They'd tear him to pieces if they knew! I'll——"

"You'll do nothin', Jimmy!" growled the cow-puncher, seizing his arm. "I told you in the first place that this was my funeral. You've just got to do as I tell you and keep your mouth shut! Do you hear me?"

The little man poured forth a torrent of epithets, and then turned and shook two trembling, excited hands up at Beauty's face.

"Do you know how I got smashed that night?" he demanded. "Well, Margovin hit me!"

Beauty gritted his teeth and relieved himself by the strongest word he could think of.

"I was down there on the beach at Santa Monica that night the big brute yelled at you and Marie. I saw you pass, and was not very far from him. I thought it all over on the way home and waited for him to come along. I thought you two hadn't heard it, and didn't want you to. I was angry, so decided to call him down myself. I knew he could lick me, but I didn't care. All I wanted to do was to let him know what I thought, anyhow. All the weapon I could find was a rock. He came along the track and I stopped him, and told him what I had to say. I shook the rock in his face and told him that I'd get him, some way, if I ever heard him yell at you or ever say anything about Marie again. He's quick for a big man. He grabbed my wrist and twisted it until I had to drop the rock, and just grinned at me all the time and said: 'Ho! Ho! So the little clown thinks he can scare Margovin! Bah!' Then he hauled off and hit me, just once. When I came to my senses, he had gone, and I staggered up toward you to get help."

As he talked, there flashed through Beauty's imagination that valiant defense of a friend, the reckless bravery that prompted this little, inoffensive man to defy a giant who tossed two-hundred-pound cannon balls and was undoubtedly the strongest man in the world. It was like a pet kitten challenging a tiger. For a moment he stood dumb with admiration.

"Jim," he said, with a strange huskiness in his usually clear voice, "somehow I can't exactly find words to thank you. It was mighty fine of you. There ain't any use in my thankin' you, because—well—because—— Oh, hang it! You know what I'm tryin' to say!"

Back of and above them, seeming to leap from the heavens, came the booming of the clock in the Metropolitan tower. Beauty started hastily, as if he had forgotten something, and seized the clown's arm.

"Come," he said. "It's time. Margovin will be there in the dressin' room, alone, just about now, and I've got to tell him a few things. What I want you to do is to keep outside the doorway so we won't be disturbed. Just walk up and down the hall, and if you see any one comin' our way, head 'em for a minute—talk to 'em—anything to let me be alone with that big hulk for five or ten minutes. No, no! Don't worry! I shan't kill him, unless he tries to jump me—and he won't do that. Don't fear. Hurry!"

They almost ran back through the entrance, and plunged toward their quarters. There was no one in the immediate vicinity when Beauty softly opened the door, stepped inside, and closed it after him. Margovin was there, and had already removed his tights, slipped on his trousers and undershirt, and was bent over tying a shoe lace, when Beauty crossed to the side

apportioned to his own belongings and turned his back to the wall.

The giant had not looked up as he entered, and for an instant Beauty saw the tremendous back, and huge, bare arms, the bull-like neck, and the small head.

"Margovin!" he said sharply, and the Austrian straightened up in his seat, and looked at him with a scowl.

The Westerner's face was white and set, his eyebrows were drawn into a straight, harsh line, and his eyes gleamed dangerously; but he still leaned against the wall in an attitude that was almost careless.

"You've gone just one step too far. Last night you made Marie Barber fall. I heard what you said, and saw it. You're the biggest coward and the least of a man of anything that I ever knew that walked on either two or four legs. You're so rotten and contemptible that it seems a pity I've got to waste time on you; but I've thought it over, and am goin' to put a finish to it."

When he began to speak, the strong man rose to his feet, with his head thrust forward defiantly, and his fists doubled up as if for attack. But it was not until Beauty's speech was nearly finished that he suddenly leaped forward with his huge hands outstretched, and heavy fingers clutching as if to seize the smaller man and rend him to pieces. He shouted inarticulate phrases in his mother tongue as he charged, and then met with a surprise; for the plainsman's air of indifference to physical attack suddenly gave way to an almost catlike activity.

On the wall behind where he stood, hung the reata that was used in the performance, and, with a swishing, whistling sound, it snapped through the air, and its hard, rawhide folds struck the Austrian squarely in the face. The blood seemed to gush from a dozen superficial wounds before the rope had come back to its owner's hands; and then, before Margovin could clear his eyes from that shock, a long, snakelike loop flashed through the air, descended over his head and shoulders, and he was almost jerked to his feet by the violence with which it was tightened. Other dexterous loops followed in half hitches, one falling upon another, in which the giant was bound by band after band as he struggled desperately to release himself from the entanglement. Even his legs were helpless, and all the strength of his gigantic muscles, as they twisted and tensed themselves, the muscles that, unimpeded, could break chains, failed to do more than imbed the rawhide into his flesh. Worst of all, still clinging to the rope and dancing round him to keep it taught, but steadily approaching, came that vengeful, flaming-eyed man, whose prey the giant was.

The plainsman seemed gauging a distance, and, when it was reached, appeared to leap from his toes, with his right arm stiffened. His fist, hard as steel, shot outward with his whole weight behind it, struck Margovin fairly on the chin, and knocked him crashing into the corner. The floor beneath seemed to shake with the impact of the fall.

The plainsman lifted the inert legs contemptuously, and roughly threw the end of the reata beneath them. He tied a knot, then caught the loose end that he had held in his hands, carried it farther upward, and made a noose which he brought round the strong man's neck, and put a foot between the shoulders of his fallen adversary. For an instant, it seemed as if he contemplated strangling the Austrian to death as remorselessly as he would have hanged a mad dog; then, thinking better of it, he loosened the slipknot, rolled the giant over on his back, and, seizing a water pitcher that rested on a washstand, carelessly dumped its contents over Margovin's face.

He stepped toward the door, opened it cautiously, and looked out. Jim was pacing up and down the deserted reaches, and the adjoining dressing rooms were still. The cowboy beckoned to the clown, and when the latter hurried to him, stepped aside, and said: "Come in and lock the door. There'll be no more noise now," and his tone was so quiet that Paxton, for an in-

stant, seemed not to appreciate the fact that any conflict had taken place.

"Jimmy, come over here!" the Westerner said.

With a frightened look in his eyes, Paxton started back from the pinioned figure on the floor.

"Good Lord, Beauty! You haven't killed him, have you?"

"Not yet," was the response, in the same quiet tone. "Here, take hold of this rope, and, if he undertakes to yell, put your foot in his face and choke him. There's nothin' bad enough for him. He isn't hurt. Those are just scratches."

Tremblingly Paxton obeyed, and stood alongside Margovin as the latter's eyes showed signs of returning consciousness. Almost roughly, Beauty caught the prostrate man by his heels, and dragged him out to the center of the floor.

When the Austrian came further to his senses and rolled his head to one side, he saw the clown grimly holding the rope, and seemed to slowly understand that it controlled the noose around his throat. His brain cleared to normal, the bewildered look left his eyes, and gave way to a sullen comprehension. He turned his head in the other direction. Seated on his trunk was the man who had brought him to this position, leaning forward and idly handling a worn pistol of heavy caliber. The firm lips were twisted into a shape of the utmost contempt, the eyes that glared at him were as cold and unfeeling as though of gray glass.

For a full minute, they glowered at each other until a slow and deadly fear crept into Margovin's expression, as if he were confronted by death, inexorable, and merely waiting there above him. He made two or three attempts before he could speak, and then his voice responded only in a strained whisper that sounded terrified and pleading as he said: "You're going to murder me?"

"I am," was the steady reply. "I'm going to kill you as surely as I live, and I'm going to kill you just when I please, and just the way I want to."

Margovin's lips opened in fright, and he attempted to scream, but the shout was abruptly checked as the clown, a remorseless look in his eyes, jerked the rope taut, strangling the shout to an inarticulate gurgle.

The Austrian's eyes seemed to start from his head in an agony of fear, and the clown bent over and loosened the noose.

"No more of that, Margovin!" commanded the plainsman, cocking the pistol, and holding it in direct line with the giant's head. "I expected you to squeal like a jack rabbit when a hound catches him by the scruff of the neck, and so I made all preparations. If you undertake to yell again, we'll either choke you to death, or else I'll put the gun close up against your head—just like this. See? And the sound wouldn't travel a hundred feet." The strong man's eyes bulged as he felt steel against his temple. "You're all alone, Margovin; we saw to that, because I wanted a little quiet conversation with you. It wouldn't be quite just to kill you here and now. You made that girl suffer for a long time, so I'm goin' to make you suffer, and that's the only reason I don't kill you now, and also because it's a certainty that, sooner or later, I'll get you—kill you, I mean. Do you understand that?"

The frontiersman paused to roll a cigarette, slipped the gun back in his coat pocket, and glanced casually at Jim, who was suddenly terrified by his compulsory participation.

Beauty smiled faintly, and his fingers did not tremble in the least as he lighted the roll of papered tobacco. He inhaled two or three times, and when he spoke again his voice was almost gentle and caressing in its tone. Had it not been for the conveyed certainty that he was passing sentence, tragedy would have seemed far distant.

"You'll not leave the show, Margovin, because the minute you do, I'll shoot you down on the street, in your room, on board a steamship, anywhere I find you; and I shall keep watch, you can bet on that! Why, I'll ride herd on you more carefully than I ever did on a

bunch of cattle! You can't stampede and get away from me. The world isn't big enough to hide you, and there's nothin' moves fast enough to keep me from catchin' you. You'll stay with the show, because that's your only chance. Now we've got that settled."

He took another languid puff, and leaned forward until he was staring hard into the frighteneed eyes that looked up toward him as if appalled and fascinated with the horror of some dread thing from which there was no escape.

"To make it quite clear to you," the level voice went on, "I'll explain: From this day on, I'm goin' to do a lot of complainin' and get mighty weak. I'm afraid I'll have a bad heart that any shock might be the means of stoppin'. I'll be so nervous that everybody around will call me a poor invalid; but you'll know that it ain't so, and that I'm strong, and hard, and just waitin' for an opportunity to kill you. You'll think of that day and night, Margovin. You'll give more time to thinkin' about that, if possible, than you did as to how you were goin' to hurt a poor little girl that you thought had nobody to defend her. You'll wake up in the night, fancyin' that the time has come when I've decided to finish this pleasant little job, and you'll sit up in bed, and you'll scream like the big coward that you are. I'm goin' to tell people that I'm afraid of you on account of my bein' such an invalid; so that when I do kill you, there ain't a jury in the whole world that'll ever convict me. I'll plead self-defense, and say the reason I did it was because you attacked me, and so, me bein' an invalid, and you the strongest man in the world, they would say I was justified. Easy, ain't it? If you quit this show, I'll kill you within an hour afterward. If you stay with this show, you'll live longer; but you're goin' to live in hell for every minute of the time I leave you, because, Margovin, just as sure as you're alive, I'm goin' to put you underground."

He stopped and silenced Jimmy, who had started to make a terrified appeal of mercy for the prostrate man, and walked across until he was where he could reach the rope; and, as he undid the noose from around the giant's twitching neck, he added almost cheerfully: "By the way, there won't be any use in your rushin' out to the police or to the Old Man to tell what has happened here to-night; because, if you do, there's two of us here who'll simply swear that it's a lie, maliciously put out to hurt us; so you see that no matter which way you turn, you'll keep on bein' just as helpless as you are right now."

His swift hands fumbled at the reata until the end was loose. He resumed his seat on the strong man's trunk, and again pulled out that menacing weapon.

"Jim, stand back," he said; then: "Now, Margovin, you roll over until you can get clear of that rope."

For a moment, the Austrian, now beaded with perspiration that had replaced the water dashed over his face, lay still, as if afraid to move.

"Roll over, I say, and get out of that rope!" curtly ordered the cowboy. "I'm not goin' to stay here all night for a thing like you!"

In almost frantic haste, the Austrian obeyed, until at last he stood free and unimpeded.

"Now coil it, and hang it up there on that hook!" commanded Beauty. "You gave me the trouble of takin' it down."

Quite meekly, and despite his enormous strength, trembling, the big man obeyed.

The cowboy said: "Come on, Jimmy!"

He backed toward the door without shifting his eyes from his enemy, and with a harsh and hungry look in his eyes, as though he half regretted the respite of life he had granted.

In the very doorway he paused to say softly: "Remember, you're mine," and added, in a mocking tone: "You've no idea how precious you are to me. Why, you big sneak, I wouldn't lose the joy of killin' you, as I'm goin' to, for this whole show or for the town of New York. I've got you just as sure as there's a God in heaven. Good night, Margovin; think it over!"

The door shut even as the giant staggered back to a seat and ran trembling fingers over his restricted throat, while, echoing hollowly from the deserted reaches of the great structure, he heard the sounds of sturdy feet walking away. He listened as if fearing their return; but they did not waver. They sounded as inexorable as the steps of fate.

CHAPTER IX.

The New York engagement was over, and by leaps and bounds the show was turning Westward for that long and glad engagement that was to carry the performers into foreign climes. Mademoiselle Zoe made her reappearance in the Coliseum of Chicago, where, beyond a slight paleness, there was little to indicate how closely she had rubbed elbows with death. The strong man had worked feverishly throughout the engagement at the Madison Square Garden, and once, in a panic, had attempted to resign; but a combination of circumstances—avarice, the off season when other engagements were scarce, and a returning confidence coupled with an increase of salary—had caused him to renew his contract for the big over-seas tour.

There in the Garden, he began to doubt the determination of the strange Westerner; for the latter appeared unconcernedly at regular intervals in the dressing room for his change, did not even glance at the strong man, speak to him, nor even notice his presence. It was as if he had forgotten.

The little clown was nervous, as if continually apprehensive; but that meant nothing to the bully who regarded the little man as insignificant, and worthy of no more consideration than would be bestowed upon a worm; so each day his confidence returned, until he was amazed at himself for his fright of that night. And he expressed the return of confidence by his blustering manner and overweening egotism.

It was while working in the Coliseum in Chicago, and no longer compelled to dress in proximity to the cowboy, that he heard the first whisper that sent a sudden chill to his new-born courage.

"I'm afraid," said an acrobat, talking to one of his companions immediately behind the giant, "that Beauty Jones won't last long. They say he's got a bad heart and is nervous and shaky; and that 'most any sudden shock would kill him."

The conversation of that terrible night in Madison Square Garden recurred to Margovin. In a rush of comprehension, he knew that the threat of the Westerner was being carried out in a deliberate, inflexible sequence. The cowboy had said that this would be his method. Step by step, the giant foresaw it all, and all his regained confidence crumbled as if it had been the flimsy underpinning of a foolishly built structure. The fear of death returned. He almost tottered as he started to do his turn, and went through it so poorly as to cause comment.

After his performance, weak and shaking, he hastened for the first time in his life to a near-by saloon and braced himself with stimulant; but the worst was yet to come. As he turned from the door, he saw, idly leaning against the lamp-post and grinning, the man who had pronounced death upon him.

On the following night, as the great show entrained, he discovered under the light of an arc lamp, swinging high above the switch yards, this same watchful figure. The Westerner's face appeared harsh and white, and the eyes full of meaning. It seemed to Margovin that he could not by any chance escape that same quiet watchfulness; but now this watchfulness had assumed a more defiant manner. In St. Paul and Minneapolis, the figure came a little closer. It began to jostle him at unexpected moments, and always it was painfully polite and apologetic. Once it whispered: "Why don't you get up pluck enough to take a smash at me, you big stiff? Can't you see that the time gets short and that all I want is an excuse? Margovin, your knees are shakin', and your lips tremblin'. Try to keep people from seein' it. Go out game, if you can! But, poor man, you

can't! You're goin' to die like a sheep that has its throat cut without enough spirit to blat."

And then the figure was gone, grinning, alert, and swift.

Once the strong man had seen a picture that clung to his untrained mind as something so terrible that it could not be forgotten. It was that of a living sword that relentlessly, up to the very end, pursued its victim. It was symbolized in this strange man of the reata, the living sword that crouched in corners, that came unexpectedly from obscure shadows, watched as its victim entered the ring, and waited for him as he donned his clothing to depart. It began to haunt the Austrian in his dreams. Again and again he lived those moments of terror when, bound by the rope, he heard sentence pronounced upon him. The prediction had come true. He awoke in the night, sat up wildly in his berth, and screamed in fright, fancying that through the curtains appeared a face, and that against his head was held that cold round steel that could carry a leaden death whose report "would not be heard a hundred feet away."

Death hovered over him in the night, and accompanied him in the ring. Death jostled him in many ways, and apologized for the delay, and always it came a little closer, and forever it was the unconquerable phantasm, fearless and waiting. The only times that he had any relief from this surveillance were on those occasions when Beauty Jones disappeared for walks with the equestrienne, and it was no balm to the Austrian's mind when he jealously discovered a constantly increasing friendliness between those two. Moreover, the plainsman, ever since the night of Marie's reappearance, had been constantly with her when she entered the ring for her act, and strove to encourage her in every way possible, as if fearing that her nerve had been shattered by the accident in Madison Square Garden.

The clown, too, seemed to share guardianship with the Westerner, and kept near her, as if to offer protection from all intruders. When alone, the Austrian gritted his teeth, and frequently wished that the blow delivered that night by the tracks in Los Angeles had killed the little man, instead of merely disfiguring him; but if the mild-eyed little jester was aware of this prodigious enmity, he gave no sign of cognizance. His own nature was such that he could not cherish animosity, and was more than willing to forgive the Austrian and dismiss the matter from mind.

Watching the giant curiously, the clown discovered that the strong man was going to pieces slowly but surely, and a big pity for the bully prompted him to at last plead for his enemy. He took occasion one afternoon to call Beauty Jones out for a stroll after the performance, and when certain that they were beyond the hearing of any one, voiced his appeal.

"Beauty," he said, looking up at the Westerner whom he regarded as a benefactor, "have you noticed lately that Margovin has taken to drinking? Something that an athlete never does?"

The plainsman looked at him, and grinned pleasantly as if with satisfaction.

"And have you noticed another thing," the little man added, "that his work is going to pieces?"

"Sure," said Beauty. "I rather thought it would."

Paxton moved around until he was squarely in front of his friend, and looked up at him.

"Beauty," he said, "I'm getting to be an old man, almost sixty, and I don't amount to much, and I haven't been able to do a whole lot for you; not nearly so much as I wished I might have done, and I haven't any good ground to ask it; but I wish you'd do a favor for me."

The cowboy looked down upon him affectionately, and, discovering the earnestness in the clown's face, himself grew grave.

"What is it you want, Jimmy?" he asked solicitously.

"I want you to let up on Margovin. I want you to promise me that you won't kill him."

For a moment, Beauty studied the smaller man's face, then turned away and looked at the horizon as if thinking of all that had happened since that day he joined Bigger's in the Wyoming town.

"Jim," he said quietly, "it's never been my rule to promise I'd do a thing without makin' good on it, and I don't like to welsh now. The Lord knows that big animal did enough to justify any one in puttin' a hole through him. When I think of the way he tortured and frightened that poor little Marie, it's pretty hard for me to quite forgive him. I know all about it now. She's told me. Why, he kept that thing up with her for more than two weeks until he broke her nerve. You're askin' quite a lot, old man!"

The little clown put a friendly hand upon his arm, and his eyes took on an added look of melancholy.

"Beauty," he said, "I'm disappointed in you. I don't think that you understand how much I have appreciated your friendship, and what you've done for me. However, it's been enough so that I've come to have more than mere friendliness for you. It's affection, boy, that I'm giving you, just as if you were my own son. It isn't big, or noble, old fellow, and it isn't worthy of you, to lower yourself to a point where you've nothing in mind very much higher than that which makes murderers."

There was a curious intermingling of affection, entreaty, and arraignment in his voiced words, and the sturdy plainsman felt suddenly abashed and mean. His eyes, usually direct and candid, lowered themselves, and he stared moodily at the ground as Paxton continued:

"Revenge of any sort is the characteristic of a mighty small spirit, Beauty. It's the sort of trait that mongrels among men conceive to be the highest of attainments. To forgive, or at least forego, is the big attribute and privilege of big souls. I'm not preaching to you; but as I said a little bit ago, I'm old enough to be your father, and I like you, and, failure that I am, I can see wherein you fail. Beauty, it won't do. There's mud in your mind, and you've got to cleanse it. I ask not for your sake, but mine, and this is the first favor I've ever asked you."

He stopped speaking, drew a deep breath as of sorrowful resignation when the plainsman did not immediately answer, and turned as if to move away.

Beauty stared at the back of his white head, and his shoulders that were beginning to show the effect of years, and it seemed to him that his best friend was walking away as though to pass forever from their common grounds of esteem. He strode forward quite hastily, and put his hand on the little man's shoulder. The latter turned and faced him with grave, questioning eyes.

"Jim," said the adventurer, "you're right. I don't want you to go away like this. I want to have you keep on thinkin' just as you've told me. I can't say that I'm ashamed of myself, just yet, because I suppose I'm not big enough. And I don't know that I'm goin' to try to be, because I detest and hate that Austrian more than I ever did any one in my life; but I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll promise you not to kill him, or even hurt him, unless he tries to kill or hurt me. But I'll be honest with you, and tell you somethin' else: I'm goin' to give him a dose of his own medicine and keep him worried until I run him out of this business. He put that girl through a mental hell. I'll give him a little more of it just to show him how it goes. You remember what I said to him that night there in New York? Well, when I think it's gone about far enough, I'll go to him and tell him that on her account, not mine, mind you, I have decided that I'll let him quit, and tell him to get out and to lose no time about it; and to keep out of my way as long as he lives. Does that suit you?"

The little man suddenly put both hands up on Jim's shoulders, and scanned his face. For quite a little time he did not speak, and when he did there was more in the manner of his speech than what he said that expressed his thought.

"Now," he exclaimed, "you're proving yourself the man! Nobility is a

fine thing to cultivate, boy, and it grows."

He dropped his hands, and they had almost retraced their steps in thoughtful silence before he added, as if he had been reviewing the whole situation: "I'm not sure that I blame you for wanting to run Margovin away from the show. I don't think either of us will ever quite feel that Marie is safe so long as he's around; but, Beauty, don't delay. Surely you've wrecked the fellow enough!"

And Beauty, generous, but unrepentant, impetuously promised that before the week was over his espionage of the strong man should come to an end. But when alone he chuckled softly, and said to himself: "I told Jimmy a week; but if ever a feller had hell on earth, it'll be Margovin through that time, because I've got to keep the bluff up and make him feel that I mean business, or when I tell him he's got to go, it won't work."

In the succeeding days, by no faintest indication did the bullying Austrian surmise that he had been reprieved. Instead, the vigilance of the plainsman seemed to have increased, and, in proportion to the added and terrifying attention bestowed upon him, so did the strong man's terror grow, until he lived in a nightmare.

His hatred for the little equestrienne grew to almost murderous proportions inasmuch as he attributed this, his deadly situation, to her. He dared not attempt to frighten her directly, and for a time, with the savage cruelty of a barbarian, contemplated maiming her horses. To hamstring the beautiful animals that were her livelihood seemed to him a most perfect way of injuring her without detection. He purchased a small and sharp hatchet with this object in view; but at the last moment, it came to him with frightful clarity that the relentless plainsman would at once suspect the author of the outrage and would then waste no time whatever in using the revolver. And of his proficiency Margovin had no doubt, for one day, as the train waited on a sidetrack, he had seen Beauty give a marvelous exhibition of skill as he fired five shots into a tin can, tossed high into the air by Jimmy, before the can could fall.

Moreover, on that day, he was aware that the Westerner had done this with a suggestive interest; for, immediately after, his eyes had flashed a message that was unmistakable. It was as if he had said: "Margovin, some day you shall take the place of the can. Some day five shots will chase each other through your body as you fall."

One bright, moonlight night, when the train came to a halt, he heard stealthy steps alongside the car, and something clutched the ledge of his window. He raised himself fearfully in his berth and looked out. On the window ledge were two firm hands, the knuckles of one maimed, and slowly, as if appearing with deliberation, a head came into view—the head of Beauty Jones. The cold gray eyes stared at him unblinkingly, as, spellbound by terror and fascinated as if by death, he met them. It seemed an age to him while the plainsman held himself up by his hands and looked in upon him, and then there was a catlike drop, and soft steps upon the gravel beside the train, and the giant found voice and shouted wildly as he threw himself from the berth.

Through the length of the car he heard expostulations and mutterings, and one said: "It's that big stiff. He's got the nightmare again."

"Coming pretty often now," another responded wearily.

And, ashamed lest those whom he had bullied and browbeaten for so long should discover his secret, the Austrian crawled back into his berth, lowered his window, though the night was warm, and drew the blind, fearful lest the apparition should again appear.

It was in a Western city far on the Northern boundary line that Margovin made his last appearance. The day was oppressive, and the journey of the preceding night had been trying to both nerves and body. Moreover, the strong man had not slept well, for after the show was over he had seen the plainsman, with an air of close familiarity that

told all too plainly of a mutual understanding, reading a letter to the little girl whom he, the giant, had so nearly maimed for life. Hatred, jealousy, and fear combined had kept him awake until long after the other occupants of the sleeping car were at rest and the train rumbling on its way. Hence he was in no good condition to withstand the shock of the words that were muttered to him by Beauty Jones as he made his way through the trapping room.

"You must be careful this afternoon, Mr. Margovin, for I've had a dream that to-day you finish."

Margovin glanced apprehensively at the plainsman's face as he hurried past and entered the ring. Those were almost the identical words, he remembered, that he had said to the little Marie on the day when she had been trampled underfoot. He remembered, also, that he had exulted with a cruel satisfaction when the big white horses had thundered over her prostrate body, and he wondered nervously if that terrible man by the curtains would not exult did a similar accident befall him. As he began his act, he looked suspiciously over his shoulder toward that one spot.

The plainsman, watching him coldly, was there, and Margovin did not dream that at the conclusion of this very turn Beauty had decided to tell him that he must resign that day, and that Bigger's would go on without him.

The sweat streamed down the big man's forehead and into his eyes, and over the splendid muscles of his body, as he tossed the heavy playthings about. He felt suddenly that it required more effort than it had in other days, and sustained a fear that his physical prowess was leaving him. He remembered now that he had been drinking too much, and that his rest had not refreshed him as it had in those days when, as the swaggering bully of Bigger's Best, he had lorded it over his fellow performers.

He became childishly angry at his failure to catch the huge dumb-bell, and was compelled to make the second attempt. His anger shifted unreasonably, toward the little equestrienne, and thence to the cowboy. He wished that he dared catch the plainsman's head, rend it from his body, and toss it, thus, even as he tossed the huge, polished cannon ball.

The band had stopped playing, and one of those strange interims approaching absolute silence had come over the huge crowd of spectators. The cannon ball fell with a heavy thud to the earth. Margovin seized it, lifted it again, and tossed it into the air; but, even as he did so, shot a swift glance back toward the curtains. The cowboy was still there, motionless and watchful. Even in that instant, Margovin, the prodigy of strength, faltered. The huge ball, its polished surface glowing dully, descended, and the giant braced himself to catch it high up on the magnificent muscles that padded his great, broad shoulders; but, instead of landing with the firm spat of steel on brawn, there was a dull, crunching sound, and Margovin, the Goliath, toppled forward, his knees sagged abruptly, and he fell face downward in the ring.

For an instant there was no sound, as though the spectators looked upon this as a new and startling but unfinished act; but the swift rush of ring attendants, headed by the ringmaster, dispelled the illusion. Quick to meet emergencies, other men sprang out in front of the spectators, threw up their hands, and shouted for quiet, some of them asserting that it was nothing but a slight accident, and that the performance would go on, while others besought those who stood up on their benches to sit quietly, and still others thrust those who had leaped forward behind the ropes. From amidst his paraphernalia other performers lifted the stricken colossus, and swiftly carried him away to the dressing tent. One of his arms had fallen as they bore him away and swung to and fro with a horrid limpness, while his bulletlike head lolled grotesquely, and most unnaturally, until an acrobat supported it.

A physician from the audience hurried after them, volunteering assistance. He bent over the fallen giant, who lay

in the midst of the awe-stricken men and women who surrounded him. There was something incongruous in their attire for such a scene—the anxious faces of the clowns, showing clearly through their painted masks, the flare of color where acrobats and gymnasts in silken tights leaned forward with questioning eyes, and the gaudy spangles of women performers as they wrung their hands in distress. Beauty Jones, in his cowboy costume, repentant, and reproaching himself, stood quietly looking at his fallen enemy. Jimmy Paxton was on a knee beside the doctor trying to assist, and Marie Barber, her eyes filled with horror and compassion for the man who had done everything that cruelty could suggest to injure her, stood at his feet.

"No use," said the doctor; "the man is dead. The ball fell just four inches too high. It broke his neck."

The plainsman had told the truth. It had been Margovin's last performance.

CHAPTER X.

For the second time, Beauty had stood beside the grave of one of Bigger's Biggest, and, despite the fact that Margovin, bad as he was, and justly deserving death, had been his enemy, was sorry that the man had gone. He had bitterly repented his part in the tragedy, and had learned the lesson so ably expounded by the little man of motley, that revenge in any form is the most unsatisfactory of all emotions. It was doubtful if many others who stood beside that grave grieved for the bullying giant who had been killed by his own mishap. Boastful and quarrelsome, malicious and vengeful, the Austrian had made no friends and many enemies; yet the cowboy who had indirectly brought him to earth regretted ever having threatened or pursued him.

The great show, as callous as an inanimate machine, went relentlessly onward, and, before the dead man was in his coffin, the manager had telegraphed tersely to his booking agent in New York:

Margovin dead. Send me another strong man by first train to take place so we will not lose billing. Rush!

A man might be killed now and then, but the big show must travel on time, and try to meet its paper. Not even the death of the manager himself could have checked it. An acrobat, member of a family, might fall to a mere distorted and maimed heap in the ring; but father and mother, sisters and brothers, must appear after slight lapse to smile at the spectators, perform, wave graceful, trained hands in salute, and suffer silently. A pole might fall and kill a horse; but its rider who loves it must mount another and ride—bravely ride! One of the exiles, the weary captives who had been trapped and brought thousands of miles to suffer unmerited tortures of unrest, the animals in the menagerie, might sicken and die of heartbreak, and a hole in the ground was its end. A vast entity, having distinct individuality but no soul, an inanimate organization so perfected that it seemed to have intelligence of its own, indifferent alike to sorrow or death, the great show could not pause.

It had reached lands that were familiar to Beauty Jones—rough hills and mountains that he had traversed—and for hours at a time he sat in Number Fifty looking from the car window with a vast homesickness in his heart. They paraded a town which he had known in the old days. Years had passed since he had seen it, and the majority of those with whom he had been acquainted were scattered and gone. There were the old familiar signs; this the old familiar street. There where the big brick building stood had been the frame shack of the pioneer merchant. That opera house covered ground which had been a barren space when last the boy beheld it, and the city had sprawled out like a great octopus, spreading tentacles in all directions. Trees that he had seen planted as saplings were now shading avenues and stretching heavy limbs toward one another in companionship. This was the place to which he had ridden, with cruelly broken knuckles, when seeking a surgeon.

Beauty wondered if the surgeon were still alive, and that afternoon patiently sought him, only to learn that his friend had traveled to a place beyond earthly greetings.

When the afternoon performance was on, he went through his act mechanically, and some of those who watched him commented on his performance.

"That heart of his will get him yet," said an acrobat sorrowfully.

"Yes; and it's too bad!" replied another. "He's as white a man as I ever knew in the business. No side to him—just plain good fellow. Why, do you know that when that chap got hurt, back there in Philadelphia, this man gave him——"

And so they talked, those who had fathomed the heart of the strange man who had been with them, but not of them, and had impressed them as a kindly, frank being from a strange world. He had earned a place in their affections, and a niche for himself in their respect. But, while they talked, in that respite between shows, Bauty Jones had sought Marie and led her away to the shelf of the mountain that overlooked the town.

"Over yonder," he said, as they rested on a porphyritic seat, "is the place I come from. It's a plain out there, beyond the gap. Sixteen miles it is—just nothin' but grass and wild flowers in the summer, and white snow in the winter. Or, anyhow, that's what it used to be. I reckon there's farms there now, and all the trees have grown big, and the shacks have made room for big, fine buildings, and the boys I knew are men, and where there was the still and open range, there is now the whirl and smash of the reaper. Somehow I don't seem to get it all. It's so changed!"

The girl at his side, in sympathy with his mood, strained her eyes as if yearning for vision beyond the hills, and drew a little closer to him.

"They say there's a town there now, where the ranch was," he said, as if communing with himself. "And the house I built for the old lady who gave me kindness when I needed it, stands on a street. I never lived in it; but now, all without my knowin' how or why, it seems like home—a place to rest—where one can have friends and see the faces one knows each day."

He turned toward her impulsively and with a great hunger in his eyes.

"I'm sick of this," he said softly. "I'm plumb tired of it. I don't belong to it, and it can never belong to me. I want to live my own life in my own way, away from sham things!"

Something in the brown eyes that met his caused him to gasp, and to catch his breath, as if he had interpreted a vision. Neither of them said anything, but he caught her face between his hands, and for a long moment stared into the crying depths of her soul that were tendered, unmasked and unashamed, for his contemplation. Slowly his homely face was illumined to a shape of beauty, reflecting the high cleanliness and purpose of a simple, loyal mind, and his honest, gray eyes softened and glowed with a profound and overwhelming tenderness. Quite gently, as if apprehensive lest she escape his arms that yearned to forever shield her, he gathered her to him, and pillowed her head closely to his breast.

Heedless of all those petty humans who formed its component parts, callous to the sufferings of its captives in the menagerie, reveling in glamour and sound, the great inanimate beings of canvas, Bigger's Biggest, squatted on the lot outside the mountain town. As the sun died and the twilight came, it awoke from somnolence for the second display that constituted each day's life, and torches flamed, men shouted, bands blared, and performers made ready for their work. Garish, unreal, ephemeral, it lived its brief and lurid hour, then swiftly drew within itself, as if angered by this halt in its never-ending round, and, piece by piece, slipped away in the toiling darkness to its trains.

The pungent odor of foreign beasts, the scents of venders' wares, the sweating turmoil of eager crowds, were all swept from the lot as if by the clean breath of an omnipotent giant come up

from across the plains and hills. The first section had whirled away into the night, and the locomotives for the succeeding ones roared impatiently for their burdens. In Number Fifty, the manager looked up from the desk that stood neatly fitted into the corner of his dining room, and stared inquiringly at the ringmaster who had entered.

"Your friend Jones," the latter burst out impatiently, "wasn't there to-night. Neither was Paxton, whose fine you remitted; nor Mademoiselle Zoe! And that ain't all! The stable boss is up in the air, because he says their horses are all gone. They took 'em out this evening on the excuse that they wanted to exercise 'em! What do you think of that? Wanted to exercise 'em!"

Astonished and perplexed, the manager scowled at his subordinate, while the cigar between his fingers sent a slow, unwavering spiral of blue up into the still air.

"Not there? Beauty not there?" he voiced, as if astonished by an unprecedented happening. "Why—wait a minute."

He rang for the steward, and by the time the black man appeared had recovered his pose and was again the automaton of a great enterprise.

"Was Mr. Jones here for supper?" he asked, with characteristic brevity.

The attendant fumbled in his coat pocket quite nervously, as if fearing a charge of complicity in some grave crime, and handed the frowning manager an envelope.

"Marse Jones dun give me dis about seben o'clock, sah. An' he dun said I war to give it to you-all, sah, dis ebenin'." Striving for amity, the black man assumed a tremulous grin, and added: "An' dat ain't all Marse Jones give me, sah. Mos' ariphtoscratic and librul, Marse Jones! He dun give me twenty dollahs, sah, all foh my own. I dun reckon I'll buy me a circus all foh mah own."

But the master of the great caravan did not hear. He was reading the letter in his hand:

FRIEND: I ain't got the heart after all your whiteness to me to tell you what I've got to say, because somehow it would hurt. You've been mighty good to me, and I've had a right good time with you, and you've paid all you owed, on the nail. But, you see, I ain't cut out for no show business, after all, and I'm back where I come from, and think it's a mighty good time to quit. More than two weeks ago I had a letter from a lawyer telling me I'm a rich man because my foster mother left me 'most all of a town out here and a big ranch thrown in. I ain't said nothing because I wa'n't sure till six o'clock this evening that I cared anything about it, but now I know. I've gone back, friend, to where I want to be, out where the grass rustles under the wind and birds sing in the mornings, and there ain't no trains to catch, and no dust and noise. I've come to where I'm going to stay. I know you won't be sore, boss, because right down inside you know what I mean. Miss Barber goes with me because by the time you get this she'll be Mrs. Jones. Jimmy going along, too, because me and him is pardners, you know, and has to stick together. We took the horses because they were ours. Also Jimmy's microscope. We're going to rest, boss, for a long time, just having our own way, and if you lose your job there's a place where the latchstring hangs out bigger'n three balls in front of a pawnshop door. And it's a whole lot more welcome, and the eats come three times a day. WILLIAM HOWARD JONES.

P. S.—Give Cora Butts my compliments, and tell an acrobat named Billings this goes for him, too. Also Mike, the lion tamer.

Please, old horse, don't be sore because we left, because all of us like you, and you're white clean through.

The manager of Bigger's Biggest got to his feet and impolitely turned his back on the ringmaster and the steward, and peered through the window and out at the starlit hills for a full minute before he faced about with something of homesickness and envy in his eyes, and said very quietly: "Well, I'll be darned! Never mind them. Go ahead."

And Bigger's Biggest, relentless, indifferent, a gigantic, restless wanderer that strode across continents and seas, moved on.

In the next issue we will publish complete a novel by Francis Whitlock, called "The Ambassador to Albania." It is a story of the "Lost Legion," and describes a strange quest for a dozen pink singing lizards.

The Joy of Living

By Peter B. Kyne

Author of "The Taking of Kilkenny," "The Flower of the Flock," Etc.

Some men worry because they can't get rich quickly. Here is the appealing romance—and a laughter-compelling romance too—of an advertising man who made money too quickly! You will appreciate the aptness of the title.

MR. HOMER G. PITCHFORD, scout of fortune, was a financial wreck on a lee shore. He had come to the parting of the ways. He was a disillusioned man.

Once Pitchford had been pleased to call himself a high-class advertising agent, but a too-intimate and long-continued acquaintance with John Barleycorn—which played havoc with his young liver—and a tremendous success early in life—which tended, so to speak, toward undue enlargement of the Pitchford cranium—had brought a life of promise to a graveyard of ruined hopes.

Pitchford was a subscriber to the ancient theory, evolved around the year 1895, that to be a high-class advertising expert one must needs be a combination poet, humorist, short-story writer, business man, buffoon, optimist, and fatalist. That Homer G. Pitchford possessed all of these qualities, fully developed, at an age when most men are still dawdling in the afterglow of their Alma Mater, and that he was the pioneer freak advertising expert of the century, will readily be admitted by those who recall his delirious advertising campaign to popularize Whangdoodle's Wonderful Wash Whitener. The catchy lyrics that adorned every street car in every State in the Union along in the fall of 1899 made Careless Carrie's Cough Compound a byword in the nation. Yet at the time Homer G. Pitchford made the discovery that life was as empty as a punched meal ticket, few, if any, of the big advertisers remembered him as the genius whose art made these things possible.

"You've got to give them something new," was the Pitchford slogan. His early clients wanted something new and startling, and he gave it to them. Because it was new it worked—until the consumer discovered that the goods advertised were worthless, when the bottom dropped out. But before it dropped Homer G. Pitchford had gracefully side-stepped. He was not present at the cataclysm. No, indeed. He was nonchalantly spending the young fortune he had accumulated by his temerity in daring to outgrow the staid old notion of dignified display announcements!

As the pioneer exponent of freak advertising, Mr. Pitchford made a barrel of money. Then he forswore the grind and eased up. Some people said he had blown up, but this was not so. He had merely made more money more easily and quickly than is healthy for a young man with an imagination.

"If "Give them something new" was the slogan of his business hours, in his moments of relaxation his motto was: "Go it while you're young." It was said of Homer G. in those days that he could go some. Why shouldn't he? he argued. Whenever he needed more money, all he had to do was to duplicate the Whangdoodle Wash or Careless Carrie!

He maintained a large office, with a corps of assistants and dispirited artists who had failed as magazine illustrators, and during the busy period succeeding his firm establishment as a high-class freak advertising expert, Pitchford left most of the details of his business to underlings. For a time, following the

first flush of success incident to his two spectacular productions already mentioned, he did a big business; then slowly but steadily it commenced to dwindle. Other advertising experts copied his methods, and even went so far as to improve upon them. Pitchford complained of dull business, but did not realize he was being forced from the field which he had pioneered until he found his available capital down to less than five thousand dollars.

"Well," he soliloquized, "it's time to get down to real business and begin putting over the big stunts again." There is no credit due Pitchford for this decision, however. In the first place, he arrived at it in a Hammam bath, and in arriving at it he had had assistance. Not to quote a paradox, let us state that the man behind was Miss Patricia Flannigan, Homer G.'s stenographer. She was a patrician beauty—and no pun intended. For months Pitchford had been railing around the office about dull business, and finally his inconsistent attitude had so provoked Miss Flannigan that she ventured to tell her employer he was a foolish young man; that unless he climbed aboard the H_2O vehicle, went to bed with the chickens, and rose with them, and in general *attended* to his business, he needn't expect to have any business at all within six months.

Having delivered this excoriation, Patricia Flannigan realized that with her Irish impulsiveness she had voluntarily parted with a very decent position. Colloquially speaking, Pitchford went up in the air, and was on the point of discharging her, when she commenced to weep; whereupon Pitchford came down to earth again like a wet skyrocket. For what man so human as Homer G. Pitchford could have the heart to discharge a weeping beauty! He merely stared at her for a minute, then quite humbly he said: "All right, Miss Flannigan, I'll take your advice, although I didn't know you were particularly interested. Hear my vow! I hereby join the Band of Hope, abjure the primrose path, and get down to business."

All of which was easier said than accomplished, although Mr. Pitchford did accomplish it. Nevertheless, at the expiration of six months his capital had dwindled to a hundred dollars, and during all that period his twitching nerves would not permit of his thinking up anything good enough to be put over with any amount of ginger. All of his great ideas fell flat. They looked cheap, and small, and amateurish, compared with the efforts of his competitors, and eventually he awoke to a realization of the devilish fact that alcohol and late hours had corroded that portion of his brain that formerly had produced the Big Ideas. Too late he realized he had sold his birthright for a mess of cocktails! He complained to Miss Patricia Flannigan that his brain was atrophied. In this particular he was wrong. It was his liver; but he did not know it, and Patricia Flannigan didn't claim to be a lady doctor.

It will be seen, therefore, that as a high-class advertising expert, all was over with Homer G. Pitchford. While he had sat back calmly in the breeching, so to speak, the old fable of the tortoise and the hare had been dramatized and produced, with Homer G. playing the lead as the hare. The former advertising tortoises of his world were far, far down the road to a greater success than this pioneer of freak advertising and freak ideas had ever dreamed of, and with a sudden chill clutch of fear and want at his heart, Pitchford realized that he must jump far and fast to make up for the time lost while he had sojourned under the delightful shade of that bush that made Milwaukee famous. And he didn't have a good jump left in his poor, old, debilitated person!

It was in the spring of the year of grace, 1908, that Homer G. Pitchford made the alarming discovery that somebody had taken away his cue and set it back in the rack. The methods that had produced the results in 1895 had, without Pitchford's knowledge, been relegated to the scrap heap of antiquity, and at thirty Mr. Pitchford was about due to petition for a place on that same

uninviting dump. He had thrown away his health, and wealth, and business, to follow the goddess of pleasure, and he had reformed too late. His youth and his nerve were both gone. He lacked "the punch." Nothing remained but despair—and on a certain Saturday afternoon the acme of his despair had been reached.

In a word, Miss Patricia Flannigan, last and most faithful of his employees, had informed him that she had a better position in prospect, and would not return to his office on Monday morning. This ultimatum Miss Patricia delivered just before she went out to luncheon. Ordinarily Pitchford's office closed on Saturday afternoons, but Patricia had remarked that she would be back about two-thirty. She did not say why, but that was unnecessary. She had twenty dollars due for a week's salary, Mr. Pitchford did not have the requisite twenty, and she knew it. Also, Pitchford knew that she knew it, and was tactfully giving him two hours and a half in which to beg, borrow, or steal it. Alas!

With this explanation we trust we have made Mr. Pitchford's position plain to the reader. For six months he had not taken a drink, yet the Demon Rum had defeated him, robbed him of the great ideas that formerly came capering across his alert consciousness like a herd of goats on a tin roof. He had the prescription for success—so he told himself—but he lacked one small ingredient—cash! For without cash a man *will* worry, and when worry moves in brilliant ideas fly out the window. Pitchford was a careless, humorous, easy-going individual, the kind that never heeds the danger signals, and never jumps until the bell rings—when usually it is too late; for when sorrow, and worry, and care, and chagrin descend upon the Pitchfords of this world, the reaction from their normal temperaments is profound. Verily, as the poet says:

For the heart that is soonest awake to the flowers
Is always the first to be prick'd by the thorn!

Let us, therefore, get down to business and preface the real action of this story with the bald statement that Homer G. Pitchford had definitely decided to end it all!

Yes, suicide was the one and only way out. He had reformed too late. All was over, and nothing remained for him to do except end it. He was a dead bird in the commercial pit. Even the loyal Patricia despised him—Pitchford had a notion that she pitied him! Better death than be laughed at; better ten thousand deaths than mental and economic pauperdom.

A slow tear of self-pity at his impending fate trickled across Mr. Pitchford's lugubrious countenance as he opened a drawer in his desk and drew forth a small, pearl-handled revolver. He was alone in his office. He cogitated.

Life! A struggle for years and years without hope of success, an aimless slipping for the under dog, a broken old age, and probable dependency upon some charitable institution.

Death! Freedom, as *Hamlet* puts it, from the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune! Why not? He was tired—tired of the endless chase for the dollars, the constant rebuffs, the repeated failures.

Death! The word caught itself on his fancy, and impaled itself there. Unfortunately, Pitchford was a creature of impulse, and this new impulse was a fatal one. He owed a few hundred dollars, but Patricia's salary was the only debt that worried him. He must pay that—*before!* As for his other creditors, Pitchford cared not a fig. Death is the great Referee in Bankruptcy.

He thrust the pistol back in the drawer, rushed out, and pawned a very expensive watch and a diamond ring, returning to his office with two hundred and fifty dollars in bills.

He was anxious to have it over with, but still he delayed, for he was maudlin with self-pity, and, moreover—the reader has, of course, guessed it—he was secretly in love with Miss Patricia Flannigan, although he had never, by word, glance, or sign, indicated the re-

motest desire to address her as "Patsy darling." She knew him too well! However, all would be over presently, so why not let her know of the agony of love unrestrained that had torn at his broken heart up to the final moment of dissolution? Surely there could be no harm in calling her "Patsy darling" now, for with him cold in death—although he figured he would be still warm when found—she could not—would not laugh. Perhaps she might even weep. There was something pathetically sweet in the thought of some one weeping beside his bier, so he took up pen and paper, and wrote his farewell. Following the trend of most suicides, he forgot to date it:

MY DARLING PATSY: For so I feel I may call you now, as I stand at the threshold of eternity. I have loved you since that day, six months ago, when you informed me I was drowning my immortal soul in whisky, and urged me to get a grip on myself before it should be too late.

Patsy, it was too late then. I have conquered my appetite for drink in an effort to prove worthy of your kindly interest, but—I started too late. I cannot think any more. The big ideas simply won't come. I have tried, but it's no use, and I have lost hope, so I am going to end it. But before I go I wanted to tell you how much you've helped, and to ask you to believe that for your sake I really tried.

Your presence in the office has been my only inspiration since I quit drinking, and now that you have resigned I see no reason for prolonging the agony. You have given me up for a failure, and you are right. I am, in every sense of the word, a dead one!

I inclose you a letter of recommendation, in case you should desire it.

Good-by, Patsy, dear.

Yours, with great respect and much love,

HOMER.

P. S.—Please pay yourself out of the inclosed funds, and, if it isn't too much trouble, would you mind engaging an undertaker to plant me decently with the remainder?

H.

His letters and the money Pitchford carefully sealed in a large envelope and laid it on top of Miss Flannigan's typewriter. Then, taking the revolver, he went into his private office, closed the door behind him, approached the washbasin, and studied his face in the little dingy mirror furnished by the towel company. The mirror hung askew.

A neat and orderly person was Homer G. Pitchford; so he laid aside his revolver and straightened the mirror. As he jerked it about he saw reflected in it a huge sign that graced the dead-wall of the Patterson Building across the street. This sign advertised a new line of life insurance. Even in this tragic moment Pitchford's sense of humor was uppermost. He chuckled. Life insurance! He had never carried a penny of it, and this was his sole regret as he raised the revolver to his temple. At any rate, he reflected whimsically, his death was insured! There was no doubt about that. And with death would come freedom from his overwhelming financial worries. Ah, if only he could have secured freedom from those devilish worries! He knew the bright ideas would come then; that once more he could demonstrate his marvelous ability as a high-class advertising expert.

He pressed the cold muzzle to his temple and cried "Ouch!" as it touched him. He drew it away a few inches, and commenced to press slowly on the trigger.

Now, there is an impression rampant to the effect that a fractional moment of perfect vision precedes death. Pitchford shuddered as he felt the hammer on his little double-action gun commence to rise, and at the precise instant that the ascending hammer reached its limit and was about to fall, something released a shutter in Mr. Pitchford's brain, and he was given a glimpse of the Great Idea!

Alas! The infinitesimally brief contemplation of that Great Idea proved too great a shock to his nerves; he could not stay his destroying finger. The hammer fell on the cartridge, and the sharp report of its discharge resounded through the office.

Homer G. Pitchford did not hear it. He was lying, limp, and bloody, and lifeless on his office floor, the smoking revolver still clutched in his hand, ere the echo of the shot had died away.

The shade of Homer G. Pitchford, freed from its fleshly mansion, paused

on the window sill before taking flight into infinity.

"It's a wicked world," soliloquized Mr. Pitchford's ghost, "and I'm glad to be out of it. If I can only get by above without being tagged for a quitter and a piker, I'll be proud of myself before this day's work is over. And yet—that *was* a bright idea I had just before I pulled the trigger. It may be that I was a little previous, after all, but no matter. It's all over now, so I'll just wing along to the pearly gates and see if there's any truth in this talk about the solid-gold pavements."

The ghost of Homer G. Pitchford was not long negotiating the quadrillions of leagues intervening between his late office and the gate where St. Peter is currently presumed to loiter on the lookout for those applicants for admission who persist in disregarding the sign: "Free List Suspended." To avoid clogging our story with detail, we will omit much that happened immediately thereafter, and state, merely, that the trial of the Pitchford shade was over almost before he had ceased flapping his wings and settling his feathers after his long flight. He was found guilty of throwing his life away without having left a single footprint in the sands of time.

It was explained to Pitchford's ghost that while the orthodox idea of the nether regions is slightly at variance with the real conditions, still punishment for earthly transgressions was an inexorable rule of the Kingdom of Light, and meted out according to the mental capacity of the individual to assimilate suffering.

"Pitchford," said St. Peter sternly, "during your stay on earth you abused the intelligence with which you were endowed at birth. After making a snug fortune in the advertising business you neglected that business to hang around cigar stands, attend vaudeville shows, and lap up high balls. Therefore, this is your punishment: You will attend the cabaret shows in Hades for a million years, occupying a seat behind an upright, where, in order to view the performance, you will have to crane your neck. During the entire period of your sentence you will be forced to drink bartenders' mistakes."

"Well, if that ain't hell," shouted Mr. Pitchford's ghost, and forthwith arising, he made an impassioned plea for commutation of sentence. "May it please the court," he said, "but about a millionth of a second before I bumped myself off I had a brilliant idea. In fact, I had already reversed my decision to commit suicide, but this was such a big idea—such an absolute winner—that in my excitement I pressed the trigger harder than I had intended, the gun went off, and I didn't get my head out of the way in time. Prior to my demise, for six long months I had not touched liquor, and I attended strictly to business when there was any to attend to. In fact, if I had only had a quarter of a second longer to think it over I wouldn't be here asking for probation. I stand convicted of failure to leave a single hoofprint in the sands of time, and to that I plead guilty. No argument about that at all. But I maintain that it was all a regrettable accident, and that I am entitled to reconsideration. That former shell of mine is hopelessly cracked, of course, but, given a new fleshly outer casing for my wicked soul, a ten-year stay of sentence, and permission to return to earth, I will guarantee not only to make a hatful of money for all concerned, but to put over something that will accomplish untold benefit to suffering humanity."

And Homer G. Pitchford's ghost sat down.

"Another stunt like Careless Carrie's Cough Compound, eh," said St. Peter sourly.

"No, that was the bunk, I'll admit—plain, diluted hop that put 'em to sleep, and they forgot to cough."

"Go into that anteroom and wait, Pitchford. I'll look into this," replied the saint, and Pitchford obeyed. Half an hour later they sent for him, and announced that his prayer had been granted. He was given an order on the chief storekeeper for a new head. Ten minutes later St. Peter unlocked the gate and, with his substitute head safely tucked under his arm, Mr. Pitch-

ford's ghost took a high dive from the bar of heaven.

Fifteen minutes later he had taken possession of the old premises, picked himself up off the floor, and walked to the window. Poor Julius Bellingall, down to his last ninety millions, was just walking up the steps of the Patterson Building.

Mr. Pitchford—now entirely human—smiled as the portly form of the multimillionaire disappeared into the rotunda.

"Julius," he murmured, "thou art my meal ticket. I will rope thee and hogtie thee, and take many pieces of eight away from thee this very afternoon, or my name isn't Homer G. Pitchford."

He wrapped his battered and discarded head in yesterday's newspaper, and tossed it contemptuously into the wastebasket. He was now ready for business, so he "frisked" himself and discovered that he had not a cent. However, he recalled the burial expenses he had left in the envelope on Miss Flannigan's desk, so he rushed out into the general office. The envelope was gone!

This unfortunate contretemps might have dismayed Pitchford an hour before, but to the rejuvenated Pitchford it was less than nothing. The dam that had so long held prisoner the flood of brilliant ideas in that brilliant brain no longer existed—for Pitchford had a new head. Smiling patronizingly at the memory of his dead self, he hunted through Miss Flannigan's desk until he had unearthed exactly one hundred and forty-seven stamped two-cent envelopes which Miss Patricia had ruined from time to time in addressing. He hastily ruined the last three good envelopes on hand to make it an even one hundred and fifty; then dividing the stamped envelopes into neat packets of twenty-five each, he walked up to the main post office, where the stamp clerk redeemed them, giving Pitchford in exchange three dollars worth of two-cent stamps.

"Now," quoth he, "Pitchford is himself again." He went to a pawnshop and sold his three dollars worth of stamps for two dollars and seventy-five cents. Next he partook of a light luncheon, which included a glass of buttermilk, treated himself to a shave, a hair cut, a shine, a new collar, and a fifty-cent cigar, after which he departed for the Patterson Building. He was gunning for Julius Bellingall.

He hummed a happy little tune as he strode briskly down the corridor, and turned in at Bellingall's office. Nothing could stop him when he felt as he did to-day. Nevertheless, something tried to. It was Bellingall's private secretary. Pitchford handed this menial a card.

"Take that into Bellingall, my son," he commanded, in his large way.

He had purposely omitted the prefix "Mr." It did the trick. "Evidently," thought the private secretary, "this young person is on terms of great familiarity with the boss. I'll be decent to him."

Within a minute, however, he returned from the private office and had the bad taste to announce that Mr. Bellingall—accent on the Mr.—was not in.

"That," quoth Homer G. Pitchford, "is a lie. I saw him come in. Why lie? It is sinful—particularly at your salary. I'm ashamed of you," and, brushing the protesting secretary aside, Mr. Pitchford passed through the office gate and walked to a door marked "Private. Please knock." So Mr. Pitchford knocked twice. Nobody replied, whereupon he opened the door and strolled in. Bellingall sat at his desk, with his back to the entrance, so Pitchford sank gratefully into a luxurious leather chair, lighted his fifty-cent cigar, and coughed propitiously. Bellingall turned at the sound, and Pitchford, smiling, inquired:

"Howdy, Mr. Bellingall."

"Quite nicely, I thank you," replied the man of wealth; "not, however, that I'm willing to admit it's any of *your* infernal business. Who let you in here?"

"Nobody. Your man tried to keep me out, but I had business with you, so I breeezd right along in."

"I see. Well, breeze right along out again, and be quick about it. Who the devil are you, anyway, to intrude in a man's private office?"

Homer G. Pitchford fixed Julius Bellingall with a long index finger. "I have you interested already," he charged. "I am Old Man Opportunity, and I knock once at every man's door. By the way, I knocked twice at yours."

"Rause mit 'em, Op!" retorted Bellingall, with a grim smile. "You're a nice, bright young man, and I like you, and all that sort of thing, but I have all the limited editions I require, and my charity is dispensed at Yuletide."

"But I——"

"'N I don't want any life insurance, either. Get out, I tell you! You're an insurance man. I can see it in your eye."

"Then, sir, my looks do not deceive you. I am in the insurance business, but not life insurance, nor yet fire, accident, health, automobile, burglary, nor liability," replied Pitchford. "My line, Mr. Bellingall, is death insurance—and the company isn't formed yet. You and I are going to get together and form it this afternoon—the Death Insurance Company, Limited."

Bellingall paused in the act of reaching for a paper weight to hurl at his visitor.

"Repeat that, Mr. Opportunity, if you please. It sounds new and interesting."

"You've got to give 'em something new to startle 'em," was the thought that flashed through Pitchford's head. Aloud he said:

"I thought it would interest you. Please put down that paper weight and permit me to talk to you for ten minutes."

"Very well, Mr.—er—er——"

"Pitchford—Homer G. Pitchford, formerly in the advertising business."

"Not THE Pitchford—the great ad——"

"That was a long time ago, Mr. Bellingall. I am no longer great. That curse of every artist—the imitator—you understand. I had to keep thinking up new ones right along, or I'd get as common as an old shoe, and I grew tired of the grind."

Bellingall held out his hand. "Pitchford, I'll listen to *you* any day in the year. You may not be aware of it, but I was very heavily interested in the company that floated Careless Carrie's Cough Compound, and the way you popularized that poison made me a million dollars. The old girl's selling pretty good yet. They have her in every home in the rural districts."

"What a fraud she was, too," replied Pitchford, smiling a little sadly. "Think, Mr. Bellingall, what I could do on a legitimate proposition, particularly one that's going to get 'em all talking within thirty days."

"Unfold," purred Julius Bellingall softly.

Forthwith Mr. Pitchford unfolded. For two hours he continued to unfold, Bellingall occasionally inferjecting a shrewd question. Pitchford outlined every single angle of his great idea, and at the conclusion of the interview he left with Bellingall's promise to finance a company to be known as The Death Insurance Company, Limited. It was to be incorporated for fifty million dollars, with Julius Bellingall president, and Homer G. Pitchford secretary and general manager. Bellingall had also pledged himself to provide a directorate of names so financially and socially prominent as to leave no doubt in the minds of the public of the seriousness of the proposition.

Within two weeks the company had been launched and established in commodious quarters on the top floor of the Patterson Building. The preliminary newspaper publicity Pitchford turned over to a specialist in press agentry, but the real advertising—the stuff with the punch—that Pitchford took charge of himself.

His first move was to cause to appear in every trolley car and suburban train throughout the country, a black-bordered card which bore a photographic reproduction of a skeleton waving aloft a sickle. To the skeleton's arm was affixed a small streamer of crape—not photographed, but the real

goods. In addition the card bore this script:

There is a Reaper, whose name is Death.
And with his sickle keen,
He reaps at a breath the bearded grain
And the flowers that grow between.

THIS MEANS YOU!

DO NOT DIE!

TAKE OUT A POLICY IN THE DEATH INSURANCE COMPANY, LTD.

We Bet You What You Like, for Any Period That You Will Die in That Period!

Patterson Building, New York.

That card fell on the people of these United States like a blight of locusts. It was too new—and there was no escape. That little streamer of crape flaunted everywhere, and everybody read it. They chuckled and they talked about it.

Two weeks passed, and then that card disappeared. Another had taken its place. Underneath the photographic reproduction of a funeral, with all the dismal trimmings, appeared the following:

IT'S A SAFE BET

That Death Will Come Like a Thief in the Night!

That's Why We Gamble On You.

Make It Worth While to Live. We Bet You You're Going to Die. Policies Graded According to Your Physical Condition. Low Rates to Consumptives.

The Death Insurance Company, Ltd.

Patterson Building, New York.

That last line, inflicted upon a public with its curiosity already stimulated, started the riot. A laugh swept from the Atlantic to the Pacific, from the Great Lakes to the Everglades of Florida, as our political orators might have expressed it. Everybody was talking about it, the newspapers ran columns about it, they commented on it editorially, and the funny papers got out a Death number right away. It was, without doubt, the greatest single exhibition of legitimate advertising of a freak business, and, at the same time, freak advertising of a legitimate business, that has ever been "put over" in the history of advertising.

Homer G. Pitchford had scored in thirty days! He had the country talking, and once you get the consumers talking about your goods, the business merely resolves itself into passing out the goods with one hand, and making change with the other. Thousands of agents were at once turned loose on a defenseless population, while Pitchford's great advertising campaign, varied and amplified to a degree not permissible of being set forth in a short story, spread the wonders and benefits of death insurance.

He gave them something new! He gave it to them every single week for a year, and not once did he duplicate. He played to that inherent sense of perversity in the female of the species, and advertised bargain-counter rates for ladies who took out policies on Fridays. On the thirteenth of each month the company gave a discount of thirty-three and one-third per cent on premiums to women, and on that day no policies were issued to men! Convalescents were given a ridiculously low rate, and hard drinkers were as welcome as the flowers in May. A man with cancer of the stomach was something to conjure with; rheumatics were given five per cent discount. Hard smokers with fluttering pulses were given flattering terms; asthmatics, folks with bronchial afflictions, nervous prostration, and diabetes, were given, in addition to a low premium, an additional discount of three per cent for cash, and consumptives were advertised for, while, on the contrary, a youthful athlete of twenty-one was about as popular as a wet dog in a parlor car.

The proposition was simplicity itself. For instance, according to the actuaries and mortality table of the old-line life-insurance companies, a man thirty years old and in good bodily health, would figure to live to the age of sixty-four under normal conditions. His life insurance would cost him, say, seventeen dollars and fifty cents a thousand, and the

insurance company, when issuing him his policy, virtually bet their client that he would *live* at least twenty years, and every year pay in to them the premium on his policy. Pitchford's company reversed all that. If a man in excellent health figured to live twenty years, the Death Insurance Company, Limited, would bet him that he wouldn't last ten, or five, or three years, or six months, for that matter. The premium was graded according to how long you thought you could live in order to beat the Death Insurance Company, Limited, at its own game, and collect on your policy.

A financier of international reputation took out a policy for ten million dollars. He had to live five years to win. Leaving the office of the insurance company with the policy in his pocket, he was hit by a taxicab and killed instantly. Immediately a thousand editors all over the country had the same brilliant inspiration. To a man they printed a whimsical editorial, suggesting that it would be good business on the part of the Death Insurance Company, Limited, to engage a band of hired murderers—taxi drivers, preferably, to insure dividends. That was good advertising, and it was all water on the Pitchford wheel.

A reference to the balance sheet at the end of the first year's business showed that the company had really lost a little money, although they had done an enormous business. But they had expected this, and were not daunted. Within three years they had lost eight millions, but still they held blithely on their course, and at the end of five years the volume of their business was simply indescribable. What had started as a colossal joke became a serious business reality, and when it was discovered that every policy was promptly paid the moment it came due, and that during its entire history the company had not been known to protest a single policy, the popularity of the Death Insurance Company, Limited, became unbounded. For a normally healthy person to take out a policy with them was really better than investing in city real estate.

At the beginning of the sixth fiscal year of the company's life, Julius Bellingall commenced to get uneasy.

"By George, Homer," he complained, "I'm getting on the anxious seat. What with these awful floods and cyclones in the Middle West, the war with Japan, the discovery of the cancer cure by the Rockefeller Institute, and this new tuberculosis serum, they'll have your Uncle Julius winging before long. Any signs of the back fire, Homer?"

"One," replied Pitchford.

"One isn't enough. With the company nineteen millions to the wrong side of the ledger——"

"We'll see how the wind blows, Mr. Bellingall," interrupted Pitchford, and picked up a card from his desk. "We have with us, in the visitors' anteroom at this moment, T. Phineas Doper, M. D., the chief pooh-bah of the Association of Medical Practitioners of America. I believe Doctor Doper has a proposition to submit. Wait a minute, Mr. Bellingall, and I'll have the doctor shown in."

T. Phineas Doper presently appeared. He was one of the recognized silver-gray types—middle-aged, courtly, well groomed, with a pointed beard, and a high silk hat. He wasted no time, but got right down to business.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I am, as you are doubtless aware, the president of the Association of Medical Practitioners of America, and I have called to submit to you a proposition which I sincerely trust you will consider. The outlandish activities of your outlandish company have made it to the interest of a large majority of the people of this country *to conserve their health* in order to collect on your policies——"

Mr. Pitchford smiled. "I anticipate your proposition," he said. "Business with the medical fraternity—particularly in the matter of hypocondriacs, who heretofore have been the principal source of revenue, has fallen off alarmingly. In other words, people are regaining their health. They are taking better care of themselves in order that they may beat this company at its own

game. Unfortunately, yours is a profession which pays only when people are sick. Now, you want us to let up, don't you?"

"Well," retorted Doper bluntly, "it had occurred to my colleagues that for a consideration you might be willing to fix up some scheme—er—doctor your policies somewhat, and make it an inducement for people to get sick!"

"My dear Doctor Doper, let us not waste each other's time. The combined wealth of all the doctors in the United States is not sufficient to make us quit. Go out and get help, and then make us a proposition. We are reasonable men, and will listen to you—later."

Doctor Doper bowed himself out. But his visit marked the beginning of a series of astonishing interviews with Homer G. Pitchford. On the following Thursday, Messrs. Caramel and Phizzer, representing the combined confectionery and ice-cream trusts, were ushered in. Their visit was not a protracted one, for after a vigorous protest against the actions of a company whose all-absorbing idea seemed to be the ruination of one of the most profitable industries in the United States—a ridiculous death insurance company that was taking the bonbons out of the mouths of a deluded feminine population, and diverting their coin from its rightful channels—the pockets of the candy magnates—they gradually worked around to an offer of five million dollars, provided the Death Insurance Company, Limited, would close out its present risks and resolve itself into a life-insurance company.

"It isn't money enough, gentlemen," retorted Pitchford. "Get out and rustle up some company to help you put up the coin. Our price is one hundred million dollars."

While in the midst of his morning's mail a week later, Pitchford was interrupted by the announcement of a visitor. His card proclaimed him to be Mr. Abner Graves, president of the International Casket Company. When he appeared, Pitchford discovered that he was a fat little man, in a light suit and a flaming tie. He entered, straw hat in hand, and smiling like the head of an old fiddle.

"Mr. Graves," Pitchford saluted him, "I suppose you have come to tell me that the casket business is dead, and that we've killed it."

Mr. Abner Graves laughed heartily. "Well, well," he bubbled, "that's a better joke than I'm forced to listen to a hundred times a day from the cheerful idiots who tell me they suppose I'm doing a stiff business."

"Thank you. Nevertheless, you admit——"

"Everything. This Death Insurance thing has handed us one right between the eyes. People are too darned healthy, Mr. Pitchford. Of course, we'll get the business ultimately, for your policyholders cannot live forever, but dad burn my eyebrows, Mr. Pitchford, I want to do business in the springtime of life. I want my profits evenly distributed, not bunched ten to twenty years from now. I just naturally cannot afford to wait."

"I perceive. You might die yourself in the interim."

"But this is a serious matter, my dear Mr. Pitchford. Really, the situation in the casket business is appalling."

"I dare say the palls have been reduced forty per cent. However, Mr. Graves, it is useless to harangue me further. With the Death Insurance Company money is the only thing that has any real eloquence. I suggest that you round up Doctor Doper, of the Association of Medical Practitioners of America, Caramel & Phizzer, of the Candy Trust, and such others as you think may be suffering from the popularity of our company. Make up a jack pot and buy us out. Price—one hundred millions. Good day, sir."

Within a month, Mr. Pitchford had been compelled to dispose in similar fashion of one Clarence Busthead, representing the allied liquor interests of America, while to his stenographer fell the task of routing Madama Waste, of the Slickform Corset Corporation, who appeared with a tale of woe which Pitchford judged was no part of a man's business.

Another month passed; then one day a telegram was received from Mr. Henry Addison Ropes, head of the Amalgamated Tobacco Interests of America, making a request for an interview with the directorate of the Death Insurance Company, Limited. Pitchford wired him, naming a date, and Ropes wired back that he was leaving New Orleans the next evening.

A crisp and businesslike old pirate was Henry Addison Ropes. He bowed coldly when the office boy ushered him into the presence of Julius Bellingall and Homer G. Pitchford.

"I asked to see the directorate," he said evenly.

"They're all dummies, so it doesn't matter, Mr. Ropes," replied Pitchford. "Mr. Bellingall and myself play dominoes with this corporation when the humor seizes us. Pray be seated."

Henry Addison Ropes laid a certified check for two million dollars on Bellingall's desk.

"My business is soon stated, gentlemen. Your confounded company is ruining the tobacco business. The Kentucky night riders are Sunday-school superintendents compared to Messrs. Pitchford and Bellingall. People have stopped smoking to dodge the tobacco heart and collect on your policies. Gentlemen, here are two million dollars, provided you offer, for ninety days, a special discount of fifty per cent for men and women with tobacco hearts!"

"I guess not," retorted Pitchford. "This business is largely philanthropic, and we do not purpose inducing the people of this country to make chimneys of themselves for the next ninety days in order that you may dispose of the enormous stock of cigars, cigarettes, and tobacco you have on hand. I am aware, Mr. Ropes, that five years ago your company entered into a ten-year contract for the entire cigar output of the Philippine Islands——"

"This is highway robbery," roared Ropes.

"It is Christian charity. It is better than giving people cash money, Mr. Ropes. It is Mr. Bellingall's peculiar scheme for aiding and elevating mankind. Since our company commenced operations it has increased the standard of health to a perfectly amazing degree. The purveyors of pills and nostrums have gone to the wall; people are learning to breathe properly, and to get the smoke out of their lungs. The saloons are being abolished, not by legislation, but through sheer lack of business. The sale of health foods and other provender for sane people's stomachs has quadrupled, the physical degeneracy which threatened this nation a decade ago has been averted. Women are wearing sensible gowns, and the manufacturers of the good old iron dumbbell are growing rich. The Consolidated Dairies Company has virtually arranged for the output of every adult healthy cow in the country, and people are drinking milk and avoiding the enervating effects of tea and the lethargy that comes from caffein in coffee. "Plain, wholesome food" is the slogan of the nation, and the farmers, as a result, are all happy and prosperous. The demand for their crops has doubled—likewise the prices. Why, there is such a demand for eggs—Mr. Ropes, permit me to let you in on a little business secret. Our experts are now at work arranging a side line whereby this company, for a small consideration, is prepared to insure the death of the domestic hen."

Henry Addison Ropes mopped his brow and quivered.

"I'm a reasonable man," he said. "Name your figure, give me an option on every share of your capital stock, together with an agreement not to engage in this same business for fifty years, ratify it at a meeting of your dummy board of directors, and I'll buy you out."

Mr. Pitchford realized that his visitor, in the language of the classic, was "talking turkey." He decided to be reasonable.

"Fifty millions," he said, and Henry Addison Ropes quivered again.

"Give me the documents I asked for and a six months' option," he said huskily. "You come high, but we have to get you. I must have six months. I can't do this thing alone, and I'll require

help. We'll have to levy an assessment all around, I guess."

The option and agreement were made out and mailed to Henry Addison Ropes that same day. Three months later he came into the office with certified checks on various banks, the whole aggregating fifty million dollars, and the entire capital stock of the Death Insurance Company, Limited, was transferred to a holding company organized for the purpose by Henry Addison Ropes. The holding company issued but five shares of stock to five clerks in Ropes' employ, at one dollar a share. These individuals forgot or purposely neglected to subscribe further capital to carry on their business, for, after borrowing fifty millions to buy out the Death Insurance Company, Limited, they had no more capital, and their promissory note turned up in the hands of an obscure person who demanded payment when the thirty days was up. Payment not being forthcoming, he sued, the holding company went into bankruptcy, and, after some months of legal subterfuge and scandal, the Death Insurance Company, Limited, died of inanition, a prolonged howl went up from the policy holders, and the matter went the way of all history.

But, to return to Julius Bellingall and Homer G. Pitchford. Upon the departure of Henry Addison Ropes with the capital stock of the company in his pocket, Mr. Pitchford arose and stretched his arms.

"Well," he said whimsically, "we're strangers in this shop now, so let's get out and divide the swag. We don't belong here any more."

"Right you are," replied Bellingall. "The books show a loss to date of approximately twenty millions. Our sale at fifty millions leaves us thirty in the clear. You furnished the idea, but I took all the risk, and you've enjoyed a large salary for five years. I should say that five millions would be about right for your cut."

"I'm tickled to death," replied Pitchford. "Not a bad profit for a piker—a million a year. And it isn't tainted money, either. I consider we've done a big job in some ways. We've got the people into the *habit* of health now, and if they'll only stick——"

"But we've left them holding the sack just the same. Don't kid yourself along, Pitchford, that you and I aren't crooks. We are. We've advertised a brand of goods, and we haven't stuck back of it. We've gained the confidence of the people only to betray them. We've taken premiums for five years from millions of people whose policies haven't expired, and now Ropes will throw the company into bankruptcy and——"

"Careless Carrie and the Whangdoodle Wash all over again," Pitchford chuckled. "Well, I should worry. I'm in the clear five millions, and I defy any man to put me in jail for it."

"Exactly. We've done well, Pitchford, and it's been great fun, but there's one drawback."

"What's that?"

"It was a freak proposition, founded in dishonesty, and now that we've put it over, it can never be put over again. That, my boy, is what put you on the toboggan in the advertising game. You advertised a fraud——"

At that instant, Homer G. Pitchford felt something cold and wet applied to the side of his head. Reaching up, he discovered that it was a water-soaked towel.

"By Jingo," he mumbled, "what's this? Have I hurt my new head?"

Two warm lips pressed to his stopped further speech. From a great distance he heard the caressing voice of Patricia Flannigan calling him sweetheart, and telling him he was all right, and not to worry any more, there's a dear!

"Cut it out, you bold hussy," retorted Mr. Pitchford thickly. "I haven't seen Patsy in five years—not since the day she quit me—turned me down for a failure, and I bumped myself off—stop it, I tell you. If I kiss anybody, it must be the real Patsy. I have five million dollars, and I'm going to hunt up Patsy and ask her——"

"But you didn't, you silly," persisted the voice of the Patricia of other days; "you merely bored a furrow in your stupid old love of a head, and your

right ear is all powder-marked and swollen until it looks like a gull's egg."

"Lemme get the straight of this," Pitchford murmured drowsily. "Holy Moses, how my head aches! Wow!" He was silent for a moment. Presently he said: "Where am I? I'm not in bed. The mattress is too hard."

"You're stretched out on your office floor, Homer, dear. I found you here when I came back to the office——"

"But my head—it's in the waste-basket——"

"It's in your darling Patsy's lap."

"Huh!" gasped Mr. Pitchford. Then a moment later: "Hah!" He smiled wanly, and Patricia kissed him.

"You're not badly hurt—the bullet went close enough to your skull to stun you, that's all. I'm going to leave you for a few minutes now while I go over to the drug store and buy some bandage to wrap this poor, old, tired head."

"Hurry back," warned Pitchford.

The fog had cleared from his brain by the time she returned.

"Say, Patsy, darling," he inquired sheepishly, "did you get my letter and the money?"

"Yes, Homer, dear."

"Then I stand aces up?"

She kissed him. "We can get married just as soon as your head heals up," she breathed, and flushed at her own audacity.

"Busted," piped poor Pitchford faintly. "Impossible."

"I'm not," retorted Patricia Flannigan loyally; "my grandmother died six months ago and left me three thousand dollars. I collected it to-day. We'll keep this office and go into business together. I know what's been the matter right along, Homer, but I dared not presume to tell you. Advertising isn't a graft any more, dearie. The day of freak advertising of worthless goods is past. Advertising is a business now, and you can't popularize a fraud. You must write ads and plan advertising campaigns for goods worth advertising—something that has come to stay——"

"Don't," pleaded Pitchford, "don't rub it in, Patsy. I know that now. I saw the light—had the Big Idea—a fraction of a second before I pulled the trigger, and I guess I must have dodged when that idea hit me. *Patsy, I've got back my thinker.* While I was lying there on the floor I dreamed a dream and lived five years of awful hard business, and cleaned up five million dollars. It was such a funny dream—and such a bogus game—death insurance! Why, darling, I woke up feeling like a crook!"

And Patsy kissed him again and wept for joy, for she knew that the battle was over.

Homer G. Pitchford had recovered his punch!

WHAT HE DIDN'T HAVE ON THE BALL

"STUFFY" McINNES, first baseman for the Athletics, was feeling in amiable mood after a game in which he had made two singles and two doubles out of four times at bat. He even pitied the pitcher whom he had slaughtered.

"Poor old fellow!" he exclaimed. "He didn't have even a prayer on the ball."

THE NAMES THEY HAVE

THE middle name of the secretary of agriculture is Bauchop. Champ Clark, the speaker of the House of Representatives, was christened Beauchamp; but, when he grew up, he cut out the "Beau," bo, and made it merely "Champ." It's much easier for the people to vote for Champ than for a stuck-up guy who calls himself Beauchamp.

Flagg's Orphan

By A. M. Chisholm

Author of "The Winning Game," "Rolling Ole," Etc.

The kangaroo court in session. A slice of life, boisterous and droll, from Yellow Horse, in the merry days when the law of the land ran with tardy steps in the West, outfooted by the swift code of the gun and the lariat. A short story that ranks with the best.

IN the sunlight of an afternoon now gone more than thirty years, the old-time placer camp of Yellow Horse drowsed and blinked somnolently. It was an unlovely collection of shacks, was Yellow Horse—shacks of logs, of poles, of rough, whipsawn boards, of canvas, and even of earth itself—set down on the flat beside the creek from which the camp took its name, entirely without order, settled plan, or design.

The original citizens—those who had first heard news of the gold find—had chosen the most eligible sites, and built cabins thereon. Those coming later had taken what was left; and what was left had continued to be taken. Yellow Horse straggled on the landscape, raw, ugly, guiltless of paint, innocent of attempt at beauty. Its structures were for the most part mere hutches wherein man might eat, sleep, and find shelter from the elements. And when they answered these purposes their owners were entirely satisfied.

But since man is gregarious, and his needs manifold, there were several larger edifices designed to minister to them. There was one general store which held somewhere within its roof and walls almost anything in merchandise which the heart of man might reasonably desire—or at least a substitute for almost anything. And since the true American possesses great adaptability, and the knack of fitting more or less comfortably into his surroundings when he cannot make them fit him, Yellow Horse was quite satisfied.

And then there were the saloons—three of them in the early days—of which the Golden Light was the chief by virtue of size, situation, the geniality of its proprietor, and the skill of its bartenders.

It was in the Golden Light that the leading spirits of Yellow Horse were wont to gather in those primitive years. It was their club, their court, their legislature. There local problems were solved and weighty matters settled. On rare occasions it had resounded to the staccato bark of six-shooters, and subsequently thereto it had witnessed inquests and trials of the simplest and swiftest; but, as a rule, its atmosphere was peaceful. Which was largely due to the fact that the majority of its habitués were excellent two-handed shots, and wore their batteries as regularly and unconsciously as their teeth. Hilarity of the standard, wild-West brands which overflowed in the playful burning of gunpowder was discouraged in the Golden Light; and gentlemen who insisted on pursuing happiness along these lines were very apt to suffer in health.

Into Yellow Horse, drowsing in the mottled, golden haze of the sleepy afternoon, with the purples of the mountains to the westward, and the immensity of the plains to the east, came a strange procession.

The leader was an Indian who trotted wearily, flat-footed, the dust puffing from his padding moccasins. His ordinarily coppery face was gray with dust and fatigue, and coursed by little

rivulets of sweat, telling of long and unwonted exercise.

Behind the Indian rode a white man. This horseman was young, saddle lean, and his face was redeemed from utter hardness only by faint, humorous lines about the mouth. Eyes, of a hardness to match the face, were chilly blue, and little devils of recklessness as elusive as dust motes danced therein. His costume was the conventional attire of the plains, and his right hand dandled jauntily and affectionately a long-barreled, single-action, forty-one-caliber six-shooter, from which the trigger had been removed expertly, showing that its owner favored that method of shooting technically known as "fanning."

Like the Indian in front, both horse and rider were powdered with gray dust. The horse jogged steadily, head hanging, half asleep, his muscular action purely mechanical. Behind, nose in the dust from his fellow's hoofs, a pack horse trotted meekly. Besides an ordinary light pack, this animal bore a man, or what had been a man, belly down across the pack saddle, arms on one side, and legs on the other, swaying and dangling with each motion of the beast.

At sight of the sinister burden borne by the pack horse, Yellow Horse—as represented by a dozen of its leading citizens lounging in the shade of the Golden Light—sat up and took notice. Not that dead men were uncommon spectacles in that camp, where the turbulent spirits of a continent forgathered. In those days there was still a frontier; not as well defined, perhaps, as that of Boone, and Harrod, and Kenty, and Wetzel, but, nevertheless, a real frontier. There were still hostile Indians. Old-timers continued to affect buckskin and long hair. The Sharps single-shot rifle was still in popular favor. The buffalo had not disappeared. The law of the land ran with tardy steps in the West, outfooted by the swift code of the gun and the lariat. Human life—in spite of theorists ever the cheapest of raw products—had not the value which a more modern and presumably higher civilization pretends to confer on it.

The spectacle, then, of the body of a man belly down across a pack horse did not shock the camp. But, taken in conjunction with an Indian on foot, herded by a gun, it aroused a lively interest. And yet the citizens of Yellow Horse were inclined to approach the matter cautiously as became gentlemen experienced in the perils of hasty comment and conclusion.

"Ed Tabor—ain't it?" observed a certain Mr. Stevens, more generally and deservedly known as "Bad Bill," referring to the horseman, and not to the man, living or dead, across the pack horse. He and Tabor were excellent friends, and there was no question of recognition involved; it was merely a polite way of approaching the main topic.

"Yep," replied old Zeb Bowerman, who was generally regarded as the camp's leading citizen. "On his Sammy-hoss. Seems like that pony favors his nigh foreleg a mite."

"May have strained hisself a leetle," Mr. Stevens rejoined.

"Ain't seen Ed for some days," Bowerman observed, after a pause.

"No, Ed he's done been somewheres," said Mr. Stevens vaguely.

This was legitimate comment. Neither, from years of experience, alluded to what might be a personal affair of Tabor's, which he would explain in good time. Until then speculation was to be reserved.

The Indian at a sharp command from Tabor halted before the Golden Light. As he halted he reeled from exhaustion, panting like a hard-run, over-fat dog. Tabor dismounted and dropped his pony's reins. Behind, the pack horse hung his head patiently.

"Howdy, Ed!" Bowerman nodded.

"Howdy, Zeb," Tabor responded. "I reckon I got a job for you, maybe."

"So?" said Bowerman, who, among his functions, was coroner when necessity arose. The matter thus opened, he permitted himself a direct question: "Dead man there?"

"Good and dead," Tabor confirmed. "It's old Flagg."

Flagg had been a dweller in Yellow Horse for a month or two, and his general characteristics had not been such as to endear him to his fellow citizens.

Bowerman received this intelligence without manifestation of either surprise or regret.

"Do you down him yourself?" he asked. "In which case before I take your post-mortem statement we better have a drink on it. I dunno but we better, anyway. This Flagg's been crowdin' the allotted span by his actions more than his years, ever since he come to camp."

"That's so," Stevens agreed. "It's merely his luck he lasts as long as he does. But where does this Injun get in on it?"

"Well," said Tabor, "I reckon he plugs Flagg, and, as he's handy, I brings him in in case."

"Then you don't kill Flagg yourself?" said Bowerman.

"No more'n you," said Tabor. "I'm ridin' along for camp—I been prospectin' a few days on the Seven Feathers—and when I top a rise near the old Sioux ford I see down below me a pony standin', and this Injun kneelin' beside what looks a lot like a dead white man. At sight of me the Injun makes a break for his pony. I reckon I'm in too much of a hurry the first time. But my second shot catches the pony in the head, and he somersaults over on top of the buck, flattenin' the breath out of him.

"When I've roped up the buck I find that his victim is Flagg. There's a hole just under his heart, and his six-shooter, with three empty ca'tridges and three good ones is lyin' alongside him. He's messed and clawed up the ground some after he's hit, and I reckon his hoss has stampeded off after he comes out'n the saddle. The buck ain't had time to scalp him, let alone round up the cayuse. Likely I interrupt them plans of his. So, as there don't seem to be no reason for lingerin' round, I h'ists Flagg up on Baldy; and bein' now shy a pony, the buck has to foot it. And as I've lost a heap of time already, I make him hit the trail right lively. Sev'ral times he acts like he's foundered. But here he is, and when he's got his breath back a little, he'll be in exc'lent condition for hangin'."

And, having concluded this matter-of-fact recital, Mr. Tabor rolled a cigarette in three motions, and lit it with a fourth with the air of one who, having done his full duty, washes his hands of further responsibility.

"Well," said Bowerman judicially, "first cards out o' the box it looks like a case. Same time we want to play a square game, even with an Injun into it. Did you talk any with this here buck?"

"Some," Tabor replied. "He puts it up he don't kill Flagg. But naturally I don't pay attention to no such prejudiced statements."

"If he don't kill him what does he run for?" asked Stevens sternly.

"Says he's afraid I'll think he's killed Flagg, and shoot him to play even," Tabor explained.

"The fact of his runnin' ain't conclusive; it may be guilty or prudence merely," said Bowerman. "If I was afoot, spraddlin' round about a dead Injun, and a party of bucks was to appear sudden on the landscape, you bet I'd fork myself over a pony the quickest I knowed how. And a single white man looms up to a buck as big as a war party does to a single white. It don't prove nothin', except that he's a prey to natural impulse. I reckon it's a case for an inquest. And also we don't want to forget that deceased has a daughter in camp. Somebody better go up to Flagg's cabin and break the news of her bereavement sorter gentle. Bein' 's Ed, here, found the old man, he could do it best."

Whereat Tabor exhibited preliminary symptoms of panic.

"You can bet," he said emphatically, "that findin' the old man and roundin' up his murderer lets me out. And I don't break nothin' to nobody. Do it yourself."

"I got other things to 'tend to," said

old Bowerman with dignity. "Bill, here, will go along with you."

"Not any I won't!" exclaimed Bad Bill Stevens as positively as Tabor. "You don't get me in rifle shot of no bereaved female, and I'll tell you why: I'm once deputed to inform a woman her husband's done cashed in, and I think I'll do it gentle and foxy, like Bowerman suggests. So I goes round behind the shack where she lives, and starts in to split wood for the kitchen stove; and when she comes out and asks me whatever I'm takin' all that trouble for, I says I never consider it no trouble to split wood for a widder. I says it just that easy and polite. But all the same, that woman, after lookin' at me for a minute sorter white and puzzled like I'd slammed a bowie into her, lets out one screech and sets down on top of them kindlin's and begins to dry-sob and laugh—mixed.

"It's sure the most scand'lous sounds ever offends my ears. And the natural consequence is I'm drunk for better'n a week tryin' to forget 'em. Which is when them two Hargraves boys, figgerin' I'm easy prey, tries to play even on their brother Sid that I shoots up a little a year before. With the further consequences that there's two more widders Hargraves. Since which I ruther inform a bear I've massacred her cub than break bad news gentle to a Christian female. It's the onluckiest thing a man can do." And Mr. Stevens shook his head in mournful retrospect.

"Well, this girl's got to be told," Bowerman decided. "We sure can't just throw the lash ropes off'n the corpse and leave him at the door for her to discover when she comes out with the water bucket in the mornin'. And anyways a girl don't set the store by her pa a woman does by her husband. She ain't had the same trouble obtainin' him in the first place, and when she picks up a new hand in the marryin' deal she quits him anyhow. Like enough she'll cry and take on for a spell, and that'll be all. And, after the funeral, if her funds is low, of course we pass the hat and send her back to her folks wherever they be."

"Which sounds as simple as beatin' pairs with fours," said Stevens. "And bein' so, you better play it yourself."

"I don't lay down on duty when she comes my way," said Bowerman. "I don't figger you boys want to, either. Ed has to come because he found Flagg, and it's only proper. The three of us will go, and maybe it's easier for all concerned."

Yielding to the pressure of public opinion, Tabor and Stevens assented unwillingly, and together they set out for the solitary cabin beyond the outskirts of Yellow Horse, which was the habitation of the Flaggs.

"This poor girl," said Bowerman, as they turned into a faint trail, "what's her first name?"

"Jemima." Tabor responded. "Leastwise, I've heard the old man call her 'Jim' when he was drunk."

"I like them good old Bible names like Jemimas, and Mary Anns, and Betsy Janes," said Bowerman, with approval. "Straight, dark girl, ain't she? Rides a paint pony, counter-branded a couple o' times?"

"That's her," said Tabor. "I seen her take it out'n that bronc once. Rides like a sure-'nough buster."

"Poor girl," said Bowerman. "She don't know what trouble's comin'. I don't want to shock her young feelin's more'n necessary. Reckon I'd better sorter lead up to it by some gen'ral remarks."

"Best way," Tabor agreed. "For an opener you could say the old man's been piled and busted a leg, but it ain't serious. Then you says the leg part is easy, but he's also hit onto his head. And when she takes that in, you adds that it's tough luck his cayuse rolls all over him and mixes him up internal to that extent it's doubtful if he pulls the hill; but if the worst happens it's for the best. After which you tells her he's dead, and speaks sorter cheerful and confident 'bout how he gives Peter the high sign and works his way in through the pearly gates without a hitch, and is now a angel in good standin'. And you might say 'bout how his last words was that she wasn't to holler, nor screech,

nor nothin', 'cause he ain't lost, but gone before." With which crafty suggestion Mr. Tabor looked at his companions for approval.

"You sure orter been a evangelist," said Bad Bill, with much sarcasm. "You got about the natural wisdom of a fool hen, Ed. You got to remember he ain't smashed by a hoss, but plugged with a six-shooter. Also, you bear in mind that the poor girl's been livin' with the old man, and there ain't no use tryin' to cold-deck her with such death-bed messages. And if Bowerman does so she merely puts him down a liar-all along the line."

"Oh, well, I don't care a durn," said Tabor. "Smooth the bed any way you like."

"There's something in what Ed says," said Bowerman. "It don't do to be too abrupt."

"All right," said Bad Bill. "But remmberin' that bereaved female that flops down among the kindlin's, and the events subsequent thereto, I don't have no confidence in breakin' bad news gentle. I'd say the abrupter the better, 'cause then the shock might hold 'em quiet till a man made his get-away. Which may sound selfish and brutal, but is merely plain hoss sense and prudence. For if it ain't for the way that kindlin'-wood widder takes on in my presence, I don't get drunk—leastwise not so drunk; and if I ain't so drunk they figgers I can't shoot them two Hargraves boys never does take a chance on me."

"Well," said Bowerman, "while concedin' the truth of what you say, I point out that this poor girl is shy merely a pa, and not a husband. Which makes a difference. And so, though she has to stand the gaff, there ain't no use bein' rougher than necessary."

By this time they were in sight of the Flagg cabin, which stood on a little knoll, commanding a clear view of the approach. It was an affair of logs, with a roof projecting beyond the front door, affording shade and shelter. The foreground was littered with tin cans, chips, and débris of sorts. It was untidy, cheerless, and dilapidated, without pretense of order or cleanliness, with no indication whatever of the presence of woman. Only a faint haze from the stovepipe projecting drunkenly through the roof betrayed occupancy.

As the trio came within thirty yards or so of the shack, the figure of a girl appeared in the doorway. She was slight, dark, and deeply bronzed, and her architectural lines seemed to run more to angles than to feminine curves. Her sleeves were rolled back, revealing a pair of muscular forearms. Her attire was a sadly worn waist and skirt short enough to show a foot of generous proportions in a heavy boot. Her middle was encircled by a belt from which depended a holster containing a six-shooter of the dimensions and caliber affected by Mr. Tabor himself.

For a moment she eyed the advancing men keenly, and then swiftly, but without haste, her hand reached back behind the door, reappearing with a repeating rifle of the latest model; which seemed of its own volition to jump to the ready beside her right hip.

"Hold on a minute!" she commanded tersely, in a voice which was a deep contralto almost masculine in timbre. Whereupon Bowerman and his companions, being gentlemen of experience, came to an abrupt halt.

"It's all right, miss," said the leader soothingly. "You know me. I'm Bowerman. We ain't holdups, nor nothin'."

"What was you wantin'?" demanded Miss Flagg, without changing the direction of the rifle muzzle.

"Why," said Bowerman, a trifle lamely, "we allowed we'd just call in for a little chat."

"Paw ain't here," said Miss Flagg coldly.

"We know that," Bowerman responded. "We figgered to talk to you about him some."

"What's he been doing?" asked Miss Flagg suspiciously.

"Nothin'—nothin' at all," Bowerman replied hastily. "That is, nothin' we don't all do or will some time when it comes our way. Your pa, miss, has been a pop'lar fav'rite, and universally respected ever since he come to camp,

for reasons it ain't necessary to enter into."

"I know paw from the hoofs up," said Flagg's daughter, "and I don't s'pose you come here just to run over his good points. And if you did you're losin' time."

"Well, no," Bowerman replied. "But the fact is, miss, I talk freer and more natural when a gun ain't pointin' at my belt buckle."

At which gentle hint, Miss Flagg, after momentary hesitation, deflected the weapon. "Bein' alone when paw's away I get sorter nervous," she explained.

"Which is only natural," said Bowerman. "A young lady hadn't orter be left alone, and that's a fact. But, speakin' of your pa, miss, was you expectin' him back any time soon?"

"Was you wantin' to see him about somethin'?" Miss Flagg countered.

"Why—not exactly," Bowerman answered. "No-o, we wasn't wantin' to see him about nothin' special, was we, boys?"

"Not at all," said Tabor.

"Him? Cert'nly not," said Bad Bill.

"Well, then," said Miss Flagg, "what was you wantin'?" And, as she spoke, her right hand toyed carelessly with the butt of the six-shooter at her belt.

"Why, the fact is we was gettin' a little anxious about him," Bowerman explained hesitatingly. "Here he's been away from camp for—how long is it he's been away?"

"'Bout a day," Miss Flagg replied.

"A lot can happen in a day," said Bowerman, shaking his head. "This here country's rude and oncivilized, and not oversafe. Accidents happens continual, too."

"Paw, he's pretty tough," said Miss Flagg calmly. "He'll stand quite a racket, will paw. You don't need to worry 'bout him."

"You can't never tell," said Bowerman. "In the midst of life we are as grass, like the Bible says. Your pa he looked rugged enough, but many a man quits the game sudden."

Miss Flagg's eyes narrowed. "Get right down to it," she commanded. "What you tryin' to tell me 'bout paw?"

"Nothin'—not a thing in the world!" Bowerman protested weakly. "That is, he's only had a leetle mite of hard luck that any one might draw. Don't you go worryin' about him. He ain't sufferin' a bit."

"What's the matter with him?" she demanded imperatively.

"Why, near as we can figger it, he gets into a leetle shootin'," said Bowerman. "He gets hurt a leetle. Now don't you go to worryin', cause it won't do no good. He gets plugged, and he loses a heap of blood, more'n he can stand, comfortable. Ed, here, fetches in his corpse——"

"He's dead!" cried Miss Flagg.

"Now you done it!" muttered Tabor, and Bad Bill's hands involuntarily sought his ears.

"I'm sure sorry, miss, but you've called it," said Bowerman mournfully. "His mortal remains is now in the snake room of the Golden Light. But the soul, as you're aware, miss, don't never die; and at this present moment there ain't no sort of doubt he's bendin' lovin' eyes on you from them bright realms above flowin' with milk and honey, where every prospect pleases, and only man is vile. And if his lovin' tongue could speak it would be to tell you to bear his loss calmly, and not to give way to grief no more than you can help. For it's a cinch bet you and him will meet again when the signs is right." And, having concluded this well-meant, if nervous, exordium, old Bowerman stiffened himself apprehensively for the inevitable outburst of grief.

Greatly to his surprise, Miss Flagg's dark eyes remained undimmed. They were bent upon his searchingly, and her voice was quite steady.

"Who downed him?" she demanded of Tabor.

Whereat the latter blurted out his tale as he had told it to Bowerman, but with a praiseworthy attempt to subdue the high lights. Miss Flagg listened in silence until he had concluded.

"Paw is quite a loss," she said. "It leaves me alone without no protector—

which is hard on a young girl. However, I reckon you boys will hang this Injun for me? I'd regard such a mark of respect to paw's memory."

"We sure will," Tabor promised promptly.

"In a minute," Bad Bill agreed.

"Provided the killin' ain't square, and he done it," Bowerman qualified.

"He's found alongside paw! What more do you want?"

"It looks like a case," Bowerman conceded. "Same time he gets a trial. And as there's no use delayin' things it will be in an hour's time. I don't s'pose, miss, you'll be there, not wantin' your young feelin's harrowed up."

"You needn't worry yourself about my young feelin's," Miss Flagg responded. "I'll be there, and I want that Injun hanged."

"Well," said Bowerman, rising, "we got things to see to; and no doubt you want to be alone, and search yourself out some black duds. While we leave you, miss, our sympathy remains. If you want anything, you can call on the camp. After the funeral we arranges your future about as you wants it. You bear up noble under your sorrow, and as such are a credit and a example to your sex."

Outside the trio breathed deep relief.

"And that's a pass I'm glad to get through without losin' pack or pony," said Bowerman. "The Christian fortitude of that poor girl is surprisin'."

"If ever I have a daughter," said Bad Bill, "and she shows sim'lar resignation when I pass away, I'll sure ask for a seat check, and take a few nights off to ha'nt her. Her conduct strikes me as unfeelin' to the point of bein' scand'lous."

"I look at it diff'rent," said Tabor. "The way she's out to hang that Injun shows that her womanly feelin's is stirred to their deepest depths. Naturally she's shocked and numbed by her bereavement; but I'm here to say her conduct throughout—and more 'special her desire for that murderer's scalp—is creditable, ladylike, and refined."

"There's something to be said both ways," Bowerman observed soothingly. "In the first place 'tain't likely the old man inspires her with an overdose of natural affection. And, in the next, no man can tell by a woman's looks how she feels inside. She may be one of the deep-feelin', dry-eyed kind. And it's even bettin' in spite of what she says, that when the rope is ready she pleads for that Injun's life."

"If I'm that Injun," said Bad Bill skeptically, "I ruther take a slow pony with a fifty-yard start than a chance on her merciful feelin's. However, I ain't enterin' no personal objections. I'm willin' to hang an Injun any time, on gen'ral principles merely."

An hour afterward, Bowerman opened the proceedings of the inquest. These were graced by the presence of Miss Flagg, who, however, had not seen fit to adopt the conventional garb of grief. She still wore her six-shooter. Tabor escorted her to a seat, and the accused Indian having been brought in, Bowerman arose.

"It is the mournful duty of this here inquest," said he, "to inquire into the circumstances surroundin' and leadin' up to the death of Nicholas Flagg; who met it by bein' plugged 'bout three inches under the heart along by the old Sioux ford. The bullet went clean through and out the south side, so it ain't been found, but, in the opinion of experts like Bill Stevens and others, it was a forty-one or forty-five-caliber Colt's slug. And in the further opinion of said experts, to go through deceased, even though it didn't hit nothin' but soft meat, it had to be fired at tol'able close range. Ed Tabor found the corpse and packed it in. Also, he found this Injun, whose name, in his own tongue, means 'Standin' Elk,' under suspicious circumstances, which he will relate. The Standin' Elk don't speak English much, but he puts it up in Shoshone that he don't know nothin' about this killin', but just happens along; though it's needless to remind this jury that what an Injun says ain't of much importance nohow. And now, Ed, you tell the jury how you finds Flagg."

Whereupon Mr. Tabor related the circumstances once more.

"You don't hear no shootin', you say?" asked a juror named Soames.

"Nary shootin'," Tabor replied. "The wind's the wrong way."

"And Flagg is warm meat when you finds him?" pursued Mr. Soames.

"I don't notice, particular," Tabor answered, glancing at Miss Flagg.

"How was his blood?" asked Mr. Soames, in ogrelike tones. "I reckon he bled free, and it was all spattered about on the grass and sech. Was it light red, or had it had time to blacken and stiffen up?"

"I dunno," said Tabor. "And I would point out that there's a daughter of deceased present, and such details is merely morbid unpleasantness mighty likely to lacerate her feelin's."

"This here ain't no polite social event, but an inquest," Mr. Soames stated. "The lady's presence is a drawback, but her own lookout; and you bet I don't allow no false delicacy to head me off from my duty. And I'm free to say that your answers to my questions surprise me. For even a pilgrim raw from the effete East, findin' a body like you say you finds Flagg, would notice details like whether he's warm or not, and how his blood looked. I puts these questions in the interests of justice."

"Is that so?" Tabor retorted hotly. "Lemme tell you something: A man that ain't got no more regard for a tender girl's grief-wrung heart than to ask such aimless and disgustin' questions about her old man's body in her presence ain't white. He ain't fitten to howl in the same night with a coyote. In fact, he's too full of natural p'ison to die of snakebite, and in the scheme of creation he's on the same level with the offspring of a blowfly."

With which vigorous characterization Mr. Tabor's hand prudently sought his starboard battery; while Mr. Soames, who was left-handed, reached for his port gun. But old Bowerman, who had scented trouble with Tabor's closing remarks, dominated the situation with his own weapon.

"I'll down the first man that is guilty of contempt of court!" he thundered. "One inquest at a time is plenty. Get your hands away from your guns, and keep 'em away. Now," he continued tactfully, having secured obedience, "in regard to these questions which is prompted by Mr. Soames' sense of duty: Ed Tabor has answered with strict truth and propriety that he don't know or don't notice, and that's satisfactory. Same time, naturally he draws his own conclusions. 'Bout how long, Ed, would you say Flagg was dead when you finds him?"

"No time at all," said Tabor promptly. "He looks fresh killed. It's my opinion Standin' Elk is just goin' to put a pianner finish on the job by scalpin' deceased when I sight him. And the reason I don't hear the shootin' is because the wind's the wrong way. Also, I'm down behind a hill."

"Which is all the evidence there is as to the killin' itself," Bowerman informed the jury: "Therefore we pass on to the guilt or otherwise of this Injun. If he done it we hang him, and the deal's closed. If he don't, we bury Flagg and sorter keep the matter in mind.

"Now the Standin' Elk's yarn is he's just ridin' along on about the usual business an Injun has—which ain't none at all—and he hears shootin'; and a little while after a man on a calico pony crosses ahead of him, ridin' like he's in a pow'ful hurry to get somewheres. He don't get a good look at this man, only he's got no whiskers, and he's dark, and pintos is so common it don't help much—ain't even a good lie, in fact. So the Standin' Elk, yieldin' to a curiosity which is mighty likely to have a fatal endin' for him, cuts this rider's trail, and picks it up and backtracks him till he comes to Flagg. And he's just got there when Tabor comes over the rise. Bein' fearful of bein' mixed up in a tragedy, he yields to impulse again and jumps on his pony; which Tabor downs and brings him in. That's the Standin' Elk's yarn, as he uncoils it to me in Shoshone, and it sounds so likely that probably it ain't true. However, that is for you to decide. If any one has any questions to ask, now is his time."

"What kind of a gun is this Standin' Elk packin'?" asked a juror of Tabor.

"Single-shot Sharps buff'lo gun, old model," Tabor replied.

"No six-shooter?"

I don't see none."

"Then the Standin' Elk is a wronged and innocent savage," put in Mr. Soames; "and my verdict is for dischargin' him without a stain on his character."

"You set your brakes a little," said Mr. Stevens, who was himself a juror, and cordially disliked Soames, frowning. "Far as an Injun's character's concerned, he ain't got none. And that there gun detail ain't material."

"You done said the hole in Flagg was made by a six-shooter, and not by a buff'lo gun," Soames reminded him.

"There ain't no evidence at all that the buck don't have a six-shooter, too," Mr. Stevens argued. "Likely he gets rid of the incrim'natin' arm by droppin' it in the grass somewheres. And you bet we ain't takin' the trouble to ride out and find it. There's Flagg dead, and his daughter a orphan; and there's the Injun. He runs when he sees Ed. Lots of white men's been hanged on less."

"In the rude exooberance of our country's youth that's mebbe so," Mr. Soames admitted; "but now we got law and order till you can't rest. Stranglin' bees ain't so frequent as they was, and this court has too much hoss sense to hang an Injun which the evidence shows is merely a good Samaritan."

"I dunno's a Samaritan's such a awful good Injun," said Bad Bill skeptically. "I reckon they must be a mighty small subtribe, and I never hears much about 'em, only that they give old Gen'ral Crook trouble the time he's out after Sittin' Bull. Also, there's some blames 'em for the Stonehouse massacree. Which shows they're as bloody-minded as any other savage. Anyway, this Standin' Elk ain't a Samaritan at all. He's a Shoshone; you can tell it by his moccasins. I'll bet a hundred dollars he don't even talk Samaritan, and I'll leave it to Bowerman, who savvys more Injun than any white man ever I see.'

"That bet's a clean miss," said Soames. "A Samaritan ain't an Injun at all—leastwise he ain't an American Injun. He's a party the Scripture tells of, who finds a man that's been downed by holdups, and takes him to his shack and fixes him up, and, when able to travel, stakes him on his way. And what I claim is that the conduct of the Standin' Elk is sim'lar. Also, I wish to add to my verdict the rec'mendaton that the camp throws him in a new pony."

"This is gettin' away from the point," said Bowerman. "Takin' a calm and dispassionate view of the evidence, it don't seem conclusive. There's room for doubt. And where there's room for doubt it's a split, of which the pris'ner gets the benefit."

"Lookin' at it calm and dispassoonate also, Mister Chairman," said Bad Bill, "and admittin' the superficial possibility of a doubt, I submit it's merely whirlin' a larger loop which tightens down all the same. For if the buck ain't killed Flagg, he may have killed some one else; and even if he ain't yet, he may. So, to play it safe, and to give gen'ral satisfaction to all concerned, I vote for hangin' him."

"It's my duty to protest agin' such a barbarous miscarriage of justice," exclaimed Soames. "There ain't no case made out. This poor, virtuous savage ain't got even the rudiments of guilt. There ain't been no motive shown for the crime yet; and, accordin' to law, you can't cinch a verdict of guilty onto no man onless you show motive."

"I can show a motive plenty good to hang an Injun on in a minute," said Bad Bill. "Flagg carried an extry good head of hair for a man of his years—long, curly, and turnin' gray. Smoke-dried, and on a pole, any savage would be proud to possess it. It's that scalp that without doubt excites covetousness in the breast of Standin' Elk."

"Speakin' in gen'ral," said a juror named Wilson, who, by reason of the converging nature of his gaze, was known as "Cock-eyed Bill," "Injuns

and other range stock does things mostly because, and lookin' for reason and motive is a waste of time. But here's a point I ain't heard touched on yet. Here's Flagg killed at close range, with a six-shooter. Flagg's six-shooter has three empty ca'tridges. Flagg was a plumb good shot, and it's natural to suppose that in this last affray he'd do his best. And yet there's no holes in the redskin. It looks to me like this alibi stiffened up the Standin' Elk's hand a lot."

"I object to this here argument, Mister Chairman," said Bad Bill. "My objection bein' that in the case of an Injun alibis is barred, and don't go. Moreover, we're here to do justice; and if we don't do it on this savage, we're shy an example. Lookin' round for another will take time, and be a lot of trouble. Likely we never do get things lined up as satisfactory as we have 'em now. So, to force a show-down, I move that Nick Flagg come to his death by bein' shot by Standin' Elk; and that the Elk be hanged accordin'ly."

"And I move in amendment," cried Soames, "that Flagg's death is due to natural causes at the hands of an unknown party ridin' a calico pony; aided by contributory negligence on the part of deceased as proved by them three empty shells, for which there's no meat to show. And that the Standin' Elk is not only innocent, but his conduct throughout is both white and creditable; and, bein' so, the camp recoups him the loss of his hoss."

"Both motion and amendment is out of order," said Bowerman, "mostly because I ain't given my opinion yet. You want to remember this is an inquest and trial, and not go chargin' off with motions and amendments which may be all proper in a public meetin', but is out of place in a solemn court. This jury will take its instructions from me, and render a verdict accordin'ly. Now the way I line this up there ain't no evidence more than his presence to connect the Standin' Elk with the killin'. Onless there's more offered, his case don't go to the jury at all; and the court regretfully turns him loose with a warnin' to be more careful how he associates himself with dead men in future. But there's a daughter of deceased present, and while the killin' itself is news to her like it is to us, it's possible she may know of some one who had a grudge against her pa. Only the ends of justice force us to intrude on her sorrow, but under the melancholy circumstances it's our duty to play the hand out. I will ask Miss Flagg to come forward and give evidence."

Miss Flagg, thus brought into prominence, rose with obvious reluctance and was given another seat in front of Bowerman.

"Now, miss," said the latter gently, "perhaps you'll oblige us by tellin' if to your knowledge any one was likely to be out gunnin' for your poor pa."

"What's the use of askin' questions like that?" said Miss Flagg. "This Injun killed him. There ain't no doubt of it."

"Leavin' the Injun out of it for a minute," said Bowerman patiently, "you don't know of no one else?"

"No, I don't," the young lady replied, with emphasis.

"Your poor pa," said Bowerman, "wasn't talkin' much about himself; which reticence I hasten to say wasn't neither marked nor unusual. Not aimin' to pry into his past, might I ask if he was mixed up into any feuds or sim'lar private enterprises?"

"No live ones," said Miss Flagg. "He was mighty careful to clean up as he went along, was paw. He allus said he didn't allow to have no old-grudge war parties campin' on his trail."

"Which is exc'lent theory," Bowerman admitted. "And so I take it you can't throw no ray of light on the identity of the party on the pinto hoss of which the Standin' Elk speaks?"

"I 'low he's just lyin' to save his copper skin," said Miss Flagg. "And I put it plain I want him hanged."

"Speakin' with all deference to the wishes of one of the gentler sex," said Bowerman, "this Injun don't hang on the evidence now before the court. There ain't a thing to connect him with

the killin' only that he's on deck when Tabor happens along."

"Ain't that plenty?" demanded Miss Flagg sharply.

"Not accordin' to the law," said Bowerman apologetically, but firmly. "Justice bein' blind supposes a man innocent ontil he's proved guilty, and it don't provide diff'rent for an Injun. I don't say this is as it should be, but it's the way it is. Your poor pa was killed by a six-shooter, and the Standin' Elk is the possessor of a rifle merely. Also, it ain't reas'nable to suppose that a good, reliable shot like your poor pa fires three times at him, and don't hit nary one. It's likely the murderer is carryin' a crease or two in his hide, and to convict the Standin' Elk would be to cast reflections on the memory of the deceased's shootin', which you, as a dutiful daughter, naturally shrinks from. And so, reluctantly and for lack of evidence, we have to turn the Standin' Elk loose on the community ontil such time as we catch him at something else."

"Back where I come from," said Miss Flagg tartly, "he'd have been strung up an hour ago. Here I am a poor orphan, and this kangaroo court denies me justice on the murderer of my paw. Don't I get no action on my sorrow and bereaved condition? I want this assassin hanged, and if you boys' sand runs more'n colors to the pan you'll take and swing him off without more delay. Ain't there no chivalry in this here camp, that a low-down Shoshone buck can come and put it all over a defenseless female by slaughterin' her natural protector and provider, and get away with it on a technicality like lack of evidence? Ain't there no higher law at all in these here parts?" And for the first time Miss Flagg produced a serviceable, polka-dotted handkerchief, with which she dabbed her eyes.

"After listenin' to this heartbreakin' appeal," said Tabor gallantly, "there's only one thing to do to save the reputation of the camp, no matter who killed Flagg. Yeller Hoss is long on chivalry, and never shall it be said that beauty in distress appeals to her in vain. Without expressin' an opinion on his guilt or otherwise, I move that the Standin' Elk be sacrificed upon the altar of chivalry; but that, before hangin' him, Bowerman explains careful to him in Shoshone how it is, and that nothing personal is intended."

"I second that," said Bad Bill. "He'd orter make the trip to the happy huntin' grounds proud in the knowledge that he's helpin' the camp out of a bad fix; which it ain't often the luck of an Injun to be able to do."

"The promptness with which the camp responds to the lady's appeal to its chivalry is highly creditable," said Bowerman. "Them old, ironclad sports that went on the prod after dragons and infidels, and other hostiles, had nothing onto us. And that's why it pains me to have to rule the motion out of order. The law don't stand for chivalry, and any sacrifices on that altar will be offered up in smoke. The Standin' Elk is a free Injun right now. Any further talk of hangin' him is contempt of court, the court bein' me, pers'nal!" And the old frontier wolf glared grimly at Tabor and Stevens.

Whatever the outcome might have been, the natural course of events was interrupted by Standing Elk. The Indian, unable to follow what was taking place, had been staring hard at Miss Flagg. Now, on his feet, his hand outstretched, dramatically pointing to her, he broke into a torrent of Shoshone addressed to Bowerman.

But with his first words the grief-stricken Miss Flagg stiffened and straightened, and the polka-dotted handkerchief fluttered to the floor. She sprang to her feet, and, with a celerity which would have done credit to Mr. Stevens himself, her hands filled with two formidable six-shooters. Her voice rang sharp and minatory, with the slight tremolo in the higher notes, which the more experienced recognized instantly as kin to the warning of the rattlesnake, and equally businesslike.

"Put up your hands, every last one of you!" barked Miss Flagg. And the urgency of the command was so evident that a forest of arms shot immediately

into that undignified position. "Keep 'em there!" she commanded. "I reckon I'll run this court myself a minute."

Down in the back of the room a man stirred uneasily. There was a flash, a puff of smoke, an explosion, and a bullet brushed his ear. And yet Miss Flagg had not appeared to look in his direction. The smoking gun poised in her hand with the supple readiness of a coiled snake.

"Silence in the court!" said Miss Flagg. "Don't scuffle your feet no more, you down there, or I'll burn the ears offen your head. And you, Bill Stevens, and Wilson, and Tabor, and Bowerman, that 'low you're some sudden with a gun, don't make no breaks onless you want to talk things over with Flagg."

"Don't worry 'bout me," said old Bowerman. "Under circumstances like these here I'm allus able to exercise self-control; otherwise likely I'd be an old-timer on high when Flagg lands in. I don't aim to be no sacrifice on that altar of chivalry Tabor was mentionin' a minute ago."

"Them sentiments was to Tabor's credit," grinned Miss Flagg. "Still, I don't try to keep up the bluff. I savvy what the Standin' Elk was tellin' you, which is why I cut in. You can bet if I'd seen that savage when I was ridin' off after the shootin' there would have been a good Shoshone trailin' up Flagg. When you was mentionin' his yarn 'bout seein' some feller onto a paint pony, I figured he wouldn't know me anyway, let alone with these here woman's duds on."

"I reckon, then," said Bowerman, "that you ain't Flagg's daughter; nor yet a member of the female order at all?"

"You can gamble all you've got I ain't," said the putative Miss Flagg positively. "Seein' the fat's burnin' now, and I'm pullin' my freight in about two minutes, never to return, I don't mind tellin' you my name is Kid Jackson; and Flagg he's French Pete Tremblay."

Which statements created a mild sensation, for both men were noted bandits, outlaws, and notorious killers.

"And, further," Jackson pursued, "though I don't 'low to be tried for nothin' whatever by no court, this killin's fair and square. Pete he tries to hold out on me, and make a get-away, and I heads him off down by that Sioux ford. And in the shootin' I outlucks him, he merely creasin' me twice along the ribs. I'm sure sorry Pete forces the play on me, but he knew what to expect."

"If that's the case," said Bowerman, "why was you so sot on hangin' an innocent savage like Standin' Elk?"

"Why, if the Elk was found guilty of killin' Flagg, naturally my position as a orphan daughter would be good for a week or so till I could ride without hurtin' this here side," Jackson returned. "And an Injun more or less ain't worth mentionin'. However, I don't hold no grudge agin' him; and, to prove it, there's that pinto up in the stable behind the shack, where me and Pete hung out. He's been rode to a showdown the last couple of days, but he's a good hoss, and I gives him to the Elk in place of the one Tabor downs, havin' a faster and fresher one standin' outside the door right now."

"That's fair and square," said Bowerman. "I s'pose you and Pete was hidin' out, which is why you run the daughter bluff?"

"That's it," Jackson replied. "Pete calls himself Flagg, and shaves off his beard. Havin' a growed-up daughter about my weight sorter fur-lines the bluff. Suspicion never gets a chance to start like it would if we was partners, or even father and son. Only thing is this female racket is so slow it's a wonder to me women is only fifty per cent crazy. The modesty and sobriety proper to the part makes me short in the grain. And Pete, he's sure a hard parent to get on with steady. Sev'ral times it looks like we'd smoke each other out of the cabin." Jackson shook his head reflectively, but his sharp eyes never relaxed their vigilance. "And now," he continued, "I reckon I'll move. And as I ain't takin' no chances what-

ever on a bunch like this here, Bowerman will come along walkin' beside my hoss till I'm out o' range. At the first hostile sign from ary one of you he loses the top of his head."

He paused a moment, his eyes searching their faces. "This ain't a bluff," he added. "You've heard of me. I'm cold, and I'm a killer. If any one has a grudge agin' Bowerman, now is his time to play even."

"Well," said Bad Bill Stevens, 'while I'd admire to take an even break with you, Jackson, in this case, and out of regard for Bowerman, I back your play. Any man that makes a hostile sign I'll down myself."

"Let me in on this, seein' I'm interested," said Bowerman. "I'm an old lead mule, but as a wheeler I'm poor. It looks to me, Jackson, like you're takin' too much for granted. First that I'll be a passive hostage; and, second, that Yeller Hoss is concerned 'special in the death of Pete Tremblay, which looks like a straight killin', in which there's no mourners. That bein' so, there's nothin' for the court to work on, and she adjourns. So far as you're concerned, Jackson, you're at liberty to pull your freight or stay round as your American judgment dictates. No one's goin' to make this incident the basis of a gun play. But you can bet I ain't arrived at my time of life to be walked out o' camp alongside no holdup. And, further words bein' useless, you can start such proceedin's as you like." And the old frontiersman looked the young killer straight in the eye.

"You're sure an awful bluff, or a game old rooster," said Jackson admiringly. "A square offer like that I'll meet halfway, trustin' to the sportin' instincts of the camp to make your words good." With which Jackson housed his artillery, and Yellow Horse lowered its collective hands. "But at that," he continued, "I won't strain your hospitality more'n long enough to get a drink, and into some pants, this set of scenery havin' lost its charm."

Half an hour later he rode slowly out of camp, two guns in his belt, and a rifle beneath his leg. Turning in his saddle at a bend of the trail, he waved his hat in farewell and was gone.

"I'm sure glad," said old Bowerman, looking after him reflectively, "that women in Yeller Hoss is so far mostly absent; and that such as ain't don't mingle much in public affairs. For even this imitation of one sev'ral times in the last hour creates strained relations between friends, vergin' to the brink of pos'tive onpleasantness."

"Takin' your remark as referrin' to me and Soames," said Tabor, "I withdraws any statements made under mistaken impressions; merely adding that, compared to some folks, mules is diplomatic and tactful personages."

"That's satisfactory," said Soames. "I accepts your explanation in the spirit it's made in; with the simple observation that other folks is so constituted that the mere sight of a woman's outer garments renders 'em non compos and crazy. When, in face of all the evidence, this Jackson wolf howls for the blood of the Standin' Elk it don't surprise me to learn he's merely an alleged female."

"No woman yet ever allowed a thing like evidence to shake her settled convictions," Bowerman observed sagely. "But I'm free to say that I'm filled with relief and thankfulness when I look down this Jackson holdup's gun. For, naturally, with them disclosures of his sex appeals to chivalry fail. And when I think of the consequences of puttin' chivalry in play across the layout of justice in a camp like this here, my mental vision gets so blurred with smoke that, hardened as I be, I tremble."

The Inspirations of Harry Larrabee

By Howard Fielding

Author of "The Murder of Jack Robinson," "Bill Harris—His Line," Etc.

If you had called Harry Larrabee a detective he would have stared at you uncomprehendingly. Nevertheless, few detectives could have achieved by their deductions the results Larrabee achieved by his "inspirations." A strange, even unique character, and an attractive one.

(*A Complete Novel*)

CHAPTER I.

THE BOARDING-HOUSE BURGLARY.

THERE was a fellow named Joe Larrabee whom I knew in college, longer ago than I care to think about. I can't say we were friends; he ranked in my regard with a hundred other men whom I liked well enough, but whose society I did not seek. He was devoted to the fine arts, and especially to music; I to science and the sports. In that small and pleasant world of college, we were never close, and in the larger world our differences of taste and fortune naturally found more scope, so that I doubt whether we met twenty times in as many years.

I was surprised, therefore, on a certain day in September, to receive an urgent note from Larrabee, asking me to call upon him at the Harvard Club at the earliest moment. Responding promptly and in person to this request, I learned that Larrabee had been ill for some days, and that he had just been removed from the club to a hospital. I gathered that his condition was alarming; and at the hospital my apprehensions were confirmed. The attending physician in the case told me definitely that there was no hope.

"Ought I to speak with him on any matter of importance?" I asked. "Is his mind affected?"

"Not by this attack," said the doctor, with a faint smile. "Know him well?"

"Not intimately, but for many years," said I.

"You won't find him much changed," said he, and set me on the way to the patient's room.

Larrabee's appearance greatly surprised me. He was animated; his face looked remarkably youthful; and my limited experience of sickness did not permit me to recognize at first the burning stimulus of fever. He greeted me with an enthusiasm which was a little wild, yet sane enough, and thanked me cordially for having come.

"But I knew you would, of course," he added. "You couldn't help guessing what was the matter."

The Seven Wise Men couldn't have guessed it, from Larrabee's message; but there was no use in annoying him by a contradiction. I said only that I was sorry he was so ill, and that I hoped to see him make a fight and win his health again.

"Oh, nonsense, old boy!" he said. "What's the sense of talking that way? You've got an eye in your head; you can see."

He gave me a quick, bright look that was peculiar to him, and somehow it went straight to my vitals. That look, and the accompanying gesture by which

he tossed the tangled hair back from his forehead, were magical reminders of old days. My youth rushed back upon me in a chord of memory woven of a thousand exquisite voices, and I felt for this man the first real tenderness that he had ever won from me. He perceived my emotion, and was gratified.

"That's right," said he; "don't pretend. You can see that I've come to the end of it. Then say so, straight out Lord, how people lie, at a time like this! But why? If the truth's sacred, it's sacred, and that's all there is about it. Yet, in the face of danger or disease, people run to lying as if it were a life preserver. And that reminds me," he rambled on. "I was aboard a ship in the Mediterranean with my wife some years ago, and we got into a collision in the middle of the night. 'Oh, Joe,' she cried out, as soon as she was fairly awake, 'are we going to sink?' 'Yes, my dear; we are,' said I, 'and mighty quick.' We used to discuss the ethics of it afterward, though she was a truthful woman, too, so far as that's possible. She claimed my first duty was to consider her feelings, but how the devil can there be duty without truth? That's what I'd like to know."

I was tempted to ask him how he had known that the ship was going to sink, for it seemed to me that he had alarmed the lady upon insufficient evidence; but I remembered that insufficient evidence had been Larrabee's long suit, in the days of our early acquaintance. His restless flow of words went on before I could say anything.

"Well, the dear girl's likely to have had new light, on the other side of the veil," he said. "She's waiting for me; and, to speak confidentially, that's the chief reason why I take this so easily. I want to see her. I've been, at times, fairly consumed with impatience." A pause, and another of his quick glances which always seemed to flash the blue of his eyes visibly out into the air. "You're still a skeptic, I see. Nothing in that; nothing at all. Why, man, I tell you she's right there!" He pointed beyond me with his slender, beautiful hand, now white as marble, and the effect was somewhat startling. I had the greatest difficulty to avoid looking in the direction indicated.

"And now," he proceeded, ceasing to stare at vacancy, "let's talk about my son."

I had forgotten that he had one.

"Yes," said I. "How's he getting along?"

"First rate," he answered; "having a great time, in his own way. I suppose this beastly business of mine will break it all up. Too bad! He's fond of me, you see. We're a pair; just alike. It's been bully good fun to have a son like Harry, with something inside him different from the poor sawdust that ordinary mortals are stuffed with. You'll take to the boy, I'm sure."

I mumbled something commonplace, out of my sawdust stuffing.

"All I have is to be his," said Larrabee; "but I've thought of putting it in trust for a few years—in trust with you."

I had a spasm of New England scrupulosity. Larrabee knew nothing about me, and it seemed improper he should put his estate into my hands. I tried to present this aspect of the matter to him, and he was so hurt that his voice trembled, and the tears came into his eyes; irritated, too, as he always was at any notion that the facts were not perceived.

"Why, my dear boy," he said, "our friendship is thirty years old. How could I know any man better than I know you? Am I an ass?" he went on, his voice rising. "Can't I *see* anything? I know you to the bone. I would trust you with millions."

I began to be seriously alarmed; but a moment later Larrabee disclosed the fact that his estate was small; barely exceeding forty thousand dollars. This was a relief, and before my mind was free of the effect, he had extorted my promise to accept the trust.

At this point, I was warned away by the nurse; but because of the pressing nature of the business, and the fact that Larrabee's case was utterly hopeless, I was permitted to return after he had had two hours' rest. In the later con-

versation, I learned that his son Harry was twenty-three years old; that he was a musician, a writer, a painter, an actor —indeed, a servant of the arts in all capacities. He was at present deeply interested in the drama, and had taken an engagement with a traveling company in order to acquire familiarity with the stage. He had not been informed of the serious nature of his father's illness, but the time had now come when this must be done; and I took down from the elder Larrabee's lips a telegram which amply illustrated his devotion to the truth. I dreaded the effect of its appalling frankness, even upon a strong young man of the same temperament as that from which the message emanated.

On my way out of the hospital with the telegram, I saw two men in the lower hall near the door. One was swathed in the white robes of the operating surgeon, and he seemed to have been halted in full course by the other who now stood in his path, holding him by the influence of a long finger pointed at his breast. The surgeon was elderly, square-built, and somewhat pompous; he puffed himself up a little, resenting this interference with his progress; but he couldn't get away from the slender, tall young man with the pointing finger. As I looked at them, the younger raised his unoccupied hand, and pushed back the hair from his forehead. His back was toward me all this time, but at that gesture, I had a flash of recognition.

"Mr. Larrabee?" said I, advancing.

He turned, and gave me a glance, just like his father's, the same blue streak in the air.

"Yes, sir," said he. "That's my name." Then to the surgeon whom he now allowed to pass: "I'm sorry to have detained you. You'll pardon me, I'm sure, remembering my anxiety, which is very great. Doctor," he said, addressing me, "you've been with my father, doubtless; you recognized me by the resemblance. Will you please tell me how he is?"

I tried to prepare his mind, but he had seen in my hand the paper on which I had taken down his father's message, and he guessed that it had some relation to himself. I was constrained to give it to him. He read it, and stood with bowed head for a moment.

"Thank you," he said. "I'm a little staggered, naturally, though I anticipated the worst. He wrote me that he was slightly ill, and I came at once. Have you attended him——"

"I'm not a doctor," said I.

He seemed to find some difficulty in believing it; pushed back his hair nervously, and blinked at me.

"I must be a good deal upset," he said. "You'll understand; I'm not quite myself. I suppose they'll let me see father at once?" And he started toward the wrong stairway.

I took him by the arm, and led him upstairs to the corridor from which his father's room opened. We exchanged barely a word on the way. He passed from my guidance to that of a nurse, and I turned back. The scene between father and son was not for me, though it seemed I was the elder Larrabee's best friend, and had enjoyed that distinction, without being aware of it, for thirty years.

The patient, from his window looking to the east, beheld the beauty of another dawn, not two. In the meantime, his desire as to the disposition of his property had been expressed as the law required. Harry approved of the arrangement without question; he accepted me at his father's valuation. I was the friend above other friends, the man to be relied on in fair weather or foul.

"I won't say that my father had better judgment than anybody else in the world," Harry remarked to me, "but at least he had the best method of judgment, the best possible."

Since Harry had the same method himself, what was the use of arguing with him? Piety and common sense joined their voices against any attempt to alter his opinion. We got along excellently. I had feared he might be difficult to handle in money matters, but no one could have been easier. The size of his income, and the need of living inside it, were facts which he perceived

instantly and without effort, and never lost sight of. He was not a spendthrift, he cared little for luxuries, and even in the dramatic profession which seems to be controlled chiefly by lunatics without keepers, he knew how to keep himself employed.

But adventures gathered round his path as if by the operation of some occult law, and his strange, precipitate judgments, formed in the twinkling of an eye, upon evidence the most shadowy and unreliable, propelled him headlong into situations the most grotesque and dangerous. And he always sent for me immediately after these occurrences—or, by coincidence, just before one of them was to happen.

After his father's death, he returned to the stage, joining a company which presently went to Chicago. Just then there arose a matter of business connected with the estate, compelling me to confer with my young friend, and I telegraphed him about it, and took a train westward bound.

He had taken quarters in a theatrical boarding house which accommodates both sexes on the unjust conditions so often complained of in the world at large; that is, there was one standard for the women and another for the men. The latter might be as bohemian as they pleased, but the women must present a certificate from the recording angel and then prove by the most exemplary living that it had not been obtained by false pretenses. The furnishings of this abode were far, far from luxurious, but the table was supposed to be the best in Chicago.

Harry's room was up two flights of stairs, at the rear. Behold him sitting there, long after the evening performance was over, with a pipe, some bottles of beer, and a litter of books. It was his habit to read half a dozen at once, scattering them around on the floor, and diving after one or another as the train of his own thought guided him, sometimes ripping out half a dozen pages, tacking them on to part of another book, and throwing the balance away. He was deeply engrossed in the study of the technique of the drama, and had come to the bottom of the second bottle of beer. The clock, meanwhile, had jogged along to half past two, but the time didn't matter. I was to arrive early the next morning, and Harry had decided to sit up all night—which was among the commonest of his decisions.

Suddenly he took his nose out of a book, arose, extinguished all the lights, and softly opened the door. He had heard suspicious noises in the house. Just what constitutes a suspicious noise in Mrs. Sandstrom's boarding house it would be too curious to inquire. The other men were as irregular in their habits as Larrabee himself; they came home at all hours, retired if they happened to feel like it, and, if not, they usually called upon some other man, and compelled him to discuss the woes of actors as long as there was a drop of beer in his room. Doubtless Larrabee knew this, yet at the very moderate hour of half past two he had heard somebody moving about, and had translated these sounds into evidence of burglary by his own peculiar mental method.

There was a very dim light in the second-story hall, and none at all in the third. Larrabee crouched down in the shelter of the banisters, listening, and presently he became aware of a man below him, stumbling over a torn place in the carpet, and softly swearing.

The man began to grope his way up the stairs. He was carrying a small satchel, and he wore black clothes and a black soft hat. Further than this Larrabee could see nothing. If the man had been one of the minor members of his own company, several of whom lodged on the third and fourth floors, Larrabee could not have identified him in that wavering glimmer of light from below. Moreover, there were men living in those upper rooms whom he had never seen at all, for he himself had been a tenant only three days. Yet it never crossed his mind that this dimly discerned and stumbling figure might not be a burglar.

And when the poor devil came to the head of the stairs, Larrabee suddenly released his six feet two of stature in

the manner of a jack-in-the-box, and infolded the stranger in his powerful embrace. A stifled yell of uttermost surprise and terror rent the air; there was a brief and frenzied struggle; and the two men fell backward down the stairs, with Larrabee on top.

When the human toboggan ceased to slide, Larrabee got upon one knee, his hand still gripping the other's throat, but there was no movement of the prostrate figure which lay in a strange posture, the right arm under the body. Doors were flung open; lights flared from the rooms; and persons of both sexes very thinly clad cried out to know what was the matter.

"A burglar," said Larrabee coolly. "Don't be alarmed. I've got him."

He took his unconscious victim by the shoulders, upon an impulse of humanity, and drew him into a less strained position. The right arm—which had been broken in the fall—was released from under the body, and a revolver slipped out of the hand.

At this moment there proceeded from the front room on the second floor—the apartment de luxe of Mrs. Sandstrom's boarding house—a cry which it is no exaggeration to describe as earsplitting. The author of this vast volume of sound was a young woman named Carolyn Vaughn, who sang a soprano rôle in a musical comedy then playing in the city. She could really sing; she had a voice, and she now let loose the whole of it in one appalling shriek.

At the first alarm, she had turned up her light and opened her door, as others had; but, being an exceptionally modest girl, she had returned for something to put on, after a single glance into the hall. Then she became aware of a disorder in her rooms which was not of her own making. The lid of a trunk was up; the contents of the top tray strewed the floor. In that tray she had hidden her watch, her money, and her jewels. They were gone.

At the sound of the girl's cry, Larrabee stooped down and took the satchel which his captive had let fall. He opened it, and some very brilliant objects gleamed in the uncertain light. They were Miss Vaughn's diamonds; her other property was there also, reposing on a substratum of picklocks and small jimmies.

Yes; though the thing is preposterous, it is none the less true. The man whom Larrabee had assaulted in a manner so unreasonable was actually a burglar. Such was his avocation; his ostensible calling was that of sceneshifter, and he was employed in the theater where Miss Vaughn sang. He had seen and coveted her diamonds. He had entered the boarding house by way of the scuttle in the roof, to which he was returning when my young friend intercepted him. The revolver which he had been in the act of drawing was loaded, every chamber, and if his fall had not disabled him, he would have shot Larrabee to escape a prison, just as they always do.

CHAPTER II.

WHILE ONE WOMAN SANG.

When I arrived next morning, Harry met me at the station. His manner was perfectly natural, without a trace of excitement. I never should have guessed that he had been up all night, still less that his researches in the technique of the drama had been interrupted by an incident so startling. He told me the story, while we were at breakfast, speaking very simply and without affectation. The occurrence did not run in his mind; he showed no tendency to talk about it all the time.

"How the devil did you know the fellow was a burglar?" I demanded. "Ten thousand to one, he would have been some harmless person lodging in the house."

"Oh," said he lightly, "I didn't do anything until I'd got my eye on him. That settled it, of course. There couldn't be any doubt as to what he was."

I would really have liked to know why not, but Larrabee's remarks upon the subject did not carry much light to my intelligence. He knew a burglar when he saw one, said he, and seemed

to be surprised that I should question it. I did question it most seriously in my own mind, but that was not the whole of the difficulty. The burglar had not made noise enough to waken Miss Vaughn or to attract the notice of the other lodgers, some of whom had not yet gone to sleep. How, then, could Larrabee have heard him? Personally, I have no idea that he did. I believe he heard some perfectly innocent person preparing to go to bed, and that the capture of the burglar must be credited to a wild freak of chance.

But the burglar seemed to me to be a minor character in the tale, when it was related to me over the coffee in a restaurant, that morning. Harry said very little about Miss Vaughn, and the less he said, the more I thought. The perils of the stage are for men as well as women. It would probably now be necessary for me, in my capacity of trustee, to rescue this tall youth from one of them. I pictured Miss Vaughn as a robust, mature, experienced person who already had her eye on Larrabee. I suspected that it was for her sake that he had gone to Mrs. Sandstrom's, and that the recovery of her diamonds would prove to be the foreordained spark in a barrel of gunpowder.

It was a hasty and an erring judgment. I was entirely wrong as to both the parties to this imagined romance. Miss Vaughn was a slender, fair-haired, young-eyed nymph, of rare beauty and exemplary character. I may doubt that it is possible to look down a dark stairway onto the top of a strange man's hat, and pick him out for a burglar, but to read a girl's face by broad daylight is another matter. Innocence and kindness, a quaint, old-fashioned self-reliance, and a vivid interest in life were what I saw most plainly in Miss Vaughn, when I had the pleasure of meeting her; and so far from having any further desire to restrain Larrabee, I began to condemn him as a booby.

In a sense, he was one. His ideas of romance were those of a healthy boy of fifteen who is too much taken up with football to waste his time thinking about girls. Not sports but art in various forms occupied Harry's attention, but the result seemed to be the same. Never have I beheld anything more entirely callous than his behavior toward Miss Vaughn. He was polite to her, but he simply didn't know that she was a woman; didn't care whether she was or not. His voice never changed in tone when he addressed the first part of a speech to me, and the last part to her; and his eye rested upon her and upon Mrs. Sandstrom's excellent pie with precisely the same kind of approval. Perhaps if his energies had been directed to pictorial art at this stage of his career, he might have viewed Miss Vaughn with a more adequate appreciation, but it happened that he was occupied with something else.

Miss Vaughn was not yet twenty-one, and there were no evidences that her heart had ever been especially aroused, but I am very much in error if it did not tremble on the verge of an awakening at this juncture. She admired Larrabee, as any one could see; she was inordinately grateful to him for the rescue of her diamonds, and she credited him with cleverness and courage far beyond his deserts. I learned that the jewels were a small part of a really valuable collection which she had inherited from her mother, along with the mother's peculiar passion for diamonds. Some years ago there had been much money in the family; it had taken to itself wings, and the girl, who was now an orphan, lived upon the wages of her voice; but not a jewel had been sold, or ever would be. In fact, there was no present need, for she received a good salary, and was clever at saving. She was somewhat disturbed, however, about the future of the piece in which she was appearing. It had not succeeded in Chicago, and was to take the road with rather gloomy prospects.

She went away next Sunday, and I was witness of Larrabee's farewell. So far as he was concerned, there was nothing about it which required privacy. He had sent her some roses, at my suggestion, which seemed to surprise him, but not nearly so much as

the offering from such a source surprised Miss Vaughn. There was no doubt she was extremely pleased; her manner of showing that she prized the roses was the most exquisite thing of the sort that I have ever beheld; but Larrabee, whose chief pride was in his power to see through a millstone at a glance, was wholly blind to this divinely delicate unveiling.

"Good-by," said he, shaking hands briskly. "Hope your show will last out the season. Let me hear from you if it doesn't; I may know of something. Good-by." And he thrust her into a cab, not ungently, but with ineffable stupidity. These things are sometimes irritating to an elderly man, condemned to stand aside and see them. I could have kicked Larrabee while he was placidly lighting his pipe, as the cab rolled away through the dull Sunday streets.

About six weeks were required to mend the burglar's broken arm and send him to jail. In the meantime, Larrabee had quarreled with his manager, who accused him of evading the reporters instead of getting all the advertising that was possible from the incident; and when some understrapper in the district attorney's office, by a process of doubtful legality, prevented Harry from leaving the city with the company, his engagement was canceled, and he returned to New York.

There for some weeks he devoted himself to study, and to the writing of a play. I saw him infrequently. He was at work all the time, except in the forenoons, when he slept, and for an hour or more in the middle of the night, when he ate what he called his dinner, and generally took a long walk alone. These nocturnal strolls had no other object that fresh air and exercise; he would usually walk northward from Columbus Circle along Central Park West until he seemed to have gone far enough, and then cross to Broadway and proceed homeward along that thoroughfare. Most men would plod around the varying triangle of those streets for several years without encountering an adventure worth relating. The habit of minding their own business would sufficiently protect them; but Larrabee had no such habit; he scorned it. He despised the character of the hanger-back, the timid man, unready, careful of his own skin. Prompt decision, instant and entirely reckless action were what he most admired, though he rarely wasted words upon the subject. The thing was too natural with him; he couldn't see the other side of the argument.

It was a night in February, and a very strange one. It might fairly be called hot. A tepid mist stewed upward from the whole city; the sky touched the tops of the houses, and was all smeared with yellow from the lights below. Windows were open everywhere, and people could be seen within, moving about restlessly like caged animals, or thrusting out their heads into the night from mere uneasy impulse.

Larrabee had gone out earlier than usual, and it was not yet midnight when he came to Eighty-fourth Street and turned westward. On the narrower street, the open windows and the excessive wakefulness of the people began to attract his attention more sharply, and that is why he happened to take note of something which might otherwise have failed to catch him at the point of his peculiar weakness.

The front of a new apartment house across the way was mostly dark, but in somebody's parlor on the third floor there was a bright light. At the two windows white shades were drawn, the one to the right lacking some inches of reaching the bottom. Here the shadow of a woman suddenly appeared, clearly enough outlined to give a hint of elegance. She tried to pull the curtain all the way down, and dragged it from its fastenings above so that it fell to the floor, revealing her in a low-cut evening gown, her right hand and arm bare, and the left arm still covered by a long white glove which was turned back to the wrist.

Perhaps even Harry Larrabee might not have noted these details in such a way as to carry them in his mind, except for what followed. The woman paid not the slightest attention to the

fallen shade, but turned instantly aside, and sat down to a piano in the corner. The instrument was invisible to Larrabee, but the musician was in plain view. She struck a chord before she was fairly seated, and it was then that Larrabee recalled the matter of the glove. Since she had begun to take her gloves off, it seemed strange she shouldn't have had time to remove them both. Why such haste?

She struck the keys heavily, looking away from the piano toward the rear of the room, in which direction Larrabee could see little except the chandelier, not a sign of any audience for the musician who now burst into song. The queer prelude of haphazard chords had touched upon familiar and funereal strains from "Trovatore," and the woman had jumped to the tenor aria, which she sang, apparently, as loudly as she could. But Larrabee detected something strangled and unnatural in the voice, something frantic in the pounding out of the accompaniment. Still, those hackneyed strains have been worse rendered many a time, and the ordinary wayfarer who did not like to hear them would merely have gone on about his business with a slight acceleration.

Larrabee was not the ordinary wayfarer. He took this performance to himself; it addressed him personally; it insulted his intelligence. The whole thing seemed to him to be extremely fishy. Clearly that woman was not singing, in any proper sense of the word; she was not trying to sing; she was making a noise, the loudest she knew how to make, and of the only sort that wouldn't bring the neighbors. Why was she doing it? To drown some other noise, of course; some other voice. Decidedly the matter smelled of mischief.

A raincoat which Larrabee had been carrying on his arm slid unnoticed to the ground. He ran across the street to the entrance of the apartment house. The door was of glass, reënforced by metal scrollwork, giving a view of the deserted hall. An attendant should have been there, and the door should have been locked, but like many others of its kind, it wasn't. Larrabee entered, and ran rearward in the hall to where a little elevator car stood empty. This offered the quickest way of getting up, if a person only knew how to operate the machinery; and Larrabee stepped aboard.

He whirled a wheel, and the car dropped like a stone; he whirled the wheel the other way, and with a wild convulsion the car shot upward. "Ah," said Larrabee, "I see how this thing works!" And he stopped it deftly at the third landing.

The voice and the piano were in full action. The woman had come to the duet, and was singing both parts. Above the noise of it, Harry heard a man speaking from the other room.

"Howl," he said; "howl! That's a grand tune. Keep it up!"

Whether the words were serious or derisive Larrabee could not decide; they produced no apparent effect upon the singer. Larrabee tried the door, and found it locked. He threw his shoulder against it, and at the same time touched accidentally the push button alongside. A bell rang sharply, and the music ceased. There came then the dull sound and the jar of something falling. Harry gave another drive at the door, and the lock slid past the catch, letting him in.

A general effect of a rather well-furnished parlor flashed upon his perception, but the first object that he clearly saw was the form of the musician stretched on the floor directly in front of him. Believing her to have been engaged in some nefarious proceeding which he had interrupted, he now assumed that she had fainted from fright. She would revive in due time; he gave her only a glance, for the other persons in the mystery seemed to be of more importance—the man whose voice he had heard, and the inferential third party whose cries had been smothered by "Il Trovatore."

At the rear of the parlor was a sort of lounging room now partly shut off by portières which were pulled in a disorderly fashion across the broad doorway. Larrabee dashed through the opening between them, heedless of the

chance that the man whom he pursued might be standing just beyond, waiting to brain him with a bludgeon. Nothing of the kind occurred; he saw no one in the smaller room; but an open door at the farther side invited him to continue his explorations.

He passed into a little hall which was lighted, but the remainder of the apartment was dark. He invaded a bathroom, a bedroom, a dining room, a kitchen, and a maid's room, turning on the light in each; and no glimpse of any mortal creature rewarded his investigation. There were several ways of exit, but none stood open, nor did he see anywhere a clew to guide him farther in pursuit.

The escape of the man who had figured in this affair was not especially mysterious, but Larrabee did not immediately see what had become of the third individual, the theoretical victim of this conjectural crime. He had decided that it must be a woman; and he now seemed compelled to assume that the chief villain of the drama had carried her away in his arms. No, he didn't believe it; he preferred to think that there was some other explanation which would presently disclose itself to him. Not for one instant did he doubt the wisdom of his own conduct, nor suspect that he had intruded into this place unwarrantably, nor fear the consequences to himself.

He returned to the parlor. The musician still lay prone, a rather comely creature, though somewhat older than he had at first supposed her to be, her charms a little more enhanced by rouge and pencil, now that he came to look at her with close attention. She had the development of chest and throat which is usual with singers in maturity; her hair was dark, and, as to race, she seemed to be part German and part Italian.

These observations were made while he stooped down beside her that he might carry her to a couch on the other side of the portières; but as he began to lift her up he saw a tiny streak of blood behind her right ear. It must have flowed from some wound under the hair. Very gently he attempted to locate this injury with the tip of his finger, whereupon the woman drew her head away, with a faint, irrepressible squeal, and opened her eyes.

"Don't be alarmed," said Larrabee. "I won't hurt you. Why did you pretend to be unconscious?"

She sat up, and glared at him.

"Who are you?" she demanded. "What are you doing here?"

Before he could reply, he saw her eyes shift to look beyond him toward the door which stood about half open. He himself had heard a sound in that direction. Glancing over his shoulder, he beheld a lean-faced youth in a green livery with black buttons.

"Boy," said Larrabee, "get a policeman. Quick!"

At this the woman raised her hand to her throat, and uttered a long, wailing cry. It gradually became articulate.

"Oh, it's gone! It's gone! My necklace. Oh, my rings!" She felt of her fingers, and beat her hands together like a child in a tantrum.

The youth started forward with his mouth open, but Larrabee checked him with a pointing finger like a sword, backed him to the wall, and pinned him there.

"Do you know her?" he demanded. "Does she live here?"

"This lady? Sure. She's Madame Batonyi."

"Did you see her come in just now?"

"Yes."

"Who was with her?"

"Another lady."

"Anybody else? Do you know of any man who was here?"

"No. I didn't see anybody. I went to the corner on an errand——"

He was interrupted by Madame Batonyi, who had got upon her feet, and had been standing with a hand to her forehead as if dazed. She now uttered a sharp cry, and ran into the other room, followed instantly by Larrabee.

"Where is she? Where is she?" exclaimed the woman, looking wildly round. "Oh, what has become of her?"

There was no closet nor cupboard, no place in which a human being could

be concealed, unless there should be more space under the low couch than its appearance indicated. Larrabee snatched away the cover which hung to the floor, but in his position he could not at the instant see beneath. Buttons, looking from the other room, had a better angle of vision. He doubled up as if with colic, and sent forth a faint cry like the howl of a dog far away in the night.

Larrabee dropped to the floor, thrust a hand under the couch, and gripped an arm near the shoulder. Beneath the covering of the sleeve, it felt slender and soft, like a child's. An unaccustomed wave of tenderness swept over him. He drew the unconscious form very gently out into the light, and, kneeling beside it, he looked down upon the face of Carolyn Vaughn.

She wore a long coat trimmed with ermine over an evening gown of pale blue. The coat was open, and was pulled partly away from one shoulder. A veil which had covered her hair was now twisted around her throat, not with a strangling pressure, perhaps, yet tightly enough to be dangerous. Larrabee tore it loose, and was aware of a complex, aromatic odor which had been faintly perceptible in the air of the room. There was no sign of any wound; the girl seemed to have been overcome by some anæsthetic drug.

Nothing whatever had in the smallest degree prepared Larrabee for the shock of finding Miss Vaughn the victim of this crime, sunk in this deathlike trance. He had not seen her since they parted in Chicago, he had not known that she was in New York. Doubtless the natural emotions—surprise, pity, protest against the fact, resentment against the person guilty of this cruelty—must have been present somewhere in his consciousness, but they did not sway him from his usual methods of procedure. He gave the girl a single searching glance, caught her up in his arms, and ran out of the apartment.

There was a sound of the trampling of feet on the stairs. A panting policeman, whose shoulders seemed as broad as the stairway, was just rounding the last run before the third floor, with several ordinary citizens in his train. Evidently, the occurrences of the last few minutes had been observed from windows across the way, and an alarm had been given.

The policeman, looking up, saw Harry with the girl in his arms.

"Here!" he yelled. "Halt! Come back, you!"

Larrabee sprang into the elevator, disengaged one of his hands, and spun the wheel.

"All right. I'll be back soon," he said, almost in the policeman's ear, as the car shot downward past the people on the stairs.

In the narrow way that wound round the elevator shaft, confusion now broke loose. The procession, reversed for the pursuit of Larrabee, was wrong-end foremost. The policeman who had led was now in last place, and he was so big that the others simply couldn't get out of his way. He carried some of them ahead of him like a wave under the bows of a scow, as he sailed down the stream in Larrabee's wake. But he came out upon Eighty-fourth Street eventually, and was there informed by many voices that a man had carried away a dead girl in a taxicab. They had supposed he was a doctor. The cab had come up to the door in the nick of time, as if it had been called for this service. It had gone westward, and was now out of sight.

CHAPTER III.

CONTRADICTORY WITNESSES.

Another policeman arrived upon the scene at this juncture, and he gave his help in clearing the hall of curious neighbors. A guard was then posted at the outer door, and the big man went upstairs again. He found Madame Batonyi apparently out of her wits, and unable to tell a connected story. A doctor was summoned to attend her, word was sent to the police station, and nothing else worth mentioning was done for perhaps a quarter of an hour.

Meanwhile, I had received a telephone call at my home which is not far

from Madame Batonyi's. The person addressing me was plainly of African descent. He said that Mr. Larrabee had asked him to give me a message This is it:

"Miss Vaughn has been drugged and robbed in the apartment of a Madame Batonyi." (Here followed the address.) "Please go there as soon as possible. Miss Vaughn seems to be dead, but we still have hope."

"Is that *all?*" I asked, when the colored person ceased to speak.

"Yes, suh."

"Who are you?"

"Ah'm de hallman," he replied; and I supposed he meant he was the hallman in the house where this deplorable crime had occurred. Perhaps the sudden, wretched news had shaken my wits; I know it struck me with a peculiar strangeness, as if such an atrocity had never been perpetrated before.

"Seems to be dead," I spoke the words aloud with an absurd feeling that that would discharge them from my mind where they were filling all the space to the exclusion of thought.

"Yes, suh." And he repeated it very carefully. "She seem to be dayed."

I dropped the receiver, and ran out of the house, snatching a hat by the way.

A considerable crowd had collected in the street, but no one was permitted to enter the house unless he could show cause. I told the sentry who halted me that I had just received a message from Mr. Henry Larrabee asking me to meet him at Madame Batonyi's.

"Who's Henry Larrabee?" said he.

"A friend of mine," said I, and I gave him my card.

The sentry pondered.

"Describe your friend," said he, at last.

"Describe him?" I echoed. "What for? He's upstairs—in the apartment, wherever that is. He's helping to revive Miss Vaughn."

"How do you know?"

"I had a message from the negro, the hallman here."

The policeman seemed to be afflicted with extreme perplexity, but if he had not had enough of his own, I could have loaned him some.

"Come in," said he, and drew me into the hall. "I want you to describe your friend for a party here."

He rapped with his club on a door to the right of the entrance. It bore a dentist's sign, and stood ajar. There was no response; the policeman glanced into the apartment, but saw no one.

"Must have gone upstairs," said he, and seemed much in doubt as to the next move.

While he meditated, a lieutenant of police came hastily to the outer door; and the sentry, with obvious relief of mind, admitted him. A whispered conversation ensued, and at its close the officer turned toward the stairs, asking me with perfect courtesy to accompany him. He did not address a word to me on the way up, and seemed so deep in thought that I decided not to get his ill will at the outset by disturbing him.

In Madame Batonyi's parlor, we found that lady herself, seated in a chair, and attended by the doctor who had evidently shielded her from questioning up to the time of our arrival. At sight of the lieutenant, however, he stepped away from the patient, and moved to an inconspicuous position. The youth in green livery was there, with the ponderous bluecoat whom Larrabee had seen on the stairs, and a plump, effeminate man with very white hands whom I rightly guessed to be the dentist resident on the ground floor. This individual seemed to have come upon the scene but a moment ago, for I noticed that he was looking about him covertly, with the curiosity of a woman, at the furnishings of his fair neighbor's room.

"Where is Miss Vaughn?" said I. "Has she been taken away?"

"Yes," said the big policeman slowly. "She—certainly—has."

"To a hospital?" said I.

There was an ominous silence.

"Do you mean she's dead?" said I, truly stricken to the heart.

The policeman glanced at his supe-

rior, who nodded, granting him permission to answer me.

"We don't know where she is, nor how she is, nor nothing about her," said the big man. "A young feller grabbed her, and ran away with her—in a taxi; and that's the last seen or heard of either of 'em."

A double anxiety gnawed at my vitals, not only for Miss Vaughn, but for Larrabee, who had taken this awful responsibility upon himself. If the girl should die, what would be his position?

The lieutenant now began his investigation, addressing himself to our hostess with the manner of a lawyer questioning his own witness. It appeared that she was Madame Julia Batonyi, widow of an Austrian colonel; that she was an opera singer, a contralto, and had sung in many of the leading theaters of Europe; that she had been in America somewhat less than a year, and had occupied this apartment—except for an absence on tour—during the past six months. She lived alone, except for a maid who slept at home. And to this account of herself she added a few words about Miss Vaughn.

"A girl the most charming and lovable I have ever known," said Madame Batonyi. "We have been acquainted since about two months. I met her in Cleveland first; then in Chicago, and again here in New York when she returned from her tour. We were both seeking engagements, and were trying to help each other."

"Coming down to this evening," said the lieutenant; "what happened?"

"We had been to the opera," she replied. "The courtesy of Mrs. Joseph Blumenthal, at whose residence I recently sang, placed at our disposal her box; and naturally we wore our jewels."

"Anybody else there?"

"In the box; no," said she. "We were unattended. Afterward I brought Miss Vaughn home with me. We were to write some letters to persons in the musical world. We had just come in. I said: 'We shall lay off our things in the other room;' and she went in, while I remained here for just a few moments, drawing the shades——"

"Did you pull that one down—the way it is now?" asked the officer.

"No," said Madame Batonyi, shaking her head. "I don't know how it is broken, like that. I know only that I spoke to Carolyn, and when she did not answer me, I went to see what had become of her. The portières were more drawn than now; I remember putting one of them aside; then—no more—all is confused. I have now a memory that I was hurt; it was as if I had struck against the side of the doorway, though I was not near it, but in the middle of——"

"She's been hit in the head," said the big policeman, speaking in a suppressed voice behind his hand.

"After an interval, a dream," continued Madame Batonyi, "I found myself lying on the floor, and I saw, bending over me, a young man with very sharp blue eyes—an intense, what you call fierce, look on his face. He frightened me."

"What did he do or say?"

"He said he wouldn't hurt me. Then I saw Leo, the hallboy, in the door, and the man turned to him and told him something—I don't know what; I just then remembered my jewels; and I put up my hands, and they were all gone." She broke off in a wail, and looked toward the doctor, as if she expected him to come to her relief.

"Go on," said he gently. "You're all right."

"I can't tell just what happened then," she resumed. "My mind was in a whirl. But I saw the man in the other room, pulling Carolyn from under that couch. He put his face close down to hers for a single instant; then he lifted her as though she were nothing, and ran away. He looked as tall as to the ceiling, and she like a little child. It was terrible. I tried to cry out——"

At this point the lady's feelings seemed to overcome her entirely. She buried her face in her hands, wildly bemoaning her own fate and that of her friend, and begging that something should be done to find Carolyn.

The suggestion seemed to appeal to the lieutenant, who turned to me, and asked what my telephone number was. Upon receiving the desired information, he addressed his huge subordinate.

"Find out where the call came from that this man received," he said.

The big fellow set his bulk in motion, and had got as far as the threshold, when he suddenly launched himself forward with a cry like the baying of a hound. Next moment Larrabee entered the room, escorted to the door by the sentinel from below, who then gave place to his broad-chested comrade.

"Here's the feller, now," said he to his superior.

Harry impressed me instantly as having undergone a change. He looked older; not more serious, because that was hardly possible, but serious in a somewhat different way, not wholly intellectual. He greeted me only with a look, sudden and eloquent, and surprising in its revelation of feeling. He was to me still a stranger, but I to him was a man known through and through, and trusted like a second father. Even in the quick flash of that glance, showing how much he prized my presence and support, I had the time to feel shame at the inequality of sentiment.

Larrabee walked straight to the lieutenant, and asked what had been done. The officer started and stared.

"What have *you* done?" he retorted. "What have you done with that girl?"

"I beg your pardon," said Larrabee, irritated, but perfectly polite in manner, "what would any sane person have done under the circumstances?"

"He'd have called a doctor, *I* should think," said the officer.

"You have not been informed, I see," said Larrabee. "She was dead. No heart beat, no respiration. Gone. No ordinary doctor could have brought her back. But there are new methods of resuscitation, in these days. Doctor Seward Wendell is the best man in that line. I took her to him."

"Do you know him?"

"No. He was mentioned in a Sunday *Times* article as the doctor who had gone deepest into that subject, among our New York men, so——"

"Suppose you hadn't found him in?"

"But I did," said Larrabee. "The thing is done—done; don't you understand?—and it was the best thing possible. There is hope for Miss Vaughn; but I could do nothing to assist, so I returned here. Miss Vaughn has been robbed of valuable jewels. A man was concerned in the crime. Have you found any trace of him?"

"We've been too busy trying to find some trace of *you*," said the lieutenant. "And now that we've got you, we'd like to hear your story."

He heard it, told with a brevity that outstripped his wits; yet the slowest mind could not fail to understand that Larrabee's account and Madame Batonyi's were in startling contradiction. The officer was obviously confused. He asked questions to give himself time to think.

"What was the real reason why you came into this house?"

Larrabee told him again.

"Didn't you know that that young lady was here?"

"No."

"Why did you suspect that there was any trouble here? Now don't tell me that story about the singing again. Tell me what you *knew*."

"I knew what I saw," said Larrabee.

"Well," said the lieutenant, rubbing his head, "we'll pass that point. After you'd come in, for whatever reason, you heard a man speak to this woman from the other room. What did *she* say?"

"Nothing," responded Larrabee.

The lieutenant turned to Madame Batonyi.

"You hear what this witness says, about your pulling down that shade, and playing, and singing. Do you deny it?"

"It seems impossible," she replied. "I should have supposed I fell to the floor as soon as I was hurt. But if you ask me what I remember about it, I must say to you, nothing at all; it is a blank. I cannot contradict this gentleman, therefore."

"Do you know him? Did you ever see him before?"

She looked at Harry intently.

"Ah!" she said, with a slow, musical note. "Yes; now I recall him. I have seen his portrait, but never the gentleman himself, before this evening."

"Where did you see his picture?" the lieutenant asked.

"In my friend's room, Miss Vaughn's. Yes; she showed it to me."

The lieutenant jerked his head sidewise toward Larrabee, saying: "Is that right?"

"Miss Vaughn has my photograph," was the reply.

"What were her jewels worth?"

"About sixty thousand dollars, I believe," said Larrabee. "I have seen only a few of them, and, of course, I don't know how many she was wearing to-night."

"All, all!" wailed Madame Batonyi. "All but a few that she had made me wear, just for this evening."

"And they're all stolen?" asked the officer.

"There were none upon Miss Vaughn," said Larrabee.

"And your loss, madam?" said the lieutenant. "What did that amount to?"

"Oh, much less," said she; "not more than twenty thousand dollars. But I valued some of them so dearly!" Her voice broke, and she hid her face for a moment. "Oh, that this should happen here, in my home, to that dear girl! I think nothing of my own loss, but only of hers. Can't I go to her?" she pleaded.

"Not just now," said the lieutenant. "By and by, perhaps. Doctor, what do you think of that injury to her head?"

"It was a good, hard bump," he replied. "No serious results will follow, however."

"Could she have done the things this man described, after getting hit?"

"You mean, without knowing that she did them, I suppose?" said the doctor. "It's not impossible; but the mental lapse would have been due to sudden fright rather than to the actual injury, I should think."

The inquisitor turned sharply upon Madame Batonyi.

"Don't you know who it was that did this?" he demanded. "Maybe you're not sure about it; you don't feel like putting suspicion on somebody that may be innocent. But leave that to me; I'll see that no injustice is done. Remember, this crime may be worse than robbery. We don't know that this girl is living at the present moment; and if she's dead you don't want to stand in the position of protecting the murderer. Take my advice, and speak up, before it's too late."

"I swear to you," cried the woman, springing to her feet, "I swear to you that I have no idea, none! If I knew what man had done this, do you think I wouldn't hunt him down? Do you think you'd have to *ask* me for his name? I'd shriek it in the ears of all the world. I pray he may be caught and killed for this. I would do it with my own hand." She raised it wildly to the wound in her head. "My blood upon him!" she cried. "I mark him for death." And she made a cross in the air.

CHAPTER IV.

HARRY UNDER SUSPICION.

A soft voice in my ear whispered: "Oh, this is terrible!" And the pink-cheeked dentist actually hid behind me like a frightened woman.

His act drew the attention of the lieutenant.

"You're the dentist from downstairs," said he. "Your name is Stettina."

"Yes, sir," answered the dentist, timidly, and pronounced his name for the officer with the proper sound: Stet-*teen*-a.

"I understand you saw a man come into this house, behind these women."

"No, sir," said Stettina. "I saw some one. But I think it was just before the ladies came, although I didn't see them. I heard their voices, if I am not mistaken, a few minutes later."

"After the man, eh? And you didn't know him, I suppose? What did he look like?"

The dentist was very pale and trem-

ulous. He seemed extremely indisposed to answer.

"Well, sir, I hate to speak of it," he said. "I paid little attention to him. He was a young man, very tall——"

"Didn't you say it was the same one who ran out with the girl afterward?" the lieutenant demanded, in an awful voice.

"Yes, sir," returned the dentist, very much frightened. "If you insist, I must say that I think it was the same man."

"*That* man!" the lieutenant almost yelled, pointing to Larrabee.

Stettina swallowed air, and his knees shook under him, but with what seemed the heroism of a coward he compelled himself to speak.

"I am quite sure," he said. "That is the man."

"Very good," said the lieutenant, waving his witness aside. "Now, Mr. Larrabee, this puts it squarely up to you. You've told us a very queer story about how you saw a lady sitting at her own piano, singing, and how you figured out in a minute that a crime had been committed. I don't feel able to swallow that, Mr. Larrabee; no, sir; I can't get it down. Now you'd better give us the truth. You came in ahead of these women."

"Is that so?" said Larrabee. "Where was the hallboy all this time?"

Buttons was now leaning on the back of an upholstered chair. During the previous part of the scene, he had occupied various positions, no one paying much attention to him. He had even been into the rear room.

"I don't know where I was," said he. "I didn't see you come in, either time. For you must have come in twice, or else you was hid somewhere. It was you that run my car up, wasn't it? That wasn't done till after the ladies came in."

"Where were you when it *was* done?" the lieutenant inquired.

"I'd gone out to call a taxi for Doctor Stettina."

"For a patient of mine," said the dentist.

"A patient?" the lieutenant echoed. "At half past eleven o'clock at night? Who was it?"

"I don't know his name," was the response. "He was a stranger to me. It seems that he was attacked by a severe toothache while on the street, and, happening to see my sign, and the light in the window, he applied to me for temporary relief. He said he was in a great hurry to keep an appointment, and could save time by having a taxicab. He suggested that I should send the boy for one. I looked out into the hall several times, and it was on one of those occasions that I saw"—he took a special breath for the name—"Mr. Larrabee. Our attendant, Leo, must have been upstairs during this time, for I noticed the absence of the car. Finally, however, I found him and sent him out. Madame Batonyi and her friend had just passed through the hall."

The lieutenant exchanged a glance with his subordinate, who shielded his mouth with his huge hand as I had seen him do before, and softly growled:

"This is some case, all right."

"So this stranger asked you to send the hallboy out," said the inquisitor, addressing Stettina. "Do you think there was anything queer about the toothache?"

The dentist appeared to consult his personal and his professional conscience very carefully.

"Well, sir," said he, at last, "a cavity of that description will sometimes cause pain. The nerve was not exposed, however, and there was no ulceration. Still I think the case was perfectly genuine."

"Describe the man."

"He was of medium size," Stettina responded; "past forty, I should say; smooth shaven, and of light complexion, with blue eyes. He was very nicely dressed."

"His hair was almost black," said Leo.

"Oho!" said the lieutenant. "You saw him, eh? Did you let him in?"

"No," answered Leo. "I saw him in the chair; just the top of his head, and a piece of his face. I think he wore a mustache—a small, dark mustache."

Stettina smiled, and shook his head.

"The patient's hair might be called brown, I suppose," said he, "but otherwise the boy is entirely wrong. The man wore no mustache."

"He looked tall to me," persisted Leo. "You say he was medium; I wouldn't call him so."

"About five feet seven," said the dentist, with gentle firmness; "not an inch more."

"All right," said Leo. "I only saw him sittin' down; but he must have mighty short legs, if he was no taller than what you say."

The lieutenant studied the boy carefully.

"Leo," said he, "did I see you pick up something, just now, in the other room, right by the edge of that couch cover?"

"Not me," said Leo sturdily, but he began to back away toward the door.

The lieutenant made a sign, and the big policeman seized the youth by the arm.

"Take him into the other room, and search him thoroughly," was the order.

"What does this mean?" said I, aside, to Larrabee. "Has the boy found a diamond?"

"I think not," he answered softly. "At any rate, he hasn't it in his possession now. His face showed that when the policeman led him away."

I observed a heightened interest in my young friend whose previous inaction had surprised me. Instead of taking the investigation out of the lieutenant's hands, and conducting it himself, he had remained absolutely passive except for the single question as to the whereabouts of Leo just previous to the crime. But he now showed a tendency to bestir himself in this matter.

Turning from me, he advanced toward the lieutenant, and halted behind the upholstered chair which has been mentioned. His hands rested on the back of it, but that is a detail which meant nothing to me at the time. The detective instinct was left out of me at birth.

"Have you observed those portières?" said Larrabee to the lieutenant. "I should suppose that they were usually drawn back, draped against the side of the arch. Have you asked Madame Batonyi whether she noticed that they were not in their ordinary state, when she returned after the opera?"

"Yes; I did," said she, with sudden emphasis, attracting everybody's attention. "But I thought Lucile must have done it. I wondered——"

"Lucile is your maid, I suppose?" said Larrabee. "Was she here, after you left?"

"Yes," said Madame Batonyi. "But of course we know now that it was not she who drew the portières; it was the thief, so that he might hide behind them."

"Foreseeing that you would send Miss Vaughn into that room," said Larrabee. "A clever man."

"One of us would surely go," said she. "It mattered not which."

"Yet I think it might have been unfortunate for him if you had both gone in together—which would have been more natural," said Larrabee. "However, there may have been two men in the ambush. You heard no struggle?"

"None. Not a sound."

"As to that injury to your head," said he, "is it not possible that you received it when you fell to the floor, after rising from the piano when you heard me at the door? It would seem to me that you might have struck the base of the piano lamp, which is very solid."

"Mr. Larrabee," said she, "do you mean that you suspect me of connivance with the thief who robbed me—who robbed and would have killed my dearest friend?"

"It would be idle for me to deny it," answered Larrabee. "My entire conduct has been based upon that theory."

She had risen and had taken a step toward him. She looked for a moment as if she could have stabbed him to the heart. Then her expression changed and softened, and the tears rushed to her eyes.

"If you have saved her life," said she, in a voice of singular sweetness that thrilled me to the marrow, "I forgive you for this terrible injustice. I don't care what you think of me, what

pain you cause, what injury you inflict. If you have saved her life, I will forever be your friend, and pray for you, all my days."

Larrabee slowly bowed his head, with what seemed reverence—for her art, I suppose. Knowing him so well, I could not fancy that any earthly influence had altered his opinion.

The searching of Leo had now been completed in vain, but the lieutenant still believed that he had seen the boy pick something up from the floor. It might have been an object having value in itself—as I had thought—or a relic of the crime, salable at a high price to the person whom it implicated. Whatever it might be, it could not now be found, nor could any admission regarding it be extorted from Leo.

The lieutenant was annoyed by this incident, and obviously perplexed by the case as a whole. He showed his state of mind by talking too much, addressing most of his remarks to me, and testing his opinions by my reception of them. What chiefly stuck in his crop was Larrabee's statement of his reason for coming into that house.

"You know how the police look at these matters," he said. "A man doesn't lie, in a case of this kind, without a motive. Now, of course, Mr. Larrabee's story won't stand for a minute. He never did any such thing as he describes—sizing up this crime from the way a woman sang a song. That's nonsense. Do you suppose his lawyer would ever let him tell that yarn in court? Not if there was another lie anywhere in the lawyer's head; and he'd be a funny lawyer if there wasn't. Now you're a man of respectability and position; anybody can see that. And you're interested in this young man. Can't you persuade him to tell the truth here?"

"I think he has told the truth," said I. "His act was eminently characteristic."

The officer turned an inquiring eye toward Larrabee on the far side of the room.

"You mean that he's a little off?" said he, tapping his forehead. "Nighthawks in his garret, eh? Would that be his defense, do you think?"

"His defense?" I echoed. "Against what charge?"

"Why, it looks kind of bad," answered the lieutenant. "The girl was a friend of his; he knew what her diamonds were worth; very likely knew where she was going to-night. We've got evidence that he came in here ahead of these women—which directly contradicts his own story, if such a yarn needed any contradiction."

"How about Mr. Larrabee's contradiction of this woman's story?" I retorted. "What's become of the man whom Mr. Larrabee heard speaking to her? It seems to me that he's the first person to be looked for. How did he get out?"

"That's easy," he replied. "If there was any such man, he had his choice of exits. There's a door with a spring lock, and a back stairway, and a fire escape, and a dumb-waiter, and the Lord knows what. No trouble about anybody's getting out—or in, for that matter. These flat houses are built to accommodate thieves; they must subsidize the architects, I guess. We'll never *track* the man who did this; we'll have to work down to him some other way. And the most promising clew at present is Mr. Larrabee's story. So long as he won't tell us why he came into this house, he's under suspicion, and I'll have to take him to the station. I don't say he's guilty; I don't want to offend you, nor do anything oppressive; but that lie of Mr. Larrabee's has got to be cleared up, and he'll be held until he does it."

"And this woman?" said I.

"I've got nothing positive against her," said he, speaking in an undertone that rose to a strange squeal of emphasis when he made his points. "Her story may be true; the doctor stands for it. She's contradicted only by Larrabee, whose evidence is no good because it starts with a plain lie that nobody can believe. *Why did he come into this house?* And even if we *try* to believe his testimony, it doesn't really contradict hers. He says her singing was

queer, but that only bears out her own explanation, that she was half stunned and crazy, and didn't know what she was doing. He says he heard a man speak, but the woman paid no attention to it. And ten seconds later she was found unconscious on the floor. It would look as though the man didn't speak to her at all."

"Do you suppose he went on murdering Miss Vaughn and robbing both of them while this one was singing 'Trovatore' and hammering the piano?" I demanded. "You ask if Mr. Larrabee is insane; but your own ideas make me wonder what I ought to think of you."

He plucked me by the lapel of my coat.

"You just want to think that I know a lot more about crooks than you do," said he. "Was the woman interfering with that thief? No; she was behaving all right, to suit *him*. And he said: 'Howl! Go on howling!'—according to your friend; but if you ask me, I think he spoke those words himself, being there at that very time, doing the trick. I think he chloroformed that girl, and got clean away, and then came back to save her life, because he got one of those scares that criminals often get—the fear of murder and the chair." He checked my protest with a gesture. "But, anyhow, one thing is sure: This woman seems to be telling the truth; she speaks sincere and plain, while Mr. Larrabee has acted suspicious from the beginning, and has lied flat and cold. Under such circumstances, what can I do? I've got to take him in."

During the last minute or two, Larrabee had been speaking quietly to Madame Batonyi, asking her permission to look once more through the rear rooms of the apartment. His previous visit, said he, had been too hurried to allow of his examining the various means of exit. The lady granted his request in the most amiable terms, and he immediately vanished from our sight.

"Hold on there!" yelled the lieutenant. "You can't leave this room."

But Larrabee had already done so, and as the order did not halt him in his course, the lieutenant started in pursuit, outstripping the ponderous patrolman, and waving him back to remain on guard. Minutes passed, and neither of the men returned. I would have followed them, but Madame Batonyi got in my way, begging me to go downstairs and telephone to Doctor Wendell about Miss Vaughn. It was impossible to use the instrument in the apartment because there was no one at the switchboard below to give the connection. When I had succeeded in freeing myself from her, the guard halted me. He had no orders to let anybody pass, said he; and while we were debating this question, Larrabee and the lieutenant returned.

The latter made a sign to me which indicated that he was now ready to take his prisoner away; and I moved toward the door. Madame Batonyi, with the manner of a hostess whose guests were departing, put herself in line for Larrabee as he came along.

"I beg you not to be unjust to me any more," she said. "You cannot know what agony of suspense I am enduring; you would not add to it, I am sure."

"On the contrary," he replied, "I will relieve your anxiety at the earliest moment. As soon as I have news of Miss Vaughn, I will see that you get it."

"Thank you," she said, in a voice that quavered with feeling, and she impulsively offered him her hand.

He could not refuse it without conspicuous brutality, and he was not the man to do a thing with a bad grace when it was plainly to be done. He took her hand, looked her in the face without embarrassment, and bade her good night with a courtesy too fine to be dishonest, simply kind.

In the hall below, we tried to call up Doctor Wendell, but were told that by his orders no communication could be had with him at present. We then went out, and walked to the corner, where Larrabee hailed a passing cab which stopped for us. To my amazement, the lieutenant turned and walked away, merely saying to Larrabee: "I'll see you later."

"What does this mean?" said I, as soon as we were in the cab.

"It's part of the deal," said Larrabee.

"What deal?" said I.

"Why, the one we made at Madame Batonyi's," he replied. "You saw how I got him alone? He's a good man, absolutely honest, but slow, awfully slow. And we couldn't stay away too long; it would have looked queer. So I had to simplify everything, to save time and insure his comprehension; and the simplest bargain about keeping quiet was that neither of us should tell anybody. Too bad; I'm very sorry; but no other course was possible."

No other course ever was possible, with Larrabee, except the one he happened to see first. It seemed probable that he had committed another indiscretion, on the top of the insane performances of the night. However, there was little use in his confiding in me; I felt entirely incompetent to advise him, and could only urge him to consult a lawyer as soon as we should have learned whether Miss Vaughn would survive.

"I'd much rather consult you," said he, "but I really can't. My word is passed. And of course there's no ground for anxiety about me in this matter. There's only one thing proper to be done, and I'm going to do it."

He gave voice to this, as to all similar declarations of his, without a trace of arrogance, but only with conviction—a kind of youthful certainty such as a college boy, of a singularly serious mind, might display in speaking of a game which he knew intimately so that he could see its points with an unerring precision. Thus Larrabee seemed to himself to behold human life, and no memory of past errors ever affected his complete assurance.

CHAPTER V.

THE AGENT OF RETRIBUTION.

Doctor Wendell lived in an unpretentious apartment house in the nineties. The colored man who had communicated with me was still on duty in the hall.

"Mistuh La'abee, suh," said he, in the softest Southern dialect, "de doctuh he just come out, lookin' fo' yuh, suh. He done say de young lady, she's much bettah; no mo' danguh——"

"Columbus nine six nine three," said Larrabee, with a wave of the hand toward the switchboard. "I thank you for your good news," he added, as the darky dropped into his chair; and I noticed that the gift which emphasized his thanks consisted of a handful of change and two latchkeys. This was the only indication of emotion I observed.

The number was Madame Batonyi's, of course. According to his promise, Larrabee communicated the good news to her, and if he still retained the suspicion that she had been a party to a crime which had fallen short of murder only by a hair's breadth, there was no sign of it in his language—the cool, unaccented speech of modern polite society. I judged that Madame Batonyi's replies were in a very different key.

Presently we were admitted to the apartment, though not to the actual scene of the modern miracle which had just been performed. The doctor's wife entertained us in a tiny sitting room, and refrained from saying anything about Miss Vaughn's case except that she had now surely been recalled to life. To my ignorance this meant that all was well, but when after a long time Doctor Wendell himself appeared, the situation speedily took on another and less favorable aspect. Miss Vaughn was now fully conscious, and had relieved the doctor from his professional obligations of secrecy, so far, at least, as Larrabee was concerned.

It appeared that Miss Vaughn was still exposed to serious perils, pneumonia among them. The nature of the drug which had been used was not definitely known, but it had caused considerable irritation of the lungs and the whole machinery of speech and breathing. Her heart would probably be weak for some time; she would require a long rest; and if her voice were to be preserved from injury she must refrain from singing, perhaps for several months. No one could yet determine how much permanent harm had been done.

If I had ever regarded Larrabee as deficient in sympathy, the error now passed from my mind. He was an artist to the core of his soul, and the prospect that Miss Vaughn might lose her career touched him with a pain he had not seemed to feel when the question had been merely whether she would lose her life. The look in his phenomenally expressive eyes was so acutely pathetic that I found myself avoiding the sight of it, and seeking relief in attending to the sound of my own voice.

"The worst of it is," said I, "that all Miss Vaughn's property was in her jewels, and they've gone—every last one of them, so far as I can learn. She even had a habit of investing her savings in diamonds. I doubt whether she has more than a few hundred dollars in the world. If her voice is ruined, how is she to live? Even to rest until next season may be more than she can afford."

"I will recover her jewels, if that were all," said Larrabee. "But—her work—the thing she's here for; the thing we've called her back to do!"

He strode up and down the room, muttering to himself, and clenching his slender, powerful hands. The singular perceptions and inspirations of Harry Larrabee are not among my own gifts, thank Heaven! and yet I had no trouble in solving the mystery of his behavior at that moment. He was getting ready to strangle somebody, the author of this crime. He had broken the Chicago burglar's arm, no more, but it might very well have been his neck; and the provocative to violence had been small, in that affair. What would he do to the man guilty of this second and really damnable offense if he should get him by the throat? Above all, would it be the right man? Nothing could be more improbable; and if he should lay hands on the wrong individual, a ruinous suit for damages would be the least of the results.

"By the way," said the doctor, "she wishes to see you, Mr. Larrabee. I have told her briefly why she happens to be alive, and she seems grateful for your share in it. I shall allow you one minute in the room," he added.

He led Harry away and brought him back again; and the time limit in Miss Vaughn's presence had not been exceeded; but even in so short a space my friend had gained a number of unassailable convictions. Miss Vaughn would not have pneumonia. Her heart would be all right in a short time. She was liable to develop a bronchitis which might become chronic and be complicated with asthma. The greatest care must be exercised, for a considerable period, in order to save her voice. It was impossible she should sing again this season.

I glanced at the doctor, whose eyes faintly twinkled.

"These things are probable," said he, "but I am not so sure about them as Mr. Larrabee is."

"My confidence rests entirely on you," said Harry. "I have seen your opinion, and have accepted it; that's all."

But presently he announced another conviction, not derived from the doctor.

"Miss Vaughn is a beautiful girl," he said; "extremely beautiful."

You would have supposed that nobody had ever noticed it before.

Though his manner was unusually controlled and precise, I knew that he was strung to a high tension, and that a very small excitement might produce remarkable results in the line of his peculiar folly. The occasion seemed to have come when we went out from Doctor Wendell's, and encountered a dozen reporters in the hall. A libel suit ought to have been born right there, but it wasn't. Harry's interview was a miracle of unemotional narrative, the plain facts without a trace of opinion. The reporters were astonished and disappointed; they had been told by the police that Larrabee was the queerest and the wildest animal that had ever broken loose along Broadway, and they had come to him for a funny story about how he had burst into a prima donna's apartments because he hadn't liked the way she sang "Il Trovatore." They declined to be balked of their sport, and they baited Harry as if he were a bull

in their efforts to make him give a comedy monologue in what they had been led to believe was his character.

He remained unmoved, kept his temper, and stuck to his facts. Madame Batonyi fared very well in this statement. Her story seemed to me more plausible than when I heard it from her own lips; and the reporters listened without derision, one of them supporting it with an instance: "The same thing happened in the Dickinson case," whatever that may have been. But it was in his mention of Miss Vaughn that Larrabee secured the best effect. He spoke of her—portrayed the girl and her misfortune—with a profound simplicity, concise and vivid like a Bible story, and artistically true. Perhaps his training in the theater helped him here; at any rate, he brought his little audience to a stillness in the midst of which a pencil moving on paper made a loud sound in the pauses.

The artist never gets anything for nothing, however; he always has to take it out of himself, and Larrabee showed the strain of this performance after it was over and we were free upon the street. The little that he said let me know that resentment had begun to boil in him again, and that he felt himself appointed to be the agent of retribution in the case of Miss Vaughn. This was what I feared the most. I adjured Larrabee in the name of all the gods to avoid further indiscretions in this affair, and to attempt no private vengeance; and he promised me, like a son to a father, that he would take no action whatever until he should be "absolutely sure of his ground." No possible expression could have been more disquieting to me than that.

He relieved my mind somewhat by announcing that he meant to go to bed, but there was a sinister suggestion even in his willingness to cease for a little while from action. It was a measure of preparation, as I could plainly see. He had planned his sleep, and he had planned what lay beyond it, if the verb "to plan" may be applied to Larrabee's mental operations. At any rate, he had a fanciful foreknowledge of some near adventure, serious enough to sober him and to make him feel the need of rest.

CHAPTER VI.

WHAT LEO FOUND.

Dawn was in the sky, and a cold wind suddenly arising had dispersed the fog, when Harry Larrabee and I parted at my door. For some hours thereafter I lay miserably wakeful; by nine o'clock I had begun my day's work, which I cut short at one, and went straight to Larrabee's. Fastened to his letter box was a note for me, and his keys were inclosed. The note ran thus:

> I have had bad news of Miss Vaughn. She is still at Doctor Wendell's, and I am going there at once. I think you'd better wait for me here, though I can't say when I shall return. If possible I shall see Madame Batonyi, and that will take time; but you will surely hear from me in the course of the afternoon.

Larrabee had no telephone, and there was none in the small, antiquated building, so far as I knew; otherwise I should have called up Doctor Wendell at once. The one modern comfort which Larrabee had in abundance was heat, and though the weather had now turned wintry with a vengeance, his rooms were very warm. I had been chilled upon the street, and my mind always responds to a falling temperature like molasses. It seemed to me that something more ought to be done for Miss Vaughn; that money should be able to command the skill to save her, but I knew not how to proceed in the matter, and so I waited till my wits should thaw. Before this process had gone far enough to permit of an effective decision, Larrabee's bell rang.

I pressed the button which controlled the door below, and then looked out into the hall. On the dim stairs there presently appeared the figure of a woman, dressed all in black, even to her furs of fox. She turned toward me at the head of the stairs, and revealed herself as Madame Batonyi.

Subsequent observation showed me that her cheeks were delicately rouged, but at the first glance her pallor pre-

vailed over the tint, and her face seemed intensely, startlingly white.

"Mr. Larrabee? Is he here?" said she.

"No," I answered; "but he may return at any moment. Will you come in?"

"Ah," she said, entering; "it is you. What word have you, from him?"

"Unfavorable news as to Miss Vaughn, I am sorry to say. It is very indefinite, but alarming."

"I have been to Doctor Wendell's," she said. "There is danger."

She shuddered, and seated herself rather weakly in a chair by the window. Her face was painfully drawn, and her mind seemed strongly concentrated. A physical impulse caused her to release the great boa from her throat so that it fell behind her, but she retained the pillow muff in her lap, and, except for the quick movement I have mentioned, her hands were never in my sight.

"I suggested to Doctor Wendell a consultation," she said. "He gave me no assurance. I think something should be done. I believe Miss Vaughn will die; I feel sure of it. They have murdered her. I say 'they,'" she went on, after a pause. "Doubtless there were more than one. And they must all die. That is your law, is it not? All who were concerned are equal in their guilt?"

"All who conspired," said I; "that is our law."

"It is just," said she. "But Carolyn may not die. Everything, everything must be tried."

"I quite agree with you," said I. "When you came I was on the point of taking action."

"Oh, if you will!" she cried. "And hurry, hurry! I have a cab at the door. Will you please take it, and go to Doctor Wendell's?"

"Very well," I assented. "I will leave you at your house."

"No," she said; "no. I would rather wait here, for Mr. Larrabee. I have something to say to him."

I hesitated, being indisposed to leave her there, but I remembered that Larrabee had told me in his note that he desired to see her. He might already have gone to her house, and have failed to find her; in which case he would probably return to his own rooms before trying again. Thus they would meet sooner than if I should take her home. Moreover, my anxiety about Miss Vaughn urged me to save even the few minutes which would be lost by stopping at Madame Batonyi's. If this woman's state of mind were due to what she had heard from Doctor Wendell, the danger to Miss Vaughn must be extremely grave. Upon these considerations I left Madame Batonyi to wait for Harry, and made the best speed possible to Doctor Wendell's.

The doctor received me, and in the conversation which ensued he succeeded in giving me encouragement without information. "If all goes well to-day," said he, "she'll probably be out of the woods to-morrow." And he added that he wished to send Miss Vaughn to a certain hospital as soon as her condition would permit, and that there were arrangements to be made in which I could give valuable and immediate assistance. Mr. Larrabee, who had just left the house, would have attended to this business, but another matter had arisen to command his attention. Accordingly I went upon the errand to the hospital, and then to my own house, where I had understood from the doctor that Larrabee wished me to wait.

Meanwhile Larrabee had gone to Madame Batonyi's, but the lady was not at home. Leo, who opened the outer door for him, imparted this information, adding:

"She's at Doctor Wendell's, where Miss Vaughn is; and I'd give two dollars to hear what they say to each other. I guess I'd have something to sell to the papers, all right."

Larrabee leaned against the wall beside the dentist's door, and scrutinized the youth's unhealthy countenance with more attention than it might have seemed to deserve.

"That's not a nice thing to say, Leo," he remarked. "It's what we call ill-bred. Do you know what that means?"

"Maybe I know more than you think

I do," retorted Leo. "If you'll go where we can have a little private talk, I'll tell you something."

"Let me tell you something first," said Larrabee. "It's only this: be honest, be straightforward, be polite, and keep out of trouble."

"Punk," said Leo. "What am I up against? The Salvation Army?" And he snapped his fingers, which was unnecessary, because he was so nervous that his joints cracked of themselves. "I want to talk business to you," he went on. "You know what it's about."

Larrabee took a step forward, put a hand on the youth's shoulder, and addressed him kindly.

"I knew you'd do this," he said. "I came here chiefly for that reason, but I won't tempt you to do it. You don't want to be a blackmailer, do you? There is such a thing as self-respect, and to sell it for money is a bad bargain. If you could see yourself—— Here!" He turned him toward a mirror in the wall. "Look at that face. Do you want to wear it all your life the way it is now—greedy, frightened. Surely not, my boy."

Leo confronted his image without aversion; he even seemed to commune with it agreeably, and to derive support from its congenial depravity.

"What's the matter with my face?" said he, with a smirk. "It looks all right to me."

"Good Lord!" said Larrabee softly, and resumed his former place. "Proceed, then, since nothing can be done."

Leo advanced toward him with a shivering eagerness.

"I found something on the floor upstairs," said he, "and you've got it. I hid it in the back of that chair, and you swiped it."

"I did," said Larrabee.

"What are you going to do with it?"

"You may judge by what I have already done."

"You can't keep that thing," said Leo. "I want it—or the worth of it," he added, in a desperate gasp.

"It didn't strike me as being worth very much," said Larrabee. "It was only a——"

Leo waved his lean hands in Larrabee's face like the antennæ of an insect.

"Don't talk so loud!" he cried, in a choked whisper.

"Nonsense!" said Larrabee, in precisely the same tone as before, not loud, but clear, a good stage tone, warranted to be audible in the last row. "Who's to hear me? This man isn't in," nodding sidelong toward the dentist's door.

"He may be," said Leo. "I didn't see him go out."

"We'll investigate," said Larrabee, and pushed the button beside the door.

"What'll you say to him?" whispered the youth, with a sudden scattering of the wits.

"Why bother about that till we know whether he's in?" returned Larrabee, and pushed the button again; but there was no response. He resumed his former place against the wall. "As I was saying, you found a part of a man's cuff link, a cameo, set in gold; and I took it."

"And you're keeping it dark," said Leo, tense as a hungry rat. "Then it belongs to you, or to some friend of yours. Oh, I watched you up there last night, Mr. Larrabee——"

"Did you watch my cuffs?"

"Not till after you'd carried the young lady away, and come back. They were all right, then, but you'd had time to get new buttons. This is a very funny case, Mr. Larrabee, and you're in bad. Do you want me to put you in worse? I can do it."

"How?"

"I can describe that thing——"

"To the police?"

"I should say not. What would I get out of them? But I can sell this story to a newspaper, and get"—he nerved himself to name the noble sum, and then exploded with it—"two hundred dollars."

For the first time, Larrabee spoke softly.

"There's a man over there by the elevator, on the stairs leading up from the basement. The janitor, perhaps?"

Leo flashed a look of hatred in the

direction indicated, but the man had withdrawn out of sight.

"Are you sure?" the hallboy whispered. "Then it must 'a' been Haldane. Gee! If that old grafter heard us, we'll both be skinned alive."

Larrabee was already striding toward the stairs. Haldane, now halfway down, made a beckoning sign, and retreated backward, ushering Larrabee along till they had passed the furnaces and had reached an open space lighted by two windows from a court. It was the clearing house for waste, garnished with ash cans and receptacles for that great gray insect, the newspaper, which multiplies exceedingly, and perishes in a day. Here the janitor took a position where his eye commanded the way by which they had come, and began to speak with a dry and formal precision which enchained Larrabee's attention at once.

"The subject to which I shall ask you to devote a few minutes of your time, Mr. Larrabee," said he, "is one that I approach with hesitation. It——"

"You're English," said Larrabee. "An educated man. Did you ever teach?"

The man started slightly, and his thin lips closed and writhed as if he had bitten into something very sour.

"That is as it may be," he said. "It does not concern us at present."

"I guess you must have amounted to something," said Larrabee. "A smaller man would show vanity. Kindly proceed."

Haldane drew his high shoulders a little higher, and, with his right hand at his breast, and the index finger pointing, he took up the thread of his discourse.

"In the first place, sir," said he, "I desire to caution you against that boy. I heard money mentioned between you. It would be well for you to assure yourself that he really has the information —or the article, whatever it may be that——"

"Thank you," said Larrabee. "I know he really hasn't. So that's all right. What information or article have *you?*"

"As to information," was the reply, "I believe, sir, that I understand the affair of last evening thoroughly. It was not a crime;" and he gave Larrabee a single glance from his veiled hawk's eye. "No robbery, surely no murder, was intended."

The precise old rascal, with his thin, hard lips, put a masterly accent of horror on the word murder, and was so pleased with the effect that he repeated it.

"Hum!" said Larrabee. "You amaze me. What *was* intended?"

'Let me answer your question with another," responded Haldane. "What is usually the object desired when an actress' diamonds are stolen—especially in America?"

"I suppose you mean advertising."

"Quite so. This may be objectionable, but it is not criminal. Otherwise it would be my duty to deal with the police."

"Why don't you do it?"

"Because of my sympathy with you, sir," Haldane replied. "The whole burden of this unfortunate affair would fall on you. The plan was certainly yours. As I apprehend your character from your conduct last night, and from the sketches in the morning papers, you are a very original young gentleman; bold, sir; I may say rash. You are writing a play: the papers mention it—doubtless a musical piece in which these two ladies would have appeared. I learn from the papers that you are a musician, and I draw my own inferences."

"You certainly do," said Larrabee. "I have rarely had the pleasure of encountering a mind like yours."

Haldane bowed his acknowledgments.

"It was the intention, I infer," said he, "that both the ladies should have been found in an unconscious condition, from an anæsthetic drug—voluntarily taken, of course. You supplied that drug. The jewels were probably intrusted to your care, and you now have them. The drug was supposed to be harmless, but Miss Vaughn, who took it first, fell immediately into a state of

collapse, totally unexpected, and very alarming. You were waiting outside. Madame Batonyi, in terror, signaled to you by means of the music—for surely no one can doubt that it was a signal."

"Very pretty," said Larrabee. "You have invented a scandalous story, which would stick to Miss Vaughn as long as she lived, no matter if it were twenty times disproved."

"My information is that the young lady will not recover," Haldane interposed. "It is your own position which excites my sympathy."

"I appreciate your motives," Larrabee rejoined. "But business is business. Aside from your silence, what have you to sell?"

"I will explain," said Haldane. "When you rushed in, responding to Madame Batonyi's signal, you found Miss Vaughn dying, and the whole plan upset. Your first idea was to conceal the fact that any drug had been used. You took the bottle and dropped it down the dumb-waiter shaft, thinking that it would be shattered to pieces, and that the liquid would evaporate. But by some freak of chance quite a large piece of the bottom of the bottle remained whole, and stood upright."

"And you found it?" said Larrabee.

"Precisely," was the reply. "I had been out during the evening, and when I returned, the police were already in the house, but nobody had been down here. I made a quiet investigation. One of these windows had been opened, to give this affair the color of a burglary. The doors of the dumb-waiter shaft also were open, in order to suggest that that was the means of entry into Madame Batonyi's rooms. The police now know of these things, of course. But they know nothing about the bottle. Would you believe it, sir, some of the liquid remained in the unbroken part of it. I poured it carefully into a small vial, and I have it still. I put it, with the fragments of the glass, into a clean pint milk jar, and corked it all up tight, to preserve the odor. The liquid can be analyzed, and the druggist who sold it—or the ingredients, in case you yourself compounded it—can be found. That would be very unfortunate, especially if the young lady should not recover."

Larrabee had begun to walk about.

"This bottle may have nothing to do with the affair," he said. "Some medicine, perhaps. There must be plenty of broken bottles on the premises. Here's glass;" and he picked up a piece from the floor.

"That's no bottle, sir," said Haldane. "It's window glass."

"Yes, so it seems," said Larrabee; but he retained the fragment, pushing it between his thumb and the brim of his hat, which he held in his left hand. "By the way, Mr. Haldane, what is your price?"

The janitor spread out his hands, and feigned humility rather poorly.

"I leave that, sir, entirely to your liberality," said he.

"In short, you want me to make a bid," said Larrabee. He ceased wandering about, and, coming close, he looked the blackmailer in the eyes. "Your face is glass," said he. "I can see the inside of your head. I could take you by the nape of the neck, and lead you straight to this thing that you have found. But it's not my business: the police will do it. I shall report this conversation at once."

He turned away, and strode toward the stairs. Haldane, apparently unaffected, remained stock-still.

"No, sir," said he quietly, as Larrabee paused. "You won't do that. There's the young lady's good name to be considered."

Larrabee seemed to be listening to some sound from overhead.

"You'll see," said he. "There's an officer upstairs now. Leo!" he called at the top of his voice. "Send that policeman down here."

His back was toward Haldane, but the bit of glass against the black brim of the hat formed a mirror, in which he thought he saw the janitor make an instinctive movement which betrayed him. There was a battered shovel standing against the side of the furnace. Larrabee seized it, brandished it

in the air, and charged back toward Haldane.

In the portrayal of utter recklessness nobody could be more convincing than Larrabee. The janitor fled for his life, ducking under the flying shovel, and passing its wielder successfully. Larrabee did not pursue; he pounced upon one of the ash cans which stood apart from its fellows, and flung off the lid. He had fancied that the janitor had made a start toward this can, indicating that the thing on which his scheme of blackmail depended was concealed therein. It was about two-thirds full, and Larrabee delved with his shovel, sending up volcanic clouds, and finally upsetting the can on the floor. Then for a moment he glared incredulously upon the scattered contents, for it was only ashes.

Haldane, meanwhile, had escaped into the room which was the headquarters of his submerged existence, and had locked the door. It occurred to Harry that the man had fled to where his treasure was, and that his dealings with it might be seen from the court. Dropping the shovel, he rushed out by the rear door, and round the corner of the building, colliding in the instant of the turn with Haldane, who had climbed out of his room, and was running, doubled up like a football player, in order to keep his head below the level of the windows opening into the space where he supposed Larrabee to be.

Despite his years the janitor was running fast; his head almost butted the life out of Larrabee, and the two men fell hard, with Haldane on top. In fact, Harry did nothing to save himself, beyond falling limp, as sports and the stage had both taught him to do. His remarkable eye had seen a small, brown parcel hugged to Haldane's bosom, and nothing else mattered. The object passed as if by magic into Harry's hands, and survived the shock unharmed. He rose with it, and pulled off the paper, revealing the pint milk bottle, with the small vial and the fragments of glass inside.

Larrabee's lips began to move long before there was any air in his lungs with which to speak. The janitor sat on the brick pavement, with his head in his hands, and by the time celestial harps stopped sounding in his brain, there was an earthly voice to hear.

"I've got you now where I want you," said Larrabee in gasps. "Not to mention the blackmail, this"—and he tapped the milk bottle—"will settle you. If I hear anything more of that advertising theory of yours, you'll go to jail. It can't hurt me, but it's objectionable, all the same; and if it comes out, I shall know the source. You've been a schoolmaster. *Verbum sat sapienti.*"

Haldane made no response except a groan. He rolled his head around with his hands gingerly, as if he were testing his neck; but he scrambled to his feet nimbly enough when Larrabee had disappeared into the basement. For a moment he seemed about to follow; then, with an inarticulate sound which had the full value of an elaborate curse, he went off around the other corner of the building—as he would have gone more rapidly if the collision had not interrupted him—and so passed to the street.

Larrabee found Leo in the basement.

"What is it?" said the youth. "Didn't you holler to me?"

"Yes," said Larrabee. "Stay right where you are. Don't go out into that court."

Leo gave him one glance of quick cunning, and dived for the door. Larrabee locked it behind him, and indulged himself with a fleeting smile. Then he went up to the hall, and telephoned to the Sixty-eighth Street police station, asking for Lieutenant Collins. The officer was not there, but was expected soon.

"I think he'd better meet me at Doctor Wendell's at his earliest convenience," said Larrabee.

Leo, by this time, was at the front door, which was locked. Chagrin and malice were in his countenance, as he looked through the glass at Larrabee advancing to let him in.

"Wanted to get rid o' me, didn't you?" said he. "Well, you'll find I'm hard to shake."

"No; I don't find you so," said Larrabee, and went his way.

Wendell was at home; and into his care Harry delivered the sample of the drug for examination and analysis, if that should be necessary.

"Miss Vaughn is doing nicely," said the doctor; "but you're the only person outside my household that knows it. I've lied to Madame Batonyi, to the reporters, and to the police; but I'm not going to keep it up much longer. This is a little risky, Mr. Larrabee; I don't know how you talked me into it. The next time you begin to exercise your soft persuasions on me, I shall take out a policy of insurance. You play too fast a game for me."

"Doctor," said Larrabee, "I feel the difference in our years and our positions in the world. I don't dream of advising you; that would be preposterous. But this thing is absolutely essential. There is only one course open. The persons responsible for this crime *must* be made to believe that it is now a question of life or death with them. And it's not a matter of deceiving the police. Lieutenant Collins concurs with me in everything."

"Well," said the doctor doubtfully, "I'll hang on a few hours more, but then there'll be an end to it. Would you like to see Miss Vaughn?"

"Not now," said Harry. "Not till I can give her jewels back to her."

Wendell smiled.

"Even indirect confidences are sacred in my profession," he said; "but if I were in your shoes, I wouldn't wait so long."

Outside the house, Larrabee waited almost an hour before the lieutenant appeared, his countenance revealing painful doubts.

"Look here, Mr. Larrabee," he said, "things are growing rather warm. I'll get into trouble, if I stick to you."

Larrabee removed his hat, pushed back his hair, and spoke softly to the gods.

"Where does this delusion originate?" he said. "Why should the most obviously necessary acts seem hazardous when I propose them? It must be something in my manner."

The lieutenant listened to this invocation with alarm.

"Have you got somebody else scared?" he asked uneasily. "What are you doing? Anything that I don't know about?"

"It's only Doctor Wendell," answered Larrabee. "For some unfathomable reason he sees risk in representing Miss Vaughn's condition to be graver than it is—for a few hours only."

"Risk?" echoed the lieutenant. "For the doctor? I wonder what he'd think if he was situated like me. According to my bargain with you, I'm not only covering up this cuff-button evidence, but I'm reporting falsely about this girl. I still think your original plan might work, and I'd sure like to have the credit of catching the parties that did this trick. It would do me good."

"You shall have it," said Larrabee. "All you've got to do is to be near my house—not too near; not in sight, mind you—and I'll turn the guilty man over to you before the day's done."

"Well, I don't know," said Collins, rubbing his chin. "The more I think of it the less likely it seems that these parties will take any great risk trying to get this thing away from you. Are you sure they think you've got it? And, after all, are they so much afraid of it? It's a common-looking button. We might not be able to trace it back to anybody in eleven years, and the thieves may bank on our not doing it." He fumbled in his pocket, and looked cautiously around. "I'm going to pass it to you right now, and call the whole game off. Don't say I ever had it. You haven't told anybody, have you?"

"Certainly not," said Larrabee. "You have my word."

"And you've got mine," said the lieutenant; "and the funny thing about it is that they're both good. I could throw you in seventeen different ways; but that's my weakness; it's why I don't get on. Here, take the button, and give it to me to-morrow, if nothing happens. I'm afraid there's a leak somewhere. I just got a tip that a man had been sent

out from headquarters on this case. Telephone call put them on to something. Any idea where it could have come from?"

"No," said Larrabee, pocketing the broken cuff link.

"And now," said the lieutenant, breathing more easily, "let me go in and get a report from the doctor, and carry it, confidential, to the captain. That'll square me, and do no harm. I'm afraid of you, Mr. Larrabee, and that's a fact. You're innocent in this case, and you're as honest as the day; but you're so reckless that nobody can play safe alongside of you. I quit."

"Very well," said Larrabee, and offered his hand, which the lieutenant eagerly accepted.

"By the way," said the officer, detaining him, "we've got a partial report on Madame Batonyi, nothing of any consequence. She's known on the other side of the ocean, but seems to have no record. Her husband was a bad egg, as we learn, but he's been dead two or three years—drowned, escaping from the police in Venice. The woman's musical reputation is largely a fake; outside of that she seems to be all right. She's sung in opera, but the most of her work has been in concert halls; male impersonator; sings baritone, if that's what you call it. Well, good day."

"Good day," said Larrabee, and returned to his rooms, meditating upon the strange timidity of men.

CHAPTER VII.

THE TRAGEDY.

Madame Batonyi was still waiting. She sat by the window, as I had left her, the muff in her lap, and her hands inside it, despite the warmth of the room. Even in the gathering dusk, Larrabee could see the strained eagerness of the woman's face, and she spoke to him, as he came forward, in language stripped to its rudiments by emotion, the mere substantive made relevant by the tone.

"Carolyn?"

Larrabee halted before her, and his words stuck in his throat.

"I am very sorry," said he, at last. "I have no other news for you than that which you received from Doctor Wendell."

Her head fell slowly back against the chair.

"Oh, I am done with it, done with it," she whispered. "Why endure this any more?"

Larrabee gave her one of his peculiar glances, and then stepped past her to the window, which he raised a little way.

"The heat here is oppressive," he said. "It has exhausted you."

Some one rapped. It seemed as if this person must have followed Larrabee so closely that he had caught the lower door before it closed.

"Come in," Larrabee called, and immediately there entered a man dressed very plainly in dark clothes. A general lack of definiteness characterized his appearance. One might pass him often on the street, perhaps, and not remark him. Yet, when one looked at him more closely, he was seen to be of good height and carriage, and to convey by his manner a suggestion of authority.

"Mr. Larrabee," said he, advancing; "I am here on a matter of business, connected with that affair on Eighty-fourth Street last night. My name is Hoffman, and I am a detective of the headquarters staff. Word has been passed to us that there is a piece of evidence in your hands which you have not turned over to the police. I have come to get it."

"Will you kindly tell me what this thing is that I'm supposed to have?" said Larrabee.

"I'll tell you all I know about it," was the reply. "It was described to us as a piece of a broken cuff button, a sort of a cameo, as I understood it. But you can describe it better than I can, Mr. Larrabee, because you've got it in your possession. Do you deny that you have it?"

"No," answered Larrabee, "and I intend to give it to the police. You may have it and welcome. If you'll wait a minute, I'll go along with you to my

studio, at the corner of Lexington Avenue and Tenth Street."

"All right," said Hoffman. "I'm in no great hurry."

"Take this chair," said Larrabee, touching the back of one that stood near him.

As the man came forward in response to this invitation, Larrabee, with a conjurer's quickness, snatched the muff from Madame Batonyi's lap, and threw it out of the window. Next instant, and with the same whirl of the body, he flung himself upon Hoffman, gripped him around the body, and began to rush him toward the door.

The suddenness of the onslaught scored a temporary triumph, and the two went halfway across the room in a single plunge; but at this point something occurred which was extremely surprising to Larrabee, in whose bright lexicon there was no such word as fail. He had confidently expected to sweep the man out of the room, and all the way to the street; but now his adversary stopped as if he had been an iron post suddenly driven into a socket. In another instant Larrabee's grip began to be broken, and by the power of only one of his opponent's hands. The other was endeavoring to reach something in a pocket of his overcoat; it was under Larrabee's arm, and he could feel the hard outline of a revolver. The idea now dawned upon my young friend that he was fighting for his life, and losing the battle.

A trick that he had learned in wrestling years ago came to him like an instinctive impulse which his muscles instantly obeyed, and with a measure of success. Hoffman was thrown, but, in falling, he completely broke Larrabee's hold, and kicked him with great force in the chest. Larrabee remained standing, but the whole mechanism of existence seemed to have stopped inside him, and he was utterly powerless. Hoffman sprang up, reaching for his revolver as he rose. Quick as a flash Madame Batonyi ran behind him, and snatched the weapon from his pocket. It was discharged in the act. The heavy bullet struck the man in the middle of the back, shattering his spine; and he fell dead.

The revolver dropped from Madame Batonyi's hand at the moment of the shot, and she stood perfectly still. Larrabee himself was not capable of action; with one glance he discerned death in the huddled form on the floor, and raised his eyes to the woman. A strange look came into her face, childish, almost imbecile. She spoke softly in German, the words barely distinguishable, but evidently drawn from a deep spring of memory, a prayer learned long ago.

Fearing that she would faint and fall, Larrabee went to her, as soon as he could move, and led her toward the chair by the window. She sank on her knees before it, clasping her hands, resting her face upon her arms, and with more earnestness repeating the long-forgotten plea for the forgiveness of sin. He spoke to her, but she had lost the faculty of attention, and his questions were unanswered, wholly uncomprehended.

While he was trying in vain to reach the woman's mind, the bell rang urgently, and though some men might have hesitated to admit a visitor to such a scene, Larrabee went at once to press the button. It was I who had rung. I came, bearing Madame Batonyi's muff, taken from an urchin, together with an odd little silver-mounted revolver, which he had found inside it. I had seen the muff fall from the window, and the weapon was a partial explanation of the incident; but the noise of automobiles in the street had prevented me from hearing the shot. Some crisis in the affair I naturally expected to encounter, but to see that dead man lying on the floor was far beyond my fears.

Failing to see the weapon that had slain him, I thought instantly of the one that had been in Madame Batonyi's muff. It was horrible in my hand, and I put it down in the nearest available spot, like a scared child.

"Did she do this?" I cried.

"By accident," said Larrabee. "He'd have shot me, if she hadn't interfered. I owe her a life, I guess."

"Shot you?" said I. "What for?"

"Because he's the guilty man," responded Larrabee; "and I had caught him. He came here to get this"—holding the cameo cuff link under my eyes. "Leo found it at Madame Batonyi's last night, and I got possession of it. Of course, there couldn't be a doubt that somebody would try to get it——"

By this time I had seen the revolver on the floor.

"Did he threaten you?" I interrupted. "Then it's self-defense, as far as you're concerned."

"No," said he; "not exactly. I jumped on him. He pretended to be a central-office detective——"

"How do you know he isn't one?" I cried, suddenly filled with deadly fear of Larrabee's inspirations. "Have you any proof, any real knowledge as to whether he is or not?"

"Certainly," said he, with a characteristic confidence which doubled my alarm. "I told him the thing wasn't here. I said it was in my studio, at the corner of Lexington Avenue and Tenth Street, and he agreed to go down there with me."

"Well?" I gasped, far too confused to see the point.

"Don't you understand?" he said. "There isn't any corner of Lexington Avenue and Tenth Street. The avenue begins at Twenty-first Street, Gramercy Park. Because this man didn't know it, he was not a central-office detective. And if he said he was one when he wasn't, what is the inevitable inference?"

"Oh, my boy," said I, with a groan, "have you brought this man to his death on such poor evidence as that?"

His confidence was not in the least degree shaken, but his sympathy was touched by my distress. He put his hand on my shoulder affectionately, and addressed me by a name he sometimes used in moments of unusual intimacy.

"Don't be frightened, Uncle Billy," he said. "I didn't kill this man. I didn't mean to hurt him. I was only going to take him out and turn him over to a policeman. And there's no mortal doubt who he is. This woman knows."

He checked himself and glanced sidelong at Madame Batonyi, who still knelt, whispering her prayers.

"I think she'd better not see him," he said in my ear. "She's coming round all right, but this might put her back again. Shall we take him into the other room?"

I disliked to touch the body, but was ashamed to confess my qualms.

"No," said I; "we mustn't move him till the police have been called."

And with that an idea leaped into my mind, so perfectly obvious that it should have been there long ago.

"If this man were a detective, he'd have a badge, wouldn't he?" said I.

"But he wasn't one, you see," responded Larrabee. "He was an impostor. Of course, he might have tried to fool me with a bogus badge, but in that case he'd have had it where I couldn't help seeing it. A real badge is always——"

He ceased suddenly. He had opened the man's coats; and now, in the place where a real badge is always carried, I beheld one, on the dead man's breast.

At the sight of it the breath went out of me with a groan, and Larrabee looked up.

"Uncle Billy," said he, "if he were covered with these things, it wouldn't change my opinion in the smallest degree."

He held the metal disk to the light to read the number, and just then the bell rang. It could hardly have startled me more, if I had been a murderer caught beside the clay I had bereft of breath. Larrabee hardly moved a muscle.

"I hope that's Collins," he said, "but whoever he is, I guess we shall have to let him in. It won't do to hide this business. Will you please push the button, Uncle Billy, and then meet this person in the hall? Don't turn him away, unless it's absolutely safe."

There was reason in this, and it gave me an odd sensation to find myself for once in unison with Larrabee. I went out into the hall, where the gas had not yet been lighted.

"Larrabee?" a strong voice called from below.

"Yes," said I, like a mouse.

A man came heavily up the stairs, and, as I looked down upon him in the gloom, the memory of Larrabee's adventure in Chicago came to me, and, with absurd inconsistency, I tried to emulate his guesswork, which I despised. But the oddest part of it is that when I yielded to this silly impulse the conviction instantly took hold of me that the visitor was a policeman.

He seemed of moderate stature, and in every way ordinary; dressed in what passed for black in that illumination, and wearing a derby hat rather low over his eyes, as I noticed when he reached my level.

"Larrabee?" said he again.

"What is your business with him?" I asked.

He leaned against the banisters, and surveyed me sidelong.

"The Eighty-fourth Street thing," he said. "I'm from the central office. What's the matter here?" he added, after a moment's further scrutiny.

"The matter?" I said weakly.

"Yes," said he. "You act very funny, if I'm any judge."

"Act?" I echoed. "I wasn't aware that I'd done anything at all."

"Well, I hope you haven't," he rejoined, "but you look as if you had. Is Mr. Larrabee at home?"

I backed away awkwardly, opened the door a little, and peered in. I was so afraid of the dead man on the floor that I wanted to see whether he was there, *had* to see, though destruction were the penalty.

"Who is it?" Larrabee called, and with that the man came forward and pushed the door wide. I was wafted into the room along with him. My legs, which had been wooden a moment before, ceased to be anything, and I continued to stand only by an obvious miracle. The corpse had disappeared; Larrabee must have taken it away, but how about the bloodstain? A dark rug lay in that place. Whether it had been there before I couldn't remember. My interest in these matters, and my vain attempts to disguise it, seemed to announce themselves to the detective by some mysterious means. He had begun to introduce himself to Larrabee, but broke off, and turned to me with a suddenness that nearly knocked the heart out of my body.

"What's the matter?" he said. "Anything missing?"

"No," I faltered.

He rubbed the back of his head, pushing his hat down farther over his eyes.

"Your friend seems worried," said he, addressing Larrabee. "What's gone wrong with him?"

"I'll tell you in a minute," said Larrabee. "You say your name is Braden, and that you're from headquarters. I'm glad to see you, Mr. Braden; you're evidently the sort of man I can get along with."

"Right," said Braden, with apparent sincerity. "I feel the same. You seem to know what you're doing. But who's your friend?" with a jerk of the head in my direction.

Larrabee introduced me in brief, but flattering, terms.

"Well, well," said the detective. "Is it possible? And the lady would be Madame Batonyi, judging from the pictures in the afternoon papers."

She was sitting in a chair pushed back into the corner where the shadows were deep, and her posture was conventional, yet to me she was a figure eloquent of tragedy, if only by her deathlike quietude. The detective scrutinized her from under the brim of his hat, but if he saw anything amiss, he did not mention it specifically.

"Has there been a gun fired here in the course of the last week or two, Mr. Larrabee?" he asked. "I have a great nose for powder." He picked up Madame Batonyi's revolver, where I had laid it on Larrabee's big dictionary, which was supported by an iron mechanism of its own. "Not *this* gun, apparently. Clean; all chambers loaded." And he replaced the weapon.

"No," said Larrabee. "It was another—discharged by accident."

"Anybody hurt?"

"One moment, if you please," said Larrabee, nailing him with a finger.

"We shall get along faster, if I ask the questions."

Braden caressed the back of his head again, tilting his hat a very little farther down over his eyes.

"Anything to oblige," said he.

"Why are you here?"

"We got a tip at headquarters, by telephone," Braden answered. "Party gave a false name. In reality it was Haldane, the janitor of the Eighty-fourth Street house. The chief will be surprised; he told me it was some college professor. Haldane said that the hallboy, Leo, had seen you get away with a piece of evidence, and was trying to pull your leg. I've just had an argument with Leo, and he came through with the story. So I'll trouble you for a piece of a cuff link with a cameo on it."

"You shall have it in a moment," said Larrabee. "What other man has been sent out from headquarters on this case?"

'None, so far as I know; but there may be a dozen."

"What man of your staff carries badge number three thousand, seven hundred and eighty-three?"

"Tom Hoffman."

"Is he on this case?"

"He is not. What do you know about him?"

"I know that he has lost his badge," said Larrabee. "Here it is."

The detective took it, and stepped toward the window. I saw his hand steal back toward his hip pocket, as he turned again to Larrabee.

"Was Tom Hoffman here?" he asked, in a changed voice.

"No," said Larrabee. "A man came, personating him, and wearing this badge. He made the same demand on me that you have made—for the cuff link."

"He wanted it? What for?"

"Because it was his," said Larrabee. "He was the man who robbed and nearly killed Miss Vaughn."

The detective advanced slowly, and looked Larrabee in the face at close range.

"This don't seem possible," he said. "Why would the man show himself to you like that, for the sake of a button? Was his name on it?"

"No," said Larrabee; "neither name nor initials."

Braden shook his head.

"It won't do," said he. "He never would have risked it. But *some* man was here, and there was trouble. Was he hurt?"

"He was shot dead," said Larrabee; "accidentally, with his own revolver. His body is in my bedroom."

"My God!" exclaimed the detective, catching Larrabee by the wrist. "Are you sure of what you've done? It might be Hoffman." He pushed Larrabee aside, and ran into the other room. I hesitated for a moment, and then followed him.

In the bedroom there were two trunks of the same height, standing end to end against a wall, and Larrabee had laid the body on top of them. Braden was standing near, not looking at the man, or at anything in particular. He was biting viciously at the end of a cigar.

"Lost my nerve," he said. "Friend of mine, you understand. Known him a long time."

My mouth fell open. I extended a pointing hand slowly toward the awful object on the trunks.

"No, no," said Braden, with a quick laugh of mere excitement. "That isn't Hoffman. I don't know this party. There's a chance your friend may be right. Gee! He's a queer guy. He certainly threw one scare into *me*." He shook himself together; dropped his cigar on the floor, and went back to the dead man, whose pockets he examined with a deft, experienced touch, while I, at his request, turned on the lights. "Nothing at all," he said. "That's good. Looks as if he thought he might be arrested. Maybe the woman knows him. What's the matter with her? Seems to be in a trance. Did she do this?"

"Yes," said I, "but it was accidental, and entirely justifiable. The man was trying to shoot Mr. Larrabee, and she snatched the revolver out of his pocket."

"Well," he said, "they're the only

witnesses. If they stick to this story, nobody can disprove it."

He gave his hat another degree of slant, and walked away toward the sitting room.

CHAPTER VIII.

LOOKING BACKWARD.

We found Larrabee standing by the writing table under the chandelier, whose lamps were lighted. He had an open penknife in his hand, and seemed to have been working with it upon some small task. He gave Braden merely a glance, and asked no questions.

"I've known from the outset that there must be something peculiar about this cuff link," he said. "That's why I was so confident about their coming after it. I've just found out the trick."

He held the cuff link out toward Braden. The cameo now stood upright on a concealed hinge, and beneath it there appeared a portrait on ivory, not larger than one's little-finger nail, but very artistically executed. The face was Madame Batonyi's, in her youth, far more beautiful, and with a charm now lost.

The detective gave it a single glance, and passed it to me.

"Now, Mr. Larrabee," he began, "something has happened——"

"You're entirely right," said Larrabee, reaching for his hat and coat. "We must find out what has become of Detective Hoffman, and I know how to do it. Come with me. Uncle Billy," he added, stepping close, and speaking in a tone somewhat suppressed, "I shall have to leave you to take care of Madame Batonyi. She will be all right, and yet I think we ought to call a doctor. I'll send one here, the first thing I do. I'll leave the doors unlocked, so that you won't have to go too far away from her. She'll need to be closely watched."

Braden now put his head with ours.

"That's right," he said. "I've seen plenty of women in that kind of trance. They're safe enough till they begin to talk; then, look out. Don't let her get near the window, unless you're close enough to grab her. There's no knowing what she'll do. And, mind you, get a full confession. She'll tell you all she knows. I'm going to send an officer here, but I shan't waste any time looking for one. My first business is to find Tom Hoffman. Nobody ever took that badge off Tom, while he was conscious. If you ask me, I don't feel much easier in my mind than I did when I thought Mr. Larrabee had shot him."

All this was hurriedly spoken, and before I had grasped the full meaning of it, Larrabee and the detective were gone. The thought came to me that I was left with murder and suicide for my companions. As to Madame Batonyi, I was the more anxious because, when the cuff link had passed from Braden's hand to mine, I had seen the woman look toward me with an expression which might be called intelligent. There were increasing evidences of a change in her condition—sudden convulsive movements, clenching of the hands, and an irregular, spasmodic breathing. As I stood watching her I would have given a great deal of money to see her lapse into the previous state of trance. No sick man ever prayed for the doctor's coming more fervently than I, but through his own fault, and not Larrabee's, he failed to appear.

Suddenly Madame Batonyi spoke in German, in a voice that rasped its way up from the depths of her soul. The words, to my imperfect knowledge of the language, seemed to mean, "It was I; once, long ago," doubtless referring to the portrait.

Her voice, I had been warned, would be the danger signal; and the window had been ominously mentioned. I reached it in three nimble strides, but the sash stuck in the frame, and I was some while in closing it. Then I turned to where Madame Batonyi had been sitting in the corner, and saw only an empty chair. She had silently escaped to the center of the room, and now sat at Larrabee's writing table.

"Please sit there," she said, indicating with a glance a chair on the opposite side of the table. It was as near

as her own to the window on which my fears were still concentrated, and I complied with her request, which had had very much the tone of a command.

Madame Batonyi's hands were not in view; the table hid them. I was reminded of the way she had sat holding her muff, after her first entrance into that room. A chill crept down my spine; I looked stealthily out of the corner of an eye toward the big dictionary on which Detective Braden had replaced Madame Batonyi's revolver. It was not there, and I knew that she had taken it, and was now holding it in her lap.

Meanwhile she had been talking straight on, with a strained insistence, such as marks a certain stage of drunkenness. Her eyes had the characteristic glitter and the staring look. Drunk with horror; the old phrase flitted through my mind. At first I hardly knew what she was saying, except that she declared her intention to tell me everything about the affair of the previous evening, which she spoke of as a murder. Evidently the idea that Miss Vaughn could not recover was firmly fixed in her mind. She breathed like a person in extreme physical pain, filling her great lungs with a hissing sound between her closed teeth, and these shuddering, deep-drawn inhalations marked the only pauses in her flow of speech.

"The man I killed in this room," she said, "was my husband, Alexander Batonyi. I did not mean to do it. Mr. Larrabee understands my act. I was trying to save him from death, and my husband from another murder. But in regard to Miss Vaughn I am guilty to this extent, that I knew what was to be done, and did not prevent it. I will explain this to you.

"I first met Colonel Batonyi in Vienna, ten years ago," she proceeded, with exaggerated precision, trying to impress upon my memory every word of this statement, the last she expected to make in this world, as the dullest person in my place could not have failed to perceive. "I had then just made my earliest success, very great, very unusual. I was conspicuous, for the moment; I was more talked about than the famous singers in the company. Colonel Batonyi was merely one of many dissolute and selfish men, who tried to have their names associated with mine.

"I hated him worse than any of the others," she resumed, after a breath, "but he was the only one whom I feared. He discovered this at once. Through certain influences he was able to force himself upon my acquaintance; and he began an intentional siege of terror. He used to hold me by the arms perfectly helpless, and taunt me because I was afraid to scream for help. 'Where is that voice now?' he would say. 'Let me hear you howl! You can't do it against my wishes.' I tell you that he trained me as if I had been a wild animal—he utterly broke my spirit, through fear; and I began at last to love him in the most miserable, tormented, and despairing way possible to imagine. I had begged him to marry me, as any wretched girl might have done, though never with the slightest hope. He merely laughed at me. But one day he came to me without a word of explanation; led me away to a little church outside the city, and we were married. I was abjectly grateful, and so entirely witless that I did not even ask why he had done it. Only years afterward I learned that another man, who doubtless really loved me, had driven Colonel Batonyi to this act, by threatening the exposure of some disgraceful thing which would have driven him from the army.

"That exposure came in another way, very soon. He had to leave Austria secretly, at an hour's notice, and alone. There was my chance of freedom, but I found in a few days that it was impossible for me to live without him. I found out where he was, and followed him, giving up my work and the dreams that had enchanted me only so little while ago. After that time I had no will of my own in opposition to his. He had only to say that he would leave me, and I would do whatever he wished. He was already a thief. I helped him; stole for him more than once, and always with

complete success, my own part not even suspected. But in the crimes which he committed alone he was not so fortunate. He became known to the police of Europe, and though I was everywhere thought to be the innocent wife of a criminal, still my connection with him ruined my career. I did, indeed, attempt to take another name, and to continue in opera, but the story was always told. I cried so much and so violently, in those days, that my voice was spoiled. I had to sing for my living, however, and to make money to give to him; so I sang anywhere—in the cabarets—it is not necessary to speak of that.

"In Venice, two years ago, my husband was arrested, and, while trying to escape from the police, he was supposed to have been drowned. When this was told to me, I did not believe it. I expected to receive word from him through some secret channel, but none came. I have told you already that I could not live without him. It became absolutely necessary for me to discover where he was; you understand that such an impulse cannot be resisted. I was *compelled* to seek for him everywhere. I heard that he was in America, and came here, accepting any position which would take me to the large cities. I *knew* that I should find him, and I did—in Chicago, just after Miss Vaughn had gone away. I had met her there; I had begun to love her very much, and through that innocent affection had again some moments that were almost happy.

"My husband had been in Chicago several weeks, and had known that I was there, but he had not tried to see me. The reason why he came to me at last was that he had read about Miss Vaughn's diamonds, at the time when Mr. Larrabee saved some of them from a thief. My husband had learned of my acquaintance with her, and it was in his mind then to steal her jewels, but he said nothing about it to me. He told me that he was going to China to enter the military service, and that there was a great fortune to be made, if he could only have a small capital in the beginning. Otherwise he could hardly accept the offer, and certainly could not take me with him. Thus he held my life before me in his hand, like a wineglass; he had only to release his hold, and it would fall and be shattered; for I should have killed myself if he had gone away from me again, and to the end of the world. He knew well enough what he was doing when he offered me this choice."

"He followed you to New York?" said I, as she paused. It was not my first attempt at an interruption, but it was the first that had succeeded. "Where has he lived?"

"I don't know," she replied, with a moan. "He hasn't let me see him. Oh, he took care that I should fully realize what it would mean to me, if he should go away. He sent me word now and then through Doctor Stettina."

"What?" I cried. "Was that little rascal an accomplice?"

"Yes," she replied. "He had known my husband abroad. They had worked together—in crimes similar to this, but never with the same drug." And she shuddered at the thought of it. "Stettina made it; he is a chemist. He thought it perfectly safe. It was to be given to me, too; but only a little, so that I should revive and call for help."

"But you would have been suspected," said I. "Didn't you know that?"

"Yes, I suppose so; but what could I do? Don't you understand? I couldn't see my husband; he wouldn't come to me. He sent me orders. He said that if I obeyed him, he would take me with him when he went away, but if not, he would go alone. He had made Stettina take rooms in that house to watch me, and to be his messenger. I was ordered to persuade Miss Vaughn to wear her jewels to the opera, and to lend me some of them; then to bring her home—it is plain, isn't it? You see, I had no choice. You can't believe that I was personally tempted to this dreadful act. All the diamonds in the world wouldn't have tempted me to injure Carolyn; no, nor the only thing I really envied her, the beautiful, young,

unspoiled voice in her throat, if I could have stolen that."

"Was your husband the patient who called on Doctor Stettina?" I asked.

"I suppose so. I didn't know the plan, except that he was to get into my rooms from Doctor Stettina's by way of the dumb-waiter, and that he would be behind the curtains. And I sent her in—to her death."

"This seems hardly to have been sane conduct on your part," said I, "feeling as you did toward her, and knowing the risk you ran."

At this her face flushed, and her throat seemed to swell with sudden rage.

"Sane?" she cried. "Sane? You speak foolishly. If a thing is necessary, one has to do it. There is no question of sanity. If I should leap from that window to escape fire, would it be an insane act? Certainly not." She paused for a moment, angry, wildly excited. Then her face went blank; she seemed to forget. "What was I saying? That I sent her in to where he was hidden, waiting. He caught her, and covered her face, and held her till he thought she was unconscious. Then, as he released her, she revived suddenly, and began to make an outcry—not loud, but, oh, so pitiful."

She was wringing her hands. In a paroxysm of agony she raised them to her ears as if to shut out a sound. This seemed to be my chance. It was possible I might reach her before she could snatch up the revolver out of her lap; but I could not start from a sitting posture.

"I see," said I, carefully beginning to rise. "He was afraid to give Miss Vaughn more of the drug, or to cover her face again immediately. He ordered you to sing, so as to conceal her cries."

My voice must have betrayed me; rather that, I think, than my slow movement. There was a flash of her white hand, and she held the revolver in my sight. I sank back into the chair.

"So," she cried. "You knew. But it doesn't matter; you can't reach me in time."

I sat like an image, staring at the revolver. It was of an open construction; I could see the bullets in several of the cartridges. Braden's words, "every chamber loaded," rang in my ears. Perfectly helpless, I began for the second time that day to envy Larrabee for his peculiar faculty of decision. His harebrained inspirations might very well fit a situation in which there was neither scope nor time for rational judgment. Certainly nothing that he had ever done, to my knowledge, was more foolish than for me to sit there, gnawing my inside in the vain attempt to think what might conceivably be Larrabee's course of action, if he were in my place. I could think of nothing except that he would be more cool than I; that he would be too rashly confident, if not too brave, to feel a personal alarm, whereas I suffered tortures in imagining my own hand blown to pieces by the discharge of the revolver when, in the last desperate moment, I should be compelled to clutch it while Madame Batonyi's finger was on the trigger. I never dreamed of being shot in any other part of the body; and I am willing to accept the cruel evidence of my own fancies at that moment in proof of the assertion I have somewhere seen, that all men scream when seriously wounded in the hand.

"Wait!" I cried. "You wish to confess—to undo this wrong, if you can. But you haven't told me all. Where are the jewels?"

"I don't know," she said. "My husband took them away, my own and hers. Do you think he was telling me the truth? Would he have taken me with him? Do you know what I believe?" A new light seemed to break on her. She spoke in a changed manner, as if from a different and superior viewpoint. "I believe that all he told me was a lie; that I was robbed as truly and as cruelly as Miss Vaughn; that I never should have seen one of my jewels again, nor a penny of the price they brought."

"But you could have followed him and——"

"Where? To China? Was he really

going there? Had he any offer from that government? I don't believe it. I think he lied to me, and meant to desert me. I should not have known how to follow him, if he had lived; but now I know, and I shall go a little way, not far. I do not wish to see him where I shall go. That is true now, for the first time in years. I humbly, penitently ask of God, with my last breath, that He will lead me elsewhere; that in His mercy He will find a place for me apart, a refuge for my soul."

I saw her fingers close more tightly on the weapon, as it slowly rose. The moment had come, and I was so far prepared for it that my hand no longer made a coward of me. Mentally I had sacrificed it already; it was the right hand mentioned in Scripture, which had offended, and had been cut off according to the command. Physically, however, it was still at the end of my arm; and, to my overpowering surprise—and Madame Batonyi's also—it reached across the table, and seized the revolver before she had lifted it to the level of her head.

There was a struggle in which I had the great disadvantage of being off my feet, stretched in an impossible position across the table. The woman very nearly got the better of me, and for an instant she must have thought that the weapon was pointed as she wished. She pulled the trigger. I knew all about it; had plenty of time to think of a thousand things, but chiefly of the fact that the barrel was aimed straight at my face. I heard a click loud as the crack of doom, and fell back on my own side of the table, holding the revolver in my hand.

CHAPTER IX.

LARRABEE'S LAST INSPIRATION.

During an immeasurable pause we faced each other in a deathly silence. Something was beating inside my head. It had the semblance of a voice, a question. Why, why, why are you alive? Could the weapon have missed fire? I knew better. Gradually there dawned in my consciousness the conviction that Larrabee had done this; that in some way I owed my life to one of his peculiar inspirations. I broke down the barrel of the revolver, and saw the ends of the five cartridges, "every chamber loaded;" but there was no mark on the one that had lain under the falling hammer. Why not? Because there was no firing pin. Larrabee had removed it while I had been in the other room, before he began to tinker with the cuff link.

Foolishly I wondered why he had not removed the weapon entire, while he had been about it, and then common sense came to my rescue, and I knew that he had left the revolver there so that Madame Batonyi should not seek any other means of death. One failure is very apt to cure a suicide, at least for a time.

There came a knock at the door, and some one entered without waiting to be invited. It was the doctor whom Larrabee had sent. At sight of him, Madame Batonyi came to herself, and knew that she must be alive. She sank into her chair; her head fell forward on her arms, and she burst into a wild flood of tears.

The doctor seemed to know exactly what to do, and to require no help from me. I began, therefore, to think of other matters. Being a mere sordid business man, I perceived that there was sixty thousand dollars worth of property at stake, so far as Miss Vaughn was concerned, and that we were not much nearer finding it than we had been at the outset. It was impossible to question Madame Batonyi now, and it was doubtful whether she had any important information to give. She did not know where her husband had lived, nor what he had done with the spoils of the robbery. He might have put some or all of them in the way of sale already, through the secret avenues of forbidden traffic known to thieves; they might have passed into the hands of persons who could easily conceal the transaction, now that he was dead. The best chance of tracing the jewels lay through the accomplice, Stettina, who must be caught before word of what

had happened could come to him, and precipitate his flight.

While I was revolving these thoughts in my mind, two policemen arrived, sent by Detective Braden, and the result of a hasty conference with them was that I left one on guard with the doctor, and took the other along with me to the house on Eighty-fourth Street. There we learned that Stettina had gone out a short time before. He had received a telephone message—as we were informed by Leo, who had studiously listened to it—telling him that a man had been killed in Mr. Larrabee's rooms, and asking him to go there and view the body, which was thought to be that of the patient who had visited him on the previous evening.

"After hearing that," said Leo, "he left in a big hurry. I suppose he went to Mr. Larrabee's."

I did not suppose anything of the sort. If Stettina knew where the jewels were, he had gone to get them; if not, he had fled empty-handed. The policeman concurred in this opinion, and advised that we should go to the West Sixty-eighth Street station house, and have an alarm sent out. We went there, and met Larrabee in the doorway. He seemed to be in high spirits, but Lieutenant Collins, who followed in his wake, was notably depressed.

"Afternoon," he said to me gloomily, and lifted a small satchel which he carried. "Here's the goods."

"The jewels?"

"Yes," said he. "Mr. Larrabee recovered 'em, with Detective Braden running second, and Lieutenant Collins scratched."

"In Heaven's name, Harry, what did you do?" said I.

He pushed back his hair, brushed the crown of his hat on his coat, and looked at me, surprised.

"Do?" said he. "Why, my dear Uncle Billy, there was only one thing I *could* do. Braden and I went up to Eighty-fourth Street, and telephoned from the nearest convenient place, telling Stettina to go and identify the body, and he went hot-foot to the house where Batonyi has been living. We followed, and found the jewels in Batonyi's room; and in another we found Detective Hoffman, laid out as nicely as you'd care to see. No danger in his case, though; he'll be brought around by ordinary methods. Braden's attending to him. We've learned that Batonyi sent a tip to headquarters about a crook living in the house—a man Hoffman was after. Hoffman got in, and went to the crook's room; and Batonyi stepped out from behind the door, and smothered him. He never saw Batonyi at all, and wouldn't have been able to testify against him. And here's an odd feature of the case," he added. "The other crook, who has nothing whatever to do with Batonyi, came home unexpectedly, and found what he supposed to be Hoffman's dead body in his room. He took one look, and ran, leaving all his things. Braden says he won't stop this side of Patagonia."

"How did you guess that Stettina was an accomplice?" I demanded.

"My dear Uncle Billy," said he, "did you hear Stettina describe his patient last evening? And then did you see Colonel Batonyi?"

"How the devil did you know he *was* Colonel Batonyi?" I interrupted. "Did she tell you?"

"Certainly not," he answered. "I heard of him from Lieutenant Collins, and, of course, I knew at once——"

"I told him Colonel Batonyi had been dead two years," Collins interposed mournfully, "so, of course, Mr. Larrabee knew at once that Batonyi wasn't dead, but alive, and in this city, and back of this job. Oh, yes; that was easy—for Mr. Larrabee."

"But about Stettina?" said I. "Certainly I heard him describe his patient, and I saw Batonyi, who was entirely different in every feature."

"Just so," said Larrabee. "I recognized him by the difference. I was looking for a man of that kind. You heard Stettina contradict Leo? Obviously lying; plainly an accomplice. I had already caught him pretending not to know Madame Batonyi, and to be curious about her furniture. So I went

up there to-day, and talked outside his door, letting him know that I had the cuff link. That wasn't necessary—they'd guessed it already, for I saw that Madame Batonyi had searched my rooms for it while she was there alone."

"What will be done with her?" said I. "It's maudlin, but I pity the woman. Yet I suppose she ought to be punished."

"I don't believe she's altogether sane," he answered. "Stettina says that her subjection to Batonyi amounted to a monomania. There's a thin streak of decency in that little swine; he'd like to save Madame Batonyi from going to prison, if he could. And it oughtn't to be difficult. If there's anything wrong with her mind, it'll be worse after this experience—worse till it's better. I think she'll be acquitted on that ground. And now," said he, "we'll carry Miss Vaughn's jewels back to her. Of course, they're nominally in the custody of the police, but——"

"Nominally," said Lieutenant Collins, tapping himself on the breast. "That means me. I'm nominally a policeman, practically a boob. I didn't know a good thing when I saw it."

I was not present when Miss Vaughn's property was restored to her, but I had an account of the proceedings from Doctor Wendell, who said that Larrabee behaved altogether too well, from a medical standpoint. He was so careful to avoid exciting Miss Vaughn that he cheated her of the very pleasure she was looking forward to, and effaced her hero with a dull coating of manner.

"If it's of no more consequence than this," she said to the doctor, when Larrabee had gone, "I think I won't be murdered again. The part seems to call for a girl with personality." And a little later she was seen to be in tears, to the detriment of her health, which Larrabee had been so careful of.

Some weeks afterward, however, Larrabee came to me with a peculiarly serious countenance.

"Uncle Billy," he said, "I'm an arrogant, unfeeling, selfish brute; but there is one man in the world whom I am very anxious to please. I wonder what would be his feelings, if he should learn that I was thinking of marriage?"

"He'd be mighty glad to hear it," said I.

"Well, that's good to hear," he said. "And, by the way, Miss Vaughn has taken a dislike to jewels; doesn't wish to see a diamond again as long as she lives. She's going to sell all she owns, and invest the money. That will give her rather more than I have. Would you regard that as an obstacle?"

"Not unless you intend to live on it," said I; "and you don't."

"Of course it's more than likely that Miss Vaughn doesn't care for me at all," said he. "I shall have to ask her; there's no other possible course. And I haven't the least idea what she'll say. How strange; but I wouldn't have it different. I shall never understand her, nor hope to, nor wish to. I want her always to be to me what she is now, a divine mystery. She's like an ultimate truth of nature, near as the rose within one's reach, remote as the last star in the sky."

"My dear boy," said I, much moved, "she's all you think her, but she's not quite as deep a mystery to me in one respect as she is to you. I think you've only to ask. On that prediction I'll risk buying a wedding present now."

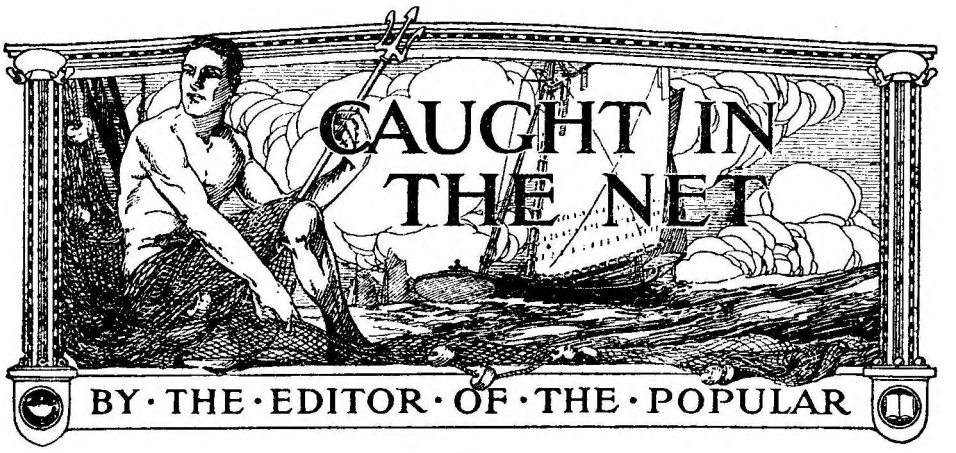
"Thank you, Uncle Billy," he said, taking my hand. "Make it anything but diamonds."

A LETTER THAT WENT SOME

WHERE did this letter go?

One of Representative Oscar W. Underwood's secretaries mailed a query to a Mrs. Charles Anderson in Alabama. After a long delay, he received this reply from a perfect stranger:

Your letter was sent to Mrs Charles Anderson, and did not reach us as quickly as it should. Mrs. Anderson is dead.



CONFIDENCE

A THOUSAND speeches have been delivered in Congress and in public halls on the decline of the American merchant marine and a million words have been written by men who believed they could point a way to restore the Stars and Stripes to the proud position they once held in the seven seas.

Within the last two years, a mild-mannered gentleman who is the editor of a maritime publication of high standing, grew tired of the pessimism that obsessed the shipbuilding industry. One day he wrote an editorial in which he predicted such a revival in shipbuilding in America and such an activity in ocean trade as had not been witnessed since the Civil War. The bottom has been touched, he declared. A turn for the better was near at hand. He buttressed his argument with facts drawn from the growth of the export business of the United States Steel Corporation, the International Harvester Company, and a dozen other great American concerns and the indications of expansion of German, French, and English commerce. Last of all, he pictured what the Panama Canal meant to American industries.

A high official of the Standard Oil Company read that editorial at the next meeting of the directors of that corporation. Filed away in a cabinet at No. 26 Broadway were plans for half a dozen steamships. They were brought out of the pigeonhole in which they had rested for several years. A few days later, the Standard Oil gave an order for the building of ships that entailed an expenditure of two million dollars.

Officers of the Hawaiian-American Steamship Company read what that editor wrote. Whether they were influenced by it or not is immaterial, but they awarded contracts for the building of seventy thousand tons of ships—the biggest single order ever placed in the history of American shipping. Then others, who long had hesitated, took action.

To-day the shipyards of the United States are more active than at any time in the last forty years. One concern—the Cramps—has eighteen million dollars of business booked. In the largest three shipyards of America, fifteen thousand men are working. More would be employed, if the plants had facilities for utilizing them.

The editor's vision was prophetic. To-day the ocean-carrying trade is bigger than ever before. Throughout the world the only ocean steamships out of service are those laid up for repairs or unfit to traverse the seas.

The Stars and Stripes may never be seen in every quarter of the globe as once they were, for the American steamship costs more to build and more to

operate than does the foreign vessel, but out of the gloom of many years one man by words of hope and cheer brought a confidence that hastened the prosperity of a great industry.

EMPLOYMENT AGENCIES

ONE of the great semireligious institutions collects hundreds of thousands of dollars a year for putting applicants for work in the way of getting jobs. It charges for its services the first week's wage the employee earns.

Most persons who come within the grade of unskilled labor have to pay to get work. The Italian ditch digger gives tribute to the padrone, the sailor to the crimp, and the house servant to the employment agent.

This system works hardship and has developed many abuses. That a boy, just out of school, eager to possess the first dollars he ever earned, should have the money taken by a church body is likely to dampen his ardor and dispel some of his illusions. Once gone, these illusions never return. In their place come the seeds of bitterness and cynicism toward those who exacted the charge. It is bad business for a Christian organization.

With some private employment agencies the situation is worse. They have found it profitable to promote unrest. Good service to employer and employee means a loss of patronage and a cutting off of commissions.

In some cities affairs have grown so bad that the local authorities have taken action. In Cleveland, as a result of exposures that shocked many persons, the Chamber of Commerce has decided to go into the employment-agency business in wholesale style. The State has a free employment bureau, and through an agency established in Cleveland the bureau will work in unison with the chamber.

As the chamber has two thousand three hundred members, and among them nearly all the large employers of labor in the city, it looks bad for the harpies who had been preying on labor. Best of all, from the women's viewpoint, it gives opportunity to housewives to get better servants than they ever had before, for, with the scrutiny and placing of house workers under the direction of one large and responsible organization, the incompetent and unworthy soon will be winnowed out and the standard of service raised throughout the city.

Incidentally, man or boy, woman or girl, who wants work in the city of Cleveland, will have a chance to get it without having to pay for the right to labor and to live.

THE MODERN DETECTIVE

ONCE upon a time, fiction was a filmy sort of something, dreamy in its consistency, far-fetched and unreal. And perhaps that was because the minds of those who wrote saw beyond the times in which they lived. Ideals had not become practicalities. The mind could see—it could not execute. As for to-day—well, the fiction writer has a hard time now to keep up with the common, everyday facts. To-day you read a fiction story, the imagination of which may seem marvelous in its scope; to-morrow you may meet the same set of conditions in everyday life. All of which leads us to the instance of the doctor and the bacteriologist.

Doctor Frank Hall, in Kansas City, has gained a reputation for his investigations in germ diseases, and particularly for his work and testimony in several big murder trials. Doctor Hall is of the detective type, yet never in his life has he followed a murderer beyond the doors of his own laboratory. However——

The consulting physician hesitated at the doorway and held forth a microscopic "slide" he had just made.

"Hall," he said, "here's a smear I wish you'd look into. I've got a patient

who's simply coughing his life out. He's losing weight, and I'm afraid he's going to die on me. It looks like a case of tuberculosis, but his lungs test all right. I wish you'd——"

"I'll look into it," replied the bacteriologist.

And the next day the physician picked up an envelope on his desk, containing the slide and this note:

DEAR JIM: Make your nearsighted barber wear glasses. Quit giving him medicine.
HALL.

It was a month later that the physician met the bacteriologist. The patient had recovered—by wearing glasses.

"Hall," said the physician, "how did you know that patient was a nearsighted barber, and why——"

"Very easy," replied the bacteriologist. "I examined the slide, and in the bit of membrane there I found a great number of finely clipped bits of human hair, foreign to the membrane. The question as to how they came there arose and was easily answered by the fact that they must have been breathed in the nostrils or the mouth, thence to the throat and bronchial tubes, causing the inflammation which had brought the cough. To breathe in those fine bits of hair, in the numbers present, one must be where the ends of human hair are constantly being snipped off. Hence the barber. And if he held his head close enough to the scissors to breathe in the hair, he must be nearsighted. The result was that I saw the necessity of glasses, that he might hold back his head and escape breathing in the bits of hair as he snipped them from the locks of the customer. See?"

And yet there are those who say the observations of Sherlock Holmes are impossible and "far-fetched!"

PAYING THE BILL

A WORKMAN employed in the carding room of one of the great cotton mills of the Lancashire district of England refused to join the union last summer. The other men working in the same room argued with him and, when that proved of no avail, abused him. Naturally, the case was reported to the officers of the trade-union, for the mill, while not recognizing the union officially, was more than partial to unionism. The union officials thereupon asked the mill owners to dismiss the obstinate person. The mill owners declined on the ground that it was the man's privilege to go into or stay out of the union as he saw fit.

The following Monday every employee of that mill, except the one man who would not join the union, went on strike. There is sympathy among capitalists as there is among workers, and there are alliances, too. There was good reason to believe that some of the big spinners were supporting the mill owner in his contest with the union. The union, in retaliation, made the strike general. Nearly three hundred thousand operators ceased work. One of the greatest industrial hives in the world stopped producing.

Before that trouble was settled, England had lost more than two million days' work. There is no way of computing the cost accurately. Some estimators put the British figures at one pound, or five dollars a day. The wage item makes less than one-third of the total, for railroads, shopkeepers, landlords, and multitudes of others besides the mill owners and the striking workmen suffer. Incidentally, even the American people were penalized for this strike, the cost of cotton goods being affected by reason of the mill disturbance. If each day each mill hand was idle meant five dollars' loss, that strike cost ten million dollars. When the strike ended, the workman about whom all the trouble arose retained his job. Nothing was gained by either mill owners or workers.

England lost twelve million days' work through strikes last year. That means sixty million dollars. The outlook in the labor field there this year is much more gloomy than it was twelve months ago. Conservative persons do not expect that the total this year will be less than twenty million days, or one hundred million dollars. All the estimators ignore one element of loss that must be considerable. At time of labor trouble, and long after the strike is over, the strikers, their wives and children, are on short allowance. Insufficient food, scanty clothing, and worry have their effect upon public health and industrial production long after peace is restored.

England is not giving so much attention to the costs of strikes just now as it should. The reason is that Great Britain has had remarkable prosperity within the last few years. A little later, however, the subject will force itself upon that nation. It will force itself upon the American people, too, for this country pays almost as large a bill proportionately for labor disturbances as does England.

VACUUM

ONE more of the get-rich schemes is upon us. One more of the ruddy promoters brought us an earful of golden returns. This time it is a funnel-shaped vacuum clothes washer. It saves the back from breaking, the clothes from friction, the day from overwork. It takes a tubful of dirty clothes and converts them into snowy lawn and linen in a third of the time of the suffering wooden washboard. It washes the taint from money. What matters it that such a device has been on the market for a quarter of a century, that any housewife can buy it for half a dollar? Still the promoter releases his horde of agents upon the faithful women of the nation. Still he charges three and one-half dollars for his piece of tin.

But because that profit is not large enough, and because the sales are not numerous enough, he has worked out an artful system of agents. Each man, who succumbs to his flamboyance, pays one hundred and fifty dollars to be an agent. Then he goes to work in turn, and makes another man an agent. From each convert, the master mind behind the scheme receives some of the one hundred and fifty dollars, and the agent who lassoed the newcomer receives a part. It is a game of "Tag. You're it." Each agent passes on his load of troubles. You don't sell goods, you sell agencies. You keep selling out, and yet all the time you are in on the rake-off from the late arrivals.

It would be possible to initiate an entire community into the selling game, so that every voter was an agent, without marketing one washer. One woman pawned her diamond for one hundred and fifty dollars and joined the endless chain. She has blond hair and a winsome manner, and has cleared over fifty thousand dollars from the men whom she has welcomed into the fold.

This headlong pursuit of phantom money, where school-teacher and stenographer and evangelist, in rout, rush madly down the track with twinkling legs, is like the wild world of the comic movies when all are chasing the vanishing baby carriage, as it goes toward the horizon. The village cop sights the speed-wrapped infant, and labors in its wake. Leading citizens pick up the pursuit, and distraught mothers, fearing it to be an offspring, come grieving from afar. Soon the townful is padding on the trail, and still the flashing carriage and its precious freight goes sucking up little particles in its whirl, and extends the distance between its easy lead and the puffing community. All of them, from postmaster to preacher, are caught into that glad momentum, till they tumble over the edge together. And the carriage floats off into the purple distance, and comes trembling to rest, with the pink occupant unhurt and cooing.

So it is with the scheme and its suckers. They end in disheveled heaps. It sails along blithely, and emerges intact.

The Uncle of Hip Wong Ting

By Ralph Bergengren

Author of "The Pirate Vote," Etc.

Talking about real estate—and we know of few more persistent topics—what would you think of a man who stuck up a sign on his place announcing "This house for sale *to Chinamen only!*" It happened in so select a community as Village Green, where the commuters prided themselves upon their exclusiveness. There were even more awful things to follow.

ON the shaded veranda of the Village Green Club, where the smell of honeysuckle was sweet to tired business noses, half a dozen members and one guest of that organization lounged in wicker chairs and stared gloomily—except the guest—at a large sign directly opposite

The sign dominated the landscape. While it stood there, it was difficult to realize the sleepy charm of the "village," with its small near-colonial houses, its well-kept lawns, and general air of refined comfort. There is unquestionably in well-to-do American communities a marked prejudice against Chinese neighbors, and Village Green, formerly West Derby, was no exception. Probably there is the same feeling in well-to-do Chinese neighborhoods against American neighbors. And if there was one thing on which Village Green prided itself that thing was exclusiveness. It was essentially a "nice place for nice people." And here in the midst of it, advertising itself immodestly to every passer, painted in giant letters of black on a white boarding that almost hid the lower windows of the house it advertised, stood the statement:

THIS HOUSE FOR SALE CHEAP TO A CHINAMAN.

NO OTHER NEED APPLY.

If the disgraceful notice had been there before the clubhouse was finished, the members would not have put their front veranda on the back of the house. As matters stood, they suffered in spirit, and were getting the habit of not asking anybody down from the city to spend the night.

"The old skeezics who owns that house," Bartley Campbell was explaining to the stranger whom he had to-day rather reluctantly brought down with him, "was one of the original settlers. Ten years ago, this place was mostly run-down farms and abandoned pasture, a kind of vermiform appendix to Derby. There were a few genuine old houses, pretty good architecture but going to seed like everything else. You'd hardly believe it, but right here, twenty minutes from town by train, was a regular, worn-out, mossback community; and sooner or later somebody was bound to see the possibilities of development for suburban living. This man Warren—'Stevie' Warren, as he's known locally—owned about half the property, and had a reputation that reached all over Derby. Talk about the paper on the wall—why, they used to say that Stevie Warren was so close that he got between the wall and the paper! Anyway, he sold most of his land to the real-estate people who took up the development, and the sale made him independently well to do."

"Rather playing in luck, I should say," commented the stranger.

"You'd have thought so," said another of the club members bitterly. "But not Stevie! After he'd sold, he got it into his head that he ought to have held out for a higher price. Maybe he'd have got it, and maybe he wouldn't. What he did get was a fair price for his land and a perpetual grouch against the people who are now living on it. You see, Stevie isn't just the kind of man that you instinctively take into the bosom of the family, and that hasn't helped the amenities. And then we had to stop him from keeping pigs. We had to go to court about it just as we are now having to about that confounded sign."

"The crowning beauty of it from Stevie's point of view," growled Campbell, "is that no Chinaman would come and live in a place like Village Green, anyway. But there we are! The genesis of that sign is a combination of pig and billboard. Originally, you know, this place was called West Derby. You felt as if you were living in that side of a hat. Well, we managed to get the name changed to Village Green, secured our own post office, and had the little flag station turned into a real railway station with a ticket window in it. Prettiest station on the line, at that. Then we succeeded in getting through the Derby city government a sort of home rule in the matter of billboards, pigs, and such pretty industries. Stevie used to have a billboard just where the sign is now that he let out to patent medicines, circuses, corsets, breakfast foods, and what not. The thing was an eyesore, and we stopped it. The Village Improvement Society made him take it down, and he swore that he'd have a billboard there some day that would stand till the Judgment. When we built this clubhouse, we tried to buy across the street, but Rockefeller wouldn't have been able to get it. And as soon as the clubhouse was opened, up went the pretty little notion that you see opposite."

"Stuck it up there the day of our opening reception," interpolated a stout member, "and sat all day on the fence in his shirt sleeves to see what we thought of it."

"And some of us were fools enough to go across and expostulate," said Campbell regretfully. "I was one of 'em. I told him no Chinaman would come and live in Village Green; and he said he guessed I was about right, but the sign would stay there till one of 'em did."

"A sign like that doesn't come under the definition of a billboard," added the stout member. "But of course it depreciates property. There's a chap I know myself who was thinking of coming here to settle—just the kind of a man we want, too!—but when he was here the other day he saw that sign and everything was off. It makes Village Green look as if it must be a full-fledged, rat-eating Chinese quarter already. It's the first thing anybody sees when he comes up the main street; and I guess it's the one thing we have that everybody who sees it is likely to remember."

"Didn't I see a picture of it the other day in a morning paper?" asked the guest thoughtfully.

"Everybody else in town saw a picture of it in the morning paper!" snapped a thin member. "I guess you're not the exception. But we'll fix him presently. The Improvement Society has applied for an injunction, and of course that brought the camera brigade down here and gave us a little undesirable publicity. That's why we didn't want to take the matter into court, but Warren forced us into it just as he did with the pigs and the billboard. The way we look at it, sir, is that that sign is a public nuisance, put up for the sole purpose of annoying the rest of us and depreciating our property. I thought myself that Judge McPherson would grant an injunction immediately, but he reserved judgment. What the deuce there can be to look into——"

"There's Henderson coming up from the train," said the stout member. He got up and went to the edge of the veranda. Everybody waited and listened as the newcomer turned into the path leading to the clubhouse. "Anything in that paper about the injunc-

tion, Henderson?" called the stout member.

Henderson, a large, ruddy man, somewhat out of breath by his walk, sank down into a wicker chair, and held out the newspaper. He said nothing, but his manner was eloquent and the paper already so folded that a single column stood out prominently. Bartley Campbell captured it, perched himself on the railing, and read feelingly:

ONLY CHINAMEN NEED APPLY.

Any Chinaman wishing a happy suburban home in one of our most delightful communities can now apply to Mr. Stephen Warren, of Village Green.

Mr. Warren is fond of Chinamen, so much so that he maintains a large sign offering to sell a house in that community at a bargain to one of that admired race. Judge McPherson to-day refused the request of the Village Green Improvement Society for an injunction restraining Mr. Warren from a course that seems to peeve many of his less broad-gauge neighbors. In handing down this decision, Judge McPherson pointed out that as the house belongs to Mr. Warren, he is within his legal rights in selling it to any favored nationality. No proof has been forthcoming that Mr. Warren does not intend to sell under the stipulated condition, and the contested sign is therefore legal unless it can be shown that Mr. Warren has erected it without intention to sell, but with intention to annoy and embarrass his neighbors.

Village Green, according to latest report, has accepted the ruling philosophically, and the villagers are now studying Chinese in the hope that when the property is disposed of it will go to a nice Chinaman, who will be a real addition to the social life of a highly cultivated suburban community.

Moy Sing, or, as he was also known, Charlie Duck, was a conscientious reader of the daily newspaper, preferring those with the largest type and the most generous display of pictures. From his first appearance in these United States he had been a versatile and intelligent Chinaman. At the very time when the Sunday school was teaching him to read the newspaper, the Chinese quarter, then smaller and not so used to American ways as it has become since, was paying him tribute for preventing the police from raiding fan-tan games.

Moy, to be sure, did not have all this influence with the police. But by the simple process of telling the police where a game was in progress, and then running ahead and warning the players, he had gained a lucrative reputation as one in the confidence of the local police captain.

This, of course, had not lasted longer than the time it took the police to get on to it; but there remain more ways in which a semi-Americanized Chinaman can blackmail his fellows in the Chinese quarter of an American city than have yet been enumerated. Charlie Duck became expert in all of them; and the more expert he became the less he attracted outside attention. And the simplest way of all, as well as the most difficult for police captains to put their fingers on, is to threaten your victim with violent death unless he postpones extinction by a cash payment—and occasionally prove how serious you are by spectacularly murdering somebody who has ventured to object to the process. This object lesson is often described as a "Tong War"; and, although there may be tong wars independent of blackmail, blackmail usually affords the unseen incentive.

There are good tongs and bad tongs, and Charlie Duck, being a versatile fellow, belonged to both kinds, and was highly respected in each. His nominal occupation was that of a merchant. He imported a great many things, on which he paid duty like a man, and which he sold afterward to large but fairly honest profit. He imported other things on which he paid no duties—principally other Chinamen whom he distributed to a chain of laundries in which he was interested. And with so many activities there were times when Charlie Duck wished he had some place to live where nobody would be likely to come and look for him. Just at present, however, he was a fine specimen, in the public eye, of a good Chinaman. He had even seen his own picture in the newspaper as one of our leading Chinese merchants.

It was a couple of weeks after Judge McPherson had handed down the de-

cision that apparently doomed Village Green to the perpetual observation of Stevie Warren's sign, that two men alighted at the Village Green station and asked their way to Mr. Warren's residence. One of these men was small, brisk, and sharp-featured, wearing a tweed business suit, and the other was a thin, sallow young man, whose black cutaway coat and derby hat did not conceal the fact that he was an unmistakable candidate for Mr. Warren's real estate. Although he could well enough afford to do so, Stevie Warren kept no servant, and himself ushered them into his living room. He had kept the farmhouse in which he had lived when Village Green was still West Derby, and a small farm, without pigs, still occupied his chief attention. He was a dried-up old man with a frequent dry chuckle that had no mirth in it.

"Well, gentlemen," he said, casting a disapproving glance of his pale-blue eye at the coiled pigtail that came into view when the younger of the two removed his hat, "I hope ye haven't been led astray by what ye seen in the papers and come after that house. Because that sign is a kind of little joke of my own on——"

The man who had no pigtail waved aside the remark, and extracted a card from his pocketbook. He handed it to Stevie; the name was unfamiliar, but the card also bore the words, "Attorney at Law" in impressive letters.

"We thought there might be some question of that, Mr. Warren," he remarked affably, "and for that reason my friend, Mr. Hip Wong Ting, asked me to accompany him. He is much in earnest in wishing to acquire a residence in some quiet, respectable neighborhood——"

"I've sold all the property hereabouts that I mean to at present," declared Mr. Warren flatly.

"In that case," said the man with the card carelessly, "I suppose you are willing to take the consequences if the Village Green Improvement Society is informed that you have refused a bona-fide offer of purchase. Unless I am mistaken, the society will be in a position to sue you for having displayed the sign we have just examined on your premises. There is also the little matter of perjury in view of your statement on oath that you intended to sell as soon as you found a purchaser."

Stevie Warren thought rapidly and uncomfortably. What the man said sounded only too plausible. The triumph of the Village Green Improvement Society loomed like a sudden thundercloud.

"I suppose you'll stand for a clause in the papers that the sale is invalid and the land comes back to me ef ye sell arterward to anybody but a Chinaman?" he asked shrewdly.

"Certainly," said the lawyer. "My client is not acting for the local people. You can set your mind easy there, Mr. Warren. This is a straight transaction on our side, bearing in mind, of course, that you offer to sell at what may reasonably be called cheap."

Stephen Warren grunted. "I suppose ye'll give me time to think the business over."

"Wantee house now," said the Chinaman. "Much soon."

"The fact is, Mr. Warren," said the lawyer, "that we shall be sadly disappointed not to close the deal immediately. We should like to make the preliminary agreement at once. Otherwise, being right here in Village Green, there can hardly be a more convenient time than the present to report your refusal to sell this house to us to those of your neighbors who are most interested."

"Ye look to me like a couple of blackmailers," said Mr. Warren acidly. "But I'll sell ye the property."

As a community, Village Green was too polite to be curious, and in the relief that followed the disappearance of Stevie's "billboard" the Village Green Club would have welcomed almost anything opposite. As a matter of fact, a few weeks showed the possibility of having a Chinese neighbor and hardly knowing the difference. If Village Green had neither the desire nor the intention of becoming personally ac-

quainted with Hip Wong Ting, the new neighbor certainly had no desire to force the acquaintance.

He "fixed up" the old house, had the lawn cared for, imported another Chinaman to wait on him and do errands at the grocery; and, without effacing himself, merged rapidly and comfortably into the landscape. He did not start a laundry; nor was he addicted to gongs and firecrackers. In fact, after he had been there a month, Village Green was quite used to him. Male villagers got into the way of passing the time of day and the state of the weather with him on the railway train.

It was surmised that he was some kind of drummer for a Chinese merchant, for he was away at intervals, and, when at home, went daily to some unknown occupation in the Chinese quarter. Occasionally he brought other Chinamen down from the city, and very likely they played fan-tan to while away a Celestial evening; but, as Bartley Campbell remarked, bridge in the club was not essentially different, although somewhat more complicated. The real beauty of Hip Wong Ting, however, was that he had eliminated Stevie's signboard and now attracted so little attention himself that it was only by special favor that strangers in Village Green were let into the secret of his existence. His most frequent visitor was his uncle, an older man, with long, thin mustaches, a frankly revealed pigtail, and a pair of tinted spectacles. Village Green also got quite used to seeing him.

Moy Sing, otherwise Charlie Duck, had disappeared; gone, but anything except forgotten. His face, which looked a good deal like that of a Sioux squaw wearing a derby hat and white collar, was in many newspapers; what was more important and lasting, it was in practically all the police stations from one end of the country to the other. He was "wanted" with an almost impassioned intensity by the police. Railway terminals were being watched for him. Chinese quarters were being gone over as with a fine-toothed comb.

For the inevitable had at last happened. Link by link, the chain was complete, from the four pigtailed victims of the latest tong battle to Charlie Duck placidly reading the morning paper in the back room of the Oriental store, with "Moy Sing, Merchant," in gilt letters on the sign outside of it. Temporarily, at least, the public knew that the Ten Ting Tong, whose representative gunmen had given a wild-West show in Chinatown, was not a thousand-year-old secret society, romantically perpetuating a thousand-year-old feud, but actually a well-organized blackmailing company, of which Charlie Duck was the promoter and chief official.

If the four deceased Chinamen had "come across" sensibly, according to Charlie Duck's notion, there would have been no need of killing them as an object lesson. It was a plain business proposition. And if the fifth, who happened to survive, hadn't had the amazing nerve to report his own situation to the police and ask for protection, the affair would have blown over after making a certain amount of picturesque newspaper copy.

Unfortunately for the future activity of the Ten Ting Tong, a little firsthand information had been enough for a starter; and with that to go on, the whole story had been unraveled. Moy Sing's partners, vice president and treasurer of the delectable society, had been caught and held for trial; nor had they hesitated to try to wriggle out by laying the chief blame on the stocky shoulders of Charlie Duck.

Then the earth had apparently opened for Charlie Duck's benefit. His Joss had been good to him; and as China is directly under us, the possibility was that he had fallen straight through and come up again on his own side. Or, more likely, he had taken advantage of his own expert knowledge of how to get Chinamen into America and successfully smuggled himself out of it.

Two or three times Moy Sing was reported captured wtih convincing details, but each time he turned out to be somebody else, for to the average American eye one Chinaman looks a

good deal like another; and the reward offered for Moy Sing made people optimistic about recognizing him.

Stevie Warren sat in his untidy living room, smoking his short clay pipe and darning a sock when a knock at the door interrupted this combination of pleasure and business. He glanced from the window, saw the neat red wagon of the Derby Sunshine Laundry, and deduced the delivery man on his doorstep.

Being a widower, Stevie patronized the Sunshine Laundry; and, being a practical economist, he patronized it as little as possible. Once a month was about his limit, and now, as he took the bundle, it seemed rather smaller than usual. But as the charge corresponded to the size, he found the necessary tribute to conventional cleanliness, paid the delivery man, and carried his bundle into the living room. There it remained until Stevie needed a collar, which was not until the following Sunday.

Mr. Warren loved a dollar for its own sake, and for the sense of security that it gave him, more than for anything that he could buy with it; in fact, there was almost nothing in life that he really wanted, except his pipe, his chickens, and his quarrel with the community. And he hated Hip Wong Ting with the intensity due to a Chinaman who had not only bought his house and eliminated the sign that had made Village Green unhappy, but had also insisted upon buying the house at what was undoubtedly a bargain.

During the week, Stevie rarely wore a collar; Sunday he celebrated by a shave and a clean shirt; and so nicely did he figure out the laundry proposition that when one laundry came in the next laundry was within one shirt of being ready to go out. The shirt he discarded on Sunday was the last item in the monthly package that the delivery man would call for Monday morning. Thus it followed that when Mr. Warren opened his bundle he cursed diligently.

Colored shirts and white collars did not appeal to him; and there was nothing for it but to upset his program by wearing his present white shirt a day or two longer and putting on one of this other man's collars if he was lucky enough to find that it fit him. The Derby Sunshine Laundry should learn Stevie's opinion of its business management. Meantime, a collar was a collar.

Without looking at the size, Mr. Warren turned to the mirror over the mantel, which reflected the back side of a clock, a match box, a shaving mug, and other miscellany, and essayed disgustedly to button this collar to his week-a-day shirt. But the thing was too big for him. It was sizes too big for him; it lapped over; he might almost have buttoned the front of it at the back of his neck. It was the largest collar Mr. Stephen Warren had ever seen, or imagined, or heard of.

But was it the largest collar he had ever heard of?

Mr. Warren stopped swearing, stared, and examined the collar more closely. The Sunshine Laundry had obliterated the size. It remained, simply, an unbelievably large collar. And where, Mr. Warren asked himself, had he lately heard of somebody who wore an unbelievably large collar?

Whoever he was, wherever he had heard of him, the man must be somewhere within the circle of influence of the Sunshine Laundry; and wherever he was he had Stevie Warren's shirts and collars. Pleasant time he'd have trying to wear 'em!

Mad as he was, Stevie grinned at the thought—and then stopped grinning with the abruptness of a man who remembers. The recollection was vivid: He had seen it in a newspaper two or three weeks ago. The man with such an unusual neck was Charlie Duck—and there was a reward of a thousand dollars for information leading to his discovery! And there was one Chinaman living in Village Green—no one knew that better than Stevie Warren—a small Chinaman—a thin fellow with a thin neck—and an uncle——

With trembling hands, Mr. Warren examined the bundle further. Yes, here were other collars that might fit a man with a small neck; six small collars, and six astoundingly large ones!

Early that evening—in fact, as soon as darkness had settled—a company of men in blue coats cautiously surrounded the house that Stevie Warren had once advertised as for sale only to a Chinaman. And inside that house they found Charlie Duck, whom they very much wanted, together with an unopened bundle of laundry that belonged to Mr. Warren.

But they did not find Hip Wong Ting. He was not there that Sunday. Evidently, his Joss was looking out for him. He was a modest young man, whose connection with Charlie Duck was never satisfactorily determined, and if he grieved when Mr. Duck was electrocuted, he wept far from the scene.

As for the house, it was eventually sold at auction for unpaid taxes. The Village Green Club got it, although Mr. Warren bid until his breaking heart refused to allow him to go fifty cents higher.

THE POET AND THE PLOWMAN

THE red-headed and energetic entomologist for the State of Georgia, E. Lee Worsham, once cherished the ambition to be a poet. In fact, he was a poet. In his early youth, whenever he fell in love, he immediately ran out to the woods and lashed himself into a frenzy of sentiment, finally emerging from the woods and the sentiment with a madrigal that was real music.

At last old man Bob, Lee's father, woke up to the true state of affairs, and with one fell sentence assassinated the poet.

"Lee," he said sternly, "yonder's a plow in that field out there. If you look as good behind it as those two mules do in front of it, you'll be all right. Also, you'll be a solid citizen and make a little money. But no more poems! Plows, not poems, are your job."

That was the beginning of a train of events which resulted in Worsham's becoming one of this country's greatest authorities on wiping out pests that prey upon trees and crops.

THE HUMAN PACK MULE

ROBERT F. ROSE, who was the official reporter on each of William Jennings Bryan's presidential campaign tours, and who is now one of Bryan's confidential men in the state department, has the distinction from Bryan's point of view of being one of the best all-around stenographers in the country. But Rose, who stands well over six feet in his stockings and weighs something over the two hundred and fifty mark, was a whole lot more to Bryan than a good stenographer.

On many occasions Bryan was in imminent danger of physical harm, and but for the timely assistance of Rose would probably have been subject to setbacks in his campaign speechmaking.

Bryan, as is well known, was a great favorite in the West and Southwest, and naturally received great ovations. But there were some towns at which the Bryan party stopped whose voters were so enthusiastic as to make it impossible for the Commoner to reach his hotel in safety.

It was in these tight places that Rose came in handy. Standing on the lower step of Bryan's private car, Rose would give the signal, and, with one leap, Bryan would jump on the big fellow's back. Then, like a shot out of a gun, Rose would force his way through the crowd and land his boss safely in some waiting carriage or automobile, which would convey him to his hotel.

The North Shore Fur Pocket

By Ray Spears

Author of "Meanness in the Mountains," "On the Trap Line," Etc.

A story of dreams and a trapper. Heeding not the menace of his dream, presaging disaster, Jean Valeaux travels the old Indian trail of a hundred years ago and finds the treasure trove of the trapper—a fur pocket. A fur pocket is where there has been no trapper for several seasons, giving the animals opportunity to increase and multiply. Truly a great fur pocket this of Jean's—but it had been a man trap.

JEAN VALEAUX lived in season on Oiseau Bay, at the foot of the burned stone ridge, where he fished summers. For a number of years he had fished there, and in winters he went to live north of the railroad, above Jackfish, where he had established a trap line. Valeaux could see only fish in summer and furs in winter, being a man of but a single thought, but one day he had a dream.

He had been racing at top speed all the morning, lifting his gill nets, and dressing out his lake trout against the coming of the fish tug, and when at last he had swung a dozen one-hundred-and-twenty-five-pound boxes of lake trout on board the tug, he was tired out. When the tug was gone and left him alone, the only man on the fifty miles of Lake Superior coast from Heron Bay to Otter Head Light, he sprawled down on the warm, white sand, and went to sleep—the uneasy, fitful, dreaming sleep of the overtired.

Soon he was dreaming; he saw Indians, but not the thin, peeked, coughing Indians of the railroad towns. They were stalwart men and women, wearing furs, and carrying bows and spears—old-timers. These Indians trooped past him in endless procession, glancing at him scornfully, as he rested there on the sand. What cared those Indians for a pale and weary Frenchman? They laughed at him, because he was shabby, and clad in fishy "seconds" from stores, while they were swathed in soft furs.

The furs caught the man's eye; they were wonderful skins, and every one was a silver-fox skin. In all his days, Jean Valeaux had never caught a silver fox; he had caught lynx, cross foxes, fisher, otter, mink, marten, but never the silver fox, which makes a man rich overnight. Through the agony of hours of Black Horse dreams, Jean Valeaux suffered there on the sand, utterly unable to rescue himself from the scorn of that procession of men, women, and children.

Every laugh cut the proud, little Frenchman to the soul, and he wanted to curse those savages, barbarians, doomed red men, who held themselves so proudly in the presence of a lordly white man. The Indians seemed to know that he was riding the Black Horse—and they laughed a thousand laughs.

At last the procession trailed away into the woods, and the man leaped to his feet with an angry chatter, but he had not been rested by his sleep. He was worn and sweaty with his struggles there on the sand. He could see that he had plunged and scuffled around on his

back. When he looked around, he could see no such woods as the Indians had entered, for the stones were burned and bare where once had stood a fine woods wilderness. There were, of course, no tracks of Indians in the sand.

He could not forget that procession of Indians. They had worn silver-fox skins—hundreds, thousands of those little skins. He wondered what the dream meant—what message had been sent to him.

For weeks he puzzled over it, telling no one what he had dreamed. In some way, it seemed the promise of fortune to him; one does not dream of great wealth in the hands of Indians in vain. Notoriously, for three hundred years, to dream of Indians possessed of goods of great value meant opportunity. So Jean figured and estimated, and when, toward early September, he began to think of taking up his nets and preparing for his winter fur campaign, there was reluctance in his heart against leaving Oiseau Bay—a reluctance that he candidly ascribed to his dream.

He tarried there longer than usual, and, between his fishings, he would stare at that part of the bay where he had seen the Indians entering a wood which no longer existed. His eyes scanned the stones, and the sands, and the shrubs which had grown up there in places since the fire, or fires. For a long time he could see nothing—not the least trace or sign of anything but fire and stones.

But one day, after he had looked for some time with the keen and practiced eye of a woodsman, he discovered something which he had never seen before. It was a shade, a kind of a line, a something that seemed to lead away around the foot of a steep rock face a hundred yards back from the beach of the bay.

"Voila!" Jean Valeaux cried, lifting his shoulders. "It is a trail—an old Indian trail!"

Not the years that had elapsed, nor the fires that had burned, had quite destroyed every vestige of the old Indian trail. Where that long procession of Indians had traveled was a faint depression which could be seen under the shrubs, and in the lean of the very shrubs themselves, as they grew up over the ancient highway. Then Jean knew that he had sensed the trail without ever seeing it before; sensing it had made him dream—if the Indians had not really passed him.

He set out instantly to follow that trail through the old burning. He peeked and he peered, and what with his quickened eyes, his nice sense of probable courses, and his intimate knowledge of signs and traces, he kept to the winding footway, till he came to the edge of the burning a mile from the bay, and there, in the green timber, opened the ancient woods way.

At least a hundred years had elapsed since any one had followed that track, and yet it was as plain to his eye as a cowpath cut through a pasture sod on a rising hillside. There was the depression worn by tribes that had tramped along in single file; there were thin lines on small trees—trees that had lived hundreds of years, stark and starved, dwarf spruces and balsams—and those lines were winter blazes, he knew. The obstructions in this trail were mere fallen trees. Here and there game had used it—moose and caribou.

Just what he had in mind, Jean Valeaux could not have told, if he had any definite idea in mind at all. Probably he was just sensing the lay of the land, with the instinct to put all the things that he could see together in some comprehensive thought or inspiration. Then he came to a flat rock ledge, and on this ledge was a long, narrow stone, all moss grown, and half hidden in leaves, and twigs, and dust from the forest.

There was something about the place that made the old woods trapper pause and look carefully. Something was not quite "natural." It was a place in keeping with the trail, so much so that the man had to stop and examine it, just as a wolf will turn to look at a stone that a bear has turned over, or a moose stumbled against.

The man began to pick away the moss in sheets and clutches. When the moss was all cleaned away, he lifted the stone and looked under it, and against the upright ledge behind he saw a pearl-white sliver, which he picked up with an exclamation of interest and understanding.

"Hunh!" he cackled. "It is the trap of an Indian—and thes is the tooth of a fox—I know eet!"

Then he uttered a low cry, and stared blankly at the ancient stone trap—the Indian deadfall, now a hundred, or two hundred years old, which he had discovered because of that deep sense of woodcraft which compelled him to recognize a stone away from its natural place.

"A fox tooth!" he repeated. "So! It was true—this is the fox land of the Indians? Puh! This is trapped-out land—a man would starve here; from Heron Bay come all the Indians——"

He hesitated, doubting his own thought, and he broke through the crust of a tradition to a present fact. Not in years had the Indians brought in many furs. He knew it, and he had not stopped to try and understand why they had not caught many furs. He had thought that it was because the country back of Oiseau Bay was "trapped out," or, as trappers said, "skinned to death." He wondered if it was not because the Indians could not endure the hardships of the long lines, because of sickness and dissipation, that they did not trap great supplies of fur? As if in answer, he heard a sharp, low squeak, and he knew that it was a mink down by the brook at the foot of the grade.

Now his eyes were opened to the fur trails of that woods. He remembered that he had often seen a partridge fly up with sudden, sharp terror on his quiet approach. Now he realized that that bird had been much hunted by something; it could not be men, and so it must be animals—lynx, fox, fisher, marten, or wolf. There were claw prints on the trees which he now saw—marten, without doubt, and probably fishers, too.

"A fur pocket!" he whispered to himself, looking around in the wilderness for fear that some one might hear him speak, or read his thoughts. "I have never had a fur pocket before!"

The treasure-trove of the trapper is a fur pocket. A fur pocket is where there has been no trapper for several seasons, giving the animals opportunity to increase and multiply. A muskrat pond may become a fur pocket if left alone for a winter, and a mink brook left alone two or three years may yield a hundred mink to the lucky finder of the brook. Here, at the east end of Lake Superior, Jean Valeaux had found a land which the Indians had left, and no white man had found lately, till he saw it on that long-deserted Oiseau Bay trail.

For hundreds of years it had been Indian and white man trapping country, but the white men had been starved out, and now the Indians, dying of tuberculosis, had become too weak to trap it. Perhaps no one had trapped there for five years, for ten years, for a generation. Now that he thought of it, Jean Valeaux could recall not one trapper from Oiseau since the Indian down at Pukaso grew too old to make a long line around Otter Head into Oiseau.

"No wonder pa'tridge is scairt, no wonder the little twigs grow in the rabbit runway, no wonder the trees are all scratched up wit' de marten claws!" Jean muttered. "I have long neglect my opportunity, fishing at Oiseau, and trapping nort' of Jackfish! I make up for him!"

All that day he circled back in the timber, and came down to Oiseau in the dusk. In the morning he ran his exploring miles farther into the timber, up two brooks there, and cutting across to a headwaters of Twin Falls River. Always he found the same story of a fur pocket written in the moss, in the streamside sands, on the tree bark, on the stones and logs. Wherever he looked, he found that through that thousands of square miles of dark-evergreen land, fur was roaming in unimaginable abundance.

Trappers had been there of old. He

crossed their long-abandoned trails repeatedly; there were Indian trails, unblazed, but worn deep by generations of Indians—now dead, or dying. There were some old white-man trails, blazed on the trees, and he found one trap at one set, which had been put in a notch in a tree, above the snow line, for a marten. The wood fibers had grown up around and through this trap, and now it was part of the tree trunk, a bit of spring and jaw showing out of the bark—mute testimony of a trapper who never returned.

The following morning, Jean pulled his nets and set them again, and shipped the fish in by the tug. Not a word did he tell any man of his intentions for the coming winter. In due course, the fishing season would end for him—later than usual this year. He spent his extra days blazing and cutting out trap lines into the wilderness. He set up bottles of fish for scent bait; he killed a moose and smoked the meat, and back in the woods he built bark cabins for line camps.

In a month, when the season at last compelled him to give up summer work for winter work, he came aboard the fish tug and returned to the railroad, as if to go north as usual for the winter. He bought a great supply of new traps, jumps and number twos, and wolf traps, and fox traps. He stowed them in two barrels, with equipment of extra axes and ammunition, garments, and the like. His supply of food he brought down to his cabin between the lake and railroad, and at last he had a full equipment for the winter season.

One night he disappeared. He told no one where he was going No one knew what were his intentions. They knew that he had not gone north over the Long Lake Road. If some guessed that he had returned to Oiseau, they did not care to go the hundred miles of bleak shore in October to prove their guess. Jean Valeaux's little sailboat was gone—people knew that; and his cabin was locked up.

So Jean Valeaux returned to Oiseau, and no one in all the world knew where he was. Few knew anything about Jean Valeaux, anyhow. He might be rich or poor; if he never spent any money that his acquaintances knew about, except for supplies and equipment, those things were costly, and might eat up the catch of a season.

Jean returned to Oiseau, and ran his sailboat through the thin ice up the mouth of the little brook. There he windlassed the boat up an ancient beach, and carried the suppies to the new cabin which he had built in a little island of balsam, which the fire had left in that sea of granite waves.

Jean could not waste time now. It was October, and all the traps must be set and baited, more winter wood must be cut, and supplies toted to the line camps before the snow came. He toiled and sweated under the back loads. He carried a dozen eighty-pound packs of steel traps and food from ten to thirty miles back into the wilderness, and when he ran through, putting down the set traps, covered with a little moss at the baited cubby cabins, he was well tired out. Running a new line is bitter toil, compared to keeping up an old one, but Jean Valeaux felt that he had done well. Never had he dreamed of seeing such a land of fur as he now had for his very own. Not one man had stepped into that thousands of square miles of fur pocket—so it seemed to the acute senses of the half-animal woodsman.

When all his traps were set, he turned back to the first line, to see what his winter's luck would be. The fur was ravenous. He found four marten in the first four traps—sixty dollars. Then he found a twenty-five-dollar lynx. The next trap was not touched, but the next one held a fisher. That first day he found one hundred and forty-five dollars' worth of fur to confirm his judgment that this was the greatest fur pocket of which he had ever heard tell He rejoiced in the necessity that compelled him to split down a dry spruce to hew and shave out a dozen stretchers for fur.

One thing the trapper does not supply ahead is stretchers, lest his forehandedness bring on him the scorn of the gods of bad luck. In every one of

the new camps at the end of a day's tramp on the line, Jean Valeaux had to cut stretcher wood and work till midnight stretching his fur.

He was dead tired when he returned to his main cabin, for two days of rest. No man could keep going every day over such a line through such a country, and he now gave way to the demand of muscle and bone for rest. He fixed up his furs that first night back home, and then turned in to sleep. Instead of awakening before dawn, he slept till noon, for he had not made up his mind to stir out early. After noon, he fished a little for brook trout, and puttered around his camp. When it came night again, he turned in to sleep, his every bone and muscle aching, for he had toiled unimaginably, to get his lines to rights.

That night he dreamed of Indians again. His camp was beside the ancient trail. He could see along the old trail a long ways, for he had trimmed out some of the brush, and it was part of his fur-pocket line. He could now see in his dream to the stone trap which had first emphasized in his mind the fact that this was a trappers' ancient fur land. He saw an Indian come down to the stone, stepping eagerly along. The Indian lifted the stone, and then let it fall unhappily. In the red man's face Jean Valeaux discovered a look which he had not seen before—disappointment, suffering, hunger, waning hope.

The Indian came on, and behind him came another Indian, who lifted the stone, let it fall, and staggered along. So they came, one after another. They came near enough for Jean, the dreamer, to see that they were raggedly clad, and thin, and weary—hunger smitten. Yet they were the same Indians whom he had seen going into that wonderland, wearing the pelts of silver foxes for everyday clothes. They were toil and trail-worn. If he lived to be a hundred years old, Jean Valeaux would never again see an Indian without remembering that dream procession of Indians coming out on the ancient tribal trail.

It seemed to Jean Valeaux as if he watched that procession of Indians all night. They came down to Oiseau Bay, down the beach, and took their canoes to trip along the icy lake shore to Heron Bay, to Port Coldwell—Jean could not see them beyond the entrance of the Oiseau Bay headland. They went away, and the trapper felt that they would never again return to that fur country.

Jean thought about the dream all the following day. What could it mean? He could not guess what this dream, coupled with his previous dream, meant. The Indians had entered the fur pocket, happy, contented, and prosperous, and now they left it poverty-stricken.

All the next trip over the line, Jean was haunted by the dreams. Asleep or awake, he thought about them, or dreamed about them. The furs that he caught were in wonderful numbers—never had he caught so many furs as now. If it had not been for the single file of prosperous Indians, followed by the procession of starved and stricken Indians, he would have been surfeited with Gallic ecstasy.

The pang of the fur pocket afflicted him. He had never been lonesome in the winter-trapping land before. Now he began to lose sleep, thinking about the Indians, and wishing that he could interpret the dream. The bay froze over, and the fleet ice was driven in by thunderous waves heaved up at the brim of the leaden lake. Jean began to think of the little settlement of Jackfish, of "The Soo," of that densely populated "Lower Country," Lake Ontario, and the beckoning St. Lawrence. He had long been thinking that some time he would be able to go down into that country, to live, and be at rest and peace.

"Voila!" he muttered, looking about his little main cabin, and through the one pane of glass on his whole trap line at the snow that filled in among the ditched and gouged granite ledges of the burning beyond the sheltering balsams. "In the timber *les sauvages* grew ever poorer—and me?"

He tried to shake the thought from him. He began to brood over it. Then he dug down into one corner of the

cabin, and lugged up a large stone jug, which he uncorked and emptied on the split-board table before him. There were quills of bills and ringing gold sovereigns—American and Canadian gold, too.

After a time he flung the money back into its cache, and left the cabin impatiently, to run a short trap line which he had neglected because of his dreams and worries. He found in one trap a black fox—a thousand-dollar fox. He knew then that his winter would be the greatest winter of all his life of trapping and money-making. On his line there might be a dozen black or silver foxes—he could not tell. He had seen many fox tracks—they might be any kind of foxes, worthless Samsons, or priceless blacks.

If he had not dreamed! His rest period over, he started away on the long line again. There was snow on the ground, several inches. Marten, mink, fisher, lynx, fox tracked it up in all directions, but there were wolf tracks, too. No track became more ominous than that ancient Indian trail, however. As he tramped along, Jean Valeaux began to think that something, or some one, was following him. He was wide awake, and it was a sunny day, but from the time he left the edge of the burning, and entered the aged wilderness, he looked back again and again, to see what or who was following him, watching him pick up the fur that he found in his traps.

Then he came to the stone trap of the Indian who had been dead at least a hundred years. He could see the shape of the stone under the thin blanket of snow. Involuntarily he circled around the stone, fearful of approaching it. He was afraid now. He heard sounds which he could not interpret, good woodsman that he was. He looked fearfully at the treetops, wondering if some tree might not fall on him—a thought he had hardly ever had before. Out of the corner of his eyes, he saw things fleeting among the trees, and when he turned quickly to look, he could see nothing at all.

"I should go—I should make my escape!" he thought to himself. "Something is wrong with these woods. It is the great fur pocket—but—but it is—it has been a mantrap!"

Winter was set in, when he thought of the long, hard land trail which he must make to find his way back to the railroad; he first decided that he would trap the winter through, and then, as the loneliness assailed him, he wondered if it would not be better to go in full flight rather than face the wintry wilderness. It seemed to him as if the very spirit of trapping had changed—as, indeed, it had, for him. If he only had not had those dreams!

The fur was plentiful, more than he had dreamed. He had placed his traps fortunately. In the ridge gaps, along the foot of rock ledges, in the stream gorges, on the runways—he had seen or felt that these places were the crossing places of the fur bearers, and he had guessed right, known right, nine times out of ten. He hung up in the cold drying shacks of each line camp, bundles of fur each night. There were small, almost black mink; there were many stone-gray marten; there were great fishers; there were red and cross foxes; in each camp he hung up a black or silver fox. With all that fur coming in, he could not afford to listen to his terror, he could not give way to the menace of panic in those wildernesses.

He had roamed far, and seen many kinds of timber, but somehow these woods and burns, these deserted trapper trails, and abandoned Indian highways of that fur pocket were different. The spirit of the deep, cold Lake Superior and the hate of the hard, brute granite wore down the man's joy over his good fortune. He knew that he was giving too much for the profit he would make, but he could not let go of a trap line that gave him dark mink, and gray martens, and black foxes. He was making too much—but he told himself that he would never come back to that land again, once he was clear of it. He would not need to, with the money that he was making, and the money that he had buried.

Mid-December came, and there was a financial inducement for his going to the railroad. If he went then, he would get ante-London sales prices for his furs. He made himself a sledge, and loaded it down with the furs that he had caught, and then he started for the settlement of Heron Bay. It was not many miles—hardly a three-day journey. It would mean four thousand dollars to him, perhaps five thousand dollars, depending on the market. If the fur market had gone up as much as it had in late years, it would be all of five thousand dollars.

He pulled and lugged through the snow at his sledge, working like a sledge-dog team. He was not disappointed in the time that it took him to make the miles; he went fast enough, but it made him very tired. He almost wished that he had waited till spring, to go out with the sailboat. However, it was worth a thousand dollars to work six days, toiling.

One ridge was between him and Heron Bay settlement—the Pic River Mission, when something broke in his breast. It did not hurt him. He turned to look back at the sledge after he felt that sudden giving away of something. It was a fine, big sledge load, indeed. No other trapper had had so much at one time—for the December sales.

As he looked at the sledge, with its bales of furs, all lashed down as a trapper knows how, covered with a caribou skin, the rawhide rope fell from his hand, and he sat down suddenly, all the strength gone from his knees, from his elbows, from his very fingers. He sat on a flat stone, leaning against a canoe-birch tree, astonishment filling him, but his fears were all gone now. All the strength was gone from him, when his eyes gazed at the sledge load. He thought to turn his head, but there was no strength in his neck. At last, he tried to shut his eyes and open them, but they came only halfway open, fluttering. What he knew then could only be guessed.

A long while after a thin, peaked Indian happened that way, and he looked at that shape of a man leaning against a tree, but he did not go near it. It was of no use. Other Indians came by, shuffling, ill-clad, sickly Indians. They amounted to a long procession, in the course of time. Doubtless, Jean Valeaux saw them as he had dreamed of seeing them, and doubtless he now understood the spirit of that vast fur pocket back from Oiseau Bay, around by Pukaso, and down toward Point Isacor. Dark mink and gray marten, fishers and lynx, black and silver foxes—the list of fur is long.

The trouble is the Dreams—the dream of the fox-clad Indians going in, all strong, and brave, and scornful, and the dream of the Indians who come out, all tattered, and weak, and peaked.

A GLITTERING OFFER

YOUR Uncle Sam is a loose and liberal spender. In ladling out salaries, he is wildly extravagant. You read it in the newspapers all the time. It must be true. He is the dizziest, craziest, maddest spender the world ever saw. It's a soft snap to work for the government.

But listen!——

In one of its announcements regarding the civil service, the commission in charge of seeing that people qualify for government jobs set forth that a salary of one thousand dollars was offered for a "competent stenographer." This sounded good. The commission said it wanted a "stenographer—botanical translator," and it continued:

It is desired to secure the services of a competent stenographer and typewriter who has a knowledge of German and one other foreign language, either French, Italian, or Latin, and who has had some experience in scientific work, preferably either in botany, pathology, or agriculture.

The Fight on Standing Stone

By Francis Lynde

Author of "The Taming of Red Butte Western," "Scientific Sprague," Etc.

SYNOPSIS OF THE OPENING CHAPTERS

Into the Standing Stone Cañon, where Stannard, a young and enthusiastic engineer is pushing to completion a railroad cut-off, comes a private-car party upon a bear hunt in the Buckskin Mountains. Right along, a rival railroad has been laying tracks to beat Stannard to his goal, and had caused him many delays in work and defection among his men. This hunting party caps the troubles, for the private-car people are headed by Silas Westervelt, a millionaire stockholder in both the railroads now fighting for right of way. One of the picnickers is Anitra Westervelt, niece of the magnate, and with whom Stannard fell in love hopelessly the year before. The engineer looks upon the sport-seeking visitors as invaders. And soon he senses that Banker Westervelt is in the field for bigger game than bears—in fact to persuade Stannard to report unfavorably of his project to President Merriam, and advise ending activities on the cut-off. A series of "accidents" follow that show Stannard his enemies of the other railroad job are determined to spoil his chances of success. Greer, their chief engineer, is using every underhand method, and under cover of night visits Westervelt to confer confidentially with him.

CHAPTER X.

MAHOMET WESTERVELT.

A TELEPHONED report from Pearson of another slump in the east-end tunnel working—this time happily without loss of life or limb—got Stannard out of bed in the graying dawn of the morning following the fight with Greer's pioneers, and sent him in hot haste up the mountain to the scene of the fresh disaster.

The black-bearded assistant met his chief in the clay cutting of the tunnel approach. He had already organized his force for the removal of the débris, and had called in as many of Patterson's graders as could be used in the limited working space.

"It's a bad one this time," was Pearson's confirmation of the wired report. "Fifty feet of the timbering is gone, and what's left of the roof is so rotten that I don't believe anything but steel or concrete will hold it."

"Some more premature shot firing?" Stannard queried.

"No; not this time. It was a shake-down right on the heels of a blast in the heading. I'd been watching it, and I ordered the men all the way out before the heading shots were fired. As it happened, it wouldn't have hurt anybody. The slump is three or four hundred feet this side of the farthest point of the present run-back. What we need is concrete."

Stannard nodded.

"One more kick to keep us hustling. Everything asks for the rushing of this loop track. We can't get the concreting material until we have a track, and we can't have the track until we get the grade. I'd plant men three feet apart all the way up the ten miles if I could get them; but I simply can't get them, Bartley. They're not to be had for love or money. Worse than that, we can't keep the gangs full from day to day."

"I know," agreed the tunnel engineer. "They quit us and chase over to Greer's camps. Patterson told me yesterday he was losing pick-and-shovel men out of his squads in bunches of five and ten at a crack. We can't stand for that, can we?"

The young chief frowned impatiently.

"There's only one way to square an account of that kind; to give the other fellow a dose of his own medicine. I

don't like to do it; I've never done it yet on any job where I had the say-so, and I don't want to begin now."

Pearson's smile was sour. "A man has no business to have a conscience in these days, Stannard. I used to have one, but I wrapped it up in cotton wool and put it away before I came out here. In this day and generation you've got to reach out and take what you want wherever you can find it. If you don't, the other fellow will."

"I hate to believe that, Bartley. It makes pirates of us all, and what isn't good for the swarm isn't good for the bee. There oughtn't to be any reason why a man should be honest in his personal relations and a buccaneer and a highbinder in business. Let's go inside and see just how bad a jolt we've got this time."

When the inspection was concluded, the sun was still no more than half an hour high above the Yellow Desert, stretching away in the eastward vista between the Dogtooth and Rock Face. Pearson walked with his chief out to the mouth of the clay cutting to the point where the path to the valley began. From the high viewpoint the Travois lay like a map in the foreground, with the camp buildings, the yard tracks, and the long strings of material cars delicately minimized by the distance.

Over on the river spur the Westervelt private Pullman was measurably isolated. A stir at the platform end of the car, a dotting of saddle horses, and the still more unusual spectacle of two buckboard teams in a railroad yard, advertised the outsetting of the bear hunters. Pearson pointed with a rocking motion of his thumb.

"So the city folks are sure enough going to beard the savage honey eater in his den, are they?" he said.

"They are going picknicking in the hills at the back of Crumley's upper ranch," Stannard qualified. "Possibly the Englishman and one or two of the others still believe in the bears."

"Are they all going?" inquired the tunnel driver.

"I suppose not. Mrs. Grantham, the chaperon, will hardly care to camp out, and I fancy nothing is farther from Mr. Westervelt's purpose."

Pearson turned short upon his superior. "What's he here for, Stannard?"

Stannard shook his head. "I wish I knew definitely. It would simplify matters somewhat."

The black-whiskered one grunted. "I don't want to know any more about it than you want to tell me," he said gruffly.

"There isn't anything to tell—not as yet. From two or three sources I have been given to understand that Mr. Westervelt's real object in coming to the Travois is not pleasure—it's business; some business connected with the railroad."

"That means the Wall Street end of some business connected with the railroad, I take it," was Pearson's curt comment.

"Naturally. It's a pretty safe bet that Mr. Westervelt's interest in any corporation with which he is associated concerns itself altogether with speculative values."

"That has been the curse of Western railroading ever since I've known anything about it, Clay," growled the tunnel engineer. "I put in ten years on one transcontinental line, and during that time there were three changes of control, all in Wall Street, and all for the purpose of making money out of the stock speculations. The physical thing itself—the railroad that was carrying the passengers and freight, and earning the money—was a mere pawn in the game; the carcass that was picked and picked again until there was nothing left but the bare bones."

"I know," Stannard agreed. "It's one part of the game, and it's lucky for us that we've got a man like Mr. Merriam on our side in the G. L. & P."

Pearson was wagging his head dubiously. "You never can tell," he rejoined. "It's the money that talks, and the big money is always in the dickering and buying and selling. The men at the top expect us to be loyal to them and to the railroad as a railroad. But they reserve the right to be loyal only

to their own bank accounts. I don't blame 'em. If anybody should show me how to make a pot of money suddenly, I reckon I'd jump at the chance —and so would you."

"Would I?" said Stannard; and he was asking himself the same question in many forms as he strode down the mountain and across the valley, pointing for the mess shack and the breakfast which he had missed.

It was after he had taken his seat in solitary state at the head of a table long since deserted by the other members of the staff that Eddie Brant came in with a telegram.

"It's marked 'rush,' but I didn't think you'd want me to go chasing out on the hill after you," said the draftsman.

Stannard said "No," and after Brant had gone he opened the freshly sealed envelope. The telegram was from New York, and it was signed by the president.

Rumors in circulation here that tunnel costs are likely to double on your estimates and necessitate another bond issue. Wire fully present condition of work, and authoritative denial of rumor over your signature. Mr. Westervelt is somewhere in your neighborhood with a hunting party. If you can reach him, it might be well for you to confer with him.

Stannard read the message twice, and was going thoughtfully over it for the third time when Vallory strolled in, with the inevitable cigarette held loosely between his thin lips.

"Breakfasting at eight o'clock?—and you call yourself a workingman! I am astonished!" said the lounger in mock reproach.

Stannard folded the portentous telegram and slipped it into his pocket.

"Overlook it this time, and we won't let it occur again," he laughed; and then: "Draw up a stool and have a cup of camp coffee with me, won't you?"

"Not in a thousand years!" protested the clubman. "There are two things that I'm mighty careful of—my reputation and my digestion. Besides, I breakfasted ages ago. The bear hunters got away at a most ungodly hour, and of course I had to get up and see them do it. By the way, is that a black eye you're sporting, or is it merely a gentle hint that the plumbing in the camp bathroom is out of order?"

"Call it the bathroom," said Stannard, with his face in his plate; and then, with a sudden return to straightforwardness: "No, you needn't do that, either. You named it right in the beginning. I had a little disagreement with a fellow last night, and was awkward enough to let him hit me."

"Was that after I left you?" Vallory queried.

"Yes; a little while after. Does it show up much?"

"No; I was only joshing you. Forget it, and let's talk about something else. Are those crazy people of ours going to get any bears out in the foothills?"

"They'll probably get plenty of hunting," was the qualified rejoinder. "Did they all go?"

Vallory laughed. "I'm not quite the sole survivor; Mrs. Grantham and Uncle Silas are still with me. And that reminds me; I've come an errand, as Montjoy would say. Westervelt wants to see you."

"Did he send you after me?" Stannard inquired shortly.

"Oh, not exactly that. He said if I happened to run across you I was to ask you to drop around. It wasn't an order, if that's what you mean."

"That is exactly what I meant," answered the Missourian, absently double-sweetening his coffee. Then he added: "I've a good bit of office work to do this morning, and if you'll take my excuses to Mr. Westervelt I'll be much obliged."

Vallory was tilting his three-legged stool against the wall of the shack and regarding the construction chief through half-closed eyelids.

"In other words," he said, half jocularly, "you'd cut off your nose to spite your face. Is that it?"

"I don't know why you should say that."

"I say it because you are so evidently prejudiced against a man whose only crime, so far as I can see, is the harboring of a rather kindly feeling for

you. If I were in your place, Clay, and a man of Westervelt's money and influence showed a disposition to want to take care of me——"

"Once more, Austin, I don't know what you're talking about," said the breakfaster, firmly determined, in the light of this new day, resolutely to ignore the conversation of the night before.

Vallory shot a new element into the argument in a single shrewd question: "Don't you want to hold onto your job?"

"Naturally."

"Then take a fool's advice and go and have a talk with Uncle Silas. Do more than that—tell him anything he may want to know. I'm advising you as I'd advise myself."

Stannard pushed his stool back from the trestle-board table and squared his shoulders against the wall.

"You are beating the bushes again, as you did last night," he said, breaking his own resolution. "Come out flat-footed and say what you mean. What does Mr. Westervelt want of me?"

"He doesn't want to throw his niece at your head, if that's what you're afraid of," said the clubman, with a smile that was more than half a leer. Then, more placably: "It's business—straight business, Clay; and you can climb in or stay out, just as you please; it won't make the slightest difference in the world to anybody but yourself. Blame me, if you feel like it. I was the one who suggested that you might be a man of sense, and not a hypersensitive ass."

"Then you are on the inside now, are you? You know you intimated last night that you weren't—that you were merely intending to be."

"I'm inside far enough to smell easy money, and to know that some of it will come your way if you don't insist upon turning it down. That's as far as I can go. If you don't see fit to confer with one of the biggest individual stockholders in your own company when he requests it, it's very pointedly your own affair."

Stannard scowled up at the ceiling, which was not a ceiling, but only the under side of the corrugated-iron roofing of the mess shack. Stubbornness was one of his failings, though those who set him hard tasks were wont to call it his chief virtue, since it was the quality which drove him through to accomplishment when other men were beaten back and crowded to the wall.

"I told you the plain truth a minute or so ago, Vallory. I have a bunch of estimates to check up and get off on the first train of empties that goes out to Yellow Medicine. Estimates mean payroll money, and if that isn't forthcoming——"

Vallory was laughing again—a slow laugh that trickled from the thin lips in little ripples of exhaled cigarette smoke.

"Perhaps Westervelt will be willing to break even with you, and wait until your precious estimates are checked," he suggested; and with that he got up and lounged out, as one who, having had a boresome duty to perform, has performed it to his own complete and entire satisfaction.

Stannard set it down as one of the curious lapses to which the sanest mind is occasionally subject that he had not remembered once, during the talk with Vallory, the wording of the president's telegram; this though he had been reading it thoughtfully for the third time when the clubman came in. In the light of the president's suggestion that he should find Silas Westervelt and confer with him, his late refusal to walk across the tracks to the *Egeria* became at once absurd and quite indefensible. None the less, he made one more small concession to the invincible obstinacy. An hour or so of delay could make little difference; and so determining, he went to his office in the headquarters cabin, stripped off his coat, and plunged doggedly into the estimate checking.

An hour later he had occasion to send Eddie Brant out to the contractors' office with one of the estimate sheets to have some corrections made. The draftsman had been gone less than a minute when the doorway was darkened by an ample figure in tailor-made

tweeds, and Stannard looked up to find the banker-director taking in the details of the scantily furnished workroom in an all-inclusive glance of the calculating eyes. Since the mountain would not go to Mahomet, Mahomet had come to the mountain.

CHAPTER XI.

PRO AND CON.

Stannard tried to make himself believe it was only decent respect for a man older than himself, and no sort of ubiquitous kotowing to the man's wealth and position, that made him get up and offer Silas Westervelt the only chair. The banker thanked him and sat down; and the engineer braced himself for another bucketing of the cold displeasure which had greeted him on that first-evening visit to the *Egeria*.

Oddly enough, the coldness did not materialize. On the contrary, the great man sniffed the odor of the black pipe which Stannard had just put aside, and said, almost genially: "Mr. Stannard, you can't imagine how vividly the smell of that pipe brings back the old undergraduate days at Yale. We didn't smoke briers in my time; we stuck to the good old long-stemmed clays. You don't happen to have a clay pipe and a bit of dry tobacco, do you?"

Half doubting the evidence of his own senses, Stannard excused himself, and went across to the mess bunk room to rummage in Pearson's kit box. The tunnel driver smoked a clay pipe sometimes in the evenings, and since it was his fad not to use one for more than a single sitting, he usually kept a supply of them in his box. With his search rewarded, the young chief went back to the workroom, and tendered the stolen pipe and a confiscated buckskin sack of Virginia leaf tobacco. Whereupon the magnate stuffed and lighted the clay, and sat back to enjoy what was doubtless the severest infraction of habit he had permitted himself in many years.

"Fill up and join me, Mr. Stannard," he said, after a whiff or two.

Stannard, speechless as yet, obeyed the order in silence. With his pipe alight, he perched himself upon Brant's drawing stool. Then the banker began to talk, quite humanly, and between leisurely puffs at the clay pipe.

"A year ago last summer we were on opposite sides of a discussion, Mr. Stannard. You were enthusiastic over an engineering project which owed itself largely, if not wholly, to your own professional genius; while I, and some other members of the committee, took the longer look ahead, and saw the possible difficulties. Do I state it fairly?"

"Quite fairly," said Stannard, still wondering.

"Very good. Those financial difficulties have arisen. Your tunnel costs are exceeding your estimates week by week. Isn't that true?"

"Unfortunately, it is true. But if you have been reading my detailed reports to the executive committee, you will know that the increased costs are due to conditions which could not possibly be foreseen."

Mr. Westervelt waved the explanation aside with a gesture of the pipe-nursing hand. "I am not criticizing, Mr. Stannard—far from it. I am merely stating the fact. Tell me frankly: Do you see any likelihood of getting the tunnel through without another bond issue?"

"There would be if the Overland Northern would keep hands off," Stannard shot back.

"You are intimating that there have been interferences?"

"Many small ones, and there is a threat of a still bigger one. With the Overland camps only a few miles away, we can't keep our laborers from drifting, and though I can't prove it, I am morally certain that Greer, the O. N. chief of construction, is overbidding us on wages, and has been sending us trouble makers—men who have signed on with us for the sole purpose of fomenting strikes and promoting accidents."

"H'm!" said the banker. "That is a pretty serious charge, isn't it?"

"I'm not making it as a charge, be-

cause, as I say, I can't prove it; but the fact remains."

"You spoke of a threat which might have still more serious consequences than these labor troubles. Do you refer to a possible conflict over the right of way in Standing Stone Cañon?"

"That is what I meant—yes. Unless we can beat him to it, Greer will make it cost us a mint of money. Without the loop line to use as a material track, we shall be obliged to abandon the tunnel work for the winter, after the snows come. The abandonment is not to be thought of. We've to keep on boring, putting in the sustaining arch as we go, or we won't have any tunnel left. I've treated these matters very fully in my reports, as you have doubtless seen."

Mr. Westervelt was nodding slowly.

"If the conservative few of us were disposed to be critical, Mr. Stannard, we might say that you, or circumstances, have gotten us into a pretty bad box. But we don't say anything of the kind. We know that the present conditions couldn't possibly have been foreseen, as you say, and we are anxious now only to save the G. L. & P. Company from disaster. You will probably say that this comparatively modest shortening project of yours is a small thing to precipitate a crisis in the affairs of a great transcontinental railway. But the stock market is a law unto itself, and the smallest adverse condition, a mere flutter, will sometimes serve to break the market for the strongest corporation."

"I'm following you," said Stannard soberly. "I've lost a good many nights' sleep over this thing, I can assure you Since we are talking as man to man, I may say that I had a telegram from Mr. Merriam this morning. He says that reports of our bad luck have already reached the Street, and asks me to deny them."

The banker-director was shaking his head rather sadly when he said: "Merriam is one of the finest fellows in the world, but he is such a confirmed optimist that he is very hard to convince at times. Have you sent the denial?"

"No; and, in the face of the facts, I don't quite see how I can, Mr. Westervelt. Do you?"

"Most certainly not. You owe it to yourself, and to the company, to take a very different course. Let me ask you something: Mr. Merriam has been your friend all along, as we all know: How far would you go in an effort to save him and his associates on the board and in the executive committee from a very serious loss—in money and in prestige?"

Stannard took time to think about it, and a picture of the bluff, jovial, large-hearted Middle-Western millionaire who had fought his way to the front in the great market place of the Street, generously dragging his friends up with him, struck itself out clearly in the mental vista. In his patient struggle to get recognition for the short-cut plan, President Merriam was the man who had reached down to him, lifting him out of the tangle of official disinterest and cold-shoulderings, and giving him his chance to plead his cause before the securities committee.

For the man who had thus befriended him, and who had finally become his strongest partisan and backer, Stannard felt that he would go to any length. Westervelt sat back in his chair and smoked quietly, with the mask of false geniality fitting like a second skin over the dry-desert features, and veiling the calculating eyes. How was Stannard to know that the way of the market place sometimes breeds enmities bitter and lasting, or that there was a score reaching backward to a loss of many millions lying between John P. Merriam and the tweeded gentleman who was calmly smoking the long-stemmed pipe raided from Pearson's kit box?

"Mr. Merriam has been my friend, as you say," was the beginning of Stannard's deferred answer. "I'm little more than a number on the G. L. & P. pay rolls, Mr. Westervelt; but if there is anything I can do to get between Mr. Merriam and this loss you speak of, I'm more than ready."

"It may cost you something temporarily at least," warned the great man, adding: "Professionally, I mean. But

let us begin at the beginning. What reply are you going to make to Merriam's telegram?"

Stannard confessed his helplessness in so many words: "To tell the truth, I don't know just what to say to Mr. Merriam."

The high-water smile came and sat upon the impassive face of the great capitalist.

"In other words, you are a railroad builder, and not a promoter. I consistently opposed the financing of this cut-off project, as you know; the time was not ripe for it. The event is proving that my judgment was right. We are confronting a crisis which is far more serious than Merriam and his crowd are willing to concede. Do you follow me, Mr. Stannard?"

"I'm trying to," said the Missourian, passing his hand over his brow to shut out the gaze of the stone-gray eyes which seemed to be half hypnotizing him.

"Let me tell you what will happen a little later on. When these reports of our failure get themselves properly exaggerated, our stock will be hammered down in the open market, and the Merriam management will be discredited. There are some of us who are not particularly concerned about what may become of the present management, but we are very pointedly concerned about the safety of our own investment. As for yourself, you have no invested money to lose, but you don't want to see Merriam get the worst of it. Isn't that your position?"

Stannard fought against the hypnotic effect of the cold eyes as the hard-rock man caught under the falling tunnel roof had fought for breath. Difficulties there had been from the outset, but if any one had tried to tell him in any former stage of them that his cherished project was not only hopeless, but a menace to the financial integrity of the G. L. & P. Company, he would have refused to listen. Now, however, he was constrained to listen.

"Are you trying to tell me that I ought to be the scapegoat, Mr. Westervelt?" he asked, after a time.

Again the high-water smile came and went.

"I wouldn't put it quite as strong as that," was the even-toned reply; "but I do think you owe it to Merriam, and to the company, to come to the rescue. You are the one man who can do it most easily and effectively, because Merriam would take your word as an engineer against the sworn testimony of a board of experts. If the G. L. & P. stockholders could know the situation as you and I know it, a vote to drop this project right where it is would be all but unanimous. Don't you agree with me?"

"You make it look that way, though I'll be frank enough to say that it hasn't looked that way to me up to this morning. If the company will back me I can put that tunnel through in spite of fate!"

"I admire your courage, Mr. Stannard," said the magnate, in a fresh access of kindliness. "You are a born fighter. But you see, it isn't altogether a matter of courage, or of the company backing you. Five points' decline in G. L. & P. stock would easily swallow the earnings, or the savings, of this short-line cut-off of yours for the next fifty years to come. It's a wise man who knows when to let go, and our friend Merriam is not gifted with that particular kind of wisdom."

"But what can I do—more than I have done?" pleaded the beleaguered young technician. "I haven't been hiding anything from our people. My reports to New York have been as exactly truthful as I have known how to make them."

"Ah, yes; but you will admit that your point of view has been like Merriam's—enthusiastically optimistic. You have encountered difficulties, but you have never admitted for a moment that they might in the end prove insurmountable. Pardon me—let me finish, if you please. I'm not criticizing your optimism; it is a fine thing in a young man. But there are crises, like the present, when the older and cooler heads are needed. You stand at the parting of the ways, Mr. Stannard. If you are

the narrow technician, seeing success only in pushing your project to completion at any and all costs, well and good -we shall have to suffer. But if you are broad enough to consider the ultimate good of all concerned——"

"One moment," Stannard interposed, striving once more to reassert himself. "You are putting this up to me as if I were the whole thing."

"You are, in a sense," was the calm rejoinder. "As I have said, you are the one man who can convince the Merriam management of the inadvisability of continuing this losing fight against nature in Buckskin Mountain."

Stannard gasped, and his heart skipped a beat.

"You mean—you mean that we ought to lie down on the job?—throw up our hands after we've spent millions on a betterment that will be absolutely worthless unless we finish it?" he stammered.

Again the banker-director waved the clay pipe in gentle deprecation.

"There is your one-sided point of view again," he asserted. "You can see the loss which would accrue from an abandonment of your work, but you fail to see the greater loss in the shrinkage of values which will certainly follow these panicky reports that are already in the air."

The young Missourian turned to the drawing table and propped his head in his hands. Somewhere in this specious argument there was a false note; he knew it—felt it in every fiber of him. But he could not find it; he could only grope blindly for it.

"Have patience with me a little longer," he begged finally. "I can't see, for the life of me, what difference it will make whether we go ahead and fail, or stop and fail."

This time the smile on the Sahara face was leniently superior.

"That workingman's point of view of yours is still getting in the way, Mr. Stannard. I wonder if you would consent to an experiment aimed at its removal?"

"A surgical operation?" suggested Stannard, catching desperately at the straw of humor.

Silas Westervelt drew himself up to the desk and took a fat collection of papers and envelopes, read letters, blanks, and other matters from his pocket. Then, tapping the papers gently with the stem of the pipe: "Let us try an experiment, calling it a laboratory test, if you please. I am a heavy stockholder in G. L. & P. A shrinkage of ten dollars a share from the present market price would cost me something over a million dollars. Very good. I am a business man, Mr. Stannard, and the good business man never hesitates to spend one dollar to save ten. That is a fair statement?"

"Perfectly."

"Very well; let us say that this ten per-cent salvage fund can be spent most judiciously in buying an enlightened point of view for the person who controls the situation. We might put it upon the basis of an expense account; money spent for the purpose of obtaining an expert and unbiased opinion. Assuming this, the good business man would search for the readiest expedient"—the banker was running through his pocket papers, suiting the action to the word—"and, having found it"—he had drawn out and unfolded a stiff sheet of parchment paper, green-backed and gilt-lettered, and was writing rapidly on the back of it with Stannard's desk pen—"and, having found it, he would promptly make his salvage investment something like this."

Stannard took the freshly blotted square of cunningly engraved bank-note parchment merely because it was thrust upon him. It was a certificate for one thousand shares of preferred stock on the G. L. & P. Railway Company, made out in the name of Silas Westervelt. On the back, the banker had filled in the blank transfer to Claiborne Stannard.

"I don't see the point," Stannard said bluntly, returning the certificate.

"Don't you?" was the suave query. "For the purposes of the experiment in changing viewpoints, Mr. Stannard, we will say that you are now no longer 'a number on the pay roll,' as you phrased

it a few minutes ago. You are the owner in fee simple of one thousand shares of G. L. & P. preferred, which, at the market, is worth something over one hundred and fifty thousand dollars, and your opinion is not now biassed by the workingman's point of view. In other words, you have become an investor whose interests as a stockholder are more important than his interests as a salaried employee of the company. The constructing engineer wishes to complete his undertaking; but the stockholder knows that a raid on his securities will mean the loss, overnight, so to speak, of more money than the engineer could earn in a goodly number of years."

Again Stannard propped his head in his hands and frowned thoughtfully down upon Eddie Brant's exquisitely drawn map of the loop line thumb-tacked upon the drawing board. Taking Mr. Westervelt's object lesson merely as a clever hypothesis, intended only as an illustration of the point in question, its effect was still subtly potent. Almost before he knew it the young construction chief was drifting. One hundred and fifty thousand dollars, added to his modest patrimony in the Ozarks, would make him a small capitalist, and with such a start the vista of possibilities widened magically. As if reading his inmost thoughts, the banker went on smoothly:

"Your engineer, who has now become a capitalist, is concerned not only about the value of his securities, but also about the future which is bound up in them. He is young and able. If he is so fortunate as to have a friendly adviser or two, he can nurse his little capital, turning and multiplying it until he, too, has become a power in the land. There is practically no limit to what a courageous young man, with a fair knowledge of the world and of other men, can accomplish with a working capital of, say, one hundred thousand dollars, which would be the present borrowing value of this bit of paper. Coming suddenly into possession of the means, a young man of intelligence and perspicacity would see new worlds opening out before him. He would realize——"

The young Missourian wheeled quickly upon the gray-clothed figure in the desk chair.

"Let's get back to earth again, Mr. Westervelt," he said shortly. "Your object lesson may stand for what it is worth as an illustration. I can see the other side now, as I couldn't a few minutes ago. What do you want me to do?"

"Only what your own good judgment —your later judgment—tells you you ought to do. You will consider the best good, in the broader sense, of the company in which you have, for the past few minutes, been a part owner. You will——"

"Specifically, I mean," Stannard broke in. "Admitting, for the sake of the argument, that I am taking the broader point of view, what can I do? Failure is failure, isn't it? What difference will it make to the market whether we stop voluntarily, or are forced to stop?"

"If we handle it skillfully, it will make all the difference in the world. Suppose you wire Merriam that it is your honest conviction that the prosecution of the cut-off project, and the construction of the tunnel under these unforeseen adverse conditions, which will so greatly increase its cost, will not be a paying investment for the company. Suppose you add that you understand the tunnel rights and site can be disposed of to good advantage to another company, and that you advise the sale."

"What!" Stannard tried to keep from shouting the demand, but the effort was a failure.

The dry-faced gentleman in the desk chair resumed his pipe for a final whiff

"I wouldn't have you quote me as your authority, of course. But, as a banker in touch with all these things, I happen to know that such overtures have been made to our executive committee, in New York. There is no need for half confidences between us, Mr. Stannard. The Overland Northern is not spending money like water merely to build a local line to the Southern

Buckskin mining camps. It is searching for a pass through the mountains by which it can eventually build on to the southern Pacific coast. Why should we not take advantage of its necessity, and recoup some portion of our loss by the sale of the tunnel?"

The thing was too big to be grasped in its entirety at the mere hearing of the words. Stannard slipped from his stool, and stood with folded arms, staring unseeingly through the small square window over the desk at the busy scene in the construction yard. Since his rôle had hitherto been that of a fighting field captain, the idea of compromising with the enemy sent the blood to his brain, and set a small war pulse hammering insistently on the edge of his square jaw. While the tumultuous wave of militancy was still submerging him, the man of money went on purringly:

"You are doubtless wondering why we have arrived at this point this morning—you and I—Mr. Stannard. Quite possibly you are asking yourself why I have come so far out of my way to enlist the services of a man on the firing line. There are several reasons. For one, I have felt that something was due you as the originator of this project. Under present industrial conditions, capital too often ignores the claims of exceptional ability in the working staff. Another reason was less altruistic and more practical, and I have already stated it. John P. Merriam will take your decision and advice as final." The great man rose and laid the borrowed pipe carefully aside. "You'll need a little time to think about it, of course. I can understand that it comes to you as a bolt from the blue. Just wire Merriam that you will give him full particulars in a day or two, and let it rest at that for the present."

When Stannard broke his absent-minded eyehold upon the yard activities, he was alone in the bare working room. Dropping into the chair so recently vacated by the banker-director, he reached mechanically for the roll of estimates. In the act something crackled stiffly under his hand, and a folded paper fell to the floor. He stooped to pick it up, and sat staring at it with another tumultuous wave of mingled emotions overwhelming him. The paper was the transferred stock certificate.

CHAPTER XII.

THE ROOT OF EVIL.

Austin Vallory, in answering Stannard's question about the stay-behinds in the *Egeria,* had craftily omitted any mention of Miss Westervelt. None the less, her uncle's prediction of the night before had been verified; she had declared she was unable to go, and the middle of the forenoon following the departure of the bear hunters found an exceedingly discontented young woman yawning over a book on the recessed observation platform of the private car.

Over in the yard the day crews were shifting the material trains back and forth, smashing the silence of the windless autumn day with stertorous locomotive snortings and the crashing of drawbars. In the intervals when the trains were out of the way, the discontented one could look across to the shacks and tents of the great camp, deserted now by all save the cooks and the commissary clerks. Farther away a thickly clustering gang of trackmen were laying the rails of a new siding, and the ringing blows of the spike mauls made cheerful music when the train noises permitted them to be heard.

To her inner self, which was ever her closest confidante, Miss Westervelt admitted that she was in a vile temper. Caring little or nothing for the doubtful pleasures of the sham bear hunt, she had a reason of her own for not wishing to be left behind. Though it was her mental habit to name things accurately, she was content to let the reason take the form of a huge distaste for solitude; and with Mrs. Grantham dozing peacefully in the biggest wicker chair planted solidly in the middle of the open compartment, and her uncle and Vallory invisible, Miss Anitra's solitude was a fact incontrovertible.

Some little time after she had finally abandoned the book as utterly impos-

sible she saw Stannard coming across the railroad yard, and began, after the manner of her kind, to put a rod in pickle for the young construction chief. He had treated her shamefully. It was two full days since she had been hurt, and he had not thought it worth while to walk across the tracks to ask about her. "Bear!" she said to herself, and then again: "Bear, *bear!*"

It was thus that Stannard's welcome was formulating itself when he swung up to the deck of the adjacent flat car and put a leg over the brass railing of the *Egeria*. Because of Vallory's craft, he had supposed, of course, that Anitra had gone with the others, and his little shock of surprise leaving him defenseless for the moment, the moment was instantly improved. Miss Westervelt looked up from the book, which she was not reading, with sparkling malice in her eye to say inhospitably: "If you are looking for Uncle Silas, you won't find him. He has gone away."

"I'm looking for you, now that I know you're here," said Stannard, drawing up a camp stool, and straightway forgetting his errand, which was to return the illustrative stock certificate left behind by the banker in the headquarters office. "You don't mean to tell me that the sore ankle has kept you from going with the others?"

"Much you care about the sore ankle!" she retorted. "In my part of the United States gentlemen take off their hats under certain well-understood conditions. Now, then, swear at me, if you feel like it; I know that's what you're aching to do."

Stannard removed his worn cloth working hat and stared into it thoughtfully.

"I guess I needed that little slap," he remarked with imperturbable good nature. "A man gets to be frightfully careless of the little decencies, living a life like mine. And I owe you a lot of apologies about that ankle, too. This is the first day I've been in camp for any length of time since you were hurt. Isn't it getting better?"

It was; it was so nearly well that only Doctor Billy's prohibition kept her quiet; but she wouldn't admit it. "No, it's quite possible that I'm going to be a cripple for life, and it's all your fault. And you wouldn't even come over to the car to say you were sorry!"

"But I have come; and if I could believe you mean what you say, 'sorry' wouldn't be the word. Is it really serious?"

"I'm here," she asserted, "and all the others have gone off to have a good time in the hills. Isn't that enough?"

"You wanted to go?" he asked.

"Why shouldn't I want to go? Didn't we come out here to hunt bears?"

"No," said Stannard shortly. "At least, that isn't your uncle's purpose—unless you choose to call me a bear. He's been hunting me."

"Business?" she queried, a little less spitefully.

"Yes; business." And then, merely because he had reached a point at which a listening ear had become a vital necessity: "He wants me to discharge myself."

"Well?" with carefully frozen disinterest, "why don't you do it? I should think you would want to do it. What can you find attractive in a life that makes you work night and day and wear old clothes and live with your hat on, with only a lot of rough men under you to bully and browbeat?"

"Surely, you don't mean that," he protested. In the other summer which was gone and could never be recalled, she had been deliciously enthusiastic over his choice of a profession; she had said it was so free, so broadening, so lacking in temptation, and all that.

"Why shouldn't I mean it?" she demanded. "What can you ever hope to be or do in an environment like this? Will you ever see the time, for example, when you can gather up a party of your friends and take them in your own, or somebody else's, private car on a bear-hunting expedition of two or three thousand miles?"

"Oh, if it's money you mean," he began.

"Of course, it's money. What else is there worth living for in such a world as this?" She made herself look very

austere and complacently mercenary, lying back in the small wicker easy-chair with the lame foot on a hassock, and there was a scornful curve to the pretty lips that sent the honest workman blood climbing in a dull flush to deepen the sunburn on Stannard's hard-muscled face.

"Excuse me," he said. "Don't you know, I really thought you looked at it the other way around—a year ago last summer."

"Maybe I did—then. I can't be held accountable for what I may have said so long ago as that."

"No, of course not," he agreed. "I tried to tell myself then that it was only a fad—that is, that you were only —only——"

"That I was merely talking because I was so charmed and delighted to listen to the sound of my own voice," she broke in flippantly. "But I'm savagely in earnest now. How any man with ambitions above those of the people over yonder who are nailing down those rails can be content to—but what is the use of talking about it? Some day, when that wonderful second choice of yours has been discovered, I suppose you will settle down to love in a cottage—or a grade shanty—and never know what you are missing."

"Does it really mean that much—the money?" he questioned.

"Doesn't it mean everything on earth that is worth while?" she flashed back.

"In times past I have been glad to believe that it didn't."

"But now you have changed your mind?"

He smiled sourly.

"I have been listening to some good advice. First it was Vallory; then it was your uncle; and now it is you."

"Certainly," she nodded, with an air of complete conviction. "Everybody will advise you to get money—honestly, if you can; the other way, if you must."

He looked away to the distant slope of the Buckskin, where the graders were making a thin line of the yellow clay show through the trees on the side cutting of the approach.

"I have just been given my chance," he announced gravely. "If I choose to take it, I have your uncle's word for it that I can be a rich man in a few years."

"If you choose to take it?" she repeated, with a lift of the willful chin. "You don't mean to say that you are hesitating."

"If I am, it is only because some of those old beliefs I spoke of are dying rather hard."

"But if Uncle Silas pointed the way for you——"

"I know what you would say," he interposed hastily. "It's honest enough, as honesty goes nowadays—business honesty, at least. More than that, it has been made to appear that I shall be doing the man who has been my strongest friend a service—only I'm afraid he may not see it in exactly that light."

"You are rich enough, even now, to afford the other conscience—the business conscience—aren't you?" She smiled across at him so sweetly at this that he forgot the social barriers—or most of them; forgot, also, his own clean code of the single standard for all men under all conditions. Then she went on: 'For the young man of today there are two roads to fortune—to make money, or to marry it. Too much conscience is a handicap in either race, isn't it?"

He looked at her curiously.

"I wonder how old you are," he said reflectively.

"Why do you say that?"

"Because you know too much."

"I haven't had anything to do but to learn. There are only two kinds of men in the world—infants and the others."

"And you think I am one of the infants, and that it is time I was growing up?"

Her shoulders went up in a small shrug of indifference, real or most artfully simulated.

"You want money, don't you? Not just a little, but a great deal. If you do, you mustn't look too closely at the means of getting it. That is the way of the world. Of course, you might marry it; that is the easy way. But Miss

Moneybags might not be even the second choice, and that would be sad."

"I wish I knew how much in earnest you are," he broke out, half impatiently. "Do you really believe that a man would be justified in throwing a lot of halfway decent ideals overboard for the sake of stuffing his bank account? I can do it, you know. As I have said, the chance has been given me within the last hour."

"By Uncle Silas, you said, didn't you?"

He made the sign of assent.

"He doesn't ask you to knock anybody down or rob a bank or anything of that sort, does he?" she asked.

"No; he merely asks me to turn my back upon a bunch of things that I have been taught to believe were more or less necessary in the make-up of an honest man."

"That is your class conscience again, isn't it? If you haven't the courage, the other way is still open; you can always marry the money, you know. Some men will tell you that it's much safer than to get down among the animals and fight for it."

The dull flush had crept up under Stannard's sun tan until it was settling under his eyes and making them uncomfortably hot.

"Say, little girl," he burst out, breaking all the conventions at a single blow, "that's the sore spot, and you've hammered on it until it hurts! Do you remember what you made me tell you the other night over yonder in the headquarters shack—about the 'one altogether lovely,' as you called her?"

"Yes; I can remember that far back."

"Well, it was her money that made the notion only a pipe dream for me. She belongs to another world, but the chief difference between her world and mine is the money and what it stands for."

Anitra's lip curl this time was of pure amusement.

"And you have a kind of hazy idea that you might bridge this terrible gap by getting rich yourself?" she queried, laughing at him.

"It isn't in the least hazy," he countered.

"Perhaps the money—your money—wouldn't make so much difference to her, after all," she suggested.

"I think enough of her to believe that it wouldn't. But it would make a lot of difference to me."

"Doc Billy doesn't feel that way," she remarked. "If he has lost any self-respect, it would take a chemical analysis to discover it. And, really, I believe he loves Dolly just as much as he would if she had only pennies instead of millions."

"Of course he does," was the prompt agreement. "Kitts is a man in every inch of him, and his wife, if her face doesn't belie her, is second cousin to an angel. But that is a combination that doesn't happen more than once in a blue moon."

"Money is a great comfort; I'm very sure I should never have the courage to give mine up," said the young woman in the wicker chair, half absently and with seeming irrelevance. Then she added: "If I cared particularly about the things that you and Doc Billy and Dolly care for, I might have to give it up some day."

"Why might you?" Stannard asked quickly.

"Because I'm so badly spoiled that I can't be trusted. I am a—a ward in chancery—is that what you call it when one has to have a guardian?"

"I don't understand," said Stannard.

"I didn't suppose you would," she returned coolly. "For further particulars you may consider yourself referred to Uncle Silas. How is your work going on?"

"My own part of it is marking time just at this moment," he said, rising to go, with a half-disappointed feeling that she was dismissing him. "You say your uncle is not in the car?"

"No; he went away with Mr. Vallory just before you came. They walked down the track that way," pointing toward the desert entrance to the Travois.

The young Missourian hung reluctantly upon his leave-taking. "I'm sorry you were not able to go to the hills with

the others," he said, going back to the safer topic.

"So am I," was the prompt return. "Perhaps I may be able to go to-morrow or next day. Doc Billy said something about driving back in one of the buckboards. It's dreadfully lonesome here, and I've been promising myself all along that I was going to learn to ride a bucking broncho before I go home."

Stannard had swung himself over the platform railing, but still he did not go.

"You like excitement?" he inquired.

"It is the breath of my life," she told him calmly.

"Yesterday there seemed to be a fair prospect of your seeing enough of it right here in the Travois. Do you see that little black smudge away out yonder on the desert horizon?"

"Yes; I've been watching it all morning. What is it?"

"It is the advance guard of another railroad, building at the rate of several miles a day to reach this valley. It has been a race, and I had the good luck to beat the other fellow by the few weeks we needed. In the natural order of things there was a scrap in prospect. We are building pretty nearly on the other railroad's right of way in Standing Stone Cañon."

"You're putting it all in the past tense. Won't there be any fight now?"

He was looking away toward the slope on high Buckskin again when he said: "Not if I conclude to take a chance in the get-rich-quick game. That was what your uncle came out here for—to stop the fight and to give me my chance."

"And this chance—what does it involve?" She asked it eagerly.

"I have told you in part. As a preliminary, it means the giving up of all this." His arm sweep included camp and yard, high-mountain gash, and the yellow-clay trail among the firs on distant Buckskin.

"But the reward is proportionately great," she cut in.

"The reward is—money. I shall need it, too, for when the commercial transaction is closed, and I have played my part, I shall most probably never be given a chance to build another railroad."

"You don't care? You want money more than anything else, don't you?"

"I should be something more or less than human if I didn't care. But I shall be only yielding to the inevitable. With or without me, the commercial gods will win out; and Vallory says, and your uncle says, and now you have said, in effect, that I shall be foolish if I don't make a running jump and get over on the money side."

"Oh, very foolish, indeed!" she protested, with the brown eyes opened wide. "You should take all you can get, and expect more. Only you mustn't deceive yourself—about the motive, you know. In the back part of your brain you are trying to make yourself believe that it's for her sake—the dream girl's; that the money will fill up the chasm so that you can safely cross it to her. You mustn't do that."

"Why mustn't I?"

"In the first place, because it isn't true. You are like other men, and you want the chance Uncle Silas will give you because you want it, and that's enough."

"And in the second place?" he queried.

"In the second place, you may be disappointed. Dream girls are always disappointing. The one you've been dreaming about may not want you at all when you come with money in your hand. That won't matter, though; there are plenty of others. Gladys, for example. You are really missing something by not cultivating Gladys. She is so adaptable. Any little sudden change of front you might wish to make, overnight——"

"Now you are joshing me, and I must go to work," he broke in, laughing. "I hope your ankle will be well enough to let you do what you want to do by to-morrow or next day. Good-by."

"Good-by, Mr. Get-rich-quick Stannard!" she called to him, as he dropped from the steel flat. "'Put money in thy purse,' and all men—and most women—will speak well of thee. And

don't try too hard to make yourself believe it's purely for the sake of the dream person—it isn't, you know."

Two small results, unmarked of any outsider, came of this small, bickering clash on the observation platform of the *Egeria* in the dead calm of the autumn morning. Stannard, plodding across to his office to finish the checking of the estimate sheets, still had the transferred stock certificate in his pocket, though he might easily have left the sealed envelope containing it with Anitra for delivery to her uncle on his return.

This was one result, and the other was quite as inexplicable. After Stannard had disappeared among the shifting material trains, the young woman in the platform wicker chair stared at the smoky blur on the distant desert horizon until the brown eyes, overstrained, one would say, filled with a quick rush of tears. Then she put her face in her hands, and gave way to a sudden tempest of emotion that shook her like the grasp of a rough hand reaching out of the calm autumn-morning immensities.

CHAPTER XIII.

BALANCINGS.

The checking of the estimates finished, Stannard put on his coat and set out to walk up the grade to see what progress the quarrymen were making in the big rock cutting in the cañon; this though it was near enough dinner time to warrant a postponement of the trip if he had been able to put his mind upon anything so commonplace as the daily camp routine.

As he swung along over the unsurfaced track, and came upon Gallagher and his men busily lining it up; saw this, and heard the shoutings of the grade gangs on the opposite mountain dominated now and then by the hoarse rumble of the dynamite or the rapid-fire clatter of the air drills; it seemed incredible that within a few days all these strenuous activities might stop as a man stops when he is stricken down in the full flush of life.

The crude waste of it was appalling. Once before, while he had been serving his engineering apprenticeship in the South, he had seen a paralleling line built at a cost of millions, only to be abandoned when it was ready for the steel; and the wasted labor still appealed to him as the memory of a crime. And now he was called upon to be the chief actor in a similar tragedy of futility. Surely something was wrong when industrial or financial ends could be reached only through such reckless squanderings of human toil and effort.

In the depressive undertow of this thought, the young engineer was glad that Westervelt had taken pains to show him that there was another side to the problem. How much the stiff bit of stock paper crackling in his pocket as he walked had to do with the broadened point of view he did not suspect as yet. None the less, in the endeavor to bring himself to some point of decision and action, he was already beginning to find it increasingly impossible to ignore the effect of the decision upon his own future.

He had passed the farthest outposts of Gallagher's track-lining gang, and was well on his way up the cañon to the rock cutting, before the banker's real meaning smashed in upon the train of thought, stopping him as suddenly as if the realization had been a blow from an invisible fist. In an illuminating flash he understood that the stock transfer had not been merely an illustration; it was a bribe, premeditated and prepared for. That was why Westervelt had left the certificate on the desk at his departure.

At first the young Missourian was conscious only of a sharp attack of moral nausea. Stumbling on over the crossties in the grip of the soul sickness, he could think of nothing but the gross indignity which had been put upon him. But little by little the huge temptation fought its way to the front, and the flood tide of repulsion began to subside.

By what modern standard would he be condemned if the only wrong lay in the mere fact that in the process of readjustment some small portion of the

reward fell to him? In a twinkling, he saw the situation precisely as the banker had intended he should see it. The Overland Northern would make the fight for the right of way, and, winning or losing, the result in the real battlefield—that of the Stock Exchange—would be the same. War would be declared upon the G. L. & P. securities, and President Merriam's telegram was a sufficient indication that the war would be disastrous.

At the same time, Stannard knew well the temper of the man who had made the Great Lakes & Pacific a financial possibility after it had been for years a plaything of the Street. He would fight to the last gasp, if only for the reason that his sheerest strength lay in fighting. That the battle would be a losing one for the younger and weaker line Stannard could not doubt. The strength and resources of its great competitor on the north were too well known to admit the factor of uncertainty. Twenty-four hours earlier, Stannard would not have admitted this; but now he saw, or thought he saw, more clearly.

Mixed with the purely selfish promptings of the moment, there was also another motive—his plain duty to Merriam, which the banker had not failed to emphasize. Disaster to the G. L. & P. meant still more crushing disaster for the Merriam management. The young engineer had a very clear-sighted view of what would befall him professionally if he should take the part of the soldier in the ranks who turns traitor for the sake of saving his commanding officer. Put in possession of all the facts, Mr. Merriam might decline to be "saved" in any such arbitrary way, but did that make it any less necessary that the salvage should be effected?

Stannard had not come to any real weighing of the purely ethical question by the time he reached the great rock cutting; or, rather, he had come to it and had dismissed it with the half-impatient and wholly cynical conclusion that the standards of a past generation could not be applied to the problems of the present. He was well assured that potentially, if not actually, Anitra Westervelt understood his dilemma, and had she not urged him to put money in his purse?

Just beyond the rock cutting, where the clatter of the air drills was a little less than deafening, he met Roddy walking the line from the eastern-tunnel approach. The assistant's report of the situation at the west end was encouraging. There had been no more trouble with the hard-rock men, and Markley had caught his stride again, and was pushing the drift at top speed.

"All of which goes to show that we got the trouble makers in the last shift-out," said Roddy, with a snap of the baby-blue eyes and a hardening of the bad jaw. "That twenty-four-hour strike was about the best thing that could have happened to us."

Stannard stood dumb before the honest little man, whose heart and soul were in the pushing of the great job. How was he to tell Roddy that all this fine enthusiasm was presently to be blown out like a candle in a gust of wind?

"Markley's all right," he commented. "He can put more enthusiasm into a gang of gophers than any man I've ever known. Did you see Pearson as you came by?"

The assistant nodded. "Yes; and he gave me a word for you. Greer's men are in the valley. Pearson saw them a little while ago through his field glasses. They are running a line on the north side of the river at the foot of Rock Face. That's what made me walk down the grade. I took the chance of picking you up on the way."

"Well?" said the chief. "That is what we've been expecting, isn't it?"

"Yes; I suppose so. But I thought you'd like to know."

"I found out last night," was the sober rejoinder. "Two of the O. N. advance men were feeling their way across the head of the Travois to a connection with the old survey in the cañon."

"In the dark?" queried Roddy.

"Yes; they were using a couple of

flash lights. That's how I came to discover them."

"I like the nerve of it!" rasped the small fighting man. And then: "There'll be a crossing fight first, I suppose. Where do they hit us?"

"At the base of the Standing Stone. I don't know their levels as they may have decided upon them now, but the old preliminary carries their line about eight feet above ours at the crossing point."

"That won't do," said Roddy quickly. "They'll have to raise or lower."

"Yes; or make us raise or lower."

"Not on your life! We got there first!" was the militant retort. "I have a hundred and fifty perfectly good Remington rifles hidden away in the commissary, and every last one of them says that we don't move our grade an inch!"

Stannard was shaking his head.

"We can't fight, Jacksie, if it comes to a show-down," he objected soberly. "We might make a bluff at it, but it wouldn't do any good."

"Why wouldn't it?"

"Some time—a little later on—I'll tell you why it wouldn't."

"Tell me now, Clay. I've just had a snack out of Pearson's dinner basket, and I can stand it now as well as I ever can. Have you been 'seeing things'?"

Stannard sat down on a stone beside the grade and pulled out his pipe. "You've got to know it sooner or later, Jackson, and I guess there isn't any reason why you shouldn't know it now," he said slowly. Then he told the story of the banker's visit, suppressing nothing save the incident of the stock transfer.

Roddy was walking back and forth, three steps and a turn, before the story was concluded; and at the end of it he stopped short to say: "I hope you told him to go straight to the devil, Clay!"

"I don't deny that I wanted to at first. It was a facer. You can see my position. If Mr. Westervelt was telling the truth—and there isn't much reason to doubt that part of it—we are in a pretty deep hole. I know, and you know, that Greer can make a spiteful fight here in the cañon—can probably keep us from reaching the tunnel this fall. If he succeeds in doing that, we won't have any tunnel by spring."

"Yes; but, Clay, look at the alternative for a minute! If you tell Mr. Merriam that the project is a failure he'll believe you, but look where it leaves you! You'll be a broken man!"

"Sure enough; but isn't it my duty to tell him anyway—in common justice to him and to his management?"

"Unquestionably," snapped the assistant, "if you've lost your fighting nerve. No man in this world ever went into a scrap with the idea that he was going to be licked and failed to get what was coming to him. Westervelt's hypnotized you, that's all there is to it—just plain hypnotized you!"

"No; he has simply made me see that my point of view, which is yours and every workingman's, doesn't reach far enough. A railroad is primarily a money-making undertaking. I'm just as good a fighting man as I was yesterday, Jackson—plus a little more common sense."

Roddy stooped down and picked up a bowlder to hurl it spitefully into the roaring flood of the Standing Stone. Then he whirled short upon his chief:

"You haven't any more use for me, Clay. My resignation takes effect tonight."

"Oh, hold on, Jacksie; don't fly off at a tangent that way. I haven't made up my mind yet just what I shall do. I've wired Mr. Merriam in reply to his telegram of this morning telling him that I'll give him full particulars a little later."

"No, you haven't made up your mind; but you've shown me pretty clearly how you're going to make it up," was the gloomy retort. Then, mad anger blinding him, he said the thing that leaped full grown into his brain at the instant: "How much is Westervelt going to give you for doing this, Clay?"

Stannard would have given worlds for the privilege of cramming a hot denial down the little man's throat. But he had sold his birthright, and the mess

of pottage was even then crumpling in the pocket of his working coat.

"There was no bribe, Jacksie," he declared, telling the first lie in what bade fair to become an endless series of lies and equivocations. "But I have a right to demand that I and the men of my staff shall be taken care of. We'll all lose out together, and Mr. Westervelt understands that it wouldn't be fair to let us bear the brunt of it."

"I thought so!" gritted the little man, which was also a lie, because the charge had been wholly unpremeditated. "You can count me out on that, too. I don't take any man's blood money." Then he added the last straw of insult: "I take it you are to marry the girl after it's all over and done with."

Stannard got up off the rock slowly, but his eyes were blazing.

"Jacksie, you're forty pounds lighter than I am, and I can't beat you up as I ought to. But you've got to take that back!"

Roddy stood up to the gigantic young chief like a fighting bantam. "I will take it back if you'll say that you haven't seen the girl and talked to her."

Stannard turned and walked away. The river was perilously handy, and the temptation to fling Roddy into it was growing too strong to be resisted. When he came back it was to say in effect what Westervelt had said to him.

"I'm going to forget everything you've said, Jacksie; and ask you to take a little time to think it over." Then, in an overwhelming rush of pure manliness: "I can't afford to lose your friendship, Jackson. We've stood shoulder to shoulder on this job, and I know you to the marrow. Between two men, that means a whole lot more than either one of them can put into words. Don't you know it?"

Roddy stooped and heaved another stone into the river, its hollow splash simulating a groan.

"I'm so mad I can't see straight, Clay," he confessed. "But when I get cooled off I know I shan't be able to see this thing in your way. Just the same, I'm sorry I said what I did about the girl." Then suddenly: "How soon have you got to make up your mind?"

"There was no time set, but in the nature of things I can't hold off very long. Go on down to camp and get out your fishing tackle. That'll give you a clearer point of view, if anything will. I'm going to walk the grade up to the tunnel." And so they parted.

It was black dark that evening before the young chief, who was far behind the returning day shift, reached the camp and took his place at table in the deserted mess shack. The cook brought in a platter of fine mountain trout, by which token Stannard knew that Roddy had taken his advice. While he was eating, the blue-eyed assistant came in, smoking his pipe.

"Feeling any better?" asked the Missourian.

"I'm feeling as if I had either been to a funeral, or was just going to one," said Roddy. And then: "Those fish came out of the river a little below the bend. Greer has had a pioneer gang at work on the other bank all afternoon. Murtrie, one of his instrument men, waded across and chinned with me. I used to know him a little up in Montana."

"Well?" Stannard encouraged.

"Greer's graders will reach the Travois by to-morrow night. He's laying rails with a machine. What you do, you've got to do mighty suddenly, Clay. You can put off everything but the fight with Greer. I can tell you right here and now that that won't wait. And if you lose the first shot, you lose the game." The little man got up and lounged to the door, turning on the threshold, to add: "If you fight, I'm with you to the finish; but if you don't, what I said up in the cañon goes as it lies—I'll take my time check."

"You'll wait till you get it, won't you?" Stannard growled good-naturedly, striving to reëstablish the *statu quo ante bellum*. "Got anything else on your mind?"

"Yes; one little thing. You didn't tell me the whole truth about that flash-light surveying party last night. Murtrie says you beat up a couple of their

men scandalously. Also, he tells me there is a warrant out for you for assault and battery."

Stannard laughed. "Does Greer tote a justice of the peace along in his outfit, too?"

"Murtrie says he does better than that," was the quiet reply. "He has the sheriff of Lodge Butte County and half a dozen deputies on his pay roll."

"The sheriff of Lodge Butte County may go chase himself," said the Missourian shortly, and he was so little disturbed by the added item of news that he picked the bones of three more of the trout after Roddy had left him.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE CONSPIRATORS.

In the night following the flawless autumn day which Miss Westervelt had found so tiresome, the weather changed, with the wind swinging to the west to blow cloud streamers over the crest of the Buckskin, and with a frosty tang in the early-morning air to give back the clamor and clang of the railroad-building industries in echoes clean cut and bell clear.

An hour beyond the breakfast for four in the *Egeria*, which was two hours and better past the turnout of the day shifts in Camp Travois, a buckboard drawn by a pair of grasshopper-headed bronchos was making its way down the northern gulch at the head of Rock Face toward a ford in the shallows of the Standing Stone.

Doctor William Pangborn Kitts, who could turn his highly educated surgeon hand to anything, from tinkering a dollar watch to setting a compound comminuted fracture of a crushed tibia, was driving the bronchos, and his seatmate in the buckboard was the round-bodied broker.

"Careful, doc, careful!" warned Padgett, when one wheel of the frontier vehicle climbed a bowlder as big as a water barrel. "I know you'd like to have a chance to put me in splints, but I'm pretty well satisfied with my bones just as they are."

"You couldn't break a bone if you should try," laughed the breezy young doctor. "You're too well cushioned. What I'm waiting for is a chance to sew you up after the first of the grizzlies has clawed a few slits in you."

Padgett snapped his cuff button and bared a forearm as round and smooth as an infant's save for a striping of ghastly white scars running from elbow to wrist.

"You've been joshing me long enough. If I tell you that a grizzly did that up in the Selkirks——"

Kitts took a chance of driving with one hand while he examined the scarred arm.

"Worst job of suturing I ever saw," was his verdict. "Looks as if somebody might have sewed 'em up with a sailor's needle and pack thread." Then: "I've never doubted your bear-hunting stories, Padgett. I've merely envied you. Which brings on more talk: Are we going to find any bears in the Teton foothills?"

The broker grinned broadly.

"You're having a good time, aren't you? A good-looking young fellow like you wouldn't want to get all mussed up in the middle of his honeymoon. And even Carroll admits that the Teton ranch house is an improvement on a railroad construction yard."

"Carroll's a joke," Kitts said; "and so is the Englishman. What keeps me guessing is why Mr. Westervelt brought them along—why he brought anybody but you and Vallory."

Padgett ignored the tentative bid for better information concerning Mr. Westervelt's object.

"Are you going to take Anitra back with you?" he asked.

"Can't, unless I leave you behind."

"You'll get yourself disliked if you don't take her," laughed the broker, adding: "You can't blame her very much. It's a pretty slow business for her, with only Mrs. Grantham and her uncle to help her wear out the time."

"And Vallory," the doctor put in.

"Mr. Vallory doesn't count; no man counts much with a young woman after

he has proposed two or three times and been turned down."

"So?" said Kitts. "I hadn't thought of Vallory as a marrying man. Just the same, I admire Anitra's good taste. Vallory's all right, but he's got too much sour dough in his cosmos. Line him up beside a man like—well, like young Stannard, for example, and he doesn't stack very high."

"Yet they have one thing in common—Stannard and Vallory; they both need money," Padgett qualified sagely.

The bronchos were picking their way through the shallows of the ford, and a little later the buckboard went bouncing over the yard tracks, to be drawn up beside the *Egeria*. One of Crumley's ranchmen was waiting to take the team, and Kitts gave the return order for the middle of the afternoon, the delay hinging upon Padgett's request for time in which to wire his New York office and get a reply.

In strict keeping with his métier, which was athletic, Kitts swung himself in a high vault to the observation platform where Mrs. Grantham was sniffing the keen morning air and trying to make herself believe that she liked it. Left to his own devices, Padgett went to the other end of the car, and had himself admitted by the porter. Silas Westervelt was alone in his stateroom when the broker entered.

"It's rather early in the game for me to show up, but Kitts was coming, anyway, so I took a chance," was the way in which the broker accounted for his presence. Then he sat down and went rapidly over the file of wire correspondence which the magnate gave him without comment.

With the reading of the latest of the messages, Padgett nodded briskly.

"It's coming along all right," he approved. "We've got 'em on the run, and all we need to do now is to keep 'em going. Has Stannard driven his little nail in the wall yet?"

"Apparently not—from those telegrams," said the banker.

"You've put it up to him?" Padgett questioned, and Westervelt made the sign of assent.

"Yesterday morning, shortly after you left," he replied, timing the event for the broker. "I didn't hurry him, because his nail-driving will serve a better purpose if it is delayed a little."

"He'll fall for it?"

"I think so. The only danger lies in the fact that he may talk too much over the wires to Merriam before he gets around to the saying of the thing he is paid to say."

"That point ought to be covered carefully," Padgett advised.

"It is covered. Vallory has taken care of the operator, and there is only the one telegraph office. Stannard has sent but one message thus far, and I have a copy of it. It is worded strictly in accordance with my suggestion made to him in the talk yesterday morning—a stand-off."

"Cost much?" queried the round bodied one with a lift of the reddish brown eyebrows.

The banker-director's hard-bitted smile came and went like a flash of heat lightning on a summer night.

"I have never believed in the policy of sending a boy to mill, Padgett."

"You made it in stock?"

The magnate inclined his head. "A little later it may be necessary for you to try to buy it back. He knows the market quotation, and if you should go to him with a premium bid, and a story that you are sweeping the corners to help out a customer who has gone short on G. L. & P., it might tip the balance."

"Then you're not altogether sure of him?"

"My dear Padgett, you haven't been buying and selling in the Street all these years without learning that you are never sure of anything until you have it right here"—holding up a thumb and forefinger tightly pinched together. "Stannard is human and he wants money. That is a majority vote in most cases; but there are exceptions enough to warrant a reasonable doubt."

"You say he wants money. Do you mean just the general human hunger, or a particular case of individual famine?"

This time Mr. Westervelt's smile was wintry.

"I suspect Stannard's realization of his lack dates back to a year ago last summer, at which time he had the good or the ill luck, as you choose to look at it, to meet a certain young woman whose money—among other things—put her rather hopelessly out of his reach."

Padgett jerked his round head in a one-sided nod, which was his way of expressing complete comprehension.

"And the young woman?" he said. "She was disposed to be a little romantic, too?"

"Up to a week ago I thought not. Now, however, I am not quite so certain, Padgett."

The broker set elbow to knee and nursed his double chin in the palm of one hand, as a man working out the result of a difficult equation.

"If you think there is any doubt about swinging Stannard into line on the business basis, it occurs to me that you are missing your one best bet," he offered at length.

Silas Westervelt did not pretend to misunderstand.

"Apart from the fact that it is never safe to mix women and business, Adam, I'm not quite temerarious enough to take the risk in the present instance. You know enough of our family affairs to get my meaning?"

"I know that your brother David left a will making you his daughter's guardian and the administrator of his estate," the broker admitted.

"He did; and there was a proviso in the will which is not so generally known. Anitra has always been a spoiled child, willful and headstrong to a degree rare even in this age of emancipated young persons. David lived in constant fear that she would make an unfitting marriage. He left his property in trust, with the proviso that if Anitra married without my approval before her twenty-fifth birthday the bulk of the money should go to certain specified charities."

Padgett made a wry face.

"I don't envy you," he commented shortly.

"It has led to much bickering and ill feeling, I regret to say," was the guardian's admission. "Anitra has had a number of excellent opportunities, any one of which I could most heartily have approved; but precisely because I could approve, I imagine, she has thrown them away. A year ago last summer this young engineer turned up, and—chiefly because I tried to keep him in his place, I fancy—the girl encouraged him openly. As I have said, I thought it was gone and forgotten. But when this hunting trip was broached, a fortnight ago, Anitra suddenly gave up her plan of going to Europe with the Van Pelts, and insisted upon coming along with us. She even went so far as to bully Kitts into saying that she needed a change to the higher altitude. It made me a bit suspicious, Padgett; to tell the truth, I am still suspicious. At this very moment I don't know whether her lame ankle is keeping her here, or whether she has again bullied Kitts."

Once more Padgett nursed his chin and became reflective.

"When in doubt, play trumps," he counseled, at the end of the reflective pause, adding: "You needn't commit yourself, you know. Let them get together a little if they want to. A small sprinkling of romance just at the present crisis may be worth money to us. I asked Kitts on the way in if he were going to take Miss Anitra back to the ranch house with him. His answer made me suspect that it would depend somewhat upon circumstances—the circumstances being your niece's wish to go or to stay."

There was no enthusiasm in the banker's reply.

"It will be leaning upon a broken reed, Padgett. Vallory suggested something of the sort, and I shut him off. Up to a certain point the 'sprinkling of romance,' as you call it, might work in our favor; but beyond that point it might easily prove disastrous. You can see what I mean."

"Oh, yes; but it wouldn't have time to get that far along. I may conclude

not to go back with Kitts to-day. Suppose you invite our man over to the car for dinner this evening. You are willing to cultivate him socially to that extent, aren't you?"

"I doubt if he would come."

"He would if Mrs. Grantham would send him a note."

"He doesn't know Mrs. Grantham."

Padgett laughed. "In my younger days, when a young girl's chaperon sent me an invitation to dinner, I think I was always able to give credit where it belonged."

"I see," said the banker. "But what's the object?"

"For one thing, it might swing the romantic pendulum our way, and for another, it would give you an excellent opportunity to commit Stannard before the rest of us."

"H'm!" said the banker thoughtfully. And then: "Padgett, you've got a long head when it comes to the details. I'll think about it."

"There is another thing to think about, too," the broker went on meditatively. "There is always the chance that Stannard may fail us at the last moment. We can't afford to fall down now. We've gone too far. Is Greer ready to put the screws on if they are needed?"

"His graders will be in the Travois to-night, and his advance men are setting the stakes for the forward push up the cañon. Stannard caught two of Greer's engineers running a line across the head of the valley night before last, and assaulted them. He has a bad temper. The O. N. men were entirely within their rights, and were not interfering in any way with Stannard's work. There is a warrant out for our young hot-head, but it won't be served unless matters come to a pass at which it will be necessary to efface Stannard for the time being."

Again Padgett jerked his head sidewise.

"I'm on," he agreed. "If it should come to blows, we can nip the thing in the bud pretty easily by having Stannard arrested for assault and battery. As far as I can see, the ground appears to be pretty well covered at this end of the line, and it's up to our people in New York to press their advantage. I'll send a wire or two and get a straight tip on the situation. The only thing I'm afraid of now is a possible leak. Stannard has two of his surveying parties out in the Kicking Deer district, and you can never tell what may happen."

The big-bodied magnate settled himself more firmly in his chair.

"Every precaution has been taken. Rundschau and Magoffin, the two Kicking Deer discoverers, have nothing to gain by talking; and besides, they are practically under guard day and night in New York, though they may not know it. More than that, their prospect holes have been carefully filled up, and made to look like abandoned claims. They are a mile off the line of Stannard's short-cut survey, and his advance parties are not looking for gold mines. Even Greer doesn't know the real object of his rush."

The broker felt absently in his pocket for a cigar, but when he had found one he put it back without lighting it.

"Just the same, I'd like to take the top of Stannard's head off and see what's going on inside," he said. "Of course, you had to give him some reason why the Overland Northern wants to acquire the tunnel site and rights?"

"There was a very plausible reason ready to hand. It has long been understood that the Overland would some day build a southwestern extension. Stannard believes that the line now under construction from Lodge Butte is the beginning of that extension. He knows, what every Western railroad builder knows, that the only practicable route for a hundred miles north or south is by means of a tunnel under the Buckskin."

"Capital!" said Padgett, rubbing his fat hands together. Then he ventured a prediction: "If you'll take my advice, about the dinner and the dose of romance, Greer won't have to be called in. It will be vastly better. Merriam can be a nasty fighter if you once get him started, as you learned a few years ago to your cost. Easy as she lies, is

the word. I'm going over to the camp telegraph office. Anything you want to send?"

"Nothing, I believe," said the big-bodied man in the desk chair, and he let Padgett go without any further assurances touching the suggested dinner invitation to one Claiborne Stannard.

CHAPTER XV.

M'CLARTY'S PETARD.

"It's some whale of a job, Stannard, and the man who could plan it all and set it going, and keep it going, needn't take a back seat for anybody."

Kitts, having paid his duty call upon Mrs. Grantham and Anitra at the car, had found Stannard as the engineer was setting out for the tunnel, had climbed the steep Buckskin trail with him, had been put in personal and sympathetic touch with the strenuous labor battle going on in the heart of the treacherous mountain, and was now on his way down the cañon loop grade with the young Missourian for his pace setter.

"There are plenty of men who can do all three," was Stannard's modest disclaimer on the credit score; "so many that the fellow who does them needn't let his head swell. Just the same, the bigness of the thing does lay hold of you. You want to see the job go through. If it doesn't go through it's a good bit like burying your best friend."

"But you're going to make this one go through," put in the athletic young physician.

"Two days ago, Kitts, I should have said there was no doubt of it. We've had our troubles all along, and we've been running a rather frantic race against time—against the coming of winter, as I told you the other day; but we still stood an even chance of winning out—up to yesterday."

"And what happened yesterday? Has the other road given you notice to quit?"

"It's worse than that," Stannard averred soberly. "We've been expecting a scrap when the Overland Northern got on the ground. That was all in the day's work. But now Wall Street butts in with a money scare. For the reasons you have just had pointed out to you on the spot, the tunnel is costing a good bit more than we figured; the estimates were based upon solid rock and a roof that would hold itself up."

"I see. And your management has lost its nerve?"

"Not that exactly. But a minority of the stock is running around in circles for fear the Northern is going to hit us on the floor of the Exchange."

"Uncle Silas brings you this pleasant bit of information?" suggested the doctor.

"Yes; and he puts it up to me good and strong that I ought to be the goat—that it's my duty to be the goat. If I wire our people that we're fighting a losing battle here, that'll settle it. Mr. Merriam will take my word for it, the short-cut project will be abandoned temporarily, at least, and the country—as the high financiers define it—will be saved."

"But, say!" Kitts broke in; "that would be pretty tough on you, wouldn't it? You'd lose your job."

"I stand to lose considerably more than my job. If I consent to be the goat, I shall be in the same fix that you'd be in if you should do something making it impossible for you to practice medicine any more."

"Why, Stannard!" exclaimed the listener. "That would be little less than a catastrophe! Give up your profession?"

"The profession will give me up. It has no more use for failures than yours has."

"Great Scott! And you're talking about it as calmly as if it were a mere incident. Doesn't your calling mean any more than that to you?"

"It means as much to me as yours does to you, Kitts. I could go on being an engineer—and a poor man—all my life, and be pretty well satisfied. But that alternative is cut out in the present case. I'm in the fix of the small manufacturer who gets in the way of the trust; he can go out of business with

the price of his plant in his pocket, or he can sit tight and be squeezed out."

Kitts had the good-natured, telltale face of an open-hearted boy, the face being maskable only when he dealt with his patients.

"For Heaven's sake!" he said in honest indignation. "They're trying to bribe you?"

"Oh, I reckon you'd hardly call it that. You don't say that the little manufacturer is bribed when he sells out because he has to. Westervelt is disposed to be fair. He knows what it will mean to me in a professional way to drop this job just as it stands, and is willing to make it up to me. He puts it on a business basis, pure and simple; says it's cheaper for him and those whom he represents to give me a chance to make good in some other way than it would be for them to take their losses on a slump in G. L. & P."

They were turning the gulch head where the upper leg of the loop swung in a great half circle to cross the mountain stream and to become the lower leg, and for a time Kitts held his peace. In the fullness of time, he said: "I can't help feeling as if I had just discovered that a mighty good friend of mine had developed a case of organic disease of the heart, Stannard. Has the thing gone so far that it can't be stopped?"

"It is practically out of my hands. I and my kind are merely pawns in the big game at the best, and we have to take our medicine when the high-finance gentlemen hand it out to us."

"I know," Kitts nodded. "It's a crooked old world in some parts of it. I've known you only three days, Stannard, but that's long enough to make me figure you as a fellow who wouldn't lie down until he's dead—plumb dead. Also, I've been sizing you up as a fellow to whom money doesn't mean any more than it ought to mean."

"That's where you're away off," Stannard rejoined half cynically. "Money means a lot to me."

"I know better!" snapped the young doctor. "You may think it does, just now, but at the bottom it doesn't; I'm sure it doesn't. Anitra's been telling me about you. You could go back to your Ozark apple orchards and live there in comfort without a job, couldn't you?"

"Yes; I reckon I could."

"Then you owe it to yourself a thousand times over to do it rather than to sell yourself to Silas Westervelt and his bunch. Listen to me a minute, Stannard. Back in New York, where people know him up one side and down the other, Westervelt has a reputation for making cold-blooded twists and turns that are simply fierce, even in this dollar-thirsty age. He'll skin you alive, quite without malice, and equally without mercy, if he needs your hide to hang on some financial fence that he happens to be building. You can't afford to put yourself into the hands of a man like that!"

"You can't magnify the risk any more than I have, Kitts. But Westervelt and his crowd have the whip hand. They can smash me, and, what is much more serious, they can smash John P. Merriam and his management. Westervelt, while he is a director in our company, is also in deep enough with Overland Northern to have some sort of a pull. Nothing has been said to me to even hint at such a thing, but I know that the Overland's claim on the right of way is going to be used as a club if it's needed. Greer is practically here on the ground with a force which outnumbers ours. If I don't call the thing off voluntarily, Greer's presence means that it'll be called off forcibly. Mr. Merriam doesn't want any stock complications such as would be piled in upon him if war is declared; and that's what'll happen if Greer's men and ours come to blows over this right of way."

"I don't see it," objected the ex-football captain stubbornly.

"I didn't, at first—chiefly, I guess, because I didn't want to see it. But it's the cold fact. Apart from the flurry the fight would doubtless kick up in the money market, we might lose out to the tune of a good many millions by getting licked. Look up on that hillside to the right. Do you see that cleared streak through the timber paralleling our grade?"

"Yes."

"That's the Overland's location. Imagine a small army of laborers up there, blasting and shoveling and dumping, firing their spoil down on us faster than we could shovel it off, and you've got the situation. Greer couldn't stop us entirely, maybe; but he might easily delay us. You've seen the tunnel, and you can guess what a prolonged delay will mean for us in that rotten hole."

"I see," Kitts said. "It may mean that the whole business will tumble in and destroy all your work. Great cats! but it's hard, Stannard—to think that your only alternative is to sell out to Uncle Silas! Are you going to do it?"

"I'm tempted, Kitts, tempted as I never supposed a man with decent upbringings could be," the Missourian confessed baldly. "On one hand there's safety for Mr. Merriam, safety for the company—as Mr. Westervelt puts it—and for me a chance to get in right with the money-making crowd. I could make good in the money wrestle; I'm just egotistical enough to believe that I could, if I should make it the be-all and end-all. While I don't care much for money, as money, I'm caring a whole lot, right now, for something that money won't buy, but for which I can't get even a look-in without money."

"That's one side of it," said Doctor Billy. "What's the other?"

"I reckon there isn't any other," said Stannard, after a dejected little pause. "Or, if there is, it can be summed up in sheer professional pride; a stubborn disgust for the quitter in any game."

Kitts took a few more strides in silence, and then he said: "What does the girl say about it?"

Stannard laughed good-naturedly. It was impossible to take offense at anything Kitts could say.

"How do you know there is a girl?" he demanded.

"I took it for granted; there always is."

The young Missourian laughed again, and feeling perfectly safe because his secret had not been shared, even with Anitra, he said: "The last time I saw and talked with her she told me to get money; honestly if I could, and the other way if I had to."

The straightforward young doctor was plainly shocked.

"That's rather dreadful, Stannard! I can't imagine your falling in love with a girl who would say a thing like that—meaning it."

"Perhaps she didn't mean it, though I wouldn't put it beyond her," was the half-absent qualification. "Money spells luxury for most women, and the one I'm speaking of has never known anything but luxury."

A curve in the grade had brought them to the big rock cut, and the clamor of the air drills shrilled suddenly louder, making anything less than a shout inaudible. Standing to look on at the head of the cutting, Stannard saw McClarty, the big Irish foreman, coming across the river on the foot-log bridge which gave access to the powder magazine hidden away, for safety's sake, under the opposite cañon cliff.

The Irishman had a small yellow cylinder in his hands, to which he appeared to be attaching a bit of blackened string, and it was evident that he had not yet observed the approach of his chief. When he reached the right-hand river bank, both of the onlookers saw him strike a match on his overalls. A moment later he climbed to the top of a hillock of broken stone, and hurled the small yellow cylinder, trailing a thin line of blue smoke behind it, high among the firs on the slope above the cutting. Instantly there was a crashing explosion on the forested hillside, and a shower of dry earth and pebbles came pouring over the clifflike lip of the excavation.

What followed came like the sudden rebound of a steel spring. While the dust and pebbles were still rattling down the face of the cliff, a man in cowboy overalls, blue shirt, and flapping hat, and with a cartridge-belted weapon sagging at his right hip, appeared on the high cliff brink. Deliberately, and yet so swiftly that the movement seemed a part of the lounging walk, he whipped the weapon from its holster, and snapped it at McClarty.

With a yell that made itself heard above the clamor of the drills, the foreman crumpled like a spineless marionette, and rolled down the side of the small stone heap from which he had hurled his missile. At the cry, the drills were stopped, and the rock men came running from both ends of the cutting.

"Come on!" Kitts shouted to his pace setter. "The man's shot!" And together they sprinted down the grade to be among the first to reach McClarty.

Knowing better than any one the value of prompt first aid, the athletic young surgeon pushed the workmen aside and took hold with his hands. The foreman's wound was in the leg, a clean, downward-ranging puncture which had missed the thigh bone, but had cut an artery.

"A handkerchief—one of you fellows, quick—a big bandanna!" snapped Kitts; and he was instantly given his choice of a half dozen. Knotting swiftly the first that came to hand, he contrived a makeshift tourniquet, twisting it with a bit of stick until the wounded man yelled again. Setting one of the drillers to hold the stick, the emergency surgeon sprang up and dragged Stannard aside.

"It's a severed artery, and I've got to get that fellow on the table in a little less than no time," he announced hastily. "Luckily, I left a few of my tools in the private car. How will you get him to camp?"

Stannard's answer expressed itself in competent action. Under his orders, McClarty was carried quickly to the end of track and put on a push car. Room was made for the doctor and the boss, and a bee swarm of the men rushed the car down the grade and around the great curve into the Travois. Five minutes after the arrival at the camp, the foreman was strapped upon the rude table in the hospital shack, a light-footed quarryman had raced across to the *Egeria*, and was on hand with the instruments, and Kitts stripped his coat and went to work.

Stannard did not stay to help. Anxious to forestall further violence, he hurried into the yard, captured one of the construction locomotives, and had the crew take him back up the line, at the best speed the newly laid track would stand, to the scene of the shooting. The rock cutting was deserted, as he was afraid it would be. The score and more of drillers and muckers who had been left behind had armed themselves with drill ends, pick handles, anything they could find, and were beating the forest above the cutting in a hot search for McClarty's assailant.

The beaters came straggling in by twos and threes shortly after the young chief got upon the ground. They had found nothing on the slope above save a few freshly driven stakes; but these served to identify the intruders. As to that, however, one of the returning quarrymen supplied better information.

"There was a gang of 'um," the man told Stannard. "Min wid transits and some wid axes. Sure, it'll be a dom sorry day for thim, do they be showin' up here again," and he went on to tell the chief how the quarrel had begun.

Stannard listened, investigated, and, after seeing the work resumed in the cutting, returned to his headquarters. A little later Kitts came up to once more beg the loan of the engineer's wash bucket and towels. He looked like a butcher, and said he felt like one.

Farther on, he came back to the workroom, and swung himself up to a seat on Brant's drawing board.

"Oh, yes; he'll live, all right," he said, in answer to Stannard's questioning brow lift. "But it was a close call. The chances are about a hundred to one that he would have bled to death if we hadn't happened along just as we did. If you've got your breath, pitch out and tell me what it all means."

"It means another move in the game—the game we were talking about as we came down the grade. A gang of Greer's pioneers was relocating the old Overland survey on the slope above the cutting. Carelessly or purposely, somebody in the gang started a rolling rock; it fell into the cutting, and barely missed smashing one of our drilling squad. Some few compliments were passed back and forth; then McClarty went

over to the magazine and made an impromptu bomb out of a stick of dynamite. That was what we saw him throw up among the trees."

"Well, they handed it back to him pretty suddenly, anyhow," Kitts commented; then he added, with the slow closing of an eye: "Rather savage state of affairs, isn't it? Back East we'd call it war. What are you going to do about it?"

"It's an added argument on the other side, don't you think?" Stannard queried. "What we've just seen is an earnest of what will follow on a bigger scale if I stick to my job and refuse to take the advice of the one-man peace tribunal over in the *Egeria*. I am game for it myself, Kitts, but the bigger question has been thrusting itself upon me in the last hour or so. My men, or a good many of them, will fight at the drop of the hat if I give the word. How much right have I to shove them into the breach? It's a pretty heavy responsibility, first and last."

The young surgeon laughed, and slipped down from the drawing-board seat. "I'm no good at that end of it, Stannard. You'll have to figure the responsibility out for yourself. But I'll venture a small guess: If I've sized you up anywhere near right, these scrappers are taking precisely the surest way to put the trouble pot on the fire. Did you catch the fellow who did the shooting?"

The Missourian shook his head. "No; the quarrymen turned out, after we left with McClarty, and ransacked the woods, but they didn't find anybody. Which is lucky, I guess—if we mean to keep the peace."

Kitts grinned knowingly.

"You don't mean to keep the peace, Stannard. I can see it in your eye. You resemble some other people I know. You like to dally with temptation, and go through all the motions of chasing it up one hill and down another, knowing all the time precisely what you're going to do, and how you are going to do it."

Stannard got out of his chair, and walked the length of the room twice with his head down and his hands in his pockets before he turned to say: "You're dead right, Kitts; I do know what I'm going to do! I'm going to show Judson Greer and the money people that we can put that tunnel through in spite of the devil. That business at the rock cutting this afternoon turned the scale. If they had been content to toll me along easy—but they were not; and now, by heavens, they can take it as it comes!"

Kitts stuck out his hand. "I like you better that way, old man. Now I'll trot along and see if Anitra has changed her mind once more about going to the bear camp with me this evening. If you were a ladies' man, I'd bet you a brand-new ten-dollar bill that she has." And at that he went away.

Half an hour after Doctor Billy had gone back to the *Egeria*, Eddie Brant came in from the lower yard, where he had been checking off a fresh consignment of steel. Stannard had some instructions to give the map maker about his latest plotting of the cañon curve, and he was bending over the drawing board with Brant when the yellow porter who figured indifferently as platform guard, second waiter, and valet-in-ordinary to Mr. Silas Westervelt, came in with a note for the young chief. The envelope exhaled a faint perfume of violets, and the inclosure, written in the stiff, upright scrawl of the up-to-date penwoman, ran thus:

DEAR MR. STANNARD: Mrs. Grantham wishes me to say that she will be greatly pleased to have you join us at dinner in the *Egeria* this evening—informally, of course. I have told her that I am sure you won't do anything so purely human as to come.

A. WESTERVELT

TO BE CONTINUED.

Fear of Home

By Theodore Goodridge Roberts

Author of "The Black Fox of Trinity Bay," "The Mysterious Smith," Etc.

A grim picture of the sealers of the North; of men braving death on the ice, leaping the crevices in the breaking floes with prayers on their lips and terror at their heels; of the courageous but horror-smitten captain who sailed the old *Walrus* back into port log-loaded with frozen men. If fear should lay hold of men whose everyday life is a thing of horror we can understand and pity, but not condemn.

THE lads of Fore-and-aft Cove are not given to deep-sea faring. They are confirmed home-keepers. Poverty and the perils of the coastwise waters keep the population from increasing to an inconvenient extent.

In the memory of the oldest inhabitant, Jerry Chalker was the first and only son of the little harbor to leave it for deep-sea voyaging. But no adventurous spirit drove him forth; no craving for wider horizons lured him out.

The men and boys of Fore-and-aft Cove worked the shore fisheries of the outer bay in their skiffs. Senseless currents, sudden fogs, and shifts of wind made it a perilous and benumbing occupation; and the reward was frequently insufficient for the needs of back and belly. In the early months of winter they hunted the caribou on the vast barrens behind the harbor, sometimes with success, and as often with failure. In the spring, ten or a dozen of the sturdiest of them tramped southward to Harbor Grace and shipped with Old Skipper Bartt, Young Skipper Bartt, Skipper Bill Pike, or some other notable slayer of seals, for a trip to the ice. The adventure to the floes was a hard way of making a modest sum of money, even with luck and a "log-loaded" ship; but the men of Fore-and-aft were accustomed to hard ways, and even in their wildest dreams an easy way of making money was beyond their imagining.

Jerry Chalker made his first journey to Harbor Grace, and his first and last trip to the ice, in his eighteenth year; but he was not without experience. Like other strong-limbed lads of the coast, he had learned, at an early age, to run on the shore ice when it was adrift in the spring—to leap unerringly from pan to pan; to cross patches of "slob," or crushed ice, with flying feet; even to strike some unwary harbor seal with his bat, and deprive it of hide and blubber with his "sculping knife."

All ten men from Fore-and-aft Cove obtained berths with Captain Pike, of the old *Walrus*. This was a grand stroke of luck for the ten men from the north, for Bill Pike had the name of a successful sealer, and it was years since the *Walrus* had returned from the ice without a deckload; and the larger the load for the ship the larger the "bill" for every member of the crew.

That year the sealing fleet from Harbor Grace consisted of four vessels. The four lay all night with their bows toward the great bay and the sea beyond, their furnaces aglow, and all their men aboard. At seven o'clock they started away to the bang of a gun

ashore, as if for a race. And truly they raced, each captain striving against his fellows in a competition that offered prizes of gold and death, steaming out of the great bay and northward to put his luck, his skill, and his ship and men to the test of the ice.

When the ships got clear of the northern cape of Conception Bay, and swung their heavy prows north and nor'-by-west, the *Walrus* was slightly in the lead. The wind was moderate, and out of the west. The sun was bright, the sky clear, and the air nipping cold. To port lay the broken coast, the snow-capped cliffs brown and purple in the sun, the land-wash fringed by shore ice that gleamed white and azure between the black rocks and the green seas. To starboard lay the vasts of ocean, the discolored hulls and black reek of the other sealers, the innumerable gray seas rising and falling and rising again without haste or violence, riding in from a wavering and colorless horizon.

The one hundred and forty men aboard the *Walrus* were in high spirits. Captain Pike was a great skipper, and the *Walrus* was a grand ship. Every poor son of distress aboard felt as sure of "making a bill" as of his need of it. Songs were sung. Big-chested stories were told of other trips to the ice, of log-loaded ships, of fabulous bills. Had not Skipper Bill Pike himself once encountered the Greenland floe and the myriads of ice-riding seals just north of the straits, and loaded his ship, to the utter disregard of the Plimsoll marks, in two days and a night? It was so.

From Cape Freels the course of the *Walrus* was laid fair for Cape Bauld, the most northern point of Newfoundland. The white glimmer of floe ice was sighted to the eastward as darkness settled slowly upon the wastes; but Captain Pike held to his course. It was the right kind of ice, he admitted—Greenland ice; but few seals were riding it.

"I can smell the swile," he said to his bewhiskered mate, "like my father could, an' like his father afore him."

Dawn showed nothing of the other ships to the men of the *Walrus* save two smudges of black smoke far to the east, and a third far astern.

Jerry Chalker was big, ignorant, uncouth, docile, and immune to hardship. He differed from his kind only in one particular. His mind was alive to such an extent as to be affected by other suggestions than those inspired by hunger, cold, and physical danger. He wondered and worried about the depths under the ship's keel. Sometimes the immensities of sky and sea awoke sensations of despair in him which he could neither name nor understand. He knew fear; and this was not fear. He had known grief when his mother died; and this was not grief. Vaguely, almost unconsciously, he envied the men around him who smoked and cursed undismayed in the face of that vast of desolation, merry so long as their bellies were satisfied, unafraid so long as they were not actually struggling against death and disaster. But when Jerry tried to reason out these distressing sensations his mind seemed to drift in a circle, feebly, painfully, uselessly. He could not think. He could only feel with his mind.

Jerry's queer distaste for his desolate surroundings did not occupy his time and attention exclusively. Far from it. A keener emotion than this periodical and nameless despair was his admiration for the captain. It was an awed admiration, and impersonal, like a savage's regard for the god of thunder and lightning. The two had never exchanged a word, to date.

Jerry Chalker, lolling with his kind on the forward deck, raised his eyes to the bridge continually and regarded the supermen there with awe and wonder. And the greatest of those superior creatures was Captain Pike. Jerry's mind struggled to comprehend the greatness of the skipper, as yours and mine sometimes struggle to comprehend the vastness of the starry universe. The immensities of the captain's powers and parts baffled the lout's toiling intelligence.

He knew that the big, lean man, with the sandy mustaches and the blue eyes, held the life of the great ship and the

lives of her company in his hand; and yet he seemed to give his attention only to the ship, the sea, and the sky, standing apart from and high above the crew and the company of seal killers, and dealing with them only through his officers.

He had seen the captain turn his head, up there on the bridge, and the boiling cutwater swing to port in answer. With a turn of the head the master directed those thousands of tons of wood, steel, and humanity across the trackless seas.

The wonder of it filled Jerry, head and soul; for he knew nothing of the mechanical contrivances which connected the bridge with the engine room. To him it seemed that the ship read the captain's thought.

Bill Pike was a clever sealer, beyond a shadow of doubt. Fifty miles north of the strait, and one hundred miles offshore, at noon of a golden and windless day, he ran the old *Walrus* into the seal-ridden floe. He drove that massive prow into a wound in the seaward flank of that immeasurable white field, so that his killers could disembark from both sides. They scattered over the ice, each man equipped with towline, skinning knife, and "bat" of birch wood.

The seals were of the two great "hair-seal" families, Harps and Hoods. They are valuable only for their hides and blubber. In the gathering of this strange and pitiful harvest, the thick pelt and its deep lining of blubber are removed in one operation, and the red carcass is left to blot the white floe, to feed the sea birds, and later the fishes.

The ice was soon stained and fouled in all directions. The pelts of the nearer seals were towed back to the ship as soon as procured; but the farther slayers killed and flayed, and passed on, leaving mounds of pelts behind them to be towed to the ship by others, or picked up later by the ship herself, should a shift of wind spread the component parts of the floe. These deposits of hide and blubber were marked by small flags distinguishing them as the property of the *Walrus,* as a safeguard against their being claimed by the crews of any other ships that might happen along.

Jerry Chalker worked in company with three others, all of Fore-and-aft Cove. They struck and skinned, struck and skinned, and moved on to fresh slaughters unceasingly, reaping that bleeding field with a perfect frenzy of energy, dead to the horrors of their task. The larger the ship's load, the larger the reward for every member of her company; and the quicker the load aboard and the ship back in port, the sooner the money in the pocket.

A little wind fanned out from the west. Captain Pike, on the high bridge, remarked it, read the glass, and studied the round horizon. The little wind shifted slightly, shifted again and again, pouring out across those thousands of acres of ice a clear, cold current—from the nor'west, from the nor'-nor'west, from the north-by-west. Again the captain consulted the glass and the sky. The sky had lost something of its clear azure, the sunlight something of its clear gold. The captain looked down at the pelts which had already been hoisted aboard, and out and away at the gleaming, stained ice, at the scattered, active black dots which were the toiling killers, and at the mounds of skins. He was an ambitious man; and there was greed as well as courage in his heart. He turned his glance to the south and east.

"Not another ship in sight," he said. "It is all ours. There will be dirty weather to-morrow; but we'll be log-loaded and away before it strikes us, at this rate."

"The glass bes fallin' fast, sir," said the second mate.

"I noticed it, Mr. Kelly," replied the skipper ironically. And then, with another voice, he cried: "We'll go home with a deckload this trip! Aye, Tim, loaded to the stack—log-loaded! We'll show 'em who are the lads who can smell out the ice an' the swile!"

"She bes breedin' for a flurry, sir," said old Kelly, gazing straight into the north with narrowed eyes. "Aye, breedin' fast."

The skipper slapped Mr. Kelly playfully on a bulky shoulder.

"Belay that, Tim Kelly," he cried. "D'ye think to teach me the tricks o' wind and weather? A flurry we'll have, as sure as God makes ice an' sets it adrift; but we'll be log-loaded before we clear away from this floe."

The shifting of the wind into the north and the scarcely perceptible dulling of the sky, did not escape the more experienced of the busy slayers out on the ice. Black Nick Chalker looked up from the sculping of a seal, with his bewhiskered face to the north, as sharply as if some one had spoken his name. He read the signs. He had made the trip to the ice every spring for twenty years. He finished the task in hand, then flung the warm pelt aside, and got to his feet. He turned and gazed questioningly off toward the distant ship.

"B'ys, a flurry bes breedin' to the nor'ard," he said, "an' they breeds big an' quick hereabouts. The ice will go all abroad i' a gale o' wind, an' the flurry'll blind us. I see it fifteen year ago, an' I see it t'ree year ago."

His three companions halted in their advance, considered sky, and wind, and ice, then turned and came back to him.

"Aye, it do look bad," said Jerry Chalker, shivering slightly. "It do look like somethin' dead was comin' alive 'way off there."

"Aye; but the skipper baint flyin' no flag to call us aboard," said Con Strowd.

"They hangs on, the skippers do," said Black Nick Chalker mournfully. "They allus hangs on. Where the swile lays thick the skippers shut their eyes to what's breedin' to win'ward. Sure, an' why not? It baint on the ship's bridge, nor yet i' the chartroom, ye git yerself lost i' the flurry, an' starved to deat' wid the cold. I'll be headin' back for the old *Walrus*, lads, widout waitin' for the skipper's signal—an' the t'ree o' ye will be comin' along wid me if ye baint fools."

So the four worthies from Fore-and-aft Cove ceased their slaying, shouldered their bats, coiled their towlines, and started back for the ship. They moved without haste at first, and with a casual air. They did not want to attract attention to their retreat; for, after all, Nick might be wrong about the speed of the storm that was gathering in the north. The skipper's neglect to fly a signal for return to the ship might be justified by a continuation of fine weather for hours.

The pale, steel tint of the northern sky thickened to an earthy brown. This, in turn, changed, and deepened and hardened to dull slate. The wind increased in weight and chill. Black Nick Chalker quickened his pace, and Jerry and the other two followed him close. Jerry glanced behind him, and to the right and left, and saw other groups of killers desist from their work and head for the ship. Many of these groups were miles away on the darkling floe, and looked no larger than crawling flies. The ship flew the signal of recall. The gloom deepened with the swiftness of the shadow of titanic wings. Jerry turned fearful eyes to the north, and saw the sky as black as night from the tossing horizon to the ominous, purple dome.

A sound sprang into being, grew, filled the darkling world. A torrent of falling wind struck the floe. Jerry and his friends held their mittened hands to their mouths and ran. The wind pressed down upon their bowed shoulders, and struck upon their necks like frosty iron. The ice rose and fell beneath their feet. They staggered; they went down upon their hands and knees; they scrambled up and raced forward madly. Cracks appeared in the laboring floe, through which the breath of the tortured waters beneath blew like smoke.

The gloom deepened. The outcry of the wind bruised ear and brain. The bitter cold snatched the breath from the lips. Men leaped the crevices in the breaking floe with prayers on their lips and terror at their heels. The ship's whistle piped feebly against the roaring of the elements. Snow as dry as sand appeared suddenly in the deluging tides of air, and swirled about the frantic runners. Bats, and towlines, and bags of food were discarded. The race was with death.

Captain Pike stood on the high bridge and drove the big ship into the spreading ice. The whistle bellowed behind him. Red lights flared on the decks below him, forward and aft. The wind buffeted him and wrenched him. The swirling dry snow powdered him and blinded him. He clung to the iron railing and drove his ship through the ice, searching for his men—searching heroically for the lives which he had already played with and lost. Ten men had come aboard at the first stroke of the tempest. Six more had been picked up before the wind had become thickened by the snow. After that, the lads from Fore-and-aft Cove had been found and hoisted over the rail. And since then—nothing.

The darkness and the violence of the storm increased. The fury of the snow-freighted wind exceeded the power of human comprehension, of belief, of the meaning of words. The great pans of ice plunged against the old ship's broad bows and hammered her sides. The frothing screw drove her forward, and the black and white tempest hurled her back. The ship and her master fought the storm—man's handiwork and science, man's brain, and courage, and cunning fought against the insane and unreasoning monstrosity, which the wastes of the North had conceived and hurled forth. And man and ship were defeated. Captain Pike was dragged into the chartroom, unconscious and frost-burned, and revived with brandy. The first mate and Mr. Kelly took the bridge, muffled in furs to their eyes. The beaten ship swung around and retreated sullenly before the onslaught of ice and wind.

The wind abated before midnight, and the snow ceased to fall an hour later. The cold did not lessen. Frozen stars glinted above the rolling seas. Captain Pike staggered back to his post on the high and swaying bridge. The old ship swung around and steamed back to the scene of its defeat. A man went aloft to keep a sharp lookout. The captain nursed a wild hope in his heart that some of the poor fellows on the ice might have made fires of their splintered bats and the raw blubber of the seals, and so saved themselves from death. But this hope died miserably. The ice rode the seas in widely scattered pans; but no pan showed the red blink of fire.

Dawn was glimmering under an ashen lid when the old ship began to recover her men from the great, scattered ice rafts. I call them men. They were hauled up the sides and swung inboard to the icy decks like balks of timber. Some were straight and some were crooked. They were piled upon the decks. The ship headed southward and homeward then, her sealing over for that year. She carried a deckload, even as the skipper had prophesied.

Eighty-two frozen corpses stacked like timber on the icy decks! It is not every skipper that is called upon to sail such a freight as that into port.

Young Jerry Chalker possessed a mind to feel with, even if not to reason with. It was a wonderful mind for the retention of terrific pictures. Courageous as he was in heart and nerve, he was a coward inside his skull. The grim incidents of his first trip to the ice haunted him with marrow-chilling pictures day and night. The homeward voyage with those frozen bodies was a black, unforgettable horror. Near the top of one of the heaps of timber-stiff human flesh lay Red Mike Scanlon, of Fore-and-aft Cove, face upward, eyes open, mouth wide as if he had died in the very act of shouting down the wind. Jerry saw it once and held it clear-cut in his brain until the day of his death.

Only once between the ice and Harbor Grace, homeward bound, did Jerry see the great captain. He looked up at the bridge many times a day, and saw only one or two of the mates there; but on the morning of the day they made port he beheld the broad shoulders and splendid head of the skipper above the canvas dodgers. The lean, high-featured face was not so ruddy as of old; but the blue eyes were clear and fearless, though somewhat fixed in their forward gaze.

Jerry Chalker fled from the death

ship into the streets of the grief-stricken town, with the horrors of that voyage at his heels. He had no money, and he had made no "bill"; but sympathetic and curious townsmen entertained him and questioned him. The red rum did not cheer Jerry. It only served to excite him, and to brighten and warm the pictures in his mind. The tolling of the bells in the town seemed to drive the horror deeper and deeper into the young man's brain at every booming stroke. No tavern in the place was deep enough to guard his throbbing brain from that sound.

A shipmaster all ready to clear for Brazil, but short of men, happened upon Jerry, listened, questioned, and understood. Jerry went aboard the bark that same night, signed on as an ordinary seaman. He slept like a log in the warm forecastle; and he was allowed to sleep late. His mental distress and the fumes of his unaccustomed potations deepened and prolonged his slumber. The bark was clear of the harbor and heading eastward for the open sea when he awoke.

Jerry rejoiced in the daily unwinding of the salty miles between himself and the fearsome North. He felt homesickness; but his horror of the entire terrific North, from Harbor Grace to the drifting ice fields beyond the strait, was stronger than his affection for Fore-and-aft Cove. No one was dependent upon him in Fore-and-aft Cove. His mother was dead; he was unmarried; he had no sweetheart. Whenever he thought of the little harbor of his nativity, the picture of the frozen corpse of Red Mike Scanlon flashed to aching fire in his brain—the wide eyes as dull as frosted windows, the open mouth, whose black lips were set forever in a futile grimace of shouting for help.

Pictures of Captain Pike on the sealer's high bridge sometimes returned to Jerry, and he wondered about that great man. The tragedy of the floe would not touch the great man deeply, he was set so high above the poor fellows who had died, thought Jerry. And he was without fear or pity. Jerry had seen that in the clear, unflinching eyes. And he was rich. The loss of one trip to the ice would mean little to him, even though his share of a full cargo of pelts would have been reckoned in thousands.

The captain of the bark was an excellent man within his limitations. He had understood Jerry Chalker's desire to forget his terrible experience of the ice in foreign voyaging, that day in Harbor Grace; but he could not understand the condition of the mind that whitened the lad's face at the suggestion of returning to Newfoundland. He thought it sheer nonsense—and he said so; and to prove that he was right he refused shore leave to Jerry, in Pernambuco.

Refused the customary privilege of shore leave, Jerry Chalker took French leave. It was not into a bed of roses that Jerry jumped from the ship's rail; but his blood and upbringing saved him from the pangs of humiliation, and he was hardened to hunger and thirst. In time he found work of sorts, and so claimed the privilege inherited from Father Adam, to eat and drink in the sweat of his brow. The sweat of his brow was copious in that stewing climate. Within six months of his desertion from the bark he obtained humble but steady employment on a big coffee estate behind the city. He was content, even happy, save when his mind was tortured by visions of that breaking floe, that darkling sky, the torrent of wind and snow, and the four score dead men stacked like balks of timber on the icy decks. Sometimes, at night, he awoke, shaken with fear, with the tolling of the bells of Harbor Grace clanging in his brain.

So two years passed. Jerry went into the city one day on some petty affair of business for his employer. He stabled his mule, attended to the business, and then entered a shabby eating house for his belated breakfast. Two seafaring men sat at a table in front of him. He judged them to be skippers, or mates, of sailing vessels from the north. One faced him, the other sat with his back turned squarely to him. Jerry was not impressed by these small fry of the

sea. He had known a greater—the master of a sealing steamer—Skipper Pike. But as he ate his highly seasoned breakfast he could not avoid overhearing fragments of the mariners' conversation. What he heard caught his attention and interest.

It was evident to Jerry that the two shipmasters were somewhat the worse for their morning cups. Both voices were thick. The eyes of the one who faced him were staring and moistly glazed.

"The disgrace of it," said the big man with his back to Jerry. "I could have kep' my ship if I'd wanted to—but not me! I don't show my face where any man alive has a right to sneer at it."

"Seven thousand for a three weeks' v'yage!" exclaimed the other. "Don't tell me it wasn't nothin' but sneers drove ye away from that to sail a rotten little barkentine out o' Halifax."

"One spring it was nine thousand I drew. But what the devil do you an' the likes o' you know about the wages o' men and the ways o' the ice?"

"You was scart, that's what. Fear's what's brought ye to this."

"Fear! Not me! But it was a girl—a merchant's daughter round in St. John's. Nothing like the kind o' women ye know about, ye mean little squid of a windjammer pilot. Oh, shucks! Don't mind what I say. Have another. She called me a murderer. Aye, slam in my face. A murderer. That's what a man gets when his luck turns just once. I went to the States an' burned all my money in six months. An' here I am. Whenever I stow too much liquor aboard I blab about it to some fool like you. But fear? No, by——"

The other, the smaller of the two, laughed unpleasantly.

"I don't believe a blasted word of it!" he cried.

His companion swung around violently in his chair and faced Jerry Chalker His blue eyes were blurred and moist, his cheeks were inflamed, and a tangle of red beard hid his jaws and chin.

"You!" he cried. "D'ye hear this shrimp call me a liar? Remember it. He called me a liar. An' now you'll see me kill 'im. You'll see me do it—whoever you are."

Jerry pulled himself to his feet.

"Don't ye do it, sir!" he cried "Leave 'im be, sir. I'll tell 'im who ye be, for didn't I make a trip to the ice wid ye meself, Skipper Pike."

"You?" cried the big mariner, sagging in his chair, and staring at Jerry with amazed and desperate eyes. "When?"

"Two year ago, sir," replied Jerry "Two year ago—when the flurry caught us on the floe—an' you sailed the old *Walrus* into port log-loaded—log-loaded wid frozen men."

Captain Pike screamed with terror, sprang from his seat, and fled from the eating house into the glaring street. Jerry could not move. He sat and gaped at the open door.

"Scart," said the remaining shipmaster. "I was right. He mistook ye for a frozen corpse, mate. He's a coward. He's ha'nted. Fear will kill 'im yet—for the rum can't save 'im."

Jerry Chalker got heavily to his feet, left the place without a word, and rode back to his rural employment and the sweltering fields, with the horror of the North riding his crupper, and the dust of a fallen god choking his heart

THE JUICY ADMINISTRATION

The favorite drinks of statesmen:
Orange juice—the president.
Grape juice—Mr. Bryan, the secretary of state.
Buttermilk—Mr. McAdoo, the secretary of the treasury.
Lemonade—Mr. Burleson, the postmaster general.
Hot water (at meals)—Joseph G. Cannon.
Horse's-neck—William H. Taft

The Fading Knights

By Frederick Niven

Author of "Hands Up," "The Lost Cabin Mine," Etc.

There're still high saddles in Idaho, but the knights of the sage-brush are fading. Niven tells of the feeling of two of these fading knights, through whose diminished realms the driver of the automobile stage honked his way, announcing the new era

THE scene of this story is a valley in Idaho. You can come to its center from the railway northward, along fifty miles of wagon road, or from the railway southward, along seventy-five. There are not many inhabitants in Catamount Valley. There are, indeed, at the present moment—though what the next census will tell, who knows?—more Indians than white persons; and more wild duck than white and red together. The chipmunks and squirrels should come out at the top in a fair census return, and have everything else "skinned," as the phrase is. Like every other valley in the Rockies, Catamount has its majority of law-loving inhabitants, its handful of doubtful characters, its inhabitants who feel that they must play their parts as units of the State, and its inhabitants who let things slide.

Long's store is the human center of Catamount. There is no other store but Long's, and it is also the post office. Next door to it is the Stockman's Hotel—the old name still there in large letters on the false front that makes the hotel look, unless you see it from the side, a story higher than it really is.

One of the few cow-punchers still left to tend the diminishing herds—and go round with the wire pliers—was Ed Caldwell—a young man of the picturesque order whose love was his pony. But when Miss Knapp came to the Stockman's Hotel as waitress, that pony took second place.

It was for the sake of Miss Knapp that he decided to leave the range while still young, for year by year there are fewer vacancies for cow hands of the old school—to leave the range, and go get a job in Bridger City, driving a milk rig around town to begin with, or, as he considered, "any old thing" for a start in some profession likely to last. And, when he had made his pile, back he would come to the Stockman's Hotel and woo Miss Knapp.

That was his dream as he repaired the fences with the pliers despised of his forerunners; that was his dream as he walked the "doggies" slow down the valley to the cars, as his forerunners had done, though they had to drive farther.

Thirty-five a month and board were his wages here. He might have been making fifty if it were not for Miss Knapp; for he had been offered a job in the next valley, on the strength of his horse-breaking powers, at that figure. But the offer came after he had seen Cecily Knapp and had his heart tangled in the gleam of her hair. He had refused it so as to be near enough to see her once or twice a week. Maloney's ranch was just over the benches from the Stockman's Hotel. Now—again because of her—he was going clean out of the valley, to hunt a job that would last.

He was a genuine, simple, straight-goods youth. He told Miss Knapp about his idea to go to town, looking in her eyes searchingly, but by no words giving her an inkling of his reason. She

met his troubled gaze with a merry twinkle, and something in her expression fired him suddenly. He leaned forward.

"I would like *you* to say you think it's a good scheme, Miss Knapp," he said.

Cecily's eyes changed; she seemed to look away deep into him, and he was greatly moved.

"Whatever for?" she asked.

"It's you—it's for you, Miss Knapp. It's for you I'm doing this here mean—I mean this here wise move," he stammered. "It's for your sake."

"Doing what?" she said.

"I'm pulling out to-morrow and going into town," he answered.

"To-morrow? Well, for the land's sake!" she cried out. "But you haven't got a job yet, have you?"

"Oh," he said, "I guess that will be all right. I'll get the job all right—but now that I'm so near goin' for it I would like some encouragement to hold it. It must be hel—I beg your pardon—it must be kind o' strange to drive a milk rig around town!" (The milk rig had evidently got first place.)

She smiled half pityingly, half amused.

"I'm only hangin' on around here for your sake," he broke out, really meaning that he had only given up the horse-breaking job for her sake; though, as she had never heard of that, she, of course, did not understand. "I'm a-tangled up in your dancing eyes like a two-year-old in a rope!" he ejaculated. "That's straight goods and no josh."

She laughed, and he was tangled deeper; nay, he might have had another smile if he could have evolved it, for he saw her gray-blue eyes then like mountain pools, in which he floundered.

"Say, Ed!" she remarked, and sat forward, chin on hand. "You're sure struck on me. I guess you'd better not hang around any more."

It was actually most humane advice—but they were talking to cross-purposes. Here, he thought, was the word of hope. He interpreted it to mean: "You go to town and make me a home, and then come back, and I'll consider your proposal!" There was a fresh rubadub at his heart—and next day there was a man short at Maloney's and a pony unsaddled; and down the wagon road, hitting the grit, with nothing in the way of baggage save a gray blanket, was a little bit of a young man, trudging under the tremendous firs, making for Bridger City.

II.

Two days after Ed had departed, a lean-faced young man, who had earned, up at Prince's outfit, the sobriquet of "Silent Slim," came into town. Town, you must understand, is Long's Store, the hotel, six town lots occupied, and about eight streets marked out with posts but not built upon.

It may seem amazing that one of Prince's men, taking a holiday, should not go to some place in which there was more Life, with the capital L in red, a little more society of the kind that loves to "whoop it up"; but I assure you that his action was not at all unusual. Work goes on seven days a week in the mountains, and it is only natural, working thus, that the boys should sometimes take a week of consecutive Sundays, as it were, to rest.

It was the same in the prospecting days, with prospectors. Every now and then one would turn up at the Stockman's Hotel, stay for a week or a fortnight, and get back to his claims again, instead of "going out"—and this, despite the fact that the proprietor of the hotel has only one gramophone, whereas, at Bridger, there are fifty, and an opera house, where, if there was seldom an opera, there was frequently a visiting company composed of singers of songs about mother, of high kickers, of jugglers, of skirt dancers—a mixture to suit all tastes.

But the cause of Slim's presence now at Catamount was that he and Ed Caldwell were "buddies," and Ed had, with great difficulty, and much grunting, written to him a "heart-to-heart" letter. This letter explained that Ed was going off to Bridger City—"and will you," it read, "do me a turn?"

It was to do his partner this turn

that Silent Slim came and loafed around the hotel for a few days, lounged on the veranda, sat at the door of the blacksmith's. He had no intention of losing his job, but it was long since he had taken a holiday, and these few days would not imperil him. He only intended to take three days just now. Later, from time to time, he would pay a flying visit to Catamount to see, quietly, how Miss Knapp was, according to Ed's request, and to protect her from any insults. That was the commission given him; for Caldwell, having fallen deeply in love, did not for a moment consider that Miss Knapp had been able to take care of herself, so far, quite well.

It has to be explained, however, that in two hundred miles of valley, with a scattered population, there are bound to be one or two mean men. And though Cecily had never complained of any unpleasant customers, Ed could not bear to think of her being annoyed by any such who might, perchance, arrive in his absence.

But the main cause of his trouble was a certain middle-aged man, resident in the valley, who tried to wear an air of being ingratiating to every "fee-male"—as the valley pronounces the word. His name was East, and that man was, in the estimation of Great and Little Catamount, a "skunk."

III.

It was no part of Slim's scheme to become a friend of Miss Knapp's. He made no advances whatever. It was "Yes, ma'am," and "No, ma'am," and "If you please, ma'am," and "Thank you, ma'am," and nothing else. I mean to say that for the first day it was like that. But the terrible thing was that he knew, before that first day of his sojourn at Catamount was over, that she was the only woman in the world for him. Well could he understand Ed's anxiety for her to have a protector around in his absence.

He made no advances whatever, but before he knew it, he found himself last man in the dining room, after all the others were "through," talking to Cecily, she leaning against the table beside him. Before he well knew what was going on, he found himself helping her to "clear away" after the meals were over. Before he well knew it, he found she had wanted to be rowed on the lake, that he had commandeered a boat, and was rowing her!

At that, after coming back, he had a terrible dark hour, sitting alone on the veranda, unable to square his conscience. He recalled his emotions as he helped her into, helped her out of, the boat. Chewing the end of a cigar, he sat in the outer dark. The silence censured him. The distant sound of gentle winds in the tops of sleeping firs admonished him. He heard, from the barroom, the sound of cards being slapped down, occasional outbursts of exclamatory speech over some run of luck or acute play, but he did not join his fellows at once.

He was in misery—feeling himself untrue to his buddy, and yet feeling that if he now froze up, if he now retreated into his shell, he would be rude to a fee-male. The tarnation thing was that the mere presence of that fee-male was to him adorable. The sound of her voice moved him, the beholding of her gestures moved him, the very crinkle of her apron and flutter of her gown moved him—all to adoration.

Adoration? Adoration? Slim asked himself where he stood—and Slim was afraid. His Deity was three parts compact of honor. Though he, Silent Slim, had been dishonorable, he did not eschew his Deity. He was not, whatever he was, of those who, on having failed to live up to their ideals, malign and forswear their ideals. The only ease he gained that night was drawn, after many self-accusations, from a thought that came to him: Perhaps Miss Knapp might, on the morrow, take back all she had given so far.

"I guess," thought he, "she will be considerin' that this here great enjoyment of each other's society ain't straight goods when her beau is workin' in town."

It never occurred to Quixote Slim

that perhaps the love affair of Ed Caldwell's was merely an idea of Ed's, not shared by Cecily. But, feeling a little better after this streak of hope for the morrow, Slim tramped along the resonant veranda to the splash of light from the barroom window, and, opening the door, went blinking into the lamplight, sicklied o'er by his hour's deep thought. The society of his fellows, and a box of dice, did him a whole lot of good.

But it was not a lasting good. Breakfast brought again the old trouble Miss Knapp was, he thought, a trifle aloof. He was glad—eh? Was he? No; he knew he should be glad; but he was not! It vexed him. He sat with one arm over the back of his chair, one elbow on table, waiting for his hot cakes, the main portion of the meal over. There was only one other breakfaster in the room, and Miss Knapp was chatting to him. She now passed behind Slim as he sat there telling himself he was glad of the turn of affairs, and then telling himself that he lied; she passed behind him, and, dropping her napkin, stooped quickly to pick it up, and in stooping—squeezed his sad and drooping hand! Just in passing it was, and she was gone. The other man did not see the action.

When she returned with Slim's hot cakes, her face was masklike. He looked up at her, worshiping. Then, suddenly, she shot him one glance—and he felt there was truth in these drawings in comic papers that show rays darting from the eyes of lovers. The comic-paper artists knew. They were wise to it. Oh, that Ed had not given him this trust!

Some late breakfaster now came in, and Slim rose, his hot cakes eaten, and passed out to the veranda.

"You're staying around a long spell," the blacksmith said to him, as he went past.

"Long spell? Why, I've only been here——" Slim paused. Gee whiz! He had been around a week! So he had! And he had only meant to stay two, or at the outside three, days! The blacksmith passed on, smiling roguishly, and the smile made Slim feel guilty. As he stood biting a wooden toothpick, taken up on leaving the table by mere force of habit, he heard a far-off hum like a thousand bees. It drew nearer. It became a rasping and humming blent.

"What in heck!" he began; and then it dawned on him. It was the weekly mail—no longer a picturesque coach, but an automobile, one high of clearance to go over the rough roads that were often little better than two ruts through the woods. The odd dozen of inhabitants began to turn out to see the mail coach—they still called it so—humming and honking through their solitudes.

"Ever rode in one of them gasoline buggies?" asked a voice behind him. It was the hotel proprietor who spoke.

"Nope," said Slim.

Onto the veranda came Cecily Knapp.

"Oh, say!" she cried. "You're behind the times. You're a back number, Slim."

He gave her one glance. Then, on the impulse of the moment, he went across to the post office, where the car was now throbbing. Old Long handed out the regulation bag—a monster one to hold a matter of three letters and a post card.

"Can you take a passenger?" Slim asked the driver.

"Yap."

Slim leaped in.

But our righteousness—whatever our creed, it would appear—is "filthy rags." Slim told himself he was doing the only straight thing left him to do, in fleeing from Miss Knapp—for how could a man of honor declare his love to his buddy's girl? He never admitted that he could have gone back to the ranch, instead of rushing into Bridger. He told himself that he fled from Catamount because he was afraid to stay longer with Miss Knapp; and then, as the machine leaped and skidded and swayed, and Slim—accustomed to naught but a saddle—shot up and down between seat and canvas hood like a pea in a bladder, he confessed to himself that he really came because Cecily

had told him he was a back number for never having ridden in one of these new devil wagons.

When he alighted at Bridger City, with a splitting headache from the shaking between hood and machine, but very greatly rejoiced over his new experience, he went straight to bed at the Occidental, and heard no sound till eight in the morning, when he returned to consciousness and remembered that he was not in the Stockman's Hotel, but fifty miles from there. He rose and drew the blind and looked out—saw the hardware stores, the banks, the drug stores, with their files of magazines hanging on each side of the doorways, saw the opera house down the street, and over its doorway a sign he marveled at: "Continuous Performance" it read. He had not been in town for a year. Oh, yes—he knew; he had heard the thing discussed in the barroom at Catamount. When he had found Ed Caldwell, and reported on the happiness of the fair Miss Knapp, he would get Ed to come inside the opera house with him. He might as well have a few more days in town, seeing he was there.

Suddenly his eye fell upon another sight. In Bridger City they still had their chain gang; it was manned, for most part, by boys who had been on the jamboree. They had a lot of streets to make in Bridger, and sidewalks to lay. The chain gang, extinct in many other parts, still flourished here under the present mayor, who did not see why a man whose ambition was to have a hot time in the old town to-night should not pay in the morning by doing a little for the town—seeing that the lumber camps and the mines lured away all but dagos and some few squareheads from street work. In the string of men that walked with iron jingle, shackled by their ankles in a shuffling row, was none other than Slim's buddy—Ed Caldwell!

Ten minutes later, Slim was in the street. Ten minutes later, in exchange for a ten-dollar bill—having followed the chain gang up a side street, where the prisoners worked beyond the gaze of citizens—he had got the permission of the Winchester-carrying old warder for two minutes' talk with his buddy.

"Gee whiz!" said Ed. "I stood it for nearly a week, and then—I met Jim Blake coming out of the opera house. Jim and me was partners in Wyoming, and he seemed so downhearted at finding me working in town that I had to chirp him up some by celebratin' our meetin'! I been here since. But what are you doing in town? Anything wrong?"

Slim shook his head.

"When do you get your laig loose again?" he asked.

"Day after to-morrow," said Ed.

The warder coughed.

"It's all right—all right. Don't fret none," said Slim hurriedly. "I waits around for you."

But, alas! Slim grew so miserable and unstrung, waiting for the next day to pass, that he had his head turned and his legs tangled by the smallest portion imaginable of an oily yellow-red fluid he sipped to cheer his spirits. Forgetting it was the era of concrete and automobiles, he felt it incumbent upon him, seeing the lights festooned across the front of the motion-picture house, to go and buy a Colt, and come out on the sidewalk opposite the opera house and get into action.

His explanation next morning was that he thought the electric lights decorating the front of the picture house were targets in a shooting gallery. The judge admitted the resemblance, but had to give Slim ten days in the chain gang. So Ed, set free the day that Slim was made to walk in the manacled row, waited in town the ten days—ten agonized days, ten dry days. For his dread was lest their fate was to be one in and one out of that chain gang!

But at last the days were over. They were both free, and together again. At a corner table of the Occidental, heads close, they conferred, Slim talking slow and quiet, Ed listening, alert, looking up at his partner from under his brows.

Silent Slim bared his heart. He told all the truth of how he had fallen in love with the girl whom he was to guard

from harm. He punctuated his narrative with the words: "Bud, I gave you straight goods, and no lie—I could not hold it down. If it hadn't been you, Ed, gee whiz! I'd have put my cards on the table—no offense to you, Ed, you understand."

Ed only nodded, and kept nodding now and then till all was said; then he held out his hand, and his grip was warm and reassuring.

"You go back," he said, "and put your cards on the table."

"Say!" cried Slim. "Say! I can't! This here is too magnanimous of you."

"Don't you mention it, Slim," responded Ed. "I'm a changed man since I tried to work in a town. You go back, Slim—and I wish you joy and felicity. You take the auto back."

"Take the what?"

"The outo-mo-beel. She comes in to-day—pulls out again to-morrow."

The mail car arrived just when they had come to this amicable end; the stopping roar of it sounded outside, and the stationary pur went on. Ed and Slim rose and moved out—and, behold, dismounting, was that ingratiating old man of Catamount Valley! They saw him get onto the sidewalk, and turn to help out a lady—their Miss Knapp! She smiled in their astonished faces as she alighted.

"Hello, kids!" she said affably. "I'm Mrs. East now."

Then she followed her newly made husband into the hotel, and the clerk, who had come out to greet them, trundled in their grips and valises.

Dumfounded, the two young men looked on. And there they stood, dazed, till the driver of the car noticed them, and said:

"How-do, boys!" They came to sane life again at sound of his voice, but stared at him rather owlishly.

"How-do!" he repeated.

"Eh? Oh—how-do!" they said, in chorus.

"It does frazzle you, don't it?" said the driver. "Well, I guess she knows what she's doing. He owns half the valley, anyhow."

"But—well—why, it's sinful!" gasped Slim. "He's sixty if he's a day, and she's no more'n a girl, no more'n twenty!"

"Pshaw!" said the driver. "Take ten off your guess at him and shove it on your guess at her, and you're getting some nearer. What does it matter to anybody except them, anyhow? Guess they're both satisfied. Guess we're all getting what we want, more or less."

"Well, yes," said Slim, "sure. It's their business. But it do seem disgraceful—him so old and her so young and beautiful."

The driver considered the two paternally. Then he said: "You fellows should get back to the range. You ain't safe roamin' around in town. I think you've been havin' too much of them soft motion-picture dramas. Life is different these here days from what you fading knights of the sagebrush would believe. You come back with me to-morrow, and get into your chaps again."

He meant it well, though half bantering, half serious, for he liked these fading knights, through whose diminished realms he honked his way announcing the new era. They looked each to each, then back at him.

"Guess we will," they said, subdued.

He stepped up and sat down behind his wheel.

"Them gasoline mechanics," said Ed, after the car had gone, "when you get to know them, ain't so bad."

"They mean well, anyhow," Slim agreed. "I guess driving a—a what-you-call-it—ain't conducive to seein' much except the metallic side of life, so to speak. You can't lay the lines on its neck, so to speak, and gather any of these yere eternal dreams outen the sky, for watchin' every inch of the road."

Ed blinked at him.

"Chirp up, bud!" he said. "Chirp up! There's still high saddles in Idaho."

More of these Western storiettes by Niven coming in later issues.

When the Red Hills Threaten

By Vingie E. Roe

SYNOPSIS OF OPENING CHAPTERS

One night McConnel, factor of the little Hudson's Bay post at Fort lu Cerne, discovers Lois le Moyne in his private room and, his account book missing, he accuses her of the theft and imprisons her in the guardhouse. She denies her guilt but refuses to explain her stealthy visit. Both factor and the girl are headstrong, stubborn characters. The handful of population at Lu Cerne rise up in rebellion and endeavor to rescue Lois, but the factor quells the angry mob. One of the native men, Pierre Vernaise, pays regular visits to the prisoner, bringing her gifts and words of comfort, and falls in love with her. Freedom does not come to her for many weeks, and only then when an emissary of Governor Stanton appears and interests himself in the fair Lois. He is one Richard Sylvester, empowered with all authority over the post. Lois released, he also falls in love with the willful beauty, and because of her humiliation attacks McConnel murderously. A fight ensues in which both men are badly beaten. Meanwhile Pierre Vernaise, jealous and fretful, betakes himself to the deep woods where he falls in with a tribe of Indians who are performing strange rites to their god so that the great sickness, boding over the red hills in uncanny haze, may be averted. Sylvester, brooding over the fancied wrong done Lois by the factor, determines to take matters in his own hands and remove McConnel. Though he declares the Scotchman deposed, the factor refuses to acknowledge Sylvester. At this juncture a fatal epidemic strikes Fort lu Cern and the doomed inhabitants die one after another. The father of Lois is striken down. Sylvester pleads with her to flee the cursed place. She decides to stay and devote her strength to caring for those afflicted.

CHAPTER XVII.

ALIEN SERVICE

LOIS followed Marcel into the stricken home of the Le Blancs, silent, unchanged to the casual eye, and her strong, young hands took hold from that first moment.

"Not the waiting, Marcel," she said firmly, "the work, the heavy work—the cooking of food, or the washing of clothes, or the bringing of water. Put me at that at once. Let me go where it is needed most, the unceasing work."

They looked at her with a sort of wonder, these people in whose homes she came without speech or explanation, and for a moment took their minds from their tragedies to contemplate the miracle.

That Lois le Moyne, the cold, the uncaring, the lawless, should turn her hand to service of mercy was beyond belief. They watched her as she plunged into the work that was ever ready at all hours of day or night in nearly every cabin of the post, and shook their heads.

If the girl had been indifferent before, she made up for it now. Here at last her magnificent young strength gave itself full play. Gloomy and frowning, her dark eyes hiding their own shadows, she entered in as only Marcel had known she could. From dawn to dusk she worked feverishly, going back to the empty cabin for a few hours' sleep, for she shortly refused to share Marcel's hospitality, emerging before the light to plunge again into the doings of the day.

And it was not for long that she was destined to serve.

Before many days it was she who began to command.

"That cabin by the gate, Marcel. Send a man to relieve the mother. You had better take the child, Solierre, and go out of the post for an hour. Go into the forest, far as you can. I will see

This story began in the first January POPULAR. Back numbers may be obtained at news stands

to all until you return. You will do better when you come back." And Marcel, with a sigh, went. Or——

"If you will take water and the clean sheets to the Couervals, Pierre." Or again——

"M'sieu le Roc, send the doctress to me within the hour."

And that sane and kindly giant, Palo le Roc, thrilled with an honest joy, for he knew that he had got at last the strongest force in the settlement enrolled in the struggle, unless it be the deposed factor, nursing his humiliation and bewilderment apart.

Gift of the good God, indeed, as Palo had said on the day of Pierre's arrival, was the bent and withered crone of the tribe of the Crees. From cabin to cabin she went, practicing her strange rites, brewing her unknown herbs into liquors that, in one instance here and another there, began to arrest the hand of the dread Terror. They clamored for her, almost tearing her from one bedside to carry her to another, and in their eagerness and need exhausting her store of roots and dried leaves which she had brought in the hood of her blanket. Within the week they dispatched a messenger to the far camps of her people for a fresh supply, and hope, that had risen like a phœnix with the first good that she had done, sank down under the despair of the length of the journey before the messenger could return.

In the meantime, Lois le Moyne held speech with the Indian woman in her own tongue, though none in Fort lu Cerne knew where the girl had learned it, and the two turned silently to work together as if with an understanding that passed over the rest.

Not alone now did Lois hold herself to the work of her hands in the serving.

Once Marcel found her holding down with her strong arms a young voyageur who raved in the delirium, bathing his burning face with cool water from the well whose supplying to her hand was the eager work of Pierre Vernaise, and Palo le Roc came upon her at another time watching a woman who was deep in the unlifting shadow, and upon the lips of the girl were the solemn phrases of the service for the passing soul.

Palo, that night, shook his head in mystification, and turned back noiselessly, leaving her to her own ways.

Those women who had talked the loudest now held their tongues, not from belief in her, but in readiness for any new development. They were for the time at sea. But who among them had ever had true bearings on the strange nature of this girl from the time Old Jacques had brought her to the post, a wee, unhappy child?

Marcel, strong, kindly Marcel, began to fall in behind, as was ever her way where Lois was concerned, deferring to the swift reason, the dominant coolness of the girl in the great work as she did in all things else.

They met one evening and walked down the main way together toward the gate of the post, gaping pitiably, it seemed to Marcel, as if trying to spew into the forest the thing within that sickened it, and the peace that lay upon the stricken scene was a mockery.

"You don' know, Lois," said Marcel gently, "how I love you for the fine work. It is proof of you to all those others."

Lois' brows drew down.

"Do you need proof, Marcel?" she asked.

The woman was filled with her mistake instantly.

"No! No! No! Lois! You know it is not the need—not me! But those others—they have talk' an' talk, an' I have fight an' fight when my heart was sore, an' now they can see what I have ever seen. You understan', Lois?"

The other smiled wearily, yet the leaping change had come into her eyes again.

"I understand, Marcel," she said.

They had stopped at the gate, and Lois stood with folded arms looking away into the green heart of the wilderness that shut itself in their faces as if to hold its secrets jealously from the puny hands that searched at its edges.

The cruel sun had dropped reluctantly behind the western rim, and the long lilac ribbons and streamers, with their

fringings of gold and copper, shot across the heavens to where that dull haze hovered and quivered above the Red Hills to the north, and to where the twilight deepened to darkness toward the south. They fell silent, resting for a brief spell before the labors of the night. Never once had Lois mentioned her father, or gone near the church since that night a week ago.

Yet now Marcel knew with the sensitive heart of the true friend that thought of him was tightening the lips beside her, and drawing the brows into a deeper scowl.

"It is a great world," she said quietly, after a while, "an' a great heaven. We are so small creatures to creep through one up to the other, so small."

Lois did not answer, and Marcel started. A figure was coming with a heavy step out of the forest way before them, betrayed by the dead leaves fallen too early, still wearing their green of summer. Presently it emerged into the faint lavender light, and it was McConnel.

He plodded slowly toward the gate, and passed them by without a word, his handsome head bent, and his hands clasped behind him after the manner of an old man.

There was something pathetic in his loneliness to Marcel.

Lois had not moved, eye or body, and presently she touched her hand, meaning to recall her back to the waiting work, and the touch startled her.

It was cold and clenched, that hand, as if some sudden emotion had drawn the warm blood from it, and instinctively Marcel turned and looked after the factor.

It was to be long remembered by them both, that evening, with its gold and lilac lights, its peace, and its twilight. As they turned back into the post, Marcel glanced toward her home where Eustace and the child made ready for sleep.

"*Jesu mia,* protect them!" she whispered.

They separated among the cabins, going each to a night of work, and each was busy with her own thoughts. As Lois passed on through the dusk, Pierre Vernaise stepped from some shadow and joined her.

"If I may, ma'amselle?" he asked, as he fell into step.

"Assuredly, Pierre," Lois said warmly, "you are very welcome to me. Your friendship is among my poor possessions, as I have told you."

A wistful pleasure lighted the dark eyes of the half-breed youth.

"So much is worth my life, ma'amselle," he answered simply, and Lois heart, a stranger to joy since the early spring, thrilled with the truth that lay so plainly in the words. They walked on for a distance together, and presently, when they reached the parting of their ways, the girl, with a sudden impulse, held out her hand.

With his heart at his lips, Pierre took it between his own for a breathless moment.

"Ma'amselle—ma'amselle!" he whispered brokenly, and turned away into the night.

All through the hours that followed the girl's mind was filled with restless memories. As she tended beside two beds in the same room, she was far back in her childhood. Pictures long forgotten came before her constantly, pictures of her babyhood, when she feared every strange face, of Old Jacques laughing at her stubborn shyness, of that long journey from some place she could not remember, the camps at night with the little fires, and some wild thing calling from the forest. She remembered the yellow-haired wife of the wandering trader who had given her the book of bright pictures, and she recalled the first time her father had put into her hands a box of beads, a needle, a string, and a piece of soft buckskin. She felt again the leap of some unknown instinct within her that sent her baby fingers deftly into the swift weaving of quaint designs and figures. She had never seen a bit of beadwork before, but she knew without words what to do with the materials. With such unceasing memories the night wore away, scattered through with the pitiful raving of a girl in one of the beds. It was a hot night, dark and

still. As the first red of coming day tinged the east there was a step on the sill, and France Thebau came hurriedly out of the darkness.

"Ma'amselle le Moyne," he whispered excitedly, "come at once. They are carrying home Marcel Roque from the north wall."

Lois whirled upon him.

"What!" she cried fiercely.

"Aye! The good woman. At last she has pay the price. An' more, ma'amselle—— This morn' Eustace, he have not arise. It has strike them both at once."

As Marcel had come to her that night of her bereavement, swiftly, leaving all else, so now she went to her, running through the breaking day, and a terrible fear clutched her soul.

She bounded in at the door of the cabin like a young deer in the spring. The bright eyes of Marcel, her good friend, her more than friend, her champion and stay, burned up into her own with the brilliance of the raging fever.

A thrill of horror shook Lois. It would be the swift death then—a matter of a day or two. On the bed behind her lay Eustace, locked in the stupor of the longer fight, and the girl's strange heart filled with anger toward him, that he was to have the few days longer lease on life.

She stopped by the bed, and Marcel reached for her hand.

"Don't, *ma chérie*," she whispered, "don't look so. It is only the common destiny. Am I more than those others, or Eustace—or——" The brilliant eyes turned to where the child lay asleep on the pallet on the floor. Marcel did not finish. She could not bring herself to name her idol.

Lois stood beside the bed in the lightening day, and her lips were dumb, and her mind blank.

Without a word to Marcel she turned to those worn workers who rallied at call of the sickness as they had rallied from the beginning, only their ranks were thinner now, and within her eyes began to glow the fire that ever lighted at the breath of battle.

"Send me the doctress, France Thebau," she said sharply.

With an assumption of authority that sat well on her young shoulders the girl at once cleared the cabin of all save herself and Palo le Roc, who would not go, and put all within to rights while she waited.

Presently she came, that old and wrinkled doctress, came with a small iron pot in her hands, which contained the last of her healing brew. Already three pale shadows were creeping back to the sunlight of life from the valley of the shadow as a result of her uncanny craft, and two more were past the line of danger.

Lois clutched her and looked into the pot from which rose a heavy, sickening odor. It was barely half full. She launched at the Indian woman a volley of words in her own tongue, receiving her answers in stoical monosyllables, and, after a while, Lois nodded acquiescence. Anxiously Marcel, from the bed, watched.

The squaw built a tiny fire on the hearth, and carefully heated her decoction. An odd, hard light flickered in the deep eyes of the girl. It was to be a battle for her friend, and she meant that it should be won.

At last the doctress poured the stuff into an earthen cup to cool a bit. The peculiar fumes made the small cabin stifling, even in the lesser heat of the yet unborn day.

"Marcel," said Lois firmly, "you must drink this all. It is your one chance." She put an arm under the woman's shoulders, and raised her up, but at that word Lois had made her first mistake. Marcel lifted her eyes to her face, and a quick anxiety diffused itself across her features.

What she read there made her look keenly at the inscrutable face of the doctress.

"Lois," she said swiftly; "Lois—is there more of this brew?"

Lois frowned and shifted her eyes to the Indian.

"Tell me," insisted Marcel, between her hot breaths.

Then Lois looked her straight in the eyes and answered.

"No," she said; "no—but by the God of heaven you drink it to the last drop!"

She slipped her arm around Marcel's neck, nodded to the doctress, who sprang to her help, and held the cup to the parched lips. Marcel fought feebly, feebly already, so swift was the working of the scourge, and tried to push it away.

"Eustace!" she cried pitiably. "My husband!"

"Solierre!" rapped Lois, sharp as a snapping wire. "Your child! Who will care for a crippled child without his mother?" and poured the hot liquid gurgling down the woman's throat

Then she stood up, pale but undaunted, while Marcel fell back on the bed, turned to the unconscious form of Eustace Roque, and fell to weeping.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE REWARD OF FRIENDSHIP

She had taken a great chance, a great responsibility, and made a great decision, this Lois le Moyne, whose life dealt only with the strenuous things.

When the doctress came bringing the last of the saving brew within Fort lu Cerne, and which was like to be the last for many days, a great crisis opened up before her quick vision. There on that bed in the dim cabin lay two people, both marked for the hand of death, and it did not count that one was set in the depths of her unloving heart in that swift moment of decision So much must be said of Lois, no matter what was to be said of her in other things Instead her mind, stripped of its agony of fear for her one friend by the glare of that white light of responsibility, saw clearly all the future as affected by this crisis.

There lay Eustace, the father and breadwinner, unconscious, marked for the quiet death that creeps without an awakening, a good man in his quiet way His place, vacant, would show a sad want, yet of all those in Fort lu Cerne none would miss him save only the woman who loved him.

Beside him lay that woman, not only the help and mainstay of the whole settlement with her simple wisdom, her great heart, and her unceasing kindliness, but more—ah, infinitely more—the mother of the pitiable misshapen child on that pallet on the floor. And here in this iron pot was the mystic brew of the Crees which could give back life—enough for one—not enough for two. So Lois le Moyne, in sacrificing one, thought for the good of the many.

It was no easy task she had set herself, that of caring for, to its consummation, the thing she had swerved her way.

For poor Eustace they did what they could, she and the doctress, who stayed by her, and Palo, who gave of his time what could be spared from his other work, in the easing the steady downward journey with cool water brought by the eager serving hands of Pierre By day and night they rolled her in blankets hung by the fire to heat, kept cool the burning brow, and hot the hands and feet, fed her with gruels, and forced down her reluctant throat the sustenance that she did not want. Day by day slipped by. Lois was wan and tired, with deep circles under her dark eyes, and the Indian woman fell away to a more birdlike slightness yet.

Once Sylvester, passing by on the farther side of the road, paused and looked hungrily at her going in across the step with a pail in her hands. The young head raised itself a bit higher with a contempt that did not hide itself now, since there was none to see but the Cree woman and the child sitting forlornly in the shadow of the house. She did not turn her face, nor speak to him, and the man went on with a real anguish in his coward's soul.

It had been on a Tuesday that the Roques had fallen into the shadow of the scourge, and on the morning of the Sunday following, Eustace slipped quietly down the last stretch whose end is peace, and Marcel opened her eyes to life.

And between the two, where they had been placed apart, at that hour, stood

Lois le Moyne, her white face hushed and calm with the calmness of that strength which had seen the best, done it, and waits without fear for the aftermath.

They carried Eustace to Marcel for her last good-by, wrapped him in the white sheets, and Palo and Pierre carried him on their shoulders to one of the graves waiting at the end of the long row.

And it was in the dusk of that same night that that last little one, the one for whose pitiful sake she had done what she had done, the small Solierre with the lovely face and the crooked shoulders, laid him down with his mother, and closed his baby eyes in a weariness that told that yet once again the touch had fallen.

Weak, Marcel looked long at the little face, raised her despairing eyes to Lois, and whispered:

"It is the end now."

But Lois shut her tired lips, squared her shoulders, and was once more ready.

"No," she said steadily "No."

The Indian woman had fallen into a deep sleep on the empty bed of Eustace, worn with her long serving of her white brothers. Lois went to her and awakened her with a heavy hand on her bony shoulder, a hand at once certain in its command and firm in its undaunted power.

"Come," she said, in the Cree tongue; "come quick!" And, as the dull eyes of the other opened, they met again the white fire of battle in those that burned above them.

"Think of all you know, my sister," spoke the girl, "the last that can be done for one in the great illness—surely the knowledge of the Crees, so justly renowned among their brothers of the forest and the post, stops not with the herbs that have given out. Think—is there nought beyond?"

She stood back, holding the doctress with her burning eyes, driving the heavy sleep of weariness from the clouded brain beneath the coarse, black hair, with its red-stained parting, by the very force of her own will, now surging up again as the need of battle rose. The old squaw sat up on the edge of the rude bed, and blinked back at her. A white soul lived behind that brown, wrinkled face, with its pathetic dullness, for this woman had patiently and without question come among the white people, exposing herself to death, and without hope of reward worked for them as if they were of blood kin—the Crees were friends of the settlement; that was a bond which demanded its redemption.

Now she looked vaguely at Lois, and slowly shook her head.

"Nothing?" said the girl tensely. "Will my sister fail at last?"

The woman slid to her feet and stood looking around the cabin.

"If it be the child——" she said hesitatingly, her deep gutturals filling the silence.

"Aye!" said Lois eagerly.

"One thing there remains. It is decreed by the Great Spirit that when a child lies down with the sickness, if there is one, strong in the strength of health over whose head the Spirit of Sickness has passed without descending, who is willing to give of his blood to liven the little veins, the child will—sometimes—be spared."

She ceased, looking toward the bed where the stricken eyes of the mother agonized above her child, unconscious of the portent of the words, whose syllables she did not understand.

They had spoken throughout in the Indian tongue.

Without a moment's hesitation the girl caught up the hope.

"My sister speaks well. Here am I, of full strength, and yonder is the child."

The woman nodded and went immediately about her preparations, the sleep hardly gone from her eyes.

She took from her legging a dirklike hunting knife, felt its edge with a withered finger, and laid it on the pine table. Then she went out the door and around the cabin, where Marcel's little garden stood in pitiable transfixion of stiff dryness, its giant red flagon flowers

dead on their stalks, its straw flowers bleached on their hollow stems.

It was among the latter that she groped in the hot darkness, coming in again presently with an assortment of the shining, delicate, tubelike straws. These she laid upon the table beside the knife, going to the hearth for her iron pot, which was added to the others, and then she turned to Lois.

The sleeves of the girl's faded print dress were rolled to the elbows, exposing the round, white forearm, fine grained and muscular. Lois moved to the table with her back to the bed, and held out the hand which the doctress motioned for. It was a weird scene with the candlelight dim and flickering, the cabin with the feel of death in it, the mother turned to recovery, the child turned into the way of death on that bed in the corner, the white girl, with her blazing eyes and her calm face, the brown woman with her last strand of help. Then, as the doctress took up the knife and reached for Lois' hand, the weak voice of Marcel, horror-filled, shrieked from the corner.

"Lois!" she cried. "Lois!"

The Indian pulled the firm, strong hand forward until the wrist, upturned, was poised above the little iron pot, holding the fingers tight in her left, while with her right hand she drove the sharp point of the knife into the white skin, gauging to a nicety just where the warm blood of that courageous heart pulsed nearest. There was an instant red spurt that followed the steel, the doctress dropped the knife, caught up the pot, and deftly directed it into the vessel. The woman on the bed, shuddering in her weakness, counted the spurts that tinkled, each, like dropping water.

Then the doctress set the pot on the table, snatched from her beaded belt one of the buckskin thongs that always hung there, and bound it swiftly and with amazing tightness around the wrist above the incision. She turned from the girl, having finished with her, and picked the small body of the child from Marcel's nerveless arms. Again the mother shrieked, not knowing.

"Silence, Marcel!" commanded Lois

She sat down and took the unconscious boy in her lap.

The doctress returned to the table, assorted with critical fingers the hollow straws shining in their dry cleanliness, selected one, felt it, looked down its interior toward the candle, blew through it, and laid it close beside the pot from which arose a tiny steam. Then she came and took one of the wizened wrists—the left, nearest the heart, drawing it toward her as Lois moved nearer the table and its burdens. Once again she raised the knife, and many a gowned physician of the civilized world might have envied the skill that this time sought out the tiny, red-walled channel of life, raised between finger and thumb the fine blue vein, punctured it, covered the puncture with a bony thumb while she lifted the pot, filled her mouth with its contents, picked up the delicate straw, slipped the thumb from its incision, inserted her rude instrument, upward, applied her lips to the other end, and sent slowly to the heart of the stricken child the warm blood of the magnificent young girl.

It was an operation not pleasant in the beholding and it took many minutes, and when Lois le Moyne at last arose to carry back to her good friend her earthly idol, that good friend, the strong, the sturdy, the sensible Marcel, she had fainted for the first time in her life.

So Lois laid the child beside her and, turning, went out into the night.

As she did so a figure stepped silently from the open window and went away in the dark, a square, heavy figure, which walked heavily like an old man, and the face that it bore was the face of McConnel, the deposed factor of Fort lu Cerne, and the look in his steady eyes was one of greater bewilderment than had sat there even in these past months when all his standards of life and living had failed him.

The heat of the night was enervating, stifling. There was no moon, and the brilliant stars burned close to the stricken earth.

Lois walked around into the rustling

dryness of the garden, and stood there looking around at the familiar scene. Down the road but a little way was the one home she had ever known, silent, dark, its doors and windows closed, its whole air one of desertion. A heavy pain took sudden hold of her as she looked, the pain that during the work-filled days was crushed fiercely down within her, and wrung her to the very foundations of her being.

The garden became suddenly unbearable. The dim light from the cabin window filled her with a horror of going back indoors. Out the gate, across the small, cleared space without the stockade, into the trail, and on into the black stillness of the deep forest she went, and for once in the span of her days fear sat on the face of old Le Moyne's daughter, fear that was vital and incomprehensible, coming from nothing tangible, and which sent her to the solitude of the great woods as instinctively as a death wound sends an animal to the same sanctuary.

With her hands clenched into fists that hugged themselves to her breast on either side, the girl ran on and on, her feet as sure on the trail in the pitch darkness as any doe's, her eyes and mouth open, her face pale. After a while she went on, her flying steps loud on the heat-killed leaves the only sound in the dense silence of the forest, the panic of unusual feelings began to leave her. The intangible horror of all creation and all death resolved itself into sanity, and the simple and stern philosophy of her untutored life began to creep back to its throne. She checked her speed, loosened her shut hands, and finally stopped, to stand breathing heavily in the stillness that fell instantly with her stoppage. The deep hush and the darkness laid its familiar hand upon her, calming her soul. She stood so a long time.

Then a little sigh heaved across her lips, the old weariness slid back into her eyes, and she raised a hand and pushed the falling hair back from her brow.

The momentary madness had passed.

She raised her head with the old uplift, and turned to go back along the trail. Already the judgment of strength which spared no one was beginning to flail her. A curl of contempt for her weakness lifted her lips.

She stopped suddenly and listened. A little sound was coming toward her from the direction of the post, the rustling of the fallen leaves under a hurrying foot.

As it came nearer she stepped, without sound herself, aside into the deeper protection of the great boles. Presently a slim figure came swiftly down the trail, a graceful figure one would have known by the swinging spring of the step, and was hurrying by into the wilderness which stretched away to the ends of the world. A swift impulse took the girl in the shadow.

"Pierre," she said distinctly.

The half-breed whirled and came to her.

"What is it, ma'amselle, that have send you away, so, into the night an' the great woods? It is some sadness that will not be still?"

There was a quiver in Pierre's voice which he could not control. The depth of his worship gave up its faithful echo.

"Oh, ma'amselle! If only I might be so blessed of *le bon Dieu* that I might serve you with my life!"

The swift words poured over themselves on his tongue. The sensitive heart that had seen the unwonted in that flight of the girl, at all times so strong and contained, and sent him to follow, could no longer contain itself.

He held out his two hands, quivering in the excess of the grand passion that swayed him, and his slender face was alight in the darkness with a worship as pure as Heaven.

It touched the girl with a quick knowledge. She reached out and took the groping hands. They were fine-skinned and slim, and they trembled greatly.

"Pierre," she said, with a new note in her voice, "Pierre, Pierre—my good, good friend!" And in that moment a sorry yearning swept over her soul, a weary wish that mortals might do with the unrulable hearts in their breasts the things they would. In a tenderness that

no living being had ever beheld in her she drew the youth toward her, and Pierre Vernaise, the light o' love, the reckless, the overbold of other days, hesitated in an agony of unworthiness, held back from the heaven of his dreams, now that the woman he loved with his soul's white fire drew him toward her in the darkness.

"If you but knew, ma'amselle!" he cried sharply. "Ah——"

"I know, Pierre," said Lois. "I know."

Gently she drew him to her, with that strange tenderness which seemed alien to her, and which might vanish at any moment; she loosened one hand and slipped it around the boyish shoulders on a level with her own, drawing the curly dark head of the youth down until it rested in the hollow of her throat.

The quick and glorious tears of an unworthy worshiper were in his eyes, and Lois felt them drop softly against her flesh.

With their touch a change flashed over her face, a quick change as of a startled glimpse of depths, and realities, and heights that she had not known existed.

It clouded her eyes with shadows, and saddened the set of her lips.

For a long time they stood so, these two, these strangely assorted two, each of whom the unknowable forces of life were slowly changing, one because of the other and love, one because of those very forces themselves, while far off toward the Pot Hole country a panther screamed to the stars.

Presently Lois bent her head and laid her cheek caressingly against Pierre's tense face. Her fingers touched his hair with the motion of a mother's who soothes her child.

The boy straightened himself with a spring, and laid his hands on her shoulders.

"Ma'amselle!" he cried brokenly. "I love you! Oh, I love you, ma'amselle!" It was a man's full cry. A cry of mighty longing, of need and yearning, and yet beneath it ran a note of despair that already felt its hopelessness.

"You are all of life, an' earth, an' heaven to me—yes, more than the good God himself! Oh, ma'amselle!"

He dropped on his knees and, catching her hands, laid them, palm outward, against his face. The anguished sadness of renunciation was in even his passionate avowal. That sense which had made Pierre Vernaise bring the doctress to the post, now showed him the heart of Lois le Moyne devoid of all love save that maternal tenderness which dared take him in her arms, and it lifted her yet higher on the column of his adoration even while it melted his soul in the furnace of suffering.

Lois stood before him looking down in the hot darkness, and the yearning in his passionate cry found an echo in her weary heart.

"Dear Pierre!" she said softly. "Good, good friend."

This was a stranger girl, this Lois, one whom none in Fort lu Cerne had ever beheld, with the tenderness vibrant in her low voice, and the light of appreciation in her eyes. She was living a wonderful moment in her detached life, and it was to remain forever among that life's meager treasures. She took a hand from his clasp, and laid it upon his bowed head.

Something was stirring within her, another of the vague and alien emotions whose birth had troubled her in the past weeks.

"Chief among the few sweet memories of my life, M'sieu Vernaise, shall be the memory of this night," she said presently, with simple dignity, "this love you give I shall hold and treasure ever. I have never had its like before, nor cared for it. Now it is to me precious as water to the drying streams.

"Pierre Vernaise—dear Pierre Vernaise, if it were in my power to reward it with the great gift in return, it would be my joy, but the heart in my breast, *ma chéri,* is dead and dry as the sun-baked flats of the Ragged Lands."

Her voice was low and sad, weary as the eyes frowning above him, yet full of the sweetness of truth. Only this youth and the weak woman back in that cabin of all Lu Cerne had ever gone deep enough beneath the forbidding ex-

terior of Lois le Moyne to find the tiny trickle of her goodness.

"An' yet you are to marry this other, ma'amselle!" he cried, lifting his drawn face. "Without a heart of love?"

"Aye! Without so much love as the tiniest fleck of dry dust on the path yonder!"

The youth caught his breath in a startled gasp.

"Then why—why, ma'amselle?"

For a moment she hesitated. Then

"In payment of a debt I owe," she answered, "a debt whose making has been my season's work—whose consummation has made life bearable these many months, even since the days when you brought me the golden trailer at the guardhouse window. A debt I would pay with life itself, m'sieu." She ceased, having made justification as she would have done to none other living.

The tone was final, and Pierre knew it, yet the pain in his heart was whelmed in a holy joy. He rose slowly and stood before her, striving to see her face. And presently, without consciousness, he held out his arms, and Lois leaned into his embrace, lifting her lips to his in the holy kiss of affection that is without alloy.

When Pierre lifted his head from that kiss, the last atom of his old abandon was dead. The change was finished He had lived his hour.

"Tell me," he said, "what I must do, ma'amselle. I know now that my life must run apart from you, yet that life shall be perfect in your serving. Where shall I go, ma'amselle? What shall I do that you would have? I would live till death as you would have me." The high calmness of the devotee spoke in his words. It stirred again that new emotion within the girl, yet it took a moment e'er she yielded to the unaccustomed feeling.

"Then see, Pierre," she said at last gently. "See. In her father's cabin lies little Jaqua Bleaurot, but newly fallen into the sickness, and she whimpers and cries the name 'Pierre' by night and day. It is the great love that she has, and it eats her heart unto death. What better serving of one love, m'sieu than the making perfect of another?"

Pierre bowed quietly.

"It is enough, ma'amselle. I go at once to the Bleaurot cabin. Jaqua or another, I give my life where an' how you say It is enough."

As by one consent they turned back along the trail to the settlement, and the right arm of the youth lay tenderly around Lois' shoulders while she held his hand in hers.

At the door of Marcel's cabin they parted silently, going back into the ceaseless work, and Lois stood a while alone in the night, thinking.

Twice in her immaculate life had she kissed a man, and neither was the kiss of love

CHAPTER XIX.

A PERIL OF THE WILDERNESS.

To Angus McConnel, living his lonely life in the solitude of the deserted headquarters, the days of the speeding summer were more unbearable than any knew. Deep in his stern nature a hidden vein of sympathy bled with each new touch of the Terror, every fresh mound beside the church; and though his face did not betray it, and his tongue spoke no word of kindness to those who remained, he yet knew every vacancy in every family, and where the touch fell last.

They paid no attention to him, the people of the post, save Palo le Roc, who sometimes looked at him going his solitary way with a longing for his great strength in the struggle.

But it was more impossible for this man with his hidden sympathy to serve than it was for Lois le Moyne who had no sympathy.

He sat at his desk and watched the men digging, in the early morning, the graves that were likely to be needed during the day, and the small processions, usually two men with a burden on their shoulders, which saw to the last resting place those who would wake no more: and often in the friendly darkness he walked among the graves with a grimness which hid that silent ache.

For three weeks the sickness had worked its will with Fort lu Cerne. There was scarce a cabin in the settlement where it had not taken toll, and over half the populace lay in that row of graves, now lengthened and doubled into two.

The heat was amazing. The verdure was dead and dry, yet bearing its summer greenness, and the water in the well was appallingly low, with a bad smell. Surely it could not last much longer, else there would be, as Netta Baupre had said, none to bury the dead in Fort lu Cerne. And Angus McConnel, who secretly sorrowed over these alien people who had been his, and longed to help and heal them, went his lonely way as if uncaring because of his inheritance. He could not bend from his blood stiffness. Yet one thing he had done which no one knew. He had sent, long back at the beginning, a stray courier down the long trail to the mission monastery to the west of Henriette, with word to Father Tenau, so long overdue among his distant people, and day by day he watched anxiously for the splendid priest who had grown white in the strenuous service of the wilderness, as did Palo le Roc for the return of his messenger from the camps of the Crees with the fresh supply of their peculiar herbs.

Only once had the two men, whose small human warfare had been swallowed up in the mighty tragedy of the settlement, met since that last tragic encounter.

On that hot night when McConnel, drawn by Marcel's cry of horror, turned away from the cabin window, he looked into the face of Sylvester, its thin length accentuated by the hollows of gaunt fear beneath the eyes, its shining nonchalance dimmed by neglect. In the light eyes had been a hunger of longing as they rested on the girl by the table as made them pathetic, albeit they were overlaid with sick repulsion at the spectacle they beheld.

He did not notice the man beside him who walked quietly away.

Once again, as McConnel sat sadly in the shadows before the big door on a night soon after this event, there came to him, ambling gracefully out of the darkness, the grotesque form of Simple John, the idiot.

As on that other night in the early spring, when McConnel smoked in peace with the good and steady future before him, undreaming of evil, Simple John had come to warn him of impending harm—a harm so great that its fire was to sear the factor's soul for all time—so now again he came out of the dusk with his uncanny warning.

He sat upon the step, gathering his knees into the embrace of his arms, and his greeting was the same flat sentence.

"*Bo jou!*" he said.

"Good even," said McConnel kindly.

To none in Fort lu Cerne had he ever spoken with so gentle a voice as he ever used to Simple John, whose strange affection had fastened upon him with his first advent in the post, and which had followed his with the fidelity of a dog's ever since. Something there was in the man's strong nature which caught and chained to him the wavering spirit within the mindless body.

"Master," said Simple John presently, "there comes a great cloud out of the north—a great dark cloud that sweeps through the forest. It blows between the trees, and fills the trails, and covers the land like smoke."

With a sudden swift motion along the step, a motion indescribably graceful, he neared McConnel and laid a slim hand upon his knee. A shiver like wind in tall grass passed over him, and his voice whimpered in fear.

"Master!" he cried. "Oh, master! It settles over the post and presses down—and there is no post!" His voice had risen in quick, keen terror with the last words, and the hand on the man's knees gripped it sharply.

In a moment the vision of the vague brain had passed.

Simple John loosened from the sudden tenseness of his attitude, the hand slid down, and once again he clasped his knees.

He looked into the dusk and nodded.

"So—so," he muttered.

But the somber line drew in between the brows of the one-time factor, and he tried vainly to pierce the future with its possibilities. Of a sudden a swift thought of the little church with its rude altar and its rusty relics of black cloth flashed before him—cloth that had once been a habit of the Order of the Sacred Heart, and he sprang to his feet with an oath. He, too, saw the vision of a great black cloud in the north that blew between the trees, filled the trails, and covered the land like smoke! He saw it settle around the post—*his* one-time post—press down—and—— But there the vision changed from the prediction. He was still factor of Fort lu Cerne in effect, and here was need of strength at last.

He laid a heavy hand for a second's space upon the idiot's head, passed in at the door, stood a moment surveying the low interior of the blockhouse, and, turning, went out and down the main way to the great gate. He swung the gigantic portal to, and its creaking carried on the still air across the settlement, examined the forged iron bars one by one, and shot them forward into their sockets. Then he turned and looked back across the post that had been his secret pride, the wrecked and stricken post, whose reign of terror was not yet done.

Within his being was accepted without question the certainty of this thing whose vague presence troubled the delicate strings of the idiot's perception and set them vibrating with warning.

Alone and in the night, he set to work to see to all things within the stockade that he might be able to do at last one service for the post wherein he had failed so signally—failed in his zeal for the company he served, failed in understanding of his people, failed in his life's ambition.

Not once did the thought of Sylvester, the man who represented the power of that company and who had deposed him, branding him as thief, maltreator, and liar, enter his mind. He still looked to himself for authority, relying on his own strength, his own knowledge, and ability.

He first made a circle of the stockade, looking it over carefully, every upright log of the thickness of his waist, every wedge and bar and pin that held it solid, and here and there he frowned as he felt with a practiced hand along the line of the earth. Twenty years ago, it had been a good wall. Since then, sun and snow and worm had not been idle. Still its strength was great; indeed, for the most part, as great as at the beginning, yet it was in unlooked-for places that the little touch of weakness crept in, like a little fox. These places he marked with a tack of paper from a small note-book in his pocket, and, having made a complete circle, which brought him again to the main gate, he went up the road to headquarters.

Simple John was gone from the step, and the desolate loneliness was settled back in its accustomed place.

McConnel did not sleep that night. All through the hot hours, his candle flared from window and door, staying a long time in the great storeroom, where were stored the arms of the settlement. Here was ammunition in packed cases as it had come up by dog train the winter before, and rifles for more men than Fort lu Cerne, alas! could muster now.

The blockhouse, built with frank thought of a future wherein white man strove with red man for right of trail and land and life, was a grim triumph of invincibility.

On barred window and studded door chain and bolt and bar were sound.

These he noted with approval, though he had known every point of the structure since his first advent in the post. A goodly amount of stores still remained, lining the thick walls, and several giant hogsheads waited for water.

Here might that portion, pitiably small indeed, of the populace of Fort lu Cerne spared by the sickness hold out indefinitely in case of siege, barring one element of warfare—that fiendish ally of the savage, fire.

Day found him still pulling into corners and beneath windows bales and barrels and boxes, and at this hour came to him France Thebau, bearer, it seemed, ever of the tale of death, with

a message that he come quickly to the Corlier cabin. Richard Sylvester was stricken of the fever and demanded speech with him.

McConnel set his lips and dropped his work, going as he was, tired and sweat-drenched from the night's labor. France caught a startled glance of a martial interior, where rows of cartridges lay on barrel heads at every porthole, and rifles, two to a place, stood crossed beside them; where every inch of space was arranged with precision and simplicity, as if the spirit of stern resistance stalked barefaced throughout an arsenal, and war waited for but a coming shot.

The light of another despairing day ushered him into the low log room, where a silent, small circle waited his coming.

On a bed in the center lay the slim form of Sylvester, his weak face working in the fear of death, his hands playing at random over the sheet, and his shoulders raised in the arms of Lois le Moyne, the woman he was to have married. The brilliant eyes lighted on the square face of McConnel, lined with the year's experience, begrimed with dust and sweat, unlovely, forbidding, stern in its half-pathetic puzzlement at the ways of fate, and into them leaped the venom of hatred.

"I'm going, all right," he cried instantly, "but don't you think, Angus McConnel, for one moment that you have won in this fight between us two. I drew up papers last night, under the hand of Le Roc, which will as surely fix you at Henriette, and punish you for your dastardly and cowardly spite against a woman, as I am surely going out with my life unfinished. I want you to know that it is I who have won—I who am ahead at every point, who have taken from you every last atom of your achievement, either real or desired. Now I command you, with my last breath of authority, to deliver up to Le Roc the keys to that blockhouse!" He fell back, panting, on the breast of the girl behind him, flaming at the heavy man before him the fire of an honest enmity.

Sylvester had fought squarely, to the best of his exotic manhood, for the sake of a woman, believing his quarrel straight.

Now he shot his last bolt, striving to finish the thing he had begun entirely. But Angus McConnel only stood a moment, looking at him with his cold blue eyes, and spoke one word of curt refusal.

"I will surrender only to the man from Henriette with the seal of the H. B. Company," he said, turned on his heel, and strode out the door.

Of all the expressions on the worn faces of the little group of those who tended here, that which rested on the face of Lois le Moyne was the most curious.

This meeting had not been of her devising, having its inception in the mind of Sylvester alone.

Her eyes dropped, and they were inscrutable in their flickering lights and shadows as she laid Sylvester back upon the bed.

"Go!" she said, turning to those present. "Maren, you need the rest of an hour. I will tend here through the day."

So they went away from the cabin, some to a few hours' heavy sleep, others to serve yet longer in other cabins, and at last this man was to have alone for the grace of his last day this girl, for whose sake he was to die.

For it was as surely for her sake that he was dying now as that the sun shone in the heavens. If it had not been for Lois le Moyne, he would have been, long ago, back among the pleasures of his kind in Henriette.

Something of this arose in the mind of the girl, but it did not trouble her. She beheld it calmly, for she was beyond the law of remorse.

He had served her purpose; she had paid for that serving with the promise of herself; therefore, she stayed beside him now, doing for him the best she could, soothing his restlessness with a tenderness she did not feel.

As soon as they were alone, he threw his hot head in the bend of her arm, catching her hand in both his own.

"A beast of a man," he panted; "keep out of his power, Lois. Never let him get a grip upon you in any way. Promise!"

The curious look upon the girl's face deepened, as she promised.

Sylvester, quick to read a sign, saw it, but misinterpreted.

"You fear him?" he cried. "Oh, Lois, my heart's heart! And I will not be here!"

"No—no," soothed Lois gently "I have no fear. Besides, m'sieu, what is there for such as I to fear—I who have naught in the world for hope or anxiety or ambition?" The words were quick, and they held a bitterness which filled the listener with joy. What could so blight a woman's life save the loss of one she loved? And the doubt that had ever underlain the triumph of her surrender to him passed forever.

His pale eyes were alight with the mighty passion which sometimes fate places in such a shallow, sensuous nature as his. They burned upon her face with a compelling power which thrilled her to her finger tips, albeit there was no answering passion in her soul for him. The very strength of it appealed to her and stirred her.

"Lois, idol of my soul, queen of all women, my pearl of the wilderness, you do love me—you do?"

There was a beauty in his burning eyes, a winsome beauty of high idolatry, of pure passion, forgetful of self—the same true fire that was lighted in the heart of the French half-breed, only there it was to be an undying flame, here it was but a flash.

"You do love me, Lois?" he gasped, with his hot breath.

"Yes, m'sieu," whispered the girl soothingly; "yes."

With a sigh, he pressed his face against her breast, and so great was the joy within him, and the peace it brought, that for a time he forgot the nearness of the Grim Shadow, and fell into a silent sleep.

So Maren, coming from her rest an hour later, found them.

"If you would go for word of the boy and Marcel, Maren?" Lois whispered, "I would know how they are faring."

Maren, glad of the diversion, went, and Lois watched her through the open door. The sun was hot on the road bed, and the dust was deep underfoot.

The stalks of those poor flowers, planted in the joyous spring, were coated heavily with its gray fineness. The hewn slabs on the roofs of the cabins were warped and curled with the heat.

The sad business of the post was going forward. Up the way from the shut gate, Palo le Roc was coming, and beside him, old Blanc gesticulated excitedly Along the stockade wall at the north were strung out here and there four trappers, who tapped and worked with sledges, driving in heavy, wedge-like bars, setting long braces, strengthening the palisades at every weak point and back and forth, with his hands locked behind him, walked McConnel.

From the door of the Bleaurot cabin issued Pierre Vernaise, going toward the church, with a candle in his hand. A new dignity seemed to encompass the youth, a strength and quiet purpose which changed his very bearing.

A wave of real tenderness swept over Lois, and she turned her eyes to the weak face sleeping on her arm.

Life, indeed, was a strange tangle.

Richard Sylvester loved her, and was dying for that love, yet she had no feeling of any sort for him save a straight and honest desire to pay the debt she owed him—Pierre loved her, to receive a maternal tenderness, being, in his turn, loved by little Jaqua, while she herself—— But there her thought checked itself with sick sternness.

Maren was coming back.

"It is of the abating, Lois—thanks be to *le bon Dieu!*—the sickness," she said gladly. "Marcel is yet most weak, but she is all of a sad smile when she looks at the child an' all of tears in her poor eyes when she look' at the empty bed in the corner. Netta does amazing well in the attendance."

Throughout the whole long day, Sylvester slept, and woke fitfully to find always the woman he loved bending over

him, bathing his hot face and soothing him with voice and hand, answering his weak caresses readily, and filling his vision and his wavering thoughts, which were growing vague, with her lie of love. Toward evening, he sank into a rose-hued dream of paradise, where soft winds blew upon him, and Lois' face drifted upon golden clouds.

That it was, in reality, a thin face, with dark shadows beneath the great black eyes and high cheek bones showing through the worn flesh, he did not know. It was still beautiful to him, tender, womanly, love-filled, and he was content.

That his dream of love and its short triumph had ever been as hollow and unreal as this fancy of his closing day mattered not, since he had never known. The fear of death had passed with Lois' nearness; indeed, the very thought was gone, and he slipped down to the twilight with a smile on his lips, parted in the light beard.

Lois sat on the bed, still holding the slight shoulders in her arms, while the sun dropped behind the rim of the forest. She was dead weary, soul and body, and she waited the end, patiently impatient. It was a beautiful twilight, purple and gold and crimson, fading to silver and palest pink and lavender where the long streamers of light shot up into the deepening blue of the great dome, changing to a sinister opalescence where they encountered the copper haze glowing above the hills in the north.

With the coming of the swift dark, the man on the bed turned his face to her breast with a little contented motion, sighed once, and lay still—forever.

Lois laid him down presently and straightened up, pushing the hair back from her face.

"Lois, come here," said Maren, in a low tone from the doorway. The girl stepped over and stood beside her.

"Listen," said Maren, "and look there."

There was some commotion at the great gate. A bunch of men were gathered there, and others were running from here and there toward them.

From without the wall came a mingling of sounds, the myriad sounds of a great concourse of people, calls, and cries, and chatterings, the stroke of falling tepee poles, and the neighing of ponies. Old Blanc's wife turned white in the dusk.

"The Indians!" she whispered. "The Indians!"

CHAPTER XX.

A WHITE SACRIFICE.

Aye! The Indians, indeed. As far as one, looking through the porthole in the wall beside the great gate, could see, they were pouring into the cleared space around the post between the stockade and the forest. They came with the paraphernalia of the quick trail, tepees snatched up and rolled around their poles, fastened to their ponies, in which baglike troughs in many instances there lay the swaddled forms of the sick, loose bundles, carried on the backs of the squaws, of things hastily gathered from the suddenly moving camp, and all bearing the confused appearance of sudden action.

Grim, half-naked warriors stalked among the concourse, painted with the brilliant colors of menace, the vermilion and green of war, the yellow of disaster.

They had brought their women and children; therefore, it was a matter of moment, not a sally of young warriors on the warpath, whose probable attack on the post could be repulsed and settled, if not by guns, by gifts and fire water, and tobacco.

They came and came, and there seemed to be no end to them. Around the post on every side they circled, pitching their huge camp, and it was plain that they were the legions of some mighty tribe. They were heavily armed, and McConnel, looking from the vantage of the porthole in the gate, frowned darkly when he saw that each warrior carried a company rifle.

They were neither Crees nor Ojibways, and they came from the north. There was only one tribe in the wilderness whose chiefs had held aloof from the post, refusing either trade or friend-

ship, one tribe whose numbers were uncounted, and whose stronghold lay in the untrailed wilderness to the north of the Red Hills—the dread tribe of the Blackfeet, of whose strength and cruelty vague tales drifted down from time to time.

No man of the post had ever been among them; no one but the good priest, Father Tenau. He had once spent a season among them, and he had come back thin and haggard, and had never spoken of that season's experiences. His people had looked upon him in awe, noting the sadness in his beautiful old eyes, wondering what strange sights they had beheld. Yet he had come back laden with savage gifts of those things which the people of the wilderness dedicate to the service of the Great Spirit. What had passed in that summer of Father Tenau's unusual life none in Fort la Cerne ever knew, what grip he had taken of their savage souls, what he had done to them, or they to him, and why, though they held him in some peculiar reverence, as evidenced by the sacred gifts, he yet had never gone back among them to press his advantage for the winning of their souls.

Camp fires soon began to send up their thin spirals in the evening air on all sides of the fort. Dogs barked, and the shrill wailing of children came out of the stillness. With calm precision this concourse of savage foes intrenched itself in camp around the little handful of whites waiting within their stricken post, a tiny knot of aliens lost in the primeval heart of the great woods, whose very depth and vastness seemed to aid and urge on the painted fiends which were its natural offspring.

Dark fell, and there was no movement of the host outside. They would wait until morning for the parley.

In the meantime, McConnel, having satisfied himself of this and stationed watchers at every porthole, went himself to headquarters. Here, with old Blanc, he set to work unpacking and distributing the ammunition. Every man who could stand came and got rifle and belt and cartridges, carrying them to the gate, placing them at intervals around the stockade, making ready for anything that might happen. They were grim and quiet, these men who worked in the summer darkness, and there was no fear on their faces. Death had become so common a thing that its nearness in another form held no terror. But among the women it was not so. Frightened eyes peered into each other, and ashen lips whispered from door to door.

In the Corlier cabin, Lois le Moyne left the silent figure on the bed uncovered and went down the road to where Marcel Roque, not yet able to walk, sat up with the sleeping child in her arms, gazing out from the unlighted house with eyes in which all the misery of earth struggled with the slow returning calmness of her patient strength.

The girl went in and sat down on the foot of the bed. The woman's sad heart thrilled at that unrecognized thing which had sent Lois to her at this first moment of the great crisis.

Ah! What was there not in this strange girl, with her half-savage nature, her hauteur, and her pride, her strength, and her coldness!

Netta Baupre had fled, and they were alone.

"The Blackfeet?" asked Marcel.

"Aye!" said Lois.

There was silence for a little while. These two women were both, each after her own fashion, of heroic mold. Here there was no wringing of hands, no hysterical trembling, no tears.

For some unaccountable reason, Lois' thoughts went back to the day at the window of the guardhouse, and she heard again the voice of Marcel saying with quiet faith: "I need no more, Lois." Something unfamiliar stirred in her breast, and she put out a hand and laid it on the covering of the child.

Instantly Marcel's covered it. A bandage was still about the wrist, and at its touch, the woman's eyes filled with tears in the darkness.

At last Lois rose.

"There is still work," she said, "for all have forsaken the cabins like the marsh birds that forsake their young at

the voice of danger. I go to the Le Rocs. Tessa ails and Palo is not to be spared from the man work now. I will come again by daybreak."

Marcel did not speak, and the girl passed out again into the night.

The dark had fallen very heavily. Early in the evening there had been a slim, pale circle of the new moon hanging low above the church in the west. It was gone, and there were no candles lighted anywhere in the post, save those burning weirdly on the altar in the place of worship. Lois looked that way, and a sudden yearning came into her soul. The black iron crucifix lay deep in the baked earth behind the church, clasped in the frail old hands of her father. She had long been a stranger to the sweet words of religion, save as she offered the service for the dead, and now a longing for its healing power, its gentle soothing, took hold upon her heart. She turned her steps toward the holy place. As she passed up the dust filled road, a figure emerged out of the darkness ahead. That way, too, lay her first destination, the cabin of the Le Rocs. No doubt Palo was hurrying down from a snatched visit to his young wife. Lois stopped.

"M'sieu le Roc," she said, "is any one with Tessa?"

"Eh?" came the voice of McConnel, out of the shadows.

The face of the girl went deadly white. She shut the hands at her sides, lifted her head, and walked slowly by. But she turned toward the cabin of Palo le Roc, and did not look again at the faintly gleaming shadows of the little church.

Between the church and Palo's cabin there stood a tiny hut, a lonesome bit of a cabin, detached, unkempt, where Simple John, the idiot, had his pathetic home. Here there was never the sound of voices nor the blessing of companionship, for the pitiable being had no soul on earth except his own.

No light shone from the one window, and Lois, turning her head in the darkness, saw that the door was partly open. Instinct sent her to look within.

In the deeper darkness of the interior she could make out dimly a huddled heap just beyond the sill. She bent and touched it. It was the unconscious form of Simple John, whose turn had come. Verily the Great Sickness was impartial. She went inside and, stooping, gathered the figure in her arms and lifted it on to the bed in the corner. She lighted the piece of candle she had learned to carry in her pocket and looked around.

There was nothing to do.

This poor creature must take his chance with all those better ones stricken since the doctress' herbs had given out. Lois wet a cloth and laid it on the pale brow, placed a cup of water beside the bed, and went away.

Fort lu Cerne was very still. The girl looked up at the burning stars, and again the alien thoughts that had troubled her these many days came thronging back to her brain. Life! What was it? A tangle of uncertain things in truth, where the threads of destiny were lost and hidden in the woof of sad mistakes. Where the highest, finest impulses of which a soul might be capable were wronged and lowered, trampled, trodden under foot—aye! even called by the lowest of all names, misunderstood and persecuted.

Life, indeed, was not much to lose. life as this girl had known it.

To-morrow might see its surrender.

The thought had no terror for her. Only the way of it caused a tiny shudder to pass through her. The vague tales of those Indians out there came back to her, tales of prisoners burned at the stake, of fiendish atrocities whose like was not known south of the Red Hills since the other tribes of the wilderness had become, these many years back, friends and allies of the post.

Only for Marcel, her more than friend, and the tiny boy with the lovely face and long curls, a wave of anguish passed over her. They at least should not fall into savage hands so long as she could handle a merciful rifle. This she vowed to herself as she stepped in at the door of Palo's cabin.

And here was another of the tragedies of that life whose eternal questions had

begun their march through the mind of this girl of the wilderness, a tragedy so great and pitiful that it dwarfed those others into insignificance.

So passed this night in the settlement, hushed, fearful, waiting, with the men working steadily that all might be in readiness for what might come, and the women weeping in terror. The sounds of the great new camp outside ceased toward morning, and sleep gave its blessed peace to those who were calm enough to take it.

Angus McConnel, sitting alone before the pine desk in the big room, leaned his head on his hands and spent the dragging hours in thought.

What would develop he did not know. Yet he knew the Blackfeet and their ways, and his stern mouth set hard at memories of certain things.

In the Bleaurot cabin pretty Jaqua clung to the breast of Pierre Vernaise, begging like a frightened child for safety.

Behind the church, Lois le Moyne sat all night by the grave of her father.

With first dawn all within the post was astir.

Outside came the waking sounds of the Indian camp, and when the sun had topped the rise of the forest in the east the first act of the tragedy took place.

There was a great beating on the closed gate, and a long pole, to which was attached a white rag, climbed up the reach of the palisade to wave in the morning air.

The Indians demanded speech.

McConnel, coming down the road from headquarters, saw it, and went quietly to the gate. Around him were gathered all the men of the post.

They did not venture to ask what he would do. With the quick habit of their lives they accepted his authority without question. Once again he was the factor, strong, silent, dominant. Forgotten at that moment were all the wrongs, the misunderstandings, the heartaches of the past year. Forgotten was Sylvester, with his brief authority, so recently eliminated from the post's affairs that he was not yet underground, forgotten the easy swerving of their own allegiance. They only saw in the hour of need their factor, once more come into his own, and they flocked to him like sheep to a leader.

It was the factor, once more unbending in his service, who lifted hand to the great bar of the gate.

The morning sun streamed in as he swung the portal partly open, with a file of men behind to force it shut at a moment's notice, and stepped into the opening.

Gathered before the gate was a mighty circle of warriors, painted from head to heel, adorned with the habiliments of war, lowering of features, and sullen. In the center of that circle, stately, magnificent in his giant proportions, spectacular, the rising sun on his towering headdress of eagle feathers, which swept the ground behind, there stood in his savage majesty the chief of the Blackfeet, Tilligamok.

He bore no trace of ever having seen McConnel before, and there was no friendliness upon his scowling face.

The factor faced him, stern and quiet as himself, and waited for him to speak, since he had demanded the parley.

Presently he spoke, his deep gutturals sounding ominous in their insolent consciousness of power.

"For many years the red man has lived in the forest. As many years as the sun god has lived in the heavens. To his hand have come the red deer and buffalo, the moose and the elk, the fox, and the wolf, and the otter. Of their flesh he has eaten, of their skins he has made his tepees. To his door have come the song birds that he might listen and be at peace. All good things have been given him by the Great Spirit because he is the son of the forest and the Great Spirit together, and his ways are good. He has lived and died in happiness. Now comes into the land of the red man the palefaces from another land. The Great Spirit frowns and is angry. Therefore he looks upon his children with displeasure. He is offended. Therefore he sends into their camps the great sickness, which devours them as the wolves the red deer. They die, and the death song is not hushed

from moon to moon. Then speaks the Great Spirit to Mishwa, medicine man: 'The sickness shall not abate until my children shall offer fit sacrifice, even a sacrifice of the paleface people, whose habitation is a sore upon the land.' The children of the Great Spirit must obey. They have come."

The chief ceased and looked McConnel squarely in the eyes with the old challenge of the red man to the white. Hatred was in that look, and ready menace.

"Tilligamok is a false friend," spoke the factor in the Blackfoot tongue, slowly and distinctly; "he has eaten flesh with his white brothers, he has sat at their fires. He has come the long trail to have the peace talk in their tepees. Now he has forgotten, and would demand a sacrifice of them. The post of Fort lu Cerne is strong, there are many rifles and much powder within its walls, also much provision and water. Tilligamok would do better to take his braves back to the Red Hills. There is no sacrifice among his white brothers for him."

With the last word the challenge in the face of the Indian changed to savage ferocity. He uttered a swift word, and in a second there was chaos without the gate. The circle of warriors broke like a wave and poured forward with one swoop. Eager hands grasped at McConnel, a tomahawk whizzed by his head, landing some feet up the main way inside the post, and with one swift leap he bounded within the palisade, black of brow and swearing, just in time. The wedge behind the gate flung it to, and Palo le Roc shot the great bars into place.

"Now what, m'sieu?" he said, as he turned to face the factor.

CHAPTER XXI.

"TAKE THAT, M'SIEU!"

Pandemonium raged outside. Cries and yells shocked the golden morning. They were, indeed, fiends and demons that sought to frighten into compliance without a struggle that little handful of people within the stockade. But they were of the conquering race, that handful, and they were not to be frightened until the last expedient had been tried and had failed.

"Man the portholes," said the factor, the words rapping out with that decision which saw its point at once, went for it, and did not change; "be ready to fire the first volley in two minutes."

Warfare was to begin, and he would start it.

Scattering from the big gate, all but enough to man its portholes, the trappers fled along the wall to either side, the two ends of the diverging parties meeting behind the church, having dropped two men at every barrel, with its load of shells and its crossed rifles.

McConnel stepped on the barrel beside the gate that he might see and be seen from every vantage point around the stockade. When all was in readiness, each man watching for the first sign, he raised his hand.

Out of the clear air rang the first defiant cry of battle, a volley of shots that ringed the post, carrying its arrogant note of invincible strength, saying plainly to that host without that Fort lu Cerne was not only unscared, but belligerent, ready and willing to fight.

Cries of rage, and here and there of more than rage, went up on all sides, and an instant reply pinged like hail against the palisade.

The Blackfeet were in deadly earnest.

From the portholes it could be seen that they were formed for siege. Directly around the post, and just within the edge of the forest, where the great boles of the trees would make excellent shields, swarmed the warriors, an innumerable host, painted and hideous. Far back rose the smoke of their camp fires, where the women had withdrawn out of the range of danger, and near enough to serve. A quick interchange of volleys followed the first, with no damage done on either side. The stern wall on one side and the protecting forest on the other made that sort of warfare but a waste of good powder and ball.

They were eager and alert, those thin

men behind the portholes, already worn by the long siege of an enemy, filled with the fire of battle, glad of a chance to strike back. They knew they were outnumbered twenty to one, but they had their trust in the old palisade, and, if that should fail, in the blockhouse itself. They watched, keen-eyed, from the portholes, and every time a painted form darted from one tree to another a rifle cracked with such certainty that more than one warrior leaped into the air with his death cry ringing suddenly above the shots. The advantage was all with the post.

Not a man was visible to the savages, and their bullets imbedded themselves harmlessly in the seasoned logs. It did not take them long to realize this. The shots ceased presently, and there was a lull in proceedings.

Not an Indian was in sight. There might have been, for sake of all appearances, no living soul within a hundred leagues of Fort lu Cerne.

The forest was as still as a forsaken desert. McConnel knew that Tilligamok had gathered his headsmen for the laying of plans.

And this was true, for presently, with a chorus of yells, a dark wedge came flying out of the trail, and a giant log, covered with gleaming copper forms, hurled itself with a boom that resounded throughout the settlement and shook the palisade, against the great gate. Rifles spat from the portholes commanding the entrance, and took their toll from the copper forms, but more flew from the sheltering trees and took their places as the wedge withdrew to come again. It was a gigantic ram, and the gate shook beneath its impact, shrieking in bar, and brace, and bolt, holding its studded breast bravely before its people, yet crying in pain.

The factor with an oath sprang down, caught up a block, and threw it upon the barrel head, snatched a rifle, and, leaping to this vantage point, fired down upon the mass without the gate from the top of the wall.

His bare head, sandy and leonine, flamed like fire in the morning sun.

The light shining upon it caught the eyes of Lois le Moyne on the step of Marcel's cabin. They dilated and clung a moment to that spot of light as if with some power beyond the girl's control. As the man leaped down, a flight of bullets chipped the top of the stockade where he had appeared.

But the heavy gate had held, and four Indians lay in various attitudes before it, while more were crawling away into the undergrowth. Tilligamok drew back his warriors. Throughout the day they tried various ruses, keeping up a constant menace that the men at the portholes might get no rest, making sham sorties to draw their fire, vainly seeking to get in against the stockade beneath the line of the rifles which protected it.

This McConnel noticed with a scowl. Two young bucks had deliberately sacrificed themselves in the attempt, and he began to see that they would stop at nothing in their fanatic zeal to obey the Great Spirit as interpreted by Mishwa. A white sacrifice was needed to remove the ban, and a white sacrifice they would have at all cost.

And the fate of that sacrifice!

Every man in the post, assailed by that thought, shuddered.

The sun turned its accustomed round of the brassy heavens, beating down on the little band of defenders, which numbered scarce more than enough to man the wall, without mercy. Within the cabins those of the women able to control themselves prepared food, and sent it out from man to man, and she who directed, worked, and at last took pail and basket and went the rounds herself was Lois le Moyne, whose fingers itched for a rifle.

And it was due to that stern thing within which made her what she was, that when, in the course of her serving from the blessed water and the reviving food, she came to that stand by the great gate where McConnel, dust-grimed, sweating, his shirt thrown open from his massive throat, his seamed face dark with powder smoke, his blunt fingers light as a lady's on trigger and shell, stood firing with dogged regularity, she halted, white-faced and silent,

and held up to him his portion of her burden.

He turned from the wall and looked down at her, and the sternness of battle was still in his steel-blue eyes.

Without a word he took the offered cup, tossing off a great draft, picked an ash cake from the basket, and turned back to his grim work. The girl walked on, but the old tumult was raging in her breast, the old fire strove with a fiercer flame.

As dusk fell and night drew on, Mc Connel sent for Palo le Roc, busy at the far side of the settlement.

"Le Roc," he said calmly, "they're trying to get in under the fire to the base of the wall. If they ever do, they'll fire it. It is their only chance, and our worst peril. The whole post is dry as tinder. We must keep them out. Take what of the men you can from the wall, yet leave one at every stand, and make torches. Set them on the palisade and light them. We must watch all night."

Here again the deft hands of Lois came in for that work whose ample plenitude was her one resource, into which she plunged at the beginning with old Jacques' death, and whose unceasing cry had kept steady the shaking soul within her.

She went with Palo to the storeroom, where were the cans of oil kept for just such emergencies, and throughout the hours of the night that followed, while the shots still barked from the palisade, and the hideous yells shattered the silence without, she wound and dipped the torches which flamed like beacons of disaster against the darkness at intervals along the wall. Netta Baupre worked beside her, whispering as she worked, capable Maren Corlier, scolding and outdoing both, chattered constantly while the men came and went, bringing the burned-out sticks to be rewound, taking the fresh supply.

At midnight, Lois, looking up with that strange feeling of eyes upon one's face, beheld in the doorway the pale face of Marcel Roque, where she clung weakly to the lintel.

"Marcel!" she cried. "Why did you come?"

"I don't know, Lois," said her friend, "but I had to come."

The girl got up at once, took Marcel by the shoulder, and marched her back to the cabin.

"You stay within," she said firmly; "there is no need of you. When there is the danger, Marcel, I will come to you."

And Marcel read the hidden meaning in her words.

She bowed her head a moment on the girl's shoulder.

"Oh, Lois—Lois!" she said brokenly.

Another dawn found a ring of haggard men at the portholes. They were not of sufficient numbers to effect a complete change, therefore they stood in shift of thirds, relieving one-third every three hours for rest and sleep.

Outside, the Indians were in savage fettle. They knew to a nicety how long it would take them to wear out that handful of defenders, and yet they were in haste to get their white sacrifice and appease their god.

Therefore they did not intend to waste this day as they had wasted the one before.

All night they had tried to crawl in to the base of the palisade, and all night they had been repulsed by the grim watchers inside, who did not sleep nor relax their vigilance.

Again Maren and others of the women cooked a huge breakfast, and again Lois, who had not closed her eyes all through the night, went out among the men at the wall, this time with pails of steaming coffee.

The glowing morning was as a pearl of beauty dropped in the rose and pale-blue lap of infinity. It was yet too early for the scorching heat. A cool shadow lay behind the church, and Lois, in passing, cast a swift glance at the peaceful mound which covered all of her blood she had ever known.

Again her weary mind turned to the unconquered question—Life.

This morning, in passing back by the storeroom, she stepped inside, picked up a rifle, examined it, and, adding some ammunition, placed it where she could

put her fingers on it at a moment's notice.

Within her heart some prescience warned that this was like to be the last of Fort lu Cerne's days, and she would be ready—she, and Marcel, and the child. She looked up toward the church again, where those graves, dug in advance for their coming occupants before this last danger threatened, still yawned emptily. Within the cabins were already waiting those occupants, forgotten in the common peril of those who survived.

As she turned toward the cabin of Marie Mercier, on whose hearth hung the big caldron of coffee, and cooked the kettles of food for the men, a sudden gorgeous spectacle arrested her steps. Across the delicate sky there curved a sailing tail of flame, which sank gracefully downward, landing in the deep dust of the road. Hetta Beaupre pounced upon it with a cry. It was an Indian fire arrow. Swift in its wake sailed up another, then a third, which circled high, and, dropping beautifully, landed on the dry slabs of the Le Moyne roof, warped by the heat into fantastic curls. The screams of the women brought, running, such of the men as were not in actual action at the wall.

In the space of a breath a swift tongue of flame leaped to heaven from the tinder of the sun-baked roof. But swifter of foot than all others, the girl reached first the threshold of her home. With trembling hands she flung wide the door, looked all around the interior, as if taking a quick farewell, her eyes traveling from object to object of the familiar things, the bed where old Jacques had died, the hearth where had hung the ill-fated and beautiful deerskin for the beading she had renounced so strangely, the picture of the Madonna above the tinseled box she had once used as a shrine, the silver fox on the floor, even the little buckskin bag which contained the pathetic relics of that unknown mother who had given her birth, hanging on a peg beside the shrine, and in that moment died some more of the life she could not understand.

As the men came surging up she turned on the step, closed the door, and hung the buckskin latch across its peg.

"It is but waste of time, m'sieus," she said calmly; "the cabin is detached. It will fire naught else. Go back to the watching of the more settled part."

So passed with the roaring flames that stabbed the soft morning sky the last vestige of those homely things which bound this girl to the life of her kind.

Her somber eyes were wide in her tired face as she turned away to whatever serving might fall to her hand.

Pierre Vernaise was passing up from the main gate, grimed with fighting.

Lois stopped and looked deeply into his face. A tender smile trembled a moment on her lips.

That deep look needed no words, and neither spoke, passing with the lift of soul that comes from communion of kindred spirits in the moment of a great crisis.

Things had begun to happen within the stockade after a fashion which brought a scowl between the factor's brows. From every point those flaming meteors leaped into the helpless settlement—with its one good well shrunken to a grudging serving of human thirst alone. Here and there they landed, and in this place and that fled up the quick flame of their kindling, while those men, weary of soul and worn of body, turned to face yet another foe, fighting the fire with blanket and hand, clambering from roof to roof, shouting for others as the rain of burning arrows increased from all sides.

At last the factor, watching both ways from his vantage by the gate, sent forth a stentorian command:

"Gather in at headquarters!"

Danger drew near with that stirring cry. If they must fight fire as well as Indians, they would fight for the blockhouse alone, which stood in its open space. Immediately they began to come in from all the cabins, women and children mostly, with here and there a man carrying his sick, bearing in their arms

such of their family gods as they could not abandon even in such dire stress.

Palo le Roc left his ceaseless work long enough to fetch on a hastily improvised stretcher, with young Henri's help, his wife, Tessa, and the tiny babe crying on her breast.

As they passed, beyond the church, the lonely hut of Simple John, Palo, in the listening kindness of his great heart, caught a moaning cry.

When he had established Tessa on a huge pile of furs in a corner of the big room, where the gentle hands of the women took her in charge, he hurried back to that pathetic abode where no living being cared for its helpless inmate.

From the bed in the corner the blank eyes of the idiot stared hopelessly at him. Maren had fed and watched him from time to time, but he was very near to the shadow. With a strange whim of the Terror which did not act alike twice, that vague thing which stood for reason in the clouded mind had come back at the last to fight for its unstable throne.

"The wind is in the trees," he whispered, with vague trouble, as the man approached and, slipping his arms beneath the slender figure, lifted Simple John for his last journey; "the wind is heavy in the trees." The weak head fell back, but righted itself with a jerk as Palo made for the door. The idiot flung out his hands and caught the lintel. The blank eyes were startled.

"The chest," he cried strongly; "the little chest!"

Palo strove to pull his hold away from the door, but he clung madly.

"The chest," he whimpered pathetically; "the chest beneath the bed."

So Palo, great, kindly man, laid down his burden and, groping under the wretched bed, brought forth a small old-fashioned box, with hinges of brass, made smooth and shining by the touch of many hands. He gathered into his mighty arms these two, who would not be separated, and went out in the sunlight and down to the blockhouse.

Fire was roaring to the skies from two cabins, and shouts and cries resounded in the fort. The lips of the men were grim. The women wept for the most part, yet here and there a stouter heart faced its end bravely.

Without, triumph sounded in every savage yell.

Of a sudden there rose, flickering above the wall of the stockade, a crop of little flames dancing along its top at a point a little to the south of the main gate. In the rush to beat down the danger within the post, too many men had left the wall. One porthole had been left for a moment unguarded, and the wily foes had done their work. It seemed at last as if the end had come. With the palisade gone, there would remain but the blockhouse.

McConnel, ever the factor, looking for the best, drew at once every man from the wall. There yet remained some moments before the savages would pour through the breach. These he used to an advantage.

They were gathered in the open place before the door, a crowd of haggard men, pale beneath the smoke and the grime, disheveled, unkempt, panting with the fever of fight, and they surged around their factor waiting for the last word.

It bore a strange resemblance, that gathering, to another not so far back in the history of Fort lu Cerne, when they had stood on the same spot to hear this man cast out from them, robbed of his manhood's honor, deposed, yet no one thought of that time, save Angus McConnel alone, and it was with a grim gladness that he followed it now with another thought, in whose simple greatness the soul of the man showed forth.

"Le Roc," he said, in the moment's hush that fell save for the crackling of flames and the yelling outside, "everything is arranged in the storeroom for resistance. If need should be, you can hold out a considerable time. The hogsheads were filled with water last night There are rifles and ammunition for more than can handle them. If there should be an attack, fight from the inside for fire in the roof. The big book on the desk keep for the next factor. It is the memory copy. If the original

should ever be found, send it with the other to Henriette for justification."

Without another word he handed to Palo the rifle he carried—it was grimed, and all but useless, from overmuch firing—and turning, walked unarmed toward the gate.

For a moment there was silence of stupid amaze.

Then Palo le Roc sprang forward and caught the factor, already some feet away in his plodding progress, by the arm.

"M'sieu! What would you do?" he cried.

McConnel faced him simply.

"It needs but one sacrifice to save the post," he said; "I am the factor of Fort la Cerne."

There was a dignity in the words which quietly claimed his tragic right.

The man beside him dropped his hand and looked into his face. For a moment the glory of the thing tempted Palo to step aside. They were two strong men, these two, but what to McConnel seemed a common and straight duty, was to Palo, with his keener soul, a glory which mounted to the skies.

"Pardon, m'sieu," he said, "it is your right. But if I might speak I would say that one sacrifice given freely will but lessen the fighting force of us when they come for the massacre, for do you think for one moment, m'sieu, that with their dead in the fringe of trees yonder, with the smell of blood in their throats, with our stockade gone, and we acknowleding our helplessness, they will go and leave us with one living being within the post? No, m'sieu; they will come for blood and plunder, and we will be but the easier prey with our factor gone, one more rifle the less."

Palo ceased in his wisdom, waiting for his words to take effect. McConnel stood frowning upon the earth, his sandy head bare in the sun, his brows contracted, striving with all his soul to see the best for his people—his people, whom he had ever failed in serving, whom he did not understand, and who did not understand him, save for Palo le Roc, whose eyes were opening in the face of death, when it was so late that it did not matter. Which way would he serve them best?

Honestly, with all his slow reason, he strove to see the highest service.

"Hurry, m'sieu," warned Palo; "the wall is burning finely. We will need to go soon within."

Then the factor raised his head. He had seen a way, the best way, it seemed, and his choice was made.

"There is the idiot," he said, frowning into Palo's eyes; "he is far gone in the sickness, not able to fight. Bring him." But for the first time his hard voice broke, and the stern line of his lips worked. The sharp, blue eyes were suddenly pitiful in their sternness.

Palo and France Thebau turned instantly.

Inside the big room, Simple John lay where Palo had placed him, only now the unstable light of reason, such as it was, had gone from his dull eyes, and he lay in apathy.

The two men picked him up and started away.

"What do you do, Palo?" asked Lois le Moyne, in sudden horror, as she looked up from Tessa on the pile of furs. Palo was too wise to speak, but France was of a running tongue.

"We are to offer the sacrifice at last to the Blackfeet," he said. "'Tis the factor's word."

The girl sprang from the floor and bounded out to where they entered the crowd of men. McConnel was looking down on the face of the strange being who had loved him, grotesque in its unconsciousness.

Lois whirled in and confronted this man, her head up, her eyes flaming above her thin cheeks, her breath coming in gasps of passion, while around the spreading nostrils there quivered the pinched white line of rage.

"M'sieu the factor is brave!" she cried, her voice shaking with a contempt so deep that it would not be suppressed, so intense that the smart of angry tears stung in her eyes. "He would buy his worthless life with so pitiable a thing as Simple John! Take that, m'sieu!"

Doubling her right hand, knuckles out like a man, she struck him full in the face.

"If there is to be a sacrifice from Fort lu Cerne, it shall be a willing one."

With that regal head still high as God meant it to be, Lois le Moyne turned to finish that life whose worth was nothing, and whose end was peace.

The flames had eaten through the palisade. With her last word there was a falling of broken timbers, and through the leaping flames there could be seen a mass of painted figures waiting to leap within with the first clearance of the heavy fire.

As she started for this opening, there was a cry behind, and Marcel Roque rushed forward, caught the girl about the waist, falling on her knees with her ashen face uplifted.

"Lois! Lois! Lois!" she panted in agony.

"Have calm, Marcel," said Lois quietly.

With a little motion she turned and looked back to where the row of graves lengthened beside the church, with the hot shadow of the wooden cross falling athwart its farther end.

Sudden tears clouded her frowning eyes.

"Of all in Fort lu Cerne I am the least needed."

She loosened Marcel's clinging hands with quick roughness, and, crouching for a swift start, sped like a deer down toward the wall. They watched her go in spellbound silence, open-mouthed. Just before that red curtain of swinging flame they saw her crouch again, tense her body for a spring, and in another second she had leaped through it, outside the wall. There was a sudden stillness, and then out on the morning air there shrilled such a savage sound that those listeners within the doomed post crouched with hands to ears.

The Blackfeet had received their sacrifice.

Angus McConnel stood where the girl had struck him, and in his eyes the old puzzlement at the ways of fate deepened pitifully.

"Lassie!" he cried thickly, as if against his will. "Lassie!"

TO BE CONCLUDED.

The final installment of this story will appear two weeks hence in the February month-end number of the POPULAR.

YANKING THE PITCHER

WHEN the Virginia Pilots' Association gave its last annual cruise in honor of the newspaper correspondents stationed in Washington, one of the guests aboard the big ship, that sailed along the shores of the Carolinas, was Thomas Kirby, the baseball writer.

On the third morning out, the doughty band of adventurers, having conquered seasickness, sprang to the breakfast table and fairly slaughtered the fish, lamb chops, eggs, hot cakes, and other viands set before them. This was notable because in Washington, as a rule, the ones with the heartiest appetites had thought they were doing well when they got away with breakfasts consisting of one egg and a few drops of coffee.

The onslaughts on the food became so violent and predatory that somebody remarked:

"It's a shame the way we're eating. That cook will be all in, trying to shoot us enough food."

Whereupon, Mr. Kirby, who had been silently voracious throughout the meal, lifted up his voice, and shouted in the general direction of the kitchen door:

"Hi, there! Warm up another cook!"

Just Strawberries

By Robert Welles Ritchie

Author of "The Goblin's Treasure House," "Fate Maketh His Circuit," Etc.

A color story of the Mexican revolution. The tatterdemalion figure wanted the jefe politico; General Palazar wanted the bank; a newspaper man wanted a "story;" and another wanted—just strawberries

TWO men sat under powdered stars, and each to his capacity cursed all things beneath the arch of heaven.

A feeble fire at their feet stabbed with puny flames at the clotting dark, heavy as cloth of chenille. Behind them other sparks of fires winked and flickered, and occasionally by their light the leprous white of a tent showed for an instant, and then passed like a restless spirit. Beyond and beyond the vague black-on-black of a blocking mountain range, stars set on its thread rim were tiny incandescents strung on wire. All about the murmur and stirring of men at rest—a single laugh cracking the stillness like the pop of a castanet; a quick, thrumming guitar chord; the neigh of a horse, petulant and unearthly. The cloying sweetness of the yucca bells, cerements of desert death, weighted the night air to choking; that and the bitter smoke of the mesquite burning.

It was a night when the Spirit of Things Unseen stoops to gather in its palm the souls of men and quicken their pulses with its own overpowering surge of the transcendental. The ear of earth is open to the whisperings of some being beyond earth, but the coarser ear of man hears only the rhythm of something attuned beyond its grasping, and, as the dog that bristles before the moon, man stands nonplused and vaguely disturbed.

"Strawberries! One dish of strawberries!"

One of the two before the fire lifted his pipestem to the stars with a dramatic gesture.

"For one dish of strawberries—*with* cream—I'd mortgage my soul to the devil and sell the roof over my old mother's head."

"Tortillas," the other answered, with a languid snort. "Tortillas con carne—and maybe without the carne—is what you'll get to-morrow, next week, next month. Bull meat, from behind the ear; bull meat, from just above the hoof; bull meat, with the horns thrown in—and tortillas!"

"Yes, but listen, you Johnson fella; there are strawberries in Mexico. I know. I tasted 'em once in Torreon. Big—sorta furry with taste all over the outside and rich with another taste inside—they squirt—yessir, squirt—when you crunch down on 'em. But you don't want to put your teeth to a strawberry; you just want to cram it up against the mansard roof in your mouth and *push* against it with your tongue. Just linger over each berry like you was saying your prayers at mamma's knee."

"Shut up!" snapped the one called Johnson. "Pass me some more of that stuff they call tobacco."

Still the voice in the gloom raved of strawberries. The peculiar merits of strawberries plucked, earthy and hot with the June sun, in the garden patch down by the old well; the transcendent glory of strawberries crisped on ice; even the abiding worth of strawberries that may be wormy or mashed—the ora-

torio of the scarlet fruit was whined in a fretful monotone.

"What do you want for your four pesos per and found in the Army of the Constitution?" the unwilling listener snarled, and his question was final.

For the man who would pawn his soul for strawberries was a paid mercenary, fighting for large and alloyed Mexican dollars in a mournful land of shadows. Strawberries were not on the menu of the Army of the Constitution. That menu was, as the other had truthfully said, thin corn cakes and thick, blood-drenched slabs of meat; the corn cakes were certain, and the meat undependable. The desert of the State of Chihuahua does not yield abundance even in piping peace; now, after three years of plunder and brigandage called war, it was swept as clean as a pauper's plate.

The man who prayed for a miracle was from Texas. The other, named Johnson, was from New York. One, whose trade name happened to be Sykes, was of the type of American irregulars willing to trade a good eyesight and quick trigger finger for a share of the finances provided by some astute Mexican politicians to serve political ends. He killed for pay—and for loot. The other was a soldier of a news agency, who traded comfort, energy, love of life, and unbelievable loyalty for a niggardly salary and the joy of duty—one of the army of anonymity, whose banner is the column of type and watchword, "The Story." Johnson had joined the Army of the Constitution with a camera and a portable typewriter; Sykes had brought with him across the Rio Grande only a vagabond spirit and a first-class rifle with telescope sights. Because they were the only two gringos in General Pasquale Palazar's division of the Army of the Constitution, they had fraternized. Each, however, held the other in slight disdain—Sykes, because Johnson took so much risk and worked so hard for so little pay; Johnson, because Sykes was a professional man-killer and had manners that were not nice.

This night when Sykes thirsted for strawberries marked the end of the third week of deadening inaction. Baked by day and frapped by night, the nine hundred of General Palazar's command had shilly-shallied over several score miles of forbidding mountain and mesa, plundering an occasional ranch, shooting now and then a hapless peon when the blood lust called for a victim, but delaying eternally for "reënforcements," which meant, translated in terms of Mexican revolution, dollars from the backers of disorder. General Pasquale Palazar was not a tactician. He had been a bullion guard for an American mining camp and a mule skinner; a certain native capacity for command and a widespread reputation for refined cruelty had lifted him from the ruck of peonage and placed him over an armed mob of petty banditti, striking coal miners, half-savage Indians, and mescal-drinking malcontents. The army's professional shibboleth was "The Constitution."

Johnson had smoked his third pipe and was tinkering with the shutter of his camera when the darkness at his elbow suddenly breached a scarecrow. One instant blackness; the next a tatterdemalion figure stood in the fire glow, impassive, dumbly expectant. At first glance it seemed a folded dog tent, erect about two spindling struts; clearer sight revealed a boy, maybe fifteen, who was almost totally enveloped by a faded and tattered smoking jacket and who carried in his right hand the ghost of a gun. The firelight struck bronze on his scraggy cheeks; his bare legs sprouted beneath the smoking jacket like two rusted mullen stalks. His hair was a rat's nest.

From the scarecrow's eyes, deeply glowing like two pools in granite, came a mute, doglike appeal, oddly mixed with a strange, ascetic light; they might have been the eyes of an ante-Nicene anchorite whose life had been spent listening for the rustle of angels' wings.

"Say, muchacho, who let you out of the rag foundry?"

Sykes' challenge was querulously im-

patient. He surveyed the ragged waif of the dark with a critical eye.

"I do not speak English, señor," came the answer, in liquid Spanish patois. "Did you ask me why I am here?"

"Yes."

"I am here to fight for my country in the Army of the Constitution, and, I hope, to kill the jefe politico of Coralita, if the good saints will grant it."

The boy spoke in a dull monotone, solemnly and almost as one in trance. His eyes were fixed on the dancing fire petals; he stood motionless save for the opening of his lips.

"Where did you come from?" Sykes asked.

"From over there"—a skinny hand waved back into the shadows—"from Coralita, four days away."

"Hungry?"

"Yes, señor; starving, perhaps."

Johnson, who had been fidgeting impatiently, barred by his slender knowledge of the language from knowing what was passing, put in a word:

"Get who he is, Sykes; who does he want to see; what brought him pussyfooting to our fire? Maybe he's got a story—he looks as if he might have."

Sykes, smiling tolerantly in enjoyment of his companion's fettered eagerness, translated the queries.

"I am Fernando Mayortorenna," the lips answered, while the eyes continued to stare into the fire. "I do not come to see anybody, but I come to fight for my country and to kill the jefe politico of Coralita. That is all."

Sykes reached behind him where his saddlebags lay and brought out a battered tin bowl, half filled with lukewarm beans. From the open mouth of a sack he speared with a pointed stick a black and soggy piece of beef, which he threw upon the coals. The boy, accepting the invitation offered by these preparations, squatted on the opposite side of the fire and began to devour the beans by the handful. He could hardly restrain himself for the sound of sizzling fat to betoken the beginning of the meat's cooking; he had the chunk of beef off the coals before it was warmed through and was tearing it with short, eager grunts. While he ate, Sykes picked up the gun he had carried, and turned it over and over in his hands with low whistlings and cluckings of surprise.

"The kid's a patriot, all right," the Texan muttered, "if he wants to fight for his country with this weapon. Why, Noah might have—say, cast your eye on the handsome breechlock the poor old branding iron's got, Johnson!"

He passed the heavy rifle over to the correspondent, and with a connoisseur's finger pointed out the wire auxiliary which bound the breech by a loop over the barrel, the stock, half battered away from the frame, the blunted hammer pin and the trigger, unprotected by a guard. It was a single-shot weapon of accepted gauge standard, such as might have been carried by some long-dead franc-tireur against the Prussians at Gravelotte. To load it must have demanded the mathematical precision of a telescope maker; to fire it, the inspiration of the Mad Mullah. Fernando Mayortorenna looked up from his beef with a solicitude almost maternal in his eyes as they followed the gringos' handling of his gun. He started and was ready to forget his feast in greater regard for the precious weapon when he saw Sykes trying to undo the looped wire that bound the breech.

The lad finished his meal, smiled a "Gracias," when Johnson handed him coarse tobacco and papers, deftly rolled his cigarette, and inhaled the first breath with the slow, lung-filling luxury of a strong swimmer's first intake after a dive. He said nothing. Only his eyes spoke as they lifted occasionally from the fire to fall in a slow, grave glance upon the faces of the two hosts.

Johnson, the nervous, insistent delver for truth, tried to read the message of the boy's eyes and was baffled.

Sykes, the more obtuse, strove clumsily to draw the ragamuffin out. He wanted to know how Fernando had reached the camp of General Palazar; why, specifically, he had come to be a soldier; what were his hopes of loot and his demands of reward. But to all questions he received the same courteous answer: Fernando had come to

fight for his country and to kill the jefe politico of Coralita. Finally Sykes cut his cross-questioning with a gruff:

"Well, tell me one thing, muchacha; do they have strawberries in your Coralita?"

"Strawberries—strawberries—ah, yes, señor! There are very wonderful strawberries in Coralita. At the Hotel Diligencia one sits at table under the arcade and eats strawberries with rum. I have seen them."

"Eating them now?" the guerrilla demanded eagerly.

"Perhaps not this minute; but at this season they eat strawberries in Coralita, señor."

Fernando slept that night in the ashes of the fire, and the next morning Sykes and Johnson sponsored him before General Palazar. That patriot, disheveled with sleep and not yet steadied by his morning's peg of aguardiente, appraised with a jaundiced eye the waif's bandy legs and shrunken cheeks, his outrageous smoking jacket, and the wreck of a rifle, and then, as he thrust a sodden orange through the bristles of his beard and sucked noisily at it, he conducted an extempore examination.

"You are another of these desert rats who come to nibble off the revolution?" he sneered.

"No, señor." Fernando's back straightened, and pride burned in his eyes. "No, señor; I do not ask to fight for money. I fight for my country only because I believe my country needs me."

Palazar winked ponderously at the two gringos and jammed the orange harder against his teeth.

"Ah, a true patriot!" he sneered. "But you expect me to give you a real gun and cartridges when guns cost fifty pesos and cartridges are worth their weight in silver?"

"No gun, señor; I have this one. Only a few cartridges when we go to battle against the enemies of our country."

Sykes whispered something in the general's ear with an exaggerated air of giving confidence. Palazar's eye brightened and the bristles on his lip lifted in a wry smile.

"A-ha; that is a worthy idea!" he chuckled. Then to the lad, who stood in reverent attention:

"So, besides fighting for your country you desire to kill the jefe politico of Coralita, eh? Why is that?"

Upon the face of the ragamuffin standing there the fingers of the soul wrought swift transformation. They deepened the line of the cheek until even the vestige of adolescence became wire-drawn into a mask of tragedy—the tragedy of the world's first hate. They tightened the lips and furrowed the brow, and into the eyes, deeply glowing like pools in granite, they fused the fire of the ascetic.

"Because, señor, before the shrine of the Virgin Mother in the little church at Coralita I made oath to kill him. I went there in the night with my gun, and as I made oath I asked the Virgin Mother to bless my gun. This she did. I know she will grant me——"

Fernando's avowal was interrupted by Palazar's booming laughter.

"Oh, ho! ho! The Holy Mother blessed that gun!" The frowsy guerrilla made a mock motion of crossing himself with the hand that held the sucked orange. "We want sanctified guns in the Army of the Constitution, little tree rat; we'll take yours—and you. You may go and find Francisco 'la Vaca,' who guards the sacred bull meat and tortillas; perhaps he will give you some—if he has any. Also a dozen cartridges will be yours—the last one for the jefe politico of Coralita, remember."

The boy turned to go. Palazar stopped him.

"How many banks are there in Coralita, muchacho?"

"One bank, señor; it belongs to the jefe politico, and there is much money in it, people say."

"Ah! And how many Federals guard Coralita, my little brown owl?"

"Two companies, señor—about one hundred men."

"Enough. Now go."

So Fernando Mayortorenna joined

the Army of the Constitution—an idealist in a smoking jacket, pledged to murder as to a holy covenant. Johnson, the searcher for hidden truths and student of what lies behind men's eyes, became foster father for him, and to Johnson Fernando paid the unquestioning fealty of a slave to a master. On bivouac nights the shabby little shadow, ridiculous weapon under head, curled up for sleep as near Johnson's dog tent as he durst, and in the hot days of the army's inactivity his flapping coat and the bobbing shock head were never far behind the gringo. But when Johnson tried to probe into Fernando's soul by adroit scalpel strokes of seemingly careless questioning he failed utterly. To the correspondent's halting questions in the vernacular, Fernando answered readily enough except when they began to touch upon the reason for his coming to be a soldier for the Constitution. When such subject was raised, the youth's eyes would burn with the zealot fire of a militant of the old church preaching crusade, but his answer was always the same:

"I fight for my country and, the saints favoring, to kill the jefe politico of Coralita."

For a week Palazar led his command on paltry plundering expeditions about the circle of the helpless haciendas, taking toll in horses, money, and supplies, but ever dodging like a sly weasel the towns where Federal garrisons offered a fight. Grumblings of discontent began to be heard among the soldiers, self-styled, who were not stayed by the thin pickings of country loot, but were eager to crack a real nut, even at the cost of a fight. A certain amount of pride prompted their demand for more positive action. Over the mountains from Sonora had come word of the siege of Guaymas and the capture of Hermosillo—a steady march of triumph for the rebels; emulation having no basis at all in real patriotism, but arising only from the promptings of the blood lust, the pride of slaughter, pricked the freebooters and bandits. Johnson, eager for action which meant "copy," was beside himself with impatience. Even the phlegmatic Sykes was willing to earn his four pesos a day at actual fighting.

"If old 'Prickly Pear' Palazar asks me where to go, I'll plug for Coralita—and strawberries," was the way the Texan framed his opinion when Johnson brought up for the hundredth time the burden of his plaint.

"Coralita ought to make a good fight," Johnson's enthusiasm was quick to flame. "It controls the railroad north of San Louis, and then there is that fat bank of Fernando's jefe politico—loot!"

Johnson, who held no false notions about General Palazar's dignity or his merits as a tactician, and who enjoyed a fair share of the ex-mule skinner's confidence, did not hesitate to go before the leader and urge a campaign of action. Sykes was the third in the council of war, highly regarded as he was by Palazar because of his merits as a fighter. Both pressed the taking of Coralita. Johnson urged the strategical advantage of the town, Sykes subtly played the lure of the bank. The correspondent was fighting for a story; the hired killer for—strawberries. In the end, they prevailed. Palazar promised action.

It came; not promptly, for nothing is prompt in Mexico. But it came. By dawn of a day promising great heat the whole command was on the move. Before noon a freight train running north from Coralita and bound for the mines with timber, machinery, and dynamite, was flagged and seized. Many hot hours thereafter were spent in dumping the contents of the freight cars onto the desert and running horses into spaces thus provided. When the sun dropped behind the burnt mesas the train, bristling guns, and with each car top covered with fighting men, began slowly to back down the track in the direction of doomed Coralita—an ugly and poisonous adder of revolution ready to sting

Johnson sat on the brake wheel of a box car, packing films into his camera; his shadow, Fernando, squatting atop the running board near him. The boy had his gun in sections, and was diligently rubbing at the rust with a shred

torn from his crazy jacket. Sykes, dangling his feet over the edge of the car, was whistling "Casey Jones."

"Say, kid," he suddenly broke off to address Fernando in the vernacular, "do you know it's back to the old home town for you?"

"If you mean we are going to Coralita, I already know that." Fernando sighted through his gun barrel at the blinding red in the West.

"Who told you?" the Texan challenged.

"The saints told me last night while I slept," came the answer simply.

Sykes turned and gave the boy a quizzical look.

"You don't say! And did your friends, the saints, tip you off to anything else of an interesting nature?"

Fernando rubbed the long iron tube in his hand with the sleeve of his jacket for several minutes before he answered; then, his eyes on the far rim of the mountains, all aflame, he answered:

"Yes; they told me I would die fighting for my country to-morrow, but that the jefe politico would die, too, and my oath would be paid."

"I got another papa on the Salt Lake line," Sykes hummed. Then:

"Say, Johnson, get this. Little Ragged Reginald, here, says the saints passed him the hunch last night that to-morrow he's going to hit the toboggan, but that William Henry Heffy-politico'll take the chute before he does."

The newspaper man, looking up at the illimitable desert sky, with the light that was before the world was born scorching the western horizon in a furnace glare—all about the seared and slag-scarred mountains of a creation's first day—sensed what the Texan could not know. He believed, of a truth, that the saints had whispered to Fernando.

Coralita lay under a pitiless sun, beleaguered.

The first attack of the rebels had been repulsed, even at the moment the town seemed in their grasp. Many dead lay in the streets and on roofs. The remnant of the Federals was intrenched before the railroad station, facing the defile in the mountains, down which the railroad ran and through which Palazar's men had launched their assault. They lay behind a barricade of railroad ties and iron, hastily thrown across the tracks, flanked right and left by the stone machine shop and station. Before that rough breastwork the impetuous charge of the Constitutionalists had shattered itself, and now far up the track on the hills beyond the town Palazar was reforming his men. Only the plip-plip! of the sharpshooters' advance guns up among the rocks; for the rest the silence and suspension of all energy that presages the earthquake.

Back among the attackers, grouped along the railroad track on the high grade out of range of the Federal fire, Johnson was kneeling by the side of Fernando, sousing wet bandages, torn from the flamboyant smoking jacket, about the boy's forehead. The correspondent, crawling among the rocks in the very forefront of the attacking line on the quest of "shots" for his camera, had come upon his shadow, lying behind a bowlder, creased across the forehead by a bullet and babbling in a delirium. Johnson had carried the lad on his shoulder back to safety with the retreat. He had even slung Fernando's ridiculous rifle under his arm when he rescued the ragamuffin—the heat of its antiquated barrel burned through Johnson's coat to his very heart.

Something was going forward on the tracks, and, leaving his charge in the shade of a stunted pine, Johnson grabbed his camera and ran down to where scores of men were pacing the ties from one end of the captured freight train to the other. As he drew near, he saw that each carried on his shoulder a square box, the size of a cracker box, but heavier. It was dynamite. They were unloading it from a car back near the engine and reloading it into an empty car at the end of the train nearest the town. Palazar, cursing savagely and striding back and forth from group to group, was urging speed with fist and boot.

Fully fifty boxes of the deadly stuff

were banked inside the car. Then the ragtag rebels seized their guns and scampered for the rim of the hills overlooking the town, like bleacher warmers at a world's series game fighting for choice place. One man crawled under the loaded car and uncoupled it. The engine, far up the line of red blocks, tooted warning, and then came the bang-bang-bang of impact down the string of buffers as the train cautiously got under way. Johnson, standing on a little rise, and with his camera poised to get a snap of the dynamite car when it should detach itself from the rest of the train, and go blundering down grade on its work of death, heard a yell. He lifted his head and saw——

A prancing, jack-o'-lantern shape, with shrewds of some outlandish garment fluttering back from shoulders and waist, and a long rifle brandished over its bandaged and bloodied head, was leaping through the scrub for the moving train. Like a fiend out of the Pit the scarecrow raced, drew near, and, with infernal strength, caught and swung itself onto the lower step of the ladder on the end car's side. Even as this happened there was a scream of brakes, and a widening slice of light showed between the rest of the train and the wild car.

Calls, curses, wildly beckoning fists, white, distorted faces!

Faster and faster, as it gathered the momentum of the grade, the dynamite car sped down through the gorge upon the damned Coralita—upon the breastwork of the defenders across the tracks. On the car's top, sharply cut against the raw blue of the sky, stood the imp of the streaming tatters, feet straddling to brace against the swaying, and hands fumbling at the breech of a long rifle. The Army of the Constitution saw the rifle finally broken at the breech, saw a movement as of pressing a shell home. Then the soldier of the Constitution on the car of death knelt and held his weapon at the ready.

The gorge swallowed him.

Johnson, exploring the streets of the captured town, given up to looting and worse, came upon Sykes at the door of the Hotel Diligencia. Sykes was battering in the wooden panels with his gun butt, but he paused to grin cheerfully at the correspondent.

"Come on in; the water's fine!" the Texan called.

"I want you to help me," Johnson answered, his face deeply etched with lines of seriousness. "Ask somebody around here where the house of Señora Mayortorenna is—I want to tell—his—sister something—if she is alive."

"Who—you mean—the kid's sister; how'd you know—say, what you want to tell her?"

"That the jefe politico of Coralita is dead for one thing," Johnson answered quietly.

"Then the kid——"

"Yes. I guess it would be hard to tell which died first."

Sykes leaned on his rifle butt and cupped his chin in his hand. He seemed to be laboring in thought.

"Say, Johnson," he finally broke out; "funny game, what? The kid wants to get the heffy and he gets him. Old Palazar wants the bank, and he's crashing in now. You want to get a story, and you get it. And now look at me ——"

"Well?"

"Well, I wanted strawberries—and you see me going after 'em!"

CHARLIE COLLINS HAS A COLD

CHARLIE COLLINS, the erudite dramatic critic of the Chicago *Inter-Ocean*, held in his hand a telegram inviting him to a swagger house party somewhere in the vicinity of Pittsburgh. He read it and reread it, and every time he did so he sneezed with wonderful resonance.

Finally, he seized a propitious moment and worked in a sigh between the sneezes. Then he laboriously wrote this reply:

My regrets. I have such a cold that my life is a continuous Chautauqua salute.

Ralston's Last Run

By Mayn Clew Garnett

Author of "The White Ghost of Disaster," "Going Into Business," Etc.

The special commissioner to Tokyo breaks the hydroplane record to get aboard his ship, and incidentally unearths a nefarious plot that had nothing to do with his mission to Japan

JACK RALSTON peered over the hood and tried to see through the flying spray. With head thrust forward and eyes straining to make out objects ahead in his course, he held the flying planer true, and pointed her straight for the lighthouse which was now visible in the gloom of the evening.

The roar of the exhaust was deafening as the hundred-horse-power engine tore away at twelve hundred revolutions. The vibrations were not great, but the whole fabric quivered and pulsated, shivered and plunged as she drove along at thirty-five miles an hour over the rippling sea.

The wind was freshening, and the salt spume flew thick and fast in the rush. The heavier part of it, however, was thrust or thrown aside, and before it fell the *Scud* had passed it in her headlong plunge; only the lighter drift flew in the driver's face and whirled and eddied about in the air like a white smoke or steam. It blinded Ralston, and he continually wiped his eyes with his left hand while he held the steering wheel with his right.

The dull thunder of the moving steel parts, coupled with the almost simultaneous explosions in the cylinders, produced a deep, rumbling note of vast volume, and it drowned all other sounds. To Ralston all sound was chaos, just a rumbling roar of great volume which filled his life, his entire surroundings, and, coupled with it, was that everlasting wet smoke of the drifting spume which rose steadily under the lifting shoulder of the planer at about six feet from the bows.

Now and again he would lift upon a swell of the sea, and the planer would lurch and plunge across, hitting the back of the roller and leaping through the trough of the sea at such velocity that she would apparently go clear altogether, showing her smooth underbody back to the tail shaft and propeller tearing a frothy wake beneath and astern.

Ralston looked at his watch. It was now six o'clock, and he had but ten miles more to do. He touched the needles under the carburetors and gave her a bit more gas, then opened the auxiliaries a little to take up the mixture. She took it, and he could tell by the increased roar that she was going faster and faster. His speed was now fully forty miles an hour, and the engine was going smoothly without a miss. The six cylinders were firing evenly. The chances were that the engine would stand up an hour or more under the terrific strain. He peered at the oiler a moment, and found it feeding.

At six o'clock he should have been at the light. Even without an accident, he would be a quarter of an hour late. His mission was most important. The Japanese had been very insistent in their demands, their honor had been involved, and John Ralston, who had been three years in the diplomatic service as first secretary to the United States legation at Tokyo, had been chosen to carry the answer of the secretary of state, carry

it in person to the Premier of Japan. Upon it rested perhaps peace or war between the powers.

It was a most important mission, and Ralston had been chosen not only because of his familiarity with the customs and language of the yellow kingdom, but because he had shown upon several occasions a steadiness and courtesy which had not been cultivated in all of the envoys who had treated with the men of the East.

Ralston was under forty, and a bachelor of great wealth. His only hobby was speed in his autos and yachts, and this mania—if it might be called such—was about the only recreation in which he indulged. He was a hard worker, and, instead of tennis or the more sober sports, he ran fast flyers and spent much money in the development of the gasoline engine.

He had received his orders when down the coast at his place near Monterey. The dispatch had taken him by surprise, and there was no way to catch the Pacific Mail ship to Tokyo unless he made the hundred-mile run to San Francisco in three hours and managed to either board the ship *Saki Maru* in the harbor or intercept her off the Heads.

Three hours had passed, and he was still miles away from the Golden Gate. The light was plainly visible at South Head, and the smoke of the liner was showing, coming down the harbor. He had tried to telegraph the company to hold her, but the wire had been down from a storm, and his powerful car had blown out a tire and twisted its steering gear so badly that at least three hours would be needed to repair it.

Alone, he had decided to try and make the run. With papers packed in a small suit case and with orders to forward his effects upon the steamer sailing the next week, he had cast off in the *Scud* with the purpose of trying to make the run in time. It would never do to have it said that he was absent from duty when such an important matter had been up before the Cabinet for their most sober consideration.

Darkness was coming on, and he still had that last ten miles to make with the smoke showing plainly over the headland and the knowledge that the *Maru* was making not less than twenty-two knots an hour on her run across the Pacific.

The minutes passed, and the wind coming off the sea struck the planer with more force. She threw the spume higher, but still tore along with undiminished speed, the roar of her engine now increased to its utmost.

Ralston held the wheel and gazed ahead, counting, trying to fathom the space between him and the sea buoy that was coming nearer at the rate of forty miles an hour. If the engine would only stand up under that terrific strain a quarter of an hour more! Well, the planer cost a few thousand dollars, but that sum was nothing to him. He would be willing to give the engine away afterward if he was successful in making the ship in time.

Objects came nearer. The Heads rose rapidly. Forty miles an hour makes tremendous inroads on distance. Hardly breathing in the watery smoke, he peered at the ship, which now came into full view and stood for the Farralones, where she would slow down to put off the pilot. There was but four miles between them, the flying planer tearing over the surface of the darkening Pacific, and the *Maru* shoving her bow wave ahead and bearing for Japan at twenty-two knots an hour. Ralston felt he would win, would make her easily now. He would run up alongside in the gloom of the evening, and the roar of his engine would be all the signal necessary to attract attention. Then he would board her, pay a man to take his craft in—and all would be well.

II.

The full-rigged ship *Jackson Bean* came slowly in, beating up against the land breeze. She reached inside the Farralones and set her signal for a tug to tow her to her berth off Market Street. She was from Hongkong, and carried a miscellaneous cargo of silks, tea, and general Chinese goods.

The inspectors were waiting for her. They had been informed of her approach, and they had leisurely taken their time to go to meet her. She was a sailing ship, and could not go fast inside the Heads. There would be no trouble overtaking her long before she came to an anchor off Telegraph Hill or made ready for her berth farther in.

They knew she had many pounds of opium aboard, as she had made the voyage several times before, and they were familiar with her agents and owners. Smuggling was a crime only when found out. Many an officer in the Pacific trade had smuggled goods in. But the opium traffic had become very raw, very bad indeed. More especially was it noxious after the new law regarding it. A little would, of course, find its way in, but the immense amounts smuggled must be stopped. They would inspect her this time before she anchored.

Jimmy Sands, her master, knew this, as he had received word to that effect long before he had sailed from the other side. It did not concern him greatly, as he had means of playing against inspectors, only he kept a sharp lookout and clewed up his topsails long before he had neared the land, his object being not to go too fast. Nightfall was early enough for him to make harbor. A small motor boat or two might be slinking down the harbor in the darkness. One especially with a heavy-duty engine muffled down so that not the slightest sound came from her engine room was expected.

This boat was forty-five feet long, and very wide and roomy. She was painted a dull drab color, a color that is distinctly hard to see in bad light, and in the night slinks by like a shadow. She carried but two men, and she never showed a light, which, as a violation of the harbor law, was more or less noticeable. But she had never been caught in anything, even by the inspectors, who are to see to it that small craft obey the regulations in regard to lights and whistles.

Her owner was a young man of thirty-five, who, in general appearance, resembled Ralston to a remarkable degree, except for a certain hardness of eye and set of jaw developed by practices in which the richer man never indulged.

Altogether, Bill Freeman, dive keeper, smuggler, and generally all-around tough citizen, was not a bad-looking man, standing six feet and over, clean-shaved, dark-eyed, and soft of speech. He was a product of the slums of the Barbary Coast of San Francisco, but a graduate of the high schools of the city and the higher or lower schools of the reformatory, where his training had not been wasted upon unfertile soil. Bill was clever, exceedingly clever, and he was a recognized leader in his district.

Sammy Sloane, who ran the engine for him, was a fisherman of more or less experience, who had taken up the crooked path. As nightfall approached, they came swiftly down the harbor, with the intention of reaching the inbound ship from China, or at least her vicinity. The tug of the inspectors had already dropped down the bay, but by holding well over to North Head the launch slipped by in the gloom and made the harbor entrance about the time the haze which often settles over the sea after sundown had begun to shut out distant objects. The southeast wind, blowing as it had, now switched about and came from the northward with a cold clamminess of the sea upon it.

"Better get the course right and drive her out before them fellows get onto us, sir," said Sloane to his master. "We kin follow up in the ship's wake and pick up the stuff easy enough if it don't get too thick."

Freeman swung outward and let his heavy engine go to its limit. The launch rushed swiftly along into the hazy gloom of the evening, and headed a course which would take her to the northward but still within a short distance of the approaching sailing vessel from Hongkong. The *Maru* tore past her in a rush of foam, sending her bow wave rolling high and causing the small vessel to roll wildly. The dull rumble of the liner's engines sounded over the

sea, and then she passed on ahead into the west on her way to Japan.

Ralston was coming up fast indeed. The haze had shut down so that he saw indistinctly, and the flying spume from his planer added to this, making it almost impossible to see objects a hundred feet ahead. The gloom of the evening increased the inability to see, so that all he could make out of the *Maru* was a dark shadow tearing along across his path, the shadow beginning to flicker and sparkle as the lights were turned on in staterooms and gangways.

He held on to cross her bow, but was unable to make it, and swung up in her wake with his engine going full speed ahead and his flying planer gaining fast upon the ship. He was almost ready to hail her, and had seized his horn to blow when a dark object showed right in his course.

He tried to swing out, to turn to the southward, but the planer was going very fast, and refused to make the turn in time.

In an instant the launch with Freeman at the wheel loomed ahead, and the planer going at forty miles an hour plunged like a projectile from the gloom and struck her upon the port quarter.

The impact was terrific. The light planer crumpled up, smashed as far aft as her hood coaming, throwing Ralston overboard, and then with her engine still firing with a steady roar, hung half imbedded in the side of the launch, while that small but powerful vessel, heeling over from the shock, kept on her course. Then Sloane shut off the power and the launch stopped.

III.

Ralston, flung far into the sea, came to the surface unharmed, although partly stunned by the shock. He swam toward the dull shadow of the launch when she stopped, and came alongside just after Freeman had recovered from being tossed to starboard against the pilot-house bulkhead. The smuggler staggered to the side to view the wreck, wondering what had happened. He saw the nose of the planer sticking into the side of his launch, and soon made out the form or rather head of Ralston coming along astern.

"What happened?" he asked Sloane.

"Struck by a flying whale, I believe," said his engineer. "For the love of liquor, I never seen anything like this—this here thing what hits us goin' a mile a minute!"

"And you, you son of a Hottentot," snarled Freeman to Ralston, who came, panting and struggling, alongside, "what the devil do you mean by running me down like this—who's to pay for this—hey?"

"Get the papers—get the papers out of the *Scud*—get them before she sinks!" gasped Ralston.

"I've a notion to bat you one on the bean and let you sink, you blind, crazy man," said Freeman, still hurt and glowering at him.

Sloane reached over the side, however, and dragged Ralston aboard, dripping and shaking slightly from the shock.

"Get the satchel—the papers—and put me aboard the liner—quick!" said Ralston, in a tone that was more peremptory than the occasion required.

"I'll put you under the whitecaps, if you don't shut up!" said Freeman. "Who in snakes are you, anyway? Where did you come from, flying along in the night like a fool bat? What's your lay?"

"I am a person of some importance—never mind who," said Ralston, with vigor, "but we will waive that—put me aboard the *Maru* and I'll give you a hundred dollars."

The liner had stopped her engines. The roar of the engine having suddenly ceased, following the crash, some one had looked astern and seen something of the collision between the two small craft. The Japanese, with that peculiar aptitude for emergencies, had stopped the ship and were in the act of getting out a small boat to go to the rescue. Then they saw the launch start ahead again as Sloane opened up, and the wreck of the hydroplane sank as the forward thrust of the wheel drew it clear of the gash in the side.

Freeman reached over just before she

went down and drew up the satchel containing the papers Ralston wanted so badly. Then he swung his craft around, and, in spite of her wounded side, into which the sea poured with some volume, he headed back toward San Francisco.

"What is it—bank loot or jewelry?" he asked laconically. "What's the lag for—how long a bit?"

"I don't understand your language, sir," said Ralston, "but I take it that you believe me a thief. I appreciate the compliment, but assure you that you are mistaken. I am a United States commissioner——"

"A what?" asked Freeman.

"A special commissioner to Japan—I have missed my ship, and will pay you well if you will hurry and put me aboard the *Maru*—she is now waiting to see what has happened."

"It'll cost you a thousand dollars to board her—not a cent less—that commissioner thing is good—only it don't get you anywhere with us. If you got anything good in that bag, whack up—if it ain't worth a thousand dollars, it ain't worth running away from so hard—they won't send you up for taking a stickpin."

"I would give you the thousand dollars willingly—if I had it, my friend, and not begrudge it at all," said Ralston.

"Well, it must be a bad case indeed, if you would, but that don't let you out at all. If you can tell me what you've done to get in that bad, I might let the price down some. But listen to me, stranger, I'm not your friend—see? I'm not a friend of yours at all; no, not to any extent. And if you've committed murder, or cracked a safe, it's up to you to get clear. I'm only with you for what's in it—see? That's me. I'm not a philanthropist, not exactly. Neither am I a policeman. I don't care a cent what you've done so long as it don't get into me. You shell out and you'll get the ship—or I'll have to turn you over to the inspectors, who'll be along presently to see me."

Freeman took the satchel and held it while he felt for a match. The lamp on the bulkhead was full of oil, and he lit it. Then he peered out over the sea for a moment, and afterward called Sloane to take the wheel until he was through with the examination of his find.

Ralston stood watching as Freeman drew forth the papers from the satchel and examined them carefully. He seemed greatly disappointed at not finding negotiable securities, or bank notes. Then he began a careful perusal of the documents, and was for some time at a loss to understand what they contained. Suddenly he sat up straight.

"You dirty spy!" he hissed. "No wonder you wanted to get the *Saki Maru!* You'll get San Quentin instead if we get in all right. Say, Sloane—do you know what we've got here—a Japanese spy, a fellow with the most important documents—here's papers from the state department at Washington—what d'ye think of that? We've found him, all right. I reckon we're in for a few thousand dollars reward if we land him."

"You are in for a term in prison if you do not instantly put me aboard that ship!" said Ralston; but even as he spoke he knew it was now too late, and that the *Maru* was going westward at a rapid rate again and was now but a shadow, a phantom they could never hope to overtake, even if they wished.

"Well, we're leaking so fast we'll have to put in at the Head to repair damages," said Sloane. "We'll have to let the ship go to-night and trust the 'old man' will have enough sense to get the stuff in without us. It's a case of sink or swim if we stay out any longer than it'll take us to make the land."

The lights of the inspectors' tug showed plainly through the misty gloom as he spoke.

"Yes, there's Jacobs and Johnson coming out to meet us—see them? The old Chinese junk'll have a time to get that stuff in, or I don't know."

"Well, what we'll lose on it we'll make on this gent here—maybe we'll land both," said Freeman.

"What you may make in some of your nefarious enterprises will certainly be more than you will now make from

me," said Ralston. "Since the ship is now gone, I'll see to it that you don't even get a cent, and, besides, you will pay dearly for running after sundown without lights. If you fellows think you can 'put anything over on me,' as you call it, you will find out your mistake only too soon. That planer was worth two thousand dollars, and you will have this launch libeled for that amount for not having lights. I'll see to it that you don't get away, also."

"Some bluff, that!" sneered Freeman. "Go it, old top; tell us you will have us all arrested, run in—but I like to see a fellow make a stall for all there's in it. It's a pity you didn't make your getaway good, for now you'll be aboard the inspectors' tug within five minutes and we'll cop the reward for you."

IV.

Freeman, still holding to the satchel, lit the running lights. He headed for the tug, which was now standing for the approaching ship that was coming slowly in, expecting the launch to show up at any moment

They came alongside and hailed her.

"We are sinking, but have a man aboard who tried to escape in the *Saki Maru* with important state papers—Japanese spy—send a man aboard and hurry about it—we have to run in at once," hailed the smuggler.

The tug slowed down, stopped, and a line was passed.

"Where were you bound?" was the inquiry from Jacobs, who stepped aboard the launch.

"We were just fishing to the south-'ard, and were going in when this chap here runs us down in a hydroplane going a mile a minute for the *Saki Maru*. He offers us a thousand dollars to board her—has these here papers with him, and they speak for themselves—he's a spy, all right; no one but a spy could get hold of this kind of stuff. Why, man, it might mean war—it's state papers!"

Jacobs stepped into the house and took the satchel from the smuggler. He held the papers to the light and read them while they ran back at full speed for the harbor, the water gaining fast from the gash in the side.

Before they arrived in the dock, the inspector approached Ralston.

"I don't suppose you care to tell me how you came by these documents—and I shall save myself the trouble of asking you—I shall have to hold you until I can communicate with the proper persons," he said.

"Oh, I don't know!" said Ralston, in disgust. "I received the papers in the regular order from Washington; they were sent by a special messenger to me at my place down below. I tried to get the ship to take them over to the ambassador in Tokyo—I am a special commissioner. I ran into this launch, which was running without lights, and—well, here I am. I hope you will do your utmost to clear the matter up before it is too late, and the best way is to send a wireless to the *Maru*, asking her to lie to, until I can get aboard her with these dispatches. You may also wire, or find out very quickly, who I am by other means. I am Mr. John Ralston, formerly of the United States legation in Tokyo. You will find my clothes marked with my name, my letters, my—well, I haven't much to show, but you can satisfy yourself easy enough. Send the wire to the ship first, and let me get a vessel to overtake her. You have now seen the dispatches and can realize their importance."

"I am sorry, sir, but that don't explain how you came to be outside the Heads trying to overtake a Japanese ship—alone," said Jacobs.

"You might at least take me to the commanding officer at the Presidio. General Blank will at least have sense enough to know who I am and how I came by these papers. Already a half hour has passed, and the ship is now nearly to the Farralones. She must be stopped—you understand."

"Well, I can take you to the Presidio easy enough," said Jacobs. "Yes, I will take you there right away—we are almost in now."

"Remember, chief, if there's anything in this, Sloane and I get it—see?" said Freeman. "We picked him up—we cop

the reward—I won't forget you, all right, you needn't worry."

The launch came to the fort dock, and Jacobs, the inspector, took his charge to the commanding officer's house.

In a few minutes the general saw what had happened.

"Don't you know that no one, no one but a person of importance could have come by these papers, Mr. Inspector?" he asked brusquely.

'No, sir, I do not; but if you take the responsibility——"

The general rang a bell. An orderly appeared.

"Tell aëro number three to call the *Saki Maru* and detain her for further orders at once," he said sharply. "Do not lose a moment!" he roared after the soldier, as the orderly saluted and disappeared.

"And now, Mr. Ralston, what will you do, sir? I do not see how you can get the ship, anyhow, for I don't believe her master will stop long enough for you to overtake her in the fort tug. She is now off the Farralones, and probably twenty-five to thirty miles out," said the officer.

"Have you no fast boat, a motor boat or hydroplane of any kind that might do the run quickly?" asked the tired Ralston.

"I have a planer—the *Slider IV.*—a forty-mile craft, but most dangerous in a seaway. You can take her if you say so. I shall have Corporal Wilson go with you as engine man."

"Nothing would suit me better, thank you, general; I'll start at once, if they pick her up by the wireless," said Ralston.

The orderly appeared even while they spoke and announced that the ship had been picked up without delay and would lie to for half an hour at least for further orders—after that she must proceed. She was not more than twenty-six miles out.

It was after dark, but the general grabbed his hat, called for his engine man, and almost ran to the water side in his hurry to get Ralston off. Within five minutes the boat was ready. Corporal Wilson spun the starter, and with a roar the engine whirled up to a thousand revolutions.

"Good-by and good luck!" called the general, waving his hand and gazing into the night where the roar grew fainter and fainter as the *Slider* slipped out and fairly tore down the harbor.

"Did any one else see those papers besides yourself?" the general asked Inspector Jacobs.

"Yes, sir; the boatmen who picked Mr. Ralston up—they thought him a spy, and insisted upon my taking him in—that's why I brought him here."

"See that you make a charge against them, and that they are detained at least ten days in solitary confinement and do not communicate with any one—you yourself, I trust, will keep quiet, as it will surely go hard with you if you speak of this affair."

"But what charge can I make against them?"

"Anything you please—if you do not do this at once I shall have to lock you up along with them—do you understand?"

"Well, they might be smugglers at that, sir—I might make a charge and not get into trouble by it. Anyhow, they ran without lights, and that will give me an excuse, sir."

"Excuse or none, you will promise that, or I shall call the guard at once and have you taken care of."

"I promise, sir; I will see to it."

"Good night, then—I am taking some risk in letting you go; but I feel that you will serve your country to that extent, at least."

"You may trust me, sir—good night," said Inspector Jacobs, as he went back to the launch

V.

Down the dark harbor Ralston tore. He was disgusted, tired, and angry at the series of mishaps that had so delayed him. The adventure was more or less exciting to say the least, and he still hoped to get the ship and deliver the documents in Tokyo without publicity. He determined that he would do his best. He trusted to the general to see

that silence would be kept, and so instructed Corporal Wilson as they tore along.

"She's a flyer, all right," he commented, as they leaped across the rip of the ebb tide at the entrance and threw the spray in sheets over them.

"Yes, sir, she goes a bit—I can get a little more out of her, if you say so."

"Let her go—let her go—don't stop her on my account," said Ralston.

"Shall I light up—or let her run in the dark?"

"Oh, never mind the lights now; you can light up on your way back in. Just let me catch the *Maru*, that's all I want," said Ralston.

Into the darkness the planer went, gaining speed as Wilson gently opened her up. She was now making fully forty-one to forty-two miles an hour, and she went through the darkness like a shadow, the roar of her exhaust sounding weirdly. She ran lightless, and, but for the white streak of foam flying from her, would have been invisible to any one a short distance away.

Ralston held her for the Farralones, and trusted that even if the *Maru* went ahead before he arrived in her vicinity, he could soon overtake her.

He was not far out before he arrived in the vicinity of the packet from Hongkong, the *Jackson Bean*, and her master, Jimmy Sands, having satisfied the inspectors that he would bear looking after, stood straight in with an official aboard, his temper ruffled, and his patience at an end at the absence of his expected friends.

Ralston tore past without warning, and Sands hailed him loudly but in vain. The darkness shut him off, and Sands thought it might be Freeman, who, having seen that the inspectors were aboard, was getting out of the way as fast as possible.

Within half an hour after starting, the *Slider* was out far enough for Ralston to make out the masthead light of the *Saki Maru*. She was still lying to, but before he came within four miles of her she had started her engines and was heading away again across the Pacific for Tokyo.

"Give her the last bit in her," said Ralston to Corporal Wilson.

The planer was doing all she could, and drew fast upon the ship in spite of her speed. The distance lessened perceptibly, and the *Slider* ran up in the white water of the ship's wake.

Slowly and surely she came up, came under the stern, then upon the quarter, and when she reached amidships, the officer on watch saw her and rang off the engines.

A ladder fell from the high deck above.

"Good-by, old fellow; that was a good run, all right," said Ralston to the soldier, shaking his hand. "You'll get in, all right; you've got gas enough and a smooth sea. I'll send a wireless to be on the lookout for you in case you have an accident. Head straight back, and give the general my compliments and tell him how I appreciate his kindness. Good-by!"

He grasped his satchel and climbed aboard. The engines started ahead again, and the *Saki Maru* steamed across the Pacific to Tokyo with the special commissioner aboard.

Wilson started his engine again, and turned and headed in for San Francisco.

Alone at sea in the night, Wilson ran slowly, saving his engine and calculating the time he would have to run before getting in. He would not run at speed when there was no especial reason for it.

The engine had become pretty warm, but it was cooling and firing steadily now, and turning not over six hundred, sending the planer along even at that rate as fast as anything need go.

He cut out the exhaust, and sent it into the muffler, which, being heavy and strong, shut off all noise save the low humming of the steel parts in motion. He was now changed from a roaring phantom to a silent ghost which fled over the sea softly and silently, and he looked at his watch again to see the time.

He ran along for half an hour into the misty night, peering about, but always heading for the light at North Head, which shone faintly in spite of

the haze, and showed him his course. The loneliness made him nervous, but the engine purred steadily and gave him no trouble. He was getting close in now, and saw a shadow ahead with a light above it. It was the *Jackson Bean* coming into harbor, and he fell behind her right in the wake. He ran up close to her in the darkness, his engine almost silent. Then a voice hailed him from above, as he saw a head appear above the taffrail.

VI.

"Is that you, Bill?" it asked gently.

"Sure!" said Wilson.

A splash followed this assurance. A heavy box bumped into the bow of the planer and jarred her with the shock. Wilson was about to yell his disapproval, but reconsidered instantly, reached for the passing box, and drew it aboard.

"Get it?" asked a voice from the ship.

"Sure!" answered Wilson, wondering what it was, but feeling that it must be of considerable value.

"All right; here comes another," said the voice.

A splash sounded again, and Wilson shut down his engine to avoid a crash. He seized the box that came alongside, and heaved it into the boat.

"Get it?" asked the voice.

"Get 'em over faster; I'll pick 'em, all right," said the soldier.

Several splashes followed in quick succession. Wilson peered about in the darkness and picked up six more boxes, which he stowed in the planer. Then he opened the throttle wider and sent her ahead at speed for the harbor.

He came in and reported that he had placed the commissioner safely aboard the *Maru* with his satchel of papers. Everything was all right. He had picked up a few pieces of drift and wished permission to take them to his house, as he was in the married quarters. This was granted, and he opened something like five thousand dollars' worth of opium in the secrecy of his bedroom. It was a great load of the stuff, each large box containing about six hundred dollars' worth, and the eight boxes together were worth to him a fortune.

Wilson debated long with himself and then with his wife regarding the proper distribution of the drug. He felt that he had earned something. Then in the morning he went on guard without settling the question to the satisfaction of either his wife or his conscience.

In the guardhouse sat Bill Freeman and his engine man, Sloane. Wilson spoke pleasantly to him.

"This is a most outrageous thing to do!" snarled Freeman. "Lock a man up for nothing, just because he tried to catch a man he believed a spy! It's an outrage. I'll make your commanding officer sweat for this—him and that fathead inspector. I wouldn't mind so much staying about this place, but you've nothing to drink or smoke."

Wilson assured him that he could get him some tobacco at once.

"Well, say, soldier, I don't like to confess it, but I need a smoke—a real smoke—you know. I hit the pipe a little, and need the stuff after a night's work. If you could get a bit of morphine, or opium—get a bit of opium from the hospital steward—see? I'll stake you when this is over."

"Sure!" said Wilson, and he went to his room the first moment off. He took a small packet of the stuff wrapped in tinfoil and marked with Chinese characters. Also, he took part of the box in which it came, to hide it as he would pass it to the men.

"Here you are," he said to Freeman, as he handed him the longed-for drug.

Freeman looked at it, staggered to his feet—then sat down solidly.

"Where did you get it?" he gasped.

"Are you Bill?" asked Wilson.

"Er—well, yes; I'm Bill Freeman."

"Then I guess it's yours, anyhow," said Wilson, with a smile.

"Yes," said Freeman, "I guess it is—how much did you get?"

"About all," said Wilson.

"I don't suppose you'll give it up—even if I snitch?" asked Freeman.

"Nix," said Wilson. "I won't. You can't say a thing—unless you want to go away for a little bit."

Babes in the Wood

By George Sterling

What the world was like in the Pleistocene Age. A brilliantly written story of people who lived three hundred thousand years ago. It is a new kind of story for the POPULAR, but there has been a revival of interest in Darwin's theory of evolution, and this series may help us to understand better the "Origin of Species."

I.—THE SABER-TOOTH

CHAPTER I.

THE SABER-TOOTH.

IN the late afternoon of a summer day in the year three hundred thousand (*circa*) B. C., a boy and a girl were squatted on the limb of a huge tree overlooking a path of a dense and somber forest. They faced in opposite directions, one up and one down the wood trail below them, and kept each a hand upon a large, smooth rock poised on the wide limb that they shared. This rock was of a size patently beyond their ability to have lifted to its position. Evidently it had been placed there by hands more powerful than their own, though either girl or boy was considerably stronger than the average man of our own times.

Each child was thickly covered with yellowish-brown hair, which became coarser and darker along the ridge of the back and on the outer portion of their limbs. On their heads it was black, and so long as to hang down over their eyes. The boy's name was Uk, and the girl's O-o. They had been stationed there by the father of Uk, who was chief of the tribe of cave folk to which they belonged, and it was their duty to drop the great stone upon the back of any beast, preferably of the deer family, that might traverse the path below. Great danger, however, would be incurred by any offense given to animals of the cat family, which might be able to follow them anywhere through the treetops.

The forest was very still, the monotonous murmur of uncountable insects, large and small, forming a steady undertone of sound that but emphasized the silence. Neither child spoke or stirred, gazing with the patience of wild things each in his or her own direction along the trail which lay over a score of feet below them.

Once the hot and drowsy stillness was broken by the cry of some great beast or reptile, and a small shudder ran abruptly over the body of each, the ridge of coarse, dark hair along their spines rising in instinctive correlation. Then silence leaped in upon sound like water above a cast pebble, and the forest resumed its dream.

But not with its former sense of peace. There hung in the close, windless air a subtle atmosphere of apprehension, like the foredriven scent of a conflagration miles below the horizon. The pair crouched to their vigil with even greater intentness, the dark eyes under the shaggy eyebrows gazing down and onward with an expression half plaintive, half menacing. A man of today, watching them, would say that they

had been slain, stuffed, and nailed cunningly to the limb that was their place at once of refuge and offense.

The long afternoon wore on, and, as the rim of that intenser sun touched the shaggy edge of the forest, a faint sound began to make itself audible to them. It grew, came nearer, swelled to an atrocious uproar of ferine voices, crossed the wood path at a point a quarter mile to the northward, and subsided slowly again to nothingness. They knew it for the clamor of a band of great apes in pursuit of one of its number, scratched perhaps by an ocelot, or otherwise come to some slight physical mischance. They knew, also, that death lay at the end of the pursuit.

The sun was now below the forest wall, and the beginnings of twilight were in copse and covert. The hairy ears, first of the girl and immediately afterward of the boy, pricked up. Noiselessly the latter shifted his position on the limb, to face, as she, down the trail. They sniffed gently, the former tremor ran over the tense bod' s, and the hair of the spine rose, as before, suddenly and without volition. Even our dulled and disused olfactory nerves would have taken notice of the scent that began to pervade the forest. To the boy and girl it was like an invisible gas, strangling, almost overpowering, and evocative at once of horror and hatred.

There ensued a breathless interval of several seconds, when suddenly a long, striped shape came into view around a corner of the trail, followed closely by another of perhaps half its length. Even we of to-day would have known them as a saber-tooth tigress and her cub.

The brutes, noiseless as shadows, drew rapidly nearer, but the two children on the limb did no more than gaze fixedly down upon them. Then O-o made as though to push the rock from its position, and Uk, with a little gasp of terror, increased the pressure of his hand upon it. O-o grasped his wrist, and endeavored to free the great stone from his control. But it was delicately poised, and, as the noiseless struggle between the two became more violent, the rock suddenly swerved, slipped from the limb, and crashed fairly upon the back of the half-grown tiger.

Instantly, as though a propelling spring had been released, the four participants in the scene hurled themselves into violent activity. The cub, its back broken, snarled horribly, and tore with unsheathed claws at the unoffending earth. The children sprang promptly to the limb above their heads, from that to the next, and upward for six successive branches. Having come to the sixth, they ran out almost to its extremity and clung there, trembling, the boy glaring in furious accusation and reproach at the girl.

But it was the tigress that was stung to fullest activity. She turned at the sound of the stone's impact, glanced for a moment at her cub, and then, as if in need of no further information, lanced her vast body viciously at the tree. In a few seconds she was three score feet in the air; in three more, halfway out on the thick limb to which the guilty ones clung and shivered. She crept outward a dozen feet farther, and then, too wise to trust the bending branch further with her great weight, struck it a leaden blow with her huge paw.

The impact sent a terrible thrill along the limb. O-o squealed shrilly, and as the tigress raised her paw for another blow, sprang for the branch above her. This she missed by but a fraction of a foot, caught a twig in her convulsive grasp, and fell back upon the limb beneath just as the second blow of the tigress descended. The branch vibrated like the plucked chord of a harp. She struck it, slipped, fell to the next branch, missed her clutch there, and came to a complete standstill only on the next.

The tigress gave her no attention whatever, but, creeping outward another foot, struck the decorticated limb half a dozen blows in rapid succession. Uk still retained his frenzied grip, but the intense vibrations were benumbing his hands, sending nervous pangs along his sinewy arms, and strange qualms to his vitals. Suddenly thrusting his enraged face nearer to the awful visage

that glared upon him from a distance of barely a dozen feet, he spat viciously and copiously at the hard, topaz eyes.

The huge brute paused for a second in astonishment, and ere she could recover her presence of mind, Uk had gathered his legs beneath him, set his feet, and sprang outward and downward at the slender branch of a tree that grew on the opposite side of the wood trail. Such a limb was ordinarily incapable of bearing a weight launched upon it from so considerable a height; but it formed one of the supports by which a stout and luxuriant liana ascended, and as the boy crashed suddenly upon it, the elastic vine absorbed as much of the impact as was essential to safety. The whole tree swayed, the branch cracked menacingly, and many of the tendrils of the vine were torn loose; yet the desperate leap was accomplished with success. The leaper, however, was not content, it would seem, with his new quarters; for swiftly descending the liana, he gained the ground, darted to a tree of moderate size, and scampered to a position halfway to its top.

The enormous cat, in the few seconds in which these events had taken place, had acted with instinctive promptness. Though unable to descend a tree with the rapidity with which an ascent was possible to her, she yet was but a few seconds behind the heels of the boy, and before Uk had reached the position that he craved at its top, her avenging claws were set into the trunk of the fresh tree that he had chosen. It was, however, of another character than that from which he had lately been dislodged. Tall, slender, but of a whiplike elasticity and toughness, it enabled him to climb to a height entirely inaccessible to the great bulk of the tigress. She was able, nevertheless, to reach a point halfway up the bole of the tree, where she resumed her former tactics of assailing it with paralyzing blows.

This time, however, the boy made no effort to retain his position by the mere grip of his hands. Instead, he fitted his body into the crotch of a limb and encircled the trunk of the tree with his hairy arms. As before, he was victim of terrible vibrations, but clung tenaciously to his point of vantage, in his deep-set eyes a far-off and patient expression; and after a little the great beast, her fury somewhat abated and her paws aching with the unwonted use to which they had been put, backed slowly down the tree and went to sniff curiously at the body of her cub, on whose eyes the death glaze was already set.

O-o, in the meanwhile, had shifted her position to one on the opposite side of the tree, and was in the act of concealing herself on a limb where the leaves were thickest, when the slight rustling caused by the act attracted the attention of the tigress, and in a flash the brute was again within a dozen feet of her. She stood not on the order of her going, but promptly sprang at the branch of a near-by tree, grasped its outer twigs, and hung there like a big wasps' nest. Immediately the tigress descended from her position, dashed up the trunk of the new tree, and began once more to deliver nerve-benumbing blows to the limb from which the girl depended.

While these events had been taking place, a band of mammoths, collectively kings of the Pleistocene age by virtue of their vast bulk and their community of action, had been steadily and swiftly passing through the forest, with the intention of reaching the slow river that formed its southern boundary. Irresistible and imperturbable, they took little heed of such small trees and thickets as lay in their path, and the crashing of underbrush announced their advent long before they came into view. Finally the procession, headed by a great bull mammoth, was upon the scene, and as the leader swung swiftly along beneath the limb from which O-o hung pendulous, she released her grip and dropped lightly upon the huge back, fell sidewise, rolled over once, and regained a position on hands and knees a few feet from the creature's tail. There she adhered, clinging to the thick, brown wool with which the beast's body was covered.

The vast creature gave a snort of indignation and reached backward with its trunk in an endeavor to pluck her from her perch. Finding he could not reach so far, he then tore up by its roots a young tree and proceeded to belabor himself with it, till O-o, stung by the whistling twigs, lowered herself to a point halfway down the great flanks, dropped lightly to the ground, and sped frantically away through the denser part of the undergrowth.

At that moment the approaching cows of the herd caught the scent of the tigress, and, with lowered heads, rushed in an avalanche of blind menace and destruction in the direction from which the odor drifted. One of them struck the tree in which the tigress was harbored so terrific a blow that the huge cat was hurled from her perch like a leaf in a whirlwind. She fell on all fours, however, after the manner of her kind, and on one side of the hurled phalanx of monsters. Several calves lay open to her fury; but she had had enough, and vanished with scarcely a rustle through the thick screen of lesser trees. The cow-mammoths checked their rush, wheeled, and returned, trumpeting, to the calves. These scrupulously inspected, the whole herd grouped about them and resumed, though at a slower pace, its ponderous march to the near-by river.

The sound of their crashing had not yet died away on the air of sunset before Uk had descended from his perch in the treetop. Between him and the caves of his tribe he feared that somewhere the tigress lurked, plotting revenge on all humans. And to reach the plain where those limestone cliffs rose, a long detour would therefore be necessary to safety—a matter that the lateness of the hour rendered no less dangerous than the direct journey to his home. He stood for a moment in indecision, then started cautiously in a northeasterly direction, somewhat to the right of the spot where the sabertooth had disappeared.

For a while he proceeded warily, with roving glance and nostrils that sampled instinctively each breath that he inhaled. But the twilight was gathering, and before long he took up a more rapid gait, though he never allowed himself to be more than a few leaps from a good-sized tree. And where the growth of trees permitted, he sometimes left the ground, scampered up some rugged trunk, and swung from limb to limb at a rate of speed much higher than he was capable of on terra firma. The size of the trees, however, finally decreased, beginning to give way to a region of dense shrubbery, among which twisted lagoons, as it were, of ground covered by a tall, sharp-bladed grass.

He was proceeding, with what speed he could summon, down one of these open channels, when the breeze that was now coming warmly up from the southwest bore to his nostrils the foreflung and unmistakable scent of the sabertooth. With a gasp of terror, he plunged suddenly into the black-green thicket at his side, wormed his way speedily through it, and, crossing another grassy interglade, slipped as noisily as he might into a second copse. This action he repeated several times, until finally he emerged upon the border of a wide plain that stretched to the eastward as far as the eye could see. At its edge grew a small, flowering shrub; he stooped, and tore a half dozen of these from the soil. With them clutched tightly in one hand, he scampered out across the grassy level, and as he ran he smeared every portion of his head and body with the light-blue, gummy substance that the shrub exuded in abundance.

Before him as he reeled gaspingly onward there rose against the horizon what would have seemed to us of today the domes of a distant city, and a city it was, though of insects and not of men—a city, withal, of more inhabitants than were ever to be gathered together in dwellings reared by the hand of man. Its remoteness would have been to us but apparent—an illusion given by the relative smallness of its chambered cumuli when compared to the domes of a metropolis. In five minutes Uk had reached it—an ant colony

that covered several acres with its gray, rounded homes.

At its very verge he stopped and glanced backward; the saber-tooth had already reached the open country, and with lowered head was bounding forward on his trail, trusting to her nose rather than to her eyes. He stopped, rubbed his legs well with the turquoise resin, and sprang in among the ant domes. Instantly the ground behind him was alive with thousands of the enraged insects. They were a dark red in color, and somewhat over an inch in length. The substance with which he was smeared was obviously most repugnant to them, since he remained quite unmolested. And ever, as he won farther and farther into the heart of that stronghold, the swarming millions in his trail added to their millions and their rage.

Reaching the center of his city of refuge, he ran to the top of its tallest mound, a pile twenty feet in height, gazed backward once more on the path that he had taken, and, gazing, saw the tigress trotting steadily toward him, her nose to the ground. In a few moments more she was at the edge of the ant city, where he expected to see her pause, realize its menace, and return sooner or later to the forest.

But the saber-tooth was, to his surprise, unaware of the peril that she incurred. She followed on his scent without pause, tracking him among structures so closely crowded that they were brushed and broken by her vast shoulders, bringing down the frail edifices in ruin about her, and adding to the myriad of enemies that were already penetrating her thick fur to points where their strong jaws could prove formidable. She drew swiftly nearer and nearer to him, until he was on the point of forsaking his insecure eminence and dodging here and there amid the maze of crumbling citadels.

Then the tigress suddenly paused, squatted, and flicked at her bristling jowls with an inquisitive hind paw. She shook her head, sneezing, and began to shake herself violently, like a dog that had just emerged from water, till the air about her was darkened by the innumerable insects shaken loose by her shudderings.

But there were now innumerable others upon her body that could not so be dislodged, and these began to bite, first by scores, then by hundreds, and then by thousands. A myriad tiny sparks of pain met in one great flame of agony, as the formic acid in each minute wound penetrated to nerve and vein and was caught up by the hurrying blood currents. The insects penetrated her ears, her nostrils, and her mouth; they swarmed into her eyes, each with but one impulse—to bite, cling, and bite once more. They hurried toward her by a thousand channels and paths, upgorged from the million sunken arteries of their homes. The whole city grew dark with their multitudes as they converged on their common enemy, until that enemy actually lost her original hue, and stood red and vermiculate, paw-deep in the increasing pool of her attackers.

Suddenly the saber-tooth screamed, a shriek as though of sudden realization and dismay, and reared her mighty body against the last red of the sunset. There she stood in brief and amazing silhouette, with huge, outflung arms and open jaws. So she hung for an instant, black and terrible, the height of three men, against the scarlet wall of the west, then flung herself upon the nearest of the domes. It collapsed with her immense weight, and the pungent dust of the structure penetrated to her lungs, making her cough and choke—blinded her, till in volcanic wrath she floundered and wallowed insanely among the falling edifices and sent up a dense cloud as of smoke to the darkling skies.

But defeat or escape the army that had gone forth against her she could not, though she killed them by the tens of thousands in her wallowings, and at the last turned her strength upon herself, like a tormented serpent, and ripped at her flanks and loins with her deadly claws. Her enemies were to be numbered at last by the tens of millions, and even had she found wisdom finally and won her way to the open

plain, a sufficient number of foes remained to insure her death by the mere amount of poison ejectable into her body.

So she flung herself hither and thither, a slowly dying engine of destruction, leaping sometimes a distance of two-score yards, only to fall among fresh armies of offense. Half of the ant city lay in ruins before her great heart succumbed to the impact of formic venom, and, with a last snarl of pain and rage, she stiffened out her terrible limbs and lay quiet, given over for a feast in the ruined halls of her slayers.

But Uk, long before her defeat was accomplished, had realized what was to take place, and had slipped from his perch and taken once more to his heels. It was well for him that he did so, since the dome that he occupied was one of the first to be destroyed by the tigress in her blind flounderings.

He hurried northward under the first stars, at a dogtrot, ever and anon stooping to clutch a handful of soil, with which he rubbed his head and body to remove the greater part of the gum that coated him. His way led along the edge of the great forest, which in places thrust out long wedges of greenery into the plain. The narrowest of these he crossed, and made detours around those that were denser and wider.

Before long the moon arose, slightly on the wane, and poured a silver flood upon his homeward way. After an hour's more travel by her light, he rounded the corner of a promontory of tall trees, and saw, a mile to the northward, the wide waves of limestone hills that marked the dwelling place of his people. The light of a great fire was visible at the base of the nearest hill, while the night wind bore to him the pulse of a savage chant.

But before him there opened suddenly the bed of an inconsiderable river. The cave man, like his cousin, the ape, hated deep water, though eager enough to chase fish in the shallows or reach for them under overhanging banks. At this portion of the stream there was, Uk knew, a ford, but he had always crossed it, as on that very day, perched upon his father's sinewy shoulders. Now it lay opaque and menacing before him, the dark abode, he knew, of strange and voracious reptiles. He knew, also, that any cry for help would be drowned by the great sound of the chant that went continuously on at the fire. And even were he heard, and assistance attempted, would the men of his tribe venture the ford in the nighttime? Such a thing had never before been essayed, and from what he knew of his people, he would cheerfully be allowed to perish before any of them, except his mother, would undergo such a hazard in his behalf.

He kept on his way along the bank of the river, until suddenly he heard in the obscurity before him the long howl of a wolf. He retraced his steps promptly, and, once more at the ford, gazed again at the mysterious waters. From them came abruptly a loud splash, a streak of ghostly foam gleamed momentarily in the moonlight, a proof of the activities of some large fish or reptile. He turned, and took the trail that led toward the dark forest. There he intended to take refuge for the night in the top of some friendly tree. But he had gone barely a quarter of a mile when from the depths of gloom before him there broke forth so appalling an outcry of animal voices that once more he fled, and ceased not from running until again at the ford of the waters.

He was now almost panic-stricken, but, knowing that anything was safer than inaction, ran southward in the general direction from which he had journeyed. He had gone but a few hundred yards when he came to a clump of tall, slender palms that grew close to the bank of the river. The stream at this point was narrow and deep, deepest at the very spot overshadowed by the trees. He climbed the tallest of them without delay, and, as he ascended, the slim trunk bent farther and farther out over the surface of the river. Still he kept on, until, as he reached the very top of the tree, he found himself head downward over the waters.

He hung barely a dozen feet above the stream, whose depth at that spot he could merely guess at. He lowered himself a little farther on the strong, slender fronds, and gazed downward for several minutes at the dark surface. It gave no evidence of occupancy. At last he released his hold and dropped, alighting, to his joy, in less than two feet of water. He dashed hastily to the white sands, ascended the river bank, and hurried once more in the direction of his home.

The fire was now larger and brighter than ever, and before long he was sufficiently near to make out the forms of two score or more persons squatted around it. He crept forward with great deliberation, on his hands and knees, keeping a large bowlder between himself and the glare. Soon he reached the rock, and, peering cautiously around its edge, beheld what matter had been provocative of the food song, for by the side of the fire lay the partially dismembered body of the tiger cub.

He hesitated no longer, but stood up and walked boldly forward to the circle, which he half skirted and entered finally to stand before a man of heavy build and forbidding visage. This individual thrust out a huge hand, grasped Uk's leg, and drew him forward; then, with the other hand, delivered upon his head and body a series of blows that would have been the death of a child of today. The boy received them passively, as a sign of his forgiveness, and on his release went with placid countenance to another part of the circle, where he squatted down at the side of his late companion. She accepted his presence with a low grunt of satisfaction. He, oblivious already to the terrific events of the day, began slyly to tickle her with a dry grass stem.

But southward on the plain the toil of many years had been undone, and a city, the work of intelligent creatures, lay half in ruin. Yet the work of repair went on without cessation, and there, too, was feasting as the sharp-jawed millions swarmed to their task and, hour succeeding hour, the ribs of the slain saber-tooth began to gleam wanly in the light of the setting moon

The second story in this series is called "The Pool of Pitch" and will appear in the February month-end POPULAR, on sale January 23rd.

A NEW WAY TO DATE TIME

HIS first name was Dick, and his great failing was too much familiarity with alcoholic drinks. He realized his fault, but persisted in cultivating it with enthusiasm.

One Tuesday morning he found in his mail an invitation from his friend Harry to run down to Harry's cottage at the seaside and spend the week-end Four hours later he arrived at Harry's cottage. Harry greeted him politely albeit suspiciously, and introduced him to the wife and children.

After dinner, the two men went into the town and imbibed too freely, with the result that they were afraid to return to Harry's hospitable home. They spent the night on the beach, and they awoke at dawn and looked at each other across an empty beer case.

"Harry," said Dick sadly, "I didn't know what was a week-end. And I came down here as soon as I got your invitation so as to make sure of not being late."

"Yes," said Harry vindictively, looking timidly toward his cottage a mile away. Harry's wife had decided views on temperance.

"Harry," pursued Dick, caressing his aching head, "when does the week end?"

"For you?" inquired Harry, with concentrated malice.

"Yes; for me."

"Right now!"

A Chat With You

HOW many words do you know in English, and how many do you make use of in ordinary talking and writing? Max Müller, author of "The Science of Language," says that an uneducated English farm laborer uses about three hundred words, but the laborer that the learned Max examined must, to our way of thinking, have been primevally inarticulate and taciturn. A two-year-old girl turns up with five hundred words in her vocabulary, and a six-year-old boy with over twenty-five hundred. It is a mistake to confuse the number of words you know with the number you make use of naturally to express your ideas and various shades of meaning. An educated adult knows on the average the meaning of about sixty thousand words, but uses only a few thousand of them. Shakespeare actually used twenty thousand words or so, and, if he was at all like other people, knew a great many more which he didn't use in his plays or poems. Milton, in his poems, used only eight thousand words. He lived at a time when the language was richer even than when Shakespeare wrote. The difference in the number of words used shows the difference in the scope of their interests. One was a Puritan, and the other wasn't. Dickens and Thackeray both had large vocabularies and added new words to the language. Kipling, as a living writer, has the distinction of having added words and phrases, although in the absence of statistics we doubt if his vocabulary is particularly large. The language is growing rapidly. In the newest dictionaries the number of words chronicled runs far over half a million.

THE chances are that you have enough words at your command to express yourself properly, if you know how to use them. In a broad, general way it is better to use words that have been long in the language rather than recent arrivals from the Latin, Greek, or some of the foreign tongues. In a general way the short word is better than the long, but there are exceptions to every rule. For instance, a phrase like "the glory that was Greece and the grandeur that was Rome" would lose all its magic, its cadence, its allusiveness if the two alliterated nouns were translated into Anglo-Saxon equivalents. Try it and see. In fact, you are free to invent and add new words to the language if you feel like it and they are the right sort. "Blizzard" and "bluff" are both splendid new words, in accord with the genius of the language, while "irrefragibility" and "latitudinarianism" are of no help to any language at all. English is a distinctively masculine language. Its finest periods are grand and lofty rather than pretty, and what grace it has is of a muscular, virile order. Homer describes the Greek speech as "winged words." French also is a light and flying tongue, and German rumbles along like some great engine. English marches steadily and irresistibly like a Roman legion, with a sort of homely majesty about it. If you want to write good English, don't be pedantic. Trust to your ears and your instinct rather than to the rules of the stricter grammarians. For instance, contrary to general opinion, it is often better to end a sentence with a preposition than to introduce an extra "which" into it. For a long time Latin grammar was the only grammar taught to Englishmen, and it is but lately that the language has cast off its shackles and is developing according to its own genius and nature.

DON'T be afraid to call a spade a spade, try and say exactly what you mean, but don't, above all things, in-

troduce rough, disgusting, or uncouth expressions with the mistaken idea that such affectation is going to improve your style or give additional strength to your narrative. You can't make yourself any stronger by sticking out your chest, you can't make your voice bigger by forcing it, you can't make your drive at golf longer by pressing it, and you can't acquire strength and virility of style or matter by straining for it. What you should strive for in writing is the combination of freedom and accuracy in the use of the English words and phrases with which your memory is stored. This alone will give whatever you write a distinction and lucidity that will mark it at once as out of the common. If you have a naturally good ear for the matchless music of our spoken tongue your periods will nobly rise into noble climaxes, or sweetly melt away in measured diminuendoes; if you have a truly fresh and fertile mind your imagery and metaphor will stir and exalt the soul; but these latter two gifts are from nature alone, and not from study, and present often as much of a hindrance as a help to good writing, unless guided by the fine critical judgment and sound taste of the author.

ALL this is just as excellent for the man who is going to write a business letter, or even deliver a brisk selling talk about something, as it is for the writer of stories. All your business, all your social intercourse is transacted through the medium of our English speech. Just regard it for a moment as a vast and complicated and delicate machine that you use every day of your life for some purpose or other, and consider then how important it is to know something about its mechanism. An unfortunately turned phrase may offend one man or hurt another where neither offense nor hurt are intended. And if you want to speak and write English well, read it as often as you can, for you, like every one else in the world, are a strongly imitative creature. You'll find good colloquial English in some of the daily papers, but, above all, you will find lots of it in this magazine. Peter B. Kyne and Charles E. Van Loan both write the living language that we speak to-day with a skill and mastery that make notable all they write. Just read Kyne's story in the present number of the magazine, and see if it is not so. And Henry C. Rowland, who writes so many novels for you, always sets forth a splendid example of a clear-flowing narrative style. Also read Chisholm and Fielding and Bergengren and the rest—in this number and the next—and think a little of the way the story is told by these word masters. And remember that the best-told story is the one that makes the reader forget the telling in the narrative itself.

IF you have any ambitions to become an author, you ought to be glad that you were born and brought up in an English-speaking community. A writer's power is determined by the number of people who read his books, and no work is quite so effective in a translation. Writing in English you appeal to an audience of about one hundred and thirty million people who use the language. The German author has to be content with about eighty million, the Russian with about seventy million, the Frenchman with about fifty million, while the poor Italian has only thirty-four million fellow countrymen to whom to tell his woes, and we know for ourselves how many of them are turning daily from Italian to American. So if we ever have a universal language it will be a good deal more like the speech we hear in the street to-day than Volapük or Esperanto or anything ever invented by the scholars. And if we have any one thing above others in regard to speech to be thankful for, it is that our speech is a *free* speech and subject to the rules of no academy, no university professors, no laws, indeed, but those of Nature herself and the great democracy that uses it.

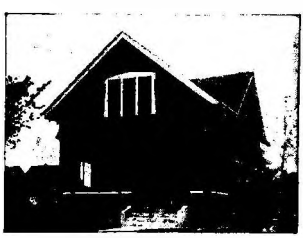
Heating that's a greeting!

It's the first moment of entrance into a new friend's home which decides you whether it will be a call or a visit — whether you shall adroitly hang onto or willingly yield up your wraps. You don't have to hesitate an instant if it's radiator heating—just a breath of the genial, cleanly hospitable warmth tells that you'll meet with perfect comfort in any part of the room, that you'll feel and be at your best in the mild, mellow warmth of

AMERICAN & IDEAL RADIATORS & BOILERS

IDEAL Boilers and AMERICAN Radiators solve the heating problem—solve it for the rest of your days—get the most heat out of the least coal. With these outfits there is no "undigested" coal — nor is the heat wasted up the chimney — nor the rich fuel-gases allowed to pass off unconsumed. These outfits yield only the most genial, cleanly warmth and distribute it steadily and uniformly throughout all rooms, bays and halls.

There is comfort, health protection, household cleanliness, least care-taking and safety. Fire once started need not be rekindled in the whole heating season. So simple a child can run the outfit — which will, without repairs, last as long as the building in which it is put. Because of the economies and sure comfort guaranteed by IDEAL Boilers and AMERICAN Radiators, they are specified, used and endorsed by the leading engineers, architects and building contractors of America, Europe, Australia and Japan. Their annual sales are increasing mightily! None but enthusiastic users!



A No. 2-19-W IDEAL Boiler and 340 sq. ft. of 38-in. AMERICAN Radiators, costing owner $165, were used to heat this cottage. At this price the goods can be bought of any reputable, competent Fitter. This did not include cost of labor, pipe, valves, freight, etc., which are extra, and vary according to climatic and other conditions.

No need to burn high-priced coals — IDEAL Boilers are made to get the maximum, smokeless results from burning even the cheapest screenings, slack, pea-coal, run-of-mine, low-grade soft coals, lignite, slabs, natural gas, coke, oil, etc. These outfits are a dividend-paying *investment* — not an expense. Buildings thus outfitted sell quicker at the higher price or bring 10% to 15% higher rental.

Whether owner, tenant or intending builder, do not delay investigating this best-paying feature in any building—whether cottage, farm house, store, school, church, public building, etc. Ask for free, valuable book: "Ideal Heating." *Prices now most favorable.* Put in without disturbing present heater until ready to start fire in the IDEAL Boiler. Act now.

Vacuum Cleaner

Ask also for catalog of the ARCO WAND—a successful sets-in-the-cellar machine with suction pipe running to each floor.

Showrooms in all large cities

AMERICAN RADIATOR COMPANY

Write Department 42
816-822 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago

Hartman Will Trust You Requires No References Asks No Advance Payment

No. [illegible]—Seamless Brussels Room Rug

9x12 ft. elegant seamless Brussels Rug of very new pattern with medallion center, artistic border. Woven of select worsted yarn with tan, brown, red and green colors [illegible]. Price [illegible].

75c Per Month

No. [illegible] Bargain Dining Chairs

Built of selected hardwood finished American quartered oak. Have shaped saddle seats and [illegible] backs, finished with Colonial scroll [illegible]. Price [illegible].

75c Per Month

No. 3F679—Complete Bed Bargain Offer

Complete Bed Outfit consisting of continuous 1 1-16 inch post Iron Bed with 3-8 inch fillers; all metal woven wire springs and elastic felt top, fibre filled mattress. Outfit comes in full size (4 ft. 6 in.) only. Colors: white, pea green and vernis martin. Price $7.[illegible].

75c Per Month

No. 1F544

50c Per Month

Remarkable Bargain SALE Now On

It's just impossible to exaggerate the importance of this great, Price-Smashing Sale of Guaranteed, Dependable Quality Home Furnishings. Now is your chance to get any of those home furnishings you've wished for so long—now is the time, because the opportunity is truly remarkable. Never before has this great **Hartman's** Establishment, from which millions of orders are shipped, been able to equal these present values.

Better Home Furnishings For YOU

Hartman's has brought the necessities, the comforts and even luxuries, here-to-fore found only in the homes of the rich and prosperous, within the reach of even those of very limited means by these remarkably low prices and very liberal Deferred Payment Plan. Send today for the Big, Special FREE Hartman Credit Bargain Book, showing everything in home-furnishings, colors, patterns and designs photographed from the original. It will be like bringing into your home an en rmous stock of home furnishings, many times the size of the largest city store including—

Furniture, Stoves, Ranges, Dishes, Jewelry, Carpets, Refrigerators, Clocks, Tinware, Rugs, Silverware, Go-Carts, Mattresses, Curtains, Portieres, Springs, Bedding, Sewing Machines, Washing Machines

Hartman Trusts Everyone

Asks No Reference—Send No Money on any of these bargains. To the millions of home-lovers, everywhere, who find it more convenient or necessary to pay in small easy payments **Hartman** says: "I will trust you. Just as I am trusting a million of others who are buying their entire house-hold needs from **Hartman. During this big sale you can order any of these special advertised bargains without sending us any advance payment."**

Hartman's transactions with you are strictly confidential, no references are asked—no embarrassment. Your neighbors need not know your business—you'll like the **Hartman** plan when you know all about it. Send for Big FREE Bargain Book and full particulars.

Hartman Makes Easiest Terms

No matter who you are or where you live, your credit is good at **Hartman's.** No matter how small your income **Hartman** meets your requirements without any red tape whatever. No extra charges, no mortgage, no security. The **Hartman** modern credit system is free from ALL objectionable features. With long time credit as easy to get as it is from **Hartman** there is no reason for anyone to live in a meagerly furnished home.

30 Days Free Examination

Every **Hartman** Bargain must actually sell itself on its own merits, after you see it in your own home. At the end of a month you are privileged to return the articles if you do not find them perfectly satisfactory. **Hartman** has made good millions of times under such tests.

You must see this Mammoth Hartman Credit Special Bargain Book—you must compare the remarkable offerings—nothing else like it. Send your address today on a postal—It's Free.

HARTMAN
Furniture & Carpet Co.
3941 Wentworth Ave.
CHICAGO, ILL.

Hartman's Rocker Bargain

A large, comfortable rocker made of selected hardwood finished American quartered oak and upholstered in Imperial leather. Is strongly built and has stout runners. Side panels and front posts are of neatly carved design. Seat is set over full spring construction. Top of back has ruffled edge. Price $3.69.

No. 4F457 Kitchen Cabinet

Convenient solid Oak Cabinet with large sanded whitewood table top 42x25 inches. Has sliding bread board, china cupboard with doors, utility drawers, cake box, cutlery drawer and two 40 lb. capacity flour bins. Price $8.75

75c Per Month

No. 4F458 — Solid Oak Dining Table

A beautiful table, made of fine quality Solid Oak with rich golden finish. Has large 42 in. top which extends to 6 ft. when opened. Massive round pedestal is supported by strong legs with carved claw feet. Price $7.85

75c Per Month

No. 6F507 — Gold Coin Porcelain 100-Piece Dinner Set.

Has heavy coin gold decorations warranted not to come off. Double fired, elegantly glazed; consists of complete service for 12 persons. Price $9.65

Price 50 Piece Set $4.85

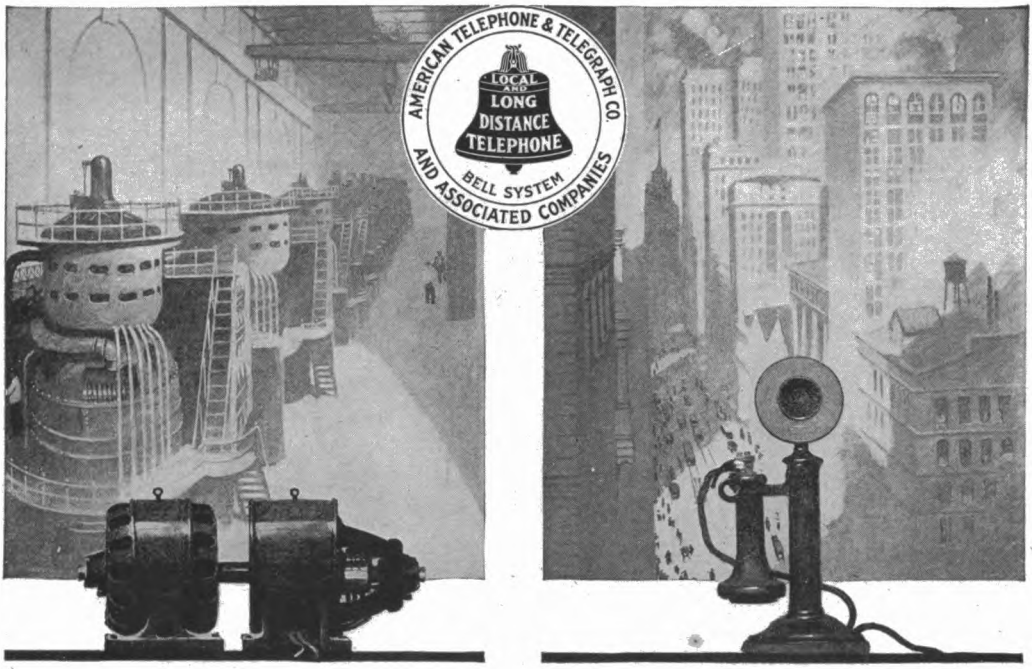
75c Per Month

HARTMAN'S Legal Guarantee

We Unreservedly Guarantee every article sold by us to be exactly as represented and described in our catalog.

We Guarantee our prices to be lower than those of any other concern for goods of equal quality.

We Guarantee to ship each and every article on approval, and if within 30 days from receipt of the goods, anything is not perfectly satisfactory, FOR ANY REASON WHATEVER, we will accept their return and when the goods are returned to us, we will refund all moneys paid on them including payment of freight charges both ways.



The Energizer of Business

IN a metropolitan power-house there must be generators large enough to furnish millions of lights and provide electrical current for thousands of cars and factories.

Each monster machine with the power of tens of thousands of horses is energized by an unobtrusive little dynamo, which is technically known as an "exciter."

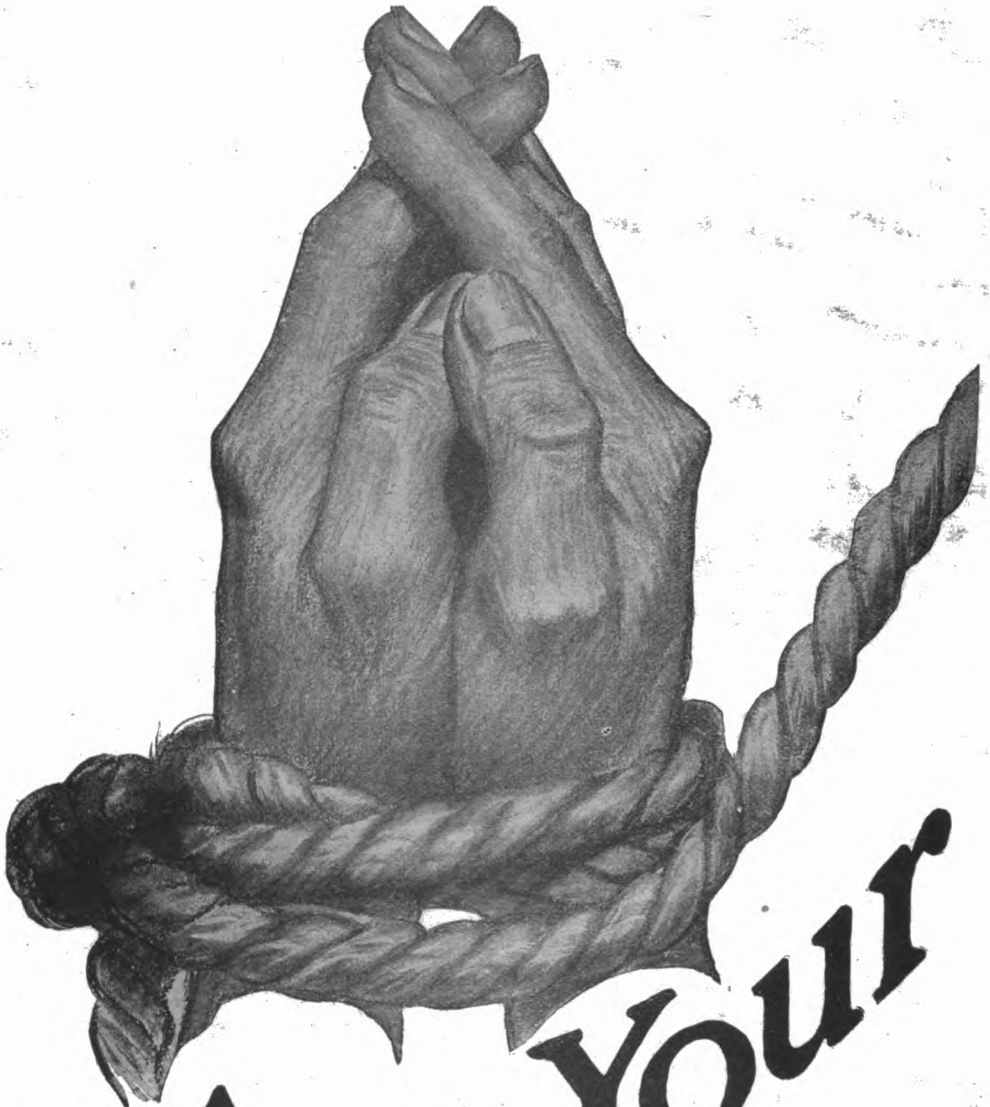
This exciter by its electric impulse through all the coils of the generator brings the whole mechanism into life and activity.

A similar service is performed for the great agencies of business and industry by the telephones of the Bell System. They carry the currents of communication everywhere to energize our intricate social and business mechanism.

United for universal service, Bell Telephones give maximum efficiency to the big generators of production and commerce.

AMERICAN TELEPHONE AND TELEGRAPH COMPANY
AND ASSOCIATED COMPANIES

One Policy ***One System*** ***Universal Service***

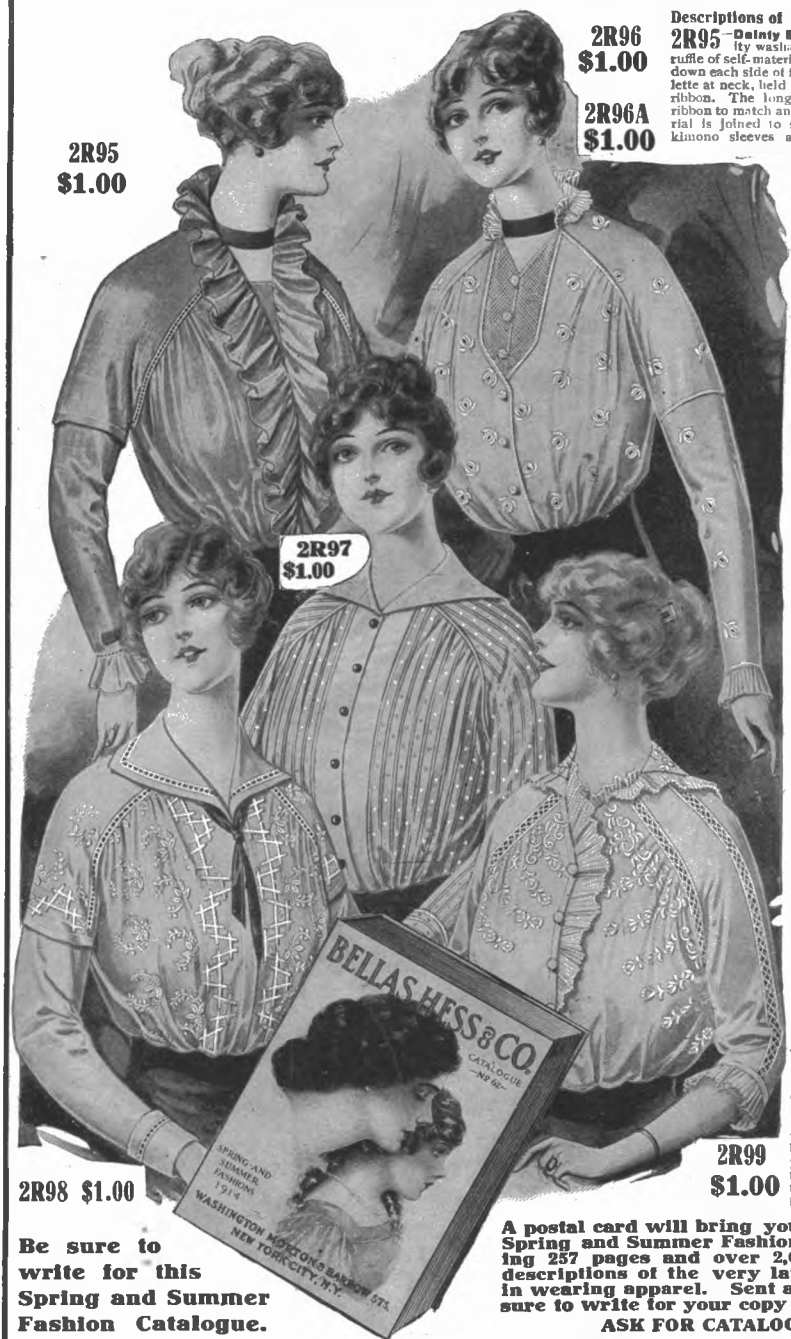


Are Your

Do you long for BETTER THINGS—yet do not know how to reach out to get them? Or—do you feel as if your "hands are tied?" Don't give up—there is hope for YOU!

FIVE STYLISH WAISTS AT $1.00 EACH

We Pay All Mail or Express Charges



Descriptions of the Smart Waists Illustrated

2R95—**Dainty Evangeline Blouse,** of good quality washable Canton Creue. Has gathered ruffle of self-material which extends around neck and down each side of front. Waist is cut slightly decollette at neck, held in place by a band of black velvet ribbon. The long sleeves are trimmed with velvet ribbon to match and at the wrist a ruffle of self-material is joined to sleeve by French veining. The kimono sleeves are outlined by French veining. Waist fastens invisibly in front. White, tan or king blue. Sizes 32 to 44 bust. **Price, postage paid** **$1.00**

2R96—**Dainty Blouse** of a fine sheer white washable All-over Embroidered Voile. This pretty model has a vest of white Brussels Net fastening with crochet buttons. It is cut in a V at the neck where it is trimmed with a band of black velvet ribbon and a double Medici frill. The cap effect long sleeves are finished with plaited ruffles. Sleeves at shoulders are designed in kimono effect and joined to body of waist by white cording. The vest is also outlined by cording. Back is of embroidered voile to match front. White only. Sizes 32 to 44 bust. **Price, postage paid** **$1.00**

2R96A—**Voile Waist,** same as 2R96, but with three-quarter length sleeves. **$1.00** **Price, postage paid . $1.00**

2R97—**A Jaunty Blouse** of fine washable striped Japonika Silk with Jacquard Silk dots in self-color, a beautiful fabric woven of silk and cotton, looks like China silk, gives better wear. Blouse is made with a vest effect and turndown collar of plain white Japonika Silk. It fastens through a vest with buttons in contrasting color. The raglan style sleeves are joined to body of waist by pretty white cording and the deep cuffs on the long sleeves are corded to match. Waist has plain shirt back and comes in white with blue stripes or white with black stripes. Sizes, 32 to 44 bust. **Special price, $1.00** **postage paid** **$1.00**

2R98—**Pretty White Voile Waist.** Front is entirely covered with embroidery, and the cap effect full length sleeves are embroidered on shoulder. Back is of plain voile. Waist is made with full blouse effect and the slightly low cut neck is finished with a chic bow tie. Sleeves are joined to waist by embroidery veining and the pointed collar and turnback cuffs are trimmed with veining to match. Fastens invisibly in the front. Comes in white only. Sizes, 32 to 44 bust. **Price, postage paid** ... **$1.00**

2R99—**Blouse** of sheer white washable Voile daintily embroidered on the front. Short sleeves are in kimono style, joined to waist by crochet lace insertion. A band of the same pretty lace extends from neck to end of sleeves which are finished with dainty ruffles of plaited voile. A plaited voile frill frames the low cut neck and extends down front. The turnback collar is embroidered voile, edged with a plaited voile frill. Tucked back; fastens in front with white crochet buttons. Sizes, 32 to 44 bust. **Price, postage paid** **$1.00**

Be sure to write for this Spring and Summer Fashion Catalogue.

A postal card will bring you this beautiful new Spring and Summer Fashion Catalogue, containing 257 pages and over 2,000 illustrations and descriptions of the very latest New York styles in wearing apparel. Sent absolutely FREE. Be sure to write for your copy to-day.

ASK FOR CATALOGUE No. 62R.

WE PAY ALL MAIL OR EXPRESS CHARGES

BELLAS HESS & CO

WASHINGTON, MORTON & BARROW STS.

NEW YORK CITY, N.Y.

WE SATISFY YOU OR REFUND YOUR MONEY

Williams'

Shaving Soaps

Use Williams' Shaving Soaps and you will be

Saving Time

because they give a quick and copious lather that speedily softens the beard and remains cool and moist as long as you need it.

Saving Energy

because they prepare the beard perfectly for the razor and make shaving a relaxation.

Saving Worry

because you will anticipate your shave with a smile of satisfaction and not with a frown of annoyance.

Saving Temper

because they will make your razor and yourself the best of friends and leave a happy face soft and velvety as a boy's.

Saving Money

because so little soap is required to make a big, thick, creamlike, lasting lather.

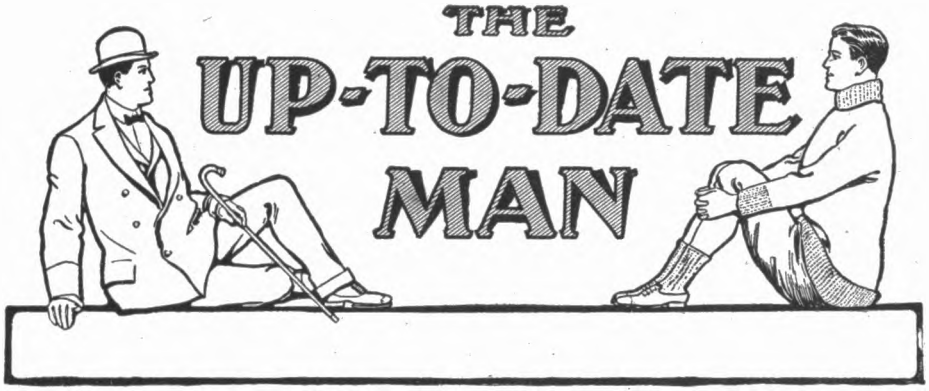
THE J. B. WILLIAMS CO.,
Dept. A, Glastonbury, Conn.

After Shaving use Williams' Talc Powder

Special Offer

Suit Case Sets

In order that those who are not familiar with our new toilet requisites may have an opportunity to try some of them, we have prepared very attractive sets of samples which we call "Men's Suit Case Sets" and "Women's Suit Case Sets." These are handsomely decorated boxes, each containing five trial size reproductions of our regular packages. Either set will be sent **for 24 cents in stamps** if your dealer does not supply you.



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.

WHAT is known as "Tuxedo dress," club dress, or informal evening dress, has undergone an appreciable change of late. This season it is a cascade of curves and a revel of ripples. As already told, this abrupt swerving from stiffness to softness is due to the wider vogue of dancing, especially those ultra-modern dances of which the "tango" is the best-known exponent. It is impossible to execute these dances with any degree of comfort in a stiff-front shirt, high-cut shoes, and all the impedimenta of "starchy" evening clothes. Knee-bending, sliding, and twisting reduce a stiff-bosom shirt to a nest of wrinkles. Hence, the "give-and-take" soft-bosom garment, variously pleated, tucked, frilled, and gathered, with soft double cuffs to match, is the only rational shirt to wear.

While, however, the "multitucked," or "thousand-pleat" shirt is correct enough with Tuxedo dress, it is not sanctioned with the "swallow-tail," which demands the formality of a stiff bosom. A "smart" Tuxedo single-button jacket and the proper accessories are illustrated here.

The newest Tuxedo is cut of roughish, dark-gray Oxford cloth, instead of the conventional black, unfinished worsted, and has turn-back cuffs, piped with silk, and two narrow silk stripes down the seams of the trousers, instead of one.

Tuxedo waistcoats are made of silks, satins, silk and satins, moire, velour, matelasse, and similar soft fabrics, that curve readily to the figure, and give a forward "spring" to the bottom points of the garment, thereby defining the waistline.

Fur Motoring Cap and Collar.

A novel English morning boot is made of black calf with cream-colored doeskin side panels. It has a tapering, sloping toe and the familiar "wing tip."

Boots with "fancy uppers" often accompany lounge suits, but the vamps should always be black calf, not patent leather, which belongs to formality.

For rough-weather tramping, a "smart" British brogan Blucher boot is made of oil-grain leather, with a narrowish, stitched plain tip and invisible eyelets. This boot is heavy, but not clumsy, and the Blucher top is shapely cut away over the instep to convey a look of elongated slimness.

Loose-draping overcoats are waning. The old, close-fitting, skirted overgarments like the Paletot, Paddock, New-

Single-Button Tuxedo Jacket.

market, and Surtout are tiptoeing back into vogue. The tilt toward making men's clothes fit as tightly as possible, and still allow for an intake of breath, is communicating to overcoats. Hence, the face-about toward figure-flexing frock overcoats and surtouts. All these garments have the extremely high-arched waist, which conduces to make the wearer seem taller.

Knitted ascots are again seen with afternoon dress. They are black, white, or pearl, and tie with a full knot and wide aprons. The "smartest" after-

noon glove is white, not gray, and, of course, the color of the neck scarf tallies with it. Gloves should always fasten with buttons, not clasps. Perhaps the newest shade in gloves is gray-green, an uncommon and winsome tint.

Waistcoats have a disconcerting trick of puckering under the arms on account of an overplus of material. Moreover, slack suspenders often cause crumpling or bulging.

Quite a few waistcoats this season have the "cut-out" armholes. These make the garment lighter, as well as less prone to wrinkle at the sides.

In lounge "sacks," green is the most applauded color, with brown only a step behind. Both must be chosen with care, as an "off shade" in either is a slap in the face.

The ring scarf looks drolly out of place in modern dress. Just now, however, there is a reversion to bygone types, and the ring scarf is again seen on both oldsters and youngsters.

It is worn with a soft, deep-point collar. The ring is separable plain gold, and is locked in the back after the scarf has been inserted.

Parisians and Londoners are very tolerant to the spade-toed boot, already mentioned here. It is a genuine innovation, and marks a face-about in the mode.

This shape is quite the quaintest and perhaps the "smartest" of the season. It is made up in many mixtures of leather, usually with "patent" vamps and mahogany tops. The peculiar toe of this boot gives the foot a delicately tapering, lengthened-out look, akin to that now the mode for women.

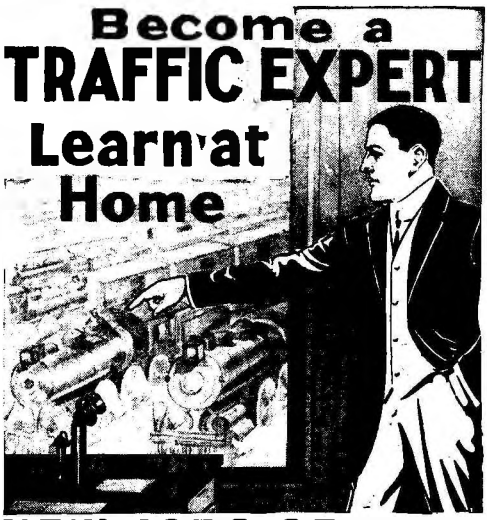
Ascots, as foretokened, are rebudding into favor. They accompany alike cutaway coats and lounge jackets, and, often, are worn with double-breasted waistcoats in white and snuff-brown.

Veering away from top hats with flattish brims and straight crowns, fashion is seesawing back to the English shape with a curled brim and a belled crown.

A new evening glove has a wrist change pocket, supposed to be handy for coins, tickets, and the like. This glove is made of white kid, white buck, or white suède, with backs embroidered in black silk.

BEAUNASH.

Become a TRAFFIC EXPERT Learn at Home



NEW JOBS OPEN, BIG PAY

Thousands of large shippers and all Railroads need trained Traffic experts and Managers—newly created positions are open everywhere with salaries of $35 to $200 weekly. The demand for trained men is greater than the supply. Recently enacted railroad rate laws and interstate commerce regulations have produced new conditions that necessitate trained specialists—men who know how to **route shipments, to obtain shortest mileage, quickest deliveries—lowest rates.** With such knowledge you can qualify for an important, big-salaried position with a future—**quick.**

WE TRAIN YOU BY MAIL

at home, in spare time, without giving up your position or income. The cost is small—we make the payments to suit you. All you need, to get into this powerful, big paying occupation is our training. No matter where you live, what you work at now, how small your pay, how long your hours—no matter what your age or education—if you can read and write—our Interstate Commerce Course will train you expertly to handle proficiently a big Traffic Manager's job—to merit and retain influence, respect, power and $35 to $200 weekly.

Most Thorough Method Known

The LaSalle method is simple, practical, logical—anybody can readily master it. It is the work of some of the greatest Traffic Experts in America. It covers thoroughly every feature of the profession you will ever need to know—it is different and more complete than any other method of home-training in Interstate Commerce ever known. This is the largest home-study Extension University in the world—our graduates are recognized as real experts—they are trained to do the kind of work that commands big positions.

NEW UNCROWDED OCCUPATION

This is a new **uncrowded** occupation—**there's room for you** if you prepare at once. Let us train you **now** for a big future, with power, dignity, respect and a big income, with almost unlimited opportunities. All you need is a desire and our home training to become a big man with independence and a big income. Don't remain in a small job that thousands of men are constantly after—let us make **you the master**—the big man—a successful leader among men.

FREE—Wonderful Book

Send **the coupon** below **now** and receive **free** copy of our much talked-of book "10 Years Promotion in One"—learn more about the opportunities afforded Traffic Experts with our training—learn about the big positions now open—learn how easy it is for us to make **you** a traffic specialist. Remember only trained men can secure the big positions now open—remember that big employers are seeking **our** graduates because of their **efficiency.** Send the coupon—**no money.**

La Salle Extension University, Chicago

La Salle Extension University, Dept. 511, Chicago, Ill.

Send at once, without expense to me, FREE copy of your famous book "10 Years Promotion in One"; also book telling how I may, without interfering with my present position, prepare myself as Traffic Expert.

Name .....

Address .....

Occupation .....

Be a Signal Engineer

The profession of Signal Engineering is only in its infancy. Thousands of men are needed. At the present time, scarcely more than 25% of the railroads are equipped with automatic electric block signals. We must find more Signal Engineers to superintend the installation of the new systems and the maintenance of the ones that are already installed. Big money is being paid. You can get just the kind of instruction to need to hold one of the big jobs in your own home—during your spare time. Send the coupon now for the big new book on Signal Engineering. Find out how **you** can **be the boss** and the man who gets the fat pay envelop. Write today.

Earn $2,500 a Year

Yes, that is what your salary will be when you are a full fledged Signal Engineer, $2,500 a year to start. Hundreds and hundreds of men making much more than that. Even while you are learning you can hold one of the positions under a Signal Engineer. Paying you $75 to $195 a month. Here is your opportunity. Be the man who tells the other fellows what to do. Send in the free coupon for full particulars.

More Men Needed

Railroads are constantly looking for competent Signal Engineers. There are not enough men to fill the positions now open. Thousands and thousands of miles of track are now being equipped with automatic signals. More Signal Engineers are needed to superintend the work. Hundreds of new positions will be open. **And there are no men to take them.** Electric Signal Engineering is one of the most fascinating of professions. As a railroad man you travel from coast to coast without it costing you a penny. **You** can be the man who knows. You can be the man who tells the other fellow what to do. You can be the man who gets the fat pay envelope and free transportation. Here is your chance.

FREE OUTFIT

If you will write at once you can get the big new Signal Engineer's outfit absolutely free. Our students get practical instruction. The kind the railroads demand. If you act at once the outfit is free to you. Send the free coupon for full particulars.

Send the FREE Coupon for Big New Book

Just put your name and address on the free coupon and send it in to us at once. Absolutely no obligations of any kind. We will send you the big new Signal book absolutely free. Tells you all about this most fascinating profession. How you can get into the $2,500 class. The book is free. Get your name and address in at once.

FREE BOOK COUPON

Department of Signaling
Desk 1142
488 Cass St.
Chicago, Ill.

GENTLEMEN: Please send me absolutely free and prepaid your big new Signal book. Also full particulars about your great special free outfit offer. It is distinctly understood that I assume no obligations of any kind.

Department of Signaling
Desk 1142
488 Cass St.
Chicago Ill.

Name .....

Address .....

Age..... Occupation .....

CHAPPED SKINS

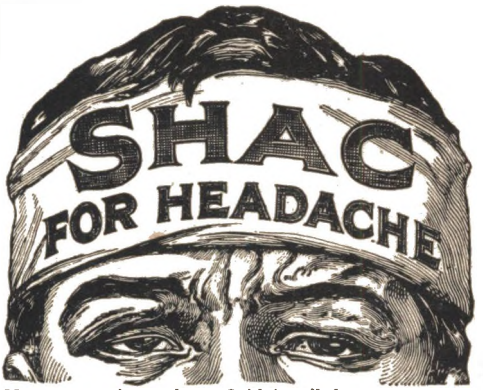
Need

CUTICURA SOAP

And Cuticura Ointment. Nothing more effective for winter rashes, eczemas, frost bites, chafings and redness or roughness of the face and hands.

Cuticura Soap and Cuticura Ointment are sold throughout the world. Send post-card to nearest depot for free sample of each with 32-page book: Newbery, 27, Charterhouse Sq., London; R. Towns & Co., Sydney, N. S. W.; Lennon, Ltd., Cape Town; Muller, Maclean & Co., Calcutta and Bombay; Potter Drug & Chem. Corp., Boston, U. S. A.

☞Men who shave and shampoo with Cuticura Soap will find it best for skin and scalp.



25 years on the market. Sold by all druggists wherever – heads ache. Twelve wafers for 25 cents—or send 10 cents for trial sample—three doses.

The Zymole Co., 108 John St., New York

I Trust You 10 Days. Send No Money

$2 Hair Switch on Approval. Choice natural wavy or straight hair. Send lock of hair and I will mail a 22-inch, short stem, fine human hair switch to match. A big bargain. Remit $2 in ten days or sell 3 and GET YOUR SWITCH FREE. Extra shades a little more. Enclose 5c postage. Write today for free beauty book of latest styles hair dressing, high grade switches, puffs, wigs, pompadours, and special bargains in Ostrich Feathers. WOMEN AGENTS WANTED.

ANNA AYERS, Dept. B496 220 S. State St., Chicago

Don't Wear a Truss

TRUSS WEARERS, Here's Great, Good, News

Tiresome, Torturous Trusses can be thrown away forever, and it's all because *Stuart's PLAPAO-PADS* are different from the painful truss, being medicine applicators made self-adhesive purposely to prevent slipping and afford an arrangement to hold the parts securely in place.

NO STRAPS, BUCKLES OR SPRINGS ATTACHED—cannot slip, so cannot chafe or press against the pubic bone. Thousands have treated themselves in the privacy of the home—most obstinate cases reported cured—no delay from work. Soft as velvet—easy to apply—inexpensive. When the weakened muscles recover their tone there is no further use for trusses. *Awarded Gold Medal International Exposition, Rome, Grand Prix, Paris.* Write TODAY and let us prove it by sending Trial Plapao FREE.

Address, **PLAPAO CORPORATION, Block 1220 St. Louis, Mo.**

EVERY MARRIED COUPLE

and all who contemplate marriage

SHOULD OWN

this complete informative book

"The Science of a New Life"

By JOHN COWAN, M.D.

SPECIAL OFFER

The regular price is $3.00. In order to introduce this work into as many neighborhoods as possible we will, for a limited time, send one copy only to any reader of this Magazine, postpaid upon receipt of $2.00.

Endorsed and recommended by foremost medical and religious critics throughout the United States. Unfolds the secrets of married happiness, so often revealed too late! No book like it to be had at the price. We can only give a few of the chapter subjects here as this book is not meant for children. (Agents Wanted):

Marriage and Its Advantages. Age at Which to Marry. Law of Choice. Love Analyzed. Qualities One Should Avoid in Choosing. Anatomy of Reproduction. Amativeness. Continence. Children. Genius.

Conception. Pregnancy. Confinement. Nursing. How a Happy Married Life is Secured.

Descriptive circular giving full and complete table of contents mailed FREE.

J. S. Ogilvie Publishing Co., 577 Rose Street NEW YORK CITY

Romances of Modern Business

ARNOLD BENNETT, the English novelist, came to America not long ago to look us over. The distinguished author is a keen student of psychology, and our entire scheme of living fell under his microscopic eye.

After visiting several of the largest American cities, he gave some interesting impressions to a Chicago newspaper interviewer. Flinging open a window commanding a view of a wide stretch of Chicago's business district, he said:

"There is your American romance—there in the large office buildings and marts of trade! Yours is the romance of great achievements in commerce, in industrial leadership. And it is a wonderful romance! The child of the world's nations is leading them!"

The British writer got to the heart of this vital, throbbing country. And if we look at our national commercial life as did this noted visitor, we shall find romance, absorbingly interesting stories, on every page of our magazines, not only in the imaginative writings of noted authors, but in the stories of business successes and of merchants and their wares.

There are many such romances in the history of American industry. Here is one of them:

CHAPTER I

The Story of a Fountain Pen

AT the rear of a news-stand, under the stairway in the old Tribune Building, in lower New York City, a remarkable discovery was made a little less than thirty years ago.

Pausing to make a purchase, the advertising manager of a well-known magazine, by one of those curious turns of chance, first learned of something that was to be of vital interest in the world of invention, and was to lighten the work of thousands in many nations.

Back of the news-stand stood a man with a small tray of goods which he was offering for sale. He was a kindly appearing man, slightly under middle age. His stock of merchandise was limited indeed. It contained only a half-dozen articles. But his goods were his own, of his own thought and invention.

This he told the advertising man; and so much did he interest his listener that, after the story had been told and the uses of his product demonstrated, there returned to the magazine office a man with a firm conviction that he had made a tremendous discovery.

The man who displayed his pet invention in the old Tribune Building news-stand was Lewis Edson Waterman, and the article he showed was the Waterman Ideal Fountain Pen.

The story of how these pens became so widely known and of how an enormous industry was developed in a few years is a very significant one. Waterman discovered the way to make a fountain pen; but a magazine advertising man discovered Waterman—*and therein lies the story.*

That was a little more than twenty-nine years ago. The inventor had confidence in his pen, but no money with which to market

it; nor had he any business affiliations or influential friends. Today, the L. E. Waterman Company estimates that approximately a million and a quarter of their fountain pens are sold annually. Many millions have been sold in practically every nation of the earth.

The inventor had been a schoolmaster in his early manhood; then he became an insurance agent. During these experiences he realized the difficulties that lay in depending on the old-fashioned pen and ink. "Why," thought he, "can I not make a pen with a receptacle for ink and an easy flow?" He worked on the idea and soon had made the first Waterman fountain pen.

Coming to New York in 1880, he was informed that others had had the same idea, that more than two hundred other fountain pens had been patented. He investigated these and found they all had proved unsatisfactory. Learning their deficiencies, he perfected his own pen.

Then came the problem of selling his pens, of letting people know about them. How was he to do it? The inventor, knowing nothing of advertising, could think of no other way than going out and personally peddling his product. This he did, beginning in 1883 and continuing through part of the following year.

It was in 1884 that the Waterman fountain pen came to the attention of the magazine advertising manager. "Let me run a quarter-page advertisement of your pen," he suggested to Mr. Waterman. But the inventor had not the money it would cost. Then the advertising man did an interesting thing: so convinced was he of the commercial possibilities of the fountain pen that he loaned Mr. Waterman the price of the quarter-page advertisement.

This first business announcement of the L. E. Waterman Company appeared in a magazine in November, 1884. Prior to that, Mr. Waterman by personal solicitation had sold about three hundred of his pens. Within a few weeks after the advertisement appeared such a large number of orders had been received that Mr. Waterman negotiated a loan of five thousand dollars, with which to contract for additional advertising and have the pens made and delivered

The business increased in strides so rapid that it soon became necessary to form a stock company and map out a systematic scheme of manufacturing and distributing the pens. An intelligent campaign of advertising was being carried on in a number of national magazines. In 1888, nine thousand pens were sold; seven years later, the number of orders had reached sixty-three thousand; in 1900, the business reached two hundred and twenty-seven thousand sales; in 1903, the orders had passed the half-million mark, and in 1912 nearly a million and a quarter pens were sold.

And what was the secret of this phenomenal success?

Mr. Frank D. Waterman, president of the L. E. Waterman Company, answering an inquiry as to what advertising had done for their business, with a wave of his hand indicated the entire scope of their industry.

"Anyone can see for himself what magazine advertising has done for the L. E. Waterman Company," he said. "The business speaks for itself. The right kind of advertising is the life of trade. You must have the merchandise, of course, and the merchant must back up what appears in his advertisements; but advertising in the proper mediums is the real force of business.

"Advertising today is not merely giving publicity to your wares. The merchant today through advertising makes a reputation, and he has to live up to it. Advertising is sure fire, if it be of a sincere, convincing, confidence-gaining quality.

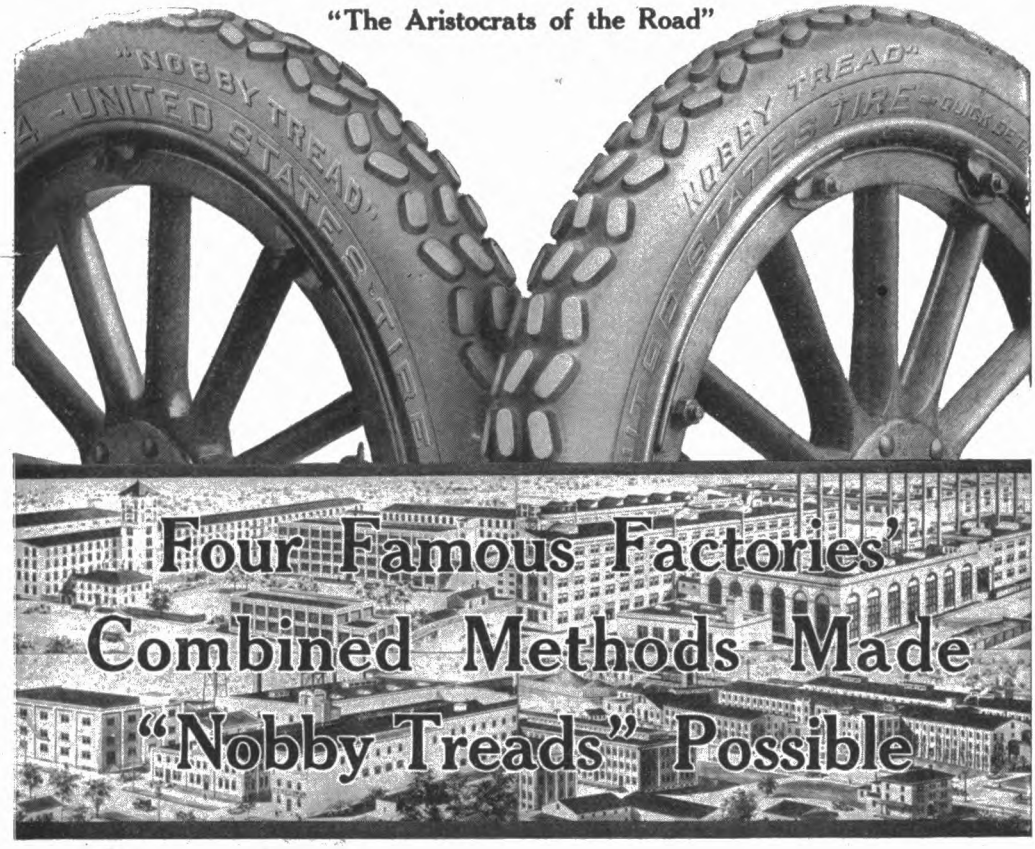
"Years ago, people asked the founder of the Waterman Company why he advertised so much in the magazines, and he replied that he couldn't get along without them. He found they paid, and so have I."

This story is interesting from more than one point of view. It has been shown that through the force of national magazine advertising a large industry was created. But there is another side—that of the significance of this creative power to the public at large.

There is a broad, ethical mission to the development of an industry such as the L. E. Waterman Company. Thousands of people are served, office and written work is facilitated, time is saved and life generally made easier and happier for many the world over.

This is the first of a series of articles that is being published to show how magazines are serving the public.

"The Aristocrats of the Road"



Four Famous Factories' Combined Methods Made "Nobby Treads" Possible

Veteran Car Owners were the first to accept this marvelous tire—the first to recognize the actual, unfailing additional Mileage and real Protection against skidding that "Nobby Treads" give—then came the Popular Demand

Popularity never comes unearned to a product.

The tremendous popularity of the "Nobby Tread" Tires has been earned by their ability not only to prevent skidding, but to "deliver" extra tire mileage under all conditions.

The choice of the veteran car owners was not based upon mere test records, but upon the actual wear that "Nobby Tread" Tires give on all kinds of roads day in and day out.

The overwhelming number of automobile manufacturers who have selected United States Tires as the standard equipment of their 1914 cars proves unquestionably that United States Tires are today the accepted standard for real tire service.

When you purchase United Stated Tires you are sure of these vitally important facts:

1—Of the Four Factory Organization behind these famous tires.

2—Of vast experience in tire building.

3—Of a tremendous organization that actually backs up its tires.

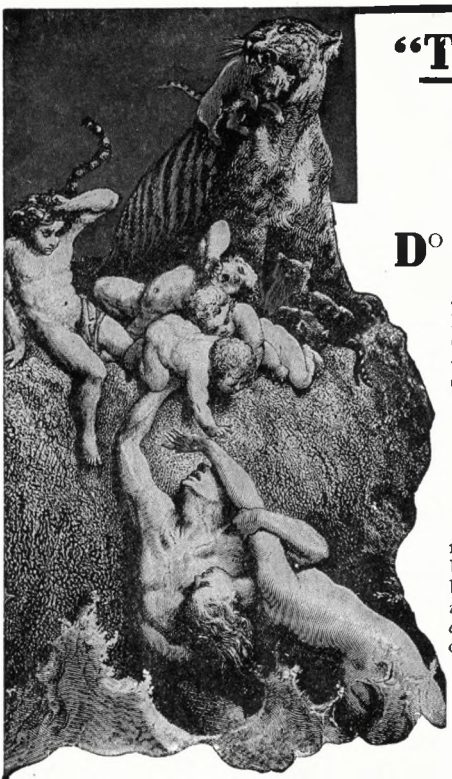
DO NOT BE TALKED INTO A SUBSTITUTE

Your own dealer or any reliable dealer can supply you with United States Tires—"Nobby Tread," "Chain Tread," or Smooth Tread. If he has no stock on hand, insist that he get them for you at once—or go to another dealer.

Note This:—Dealers who sell UNITED STATES TIRES sell the best of everything.

United States Tires

Made by the
Largest Rubber Company in the World



"The Chaldean Story of the Flood"

Dug Up From the Ruins of Ancient Chaldea

DO YOU KNOW that there has been dug up from the ruins of old Chaldea a complete story of the Flood—the same in every detail as Moses' account in Genesis—and that it was written thousands of years before his version appeared? Hardly one in a million has ever had an opportunity of seeing this startling story—HAVE *YOU?* But it is one of the many thousand curiously interesting accounts in

The Library of Original Sources

now for the first time available to the general public. Up to the present this remarkable Library has only been sold by subscription, but by taking over the *entire unsold edition* from the publishers we secured it at an *absolutely unheard of bargain.* Therefore we are able to offer the few remaining sets to POPULAR'S readers at an

Extraordinary Bargain

Send us the attached coupon AT ONCE, and we will tell you how to get the Library on EASY MONTHLY PAYMENTS, and mail you FREE a book of rare documents. Remember there are only a limited number of sets, so act quickly. Mail the coupon now. You assume no obligation. No salesman will call. The book is FREE.

THIS MARVELOUS WORK is revolutionizing modern thought. It's turning upside down old notions and ideas. It gives the authoritative, rock-bottom sources of our knowledge on ALL SUBJECTS OF HUMAN INTEREST from the earliest civilization down to today—the inside facts which the average person has never even heard of.

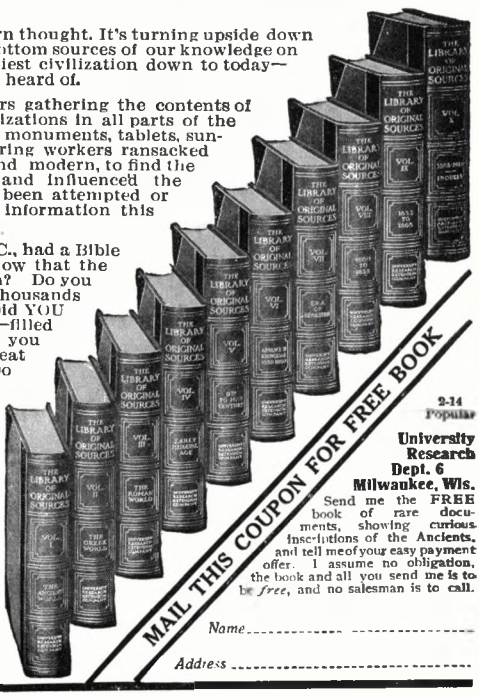
OVER 100 RESEARCH SPECIALISTS spent 10 years gathering the contents of this great work. Ancient and remote and forgotten civilizations in all parts of the globe were uncovered, and age-buried hieroglyphics on monuments, tablets, sun-baked bricks and palimpsests yielded their secrets; untiring workers ransacked the hidden literature of every age, ancient, mediæval and modern, to find the "original documents" that shaped the civilizations and influenced the thought and life of the world. Nothing like it has ever been attempted or thought of before. You'll be amazed at the wealth of information this unique library contains.

DO YOU KNOW that the old Egyptians, 5000 years B. C., had a Bible which they called the "Book of the Dead"? Do you know that the Assyrian sacred literature gives the story of the Creation? Do you know that books and newspapers were printed in Asia thousands of years before printing was invented by Gutenberg? Did YOU ever read Columbus' personal log of his great voyage—filled with strange happenings and ominous forebodings? Do you know that there occurred in Mediæval England a great Socialistic protest—the first of its kind ever known? Do you know by what unique process Harvey demonstrated that the blood does not stand still in the veins, as everyone then thought? Do you know who Machiavelli was, or what world famous treatise he wrote?

YOU'LL FIND THEM ALL—and thousands of others equally as curious and important—in the Library of Original Sources. Every document is in the exact words of the original, translated; every contribution is from the actual eye-witness or person who took part; every idea is in the words of the thinker, investigator, discoverer or inventor.

JACK LONDON SAYS:—"It is a whole library in itself. I certainly never could spare these books from my shelves."

10 sumptuous, massive volumes, bound in rich, deep red Morocco; full page illustrations, pure silk headbands, printed in large, clear type on handmade paper, gold tops—a veritable triumph of the bookmaker's art.



MAIL THIS COUPON FOR FREE BOOK

2-14
Popular

University Research Dept. 6 Milwaukee, Wis.

Send me the FREE book of rare documents, showing curious inscriptions of the Ancients, and tell me of your easy payment offer. I assume no obligation, the book and all you send me is to be *free*, and no salesman is to call.

Name _____

Address _____

COLGATE'S SHAVING LATHER

"Papa, why do some people use other kinds of shaving soap?"

"Because they've never used Colgate's."

Learn the comfort of a Colgate Shave. On receipt of 4 cts. in stamps we will send you a trial size of Colgate's Shaving Stick, the Magic Wand of Shaving; Rapid-Shave Powder, the Powder that Shortens the Shave; or Perfected Shaving Cream. Mention your preference.

Colgate & Co.
Dept. B
199 Fulton St.,
New York

Makers of Cashmere Bouquet Soap—luxurious, lasting, refined.