THIS ISSUE—ROMAN DOUBLEDAY, JOHN HUSLETTE, CLARENCE CULLEM, C. E. VAN LOAN

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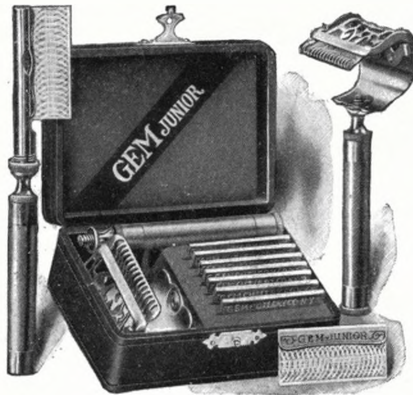

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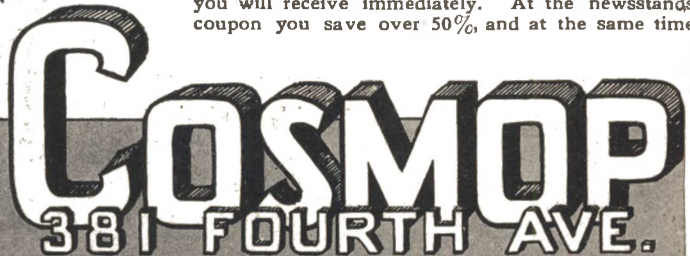

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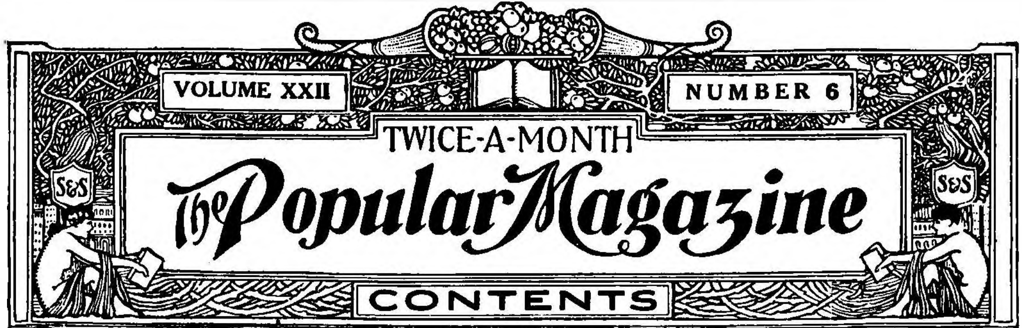

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(230)

THE POPULAR MAGAZINE

VOL. XXII. JANUARY 1, 1912. No. 6

His Friend, the President

By John Haslette

Author of "Desmond Rourke, Irishman," "The Carven Ball," Etc.

A story of South America, introducing "His Excellency, the President of the Effulgent Republic of Coquibe," whose friendship a lot of people have been proud to claim. Young Temporel, the bank manager, had an experience of that friendship—but he doesn't want to boast about it.

CHAPTER I.

UNPOETIC JUSTICE.

HIS Excellency, Don Luis Pescate, President of the Effulgent Republic of Coquibe," as he loved to style himself in his pronunciamentos, lolled back in his chair, to survey, with the eye of a connoisseur, the charming face of a lady who sat opposite him at the dinner table. The service had been removed; only a few decanters, and some thin-stemmed wineglasses remained. Between them, many bunches of grapes flaunted their luscious purple in a massive silver epergne.

His Excellency stretched out long, thin fingers, loaded with rings, detached a grape from a cluster, and placed it delicately between his excellent teeth. He crushed it slowly.

The lady watched him; her air perceptibly sulky; her fine shoulders on the point of shrugging.

"My excellent Luis," she said, speaking in a sweet, hushed contralto, which seemed strangely at variance with her piquant and coquettish face, "I must have some more money, and I must have some Paris frocks—positively must!"

"Heart of my life," replied His Excellency gently, "money is scarce; frocks are dear; the imperative mood does not suit your charming face or your adorable voice. Frankly, my sweet, the presidential coffers wink coldly with their last peso. The presidential credit—well, that is better left to the imagination, and the talk of fools."

"But, with it all, I must have money—and frocks," said the lady, leaning toward him.

Don Luis smiled. He had heard all this before.

"My adored Carmencita, it will gratify me extremely if you can suggest a way to provide you with these necessities."

Her eyes glowed. "You are president, and you may do what you please," she hinted.

"I generally do," he said, deliberately detaching another grape, and subjecting

it to the crushing process. He wiped his lips delicately with his napkin, and smiled again. "It is the most difficult thing in the world—that."

Carmencita Pensol was gradually working herself into a delightful little feminine rage. "Ah-h! Me, I am in rags!" She tugged furiously at the costly lace on her gown. "Rags! Look at my hands—bare! Not a ring, not a jewel. Are these the hands of a woman who should be permitted to go without rings?"

"*Corazon de mi vida*, they are not," replied Don Luis, reaching across the table, and patting them gently. "You have disposed, no doubt, of all the fine rings I gave you?"

She shrugged. "Fine rings? Mere sparks, I assure you. You speak to me of them while that pestilent woman, the Doña Maria Luisa Carboles, flaunts a tiara of the finest Brazilian stones, and also a necklet—worth at the least six thousand pesos."

Don Luis lighted a cigar, and glanced at her amiably. "You surprise me. Is she not afraid to wear such gems in this country?"

"Perhaps," said the lady. "But on the days when she does not require them they are placed in the safes of the new English bank."

"A thousand devils!" cried His Excellency. "The English bank! I profess, *chiquita mia*, as a patriotic statesman of our effulgent republic, I view with alarm and suspicion the appearance of these English in our commercial circles. Decidedly they are serious competitors."

"Is it not a shame!" cried Carmencita, opening a little gold cigarette case which lay on the table beside her. "There is ever so much money—fabulous sums, while I, Carmencita Pensol, go in rags and with my hands bare!"

"The loveliest hands in the universe," said His Excellency, admiring them leisurely. "The most adorable since Cleopatra's. Well, we must see what can be done."

"But it is not well!" she cried, her white shoulders moving irritably. "You talk and talk——"

"I shall also think," he said, rising from his chair and coming to stand beside her. He put out a hand, and laid it tenderly on her arm, smiling down into the liquid eyes upturned to meet his.

She flashed pearly teeth at him—they were still unpaid for—and laughed. "Then I shall have more money and more frocks?" she said.

"Though the heavens fall," he said gently.

Early the morning following, Don Luis rang for his secretary. The latter appeared, rubbing his eyes sleepily.

The president stroked his chin complacently. "Soto, there are in the city some who are not well affected to our person."

"Many, Excellency," said the secretary.

"Then bring a few of them to me," said Don Luis amiably. "Those who would be leaders. Lead them through back streets to the private door, and so to my study. I shall interview them immediately."

"But, Excellency, they will not come——" began Soto.

"You mistake, my good fellow; they will hasten with speed to assure me that nothing surpasses their loyalty to my position and person. Away, you waste valuable time. Return speedily."

Don Luis was examining some official documents in his study when Soto entered. He preceded four hot, dusty, and alarmed individuals, who promptly and without ceremony began to explain the full extent and meaning of their devotion to His Excellency.

But Don Luis signed to his secretary to shut and lock the door giving on the street, and, with a disturbed air, rang a bell. At once there was the tramp of feet from an outside passage, the second door to the room was flung open, and five *rurales*, armed with carbines, filed into the study.

"Seize these men, and place them under arrest," cried Don Luis. "But first search them under my eye."

Despite the oaths, protests, and ap-

peals of the four men, they were seized and searched. On one was found a knife, on another a revolver. The president fronted them with lowering brow, one white hand stretched out accusingly.

"Ah! They seek my life! They come—intrude into my study with weapons in their hands, and in their hearts the foul purpose of assassination! Take them instantly to the strong room in the basement, and secure them with cords. Meanwhile, no word of this to any one. It might stir up the hearts of my noble people. Away!"

When the prisoners had been removed, Don Luis smiled, lighted a cigar, and glanced at Soto, who was regarding him with some mystification.

"Soto, I have still an errand for you. You know the prison. Go there, ask for the warden, tell him to send to me here those four criminals who were, last month, imprisoned on a charge of burglary. One is a Swede, I believe. Tell the warden that I also wish to see the tools found upon the men when arrested. Also ask him to accompany the men to this place."

When Soto had gone, the president took up a novel, and became absorbed in its pages until a sound warned him that the warden, with the prisoners under guard, was at the outer door. In response to his polite invitation to enter, first the warden, then Soto, followed by the others, filed into the room. Don Luis bade the warden be seated, dismissed Soto, and stared steadily at the four criminals.

"Your name is Forgas?" he asked the most burly of the men.

"It is, Excellency."

"Ah! I have been inquiring into the case, and to my mind there has been a miscarriage of justice." Then to the warden: "Señor, I observe that one of your men carries the tools found on these prisoners."

"Yes, Excellency."

Don Luis nodded. "Forgas," he said, "why was it that at your trial you did not mention the fact that you were a locksmith?"

"I—I——" stammered the man.

"That will do! You willfully withheld information which would have led to your acquittal. So you are rightly served for your foolishness. Of your companions, two follow the same trade as yourself; the third is a clockmaker."

The men dissembled their surprise, and managed to murmur that His Excellency spoke words of exceeding wisdom.

Don Luis addressed the astonished warden. "In this case, I shall exercise my prerogative of mercy. These men are released, to be held temporarily at my disposal. You, señor, are a servant of the state of which I have the honor to be the head. Be honest; govern wisely those committed to your care; attend"—he pointed a finger—"attend to the instructions of those who direct the destinies of the republic. I commend your service. Go!"

"But——" began the warden, glancing at his prisoners with an uneasy eye.

"Taking with you the guard," continued the president softly. "I salute you."

The warden, much perplexed, gave the word of command; the guard followed him out of the study and into the street. Don Luis rang the bell for his *rurales*, and gave an order.

"Lead these men below, and see that they remain here. But entertain them suitably. They should have a full meal. And you, *intendente,* return to me here."

The prisoners, puzzled to distraction, withdrew under guard. And presently the *intendente* came back.

"Your Excellency?"

"*Intendente*, you have spare uniforms of your corps. At dark this evening see that the four men are clothed in them. They will join with a half section of your men. At twelve, midnight, you will go quietly to the English bank in the Calle Suarez. I have received information which leads me to believe that an attack will be made upon the bank by a party of disaffected persons. There you will act under my instructions. Meanwhile prepare the men you have bound below, the first four men, to leave this

house to-night. They will also go to the English bank in the center of a body of your men."

"Very well, Your Excellency."

It was very dark that night. The sky was bare of stars, the moon still lurked deep below the horizon. At eleven the economical municipality extinguished the street lamps. Thereafter the streets were black as pitch. In Don Luis' mansion all was bright and gay. The windows blazed with light, and envious loungers saw obsequious servants passing across the squares illumined by the hanging electroliers within.

But Don Luis was in his private room, dressing himself in the uniform of an *intendente* of *rurales*. Near his feet lay a bag containing certain tools. He smiled to himself very cheerfully, and whistled a snatch from "Nozze di Figaro" with great accuracy and sweetness. Below four men were assuming similar costumes, while four other men watched them with amazement and alarm.

Every man of the force of *rurales* had been instructed to wear grass sandals, footwear which enabled them to pass almost noiselessly along the streets. They commonly wore these on night duty, but never before had such a considerable force marched in them through the streets of the city.

Presently the lights in the mansion were extinguished, and the bold stucco façade faded out into the gloom which brooded all around. Then a side door opened, and a nameless personage, in the uniform of an *intendente* walked quietly out, followed by a small column of his force. In the midst of this latter were four men, disaffected citizens of the republic, painfully left in doubt as to whether they were marching to glory or execution.

The little column passed on its way, moving quietly, disturbing not even the lightest slumberer, and gradually drew near to the Calle Suarez.

The residents of the English bank building comprised the manager—a stout young man, very pompous and therefore very easily hoodwinked—two servants, a man and a woman; and the bank messenger, a mestizo, who was very zealous and intensely stupid. The manager slept on the first floor; the two servants in the basement, the messenger in a room near the entrance to the ground floor.

Arrived opposite the bank premises, the *intendente* told his men to form a cordon about the main entrance, and himself rang the bell which communicated with the bank messenger.

After a short space of time, the messenger opened the great door cautiously, and peered out. In his left hand he held a repeating shotgun, in the right a lamp, which he raised to throw light upon the face of the man who rang. At sight of the uniform of the *rurales*, he assumed a less tense pose, and asked what was required of him at that hour of the night.

The *intendente*, his sombrero pulled down over his brows, informed him that he must come a little distance from the door to speak upon an important matter; meanwhile the *rurales* would see that the place was guarded. This request had all the force of a command. The messenger left his shotgun in the doorway, and followed the *intendente*.

Still all was silent in the building. Another man, our good friend Don Luis, also in the uniform of an officer of *rurales*, took command. At a word from him, the four innocent locksmiths entered the bank, carrying the tools of their craft. The four disaffected citizens followed perplexedly, and Don Luis brought up the rear. The silent force of armed men remained on guard outside.

Don Luis seemed to know the bank intimately. He directed the locksmiths to the room where the safes were kept, and told them to set to work at once. He knew that they could not escape, with his armed cordon in waiting. Then he went upstairs, driving the citizens before him, and only paused on the landing outside the bank manager's bedroom door.

This opened in a moment. The man-

ager had heard the sounds of feet, and appeared in his pajamas, a heavy revolver in his hand.

"Stop, or I fire!"

Don Luis stepped forward. "It is I—the president," he announced shortly. "A force of armed *rurales* are guarding the door. This afternoon I received information that a number of men had secreted themselves in the bank house, with intent to commit a felony. For your bank's security and the credit of the republic, the house must be searched from top to bottom, the criminals seized. Have you any top rooms which are unused? If so, señor, show them to us. With you and these four men we shall search. They cannot escape us."

"In this house!" The perspiration began to trickle down the manager's face. "Good heavens!" he cried, mopping his face. "You're not serious—you're joking? I can't believe it. Why, the messenger sleeps below, and it is difficult——"

"No doubt," said Don Luis, who was not disinclined to continue the conversation. He thought of his men working below, and reflected that it was necessary to give them every chance. "It is always difficult, señor, to believe that which is unpalatable. I assure you that this affair is equally disagreeable to me. In my republic I would have every man honest; every man's property safe and secure. But we waste time here. Let us search the upper floors."

Temporel, the manager, was very white; not from any lack of courage, but from a very definite realization of what this meant to him.

"What shall we do?" he cried, trembling visibly with agitation. "Let us go downstairs first—they may have sacked the place already, eh?"

"No, no!" cried Don Luis, laying a reassuring hand on the shoulder of the young man. "The messenger sleeps below, as you have said, but he did not seem to have heard any suspicious sounds. In any case, a force of *rurales* is on guard. The men could not hope to escape."

"That seems true," said the young manager, steadying himself, his appealing eyes fixed on Don Luis' concerned face. "Well, let us go upstairs at once—you don't know what this means to me. I was with the New York branch of this English banking house till recently, when I secured this managerial appointment, and I have a little girl waiting in New York——"

He broke off to cover his face with his hands, the pistol falling to the floor. Then suddenly he stooped, picked up his weapon, and sprang toward the stairway. "Come on! We may get them yet."

"I trust we shall," said the president, smiling gently at his retreating back, and motioning the four waiting men to follow Temporel. He himself also proceeded to ascend.

Below the four expert workmen were hurrying forward with their task. In addition to the tools found upon them at the time of their arrest, they had been supplied with an oxy-acetylene blowpipe. Soon one safe door was open, and they set to work upon the next.

The *intendente,* in the meanwhile, had sent the bank messenger away with a private message for General Mayoro, and returned to the bank with three chosen men, carrying gunny bags, in which they bestowed the contents of the first safe. The cavalry barracks lay a mile and a half from the town, and the *intendente* knew that the messenger could not deliver his message and return in less than an hour—the general being a heavy sleeper, and not the sweetest tempered of men when incontinently awakened from his slumbers. The sacks, then, with their valuable burdens, were carried out through the main entrance of the bank, unseen or unnoticed by the cordon of *rurales* on the roadway.

The second safe soon yielded to its masters. It contained some unnegotiable scrip, a number of bank notes, and, in a solid leather jewel case, the tiara and necklet of diamonds so unwisely flaunted by the Doña Carboles. The *intendente* returned and emptied the second safe as he had the first, leaving

only the scrip, which was of no value to himself or his employer, and might enable the owners to set on foot certain dangerous inquiries.

CHAPTER II.

THE UNHAPPY DUPE.

While the men were working quietly below, Don Luis and his helpers had made an exhaustive search of the upper rooms. Sounding walls, tapping the flooring, looking under and behind piles of paper, rubbish, and dismembered furniture, the time flew. Temporel was hopeful at first, then dejected. His impatience increased. Surely it would be better to look into the office of the bank itself to be certain that nothing had gone wrong. But the president held him; by argument, by ridicule, by appeals to his practical common sense. The *rurales* were waiting outside in the street; the concealed criminals, if such there were, could not hope to break through the line. So he gained time, and waited for a prearranged signal.

The *intendente* having secured the valuable contents of the safe, made his workmen pack up the oxy-acetylene plant, but directed them to leave the other tools scattered haphazard on the floor. Then he led them back to the street.

"Six of my men will escort you back to the president's *palacio,*" he said to them privately, as they passed through the hall. "The men think you are new recruits. Be silent, then, on your lives. His Excellency intends to feast and reward you—*sabe?*"

Having dismissed the men, under guard, he returned to the bank, and ran up the stairs, shouting as he went.

"Excellency!" he cried. "The bank has been sacked. They have taken all—all. Come quickly—Your Excellency!"

Temporel heard the shout, dropped his pistol, and staggered up against the wall. "Then it's true!" he groaned. "This is the end! I'm done for!"

"Come, señor," said Don Luis, in a kindly tone; "we must see what can be done." As he spoke, the *intendente* rushed in upon them, his eyes staring, quick hands pantomiming horror. "Capos, calm yourself. What has happened?"

"The men must have forestalled us," cried the other. "They must have sacked the bank while the messenger slept—two safes have been opened."

"Two—no more?" asked Temporel, in a broken, husky voice, dragging himself forward. "Come with me!"

He sprang forward with the energy of despair, and descended the stairs three steps at a time, his face twitching. The president, with the four men and the *intendente,* followed more leisurely.

The scene in the safe room of the bank filled him with horror and dismay. Yes, the place had been sacked—that was the right word. Of the contents of the two safes, nothing remained but the scrip. This was an end to his dreams of marrying the little girl who waited for him in New York. They had had such high hopes, these two—they had counted on so much. Temporel had been promoted, from cashier in the Manhattan branch, to be manager of the South American branch in Santa Malua, and they had seen in this step upward the fulfillment of all that they had wished for, and waited for so long.

Temporel was no longer pompous of manner. The events of the past hour had broken—and made him. The idle habit of mind engendered by years of routine and regulations was shed from him in this moment of trial.

Furiously they searched for traces of the criminals, but discovered none, except the tools which lay scattered on the floor. The president threw into his efforts such vigor and energy that Temporel was impressed. That the great man should so labor to retrieve the misfortune touched him to a sense of gratitude; more deeply felt because he knew that from this time forward he would find few friends to help him.

The establishment of a foreign bank in Santa Malua had stirred up local prejudices. The ignorant residents had

seen in it some vague menace to their petty interests. From the bank directors in England, he expected little. They were business men of a normal type -directors of a company which had to show good dividends. The loss of so much money, and of gems, deposited for safety by a new and wealthy customer, was not a light matter, nor would they regard it as such.

"Your Excellency," he said at last, sitting down on a high stool, "it's no good. They must have got away before your men came up."

"Do not lose hope," said Don Luis, with an almost paternal air. He began to gather together the tools from the floor, and to place them in a bag which had lain disregarded under a desk. "These tools may help us to identify the criminals. I shall communicate with the chief of police, but in the meantime I shall take charge of these—— Ah, here comes the messenger."

The man, hot, dusty, and frightened, flung into the room, and went straight up to Temporel.

"Señor, is it true?"

"It is true," said Temporel somberly. "José, I fear you will lose your place over this."

The man wrung his hands. *"Ay de mi*—my place!"

"But it will be easy for you to get another," said the manager, looking at Don Luis, who was watching with an air of sympathetic good will. "With me it's different—different——"

The president moved forward. "Señor, I must wish you good night! In the morning we shall inquire further into this matter—*Vamos, hombres."*

He drove the four men before him from the room. The messenger lingered for a few moments, looking blankly at Temporel, who stared into vacancy with a set and ghastly smile. Then he retired to lock up the premises.

Temporel was alone. In the street outside, the *rurales* moved off. There was the sound of soft padding feet. Then stillness fell about the bank, the silence of quiet night. Behind Temporel the safes in the little room gaped, reproachful and accusing.

He laid his flushed face upon his hands, and his shoulders shook. The blood, flowing in a quickened stream from his heart, seemed to gather like a flood, to submerge his brain, to beat like the loosened waters of a dam against the back of his eyes. It was like the shouting of waters, exultant and past restraint.

He continued to sit there, hunched up, immobile. He was thinking of the things that had been, but might not be again.

On the following morning, the semi-official morning paper *El Mundo* devoted a half-column leader to a panegyric with regard to the president, after giving details of the bank outrage, and then going on to say:

His Excellency was first on the scene of the dastardly outrage above referred to, leading our brave *rurales* at the risk of his life, abandoning sleep, working nobly to protect and preserve the property of the English bankers. Long live His Excellency, a landmark to other nations, a father to his devoted and loving people.

The president's morning was spent in receiving callers—generals, colonels, the commander of th cruiser *Don Luis* lying in the blue bay beyond the mole, sundry military small fry, with most of the notables of Santa Malua. They poured through the doors of the *palacio* in a congratulatory stream, commented volubly and spaciously upon His Excellency's goodness, graciousness, piety, valor; upon the largeness of his heart, the catholicity of his sympathies.

With Temporel it was, as he had said, different. He sat in his private room at the bank, out of earshot of the talkative clerks in the office, endeavoring to frame a cable message for his directors. With aching head and eyes red from lack of sleep, he worked on—writing, correcting, destroying successive messages. At length he had finished. The substance of the cable was in these words:

Regret bank burgled. Cash lost, 10,000 pounds. Also jewels, value 1,800 pounds,

property customer deposited. No arrests yet. Inquiries being made.

He rang his bell, and a Spanish clerk, a thin, yellow-faced man, with a sparse chin tuft, entered.

"Marino," said the manager, "send this cable off immediately."

Marino took the message and withdrew. Coming through the general office, he approached the desk of the cashier.

"Señor Temporel will not be allowed to remain here I am sure, Mistaire Peters," he said softly.

Peters, the cashier, looked up, and a light came into his eyes. "So, ho!" he thought to himself. "The managership may fall vacant soon! Why should not I be promoted?"

He glanced at the cable message handed to him by Marino. "All right," he said aloud, "I'll just count the words —— Poor devil! This affair will muddle him up a bit with the chiefs."

That morning the bank premises were invaded by a small army of *rurales,* policemen, and presidential emissaries. They interviewed Temporel at length, were shown over the building from top to bottom, took solemn measurements, made small notes in large notebooks, and generally comported themselves as inefficient detectives confronted with a mystery which they clearly realized was beyond their power to solve.

When the last caller had gone, Temporel retired to his private room again, passing through the general office, his head up, his shoulders squared.

"Bad business, sir," said Peters, as he went by.

The manager nodded, but did not reply. He was conscious of a certain new familiarity in his subordinate's tone, and did not relish it. Intuitively he guessed at the man's thoughts. But, once behind his private door, he rang the bell for José, the messenger, who came to him promptly.

"You require me, señor."

"Yes, José. This is a very bad business. You understand that you are practically acting as watchman here. Last night, as you know, the bank was burgled. To enter, the men must have passed your door. Did you hear no suspicious sounds?"

José's olive face went a dirty white. "No, señor, I swear it."

"Strange—very strange," said the manager, in an absent tone. "Tell me what occurred when the *rurales* arrived last night. You did not enter with the president?"

José explained what had taken place, and added: "Señor, the *intendente* sent me to the cavalry barracks with a message for General Mayoro. I returned as soon as possible."

"Ah, did the message request the general to return with you?"

"Señor, I cannot tell. It was a written message, and was handed to me in an envelope. The general said to me: 'Tell His Excellency I will send ten troopers.' "

"That was all?"

"Yes, señor." The man hesitated, and went on timidly: "Does the señor believe that I shall lose my place here because of the ladrones having broken in while I slept?"

Temporel shook his head regretfully, feeling that he was in like case, though he did not care to say so. "I cannot say. I believe it is very possible. I trust that the matter may not go any further, but at present it is impossible to forecast anything. You may go now, José. I will do what I can for you."

"Señor, I thank you."

On the following morning the cablegram arrived. Temporel scanned the flimsy slip, flung it from him, and grew gradually paler. He stood, stock-still, for a full minute, staring into space, silent, enraged, despairing. The cable informed him that the directors requested him to hand in his resignation. He had a twelve months' agreement with them, and was to retain his post until the arrival of his successor—who would be sent from the London headquarters of the firm. His salary for the forthcoming year must serve in lieu of the usual notice. The word "resignation" was a mere mockery.

"Curse them!" cried Temporel,

smarting under the blow, "and those ruffians who have ruined me"—he stopped, bit his lip, saw, in a sudden and complete vision, the girl who waited for him. The oaths died upon his lips. There was surely something better than futile and childish swearing, some more manly way of meeting the crisis.

He had two months before his successor would arrive. He would be in possession of a year's salary. It was necessary that he should discover the bank robbers. If the local authorities could not succeed, he must. In the end, he would achieve his purpose, set himself right with his directors, and ask to be reinstated. With this thought, he sat down to write a letter, acknowledging receipt of the cable, and inclosing a report of the robbery, with details regarding the inquiries which had been set on foot.

Then he got a sheet of private note paper, and began a letter to his fiancée, Cynthia Carvel. He wrote in a cheerful strain, quite at variance with the gloomy mood which was on him, and passed lightly over the bank robbery as "a little case of theft at the office," and expressed a hope that he might soon be able to send for her.

The last paragraph gave him the most pain to write:

My dearest girl, do not build too much on our early marriage. You see business has not come in rapidly yet—local prejudices must be overcome—and I shall not get the necessary rise until the branch is fairly established.

He closed with contradictory hopes, endearing words, those little tender banalities which will endure when the most daring and forceful phrases shall have lost their meaning. Then he sealed and stamped the envelope, and went out to post it.

Don Luis, in his *palacio*, was also busy. Before the darkness had given place to day, on the morning of the raid, ten troopers rode into the *patio*. They found, in the pleasant court, four men, gagged, bound, and strapped to the saddles of their horses. Don Luis' secretary was there to give instructions. These four men, daring and audacious criminals, he said, were to be conveyed to the fort at Puerto Pelos, and there kept in solitary confinement at the president's pleasure. The troopers took their orders obediently. After all, it was no affair of theirs.

At the same hour a letter was sent to the warden of the prison in Santa Malua, and ran as follows:

My Very Excellent Friend: I have subjected the four criminals to a searching and thorough cross-examination, and regret that I made, in the first instance, a rash and hasty judgment, which may have seemed to reflect upon your discrimination.

Contrary to my belief, they have failed to prove their innocence. In these circumstances I consider them deserving of the severest punishment, and have consigned them under escort to the fortress at Puerto Pelos. The tools found upon them at the time of their arrest I return to you for inclusion in the criminal museum.

Accept, excellent friend, the assurance of my very deepest regards.

Don Luis Parajal Pescate.
President of the Republic of Coquibe.

These matters arranged, Don Luis settled himself again to enjoy life. At the hour when Temporel was writing to his distant Cynthia, the president was standing beside the Doña Carmencita Pensol in the drawing-room of his residence, and listening gravely to the explanations of his private jeweler.

"This tiara, Excellency, can be readily managed," the man was saying. "I shall have the stones taken out, and mounted again after the design of which Your Excellency has done me the honor to approve—the necklet also."

"*Bueno*," said Don Luis, pinching the ear of his inamorata, and smiling down into her face. "Go, then, and see that the work is done well and speedily."

When the jeweler had retired, Carmencita went off into a delicious gurgle of laughter.

"Luis, you are the most adorable man in the world!"

"Without doubt, heart of my life," said he, putting his hand on her shoulder. "Until you have spent the money, and tired of your jewels, I shall remain so. After——"

"And—well?" said she.

"Well," he said, smiling cynically, "who knows but some day even I—— Such things have happened, *querida.*"

She stood up, and, putting an arm about his neck, kissed him. "With some women, yes—with me, no," she said.

The president still smiled: "You misunderstand me, sweet of my life. I was going to add that some day even I might tire of you."

CHAPTER III.

THE MAN OF SILENCE.

Two days later Temporel met the president.

In rather a gloomy humor he had left the bank, to take a walk on the Alameda, and, as he turned into the avenue from the plaza, Don Luis' carriage whirled round the corner. The president saw him, cried out to his coachman, and the big landau drew up. Temporel saw a beckoning hand, and, raising his hat, advanced to greet His Excellency.

"Señor Temporel," said the latter, smiling sympathetically, "I am sorry that they have not advanced much into their investigation of that affair at your bank. As it seems, we were just too late in arriving. Accept my regrets, and, if you please, communicate them to the señores your directors."

"Thank you," said Temporel. "Your Excellency is very kind. I have already communicated to my directors the fact that you took a personal interest in that unfortunate affair."

Don Luis bit his lip. Without intending it, the manager had struck the mark. "Well, well," he said, recovering his composure. "We must not yet abandon hope. Some other time we shall talk of it. At the moment I have other business with you. Will you dine with me some night this week—say Friday?"

"I shall be delighted," replied Temporel gratefully. "Delighted and honored."

"I shall expect you, then, at eight o'clock. Now, *adios.* I have an appointment with the minister of commerce."

The carriage drove on. Temporel felt a new lightness of heart. He had some friends still. "What a good sort he is!" he was saying to himself, as he looked after the fast-disappearing carriage. "Perhaps he might get me a place here, when I leave the bank. I must sound him on that point."

While he stood there, absorbed in the possibilities of this new idea, a slight, bearded man had approached, and was surveying him from the distance of a few paces. When the presidential carriage had rolled out of sight, he came closer, and touched Temporel on the sleeve. The latter started, and turned.

"What can I do for you, señor?" he asked.

The slight man stared hard at him, nodded furiously, and pointed in the direction taken by the carriage. His face worked a little, like that of a man eagerly striving to express some idea, but at a loss for a word. Temporel glanced at him perplexedly.

"Señor, it is evident that you do not speak English. That does not matter. I understand Spanish."

The man nodded, but continued to gesticulate.

"Spanish—speak Spanish!" said Temporel rather impatiently; "I can understand that."

But the man did not speak. He pulled a handful of coins from his pocket with his right hand, snatched them with the left, and placed them in his other pocket, pointing excitedly up the Alameda.

Temporel shook his head. "No, I have no money to spare," he said.

The fellow flushed, making it clear that he was not a beggar. He repeated the pantomime without conveying any lucid idea of his meaning to the mystified New Yorker. He was conscious of that, perhaps, for he spun once upon his heels, and shook his head sorrowfully.

Temporel thrust his hands into his trousers' pockets, and stared at him. "My dear fellow, I can't understand

what you mean. If you have anything to say, please say it. I am not a quick hand at picking up sign language."

The other pointed first to himself, then to Temporel, and managed by an expressive look to indicate that he wished the New Yorker to accompany him. Temporel was in two minds. Perhaps the fellow had something to say; he seemed intensely anxious. Possibly he understood neither English nor Spanish. On the other hand, it was possible that he was endeavoring to decoy Temporel into some criminal haunt, with some felonious intent. But curiosity prevailed over prudence. Temporel looked up and down the street, and nodded.

"All right. Go on, and I will follow you."

A look of intense satisfaction flitted across the man's mobile face. He did not attempt to conceal his emotions, but smiled openly and approvingly.

Leaving the corner of the Alameda, and skirting the palm-fringed inclosure in the center of the Gran' Plaza, they walked quickly to the spot where the Calle Destina debouches into the square. The presidential residence stood at this corner; the main façade fronting the square, the side running on the street.

The man stopped there, and looked upward, tapping Temporel on the shoulder.

"Well, what is it now?"

The man again drew some money from his pocket, but this time varied the pantomime by feigning to place his money upon a window sill. That done, he stared expectantly, anxiously at his companion, his face a study in half-sick hope.

Temporel shook his head. He could not understand, believed indeed that the man must be insane. Observing his expression of doubt and amazement, the other redoubled his exertions. He almost danced before Temporel, flinging out his arms, grimacing, endeavoring to explain by signs something inexplicable and vague. That, at least, was how it seemed to Temporel. Without wishing to appear impolite, he was anxious to leave the man, being now well aware that he would never understand what his companion tried so eagerly and so silently to express.

"I am sorry," he said, at length, "but I am in a hurry. You must excuse me."

His companion looked at him mournfully, and, with a sudden, swift access of excitement, pulled at his sleeve. Temporel followed him. They passed down the Calle Destina, cut across a side street, and entered the Calle Suarez. Here they stopped near the bank; the man pointed at the building, and began vigorously to gesticulate. But Temporel's patience had come to an end. He moved off a few paces, and prepared to resume his walk. Whether the man in normal circumstances would have endeavored to detain him is uncertain, for, at that moment, a mounted *rural* came trotting down the street.

He was still some fifty paces distant, when the man caught sight of him, and stood suddenly still, fixed, as it were, in making an excited gesture. His face became suddenly despondent. Then his arms fell to his sides, he left Temporel, and hurried quickly up the street. He went without ceremony, without a word, as if the appearanec of that solitary *rural* was the signal which set him in motion.

Temporel looked after him wonderingly, but he soon forgot the incident. The sight of the bank building reminded him sharply of the robbery which had dealt a deathblow to his hopes. He wondered anew how the criminals had contrived to insinuate themselves into the building without being observed. He judged that it was impossible that they could have entered during the hours of daylight. At five o'clock, the doors were closed and bolted for the night. He now approached the main entrance, and, for the twentieth time, closely scrutinized the massive iron door.

There was not a scratch, not a mark to show how the entry had been made. As Temporel turned away disappointed, the sound of hurrying feet startled him.

From the entrance to the Calle Santander, a man came running. His face was flushed, dripping with perspiration. He ran like a man pursued, and Temporel now heard distantly the clatter of hoofs.

The man ran straight toward him. He was the very fellow who had mystified and intrigued Temporel by his silent but persistent pantomiming.

"What is it?" said the latter irritably, as the panting man came up to him. But something told him. He read it in the man's eyes, in his despairing face, in the quick, hard breathing that told of hot pursuit. Even while he put the question, he was fumbling for his latchkey, found it, and turned it in the lock.

"Inside, quick!" he said violently, as the door yielded to his hand.

The man gave him a glance of thanks, sprang to the opening, and disappeared. Temporel shut the door, moved off a pace, and stood opposite the main entrance to the bank.

He was standing there, watchful and expectant, when a mounted *rural* came galloping from the Calle Santander. Another appeared from the cross street. One wheeled to the right, and joined the other, and they came hastily up the street to the bank.

"Señor, you have seen a man running?" one asked.

"No," said Temporel bluntly. He had yielded to the promptings of a primal instinct—the instinct which bids us shelter the hunted. But he was asking himself if he had made a mistake. Had he been wise to shelter the man?

"But he came this way, señor!" protested the second *rural*.

"Possibly, but I am not looking for running men. What was he like?"

"A slight man, and bearded, señor. We have orders to apprehend him on a charge of having broken into Your Honor's bank."

Temporel started. For an instant he was tempted to say that the man they sought was at that moment behind his private door. Then came a doubting question: Why should a bank robber fly for protection to the bank itself? It was absurd.

"I will let you know if I see such a man," he said indifferently. "The scoundrel must be taken, of course. If he returns this way, I shall detain him."

They spurred on, with a jingle of silver-mounted headstalls, their carbines pounding lightly in the leathern buckets. Temporel watched them for a moment, then entered his private doorway, and opened the door. He proceeded cautiously up the stairs.

He found the hunted man on the landing, crouching behind a curtain. He could see the dull steel of a knife blade half withdrawn from his belt. But at sight of his protector, he pushed back the weapon, and advanced with outstretched hands. Temporel surveyed him dubiously, almost harshly.

"Well, the *rurales* have passed. I told them a lie—I said that I had not seen you."

The man seized his hand, pressed it to his lips. His eager eyes shone with friendliness and gratitude. Still, he did not speak.

"Are you dumb!" cried Temporel angrily. He felt that he had been a fool. Even the man's exuberant gratitude could not drive away that idea. If this fellow had not been concerned in the bank robbery, what did he mean by that pantomime with the money he took from his pocket? Temporel flushed.

"Why don't you speak! They tell me you are suspected of breaking into this bank. Well, if that is true, you have ruined me—do you hear?—ruined me! If I thought you had, I'd smash you where you stand—I'd smash you!"

He surprised himself by this mood of gusty anger which seemed to have sprung out of nothing. Something hot filled him, kindled like embers suddenly blown upon by a strong wind. The memory of what had destroyed at a blow his career and his best hopes spurred him to an outburst of uncontrollable anger.

"Eh, did you?" he cried. "Won't you speak? I'll force it out of you! You followed me this evening with your foolery, but that didn't matter—this does. It means everything to me."

He grew incoherent, the words ran off his tongue, jostled, clipped of their terminations, in a mad race to surge upon this silent man. "Were you one of them? If I thought it; even thought it—— It was all one to you. You wanted money, and you took it. I was in charge, but you never thought what it would mean to me. You didn't care——"

The man looked disconcerted and dismayed. He put out his hands again, shook his head vigorously.

Temporel gripped his shoulder. "You've got to tell me!" If this were indeed one of the robbers, he might be able to recover some of the stolen money. Only three days had passed since the robbery. He shook the man violently. "Yes, you've got to! I'll have it out of you, if I—— Won't you speak?"

The man had not attempted to struggle. He remained quiet, silent, protesting only with one expressive hand.

The meaning of it all came suddenly to Temporel. That hot something seemed to chill suddenly within him, to die as a spark dies in a close place. He felt hopeless, listless, the reaction after those moments of intense nerve strain. The man was armed, yet he had not attempted to use his weapon. He was not the criminal—the idea was ridiculous. Temporel stared at him, repeated his former question, but now with new significance.

"Are you dumb?"

The man nodded affirmatively, his teeth showing in an apologetic and explanatory smile. He put up a hand to his lips, tapped them, nodded once more.

"I'm sorry," Temporel stammered in English, seeing now the brutality of which he had been capable. His disappointment was like a blow. If this had been the man, he would have glutted his rage upon him. His hand had itched for a strangle grip, to force the robber down, to kneel upon him, crash his fist down upon the face of a man who had ruined him. As it was, he had only treated roughly a man who did not speak because he was dumb. He stared at him now, laughing discordantly. "I thought you would not speak—see? But how am I to get at what you want? Can you write?"

The head was shaken mournfully.

"Read, perhaps?"

Again the mournful negation. It was likely enough. Those, in Coquibe, who suffered from physical disabilities, were left to bear their burdens alone. The people would have struck at a law which might seem to favor the weak at the expense of the strong.

"At least, you can hear," said Temporel slowly. "Well, then, the *rurales* are after you, Heaven knows why. Shall I conceal you here for a few days?"

The man shook his head.

"Then do you think you can slip out safely?"

A vigorous nod. It was evident that he preferred to go.

"Very well," said Temporel. He led the way to the front door. The dark had fallen suddenly; the street, from the absence of noise, seemed almost deserted.

"Ready?" he asked.

The man pressed his hand, and slipped past him. As Temporel stood looking in the direction taken by the fugitive, the stone paving emitted a shower of sparks, a horse's hoofs clattered furiously, and mingled with the rush of a man's running feet. The darkness opened in a fine wedge to a spurt of flame. The report of a pistol woke the slumbering echoes. Then came silence again—silence and the dark.

Had they laid a trap for the dumb man, hoping to catch him in the darkness? It seemed so.

To-morrow Temporel might hear what had happened.

CHAPTER IV.

A DANGEROUS CRIMINAL.

Punctually at the hour of eight, on Friday evening, Temporel reached the president's *palacio*, and was ushered into one of the smaller rooms, normally sacred, though Temporel did not know

it, to those light hours when Carmencita Pensol dined or supped with His Excellency. Covers were laid for two now, a fact which seemed to hint at a certain intimacy between himself and the great man.

The president appeared. He spoke English easily and well. Extending his hand, he greeted Temporel with quiet amiability.

"Ah, how do you do? I am delighted that you are able to come. There are some matters I wished to talk over with you, in part relating to that unfortunate affair at your bank—in part to yourself. Be seated, please. I shall ring."

Soup was served—an excellent, clear soup, such as Temporel had never before tasted in Santa Malua. The gentle warmth acted like a stimulant. He glanced at the president gratefully.

"Now, señor," said the latter, bending a little forward, "there is something I wish to say, but find difficult. One does not like to intrude oneself upon the private affairs of another. But I wish to help you, and I cannot do so unless I know how you stand."

Temporel flushed.

"Well, Your Excellency, it is not pleasant to talk of one's failures. But you are right, and you are very kind. That loss has damaged me. My directors cannot afford to lose so much without visiting it upon some one."

The president tilted his plate forward. "Much? Oh, but it was some small sum they told me—ten or twelve thousand pounds—fifty thousand American dollars."

"That seems to me considerable."

"Ah! to a bank with, perhaps, millions?"

"Millions or no millions, they have asked me to hand in my resignation," said Temporel ruefully. "My successor is already on his way out here."

"Scandalous!" cried Don Luis, with some warmth, "to dismiss an honorable and efficient gentleman, because some ladrones stole a few pounds! Scandalous!"

Temporel set his mouth hard.

"I must not discuss my directors, however," he said.

"True," said the president, with an approving look. "I admire your loyalty to those who have treated you so ill. But now, a question."

"I will answer it if I can."

"Well, how do you stand? When your successor arrives, will you take some other post, or shall you return to New York?"

To New York! To see Cynthia, to confess what had happened, to receive the patronizing commiseration of her relatives, to be forgiven, perhaps, for a happening with which he had had nothing to do! That was unthinkable. He bit his lip at the thought of it.

"Your Excellency, I shall stay here. I must find the men who robbed the bank. I shall never rest till they are found. I owe that to myself. I shall take any post that offers."

"Bravo!" cried Don Luis. "That is the spirit in which every man should meet undeserved misfortune. Now, as to the robbers. The police confess themselves baffled, the *rurales* have scoured the country for the criminals—in vain. Were I absolutely master, they should never rest until the men were found. But that is impossible. You know these ignorant prejudices. The deputies would say in Congress that I was spending the money of the republic on behalf of a foreign company who had come to Santa Malua to compete with native Coquibians—you see. Sadly I regret it. The official inquiry into the affair must come to an end this week."

"Well," said Temporel earnestly, "if the officials refuse to go on—I must. I'll spend my last cent, but I'll see those men in jail."

"Again, bravo!" said Don Luis, clapping his hands gently. "I wish you all success. Meanwhile you will need a post. In a month or two there will be one vacant in the office of the minister of commerce. Perhaps you will allow me to mention your name?"

"Oh, Your Excellency——" Temporel began.

Don Luis held up an arresting hand. "Not a word, I beg of you. But trust

me, I shall see to it. Now, again to the inquiry. If you wish to carry it on, you will be wise to engage some native expert in following clews, in tracing men—I know of such a man, and shall gladly give you his name. He was once *teniente* in the *rurales* here, dismissed for some slight fault—he will not rejoin the force."

"That is very good of you. I am prepared to pay him one hundred pesos a month, but he must be absolutely at my disposal, night and day."

"He will be delighted. His name is Pedro Barriga, his address Calle Santander, Number Nine. I shall now give you some valuable information, which came into my hands only to-day. I endeavored to get the police to act upon it, but without success. There is a man who lives, or used to live, in the town—a slight man with a beard." He looked hard at Temporel. "He is dumb. If you can secure him, you will have secured the head of the gang. I believe it. He is a dangerous criminal. Well; after dinner, I will write a note to Barriga, which you may take to him. I wish you good luck in your quest."

Temporel thanked him warmly. Was it really true that he had had the man in his hands, and had allowed him to slip through them? It was evident that the *rural* had not shot his man that night. But what audacity! To shelter from the police in the very bank which he had robbed! Temporel felt hot at the thought of it.

Dinner over, Don Luis begged to be allowed to write. He sat down at a little bureau in a corner, took up a pen, and wrote:

BARRIGA: You will place yourself at the disposal of Señor Temporel. Do what he commands. You will receive a salary of one hundred pesos a month. Seventy-five pesos must be rendered to me each month here.
DON LUIS PARAJAL PESCATE.

The president did not disdain small gains. He sealed up the envelope, and handed it to Temporel.

"I am greatly obliged to Your Excellency."

The president smiled. "It is nothing. I wish you success. But, in all you do, remember the dumb man. You will know him—slight, bearded, dumb—remember!"

CHAPTER V.

THE SPY.

If the *teniente,* now retired, recommended to Temporel by His Excellency, and the *intendente,* who commanded the *rurales* on the night of the bank robbery, were not one and the same person, it is certain that they were marvelously alike. The resemblance was sufficiently striking to have impressed those who had seen the *intendente.* Temporel, even, had some distant recollection of having seen the man before, but not with sufficient definiteness to carry conviction. However, he visited the house in the Calle Santander, and engaged the former officer of *rurales* at the figure he had named to Don Luis.

Barriga seemed well pleased with the commission. He looked keen, alert, intelligent.

"You think we shall be able to lay our hands on those men?" Temporel asked rather anxiously, when they had talked the matter over.

Barriga tugged at his fine mustache. "But, yes. I believe so. The police here are foolish fellows. They know nothing of the art of detection. If you show them a criminal, they can apprehend him—beyond that nothing."

"What about the slight man who is dumb—do you agree with His Excellency?"

Barriga knew his cues. "Absolutely, señor. He is well known as a desperate man."

Temporel reflected. He had not told the president how he had sheltered the dumb man from the pursuing *rurales.* Would it not be advisable to mention the fact now? After all, Barriga was his paid assistant. So he explained how the man had come to him once at the bank, omitting the details with regard to his own part in the matter. Barriga's eyes lighted up at this intelligence.

"Ah, what a lost chance! If you had

only seized him, we should have no more trouble. But the superb audacity of the fellow! It makes one smile to think of it. Señor, I have a plan. He may think that you do not know him in his real person. You were kind to him. He helped to rob your bank once; he may again. He will, perhaps, come to you, ask for shelter—and then——"

"Let him!" cried Temporel, with sparkling eyes. "I hope he does. If he comes to my house, I'll detain him on some pretext, and phone you."

"My house is not connected with the telephone," said Barriga, "but you could ring up the chief of police. He would send men instantly. Of course, he may not come again to you, señor, but I shall look for him very thoroughly. Between us—ah!"

"We shall do the trick," said Temporel, shaking his hand. "Good; get to work to-morrow, and let me have a short report every evening. If you want a small amount in advance for expenses, I shall be glad to let you have it."

Barriga seemed to ponder. "Twenty pesos will be enough for the present," he said slowly. "I do not wish to waste money. Well, *adios,* señor. I shall report to-morrow."

Temporel was sitting that evening in his room on the first floor. He was reading a novel in a desultory way, and smoking a cigarette. Nine had just struck, when something tinkled on the glass of the window behind him. He turned in his chair, waited and wondered. What was it? It came again, a sharp tinkle as if something thrown up from the street below had rebounded from the glass.

The repetition of the sound threw Temporel into a fever of excitement. His eyes shone with a dry, hard light, his mouth contracted, the lips meeting in a venomous line. He crossed the room at a bound, and flung up the shade.

Then he started back with an exclamation. Some one was crouching on the narrow iron balcony that projected over the street!

As he advanced to the window, the crouching figure rose, and the light from within the room streamed out upon his face. It was the dumb man.

Temporel felt a thrill of satisfaction. At last! The man of his own accord had ventured into the trap. In a few minutes the jaws would close upon him. He undid the fastenings of the window, and pushed it open.

"Come in quickly!" he said, in a soft voice. "Hurry!"

A moment, and the man stepped into the room, and confronted Temporel. But a very different Temporel was waiting for him now. Behind the soft smile, the appearance of welcome, the New Yorker hid a devouring rage.

"So you have come again, have you?" he said huskily.

The man nodded, and began a rapid pantomime. He seemed uneasy, but anxious as before to explain something. Once he looked back swiftly at the window, as if he expected to see some one enter.

"You come unexpectedly," said Temporel, choking down his anger. "Still I am glad to see you—very glad. Will you excuse me for a moment? I forgot some letters, and left them in my room."

The man sighed acquiescence. Temporel left the room, and went to the telephone below. He rang up the chief of police, and waited for an answering voice. It came at last.

"This is Temporel—the English bank!" he said quickly. "The dumb man you are looking for is here in my room. Send your men. I can hold him till they arrive. Hustle."

He replaced the receiver, and returned to the sitting room, stopping for a moment in his bedroom to thrust a revolver in his pocket. The dumb man was standing near the window, peering out into the darkness. He turned quickly.

"You are afraid of them—afraid of the *rurales?*" asked Temporel, in a conversational tone. He motioned the man to be seated, and himself dropped into an easy-chair. "You think they may come here?"

The stranger nodded, keeping his

right hand hidden in his waist belt. The manager watched him closely. What a callous brute the fellow was! No nerves—absolutely none. He could sit there, facing the man he had ruined, smiling in a friendly way, asking mutely for protection against the law—begging it of the man who restrained himself with difficulty from flying at his throat. Temporel thought of Cynthia, and his mood grew blacker. He sat a little forward in his chair, his legs crossed. The hard angle of the pistol in his pocket pressed upon his thigh.

"You have been in the bank before?"

The man nodded. His face indicated perplexity. He was searching in his mind for a gesture which would express—explain. His volatile pantomiming had conveyed nothing to the manager. His eyes clouded with disappointment.

"But I was not here then," Temporel went on, staring at him fixedly. "You had it all to yourself."

The dumb man shook his head, striving to catch his meaning. He became suddenly energetic, rose from his chair, and advanced upon the manager. Temporel thrust a hand into his pocket, felt it grip upon his weapon, and waited breathlessly.

But the other made no menacing movement. He touched Temporel with outstretched finger, pointed downward, then turned a little and indicated the distant plaza—a gesture which was quite meaningless to Temporel.

The manager was listening for the sounds of the coming of the *rurales*. He strained his ears, smiling still, expectant, tense, full of a somber gratification.

There came at last the distant clatter of hoofs. He rose from his chair, and moved it, hoping to cover by that grating noise the noise of the approaching men. But the dumb man was listening, too. He glanced at Temporel. The sound came nearer, and he started toward the window, drawing a knife from his belt. The manager no longer smiled. His face was dark with passion, his lips tightly set together. With a rapid movement, he drew his pistol.

"No, you don't! It's my turn now," he said loudly. "I'll shoot you down if you attempt to escape. I've got you."

The man wheeled upon him; surprise, dismay, perplexity showing upon his white face. He advanced a pace, but the sight of the leveled revolver checked him. The clatter of hoofs was in the street now. He threw out his hands with a gesture of despair.

"Yes, keep your hands up. That's right. The moment they go toward your belt, things are going to happen—understand? The *rurales* are below to take you. It will do you no good to struggle. You may as well give in."

The man sank into a chair. It was as if he realized the utter futility of endeavoring to explain. Dumb, he could not express anything. The brutal irony of the thing crushed him. He did not blame Temporel. He had done his best; now he gave up. The *rurales* were knocking at the door.

"Come along," said Temporel, taking his reading lamp in his left hand. "We must go down to them since the door is locked. But, one moment—if you tell me where the money is, I can let you off yet. You don't deserve it, you callous scoundrel, but for the sake of—of some one—— Quick, where did you hide the money?"

The dumb men laughed bitterly at him, and Temporel saw his mistake. How could the man tell him?

"Come, then. Walk before me."

In this order they crossed the room and descended the stairs. In the hall below, Temporel placed the lamp on a bracket, and fumbled for his key. The door swung back, and he saw Barriga's face in the stream of lamplight; behind him the grinning faces of four *rurales*. For an instant he felt a wave of pity.

"Here he is," he said shortly. "Take him away, Barriga. No doubt you will discover the names of his associates—but he is dumb! I seem always to forget that. Never mind; you may get him to point out their whereabouts."

Barriga took the man by the shoulder. The *rurales* closed round. "Certainly, señor, we shall find out much. Leave him to us. We shall take him

immediately to the jail, and in the morning I shall call upon you to report."

"Well, go quickly," said the manager, wiping his forehead. The dumb man was looking into his face reproachfully, wearily. He must be a consummate actor, thought Temporel, who was sick of the business. Despite the facts, he felt that his action savored somewhat of treachery. He had a thankless part to play.

"Good night, then," he said, half turning indoors. "Come in the morning. I am tired now. You can inform the president of what has been done."

"*Bueno*," said Barriga. "But one word, señor. Do not speak of this outside. If this fellow's companions get wind of it, they will fly the country. If we keep silent, we may lay hands on them."

Barriga called upon Temporel in the morning, and was shown into his private room.

The manager thrust aside a mass of letters and papers, and bade him be seated.

"Well, you got him safely away. What news? Do you think he will disclose anything of importance?"

Barriga looked doubtful. "As you observed, señor, the man is dumb. That makes it difficult for us to question him. He expresses something with his hands, but what it means we cannot understand. We gave him a paper and a pencil, but it appears that he cannot write. So, at dawn, before the townspeople were awake, we took him under guard into the city, and ordered him to point out where his comrades lived. But no. He would not. He shook his head. He was obstinate."

Temporel whistled. "He doesn't seem to be much good to us, then."

"Ah, well. At least we have secured the leader of the gang."

"Yes, of course. But I don't care about that. My directors will not find any satisfaction in that news. I want to recover the stolen money and the jewels. The Doña Carboles was in with me here the other day, and kicking up a fuss. She has drawn her account, and the bank has lost a good customer. I want to lay hands on the money."

"Naturally, but that will take time. I have a plan now."

Temporel loked up. "What is it?"

"The dumb man has a daughter living in the town. They had a small house in a street near the port. I shall go there as a lodger, and by watching may discover the man's associates."

"A daughter, has he? Yes, she might know the gang, if nothing more. I think that is a good idea. Listen. I'll give you a check now for two hundred pesos, and you can cash it as you go through. That will be for expenses, apart from your monthly salary. Bribe any one who may be useful, and come to me for funds if you run short. This means a lot to me. Don't spare expense."

Barriga smiled slightly. This was an affair after his own mind.

"Yes, that is the right way; in a short time I may be able to discover all. I am on the track."

Temporel smiled. "You're going the right way about it certainly. The police they put on the case were a lot of fools."

CHAPTER VI.

JUANNA SERRANO.

Hardly had Barriga departed with his check when another visitor was ushered in—a lady draped from head to foot in a long, black mantua, which effectually concealed the style and quality of her clothing. A lacy mantilla covered her hair, and framed with soft suitableness a face that was charmingly regular of feature. But she did not walk with the mincing gait of the delicately nurtured Spanish woman; she had rather the gait of the peasant, easy, supple, and unconstrained.

Temporel rose, and offered her a chair. She refused to sit, and it was obvious from her manner that she was much agitated—almost to the verge of tears.

"Señor, 'ave you see 'eem?" she began timidly.

Temporel raised his eyebrows. "If you will speak Spanish, señorita, I shall understand you better, and you will not find it so difficult. You were asking me if I had seen somebody—who?"

"My father," she said rapidly.

"It is just possible that I may have seen him," he replied. "But, so far, you have not told me his name."

"You might not know it, señor. But if you have seen my father you will know him. He is dumb!"

Temporel suddenly sat down. So this was the daughter Barriga had spoken of—the possible associate of the gang! He was astounded, and unconvinced. Why of all men should she come to him to ask regarding the dumb man? His face set coldly. At least, she could not now appeal to his sympathies.

"I have certainly seen a dumb man," he said, speaking very deliberately. "He was here last night."

She clasped her hands. "Ah, then he is here. I can speak to him."

"No, señorita," he returned sternly. "The man you speak of was found last night by me crouching on my balcony."

The girl went white, and took a step toward him. It was evident that some painful emotion was tearing at her heart. Then she stammered out: "Some one told me that my father had been here, but on your balcony, señor, it is impossible."

"It is true. In the circumstances, I had no option but to send for the police."

The girl uttered a sharp cry, and fell back a little, her hand upraised in a gesture of horror. "The police! Oh, señor, you have been cruel! He is dumb, and you——"

Temporel frowned. "In my place what would you have done? This is a bank. Much money was stolen here recently. No doubt you have heard of it. But the matter goes further than that."

"*Madre santisima!* How?"

"When the *rurales* came they told me that your—that the dumb man had been concerned in the robbery from this bank."

The girl advanced and clutched him by the arm. "Oh, that is not true! He would not touch a peso belonging to any one. He was dumb, señor, and harmless to all. What have you done?"

She was putting Temporel in the wrong, and his nerves, lately sharpened to a knife edge, prompted an irritable reply.

"Nonsense. I tell you I found him on my balcony last night. And the *rurales* recognized him at once. Listen, señorita. I do not wish to hurt you. I speak the truth. A few days ago—the evening before last—he came to me for protection from a *rural* who was pursuing him. At that time I did not know what he had done. I let him in by my private door until the man had passed. But what was I to think when I found him yesterday outside the window?"

The girl looked at him thoughtfully. She was weighing the matter, and realized that he was speaking the truth.

"Forgive me, señor, I did not know. Ah, it is a plot. Always the *rurales!* Once we had a large rancho near Matamoro. The *rurales* drove us from that. We went to Ichirota, and purchased a pulperia. The *rurales* came again, and we had to leave the place. My father could say nothing. Oh, it was so sad, for he cannot speak. But this, too, is the *rurales*—why will they not leave us alone?"

Temporel had a theory to account for this, but did not mention it from motives of delicacy. Evidently the girl did not know her father's real profession; she imagined him an innocent harshly treated by some unjust law. Perhaps it would be better to leave her illusion undisturbed.

"Well, señorita, if your father has been wronged, at least it is not my fault. The circumstances were suspicious, and then the *rurales* recognized him."

She released his arm. "Ah, señor, I believe that you did not wish to do him harm, and I cannot understand why he should climb to your balcony. It is all so terrible. Where have they taken him?"

"To the jail, I believe," said Temporel, biting his lip.

Observing her as she stood there, he formed a more favorable opinion. There was a certain childish and almost pathetic innocence about her which moved him not a little. But what he had to do in the matter puzzled him. With the best will in the world, he could not release her father, nor could he convince himself that the dumb man was the harmless individual his daughter believed him to be.

"Can you not do something, señor?" she asked helplessly.

"What? I am in a difficult position. I owe a duty to the bank. I cannot exercise clemency since the stolen money did not belong to me."

She flushed up. "But he did not steal it!" she cried.

"Well, that has to be proved. Where was your father on the night of the bank robbery, señorita—at home?"

"No, señor, he was not at home. I do not know where he was."

Temporel shrugged. "You see? Well, he will stand his trial."

She shook her head indignantly. "Señor, there will be no trial. I know it. It is that they have some spite against him—the government. He would never tell me, but I know there is something. Here many men are put in prison, and of some of them we do not hear again."

Temporel listened gravely. "Señorita, I will see that your father stands his trial. Though he is charged with robbing this bank, I shall see that the matter is thoroughly sifted."

She made a gesture of doubt and perplexity. "You are more than kind, señor; you are just. For me, I can do nothing. My voice would not be heard. Ah, you are new to this place, you do not understand. But I trust you."

Temporel bowed. "Thank you. Try to wait patiently. I will let you know how the affair proceeds. Give me your name and address?"

"Juanna Serrano, señor. I live in the Calle De Los Vapores, Number Five."

"Thank you. I will write if I have any news. Now, señorita, if you will excuse me, I have some work to do."

Temporel rang up the office of the chief of police when the girl had left him. He asked if Barriga could be found readily. By some stroke of fortune, it appeared that Barriga was at that moment visiting the chief. Temporel could speak to him at once.

"Señor, you wish to speak to me?" the voice came over the wire.

"That you, Barriga?—yes. You remember we arranged a plan. You were, if possible, to find lodgings in the house of the dumb man. I want to countermand that. You can proceed with the other part of the investigation."

"But, señor——"

"You heard what I said? I've made up my mind—— By the way, when will the trial come on?"

There was a pause. "In a month or two, señor. We do not wish to alarm the others, you see. If they hear that the man has been taken, they will scatter at once."

"I see. That seems sensible enough. But there will be a trial, won't there? No flimflam about it?"

"But of course."

"I want to see justice done. Whatever the man may be usually, I am only concerned with him over the robbery here."

Barriga replied softly: "You may rest assured that all will be done in proper form. Wait, señor, and I will ask the chief of police."

There was silence for a moment, then the voice came again.

"The trial is provisionally fixed for the twenty-ninth of next month." Temporel felt relieved. "Right. That's all."

CHAPTER VII.

WAITING.

A month had passed, and still the inquiry into the bank robbery had proved futile. Barriga drew his salary, took his expenses, was here, there, and everywhere, zealous, energetic, and persistent. He brought a regular daily report to Temporel, records of his doings, notes of the people he had met, and who seemed to him to have some con-

nection with the case. But there was nothing definite, nothing which threw any clear light upon the affair. The fellow came so often, with his smooth reports, his futile and ineffective theories that Temporel looked upon him with growing gloom, seeing in him a creature which preyed upon his vitals, upon his brain. Always polite, yielding, tactful, he filled Temporel with a sense of nausea as real as it was inexplicable.

Barriga himself got to see that, but it failed to disturb his placid and unruffled surface. Such was his good will that he once suggested that the inquiry should be abandoned, and by this drove Temporel to the other extreme.

"Give it up?" cried the manager, striking the desk with his hand. "I'll never give it up. I'll lose every cent. I'll strip myself, but I'll put my hands on them." His eyes blazed.

"As you please, señor," said the other, shrugging, "but we have little time left, only a few days."

Temporel sprang up. "Oh, you're going to give it up on your own account, are you? First the police, then you——"

"Pardon," Barriga interrupted, "I do not do so. But the trial of that man, Serrano, will take place in a few days."

Temporel sank into his seat. He looked savagely about him. The strain of the last month had told upon him. His temper was short now, his face was usually set in a frown. He was not so careful of his dress—sure signs of a certain deterioration.

"It must be put off—d'ye hear! Those infernal police are always getting in my way. You go to the chief and ask him about it."

Barriga made a gesture. "Señor, it is not my fault——"

"Señor, I don't care a continental whose fault it is."

"Well, you know how the country is administered—bribes—always bribes! If you wish to get anything done, you must always hold out money in your palm. Even the chief of police ——"

Temporel sneered. "Don't I know! You've done your part. I wonder how much of my money has gone in bribes lately. Well, it doesn't count much, anyway." He took out a check book, and scribbled savagely: "I'm beggared one way or another. Now get out. Don't let me see you again until you can tell me the trial is postponed."

When Barriga had gone, Temporel sank his face in his hands. He sat motionless, thinking—thinking. Cynthia, the dumb man, Juanna, Barriga always polite and zealous, passed in procession through his tired brain, smiling, imploring, pleading, suggesting.

At this rate his money would soon be gone. But what did it all matter? All his hopes lay in the inquiry, and that seemed more profitless than any other thing. In this welter of thought the figure of the president came up. He had promised to secure him some post. Why not go to him now, and remind him of his promise? It was close upon the time for shutting the bank.

Temporel got up, and went to his rooms above. On his way he turned in at the sitting room, and, crossing to the sideboard, took up a decanter. He was no tippler this man. A short time ago he rarely touched spirits. Now, he filled a liqueur glass to the brim with brandy, drained it, and filled another. He looked at himself in the mirror, and observed vacantly that he had not shaved that morning.

He went up to his room, and began to strop his razor. Lathering his face then, he commenced to shave. He cut himself several times, and appeared all at sea. Thereafter he dressed to go out.

Don Luis was sitting with the Doña Carmencita Pensol when the manager's card was brought to him. The lady looked up, smiled, and rubbed one finger meditatively. Upon it a large brilliant shone in a fine gold ring. She was lolling back on a settee covered with gold brocade.

"Oh, that tiresome fellow!" cried the president, with some irritation.

"They are all tiresome," said she, laughing, "save and except you, my adorable Luis. Who is it?"

"That American from the bank," said he.

"The English bank—I had forgotten. There was a robbery there some time ago."

"There was, *chiquita,*" said the president, smiling.

The Doña Carmencita laughed again. "Sad, was it not?"

Don Luis turned to go. "Well, I must see this person. Wait for me here."

He descended leisurely to the room where Temporel awaited him.

"Well, señor, how goes the inquiry? And for yourself, you are well, eh?"

"Thanks, Your Excellency. As for the inquiry, nothing has come of it so far. I came to remind you of a promise."

"And that, my good friend?"

"My successor will soon be here. If I cannot recover the stolen money, I must go. Your Excellency was kind enough to promise me a post in the ministry of commerce. I am still in the service of the bank, but I must make my arrangements."

The president was sympathetic. "I am sorry, very sorry, señor. I cannot think that your directors have acted wisely. They are not polite men. My government has received from them some rude letters. That, however, is not your fault. I have always found you tactful and discreet. As to this post, I fear we shall have some difficulty. These local prejudices are hard to overcome—we talked of that before. I have spoken to the minister of commerce, but had the greatest difficulty in making him see eye to eye with me. Now he is on our side, but the battle is not yet won. There are old men to be propitiated, young men to be talked out. Assure yourself that I am doing my best."

Temporel's spirits sank. "Then it is possible I may not——"

"Everything is possible in a country like this. Do not build on it too much. I have power, but even I am not omnipotent."

"Your Excellency is very kind—I hear that the trial of Serrano is to be postponed."

The president's face grew suddenly grave. He looked down, and seemed to ponder. "Señor," he said, at length, "there will be no trial. The man is dead. He committed suicide in prison yesterday."

Temporel gasped. "I never heard—that is terrible! You are sure of it?"

"Perfectly. It was an unfortunate occurrence. He was buried at once."

Temporel thought of the man's daughter. It would be sad news for her. She had always thought her father innocent.

"I presume he divulged nothing?"

"Nothing, señor."

Temporel took up his hat. "I shall not detain Your Excellency. I have some work to do. I shall be obliged if you will let me know again regarding that post."

"Certainly. I am glad you called. My memory is not good. Sometimes it needs to be stirred up. Yes, I am glad you called."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SUCCESSOR.

Another month had passed, and still the mystery remained unsolved. Temporel was reckless now. His successor was due to arrive in a few days; his cash balance had reached a very low ebb, owing to the constant drain upon it by the energetic Barriga.

Once he thought of going home, but that idea was soon put aside. To go home, a broken and disappointed man, with no money, few friends, to be reminded of what he had been, of what he had lost; to be politely but inevitably blamed for what had occurred. Never! He had tasted the bitterness of defeat, but he did not intend to return to be the mock of his enemies, and his detractors.

Cynthia would sympathize with him. He knew that. But even her sympathy would have been as gall to his wounded spirit.

The decanter was frequently on his desk now; from it he drew a momentary inspiration, a fragmentary comfort. The clerks, in his absence, looked

at one another, lifted mocking little fingers in a pantomime of drinking. So far he looked little the worse. His slight tendency to stoutness had gone, so that he looked a younger man; his face retained its pink freshnes, but he took less care of his dress. He would appear in the bank unshaven, his tie roughly arranged, his feet thrust into carpet slippers, which flopped absurdly as he moved about the bank.

Now and then there would come a letter from Cynthia—hopeful and loving letters, which made him feel as if some hard thing was pressing on his heart. The next day he would be shaven, spruce, clear-eyed, stern. He would sit down to write to her, at first fired with the idea of confessing his deterioration, and promising to front his difficulties like a man. That would pass. He would write the same vague expressions of hopefulness—then he would halt and hesitate, wonder what to say; end by going upstairs for the decanter.

Once he had visited Juanna Serrano in the Calle De Los Vapores. He had written her of her father's suicide. She was still mourning, and at first, in her grief, disposed to number Temporel among her father's betrayers. But his sympathy was so sincere and open that she was easily convinced of the blameless part he had played.

She had written an appeal to the president, and had been answered by a letter from his secretary, expressing sympathy, but pointing out that her father had inferentially condemned himself by committing suicide before his trial.

Juanna had a small yearly income, to which she had fallen heir on her father's death, and of late she had paid an old woman to live in the house as a species of duenna.

Temporel felt sorry for her. They had both experienced misfortune. Both looked to the future with despair.

Then came the day when Temporel's successor arrived from England. That morning Temporel had been drinking. He bullied Peters, swore volubly at the clerks—and he was normally a clean-lipped man—he was working himself into a fit of rage. Chagrin, disappointment, the fumes of the liquor had mounted to his brain.

Hardacre, his successor, was the beau ideal of a bank manager. Despite the fact that he was now on tropical soil, he alighted from the train frock-coated, silk-hatted, wearing patent boots with gray suède spats. He carried a small black bag in his hand. From the station he was driven direct to the bank.

Approaching the cashier, he announced himself.

"Mr. Temporel is in, I suppose," he said, in a clear and rather musical voice. "I should like to see him."

Peters got up from his seat. "How do you do, sir? Yes, Mr. Temporel is in. Will you come this way?" He held a hand to his lips, and added in a confidential undertone:

"Just about time you came, sir. He is not——"

Hardacre drew himself up. This man must go as soon as possible. "I beg that you will not address to me any observations reflecting on the conduct or person of your manager," he said coldly. "You understand that? Good! Now show me in to Mr. Temporel."

Peters restrained his anger with an effort. The Englishman was putting on side very early, he thought. "Very good, sir—I beg your pardon," he said, leading the way to the private office.

Hardacre was coldly conscious of his air of familiarity. Was Temporel a man of the same kidney, he wondered! The sight of the latter's office confirmed him in that view. It was untidy, littered with papers and cigar ends. A decanter stood at the manager's elbow.

Temporel got up slowly from his seat, his face flushed, his speech unsteady.

"My name is Hardacre," said the newcomer, wondering if he ought to shake hands. "As you are aware, I have been appointed to the managership of the bank. I am sorry."

Temporel pointed a finger at Peters, who was lingering interestedly in the

background. "Hi! You dirty spy, get out of this. Get out!"

Peters vanished. Hardacre raised his eyebrows. Temporel turned to him with a foolish smile.

"You're Hardacre, eh? All right. I've no objection in the world. Have a drink, old man—Hardacre?" He balanced the decanter in his fingers. "Why not? Needn't be uppish with an old pal. What d'ye want here, anyway?"

Hardacre strove to conceal his disgust. He hated scenes, as he hated untidiness, and that was with his whole soul. "I have been appointed manager here, Mr. Temporel," he said slowly. "No doubt you have heard from the directors to that effect?"

Temporel sat down, and poured himself a glass of spirit. "All right. But what—what are you going to manage?"

"This bank, Mr. Temporel."

The other laughed. "Now, that's funny. That's quite good. 'Pon my soul, qui—quite good. Two managers with but a single bang—thought, two hearts that beat as——" He gulped, and went on: "What you doing here, sir?"

Hardacre looked about him. He was at a loss how to proceed. Here was a nice state of affairs. "I have come from England to take charge. If you will let me have the keys, I can see the run of things."

Temporel opened a drawer, and, producing a bunch of keys, handed them to his successor.

Hardacre took them. "Thank you," he said.

The other rose slowly. "Look here, my fine fellow, seems to me you're one of those sharks busy taking bread out of mouths widows 'n' orphans. See? That's what you are. Shark! See? I am going to have 'nother dring, and then look at you. I don' like those things you're wearing on your feet. Gloves, I call them. Silly kid's gloves. Man of your age oughta know better."

"Had you not better go up to your rooms, and have a rest?" said Hardacre, as politely as he could. "I feel sure you're not quite fit. The heat is great here——"

"Heat? I tell you whatitis, Hardacre. A man who calls himself gen'l'man, wearing gloves on his feet, should be a gen'l'man. This is my place here—get my living by it, anyway. Now, you come along, take my keys, thing you're going put on frills with me. Well, you're not! No, confound you! I've good mind give you best lick—licking you ever had."

"That is quite enough," said Hardacre, white with anger. "I am manager now, and you will oblige me by going to your rooms. They are yours until you can arrange for another residence."

A white fury took possession of the unfortunate Temporel. This insolent fellow was actually ordering him to his rooms. A little white man with gloves on his feet ordering him. He advanced with a scowling face upon the other.

"Say that again, you—you freak! I—I'll break you in half. Ta' my place, would you, and leave me on the street, would you? I thing I'll teach you speak civilly to manager of bank. You're 'nother spy, like Peters—call him in now. I'll smash you both at one blow. You call him in."

Hardacre was not lacking in courage. He thought, too, that Temporel hardly realized what he was saying. "Come, pull yourself together. A good sleep will do you all the good in the world." He put a hand on the other's arm.

Temporel shook it off fiercely. "Leggo! I don't want you—you or Peters. You touch me again, and I'll—I'll——"

He walked the length of the office, and, stopping suddenly, flung off his coat, and began to turn up his sleeves, his eyes fixed savagely upon Hardacre.

The latter's eyes fell upon the bell push on the desk. He walked up to it, and pressed it quickly.

Temporel saw the action, and gave a cry of rage. He ran full at the other, missed him by inches with a swinging fist, and staggered across the floor. But he recovered himself with wonderful quickness, and came back.

Hardacre tried to evade him, but only partially succeeded. Temporel's fist struck him at the side of the neck, and he fell with a thud to the floor. As Marino and Peters rushed in, he was still there, while Temporel stood above him, staring at him with an expression of stupid amazement.

"Hold him! He's mad!" cried the Englishman.

Peters and Marino rushed in simultaneously, and grasped their former chief. But he made no struggle, did not even attempt to evade them. He stood there, trembling and staring.

Hardacre rose, and began to dust himself. "Oblige me by seeing Mr. Temporel to his room," he said, in his cold, gentlemanly voice. "And remember—not a word of this outside. I shall speak to him when he is sober."

Temporel went away quietly. Mounting the stairs, he shook off his companions, and went unsteadily to his bedroom. They did not follow him. But from where they stood, amused and exultant, they could hear the grating of the key in the lock.

CHAPTER IX.

ON THE SLOPE.

Savagely sober now, Temporel went about his room, packing, selecting, discarding little personal belongings. His clothes were already packed. When he had finished he stared at himself in the glass, made a grimace of reckless ill humor, not unmixed with faint self-disgust. He went to his sitting room, and, seating himself at the table, felt in his pocket for his check book.

He fumbled at it for a moment, opened it, and laid it flat on the table. Out of the year's salary which had been cabled to him, there only remained the miserable sum of thirty pounds—something over one hundred and fifty dollars. The rest had gone, where he did not know. It had seemed to slip through his hands like water. Barriga had the bulk of it, or at least the dispensing. The others, officials, the chief of police, discreditable spies, bar loafers—all had dipped deeply, to aid the prosecution of that futile inquiry.

He left the bank building carrying only a bag. At the corner he instructed a man he knew by sight to call at the bank for his remaining baggage, and to carry it to a little hotel in the Plaza San Martin, where he intended to stay until he had time to hunt for cheaper rooms. Later on he had a brief interview with Barriga, and told him that he had decided to drop the case for the present. Barriga expressed regret that his exertions had come to naught, but declared that his services were at the manager's disposal at any time.

"I shall not require you again," said Temporel, and left him.

He returned to the hotel he had chosen with a sense of absolute irresponsibility. He seemed to be cut off from his kind, from the daily interests which had made up his life, from everything which tied him to the stable world. Even Cynthia seemed to have faded out of his mind. She was something abstract now, an ideal, a dream, something he had once hoped for, longed for, at length had become unattainable. The world had become gray and dull, and under that weight of ennui he felt a sudden fierce craving for excitement, or for absolute and complete torpor—extremes which meet in his and similar cases. What did anything matter? That summed up, crystalized in one acrid phrase his philosophy at the moment. He was down. He would never get up again. There was a fierce joy in climbing; might there not be a more insane and obsessing delight in adding force to speed, in increasing the impetus of a swift glide down the slope?

He went down to the bar of the hotel, and ordered a cocktail. The place was pretty full at the moment. A motley gang, Spanish somewhat staled, Portuguese, mestizos, some Scandinavians, and an odd Englishman and American made up the crowd. They were talking in four languages, and making a very considerable noise. They took things lightly, and seemed to enjoy themselves.

Temporel regarded them somberly. He finished his cocktail, and, looking at his watch, saw that it was now six o'clock. A thin, washed-out-looking man in a corner watched him closely, his eyes falling upon the valuable watch Temporel drew out.

The latter seized a chair, and sat down at a little table. He felt somewhat stupid; his head ached. The thin man approached and greeted him politely.

"The señor is American? He will drink with me, eh? I have great affection from Uncle Sam, for he was ver' kind to me when I visit his country."

"All right," said Temporel stupidly.

The man ordered a bottle of whisky—an atrocious brand, which was retailed at six pesos the bottle. He toasted Temporel in this fiery fluid.

"You live here long?" he asked.

"Too blamed long," mumbled Temporel. "Country isn't fit for a dog. Never in all my life came across such vile hole. Honest—never in my life. Dirty people, dirty government——"

He stopped there, and would say no more. He felt his tongue failing him. It occurred to him that he must go somewhere into the open air. The air of this place seemed stifling, the walls had an odd way of dwindling and receding until he seemed to see over and past them to a dim amorphous gulf beyond. His companion, too, had grown taller, and seemed to be looking down upon him from an immense height.

He went to sleep suddenly, with his head on his arms, which sprawled across the table. The bartender—an American—saw him, and raised knowing eyebrows. He glanced at the thin man, and said something in a low voice.

"All in. But no rough-house, Saldor. Don't you get gay with him in this bar, or you'll have to beat it quick, see?"

The thin man snarled at him, but remembered the warning.

It was near the hour of darkness when Temporel awoke. The bar was still crowded; his companion was at the other side of the table. He awakened in the firm conviction that he had an appointment to see Juanna Serrano, and forthwith announced the fact.

"You know where she live?" asked the other.

"Know? Of course I know. Calle De Los Vapores near the port. I'll just have one more little dring, then go."

The whisky gurgled into a glass. Temporel rose unsteadily. The bartender made one more good-natured attempt.

"Say, boss. Better leave your watch with me. It'll be safer. There's a lot of smooth guys around, and they might hanker after the time."

Temporel gave him a look which meant to be dignified. "I shall do nothing of the sort, sir," he said loudly. "I absolutely refuse to do anything of sort."

"Have it your own way," said the bartender, and turned again to his glasses.

Temporel steered a tortuous way to the door, followed by the thin man. To him he confided his disgust at the bartender's base attempt to rob him of his watch. His companion agreed that it was disgraceful, and politely offered to guide Temporel to the very door he wanted. The latter thanked him, smiled fatuously, and took his arm.

They crossed the plaza in this fashion, entered the Calle Matado, and boarded an electric car which ran to the port. Later they alighted, as darkness fell, and threaded a maze of small streets until they came to the Calle De Los Vapores. Here they debated over the precise number. Temporel was certain it was 63, and supported his contention by loud argument. He was rather in a pugnacious mood. His companion said that the number was 16.

"Tell you wha'," said Temporel. "Ish one number or other. You knock one door, and I knock other all way."

His companion assented. It was difficult to see the numbers in the gloom, which was only illumined by two miserable lamps. Temporel advanced to a door, and prepared to knock. The thin man went to the door behind him,

but did not knock. He felt under his *poncho,* and crept with catlike steps toward the other.

As Temporel raised his hand to knock, the thin man sandbagged him from behind; not a crashing blow, but sufficient to knock him out. Temporel threw out his hands, whirled half round, and tumbled unconscious on the sidewalk.

CHAPTER X.

THE SAMARITAN.

When Temporel recovered consciousness, he was lying in a strange bed, in an unfamiliar room. He stared up at a low and somewhat discolored ceiling, not following any particular train of thought, but wandering rather in twilight between vague horizons. Then his eyelids closed wearily.

Suddenly a cool, appeasing hand was laid on his forehead. He did not look up. He knew what had happened. *She* had come to him at last. Through many trials he had attained to her. He lay quite still, breathing one word softly.

A woman's ear caught that word, and read in it, strange as it was to her, another woman's name. A soft sigh, sympathetic and moved, fluttered to Temporel's ear. It soothed him somehow. It made him more content to lie there, comforted by her presence, soothed by the reassuring coolness of that appeasing hand which lay so light on his forehead.

His mind strayed to the past. Thrown against that vibrating background of orange light, like a picture on a screen, moved scenes that thrilled him indefinably. Cynthia in a boat, trees overhead, green feathery foliage, rippling water. Cynthia on the lawn, her cool summer muslin a note of white in a welter of warm hues, the dazzling gayety of flower parterres. A cool, shaded room with Cynthia—the roar of New York coming up through the open windows——

He opened his eyes suddenly, and was dazzled by the yellow glow all about him.

"Cynthia!" he said again.

"Ah, señor, it is I."

The disappointment was a blow. He shivered under it, and felt anew that heavy paralysis of limbs and brain.

"You are better?" said a soft voice in Spanish. "I thought at first that you were dead. I found you in the street, and you lay quite still. But then I found that your heart was beating. After all, you are not in danger, for the doctor who was here told me that you were safe if you came to consciousness very soon. He said it might be some days, and then I might tremble for you."

Something of the purport of her words filtered slowly to Temporel's brain. Piece by piece he reconstructed what had passed. He had been a beast, a brute. He had descended, fallen. What dormant bestial instincts had wakened in him! Struck down drunk, lying in the gutter like an unwelcome dog one kicks into the streets. He seemed to see himself slipping down and down, Cynthia from somewhere far off looking at him, with a look of pity, of helpless and infinite amazement, receding as she looked, fading out presently altogether.

What did it matter if he had been drunk? What did anything matter? He was going to get well again, to be saved that he might in full mental vigor suffer all the pangs of memory, and complete the wreck he had made of his career.

As he thought more clearly, he had no illusions on this point. He had only made a beginning; soon he would make an end. Every day it would be the same. He was going to drink hard while his money and his strength lasted. What else was there to do? Surely nothing.

The girl had expected no answer to her question. She bent forward, that she might look into his face. He was conscious of her nearer approach, and, opening his eyes fully, looked into the pale face of Juanna Serrano.

"*Gracias, gracias, señorita,*" he said faintly. "I did not know your voice. Am I in your house?"

"Yes, it is my house, señor. Some one had struck you down in the street, but the neighbors would not take you in because they feared it might be said that they were concerned."

How hard it was to smile gratitude now! "You were kind."

"Señor, it is not kindness to help those in trouble; it is a duty——" She paused, and went on with some hesitation: "Forgive me, but in this climate, señor, spirits mount to the head, and there are so many robbers——"

"You think to reform me, señorita," he said, smiling bitterly. "There is only one woman who could do that, and she—I suppose she never will."

"But for that woman's sake," she pleaded. "I, too, am a woman, so let me speak for her. You are in trouble, and that is why——"

"In trouble? Oh, no. I am ruined merely. Some one is always being ruined, and it does not matter—I've got to live out my life. It must be short."

She moved away from him, and the sound of her footsteps was agitated. The tone in which he spoke moved her profoundly. She clenched her hands, looking at him covertly over her shoulder. He was staring up at the discolored ceiling, and smiling calmly.

"Well," she said, returning to his side, "you must not talk any more now. You must rest."

His lips twitched.

"I have something here for you," she went on. "You will take it—no?"

"Give it to me!" he said. "I am going to get better—to get worse. Give it to me."

She raised his head, and put a glass to his lips. The liquid had a slightly bitter taste, but he drank it willingly, and soon fell into sleep.

Juanna watched by him for an hour, her face anxious and thoughtful. This artificially produced slumber almost frightened her. It seemed as if he had died on her hands, his face was so composed, so immobile. But presently she became more confident, seeing in his quietness a promise of recovery. When she at last left his side, her place was taken by the old woman who lived with her.

A week later saw Temporel almost himself again. He was a little thinner and paler, but able to walk, sleep, and eat as before. He had kept to the house since his injury. With returning strength came the thought of the future. His watch and the few pesos he had carried on the night of the attack were gone, but he had left the balance of his money in his grip at the hotel in the plaza, and he sent Juanna to fetch it, instructing her to pay a week's rent for the room he had taken there. He proposed to the girl that she should let him have a room in her house, and she, after much doubtful cogitation, had agreed.

With some measure of hope, he wrote a letter to the president in these terms:

YOUR EXCELLENCY: Sincerely regretting the necessity, I take the liberty of reminding you of your promise to assist me. I have left the service of the bank, and my funds are at a low ebb. Knowing by experience Your Excellency's kindness, I feel assured that I do not ask in vain. A note informing me of the possibility of an early vacancy in the offices of the minister of commerce will be welcomed by, Your Excellency's grateful and obedient servant, CHARLES TEMPOREL.

This letter, written after much thought, he handed to Juanna, and begged her to see that it was delivered at the president's *palacio*.

Three days passed before the reply came to his letter. It was brought by an undersecretary, and sealed with the president's private seal. Juanna ran with it into the house.

"Señor, señor!" she cried. "It has come!"

Temporel sprang up from where he was sitting. A sick feeling swept over him, a sensation of absolute emptiness born of mingled fear and hope.

He straightened out the paper, and read. As he went on, the sheet trembled like a leaf in the wind. His lips parted, showing his white teeth set like a trap. His face was putty-colored now, and his eyelids flickered continually. He thrust the letter toward Juanna, and sank into a seat at the table.

She gave him one glance full of compassion, and let her eyes fall upon the clearly written script.

My Dear Senor: It was with deep regret that I received your letter. This because circumstances beyond my control compel me to reply that you must abandon hope of securing the office I promised to assist you to. At the last minute the minister of commerce informs me that in view of the feelings aroused locally by the rumor that a foreigner was to be employed by my government, it would be highly unwise to recommend you for the post. He added, what I convey to you with the profoundest regret, that the tongues of scandal had been busy, and that it was hinted you were entering upon a career of dissipation.

This I cannot believe. It is, no doubt, a canard, put about by your enemies. But you will see that I have often to bow to ignorant prejudices.

Assure yourself of my continued esteem; accept my sympathy, and believe me,

Your sincere well-wisher,

Luis Parajal Pescate.

"But what does it mean?" cried Juanna.

Temporel gave a great shout of laughter. "Mean? You ask what it means! I'm a scoundrel, a drunken scoundrel, unfit to associate with the pure, the true, the noble, and sublime citizens of Coquibe! No man must touch me." He rose and went blindly toward the door.

Juanna ran to him, and seized his arm.

"Where are you going, señor?"

He laughed again. "Anywhere—nowhere."

She held him. "Do not go, señor. Perhaps——"

"Perhaps, and perhaps!" he mocked, releasing his arm from her clinging fingers. "I've wasted my time here. I might have been drinking, turning myself into a sot. Oh, they shall have cause to know that it is no canard—cause a plenty!"

Juanna put herself between him and the door.

"Señor, dear señor, do not go. I ask you—I ask you for your—Cynthia."

The name seemed to madden him. He spun about, and made to go out. Juanna's face blanched, but she held her ground.

"No, no!"

He pushed past her, his face set savagely. At last she gave way. She made no further protest.

Temporel passed out of the doorway, and so to the street.

CHAPTER XI.

THE TRAGICAL VISIT.

Cynthia Carvel represented a lovable type—light-hearted, amiable, laughter loving, capable nevertheless of great passion and of steadfast devotion. She loved Temporel. There was a real tie between them. Their engagement was not the meteoric result of a passing fancy, of a momentary fascination. Pompous as he had been, she had seen through that and other minor defects the result of training and circumstances, and had penetrated to the heart of the man. She knew him as it is given to few women to know the man they love.

But Temporel's letters puzzled her. She could read between the lines, see even in his most hopeful phrases into what mood of dejection and despondency he had fallen. It was all plain to her. The hint that she should not count too much on an early marriage, the contradictory expressions of confidence. Had he told her the whole truth? He had mentioned some small theft at the bank. If it were so unimportant, why should he speak of it in his letters?

She thought of her mother—a rather timid and mild-spoken lady, who took life easily and without worry. This in connection with a sudden thought which had come into her mind. John Carvel, her uncle on the paternal side, was interested in South American securities. Some of his holdings were Brazilian, some Buenos Ayres street cars, but Cynthia remembered that he had lately purchased a parcel of bonds of the Republic of Coquibe. He had planned a trip to Rio, and from there he intended to travel to Buenos Ayres to make personal investigation.

Cynthia's mind traveled to John Car-

vel. She was uneasy about Temporel. If she could only see him again, speak to him, she felt she could give him new courage to face whatever might come. So she made up her mind to ask her uncle to take her with him.

John Carvel—a big, broad-shouldered man with iron-gray hair—had a stubborn chin, which was wont to be much in evidence in business dealings. But Cynthia had no respect for that strong chin of his, and, though he enumerated a host of objections to the girl's plan, she had her way. The mild-mannered mother was easily won over, and Cynthia started with her uncle.

Arrived at Rio, Carvel busied himself with his financial affairs, and found scant time for sight-seeing. But Cynthia did not complain. Rio de Janeiro was only the first stage on the way to Temporel, and she left it with few regrets. Buenos Ayres was their next destination; from there John Carvel had promised to take her to Santa Malua. What would Temporel say when he saw her again? She often joyfully asked and answered that question.

A few weeks later, Carvel returned from an interview with a minister of the government, and greeted Cynthia cheerfully.

"Well, that's over, my dear," he said, laughing. "I've settled all my business here, so to-morrow we can start for Santa Malua."

"Oh, can we go at last?" said Cynthia, taking his arm affectionately. "How glad I am! It is really awfully good of you, uncle, to do this for me. I know you're just longing to get back to Broadway."

John Carvel took a paper from his pocket, and tapped it. "I've fixed up a concession this morning, Cynthia—got good terms, too. So I feel benevolently disposed. Better, I got the minister to give me a letter of introduction to the president of Coquibe—some sort of a Spanish grandee called Don Luis Pescate. It's always as well when you go to these out-of-the-way places. Keeps you from trouble with inquisitive police, and so on."

"Charles might have done that for us," said Cynthia wisely.

"My dear girl, you seem to imagine that Charley Temporel owns the republic! No, I'm teasing. You shall see your Charles while I hobnob with His Excellency and spy out the land generally."

"And we can really start to-morrow?"

"Certainly, my dear. There's a boat starting in the afternoon, and I got berths as I came back. By the way, I expect Don Luis will entertain us. From what I hear he's a worth-while fellow, not more than forty-five, and rather distinguished in appearance."

Cynthia laughed, and pinched his arm. "As I am not going to fascinate him, uncle, it doesn't seem to matter much," she said.

A week later, and they were in sight of the bay of Santa Malua and the busy port which stands near the southern end of the land curve. Then they could see the smoke from the port and the town beyond, the low, grim buildings of the fort at Puerto Pelos, the waste of gray sand that swept northward hanging upon the skirts of the sea.

Presently they were moored alongside the wharf, and there began the usual search among baggage for articles which Coquibe considered ought to assist the national revenues. That over, John Carvel hired a victoria, and they were driven away to their hotel in the Gran' Plaza, opposite the residence of the president. On the following morning, they went across the great square to present the letter of introduction.

His Excellency looked closely at Cynthia as he greeted them. Then he begged permission to glance at the letter, and when he had read it again favored her with a keen glance. He had just read that the minister presented to him an immensely wealthy New Yorker, with his charming niece. But the admiration he felt did not show itself in his face, which wore an expression at once courteous and deferential.

"I am completely at your service,"

he said, bowing to both. "I feel honored in being permitted to welcome to my republic such distinguished guests. This, I presume, señor, is your daughter?"

"My niece, Your Excellency," said John Carvel, smiling at Cynthia, who was looking her prettiest. "I have neither son nor daughter."

"Their place is delightfully filled by the señorita, I am sure," said Don Luis, in that grave voice of his, which gave genuine pleasure to the flattered, so convincing was it. "Well, you must allow me to entertain you during your stay."

"Your Excellency is exceedingly kind, but our baggage has gone to the hotel opposite."

"To the hotel? No, really, I could not hear of such a thing. You must consider yourselves the guests of my republic. I shall send over to the hotel for your things, and shall be delighted if you will remain here during your stay in Santa Malua."

John Carvel looked at Cynthia. This was the true Spanish politeness of which he had heard so much. He flushed with pleasure as he replied: "Well, Your Excellency, we are very much obliged to you. We accept your invitation most gratefully."

"I thank you," said Don Luis. "Well, you may have something to settle up at your hotel. I shall expect you at the hour of four—in time for tea." He smiled at Cynthia, who was favorably impressed by the man. "For the present, *adios, señorita. Adios, señor.*"

"Good-by, Your Excellency," said John Carvel, smiling.

To one who did not understand Don Luis, it might seem strange that he should have spoken of John Carvel's daughter when, in the letter he held in his hand, Cynthia was directly referred to as the millionaire's niece. By his question he had secured the information that Carvel had no direct heirs, a fact which interested him hugely at the moment. The sight of Cynthia had brought to him a daring and novel inspiration. He now reflected on it, approved it, and began to lay plans. Two years ago, the Coquibian minister in Washington had married the daughter of a wealthy leather merchant. What had been done before might be done again.

Two things, then, were left to discover—what income John Carvel enjoyed, and who was his heir or heiress. Don Luis was almost certain, and Don Luis was right. A slight smile curved his lips as he turned over in his mind this new and pleasant project. True, there was Carmencita Pensol, but he would know how to deal with her. She presented no just cause or impediment to the affair.

He went promptly to the telephone, and rang up the private residence of the minister of war, a young man lately married to a Coquibian lady, whose character was at once unimpeachable and dull. This lady was soon conversing with him over the wire.

"I am giving a dinner to-night, señora, to an American financier and his niece," he said. "Would you honor me by being present? The American will wish, perhaps, to talk business with me, and, as you know, I have no women in my household."

"I shall be delighted," said the good lady. "At eight, I presume—yes?"

"At eight," said Don Luis. "I shall expect you then."

The dinner was quite a success. The president and John Carvel got on excellently. The latter was surprised at his host's business acumen. He did not at once make up his mind to increase his holdings in Coquibian bonds, for he was too old a bird to be caught by even the most delicate chaff. But while he would not commit himself personally, he was left with the impression that in Don Luis the political ship of Coquibe had a master mariner who knew the shoals and would steer it safely into calm waters.

Dessert was brought in, and Cynthia and the minister's wife retired to the great salon, leaving the president and his guest to their wine.

"A very charming young lady your niece," said Don Luis, when the door had closed behind the departing ladies.

"Yes, she's a good girl," said Carvel. He looked at the president, and nodded sagely. "You would hardly guess her errand here."

"Her errand?"

"She has come all the way to see her fiancé. He lives in Santa Malua, you know."

The president's temperature fell at least ten degrees, but he preserved his composure admirably, and, indeed, managed to smile.

"Ah, she is engaged, then? And she will be married soon, eh?"

"I don't know exactly when," said Carvel. "He has to make his way in the world first."

Don Luis was secretly amused. It occurred to him that, were he in the young man's place, he would look to John Carvel for advancement rather than trust to his own laborious exertions.

"And what is the name of the man she has honored?" he asked.

John Carvel raised her eyebrows. "Oh, you may know him. He is the manager of the English bank here, and his name is Temporel."

The president started. It was really very artistically done. It suggested amazement, restrained protest, the unwilling doubt of a man who hears bad news. He smiled gravely.

"Ah, Temporel!"

John Carvel felt momentarily uncomfortable. What the deuce did the man mean?

"I suppose you have heard of him?" he said shortly.

"Oh, yes. He used to manage the bank in the Calle Suarez. I have met him."

"Used to? Your Excellency, he is still the manager."

"Pardon, but no. The manager is named Hardacre."

"Temporel is the manager," persisted Carvel. "The other man must be the cashier."

"But," said Don Luis doubtfully, "this man has come recently from England. The cashier has some other name—Pede—ah, Peters."

"Your Excellency must pardon me," said Carvel, growing red in the face. "I cannot quite understand what has happened."

Don Luis kept silence for a little. Then unwillingly: "My dear señor, you must forgive me if I do not pursue the subject. I shall only distress you, and make myself feel——" he began.

"Good heavens! Has he left the bank?"

"He has, señor—but I would prefer not to talk of it."

"Yes, yes—but you see what it means to me. My niece is my heiress, and —— Oh, it's unthinkable! You suggest——"

"Nothing," said Don Luis, in a reassuring tone. "It was not his fault. Some time ago the bank was broken into, and a considerable sum of money stolen. The directors of the bank, thinking, no doubt, that Señor Temporel might have exercised greater vigilance, were angry at the loss, and asked him to resign. They sent out a member of the staff called Hardacre."

Carvel's face cleared a little. "Your Excellency rather disturbed me. I began to think that he had done something. At least you can tell me where he is living now. My niece will want to see him to-morrow."

Again Don Luis hesitated. "Well, señor, perhaps it would be better to——"

"To do what?"

"Well, to send him notice of your coming."

Carvel frowned. There was too much hidden in all this for his taste. He began to drum on the table with his heavy fingers.

"Señor," said the other anxiously, "you place me in a very unhappy position. This señor is engaged to your niece. He is known to me personally. You will see—you will understand that——"

"I understand nothing," stormed Carvel. "What's the matter with the man? Has he taken to drink?"

Don Luis was silent.

"Your Excellency—you don't really mean that? I was joking, of course. You seriously mean that he drinks?"

His Excellency could be very dignified when he chose. Now he drew himself up, and faced his questioner gravely. "With all due respect to you, señor, I refuse to pursue the subject. I may have already told you too much."

Carvel went white. He was thinking of poor Cynthia chatting perhaps in the other room. "I cannot believe it. Well, I appreciate your desire to spare my feelings. But surely you will give me his address. I must know it. My niece will certainly go to the bank otherwise."

Don Luis shrugged. "In that case, yes. He lives in the Calle De Los Vapores, near the port. The house is Number Five."

"Thank you. I presume he is lodging with some one?"

"With a—lady called the Señorita Juanna Serrano."

Again in his voice there was the momentary hesitation, and Carvel was troubled.

"Of course, she is quite—er—quite all that——"

"I think so—I have no reason to believe otherwise."

John Carvel rose heavily from the table. The president tactfully got to his feet.

"Shall we join the ladies, señor? They are no doubt waiting for us in the salon."

The following morning found Don Luis up and away before his guests came down to breakfast. Some business demanded immediate attention, said the polite secretary, but he would return before the evening. He had sent greetings to both, and polite expressions of regret at the necessity which drew him away.

There was a bad quarter of an hour at breakfast. Cynthia was bubbling over with joy at the prospect of the day's visit; John Carvel sat thoughtful and silent, anxious not to depress or harass the girl, but very conscious of his duty in this matter.

"I am going to see *him* to-day, uncle!" Cynthia said suddenly. "I have been thinking of it ever since I left home, and now it has come at last. Oh, I am so glad."

"Heaven help me!" said John Carvel to himself. "It is going to be hard to tell her."

Breakfast over, he took her gently by the arm, and led her into the salon. His face was furrowed with thought, his eyes pitiful and troubled. "Sit down, my dear," he said slowly, "I have something to say to you—I don't think you should see Mr. Temporel to-day."

"Uncle, dear," said Cynthia, "he's not—he is quite well?"

"Quite, I understand, but——" He stammered and halted as he looked at her, and observed her growing pallor. "Girl, I hardly know how to—— There! Keep up—I suppose I had better tell you."

He told her then, and as he spoke a certain defiance made itself observable in her manner.

"I shall never believe it, never!" she said, when he had made an end.

"I should not in other circumstances, but the information was given me very reluctantly—quite by accident that I came on it——"

The girl sobbed suddenly. "Oh, it is a cruel, cruel thing. I shall never believe it. And as for that place where he lives—I——"

"Don't, my dear! You know how it hurts me to have to tell you. But, of course, we cannot condemn him without making further inquiries."

"From whom?" she asked, clenching her hands. "These people might say anything."

John Carvel pursed up his lips. "I thought of that, and we do not want to hear a false statement. No, I must have it from his own lips. Why, the appearance of the man himself will show us if there is any truth in the rumor."

"Then I shall go to-day."

"No. I forbid you. My dear, it would not be right. I am unwilling to believe that Temporel is anything but the man he was. His love for you should keep him from excesses, even in misfortune. He was not blamed for

the bank robbery, you must remember——"

"It is a wonder!" cried Cynthia hotly. "I suppose those horrid English directors really believed he had taken their nasty money——"

John Carvel pressed her hand. "Well, cheer up! We haven't seen the other side of the shield yet. We may be disturbing ourselves for nothing. I shall make inquiries, you may be sure. Perhaps the president could help us, or do you object to my asking him about it?"

"I would rather you did," said Cynthia. "Some one has told him, and he believes it. I would like to see Charles cleared in the sight of all the world."

"Then," said Carvel decidedly, "let us leave it till the evening. When the president returns, we must concert some plan to get at the real truth of the matter."

They found Don Luis sympathetic, reassuring, and hopeful.

"It was told to me, and I did not go into the matter since it was no business of mine," he said, looking from one to the other. "If I had known, I might have made inquiries which would have relieved your minds. What do you suggest should be done? If I can be of the slightest service, count on me fully."

"Your Excellency," said Cynthia earnestly, the tears in her eyes, "could you—would you ask him here?"

CHAPTER XII.

THE PROOF.

At the girl's words, His Excellency started, and John Carvel took a step forward. Then Don Luis answered in a tone full of compassion.

"Señorita, I shall willingly do so, if you wish it—but——" He frowned a little, and made an uncertain gesture. "Yes—perhaps. I might write to him, asking him to dine here with us, and mentioning that you are staying here with your uncle."

"I am sure Your Excellency means that kindly," she said, in a hard voice. "But I do not want to be put off with fair seeming. I want to know the truth. If you write, please invite him to dine, nothing more."

The president's attitude was wholly admirable. The man was a genius in his own way.

"A woman and a child are both cruel," he said. "Do not ask me to do that. Let me tell him that you are here."

"No!" Cynthia was inflexible. Her confidence was so great, her hopes so high, that she would not have it even seem she mistrusted Temporel. "Please me, help me by doing as I ask."

"She is right," said John Carvel slowly; "quite right. The man does not need to be whitewashed. He can stand up for himself."

His Excellency dropped both hands in a gesture of resignation.

"Señorita, I shall do as you wish."

It was four o'clock on the afternoon following when the president's secretary was instructed by his employer to go in search of Temporel.

"He lives in the Calle De Los Vapores, as you know," said Don Luis, "but you may not find him there at this hour. Search the *fondas,* and also look last into the bar of the Chilaca Hotel—you will most probably find him there. Draw him aside, and tell him that I wish to see him. Do not say that the matter is important, simply give that message. Be sure that he promises to come."

"And when he arrives, Excellency?"

"Then you will meet him personally, and show him into the salon. Now, go."

This commission was by no means a sinecure. The secretary called at the house of Juanna Serrano, and learned that Temporel had gone out shortly after breakfast, and had not returned. The old woman told him that, and her shrug was suggestive. Then began a systematic search of the *fondas* in the neighborhood. But Temporel was not in any of them. So the man passed the time till it was close upon seven

o'clock, when he sauntered into the bar of the Chilaca Hotel.

Temporel was there. He sat at a little table in a corner, a glass of brandy before him, chewing the end of a dead cigar, and staring absently across the room.

The secretary surveyed him with amazement. He hardly recognized the dignified bank manager in the limp and dejected figure at the table. Temporel had not shaved for two days; his hair was unbrushed. He had taken a good deal of drink that morning, but was only slightly unsteady when he rose. His brain, however, was in a more parlous condition, and he spoke with the hesitation of a man who finds his tongue treacherous.

"I'll—have—er—anoth' one, Jake."

The secretary intercepted him.

"Señor, I would speak with you."

Temporel looked at him cunningly. "I hear you—er—speaking. I'm not—er—I'm not keeping you back."

"Señor, the president has asked me to see you. He asks that you shall visit him this evening."

"Shan't!" said Temporel.

This infantile exclamation made the secretary shake with silent laughter, but he kept his face grave.

"He would like to see you this evening," he said persuasively.

Temporel turned toward the bartender.

"Jake! I have honor visit 's Excellency the president—what say?"

"'Bout time you saw somebody," said Jake, grinning. "Well, give him my love."

Temporel turned to the messenger again. "I'll go with you. I find lots of people in this place disappear in extr'ordinary way. I dunno what they do with 'em—most mysterious. So I am going to come with you, and you mus' see that 's Excellency doesn't do the same—see?"

Together they left the bar, and made their way to the *palacio*.

The secretary led the way to the salon.

"Will you please to enter, señor."

The door opened, and Temporel walked slowly into the room. He had an appearance of immense dignity, his head up, his shoulders thrown back, his mouth firm. In the middle of the vast apartment a woman sat alone upon a settee. She rose now, and advanced slowly across the floor. Her face was very pale, set; the corners of her mouth drooped suddenly as her eyes fell upon Temporel, absurdly dignified, coming toward her.

"How do, Excellency," said the latter, in a husky voice. He looked about him in a puzzled way. "Ah, beg pardon—as I was saying little time ago, people have a wonderful way. Do you know——" He hesitated. "Do you know that fellow promised me he would see—— He's gone again."

"Don't you know me, Charles?"

Cynthia's voice was faint. She could hardly speak. Because her confidence had been so great, her hopes so high, she felt as if she had been brutally bludgeoned. Her limbs gave under her. He did not recognize her! What an infinity of pain there was in that knowledge!

He came closer, and for a moment it seemed to her that he realized who she was. But the light in his eyes died again, and he only stared at her in a bewildered way.

"Why are you calling me 'Charles'?" he asked. "I haven't the pleasure—of course, I know there's no—no offense intended."

She forced herself to approach him, to lay a hand on his arm, and look into his face. "Charles, you must remember me—I am Cynthia."

He fixed her with an intense but perplexed regard, then his eyes strayed down to the little hand which lay upon his arm.

"Now I think of it, I—er—seem to have—I b'lieve I met some one—some time—Cynthia? Seems to me that names are just like people—continually disappearing. Fact. I have sort of suspicion I knew girl called Cynthia! Excuse me, I forget."

He had been drinking—he was drunk now. He did not remember her! This was a terrible reality. It was no dream,

no phantasm of the imagination. The president had been right. Rumor had spoken truly. The man she loved, the man she was to marry.

She wanted to cry out, to scream, to express in a terrible sound how the pain tore at her heart. But her lips were quite dry. She said nothing; only looked at him, and sobbed deep down in her throat.

He moved away a little, and muttered:

"'Scuse me. I think I'll sit down. Everything whirls. Very stupid. Some time ago some one hit me on head—feel it still—brandy only cure—I've had twelve glasses 's morning—only cure."

He sank heavily into the settee, and remained there silent for a few minutes. Now that he was off his feet, everything seemed to be clearer. The room did not rotate irritatingly about him as it had done, and he surveyed the girl standing near him with a gaze of growing amazement. She took a pace nearer.

"Charles—Mr. Temporel—I am Cynthia—do you not remember?"

Some faint perception of the truth crept into his poor muddled brain. Her voice, her look, the lines of her figure brought back to him something of the past. He was sobered a little. Surely he had seen this girl before! Her face reminded him of a shadow shape which used to flit across his dreams. Suddenly he began to cry, his head bent down over his arms. It was foolish, futile weeping wrung from him because he was unstrung, because he half remembered sweet things which had passed and would not return. In a moment Cynthia was at his side.

"Charles—dear Charles!"

He looked up, and saw her bending over him. It was all a dream. He was asleep, and Cynthia had come back to him. He had dreamed so before. In those dreams Cynthia would bend down to kiss him; he would reach up, stretch out his arm to clasp her—and she would vanish with his awakening. Now she was so near. This time she could not escape him.

He put his arm suddenly about the girl's neck, and as she yielded to the unexpected strain, his lips met hers.

In an instant Cynthia released herself, and sprang back. He got to his feet with a foolish laugh, advanced toward her as she retreated. A table stopped her for a moment, and again he had taken her in his arms.

"Mr. Temporel"—her voice was very cold—"let me go at once! I forbid you to touch me again."

He dropped his arms, and stood like a man struck. "No harm meant—Cynthia," he said huskily. "You played trick on me before, you know—always going and coming—going and comin' like——"

Cynthia's only thought was to retire from the room as quickly as possible. She wanted to be alone, to empty her heart in sick sobbing, to forget.

Temporel moved back to the settee, keeping his eyes fixed on her with a baffled air. He was vaguely aware that another misfortune had overtaken him, that he had lost something—but what?

He staggered to his feet.

"Cynthia, come back!"

But the door opened. She passed out. He tried to run, but his tripping feet failed him. He swerved and fell.

Cynthia came quickly into the room where John Carvel was sitting. She was deathly pale, her breath came in little gasps.

"Uncle, oh, uncle! It's true. He is in there." She pointed. "I cannot go back."

He sprang up, and supported her.

"There, my dear. Try to be calm. Sit down here. I will see him."

He went out, and, passing through the hall, met the president's secretary. "Go out and get a cab at once. The gentleman who called is not well, and must be taken home. You know the address."

"Certainly, señor, I will go at once."

John Carvel went to the door of the salon, opened it, and entered. He was very angry. The whole affair looked very bad. He intended to speak very sharply to Temporel. He advanced quickly.

But Temporel was again seated on

the settee. He leaned a little forward, his arms hanging, his head drooped, his eyes closed.

John Carvel did not wake him. He stopped, his under lip a little thrust out, a frown on his face. He was still standing there silently when the secretary came to announce that the cab was waiting below.

CHAPTER XIII.

ASTER CALLS A BLUFF.

Threafter Temporel went steadily downhill.

His only hope lay in drowning sensation, memory; in making himself oblivious to the nightmare of thought.

One day he was, as usual, sitting at a table in the bar of the Chilaca, when a short, broad-shouldered man, who had been observing him for some time, stepped up to him.

"May I join you?" he asked. "We're both from God's country, and if you don't mind——"

"Oh, sure," said Temporel listlessly. "What'll you have?"

"Cut out the drinks. I just want to talk." The stranger dropped into a chair opposite Temporel, and continued: "My name's Aster. Yours, I know, is Temporel. So we know each other. Well, Temporel, I've heard all about you, and I take it that Fate's been handing it to you strong."

"Let her," said Temporel defiantly. "While there's liquor in the land, I don't care a whoop."

"Suit yourself, Temporel. But I'd like to say that you're butting into a poker game where the only limit is hell. You can take on a mighty good player, but Old Nick is going to rake in your chips every time. You see he's the dealer in this poker game, and your deck is only going to pan out a pair to his straight flush. Now, don't get mad over my straight talk. I mean it well, and it isn't every fellow I would take the trouble over."

"Thank you," said Temporel. "You lecture very delightfully, Mr. Aster."

"Good enough. Some men would have given me sour looks for that. We'll just have a look into this notion of yours. What do you reckon to make by it, anyway?"

"Heaven only knows why I am discussing my affairs with you, Aster, and I've a good mind to tell you to go to Jericho. But, since you have been kind enough to poke your nose into what doesn't concern you, you shall hear. I'm going to drink myself dead, see? I intend to make my gloomy life a pretty short one."

"There are easier ways," said Aster thoughtfully. "But it seems to me your philosophy is on the blink. Some one has cleaned you up, and that some one is going about this very minute, sporting a glad smile, and occasionally laughing some. Suppose a fellow comes along and hands you a punch on the solar plexus. What do you do? Well, according to your theory, you get a club, and bang yourself hard over the head—savvy? And for every kick the fellow gives you, you give yourself another, till you've kicked yourself right off the earth. And what's the other fellow doing? Well, he keeps on smiling."

Temporel was interested in spite of himself. "And your policy under similar circumstances?" he asked.

"Well, the man who short-circuits me is going to pray for himself hard. That's all. If he's hiding in his cyclone cellar, he is going to find an earthquake being born under him, and, if he takes to an aëroplane, he'll wish he'd selected the earthquake! I'll quit allegory, and give it to you straight. Some fellow or fellows got into your bank, and slid out with a considerable sum. You got into hot water with the people on the other side. They cut you loose, and the fellows who'd put their fingers in your eye sidestepped you. Have you won anything? Not. But you go ahead and say you've got to get filled up with misfortune—it's up to you to be darned miserable. You're doing it. You're turning a pretty decent constitution into soft soap, and providing a raree show for all the pie-faced mutts in this city."

Temporel flushed, but answered with some spirit:

"Don't think I gave up without fighting, that I took to this at once. No. I put up nearly every cent I had. They're gone now—bribes, and expenses, and salary to a man who thought he could see the thing through."

"Kind of amateur detective," said Aster. "What was his name?"

"Barriga," said Temporel absently.

Aster nodded, and proffered a well-filled cigar case. "Light up," he said, "and listen to me. I'm here on business—at least I was. You know what a Pinkerton agent is? Well, I'm one. I came to Santa Malua to round up a boodler from Missouri. He fooled me—he committed suicide the day I landed. Then I heard of you, and took a kind of professional interest in the case. About ten years back I was on a case in Nicaragua—government job, paid for by His Littleness the president of that day. The man I wanted was a Spanish swindler, who had cleared out with a pile of somebody else's cash. I never got him. I landed the day after he did at Para. He cut across country, hit the Amazon somewhere, and went upstream with some *caucheros.* I've been on a lot of jobs since then, but that failure has stuck in my throat. Here I ran upon a fellow who looked like my man. I can't say he is, I can't say he isn't. Ten years is some time. But I cabled over to the old man on the other side, and got a free pass over the line. You see, there are big interests involved, and there's an old Spanish fellow, called Zumala, living in Leon still, who would cough up readily if I could put hands on the man I want."

Temporel yawned. "I have no doubt your narrative is accurate," he said languidly. "But I can't see what it all has to do with me."

"Just this," said Aster earnestly. "I want to help you, so's to help myself, see? Ten to one your Barriga fellow did nothing but draw his pay. Now, I am used to hunting up yeggmen of all kinds. You haven't to contribute a dime. All you have to do is to tell me what happened, and I'll get busy."

Temporel lighted the cigar he had been holding between his fingers, and thought quickly. Was the man honest? Did he really offer to make investigations without payment? It seemed so. But was it possible that, after this lapse of time, his inquiries would lead to anything? For the first time since that terrible scene, Temporel thought without bitterness of Cynthia. Memory was like a whiplash. Was it fair to her, fair to himself that he should abandon hope? Was it not possible that she loved him yet—that he might go to her again, free of his folly, righted in the eyes of the world? The very thought made the blood run fast in his veins.

He held out his hand. "Aster, whatever your motives may be, and I believe they are worthy ones, you've saved me from myself. Shake hands. I'll tell you what I have done, and what happened at the bank. If we win out, you'll find that the business may pay from both sides. Lord, man, you can't know what it means to me."

"I've heard something, and I've guessed a lot," said Aster. "Go ahead!"

Temporel told him shortly and plainly, and explained the steps he had taken to discover the criminals.

Aster nodded. "Your watchman, José—you don't think he was in it?"

"I am sure he was not."

"Then there's this dumb man—what do you make of him?"

"I have no clear idea."

"That's where you hit the wrong trail. He was busy trying to explain something to you. He took money out of his pocket—that referred to the money from the bank. He put it in his other pocket—that's the transfer to some one else. That fellow was going to put you wise to the whole thing, and you go and have him stowed in the *calaboso,* where you can't get at him."

"You think that is what he meant? But the president said he was a notorious criminal."

"Maybe. But now and again one will smoke the whole thing. Well, he's dead, so it's no good talking. The men who got away with the stuff were old

hands. We've got to find out if any industrious gentlemen were let out of prison about that time. The police can tell us about any who were in the city living quiet and good."

"Let's get out of this," said Temporel, rising. "We'll talk in the fresh air." They left the bar, and strolled out into a square. "I'm about stumped," Temporel said quietly. "I have less than ten dollars, and I can't live long on that."

Aster laughed. "I can take you on the pay roll as my assistant," he said. "Sixty dollars a month—is it good enough? The old man won't scrimp when there's anything to be gained."

"I am very grateful to you, though I don't think my services will be of much value."

"You'll change your mind. You can take up your duties right away. To-morrow morning Temporel, I shall be obliged if you can get me a list of the *rurales* who formed the cordon round the bank. Get hold of one, and donate him something considerable. I want that list bad. I guess you will take a day over that."

"I'll take a month, but I'll get it," said the other eagerly.

Aster held out his hand. "Good! Now you're talking. I'll meet you to-morrow at four. Third seat in the Alameda. So long. Here's luck, and—cut out the booze."

CHAPTER XIV.

DANGER.

For some reason, inexplicable to Cynthia, John Carvel announced his intention of remaining for a further month in Santa Malua. His pretext was that he saw in the republic ground for profitable schemes—an excuse which gained validity from his recent association with Don Estaban Torino, a local banker and financier, who was also the president of the National Gold Mining Corporation, of Coquibe.

Cynthia could hardly believe that that was her uncle's sole motive for lingering in a place he had once spoken of as a "one-horse show," but she did not trouble to inquire into his reasons. She had abandoned her first impulse to fly from the place where she had suffered such intense unhappiness. Pride came to her aid. The president, Don Luis, had been a sharer in that terrible knowledge; now he should see that an American girl could support herself under misfortune without the loss of her dignity or self-respect; he should never see how she reeled under the blow which had been given her.

They stayed with Don Luis for a week; and then, since their visit to Santa Malua had been extended, John Carvel rented for a month a furnished house on the northern outskirts of the town. The president visited them there frequently. His carriage often called to take Carvel and Cynthia for a drive, while His Excellency himself devoted to them all the hours he could spare from the responsible duties of his office. He brought Cynthia flowers, baskets of rare fruit, books—for she had begun to learn Spanish as a means of passing idle hours. He was at first sympathetic; then, adroit to a degree, he seemed to have forgotten all that had passed, and put Cynthia fully at her ease by the careful avoidance of any topic which might lead her thoughts into that unpleasant channel.

The Doña Carmencita Pensol was now at the little seaside resort of Piedraolas. On the day following the arrival of the Carvels, Don Luis had sent her a letter, inclosing a thousand pesos, and suggesting that she should try a change of air. There was a little casino at Piedraolas, and Carmencita went there gladly. She won sufficiently to encourage her to prolong her stay. So, for the present, Don Luis had leisure to play out his hand.

Temporel, on the day after his meeting with Aster, set out on his search. He had little difficulty in finding a *rural* willing to talk for a consideration. But the man who has his tongue loosened by coins may talk to both sides. Temporel must get the information he required without arousing the suspicion of the man that he was being "pumped."

He suggested a visit to a little *fonda* situated in the pleasant village of Otaque, half an hour from Santa Malua. The man was off duty till the evening, and welcomed the prospect of a free holiday.

"That was an immense affair at the English Bank, señor," said the *rural*, when they were seated in the garden of the inn. "I had something to do with that. For several days I rode in the country like a man bereft, searching for those *bribons*."

Temporel smiled carelessly. The *rural* knew that he had been manager of the bank, and merely wished to satisfy some easy curiosity. So much the better. It would be easier to get the information he sought.

"Ah, but they were never caught."

"No, señor, and it was the strangest thing in the world. Our men formed a cordon about the door; they remained there for over an hour, I believe. Yet when the bank was searched they found no one."

"I believe they must have been drunk, your men!" said Temporel, in an indignant tone.

"That is not possible, señor. I know these men, and they are good fellows."

"If what you say is true, I should like to reward them," said Temporel. "At least they waited for a long time. Will you write down their names for me? Here is paper."

The *rural* took the paper, and found a stub of pencil. He began to write slowly.

"Do not mention this to any one," said Temporel.

"I shall not, señor. The *teniente* is greedy. He would probably demand from the men the money you gave them. It is always so here."

Temporel got his list presently, and placed it carefully in his pocket. He had not the remotest idea why Aster wanted it, but was determined to carry out his instructions to the letter. He rose to order some wine for the *rural*, when he came face to face with Barriga, who had just entered the garden.

"Well met, señor," said the latter, smiling. "How are affairs with you? You have heard nothing more of the ladrones—no? Well, señor, let us drink to their speedy destruction. You will take wine with me?"

"Thank you. I must deny myself the pleasure. I came here with one of the *rurales* who had to do with the inquiry. It appears that he worked hard over it, and I wished——"

"You were always generous, señor. May I be permitted to join you?"

Temporel thought quickly. After all, Barriga had been a paid agent in connection with this very affair. Besides, it would be impossible without discourtesy to refuse such an amiable demand.

"By all means," he said, as agreeably as he could. "Our friend is sitting over there. I am going to order some wine and cigars. I shall be with you in a moment."

Barriga nodded, and joined the *rural*, who looked up at him in apparent surprise, and raised his hand a little. Barriga stopped him with a significant gesture, and said something to him in a low voice.

Temporel came back presently, and held out a well-filled cigar case. "These are good, I think," he said. "And now, Señor Barriga, what brings you here to-day?"

The other blew out a puff of smoke, and sighed luxuriously. "Like you, señor, I enjoy a holiday. This is a charming place, and a great favorite with me. I come here often. But is it not strange that we should meet, and also our good friend here, who happened to be concerned in the inquiry?" He turned to the *rural*, who was drinking his wine, and looking rather ill at ease. "You were with the cordon, eh, my friend?"

"No, señor. Afterward I searched for the ladrones."

Barriga reflected. "Does it not occur to you, señor, that we might have secured some evidence which would be valuable if we had interrogated the *rurales* who watched outside the bank?" he said thoughtfully.

Temporel started. The *rural* looked up.

"Señor, I have——" he began, but

stopped abruptly. Barriga did not appear to have heard him. He smoked his cigar, and looked up at the sky with lazy eyes.

"I don't think so," said Temporel hurriedly. "If they had seen any one coming from the bank they would have seized him at once. It is obvious that they saw nothing."

"That is true," said Barriga. He favored Temporel with a sharp glance. "It was merely a suggestion."

"As I told you, I abandoned the inquiry," said Temporal, suddenly cautious. "It is done with. A great many days have passed since the robbery. It would not be any satisfaction for me to get the rogues when they had disposed of the money. Well, I must get back to town. *Adios.*"

It was striking four when he reached the Alameda. Aster was there, waiting for him.

"Hello, Temporel. You're right on time."

"There or about. I've got the list, too. I managed to get hold of a *rural* off duty," and Temporel went on to relate what he had done that day.

"So your amateur detective met you there?" said Aster. "What do you think he wanted?"

"Well, he had a soft job, and perhaps he thought he might get it again. He had a lot of my money over the business, for bribes and so forth. But I think our meeting was accidental. He told me he often went to the little inn."

"Let's see that list," said Aster, reaching out a hand. "I'll just run over the names, and see if I can't get at some of the men."

The slip of paper containing the names was handed over, and he read it slowly.

"What shall I do to-morrow?" asked Temporel, smiling a little. "Since I'm on the staff, I must take my instructions from you."

"Right," said Aster, his eyes twinkling. "I'll give you a commission right now. To-morrow I want you to hunt up that watchman, José. I heard the bank had fired him, too, or, at least, the new manager did when he inquired into the case. I don't know if he got a job since, but you should find him easy. Stay away from home in the morning, for I want to have a talk with the Señorita Serrano. The dumb man was her father, and she may put me wise to a few things. You go after José, and fix it up for me to see him somewhere private. Don't meet me here again. I'll look you up at your place some time during the evening."

"All right—good-by, then," said Temporel, rising.

As he started down the Alameda, he saw the figure of a man stepping quickly among the trees some ninety yards away, but lost sight of him immediately. At the time the incident made no particular impression on his mind. He had supper early that evening. The municipal band was to play in the Gran' Plaza, and Temporel had decided to form one of the audience. With the return of hope, he found himself hungering for a little gayety.

So, as darkness fell, he left the little house in the Calle De Los Vapores, and set out toward the great square. He felt appreciably happier, and thought with unmixed wonder of the period of sordid and pitiful deterioration through which he had lately passed. Why had he been so easily depressed? What insane aberration had driven him to steep his senses in futile and reasonless dissipation? Was it to be wondered at that Cynthia had seen in him not the man who had been given her love, but a foolish sot, weak and decadent? He had seen Cynthia two days ago, sitting in the president's carriage, but at sight of her he had shrunk back into the shelter of a welcome doorway.

She was still in Santa Malua. In a way, he wondered at that. Had she still some love for him, or was her remaining an effort of pride piqued at her humiliation? He could not say. But soon he would go to her again; this time his own man. He would lay all his case before her, and ask her for the sake of the love she had borne him, for the sake of the past, to forget that he had ever slipped, to forgive him for his manifest weakness.

In New York he had made the acquaintance of John Carvel. Perhaps it would be better first to appeal to him. To a man he could explain many things. Perhaps it would be better——

Presently he reached the town, and crossed the mouth of a small passage which ran into the Plaza Magellan. The place there was very dark. The nearest lamp was at a distance of forty paces. Most of the townsfolk had gathered in the Gran' Plaza, and this square was quite deserted. He stepped off the pavement, and would have traversed the entrance to the alley in a few paces, when a sharp detonation, and a bright flash startled him into action. His hat spun from his head, and fell to the ground.

At once he realized that some one had fired at him. Whatever may be said of Temporel, he was no coward. He dashed into the alley from which the shot had proceeded. He was unarmed, except for a light cane, but in his fury he never thought of that.

Probably it was as well. Had he continued his progress, his would-be assassin would inevitably have followed him, and aimed more truly. But the fellow had been hiding in a doorway at a very short distance, and, seeing Temporel rushing toward him, fired an ineffective shot, and bolted down the alley.

Temporel followed him rapidly. He felt madly angry; he was determined at all costs to lay hands on the man who had attempted his life. The stone paving echoed to the sound of their flying footsteps. At first he seemed to gain. It was difficult to see the man ahead, now dashing along in the deep shadows, now coming for a fragment of time into the light thrown by a feeble lamp. Then Temporel lost him. He ran in close under some houses, passed out of sight. The sound of footsteps ceased. Temporel thought he heard a door slam, but, examining the houses carefully, he found nothing which would enable him to discover into which door the man had disappeared.

Hot and furious he paced up and down the street, exclaiming at himself for having let the man escape him. He lingered there for a minute or two, when he heard some one coming up the street. Looking upward, he saw two men—one in the uniform of the *rurales.* They came to him quickly.

"Señor," said the second man, who was a civilian, "have you seen a man running? A shot was fired lately. Possibly some one has been killed."

"Barriga!" cried Temporel, recognizing the voice.

"Ah! It is the Señor Temporel!"

CHAPTER XV.

THE DUMB MAN.

"I wish you had come sooner," said Temporel, in an angry voice. "A man fired at me, and I followed him to this place. I think he went into one of these houses."

"Here?" said Barriga. Then hurriedly: "Well, I will visit each in turn. You can give information to the *rural,* who will see that proper inquiry is made into the matter."

He turned away immediately, and knocked at the door of a house near at hand. Temporel turned to the other man, and began to explain what had happened. "You should keep a closer eye upon these streets at night," he added. "The moment there is a fête on all you fellows leave your patrols, and crowd into the plaza, so that half a dozen men might be murdered in the other parts of the town, without any one being made to pay for it."

"Pardon, señor," said the man, quite good-humoredly. "I should have liked also to listen to the band in the square, but I was on duty in the next street—the Calle Destina, and came immediately when the other señor called me. He said that some one had been shot."

Temporel was cooler now. "All right. I beg your pardon. But you must admit that better order should be kept. I am not the only man who has been shot at lately."

Barriga returned to them hastily. "These people deny that any man entered their houses. You must have lost him in the darkness. Could you identify him, Señor Temporel?"

"How the deuce could I? He was running, and it is quite dark. No, I can't say what he was like, except that he was of medium height, and wore a poncho. That description might apply to a thousand men in Santa Malua. Well, you can do what is possible, but I am afraid nothing will come of it. I shall carry a pistol in future, and keep a good lookout. I could have hit the fellow if I had had a weapon."

Barriga shrugged. "Probably he mistook you for some one else with whom he was at feud. It is hardly likely to occur again."

"It won't without some one being hurt," said Temporel grimly.

Annoyed and mystified, he had one more look at the houses, and resumed his walk toward the Gran' Plaza.

When he again saw Aster, this time in his own apartments, he related to him what had passed. It surprised him that the other took it so calmly.

"It shows we're getting warm," said Aster, staring hard. "Better take a gun with you next time, and pull on the first man who looks ugly. It's a certainty the man must have gone through one of those houses near where you saw him disappear. That Barriga fellow might have known the folks wouldn't tell him anything. But I'll take that in hand right away. I know the place you mean, and will make some inquiries. Put it out of your mind."

"I'll try to," said Temporel, laughing a little. "By the way, what did you do yesterday? Had you any success?"

Aster smiled ambiguously. "I had, and I hadn't. Your señorita did not tell me much that I had not already heard from you. But I had a bit of luck in another direction."

"Yes?"

"Listen. I was picking over some odds and ends in a cheap bookstore, when I came across a plan of the jail. It was done when the building was built, and lithographed for the benefit of the citizens, who were surely proud of the advance made when they put up this *calabozo*. I froze onto that map, at a cost of twenty-five centavos.

"I went off with it in my pocket to reconnoiter the place from the outside. I was wandering around, looking lost, when a big wagon drove up to the gates, and a couple of fellows began to hand out provisions—bags of beans, and so forth. I got the name of the storekeeper who handled these goods, and looked him up. When I'd handed out a few pesos for some stuff I didn't want, we got onto the subject of the jail. The fellow told me presently that he supplied all the food for the people inside, excepting the warden and the keepers, who got their grub from a more expensive place. I sifted him pretty carefully. It appears that he took on the contract, and was bound to supply every day a certain quantity of provisions, calculated on the number of prisoners. Some days there'd be more, sometimes less, but it worked all right on the average. At the moment, he told me, there were sixty-three prisoners."

"I see," said Temporel eagerly. "Go on!"

"I left him soon, and wandered round to the shop where they sell justice to the man with the biggest dough bag. I saw that amiable and elegant gentleman, the *jefe politico*. He is a trifle less expensive than some of the others, so I donated him fifty dollars for distribution among the poor—meaning him. Then I explained who I was supposed to be—a feverish American investigating the prison systems of fourteen countries for purposes of comparison. I asked him would he be kind enough to tell me how many prisoners there were in the jail, and the nature of the offenses with which they were charged.

"He was very polite, explained that he could not let me see through the jail, but would give me the nature of the offenses the men were sentenced for. Well, to make a long story short, I discovered that his list had only sixty-two names. The storekeeper said sixty-three. There's only one explanation. The *jefe politico* and others of them have 'fixed' the register. There's one prisoner they pretend isn't inside."

Temporel leaned forward. "And you really think——"

"Think? It's a cinch that our friend,

the dumb man, is in there. The suicide story was a fake."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE ONE WAY OUT.

Temporel received this intelligence with incredulity.

"My dear Aster," he said, disappointment in his voice, "I must own that I'd like to credit your theory, but it's altogether too improbable. The president informed me that the dumb man had committed suicide."

"And who told His Excellency?" demanded Aster abruptly. "Do you think he has time to see to everything? I guess not. He has been told that by some interested party, the warden, perhaps. You see, you were trying to hurry the trial, and the thieves may have had an idea that Serrano was wise to their doings at the bank. Since I've been here I've found that most of the government officials can be bought. What was there to prevent these fellows putting up some of the coin they got from your bank, and handing it out to the warden of the jail?"

"Nothing, of course," said Temporel thoughtfully. "It would be possible for him to alter the register, and give out that Serrano had committed suicide."

"Sure thing. We must take it that the dumb man is alive. The question is, how to get him out of jail alive?"

"Let's look at the chart," suggested Temporel.

Aster felt in his pocket, and produced the plan, which was printed on cloth-backed paper. He spread it out on his knee.

The jail was built in the shape of a rectangle, and surrounded by a high adobe wall. From the main entrance there ran a wide passage, from which radiated narrower passages, on either side of which the cells lay. The front of the building was devoted to bedrooms, living rooms, and a refectory for the keepers. The warden lived in a separate building, bounded by and abutting on the surrounding wall of adobe.

"See here," said Aster, indicating with his finger some cells in the northwest corner of the jail. "There is a cell which is the last one in the last passage at the back. That is the left side, but there is a similar one on the right. Serrano's in one of them if he's alive."

Temporel shrugged. "Even granting that, what can be done?"

"We've got to break in, that's all. I suppose we couldn't dope the keepers?"

Temporel shook his head. "I'm afraid not. But I'll tell you—we might anonymously send two or three cases of champagne to the guards. The stuff need not be labeled, and your friend of the store could send it with the provisions. Whatever happened, he would never see any connection between breaking into the jail and sending champagne for the keepers. Besides, he wouldn't even know it was champagne."

"That's bully. We'll do that, anyway, when the time comes. Then, supposing we have a clear field, what is the plan of campaign? We could cut steps in the 'dobe wall. But there's the warden's house."

"To the right of the jail, and standing fifty yards back. We could try the cell to the left. According to the plan, there are no guards' rooms looking to the rear; they lie to the front. I don't expect any of the prisoners would give us trouble."

"I guess not," said Aster. "We would work mighty quick. But before we butt into that job, we must have a place where we could hide Serrano, and we must arrange for horses to be waiting outside the 'dobe wall."

"That is easily arranged," said Temporel hopefully. "The worst part will be making an entry into the cell. I suppose they are always closely barred?"

"So the *jefe politico* said when he was talking to me. If all else goes well, I could see to that while you waited outside with the horses. I've seen enough of burglar's tools to know the way they act. All I want is a dark night."

"We'll do it," cried Temporel. "If you think the dumb man can tell us what we want to know, we'll do it.

Perhaps we can use José, the former bank messenger. I'll send him to your house to-morrow morning very early. Arrange to have him admitted when he knocks. These people may be watching us both."

"They're watching you, anyway," said Aster, "so I'm going to ask the señorita to let me out by the back way. We haven't got to meet in public after this. I may turn up any time, so don't be surprised to see me here waiting. I have arranged all that with the lady."

"Very good. I think that is best. When you see José, you can ask him to be prepared to find us three horses any time on the quiet. I think he is an honest fellow, and we might easily help him if he is out of work still."

"Sure," said Aster, rising. "The pay roll will stand a few more dollars easy. As for the house to store our dumb friend in, leave that to me."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE INTERVIEW.

The next morning Temporel was sauntering through one of the smaller squares, when Don Luis' carriage swept past him. In it sat His Excellency, smiling and chatting with a lady at his side. It was Cynthia Carvel.

Temporel stopped dead, and the color went from his face slowly. The sight of Cynthia revived all the hopes, all the emotions of the past. She looked well, and comparatively happy. Her face was turned toward her companion, and she seemed to be replying with animation to his gay talk. A momentary sensation of jealousy took possession of Temporel, as he stared after the hurrying carriage. Then he recovered his composure, and laughed a little, though with no mirthful expression on his keen, good-looking face. She had not seen him, and he was glad. He had never met her face to face since that terrible evening.

But his quick eyes had noted one fact—they were not accompanied by John Carvel. Possibly the financier was at home. Would it not be well to call there, and see him before Cynthia should return?

He acted upon the impulse. At the worst, the girl's uncle could only refuse to see him.

He made his way to the house rented by John Carvel, and sent in his card.

The servant brought the answer quickly. "The Señor Carvel says that he will give you ten minutes. Will you follow me, señor."

Temporel was shown into a small room fitted up as a library. He waited there for five minutes, when the door opened, and John Carvel entered.

"Good morning, Mr. Temporel," he said gravely, keeping his hands behind his back. "Let me hear briefly what you want."

Temporel bowed, somewhat overcome, and his voice trembled a little as he replied: "Mr. Carvel, I have come here to explain—and to apologize for a very regrettable incident. I assure you that when I was called to the president's house, I had not the slightest idea that you and Cyn—and Miss Carvel were in Santa Malua——"

"That is hardly an excuse for your conduct, for the condition in which you presented yourself," said John Carvel grimly. "You seem to suggest that if you had known we were staying here, you would have kept sober for the occasion?"

Temporel flushed up. "You wrong me, sir. Indeed, you do. Perhaps, I spoke rather ambiguously. I meant to say that you saw me in a miserable, and, I regret to say, a drunken condition, without having heard the causes which led me into excesses."

Carvel bowed. "I have yet to learn that drunkenness is so easily excused. Here, my niece is under my care, and she has learned by sad ocular demonstration that you were intemperate. You humiliated us, sir, in our host's house."

A look of keen pain came to Temporel's face. "I shall never cease to regret it. I was a brute, a savage—but think how I had been tried. You will believe me, I hope, when I say that I

have not tasted liquor for some days, and do not intend to do so again. Before I lost my position in the bank, I was a very abstemious man."

"So far as the latter part of your statement is concerned, I believe that to be strictly true, Mr. Temporel; as to the first, I am willing to take your word."

"Thank you. I hardly deserve your confidence. Let me explain, Mr. Carvel. I must try to put myself right with you. I don't think I am unreasonable in asking for a hearing."

Carvel looked at his watch, and relaxed somewhat the stiffness of his attitude. "Very well. I will give you fifteen minutes more, if you will consent to one condition."

"To any," said Temporel eagerly.

"It is this—you must not see or attempt to communicate with my niece, Cynthia, until I give you full permission to do so."

"I agree," said Temporel, without hesitation.

"Sit down, and let me hear what you have to say."

Temporel took a seat, and flushed, eager, earnest, began his narration. He told of the robbery at the bank, of the useless efforts, made first by the police and continued by himself, to trace the criminals; he went on to speak of the cable from the English office, and of his own despair when he was informed that he must resign his position in the bank. From that he proceeded to his own deterioration, forgetting and extenuating nothing.

"Try to put yourself in my place, Mr. Carvel," he said, with a gesture of despair. "I had spent all my money in endeavoring to track the criminals, I had been thrown out of employment by the directors. It was, of course, possible for me to return to New York, but what could I do there? Perhaps it was false pride, but I could not bear the thought of returning, a broken and workless man; I couldn't bear to face Cynthia, who had shared my hopes. I did not wish to receive the spiteful condolences of malicious people. So I stayed on, kept up by the hope of securing a post under the government here, practically promised me by His Excellency, Don Luis."

"Ah," said Carvel. "He did not tell me of that."

"He wouldn't," said Temporel quickly. "He's the soul of kindness, but he would not go about openly boasting of his efforts in my behalf. I owe much to that man."

Carvel nodded, and Temporel went on:

"I did not get the post. Local prejudices were against the policy of giving posts to aliens. Don Luis did his best, but in the end even he had to give way. That sunk me deeper in the mire. I got reckless. It seemed to me that I had lost everything worth living for—Cynthia, my self-respect, my prospects of advancement. You have never been in my position, and perhaps you will not understand. I asked myself what did anything matter. No one cared if I were drunk or sober, if I rose or fell. What happened? I wanted to forget. I shall be frank with you. I was in a fair way to become an irredeemable sot."

John Carvel frowned a little, and looked steadily at his companion.

"It seems to me to show a certain weakness of temperament," he said slowly.

"It was weak—horribly, detestably weak," Temporel admitted, flushing again. "I see that now, as I did not see it at the time. Then, Mr. Carvel, the president's secretary came to me, and told me that His Excellency wished to see me. I had been drinking that day, and went just as I was—I shall never forget it. Surely, surely, the president might have told me that you and——"

"He suggested that you should have warning," said Carvel. "Apparently he knew the facts, though he endeavored to conceal them. You were invited without ceremony at the suggestion of my niece, Cynthia."

Temporel sat back in his chair. Cynthia had suggested it! The president would have warned him. A dull red crept into his cheeks.

"I can hardly believe it," he said slowly. "Do you mean me to believe

that Cyn—that your niece intended me to betray myself?"

"No. I am sure that was not her wish or intention. Remember that she loved you, that rumors had reached her ears. She trusted in and believed in you so fully that she wished you to prove the baselessness of the rumors in the most open way."

Temporel grew calm again. His heart, which had begun to beat fast, slowed to its normal. "God bless her! Mr. Carvel, I want you to promise me something. I think I am on the track of the thieves. If I can secure them, I may be able to reason with the bank directors. Possibly I might get reinstated. If I do that, if I again take up my position as manager in the bank, will you allow me to go to Cynthia, and ask her to forget what has passed?"

Mr. Carvel moved uneasily in his chair and glanced thoughtfully before him. Temporel's tones carried conviction. He was disposed to regard the affair more lightly than he had done.

But there was Cynthia to be considered. She did not look so lightly upon the offense. She had the very proper, but very unyielding, outlook of youth. Her pride had received a blow.

"It is not unreasonable," continued Temporel. "I only ask for a chance."

John Carvel rose. "You shall have it if it is within my power. Of course, my niece may refuse to receive you. I cannot answer for her. But, subject to the condition I mentioned, your success in the matter of the inquiry will bring you my assistance."

"Thank you. Are you going to stay long in Santa Malua, Mr. Carvel? I see that you have rented this house."

"I am not certain as to the length of my stay. I could, of course, extend it, if there was any good reason for my so doing."

"There may be—I think there will be."

"Well, if it happens so, I will make arrangements."

"Thank you again."

John Carvel once more glanced at his watch, "I have given you twenty-five minutes. You must go before my niece returns. She is out driving with His Excellency. Good-by. I shall be glad to hear from you if anything turns up."

Temporel took up his hat, but still lingered, smiling uneasily.

"Mr. Carvel—tell me—does Cynthia —still——"

"I cannot say exactly. I am not an expert where a woman's heart is concerned. Apparently, she has put you completely out of her mind, but——"

Temporel leaned forward. "Yes, yes?"

"But, I think—— Yes, I think you need not lose hope."

When Temporel left the house a minute later, he felt as if he were walking on air.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE ATTACK ON THE JAIL.

Three days later, Aster came to Temporel. They had met in the interim, but nothing of especial moment had passed between them. Temporel had just risen, and Aster found him shaving in his bedroom.

"Great Scott!" cried Temporel, "you've made an early start. What's up?"

"Nothing much. I've hired a boat, and I'm going fishing."

"Oh, are you?" said Temporel, laughing. "What bait are you going to use?"

"Modern scientific methods," said Aster, grinning. "Oxy-acetylene plant, and a few files. I shall be lying inshore as it gets dark."

Temporel started. "To-night, then?"

"Sure," said Aster. "To-night's the night. There'll be no moon till close on three o'clock. You will have to make your plans, too. I'll take the boat up toward that wreck northward. José left town yesterday, and he is to meet us with three horses inshore. We're watched. Some one will be sure to follow you, so you had better come out quite openly, carry a lunch basket, and make for the depot. You can get a ticket for Insinito. Ask for it as loudly

as you can without giving the idea away. From Insinito you can get a train back at about six, and may get out at the last little station before you come to the port.

"From there it's only a mile to the place where we meet, which should be in a direct line eastward of the wreck. There are some good clumps of brush to guide you, and if the light fails, José or I will give the call of a sea gull. See? Insinito is a good ninety miles out of Santa Malua, and if you go by the ten-thirty express this morning—Insinito first stop—it's odds no one will take the trouble to follow you. Of course, if some suspicious-looking fellow takes train with you, you've got to lose him somewhere."

"Shall I take my pistol?"

"Oh, sure. That's the best kind of argument to put up. Well, so long."

Temporel caught the train for Insinito, and found himself spinning out of Santa Malua. At the station he imagined that he had observed a man watching him from a little distance. It was certain that the same man stood next him as he purchased his ticket. Once in the train he would have liked to look out of the window to see if this man were also going to Insinito, but he restrained the impulse, feeling that it would be wiser to seem wholly at his ease, as if he were going on a mere holiday.

He reached Insinito without mishap, and found it a sleepy little town, nestling under the shadow of the mountains. Indians, half-breeds, and a few Magyars made up the population. Temporel made a rough lunch, then strolled out to the lower slopes, and read a magazine, reclining on a tuft of sun-dried grass. Between smoking and reading, the hours passed slowly. As six came near, he rose and made his way to the station, procured a ticket for the last stop before the port of Santa Malua, and waited.

The train rolled in at last—twenty-five minutes late—and Temporel climbed aboard.

It was quite dark when he arrived at his destination. Jettisoning his basket, he set off cheerfully toward the southwest.

From time to time he looked at his watch and the compass he carried. Thirty-five minutes passed, but no sign of his friends. He walked on for five minutes more, then stopped.

Brushwood grew here rather thickly, and in the darkness which prevailed he might easily get entangled. He lighted a cigarette, with the idea that his friends might catch the tiny flare. But the match went out, and nothing had happened. On the still air the sound of the sea came to him, breaking in long rollers upon the beach of gray sand, a monotonous and mournful iteration. He began to feel anxious.

Then suddenly, to his right, a sea gull screamed. He turned to listen. It came again, this time a little nearer. Temporel answered with a passable imitation, and began to walk in that direction. Four minutes later he met Aster and José, both mounted, and leading a spare horse.

"That you, Mr. Temporel?" came Aster's voice out of the gloom. "If it is, jump up. We've got to ride like blazes, if we want to make a job of it before the light comes. José, steady that beast."

"Right," said Temporel, putting a hand on the horse's mane, and preparing to mount. He got a foot into the stirrup. "I got through without being followed."

"Same here," said Aster, gathering up his reins. "We beached the boat, and got half filled coming in. José went out a bit into the water on his horse, and got the end of the painter. Now we've got eight miles to cover, and we have to do the last mile on our feet, for fear of making a noise. I know the track. Just keep close to me."

They set off at a gallop, and presently the mournful sound of the breakers passed out of hearing. The country was open here, all grass, and no fencing. Presently Aster thought they had ridden far enough. To one side they could see the glow that hung over the city. They dismounted, put on loose

grass sandals over their shoes, and led their horses westward.

"José will hold our horses outside the 'dobe wall," said Aster, as a final instruction. "I got the storekeeper to send in a few cases of good champagne, so I hope the jailers will have a considerable jag on by this time. You, Temporel, must come with me. I've fitted up a kind of screen for you to hold behind me when I'm working. That, and keeping watch, is your job. If Serrano is manacled, we must carry him out—see? This is the last bit of talk we're going to have for a spell, so we must settle everything. I have the tools in a saddlebag, and José is carrying the plant. You will find the screen slung on your saddle."

"Right," said Temporel shortly. "We must work in the dark, I suppose?"

"Yes. But the screen is easily handled, and the rest you can leave to me."

They went on again, and presently the dark mass of the high adobe wall prevented farther progress. Temporel and Aster dismounted, giving the head ropes of their horses to José. Aster unslung his bag, and got down the oxy-acetylene plant. Then he proceeded to unwind a rope, which was terminated by an iron pair of hooks. He had evidently abandoned the idea of cutting steps in the wall. No one spoke, as he took hold and climbed the rope, the hook of which he had managed to fasten to the wall coping.

Sitting astride the wall, he agitated the rope, and Temporel saw that he wished to pull up the tools. He fastened them on quickly, Aster drew them up with an effort, and began to lower them down the other side. A burst of loud singing from the jail brought a smile to his face.

He slipped down inside the wall, untied the tools, and again climbed to the coping. The rope was thrown over to Temporel, who grasped it, and was soon beside his companion. José heard a slight scraping sound, a faint thud, and was satisfied.

The two men, carrying the tools and the screen, approached the prison with the utmost caution. At the left angle of the building, the window of the last cell was well protected. A bar was set in a socket every two inches, and Aster shook his head angrily. This was going to be a long job. But he got to it quickly, and Temporel held up the screen to conceal him. The thing had been fitted on bamboos, and could be held behind the back, with two hands at the level of the waist. The lower sill of the window was at a height of four feet from the ground.

José, meanwhile, waited curiously. He had good nerves, but now they were being fully tried. His was the patience of inaction. He could not see what was going on; every moment he feared to hear the sounds of alarm and of pursuit.

But, as he waited, another sound came to his ears. There was a faint but steady and continuous rustling of the grasses, the light padding of cautiously approaching feet. He tied the horses' head ropes together, and slipped noiselessly to the ground. Quickly divesting himself of his *poncho,* he stole round the standing horses. They were now between him and the intruder. He held the blanket in both hands, and waited.

The footsteps came nearer, they stopped within two paces. José judged that the newcomer was examining the horses, perhaps in surprise at finding them there. This was a moment for extreme adroitness. Stooping under the belly of the nearest animal, he crept forward, rising suddenly face to face with the spy.

He was quick as strong. The blanket swept rapidly over the other man's head, and was wound tightly about the mouth, opened that moment to emit a cry of warning. He tripped the man neatly, and flung himself upon him. Drawing a knife, he penetrated the clothing of his opponent until the point scratched bare flesh.

The man might not hear him through the folds of the blanket, but repeated scratches from the knife told the other that he was to lie still and silent under pain of death. When he understood this, José improvised a gag, and, putting his hand under the *poncho,* fixed it,

and, rising from the ground, began to take off his belt. With it he fastened the ends of the *poncho* under the arms of the spy, and breathed more easily. The whole thing had not occupied three minutes, and had been done almost without noise. He waited a little longer, and, finding that Aster and Temporel did not return, reënforced the man's bonds by tying his legs together with a piece of the rope which hung at his saddle peak.

Aster had been working for three-quarters of an hour, when he put down his tools, and touched Temporel on the arm. The latter felt along the sill of the window, and found that twelve bars had been cut out of the sockets, and only hung dependent from above. No sound except a noise of gentle shuffling had come from the inside, but, as his hand passed along, it came suddenly in contact with a man's head. He started, and drew it back.

He permitted himself one soft-spoken word: "Serrano!"

The man within grasped at a bar, and pulled heavily. The socket above gave a little. This had been the work of some knavish contractor favored by a venial government. Aster and Temporel became aware that the prisoner was helping them. Each seized a bar, and bent it inward. They worked eagerly, quickly, putting every ounce of energy they possessed into the business. In another twenty minutes they had laid hold of the prisoner's arms, and were helping him carefully through the opening. Still no one had come to disturb them.

The prisoner's arms were free, but his ankles were secured by a light chain connecting two rings. Once outside, he seized Aster's hand, and, raising it, tapped it lightly on his lips. It was Serrano, after all!

Without the exchange of a word, they raised the dumb man, and carried him across the space which lay between the jail and the surrounding wall. They found the hanging rope, and Aster mounted to the coping. Serrano was able to use his hands, and, with some assistance, he was got over the wall in safety. Aster and his companion went back to the building to secure their tools. In a few minutes they had rejoined José.

He came a few yards to meet them, and discovered that they had effected their purpose. Serrano being put down, he drew the attention of the others to the spy, who was lying on the ground motionless. Temporel ran his hand over the muffled head, Aster felt that the bindings were secure, and again straightened himself.

"We have no time for him," he said, very softly. "Get Serrano up at once. We must go."

The dumb man was to travel on José's horse, so the latter mounted, and Aster hoisted the fettered man to a place before him. The chain prevented him from sitting astride. Temporel put the tools together, and fastened them on his horse and Aster's. Both swung to saddle, and the little cavalcade got into motion, leaving the gagged man lying where José had thrown him.

"What luck!" said Temporel, when they had put a mile between them and the jail. "We got him without much difficulty. I suppose that man was spying on us, eh, José?"

"It seems so, señor. It is a pity we did not look at him."

"What?" said Aster. "Light a match, and have them all down on us! No, sir, not me."

"I think he is pretty secure, anyway," said Temporel. "Don't worry about him. The next thing to do is to get our friend under safe cover. Which way?"

Aster looked up at the dark sky. "We're all right. No moon for two hours yet. Now, Temporel, you leave us and scoot for home. Throw those tools into the first bit of rough brush, and leave the horse before you reach Santa Malua. José and I will see to this business, but you've got to prove an alibi by being in bed when the sun gets up. We may need one."

"But——" began Temporel, in some perplexity.

"Don't!" said Aster quickly. "Just get going. I'll explain wnen I see you again."

CHAPTER XIX.

POSSIBILITIES.

Two days passed before Temporel again talked with Aster. He had seen him once in the meantime, walking across one of the squares, but from motives of caution did not accost him.

Aster came into his room about eight o'clock in the evening. "Well, Temporel," he said, smiling, "I guess you thought I had deserted you altogether. As a matter of fact, I have been playing tutor to that fellow we have taken under our wing—teaching him to write."

"Where is he?" asked Temporel. "You forgot to tell me that when we separated."

Aster looked at him earnestly. "Temporel, I would just as soon you didn't ask. He's quite safe, but I can't say where he is. You won't misunderstand me? I think it wiser for the present to keep it to myself."

Temporel frowned; then his face cleared. "It all seems most mysterious, Aster," he said good-humoredly. "I don't see why I should be left out of it, but, if you really think it wiser, I agree. How are you making out with Serrano?"

"Well, it would be a mighty hard job only that he's a man, and has observed things as he went along. He's bright, though. Of course, I can't take him out of doors, but I have to feed him with pictures. I started with the word 'tree.' I put it down in separate letters, and showed him a tree in a picture. Then I showed him two more trees, and put down the word again for each. He tumbled to that instantly, turned to the window, pointed out a palm, and then the word I had written. Then I got the word 'trunk,' and showed him the picture in an advertisement. He saw that, and showed me the first two letters in each word. Then I wrote him down an alphabet, each letter large, and set him to copy it. He seems to have some faint idea of drawing, which helps him a bit."

"Can you draw, Aster?" asked Temporel. "You might try him with a sketch of a man running away with some money. If he has been trying all along to tell me of the bank robbery, that is certain to interest him."

Aster shook his head. "I couldn't draw a goat's grandmother—that is, a real picture of one, but I can do kind of child's copies. I thought of that, and made a real scarecrow, with a big bag in each hand, and money coming out of it. What d'ye think Serrano did? Well, he just made one skip for the table, and put his finger on the word 'banco,' which I had taught him the meaning of."

Temporel was very eager now. "Then he did see something," he cried. "We are getting to the heart of it."

"Seems so. Well, I pointed to the word, and I pointed to my scarecrow picture, and raised my eyebrows as high as I could. He saw that I was asking question, so I gave him a paper to answer it on. The thing he drew was marvelously like a *rural*——"

"That refers, of course, to the men who formed the cordon round the bank," said Temporel, somewhat disappointed. "By the way, did you get hold of any of the men on the list I got for you?"

"All except three," said Aster briskly. "I can't lay my hands on them yet. It seems to me they went out of town soon after. But I was telling you about Serrano. He was very sure about that *rural* being my scarecrow with the money. He kept pointing from one to the other, and making great play with his hands. Say, I'm going to have a good look at some of the *rurales* to-morrow. I've got an idea. The whole business has a solution, but it seems too darned simple to be true."

Temporel suddenly gripped him by the arm. "Heavens, man! Don't keep me in suspense. What is it?"

"You'll hear pretty soon," said Aster. "I'll run in to see you about this time day after to-morrow, and I'll bring José. Now, I'm going. Don't worry."

Aster was as good as his word. Two days later he appeared with José in Temporel's rooms.

"Here we are, Temporel," he cried gleefully. "We got through slick enough. Sit down, José, and have a cigar. We want you to tell us all about the night of the affair at the bank."

"Very well, señor," said José, seating himself diffidently.

Aster took a chair, and sat across it, his arm leaning on the back.

"Now, then, we know the *rurales* woke you up, and the *intendente* asked you to come out and talk. After that you were sent to the cavalry barracks with a message. Who was that message for?"

"For the General Mayoro."

"Right, and what did he say?"

"He said: 'Tell His Excellency I shall send ten troopers.'"

"Did he say where he would send them?"

"No, señor. Hastily he said what I have told you."

"Did the message say anything about the troopers' destination?"

"No, señor—or, rather, I did not see the message. It was given to me in an envelope."

Aster half started up. "In an envelope! You mean to say the fellow had it all ready in an envelope? That shows it was premeditated."

Temporel stared at him, tense and eager. "My dear fellow! You don't think the *intendente* had anything to do with it?"

"I hardly know what to think, but, at any rate, I must find out the name of that *intendente*."

"What about Serrano?" asked Temporel curiously.

"Well, he gets on slowly. I am wondering if the *intendente* would dress differently from the other men. I didn't think of observing that simple point, I can't think why."

"Of course he does," said Temporel. "I could not tell you offhand the points of difference, but I am quite sure they exist. Why do you want to know?"

"Well, because when Serrano did his child's picture of a *rural,* he drew a kind of uniform. If that is the dress of an *intendente*, and Serrano put it in on purpose, I think we have some clew."

"My dear fellow, the *intendente* idea is quite an obsession with you. Serrano may have drawn it in that way with no definite idea of suggesting the rank. And we can't tell that very well. But, presuming that the *intendente* is the man who managed the robbery, how does it square with the letter from His Excellency?"

"Nothing easier if the fellow was really a crook. He could have forged a letter, knowing the general would be just out of his sleep, and probably reading it in a bad light. That's easy."

Temporel reflected. "A confoundedly audacious scheme, since he knew the president was with me upstairs. But why should he send for troopers, in any case?"

"To send José on an errand which would keep him out of the way. Ten to one he faked a letter beforehand, told His Excellency that he had received information about some men being in the bank, and suggested that they should send to catch them after nightfall. He would tell the president that the men had probably secreted themselves in some upper rooms, because José slept below. I found out all the names of the *rurales* in the cordon except three. They seem to have vamosed. Now, if those fellows were paid hands of the *intendente's*." He stopped, and looked triumphantly at Temporel.

The latter shook his head. "Your theory is quite delightful, and quite improbable," he said. "No man would dare to do such a thing, knowing that at any moment the president might come down and discover them at their work."

Again Aster looked disappointed. "Say, this climate must have turned my brains into mud. Now I come to think of it, the theory doesn't include that Spanish swindler I'm after, as I surely thought it did."

"Another obsession," Temporel smiled. "Who is he?"

"He looks mighty like your amateur detective, Barriga."

Temporel jumped to his feet. "Barriga! Great Scott, Aster, I believe you

have hit it! That day you met me on the Alameda I saw a man who looked as if he had been spying on us. I couldn't see his face. Then that other night—or was it the same? Anyway, a man fired at me, and got away. The next thing, Barriga, with a *rural*, came from the Calle Destina, which runs parallel with the street I lost the rogue in—see? He said he had heard a shot fired. Then again in the *fonda* at Otaque, I was busy pumping that *rural*, when Barriga turned up, and forced himself on me. Why, he must have been the man who was spying all along."

"Sure. And when he was drawing his pay, he was just looking after himself in two senses," cried Aster, in delight. "José, do you remember the man you captured near the jail?"

José had been looking perplexedly from one to the other. Now he nodded. "Oh, yes, señor."

"Was he tall, or short?"

"It was so dark it is difficult to say. But I think he was of medium height."

"Temporel, I'll bet if we had looked at the fellow we would have found our friend Barriga."

Temporel clenched his hands. "Then he almost ruined me. He went through my money, kept me from discovering the real identity of the thief, or thieves, and——" he stopped, thinking of Cynthia and his humiliation, his face working. "I'll kill him, Aster! I'll make him pay."

"No, leave him to me. I'll see to him."

Temporel became calmer. "All right. Just one thing: If you go to the place where you have hidden Serrano, he may watch you."

"I don't care if he does," said Aster, smiling mysteriously. "He wouldn't dare to go where I put Serrano."

CHAPTER XX.

CARMENCITA IS WARNED.

The Doña Carmencita Pensol did not find time hang heavy on her hands. She was an inveterate gambler, and if she sometimes grumbled that the tables were closed on an absurdly small limit, generally the fortunes of the mimic war between the croupiers and herself left only a small margin for or against.

During her stay at Piedraolas, she permitted a youthful officer of that brilliantly uniformed and highly inefficient force, the Coquibian army, to act as her cavalier—a post of honor which involved the payment of small debts, the transportation of the beauty's impedimenta, and the right to be scolded and screamed at on slight provocation. There was only one advantage, and that of doubtful value. It lay in the right to be seen in public places with a woman beautiful enough to turn his head, and almost old enough to be his mother.

She led a lazy life during the day; a highly tense and nervous one during the nightly sessions at the tables. She had almost forgotten the town of Santa Malua, and that bright particular star, the president, until one day there came a letter which set her furiously to think.

It was from a dear friend—an admirable letter, couched in terms which could not have offended the most fastidious. The sting lay, as usual, in the tail, deftly interwoven into a network of news, scandal, and terms of endearment.

Carmencita was sitting under the veranda of her hotel—the boy officer at her feet—when she read it. She promptly kicked her cavalier, whether intentionally or not it is impossible to say, and rose to her feet.

"Did you bring me that box of fondants?" she demanded of the youth.

He turned all colors. "Ah, I have forgotten——"

Carmencita relieved her pent-up soul.

"You are the worst kind of pig!" she said furiously. "You know I can never pass a morning agreeably without those fondants. You neglect me shamefully. Go and procure them at once!"

The worm was too fascinated to turn. He blushed instead.

"*Señorita mia,* I assure you——"

"I have heard your assurances often. It is a shameful neglect. Go at once!"

He fell over his sword in an attempt to execute her command. Recovering himself, he went off at a smart pace.

"Ah," said Carmencita to herself, looking spitefully at the departing back of her cavalier, "so Luis thinks to get me out of the way! He is a fool, and I shall tell him so. He hopes to ingratiate himself with this New York heiress. She has money, and the excellent Luis would sell his soul and the soul of every one else for that. But I shall put a stop to the game. I shall write to him, and tell him that I shall not tolerate it. I shall also write to the Señorita Maria Luisa, and say that it is not true. Then, perhaps, the spiteful creature will give me some details."

Completely forgetting the boy officer, she went indoors, and wrote two letters, the first to the president, rating him for his inconstancy; the second to her friend, denying categorically that the president had fixed his mercenary eyes upon the rich New York girl. Then she went back to the veranda, and spent the morning in wrangling with the fascinated young soldier.

On the second day after, two letters were delivered to her, which drove her almost to the point of madness. One came from His Excellency, coldly flouted her claims to intervene, warned her that he had sufficient power to have her put over the frontier if she dared by word or letter to communicate with Miss Cynthia Carvel. He remarked that as she had spent a considerable amount of his money, she must be content.

The man was quite capable of carrying out his threat, she knew. So she abandoned an idea that had come to her, and began to think out some way of venting her spite upon Don Luis.

If she wanted further confirmation of the facts, the second letter gave it. With manifest glee, and verbal regret, her familiar friend piled up the evidence. As Carmencita read, she wished with all her angry soul that she could have a quiet talk with the writer. For the next two days she shut herself up in her room, and refused admittance to all the world. When she again reappeared, she went first to the post office with a little packet, which she took care to register.

Then she descended to the veranda, smiled delightfully upon her youthful lover, and so mesmerized him that before ten minutes had passed he had stuttered out a fiery proposal—and had been accepted. He had cash, if not brains; his people were immensely stiff and aristocratic. In these circumstances, what was more romantic, more necessary, than an elopement? That night they crossed the frontier into a neighboring republic, were married the following morning, and, so far as can be ascertained, lived unhappily ever after.

On the evening following the elopement of the Señorita Pensol with her fascinated youth, Temporel found himself wandering in the direction of the suburb in which John Carvel had rented a villa. He was prompted by a lovesick desire to look at the house where Cynthia lived. He meant only to look at it as dark drew on, and then to return home.

As the light of day suddenly fled, he advanced down the road in front of the villa, and, ensconcing himself under the pillared porch of a vacant house almost opposite, stood thoughtfully, staring into vacancy, his mind filled anew with hopeless and painful reminiscences.

He was about to turn away, when the sound of a footstep—quick, firm, energetic—came to his ears. He looked down the road. A figure which seemed familiar came into the yellow glow of a lamp. He looked again, to assure himself that he had made no mistake.

No. The figure, the walk, everything told him that he had guessed correctly. The man now approaching rapidly was Aster.

Something moved Temporel to step quietly from the porch and retire a little up the street. He kept in the shadows, and walked very softly.

Aster advanced until he was almost opposite the porch where Temporel had stood. Then he, too, moved into the shadows, and waited. After a minute, however, he reappeared, and, crossing the road, went directly to John Carvel's villa.

Temporal was startled. What business had the man there?

He came back again swiftly but silently. Aster had disappeared into the garden surrounding the house.

Temporel listened. The footsteps had died away. But a moment later he heard the sound of a door opening, a murmur of voices, and a shuffling. Then the door closed with a sharp thud.

Temporel was genuinely perplexed. What Aster wanted with John Carvel was a question he found himself quite unable to answer. He waited for some time to see if Aster would again emerge from the grounds surrounding the villa, but waited in vain.

Returning slowly to the little house in the Calle De Los Vapores, he kept a cautious lookout. If he ran across Barriga he would know that their theory held good. But no one was in evidence, so far as he could see. He got a late car for the port, and presently reached his rooms.

"Señor, there is a packet for you," said Juanna, as he entered.

"A packet?"

"Yes, it came by post. It has the postmark of Piedraolas."

"That's a seaside, isn't it?"

"Yes, and there is a casino. I placed the packet on your table."

"Thank you, señorita."

He opened the packet carefully, and found what appeared to be a letter, in a large, scrawling hand, folded tightly about some small object the size of a pea.

"Hello!" he said, half aloud.

Unfolding the letter, he shook it, letting the contents fall upon the table. Side by side lay a slip of paper and a white, sparkling diamond. He stood back, and stared in amazement. Then he picked up the gem, and began to examine it carefully. It was a fine stone, exquisitely cut, and of the finest water.

There was some writing on the paper. It was apparently in a disguised hand, first with a back slant, afterward upright, as if the writer had found it rather an effort to pen the words in this fashion. It ran thus:

THINGS THAT EXIST.

There are four prisoners in Puerto Pelos.

There is a criminal museum in Santa Malua.

There are ten troopers.

There was nothing more than that, and, as he read, Temporel's expression became slightly bewildered. What had he to do with criminal museums, and troopers? Could this be an attempt to hint at the identity of the bank thieves? He was inclined to think so.

He looked again at the diamond, and wondered. He remembered that the Doña Carboles' jewels had been stolen from the bank, and reflected that this might be a stone taken from its setting. But why had it been sent to him? The packet had come from Piedraolas.

He took up the letter next, and whistled. It was not addressed to him, but to His Excellency, Don Luis Pescate. Noticing that, he put it aside for the moment, and called Juanna. She came to him quickly.

"Well, what is it, señor?"

"That's what I want to know. Are you sure this was addressed to me?"

"Certainly." She bent and picked up the opened cover of the packet, which he had thrown on the floor. "You opened it yourself, and here is the address, quite correct."

"Thank you. That is all I wanted to know. *Buenas noches, señorita.* I will not keep you longer."

When she had gone, he took up the letter once more, and read it with ever-growing perplexity:

My Adored Luis: I cannot believe that what I have heard is true. I will not believe it. Whatever they say, I know you are true to me. I know that not all the wealth of America could come between us.

You will reassure me, dear friend, will you not? You will tell me that it is all false. If I do not hear from you—but no, that will be impossible, for I start for Santa Malua at once—if I do not see you when I arrive, I must visit this girl from New York, and learn from her own lips that you do not trouble her with your attentions. As you love me, meet me to-night at ten o'clock at the deserted estancia on the Otaque Road. I shall be there with open arms to welcome you. Your distracted but adoring

Carmencita.

Temporel felt ashamed then that he

had read this private note. But, after all, the address had been written in a firm hand, which showed that the sender had been in no doubt as to the destination of the packet. Also, the letter to His Excellency contained no mention of the diamond.

What had been the intention of the sender? It was just possible that the latter was the woman who wrote the letter, and that she had by mistake inclosed the diamond in the slip of paper. But that hinted that she was a confederate of the bank thieves.

For the moment Temporel gave it up in despair. Aster would soon come again. He must consult him before taking action.

CHAPTER XXI.

ASTER SPRINGS A SURPRISE.

His sleep was somewhat disturbed that night. His brain was too active. At earliest dawn he was fully awake, and lay staring up at the ceiling.

At six o'clock there came a gentle tap at the door. He raised himself in bed, and said: "Come in."

Aster appeared, smiling. "You didn't expect me so early, eh? My apologies, Temporel. I've got good news for you this time."

Temporel got out of bed, and slipped on a dressing gown. "Glad to hear it," he said quickly. "Sit down and tell me about it. I've had the very deuce of a night—could only sleep in scraps."

"Sorry." Aster sat down. "Mind if I smoke?"

"Not a bit. You'll find some cigars on the table, in the cedar box. Pass me one when you're at it."

Aster lighted his cigar, and began: "You remember I was going to put myself wise about that uniform. Well, I did. I saw the *intendente* yesterday in the square, and compared him with one of the others. There's a considerable difference. I spotted it at once. The picture Serrano made me was a man in the uniform of an officer—see? That just makes it out that the *intendente* of the night of the robbery was the fellow Serrano intended to point out."

Temporel considered. "Well, we'll take that for granted. How does it touch our affair?"

"This way: If it was the officer, my inquiry was limited. I had to find out who was in charge that evening. There's where I ran up against a snag. It took a lot of snooping around before I could hear anything."

"But you did?"

"Oh, sure. I found out eventually that the man was no longer in the *rurales*."

Temporel was disappointed. "Just our luck."

"But I didn't quit there. I got onto the trail of the *intendente* who left. It would take a considerable time to tell you how I went at it, so we'll cut that, and come to our point."

"Did you find out the name of the man?"

Aster struck his hand sharply on his knee. "Yes, the *intendente* on the night of the robbery was Barriga."

Temporel opened his eyes widely. "Good heavens! Is it possible? The scoundrel robbed the bank while he was supposed to be in charge of the *rurales* outside, and then he pretended to play detective, and threw dust in my eyes while he took my money. What a muddle-brained idiot I must have been not to see through him——"

"Oh, he's pretty slick," said Aster seriously. "And it's up to us not to let him slip out of our hands. That's one of the first jobs I've laid out for us. You can get him here on an excuse, and we'll fix him."

Temporel walked agitatedly up and down the room. "It fits in like a jigsaw puzzle," he said. "The three *rurales* who have left the town."

"Four—I found that out yesterday."

"The four, then. Next Barriga's retirement from the *rurales*, and his spying on us both—then that appearance outside the walls of the jail, when we went for Serrano. You must have noticed, by the way, that the papers hadn't a single word about the escape of a prisoner, or the discovery of a man tied up outside. That omission is suggestive."

"There's no doubt about it. I have got him to rights. He was in charge that night."

"Well, what's your plan of campaign?"

"Just what I said. We must get him here, and then put the fear of God into him. I believe he'll come if you write saying that you intend to renew the inquiry. Leave him to me after that. He's got to tell all he knows, and make a confession. With that in our hands, we can act."

Temporel began to dress quickly. He could hardly believe that at last, after the weary months of striving and repeated disappointment, they had secured a clew to the mystery of the robbery at the bank. Soon he might be able to remind John Carvel of his promise. He would see Cynthia, and find her, perhaps, more merciful now, more disposed to listen to his case. He looked a different man; erect, fresh, youthful. There was about him nothing of that subtle suggestion of dissipation which had shocked Cynthia at their last meeting. Remembering her, he had his thoughts carried back to the previous evening.

He turned to Aster, wrinkling his brows a little. "There is one thing I wish you would explain."

"What I can—yes."

"It's this—I don't want you to imagine I was spying on you——"

"You can just bet I won't," said Aster, glancing at him quickly.

Temporel, after a moment's hesitation, told him of his visit to the road in which John Carvel had taken a villa, of his waiting under the porch, and his surprise upon seeing the American himself approach and enter the house.

"I hope you won't think me unduly curious if I ask what you were doing there," he added.

Aster first frowned, then smiled. "No. It seems to me you've got a kind of option there. The thing wasn't meant to come out, but since you ask, it's only fair to myself to tell you. Besides, it doesn't matter a cent now."

"Very good. I should like to know."

"It's this way, Temporel. I told you the truth when I said I was a Pinkerton agent, also when I said that I was after a Spanish boodler, who had given me the slip ten years ago. But I didn't tell you that I had another commission, because it was up to me on the agreement to keep it dark. Professional curiosity drew me a bit, but a salary drew me more. There was some one in Santa Malua who began to surmise that you hadn't had a square deal. This person was put wise to the fact that you were cleaned out, having spent your last dime in the chase. The same individual didn't quite conceive of you as a saint, but thought, anyhow, since you were an American, and in a sort of way interested in one quarter, you should be given a chance to make good."

"I see."

"That being so, this person happened to hit on me as likely to do the business, and I was offered a regular salary, with a bonus to follow if the thing panned out as expected. Your telling me that the *rurales* were after Serrano just after you met him, first put me on the track. I reckoned that he had been seen semaphoring to you, to try and explain who broke the bank. I knew some one thought to sneak the man away before he let out what he knew. As a matter of fact, I believe that he saw the stuff being handed out of the bank that night. Otherwise, how did he point out the *intendente* as being the man who had the run of the cash?"

"I see that. But how did this person you speak of know that you were in the inquiry line?"

"Through old Torino, the banker here. He acts as local agent for the Nicaraguayan grandee in Leon, who wants Barriga badly."

"I believe I could tell who commissioned you," said Temporel. "Was it Miss Carvel?"

"Guess again."

Temporel whistled softly. "John Carvel?"

Aster nodded. "Yes, sir; Mr. John Carvel. He is a rare old sort. He's fond of that niece of his, and he couldn't get away from the idea that you were still in Miss Cynthia's eye."

"So you put Serrano——"

"I guess we did. We just toted him along that night to Mr. Carvel's house, and he's been there ever since. He's there now!"

CHAPTER XXII.

AMAZEMENT.

For a full minute, Temporel did not speak. A tide of joy surged through his brain.

"But," he said presently, staring at Aster, "I don't think it was wise to leave Serrano in Carvel's house. You seem to go there openly. You may have been followed and watched."

"What then?" asked Aster, shrugging. "Serrano is officially dead. The president himself told you that he had committed suicide in prison. Suppose they discover him, and ask us to produce him—well, people will want to know why he was kept in jail, and the rumor of his death circulated."

"That only applies to Barriga, and, perhaps, the warden. They must have told the president that so that it would reach my ears."

Aster was silent for a moment. "Who recommended Barriga to you?" he asked then.

"His Excellency did."

"Quite so. Since Barriga was the *intendente,* Don Luis must have known him."

"Certainly. The president, as you know, came to the bank with the *rurales* that night. Wait a bit. I got a very odd letter yesterday evening. I'll show it to you."

Aster held out an eager hand. "We're moving some."

Temporel handed him the letter signed "Carmencita," and watched him as he read it. Aster smiled as he proceeded, and a triumphant light came into his eyes.

"O. K.," he said briefly, when he had finished.

"But why was it addressed to me?"

"That's easy. We'll go into that later——"

Temporel interrupted him. "Here's a slip of paper came with it."

Aster grasped at it, glanced down, and whistled.

"You don't tumble to what this means?" he asked.

"It's something to do with the robbery, of course," said Temporel, opening his pocketbook, and placing the diamond on Aster's palm. "That came, too. I can't get the hang of it."

"I'll show you mighty soon," said Aster. "Look at this slip now. It isn't signed, but the heading is '*Things That Exist.*'"

"Lots of things exist."

"Well, take the first: '*There are four prisoners in Puerto Pelos.*' That means the fort, because there isn't a jail there."

"Yes?"

"And there were four more *rurales* at the bank that night than I can see in sight. You may take it from me that those four were put out of the way, so's they couldn't talk. And why not? Well, they must have been the fellows who did the job."

Temporel frowned. "It's possible, I'll admit. Go on."

"Then we come to the next item: '*There is a criminal museum in Santa Malua.*' That tells us right away that there are tools in the museum we ought to have a squint at. You see, there'll probably be a catalogue, and from that we can see who the owners were, and the date of the deposit of the articles."

"You're right," said Temporel, seeing at last the trend of the other's remarks. "Of course, too, the ten troopers must have been the men sent for on the night of the bank robbery. They didn't turn up, but they are referred to unmistakably in the slip."

"Now you're talking," said Aster joyfully. "We've enough to go upon at once. If you don't mind, I'll keep this diamond, and the letter and slip. Barriga is the next on hand."

Temporel lighted a fresh cigar. "You think we should get him here?"

"We must have him here at once—to-day, anyway. Write him a note, and send it by mail. Tell him you've got a clew, and ask him to come and see you. Meantime I'll have a run through the

museum, and also call on a lady whom we won't name just yet."

"What time shall I appoint for Barriga to call?" asked Temporel, fetching pen and paper.

"Say two this afternoon. At that time, send Juanna and the old woman out for an airing, and see that your window here is shut and barred."

Temporel wrote:

ESTIMABLE SENOR: I think I have a clew to the bank thieves, and shall be glad if you will help me to follow it up. You were very useful before, with little to go upon. This time I believe we can succeed. If you will call here at two o'clock, I shall be obliged.
Yours faithfully.
CHARLES TEMPOREL.

"Right," said Aster, who had been looking over his shoulder. "That'll fetch him."

"I hope so. You can mail it when you go out, Aster. But what do you think is the meaning of that letter, and why was it addressed to me?"

Aster looked surprised. "What! You don't know Carmencita Pensol, and you've been living here for quite a while?"

"I may have heard the name, but I can't place it."

"Why, it was the talk of the town—the attachment of Don Luis to this señorita—until Miss Carvel came on the scene. Then Carmencita was sent off to Piedraolas. Naturally, being a jealous woman, and, having dear friends, some of them hint that His Excellency is casting the glad eye at the millionairess from Manhattan, and Carmencita is on hot plates. She knows she can't get back at the fellow straight, because he's got power enough to have her put in the fort if she becomes obdurate. So, instead, she sends the diamond to you, and the slip, giving the show away."

Temporel laid his hand heavily on Aster's shoulder. "Think what you're saying! You charge the president with being an accomplice in the bank robbery! You suggest that the diamond is from one of the stolen ornaments!"

Aster rose. "I do a heap more," he said decidedly. "I say that it is one of the stones, and I say that His Excellency is not the accomplice, but the principal!"

"I can't believe it!" cried Temporel. "Why, he was most kind to me. He did more for me than any other man before you came on the scene."

"Oh, he did for you, sure," said Aster, with a grin.

"Nonsense! He came to the bank to find out—but that's not all. He promised me a post under the government, and——"

"Did you get it?"

Temporel frowned. "That wasn't his fault. Local prejudices——"

"Local lime juice! Don Luis simply flimflammed you. He's a clever devil. See here, Temporel. Did the president say anything when you were searching the upper rooms at the bank?"

"Say what?"

"Well, did he keep you up there when you wanted to go down and see if the safes were all right?"

"He—yes, he did."

"What was he doing in the uniform of the *rurales* that night?"

Temporel glanced about uneasily. "I can't say."

"Well, I can. How was it that the letter for General Mayoro was already written, and went in an envelope? Why didn't the troopers come to the bank? For reasons good. It seems to me they just came into the town that night to take the four men who did the job to Puerto Pelos fort when the business was finished. Shall I enumerate the kindnesses Don Luis showed you?"

Temporel looked dazed. He had been duped, befooled. "Go on."

"He kept you from seeing what his men were doing with your safes; he had the bank looted, and gave the jewels to his inamorata; he prevented you from seeing anything by recommending Barriga, who took your money, and took care that you heard nothing of importance. That's not all. He kept you quiet by making promises, until he knew you had no cash to go on. Then your girl came out, and I'll lay any odds he told the uncle, in his sly way, that you were drunken and dissolute. Yes,

sir, he's been putting his finger in your pie, and keeping it there."

"If he's done that—hell's too good for him," said Temporel, scowling. "If you prove it, I am going to shoot him."

"You're not! You have got your señorita to marry, Mr. Temporel, and she won't marry a murderer, right or wrong. No, we have him booked another way."

"I must have more proof, in any case," said Temporel shortly.

"You'll get proof mighty quick. You can't believe it, because it isn't natural to think every man's a rogue and a hypocrite. I bet the Doña Maria Carboles recognizes that stone at sight. Carmencita got back at His Excellency by betraying him."

Temporel was convinced against his will. "What about the letter? That is still unexplained."

"No, the president will turn up at the place mentioned, to try to close the woman's mouth. She sent us the letter as a decoy. When our friend, Don Luis, comes along, he'll find us waiting for him, see? Serrano's coming along, too, as what the French call a 'pièce de conviction.'"

Temporel held out his hand. "Aster, you're a wonder! You have it splendidly worked out. You're quite right, too, about the president. I must not show up badly to Miss Carvel. He will have to stand his punishment in another way."

"Yes, we are going to dictate terms."

"Any preparations to make?"

"Yes. I'll send the letter to His Excellency. You had better make up a couple of serviceable gags, and a couple of strong mufflers. We'll finish the job to-night. Have your pistol in order."

CHAPTER XXIII.

BARRIGA TALKS.

Aster did not return to the Calle De Los Vapores until twenty minutes to two. He looked excited, almost as much so as Temporel, who had been impatiently awaiting his arrival, fearing that something had gone amiss.

"I've got it!" he said hurriedly. "The tools belonged to four fellows who aren't in the jail. Then I saw the doña, and she identified the stone at once. I made her promise not to talk about it till we allowed her. I can tell you she was pleased to think the crooks were going to get their gruel."

"Good!" said Temporel. "Now, we must get ready for the arrival of our friend. When he knocks, I shall go down to let him in. The señorita and the old woman have gone out. You must stay in my bedroom when he comes up. I'll put his chair with his back to that door. My own chair will be at the other side of the table, and I have fixed up a little hanging shelf on my side. From that I can reach my pistol in a second, without attracting his attention. When I strike the table with my hand you hurry in."

"Bully! It's near two now, so I'll slide along. This the door?"

"That's it."

When Aster had entered the bedroom, Temporel sat down at the table, and gave himself up to thought. He was excited, as the red flush on his cheeks showed. Half an hour would decide his fate.

The minutes went slowly. Presently from below there came the sound of a sharp knock. Hurriedly thrusting his hand under the table, to make sure that his pistol was in readiness, he rose, and went quietly downstairs.

He opened the door, and faced Barriga. The man was smiling. His greeting was effusive.

"Señor, I am glad that you have decided to renew the search."

"Yes, it is wiser. Will you come up to my room, where we can talk quietly?"

"Certainly, señor."

Temporel preceded him upstairs, his heart beating fast. They entered the room, and he seated himself at the table, motioning Barriga to the chair facing away from the bedroom door.

Now that the moment had come, he confessed to himself that he felt nervous about the outcome. If the man refused to speak—— But the next mo-

ment he pulled himself together, and began:

"I have decided to renew the search. You can assist me better than any one else" As he spoke, he put his hand under the table, his fingers closed about the butt of the pistol. He slid it onto his knee, and paused for a moment. Then he lifted it quickly, and leveled it at the other. "Barriga, please put both your hands on the table! Quick! And don't speak, or I shall shoot at once!"

Barriga made a quick movement, his face paled, but he put both his hands palm upward on the table. "Señor," he whispered, "what have I done?"

"What is your name?" asked Temporel, as softly. He knocked once on the table.

"Señor, it is, of course, Barriga!"

The bedroom door had opened. "You're a liar—it's Bazan!" said a quiet voice behind him.

Barriga half turned his head, but did not move his body, conscious of the menace of the pistol barrel opposite. Aster came round the table, and threw upon it a photograph, rather soiled, but still quite a passable likeness of the man who sat white and silent before him.

"That's you, Bazan. I've been after you before, and I thought I knew you again. The beard you've grown puzzled me a bit."

Barriga, or Bazan, found his voice. "It is not true, señor, and I demand to be released."

"I'll prove it's true, if I have to shave you," said Aster confidently. "As for release, well, you may think yourself lucky if you get off with your bare life. We want a confession, and we're going to get it. I can tell you everything you did in the bank affair, if that'll convince you. You were an *intendente* of *rurales,* and were in charge of the men at the bank; while your accomplice, or principal, kept Mr. Temporel in play, your four men looted two safes. They were afterward stowed in the fort so that they couldn't talk, and their tools are now in the criminal museum. Those four men were released prisoners, dressed in uniform. Then you pretended to act for Mr. Temporel, and spied on him instead."

Bazan was very pale at first, but, realizing that they knew all, he laughed cynically. "It is not true."

"You'll change your mind, son. The cash went into Don Luis' hands, with a percentage for you. The jewels were given by him to the Señorita Pensol, and one of the stones is now in my possession. Later, you found that Mr. Temporel was getting on the right track, and you tried to murder him. Oh, I know you."

Bazan laughed dryly. "And if it is true? What do you wish to do to me—to get a confession? But if I will not speak?"

"Then I guess you're going to keep silent till the last trump."

"But, if I do speak, will you release me?"

"No. I'll inform Torino, and then give you over to the authorities."

Bazan drummed with his fingers on the table. "It is a choice of death or prison for life, then—I shall not tell you one word."

"No," said Temporel, nodding at Aster. "There's a better way. We will give you twenty-four hours' start. There's a boat starting from the port to-morrow very early. Do you agree?"

Bazan looked casually about him, as if seeking a way of escape, then he turned his calculating eyes upon his two companions. He decided quickly.

"On that condition, señor, I consent."

His matchless audacity had given to his voice almost the tone of a patron addressing his dependents. He laughed slightly now.

"It is a bad player who does not know the resources of his hand," he continued, with a sideward smile. "Such a man will continue to play when he has not the remotest chance of winning—I, señores, am not a bad player. May I have paper and a pen?"

Temporel produced two sheets of foolscap and a fountain pen.

"Now, Barriga, or Bazan, put down everything you know about the affair. Your part in it, the"—a shade flitted across his face, and his mouth grew

sterner—"the president's part in it. You must take your oath to it afterward, and sign it in the presence of Mr. Aster and myself as witnesses."

"I am familiar with the composition of these things," said Bazan carelessly, as he took up the pen, and began to write. "You will find this quite a good legal document. Perhaps you will allow me to smoke?"

Temporel silently pushed him a cigar box, and sat down in the chair facing him. Aster stood behind the man, and looked over his shoulder. For a quarter of an hour there was no sound in the room but the hiss of the pen, soft and sibilant, an occasional sigh, that suggested ennui, from Bazan. The distant noises of the street came like a dreamy hum.

Presently Bazan put down the pen, and sat back in his chair.

"It is done," he said briefly, taking a second cigar from the box, and pushing the foolscap across to Temporel. "I presume that you will not let me go until you have gone further into the matter?"

"Afraid not," said Aster, somewhat amazed at his coolness. "First we have got to tie you up, so you can't warn His Excellency——"

"Why should I trouble?" asked Bazan.

"Ask me an easier one—we'll see that you don't, anyhow. Then you must have a gag in that dangerous mouth of yours. But we will do it all as gently as we can, and you will be free to-night."

Ten minutes later Bazan was securely trussed up on the sofa, and Aster and Temporel went out. They locked the door behind them.

CHAPTER XXIV.

HIS EXCELLENCY AT BAY.

The superlative calm of His Excellency, Don Luis Pescate, was rudely broken by the missive which fell, like a verbal bombshell, before him.

For almost the first time in his life, the careless good humor of the man gave place to a mood of hysterical violence. He cursed Carmencita in terms which exhibited a wide range of profanity.

That evening he was giving an entertainment to which all the local aristocracy had been invited. Cynthia had promised to be present, escorted by John Carvel. Don Luis, with an instinct for the psychological moment, had fixed upon this evening for the proposal which must secure for him the hand of the fair American, and more important in the future, the money bags of her uncle.

The rough fragments of the verbal bomb now flew among these plans.

It was too late to postpone the function. Some of the guests were coming in from distant estancias, some from the coast towns. It was too late to communicate with them. The letter had fixed the appointment for ten o'clock, at the deserted buildings on the Otaque Road. The guests were to arrive at eight.

The rendezvous lay at a distance of some three leagues. A good horse could cover the distance in three-quarters of an hour, and, allowing for half an hour's interview, he could leave his residence at a quarter past nine, and return at a quarter past eleven. In that interval some one must take his place, and fulfill the duties of host. It could be arranged.

He received his guests with his usual urbane manner, bowed over Cynthia's hand, cordially greeted John Carvel, who seemed to regard him with a dubious expression. His laugh, discreet and mellow, could be heard where the pulse of like beat fastest; his handsome face smiled appreciation, softened at a woman's word, became diplomatically serious as he spoke to one of his ministers. Then he went out.

A horse was waiting for him in the *patio*. He wore a *poncho,* and had put on long leather riding boots over his evening trousers. As the peon stood back, he cantered quickly out of the gateway.

After a hard ride across country he approached the deserted estancia on the Otaque Road.

This estancia, abandoned by a rancher

who had spent a lifetime and a fortune in useless litigation, was very pleasantly situated among paraiso and orange trees; a grove of tall eucalyptus flanked it on one side. The buildings had once been covered with pink stucco, now fallen off in patches, covered with creepers, yellow lichens, prehensile mosses. Orchids gripped the surrounding trees with parasitic fervor, swags of air plants depended from branch to branch, while beneath flowers straggled in unkept loveliness, lupins, verbena, tobacco flowers, the evening primrose, roses grew side by side, harmonized by nature's deft arrangement.

Don Luis drew rein and walked slowly toward the building. He found the open doorway, and paused. He reflected that he had not brought a lamp.

Then a light flamed within, and in the dark hallway the track of its beam made a yellow splash upon the dusty floor. Don Luis started along the hall, and entered the room. A lamp hung from a bracket there, its mellow light faintly illumining the apartment.

He looked to see Carmencita, but as his eyes wandered about the empty space they fell only upon the figure of a man sitting on a broken bench in the shadow. It was Serrano.

Don Luis gave a cry of fury. He had been trapped. That desperate woman had decoyed him here to betray him to his enemies. From a deep pocket he drew a long Mexican knife, and passed with hasty strides to where Serrano awaited him. Serrano, immobile, silent, facing him with a smile on his thin lips.

There were footsteps in the passage, footsteps outside the solitary window, from which the rusty iron bars had been broken away. Don Luis wheeled, snarling.

Temporel appeared in the doorway. His face was very pale, but his lips smiled. Aster put a hand and a pistol through the window, and climbed in. Serrano sat still on the bench—calm, without speech, relentless as fate.

"Ah, Señor Temporel, so you are in a plot against me!" cried Don Luis. "You shall all suffer for this! You now bite the hand that once would have fed you——"

"Drop your knife!" said Temporel, a hand upon the pistol in his pocket. "It seems that your errand was not much better. Do men come with knives to talk with women?"

Don Luis let the knife fall at his feet. He breathed hard, keeping his alert eyes upon Aster's threatening weapon. "It is a play, then?" he said gently. "We rehearse, is it not?"

Temporel put up a hand to his mouth, and glanced at Serrano, who took a paper from his pocket and held it out. It was the slip sent him by Carmencita. Don Luis glanced at it. "A blackmailing woman," he said sornfully.

Temporel held out something in his open palm, which glittered in the lamp rays. "This?"

Don Luis snarled in reply.

"This?" said Temporel, holding out the confession made by Bazan.

Don Luis was perceptibly whiter now. He unfolded the foolscap, read it slowly. A dazed look came into his eyes.

"This man?" said Temporel again, pointing to Serrano. "The man you persecuted for years because he refused to submit to extortions; the man you drove from pillar to post until he turned, and watched you constantly, waiting till you made a slip—what have you to say about him?"

Don Luis put up a hand to his forehead and wiped from it with meticulous carefulness a single bead of perspiration which was trickling slowly down.

"Listen! We know you now, Mr. President. We have convincing proofs. Copies of the slip, and of Bazan's confession have been deposited with Mr. John Carvel, and with the Señor Don Estaban Torino. They are to be opened to-morrow morning, if you prove stubborn. But you will not be obstinate, for we can deal with you. What are the facts? You come here, carrying in your pocket a letter from your old inamorata, making an appointment here. You have a knife. We are going to ask you to append a full confession to the document signed by your accom-

plice Bazan, or Barriga, as he called himself. You may refuse—what then? If we shoot you, you will lie here, the letter in your pocket, the knife at your feet. Those who find you will read the letter. They will say: 'He tried to discard the jealous woman, and she shot him.' You understand?"

Don Luis swayed a little. At one stroke, it seemed to him, he had lost all—his place, his power, a fortune, the respect and homage of men. His face was livid, and the sparkle of his eyes made his pallor more remarkable by contrast. He said something inaudibly, choked, and put up a hand to his mouth.

"Come, pull yourself together," said Aster, advancing. "Bazan was as gay as a lynx carrying off a trap bait. We want you to talk, and do it quick."

"Yes, come!" Temporel echoed.

"I will write it when I reach my house," said His Excellency. "There are some facts I do not remember——"

"Well, get a hustle on that memory of yours right away. If you think we're going to let you scoot, I guess you don't understand our business. Here, Temporel, give him your pen. And you, Serrano, get off that bench. It will do for a table. Now sign, Mr. President."

"I shall not sign," said Don Luis sullenly, his quick eyes roving about the room. "You do not know, señores, that my men accompany me, and are waiting without."

"They will have to wait without—without you, if you don't get a move on that pen," said Aster grimly. "Refuse to sign your confession, after you've made it, or just give one cry, and you'll join the spirits in the dogs' heaven—see?"

"You will not dare to shoot!"

Aster advanced till the muzzle of his pistol was within a foot of the other's chest. "Give him the paper, Mr. Temporel!" he said.

Temporel spread the paper on the bench, and produced the fountain pen with which Bazan had written his confession. Don Luis took it, advanced to the bench, and bent down. Then, with a sudden upward spring, he grasped at Temporel. As he bent he had picked up the knife, and the blade gleamed momentarily in the lamplight. But Temporel jumped back, and Aster, advancing, pressed the muzzle of his pistol against the back of Don Luis' neck.

"I've a good mind to shoot you, you beast!" he said. "Drop that knife!"

For the second time, the president dropped his weapon, and stood, glaring and panting. It had been the result of a furious, unthinking impulse, that rush, but now he realized that the game was up. He bent to the bench, began to write, his face working, his shoulders heaving under the stress of conflicting emotions. And presently he straightened himself.

Temporel advanced warily, and took the paper, scanned it, and smiled. "All right, Aster," he said. "We can dictate terms now."

"Good!" said Aster. "Go ahead."

"Now, Don Luis, you have put yourself completely in our hands. You took a large sum of money from the bank, and you must restore that.

"And the jewels—you've got to tell us!"

"They are, as you know, with the Señorita Pensol."

"Then we may say good-by to them. They represented the sum of nine thousand dollars. That must be paid into the bank of the Señor Don Estaban Torino to-morrow. You may not have the money, but you can raise it on some of your securities. Don't think you can evade us. Mr. Carvel has already sent his copy to England—to be opened in a month in the event of anything having happened to him in the interim."

"Ah!"

"Yes, as long as you could lie to me, stupid fool that I was, you could twist me round your little finger. But that has come to an end."

"'Bout time," said Aster laconically.

"Quite," said Temporel, replacing the pistol in his pocket. "Now, I will wish you good night. I return to Santa Malua with Serrano and your precious confession. To-morrow morning you will be released. Your sting will be gone by that time. Mr. Aster will ride with you back to Santa Malua. When

you are there you must see at once to making reparation. You deserve to be shot, but we won't dirty our hands over such a business. If you care to go on being president with this hanging over you, you can. That's your lookout."

He picked up the knife and threw it through the open window, then, with Serrano, left the room.

Aster sat down, cross-legged on the floor, his pistol laid across his knees.

"Mr. President," he said pleasantly, "if you feel like sleeping, well, don't mind me. I guess it's a case of 'Watch With Me, Love, To-night.'"

But Don Luis did not reply. He sat like a figure of stone.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE LETTER.

At the outskirts of Santa Malua, Serrano and Temporel parted. The latter had prepared Juanna for the appearance of the father she had mourned as dead, and the dumb man was to return by a circuitous route to his home in the Calle De Los Vapores.

He himself rode into the town, and straight to the house John Carvel had taken. He found the servants still astir, lights glowing through the windows, a certain amount of excitement, for which he was able to account.

John Carvel had returned from the president's *palacio* half an hour before Temporel's arrival. With the president's disappearance, the function had lost much of its life, had dragged, and become dull. People asked why the host should absent himself at this particular time, and were not wholly satisfied by the plausible excuses of his substitute, the war minister.

Cynthia had retired immediately after her return, but Mr. Carvel was sitting in the study, smoking a last pipe, and pondering thoughtfully over the paper containing Barriga's confession, which he held in his hand.

Temporel was shown into the room at once. John Carvel rose, and shook hands warmly with the younger man.

"Bravo! I congratulate you, Temporel, very sincerely. We all owe you an apology for our blindness."

"Thank you. But personally, sir, you have made the best of apologies, a practical one. In the circumstances, it was natural that I should be misjudged. Please say no more about it."

"Won't you sit?" said Carvel, indicating a chair. "I am very glad to see you. Have you been successful?"

"Absolutely." Temporel put a hand in his pocket and drew out the confession. "Here it is. We made him sign, of course, much against his will. We have it all in black and white, and were able to dictate terms."

"Good! What were they?"

"The restitution of all the money stolen, and the equivalent of the jewels in cash."

"Ah, very satisfactory—but don't you think the gentleman may try to go behind that paper?"

"He can't, Mr. Carvel. Torino has a copy, and he has a great deal of influence in Coquibe. He owes Don Luis a grudge over that bit of finesse with the national bonds. Besides, we have his accomplice's confession, and very strong evidence, other than presumptive. The bank would take it up if I communicated to the directors the information I have acquired. With a new issue of Coquibian stock in prospect, he couldn't afford to quarrel with European financiers."

"Then you are allowing him to retain office? It's a great pity, I think. A scoundrel like that should be exposed."

Temporel shrugged. "I quite agree with you. But how is that to be effected? Short of killing the man, we could not do much. Besides, as in the case of Barriga, we had to offer some inducement to procure the confession. If a man knows you are going to ruin him in any case, he won't tell you much."

"That is quite true. After all, the affairs of the Coquibians are not matters for outside interference. They have always a remedy, if they feel aggrieved."

"A revolution," said Temporel, smiling a little. "I began to see the neces-

sity for such things when I came to Coquibe."

"Where is the president?"

"Aster is keeping him at the estancia until the morning. Do you know that man actually intended to kill the Señorita Pensol? He was carrying a very nasty-looking knife when we caught him."

"The dog! Well, he is safe for a little. Now comes my part. I must write the directors of your former bank with regard to this affair. I know Hellar, and one of the others slightly. I shall explain matters without making any direct reference to Don Luis. I can put it that you continued the inquiry after the local authorities had dropped it, and that your zeal alone brought it to a successful termination. They will be glad to recover the money, and very grateful to you, I am sure, for continuing to work for them after they had treated you so shabbily. Leave it to me. They will reinstate you, never fear."

"Not in Santa Malua, please," said Temporel. "I have had enough of the place."

"I am sure you have."

"And then I do not wish to disturb the present manager, Mr. Hardacre. What a bounder he must have thought me! I mean to call and apologize to him to-morrow morning."

Mr. Carvel looked at him thoughtfully. "Well, young man, I suppose you want to see Cynthia? I know young blood is impatient. As a matter of fact, the girl's gone to bed, but to-morrow will come, and——"

Temporel's face flushed. "It's awfully good of you, and I shall be exceedingly glad——"

"You got the letter, of course?" interrupted Mr. Carvel.

"A letter? No. Was it from Cynthia?"

"Certainly. I thought you would like to see it before speaking to her. Probably you left home before it arrived. It is only fair to Cynthia to let you know that she is not yet aware of the president's villainy, or of the part you played in the matter."

"I did not get her letter," said Temporel quickly. "I must read it before I see her. Will you excuse me now? I——"

"Run along, run along! You aren't the only young man who has been in love, you know. The symptoms are well defined. Good night; we shall expect you in the morning about eleven. I shall prepare Cynthia for your coming."

Outside, a servant was holding his horse. Through the heart of the town he galloped, then down toward the port, and finally pulled up his steaming horse at the door of the little house in the Calle De Los Vapores.

Juanna and her father were there. Juanna ran to him with a letter the moment he entered the house.

"It is a woman's writing," she said, with a little laugh. "Perhaps it is from your señorita."

Temporel took the envelope, and felt suddenly limp. He had waited so long, and struggled so hard that the news of joy even came upon him like a shock. He thanked Juanna in a husky voice, and, going to his room, tore open the envelope.

This was better than all. Behind all his happy expectations had lurked the unfortunate thought that Cynthia had not trusted him, that he had had to rescue the glove from the lions before she would give herself to him. Now that suspicion was dissipated. She had written to him before she knew what he had done.

The letter was short, but immensely welcome. His eyes lingered on it, after his brain had mastered the contents:

Dear Charles: I was weak enough to think that I could forget you, and put you away from me. I cannot. I love you, my dear, as I did—as I have always done, though once I tried to make myself believe it had been a delusion. Will you forgive me? Come to me soon. Cynthia.

CHAPTER XXVI.

MINGLING TIDES.

"Cynthia!"

Temporel entered the room where Cynthia was sitting, and stopped momentarily just inside the door.

It was a hot morning, and sunlight was diffused in a mellow glow through the room. But there was a mist before Temporel's eyes through which he only saw dimly. He blinked once, but did not, could not, move. Some weight of inertia seemed to prevent him from covering even those few paces which intervened between him and Cynthia.

When the mist cleared, he was looking down into Cynthia's eyes, her hand was trembling on his arm. He came to himself with a shaking start.

Neither spoke just yet. It was enough to stand close, to communicate in a delicious proximity the thoughts and emotions that rioted in each heart and brain.

Cynthia's arm slowly moved up to his shoulder, her face was tilted upward, her eyes with invitation drew his head slowly down. It was a situation not to be spoiled by one violent or unconsidered action, to be enjoyed, as one enjoys the perfume of a flower.

Then, as her hand pressed his shoulder, Temporel put his arms round her, and drew her to him very close. His lips were pressed to hers.

"Boy," she said softly, "do you forgive me?"

He did not answer her question.

"I have your letter," he said. "And there is nothing to forgive. It told me all I wished to know. Oh, sweetheart, I knew we could never forget love——"

"No—I thought so for a little——"

"We won't speak of it again. We want to forget something."

"But it showed us what we were to each other, dear."

"Yes."

Temporel drew her to him again. The house was very still. In its silence it seemed that they could hear the beating of their hearts, the throbbing of quick pulses. There was no sound from the street outside.

The sunlight, lazy and warm, pierced between the slats of the jalousies and quivered caressingly about the man and woman standing face to face.

You will be glad to know that B. M. BOWER has completed another great novel of the West. It will appear serially in the POPULAR beginning with the issue out two weeks hence, the January Month-end number, on sale December 25th. It is called "GOOD INDIAN." You don't want to miss the first installment

FISHING SOME!

IF you ever step off a train in Washington Junction, Maryland, and wait in that quiet, innocent-looking village for another train, make the best of your opportunities. There is something in that town which no man should miss. It is connected with the business of decorating the station platform with Its person every time a train rolls in, and It is the biggest, greatest, most marvelous fisherman in the whole wide world. It has Neptune and all the other gods of the sea backed into the desert.

This is the story It told one afternoon when the sun was sinking behind the mountains, that hour when the thoughts of man should be on heavenly things, that holy time when the soul is uplifted and supernal:

"Me and Jim went down the river las' night, and we got twenty-one bass. And we didn't use no hook and line. The water was muddy, and we just rowed 'long, close to the shore, and flapped our oars in the water. The first time we flapped a big bass jumped up out of the water and landed in our boat. We got twenty-one that way. Yes, suhree, twenty-one eatable bass jumped square into our boat. And that was some fishing. But it's the truth, just as true as I'm going to eat my supper right now!"

Then It did not fall dead, as Ananias had done, but went up the street, apparently with a clear conscience and a great hunger.

The Lesson

By A. M. Chisholm

Author of "The Winning Game," "The Boss of the Bonnechere," Etc.

You can play the game of politics with a certain ease on the Bowery; but it is a mighty difficult thing to club the lumberjacks into voting your way. McSloy, the political "boss" of the waterfront, thought he could do it. He needed a lesson—and he got it.

IF the flourishing little lumbering city of White's Falls had endeavored to ascertain by popular vote who was its toughest citizen, "Red" McSloy—who signed himself with difficulty "Michael W."—would have won under double wraps. Indeed, such an expression of opinion would scarcely have aroused public interest, for the result would have been a foregone conclusion. For once, voters of all parties, races, and creeds would have been in millennial accord.

But a like vote, having for its object the abolition or otherwise of Mr. McSloy, would have revealed great differences of opinion. That part of the populace which dwelt soberly and respectably on maple and horse-chestnut shaded streets, on the rising ground back from the river, held him and all his works in virtuous abhorrence; but that part of it which abode along the river front, in little, unpainted shacks on treeless streets, within sound of the droning of the great saws and the roll of the log carriages by day and the boom of the falls by night, and was at times neither sober nor respectable, held McSloy in awe, and did him considerable reverence.

Down there among the piling yards, where the smell of water and freshly cut pine struck the nostrils sweetly in compensation for other indescribable odors, he was a power, and his name was one to conjure with. His visible means of support was as tough a place as ever emptied a shanty lad's pockets of a winter's wages, and in return filled him up to his back teeth with scarcely diluted highwines; and Red himself made no secret of the fact that he ran a deadfall.

"I'll give a man booze as long as he can pay for it," he was wont to declare; "and I'll take his money any way he wants to give it to me. And if he won't give it to me, I'll take it, anyhow. If I don't get it some one else will."

The last statement was simply cold fact; but others in the same business called him a hog, and alleged that a man who got full in McSloy's never had anything left worth taking.

Women in little log houses on miserable, half-cultivated clearings had him to blame when their men showed up shamed and sullen in the spring, without a cent to show for the winter's work in the bush. And these same men, back again in the logging camps, cursed him whenever they thought of their bare little homes and ill-fed and scantily clothed families. And they made good resolutions for the future, which they invariably forgot at the first strangling rasp of his liquor against their palates.

In person, Mr. McSloy was unprepossessing but impressive. He owned a shock of flaming hair, a rumbling bass voice, and two hundred odd pounds of

meat and bone, with very little fat. He was thoroughly at home in a rough-house, and quite able to handle any half-dozen average drunks. On several occasions he had trimmed boss "bully boys," noted fighters, whose conception of a good time involved the cleaning out of his bar; and he was afraid of nothing that he had ever seen. And finally his ordinary temper was about as sweet as a wounded grizzly's.

In the city wards which comprised the river front, he was a political power. It was understood that no candidate lacking his support had a chance. He spent money freely because he made it easily; and half the river-front voters were in his debt for loans or for favors. He dealt with this vote as his private property; and, being able to deliver the goods, he did about as he pleased, conducting himself and his business with little regard for civic ordinances, or even for the law of the land. And this naturally made trouble for those nominally "higher up," to whom his support, liberty, and well-being were essential, a fact of which he was quite aware.

One spring evening, Mr. McSloy stood in shirt-sleeved comfort in his bar. Though business was slow it had been an exhausting day. Indeed, at one time it had been very doubtful whether he would spend the night beneath his own roof or beneath that of an institution maintained by the State for non-paying guests.

In fact, he had been charged with "rolling" a man, and the lawyer for the prosecution—he was not the regular prosecuting attorney, who would have known better—had almost made the charge stick. In spite of a carefully selected jury, it required the best efforts of counsel for the defense, aided by the hardest kind of swearing, to secure an acquittal; and the occupant of the bench had delivered himself of a few caustic remarks which Mr. McSloy was retailing to Tony, his bartender, in the vernacular.

"Right from the start, I see this judge ain't got no use for me," he said. "He's one of them sour old guys with a bald head and a bent mouth, and a white *mus*-tache nibbled off short where he bites it when he's mad. I seen he'd soak me if he could. I c'd just see 'Ten years f'r yours' slide out o' the corner of his face. And their lawyer was cert'nly onto his job. I had all I could do to keep him from tripping me." Mr. McSloy swore feelingly at the recollection of his cross-examination, and demanded a drink. When he had imbibed it, he proceeded:

"Kinsella done his best for me, I'll say that for him, and no one could do better. He's a smart lawyer, and you tell the boys to pull for him. When the jury's out, I says: 'Well, Kinsella,' I says, 'I s'pose it's all right, hey?' He shook his head doubtful. 'I picked the jurors the way you tipped me,' he says; 'but it's a whoppin' line of evidence to overlook. If old Packy, up there on the bench, had you to himself, you'd get a million years.'"

The jury, however, had justified Mr. McSloy's confidence by returning a verdict of "Not guilty," upon which Judge Packard had commented with biting sarcasm.

"Because of a wise provision of the law, which makes it possible for the punishment or acquittal of a criminal to rest in the decision of twelve men who owe him money or who are afraid of him, it is my duty to acquit the accused. How the jury arrived at the decision they did arrive at, in face of their oath, is a matter between themselves and a Judge of a jurisdiction greater than mine. In an experience of forty years in the courts, I never came across another case which so clearly shows the practical weakness of the jury system in dealing with local crime. The evidence for the defense has been characterized by shameless perjury, and the jury knows it well. I congratulate prisoner, jurors, and witnesses upon the fact that it is not within my power to deal with either of you as you deserve. But I sincerely hope that at some future time you, McSloy, will come before me again; and that you, gentlemen of the jury, or some of you, will appear in this court in quite another capacity, and then, I can assure you, that your cases

will receive my careful and conscientious attention."

But a verbatim recital of these remarks was quite beyond Mr. McSloy's powers of narration. What he said to his bartender was:

"Soon as the jury says I'm not guilty, the old guy lights into them, and says all juries is rotten, and he hopes if they're ever pinched that he gets the tryin' of them; and he says he hopes he gets another whack at me some day. Now, what d'ye know about that?"

"Gee!" Tony ejaculated. "He was sure handin' it to the bunch of you."

"He ought to be fired from his job," said Mr. McSloy indignantly. "I guess he was a bum lawyer before he got to be a judge, and that's why he's sore on juries. Without them this country wouldn't be fit to live in. Why, figure it out for yourself. Nobody'd be safe if a judge had the say. Take that time you near killed the Frenchman. Where would you be now if it wasn't for an Irish jury? Could you have fixed the judge? Cert'nly *not*."

With which experienced opinion on the advantages of trial by one's peers Tony cordially agreed.

"Sure thing," he said. "I'll take a jury *and* repeat. But the law'd oughta keep men with whiskers offa them. There was Con Dolan went agin' a jury, and seven men on it had whiskers. His lawyer let 'em get by. Say—them fringed gents went dead agin' him; and, s'help me, they swung the others into line. Connie got——"

But the narrative of Mr. Dolan's hard luck was interrupted by the buzz of an electric bell. Both looked at the indicator, and saw that the summons came from a private room where Mr. McSloy was accustomed to discuss business which demanded privacy. This room was accessible from the street by a separate entrance; but there were only one or two who had the right of entry.

"See who it is," McSloy commanded.

And Tony returned with the information that it was Andy Clinch.

"What's he want?" asked Red.

"You," Tony returned succinctly.

Clinch at that time controlled, or thought he controlled, the political destinies of White's Falls. At any rate, he had a majority in the city council whom he could depend on to put through any measure short of open confiscation of the yearly revenue. Just then, unfortunately, he had to face an election; and it was going to be a hard fight.

The river front, by virtue of McSloy's influence, had always given him fairly solid support, and he needed it badly. McSloy was more or less identified in the public mind with his organization; and the publicity attending that gentleman's latest break annoyed him exceedingly; and yet he could not very well get along without him.

He was far too prudent, in view of Red's general reputation or the lack of it—to say nothing of Judge Packard's remarks, published verbatim in an evening daily—to come openly to his place of business. He was getting plenty of editorial bumps already; and he was more desirous than ever of keeping his connection with Red in the dimmest background. It would have been unwise to send for him. Still, he had to have an interview, and so he waited till after dark, put on his oldest hat, and dodged along the less frequented streets until he came to the side entrance; and, knowing the ropes perfectly, he went to the little room and pressed the bell.

"I dropped in," he said when Red appeared, "to have a little talk over the situation."

"Well, why didn't you come in through the bar?" growled Red.

"Because I didn't want to," Clinch returned. "Any objection to my using the side door? I've done it before."

Red merely grunted. He knew exactly why Clinch had come that way, and, being of downright character himself, resented it, although he realized that, from Clinch's standpoint, it was the proper entrance.

"All right," he said. "Have something?" He pressed the bell, and directed Tony to bring liquor that corresponded to the label, and cigars.

"I want to know," Clinch began, "how far we can depend on the river-front vote this time?"

"What's the matter?" asked Red. "What do you come to me for? You've had men working down here. Why don't you get your line from them?"

"I don't know what you mean," Clinch replied. "I come to you because you swing that vote. I haven't put anybody into your territory."

"Well, somebody has," Red asserted truculently, "and I'm tellin' you you want to call them off. I won't stand for no one buttin' in on my ground. Don't I always deliver the goods? Well, I guess yes! You leave the vote down here to me and you'll get it. But start workin' behind my back and see where you land."

"I don't know anything about it," said Clinch; "but if it's going on I'll stop it."

"Take it from me that it's goin' on," said Red positively; "and you'd better stop it, or some smooth guys will get beat up. You tell 'em so. This river front is mine; understand? I can vote it any way I want to; and that's what I will do."

"Are you thinking of voting it some other way?" asked Clinch. "Have you anything to complain of? Haven't you been treated right?"

"Oh, I guess so," Red admitted reluctantly. "I got no kick comin' at that. Only what I'm tellin' you. I thought maybe you knew something."

"I don't," said Clinch. "But if it's so, you've got yourself to blame for it. If you had been sent down to-day this ward would have been in a nice mess. This coarse work of yours makes trouble for everybody. We can't go to the front for you every time. I may as well tell you that you'll have to be more careful in future." He spoke warmly, for Red's steady grouch was getting on his nerves.

"I will, will I?" growled Red.

"Yes, you will," snapped Clinch, "or we'll let you take your medicine. You're a load to carry, and you want to wise up to it."

Red shook a finger beneath his nose.

"Say, look ahere," he rumbled, "you don't want to get gay with me. You ain't my boss, if it comes to that. More like, I'm yours. Who do you s'pose elects you fellows, anyway? Ain't it me and the solid bunch of votes from the boys along the front? Could you get along without them? Could you, now? Come on, tell me."

Clinch hesitated, knowing that there was only one answer, and that McSloy knew that as well as he did.

"You bet you couldn't," said Red, with certainty. "And what you s'pose I elect you for? Do I care a Methodist curse for you? Nix. I elect your crowd so's you can protect me in my business. That's what you're there for; see? Any time you don't do it, I'll get somebody that will. You tie into that now. A load, am I? Say, if I was to flatback my ears and quit pullin', your old band wagon'd bog into the mud clear to the hubs. Yes, and a few men that's tootlin' their horns on the high seats'd have to beat it out o' town."

"McSloy," said Clinch deliberately, for he never took back water for any man, "I admit that we can't carry this election without the river-front vote; and I admit that just now you carry that in your trousers pocket—because we've let you. And now let me tell you something—and try to get it clear, for I'll only say it once.

"Outside the party organization, no man is worth a lead nickel. No party organization but ours will stand for you. We treat you better than you deserve. In return, you've got to put both feet on the mark when we want you to. If you don't, we'll close down this dump of yours and go after you on your record. We'll do it. We may lose one election; but it will be only one; and next time we'll have a man we can trust on the river-front job.

"Got that? Got it clear inside that red nut of yours? Force a show-down, and the party will outhold you every time. Now, then, let's cut out the hard stuff and talk sense. Can you fix it to have all the absent vote polled?"

McSloy possessed an abundance of brutal courage beneath his bluster, but he had the good sense to realize that Clinch meant every word he said. Anyway, he had no specific ground of com-

plaint, and he had been merely indulging his naturally bad temper. Said he:

"You treat me fair and that's all I ask. Call off the workers that's buttin' in on my territory and I'll do what I've always done. Does that go?"

"That's good," said Clinch. "Now, about those absentees?"

Together they went over the list of voters; and it developed that, while many of the men had returned from the lumber camps where they had spent the winter, a number were engaged in bringing the log drives down the river; and it was very doubtful where they would be on any given day. And, since a drive is a matter of urgency, usually requiring the presence of every man, no employer was apt to give part of his crew a few days' vacation merely that they might vote in a municipal election in which he had not the slightest interest.

"We've got to get those votes," said Clinch. "We've no margin to figure on this time, and we can't give away anything. Can you plug them in?"

"Some of them I might," said Red; "but not the whole bunch. They're too well known. Somebody'd be sure to get next." He reflected, scowling at the end of his cigar. "There's a dozen votes with Crooks & Cameron's drive; but Patton's crew is mostly our men. Patton's drive is just behind Crooks'; and Crooks passed the Elbow yesterday, I heard. That'll let 'em by here and 'way down the river before election. That means we lose 'em."

Crooks & Cameron's and Patton's mills were at another town below White's Falls. Therefore, if the drives passed the latter place before the election, the votes of the rivermen would, in all probability, be lost; for the aforesaid employers were plain lumbermen, and they did not care a hoot for White's Falls, or Clinch, or McSloy, or for anything that did not affect their business. They would be the last men on earth to delay their drives for any one's political convenience.

"I tell you we can't afford to lose them," said Clinch. "We've got to get them somehow. It's up to you."

"Why is it up to me?" demanded Red.

"Because they're your men," snapped Clinch. "You didn't want any one butting into your territory. Very well. Now you make good. We need those votes. If we're beaten, you know what will happen to you."

McSloy knew; and the knowledge made him scowl ferociously.

"I'll get 'em somehow," he swore emphatically. "You leave it to me."

"That's what I'm doing," said Clinch; and he added significantly: "And you want to remember that I'm doing it, too."

II.

While the political pot of White's Falls was simmering and emitting sundry unsavory odors, Crooks & Cameron's big drive was being hustled down the river by a big, thoroughly competent, and very thirsty crew under Bill McKeever.

McKeever was gaunt, rawboned, and silent. What was left of a once fair complexion was tanned to mahogany. His skin was a maze of fine wrinkles, produced by the suns and winds and waters and snows of fifty years. Around the corners of the eyes, the wrinkles deepened, the result of much peering over bright, sunlit spaces. The eyes themselves were gray, the gray of new steel, steady, and usually expressionless. He was very strong, but not noticeably muscular. His was the huge power that lies in long sinews of w' e and steel close to the bones of the large-framed, sloping-shouldered man, and does not bulge into knobs and masses.

Bill McKeever was Crooks & Cameron's best river boss. That is, he delivered the goods. There were others who could estimate water, current, and shallows, and handle a ticklish situation equally well. There were still others who could extract the last ounce of work from a driving crew up to their waists in icy water fourteen hours a day and keep them cheerful, and get them past a town approximately sober; but for plain, unexplained results, without failures and without excuses, Bill McKeever was the man.

He was the firm's boss first, last, and all the time. He had grown up with the firm, and he meant to die in their harness. If he had written a new creed, he would have begun it: "I believe in the lumber firm of Crooks & Cameron, their heirs and assigns forever." And he would probably have ended it: "And I believe in whatever they believe in, whether I know anything about it or not."

He had their interests at heart day and night, and his work showed it. He would bring down a drive and have the logs in the booms a full week before any other man equally zealous—if that were possible—could be reasonably expected to. Consequently when it became important to have this drive at the mills by a certain date, Bill McKeever was told to go up and bring it down. That settled it from the firm's standpoint. They had no doubt that they would get the logs when they wanted them, and they thought no more about them.

But this time the Fates were unkind to McKeever. The river was unusually low, and delayed him. Jams occurred; not big ones or dangerous ones, because the water was not high enough or strong enough to pile the big sticks one on the other to any height; but still the logs grounded, and had to be released; and the very fact that the jams were not big and high made it impossible to use powder profitably. They had to be picked to pieces by hand.

The work was slow and monotonous. Bill McKeever's crew got their fill of it. For weeks they lived an amphibious life. The water was very cold, the hours were very long, and the weather was miserable. Gradually they eliminated useless words from their vocabularies, retaining only the expressive and profane. And the most disgusted man in the whole crew was McKeever, who was away behind the schedule he had set for himself.

At last the drive got down to White's Rapids, below which all would be plain sailing. The rapids, proper, were some distance above the town, and easy to drive under ordinary conditions. Below them, the river spread out, and the bottom was a series of ledges of flat rock and gravel bars. To get over this difficulty, there was a dam, and the water was backed up over these shallows, forming a long, narrow stretch of considerable extent, so that when the rapids had been negotiated, all that remained was to put the logs down this stretch and sluice them.

The rapids covered a mile from beginning to end; and when the drive struck them, by reason of the low water, it promptly jammed. When one jam was loosened another formed, and finally the rapids were plugged full, comparatively few of the logs finding their way to the pond below.

There was no help for it; and McKeever started his crew in at the bottom and began to work up, cursing logs and water, for he knew that Patton's drive was right behind him. His only consolation was that if Patton's logs had been first they would have blocked the river just as effectually. The low water and the bad luck, together, were making things very hard for him; and he chafed at the delay which threatened the sacred interests of Crooks & Cameron.

McKeever's camp was at the rapids, which he considered a judicious distance from town. The men were supposed to be, and should have been, too tired at night to walk there and back again. But on the second morning, he found himself two hands short; and he ascertained that they had gone into town the night before and had not returned.

They put in an appearance about ten o'clock; and it was plain to McKeever's experienced eye how they had passed the night.

"Where have you men been?" he demanded, although he knew well enough.

"I got word me wife was sick in town," said Cleary promptly. He looked the river boss straight in the eye unblushingly.

"I didn't know you were married," said McKeever.

"Sure I am," returned Cleary. "She was mighty sick. I been up all night with her."

"You look it," McKeever commented. "You'd be a treat to any sick woman,

wouldn't you? You're not sober yet. I can smell you from here. I know how much sick wife you had—about as much as Mullins there. You, Mullins, I s'pose you was sitting up with Cleary's wife, too?"

Mullins hesitated. His muddled mind could not recall the piece of choice fiction he had prepared for the occasion with drunken cunning.

"You make me sick, the both of you!" snapped McKeever. "Get on with your work now. I'll dock you for this."

"I'll take my time now," Cleary declared. "No man can tell me I lie and dock me."

"I'll do both," said McKeever. "Your time, is it? I'll give it you with the toe of my boot. You're hired for the drive, my buck, and if you quit you can whistle for your money."

He knew very well that this was not the case. Cleary and Mullins were entitled to their "time"—that is, to pay for the number of days' work actually done; but he needed every man he had, and he wished to discourage others from following their bad example.

But Cleary and Mullins, who were both good men, quit then and there, with threats of law and lawyers. They knew their rights, and they knew that McKeever knew them. Still, the carelessness with which they took the chance puzzled him.

The next day, three men asked for their time on various pretexts; and he gave it to them together with his curse. And that night he discovered that there was almost enough whisky in camp to float a canoe. The driving crew, made up mostly of devil-may-care shantymen, eagerly looking forward to the annual spree in which they would cheerfully "blow" every cent of their pay, was getting out of hand. Loyalty to their employers and a sense of duty might hold some of them; but by no means all. And already the work was suffering. The crew was not doing a day's work, according to McKeever's ideas of one.

In the morning, after a restless night, he sat on a log, lit his pipe, and pondered the matter, his gray eyes almost shut. Any one not knowing him would have supposed him to be half asleep and at peace with all the world. In reality, he was furiously angry.

It was possible that all this liquor had been bought by the men; but it was not probable. And then men were deliberately quitting for no good cause. There was something at the bottom of it which he could not fathom. But, whatever it was, the interests of Crooks & Cameron were suffering, and that was enough to arouse in McKeever the same feeling that animates an old bear whose cub is threatened.

None knew better than he that every lumbering town possesses birds of prey who have brought the process of separating a shantyman from his pay to the exactness of a science. Spring and summer are their harvest time; and on the takings of this season of plenty they live until the next. And so McKeever was inclined to believe that some of these gentry were endeavoring to stampede his crew.

He knew nothing, and cared less, about the municipal politics of White's Falls. But he did know of Red McSloy, though he had never seen him, and what he knew made him suspect the latter on general principles merely.

As he sat turning these matters over in his mind, he intercepted a shrewd side glance from the eye of a huge riverman who passed, peavey on shoulder, the water squelching in his spiked boots at every step.

This was Bill Leamy, one of his best men, but who went broke regularly a week after he was paid off. Mr. Leamy's face was the kind the artists of our childhoods' picture books loved to confer upon their ogres.

The bridge of his nose, broken in some bygone combat, lay flush with the face; and the nostrils faced outward like hawse holes. His lower jaw was undershot like a bulldog's, and his upper incisors were missing. Fierce, cunning little eyes twinkled in a countenance whose natural and acquired defects were accentuated by innumerable little pits, some of them mementos of a se-

vere case of smallpox, but most the scars of the calks of river boots.

As to face, Leamy was no beauty; but he had no need to apologize for his body, which was massive, well-proportioned, and told of huge power in every line.

In spite of his forbidding countenance, he was as tender-hearted as a woman; and he would give his last dollar to any one in hard luck. He was a thoroughly reliable and invaluable man until the season's work was over. Then he turned himself loose as long as his money lasted; and his capacity for finding trouble and taking care of it when found was matter of local history in many small river towns.

So McKeever, having intercepted Leamy's glance, interpreted it to mean that the big lumberjack had a very fair idea of what he was thinking about.

"Bill," he said. "Oh, Bill! I want to talk to you a minute."

Leamy came over, clanked the bill of his peavey on the gravel, folded his hands on the stock, leaned his shoulder on them, spat deliberately, and so stood at attention. He had worked under McKeever for several seasons, at different times, and liked him.

"Bill," said the boss abruptly, "five men have quit me."

Leamy nodded. "Was you thinkin' of givin' me my time?" he asked, and grinned horribly, for he considered the idea excessively humorous.

"I'd take an ax to you if you thought of quitting," returned McKeever. "You're not that kind. Some one is filling the crew up every night. Who is it?"

Leamy deliberated for a moment.

"Well, now, that's hard to say."

"Not if you wanted to."

Leamy did not attempt to deny it.

"These is Crooks & Cameron's logs, and they're payin' me and you for bringin' them down," pursued McKeever. "I never had a crew quit on me, and when I do I'll quit myself. But you know as well as I do what happens when some of them gets the smell of whisky in the nose. There's some dive keeper doin' this to get his filthy paws on the lads' time checks; and it's up to me to bring them logs down."

The personal argument appealed to Leamy.

"If you want my idea of it," he said, "it's Red McSloy. Maybe you've heard of him?"

McKeever nodded.

"Well, I ain't sure," Leamy continued; "but there's a duck that works for him been hangin' around. Him and Slinn be's together quite a bit. But I want to tell ye that, wid all the booze, I ain't had a drop of it; an' God knows I'm dry enough!"

"I wish others was like you," said McKeever. "I think the more of you for it."

"Well, I dunno's it's much credit to me this time," said Leamy. "It's Jimmy's doin's. He got into McSloy's place last year, an' McSloy doped his drink an' rolled him. Jimmy made no holler at the time. What was the good? But he says to me: 'Bill,' he says, 'you wait,' he says, 'an' you see me so, I'll get good an' square wid that red-hided——' " Here Leamy's quotation became unprintable. "So, when the booze turned up in camp, Jimmy says to me: 'Here's more of McSloy's poison. Not a smell of it do I take.' 'Let's go into town an' rip the guts out of his place,' I says. 'Me an' you can do it.' 'Maybe later,' says Jimmy. 'I want to get him right. I want to hammer the face of him till he's blind, an' put the boots till him till he's nigh hand dead. I'll learn him to roll *me!*' "

The "Jimmy" alluded to by Leamy was Jimmy McPike, his closest friend, for whom he cherished an admiration bordering on idolatry. McPike's boast was that he had never been whipped in single combat when sober or approximately sober. Leamy and he invariably hired into the same camps, and, taken together, were about the most formidable pair who ever proceeded to take the tough section of a town apart.

"If the two of yez get to this McSloy, he'll need fixin'," said McKeever. "If you're sure it's him that's doin' this, I'll have a talk with him. He'll leave my crews alone or I'll know why."

"I'm told it's this way," said Leamy. "They're holdin' an election in town, an' McSloy does be in politics up to the dirty neck of him. There's a lot of rivermen has votes there—all the men that's quit us has. Then most of Patton's crew, behind, lives there. If McSloy can keep us hangin', Patton's logs can't get by and his men will vote; but if they once get past an' down the river they're no good to him."

"Then why don't he hang Patton's drive and leave us alone?" asked McKeever.

"Well, it's better to be sure nor sorry," said Leamy. "We're the handiest, and our money is good if he can get it."

McKeever brooded over this information for an hour; and then he went into White's Falls, finding McSloy in his bar. As a diplomatic preliminary, he ordered a glass of beer, and then he proceeded to state his business with characteristic directness.

"My name's McKeever, and I'm Crooks & Cameron's river boss," he announced. "I want to see Mister McSloy. Are you him?"

"I'm him," Red acknowledged. "I've heard of you."

The old river boss and the big dive keeper took stock of each other for a moment, and found much to dislike in the inspection.

"And I've heard of you," said McKeever. "I'm told you're sending whisky up to my camp."

"Who told you that?" asked Red.

"Never mind," McKeever replied. "I know it, if you like that better."

"Well, what if I am?" demanded Red. "I'm not sellin' it there. Your crew ain't Injuns. If I want to slip them a few bottles, I guess I can do it."

"Not while I'm boss you can't," said McKeever definitely. "You've got to stop it, McSloy. I'm tellin' you for your own good. You take warnin' now."

Red's reply was characteristic. Said he:

"You get out of here, or I'll kick your ribs into your heart!"

"And that's some job," said McKeever, unmoved. "You might stub your toe, for all I'm an old fellow. Now mind, you let my crews alone. I don't give a tinker's curse for your little election; but you're not going to hang my drive up, and I tell you so."

Red McSloy's reception of this information was entirely blasphemous; and McKeever, who had said all he wanted to say, and seldom wasted words, departed for camp, where he proceeded to urge his crew to further exertions. The logs were coming out freely, for the river was rising slightly, and he hoped that the next day would see him through.

But the morning brought another setback, which made him furious. The water gates had been opened and the water level had been lowered. Consequently logs which had come through the rapids at the cost of much labor were once more caught on the gravel bars and ledges below them.

Thoroughly indignant, McKeever sought an explanation; and he was calmly informed that the authorities considered that time an opportune one to clean out the pond, the state of which was seriously alarming the local Health Office.

"But you're hangin' up my drive," he protested warmly. "Couldn't you wait for a day? I'd 'a' been through by then."

"I'm sorry, but I'm acting under orders," was the reply. "The health of the community——"

"The health of hell!" McKeever interrupted hotly. "How about the health of Crooks & Cameron? If they don't get this drive on time they'll lose money. You got no right to interfere with the river. You've got all year to clean your pond. But, no. You've got to do it right when the drive is on. It's rotten, that's what it is. I know why it's being done, too, and I'll make somebody sweat for it."

He went to see the best lawyer the town afforded, and received cold comfort. The river was not navigable. Loggers had a right of user, but not necessarily uninterrupted user. And this was subject to the rights of com-

munities to a sufficient and pure-water supply. Which merely confirmed McKeever in a lifelong opinion—shared, by the way, by many gentlemen of greater prominence—that the law was conceived and administered with the sole view of embarrassing lumbermen in their business.

Being thus thrown back upon his own resources, McKeever returned to the river. He went to it as naturally as a troubled child to its mother. The best years of his life had been spent on it and beside it. He knew its moods and changes, and he loved it, though he had never put his feelings into words or even definite thought. But its presence soothed him, aided his deliberate mental processes. The flow of its current seemed to stimulate his ideas to keep pace with it. And so he sat down on the butt of a boom log, filled his pipe, and stared for half an hour at the water.

It was characteristic of him that his starting point was absolutely fixed and definite. The logs must be sluiced through at once. That salient necessity was beyond doubt or argument. It was up to him, Bill McKeever, who drew Crooks & Cameron's good pay, to get them through. That also was definite. And there was only one way to get them through; namely, by raising the water, which could be done only by closing the gates. Therefore, it followed that the water gates must be closed.

Thus simply the problem presented itself to McKeever. Then all that remained was to close the gates, and keep them closed till his last log tailed through.

Some people might consider that this process of thought left him exactly where he started; but he, who was the person most concerned, was quite satisfied with it. And so he knocked out his pipe and sauntered down to the dam to look over the ground, or, rather, the water.

Along the lowered water level, he saw half a dozen men with long-handled rakes drawing bits of weed and water-soaked bark into piles. Their work scarcely reached the dimensions of a bluff, and he was not concerned with it. Just how long it would take them at that rate to safeguard the health of White's Falls was quite beside the question.

He found the dam equipped with a watchman, a little tower or sentry box, and a telephone. These things he knew already; but he paid special, though covert, attention to the water gates, and the apparatus for raising and lowering them, which was a hand-power winch, and then he returned to camp.

There he found two of his men in beatific, drunken slumber in one of the tents. Temporarily he had ceased to think of Red McSloy; but this outrage, as he looked upon it, set his slow temper boiling. Repressing an inclination to throw them both into the river, he went out on the work. The rapids were almost clear; but below them the logs were stranded. Without water very little more could be done.

The afternoon brought Tom Noyes, Patton's river boss, who, when he learned of the state of affairs, was quite as indignant as McKeever.

"I know what happens if McSloy gets to *my* crew with free booze," he said. "They'll quit me cold, that's what they'll do. This election is three days off, you say. There's only one thing. We got to get them drives through and keep them hustling. If my men ever get into town, there's not ten of 'em will go to work again till fall; and that means I needn't then—not for Patton, anyway."

"I guess that's so," said McKeever slowly. "Crooks & Cameron will see me through far's I want to go. It's a case with them. They got to have these logs."

"Old Sam Patton himself told me to get a hustle on," said Noyes; "and, when he says that, he means it. Anyway, he won't stand for no dinky little towns hangin' up *his* drive. He thinks he owns the river. Always did."

"All right," said McKeever. "Now here's what I'm going to do, and you can help me if you like or stand from under if you like. I'm going to drop them gates soon's she gets good and dark. And then I'm goin' to wreck the

liftin' gear so's they can't be raised; and I'm goin' to sluice my drive through tomorrow. And, what's more, I'm goin' to learn that McSloy a lesson. If I was twenty years younger, I'd handle him myself; but I'm gettin' on, and I want men that'll do the job good."

"He's too much beef for me," said Noyes, who, though he had ample sand, was slightly built and knew his limitations; "but I got some bully boys that wouldn't back off a trail for an old bear and three cubs."

"I got a few of my own," said McKeever, with justifiable pride.

"I saw that red-headed McPike as I came along, and the big man that chums with him," said Noyes. "I know the both of them. But I want to get in on this somehow. What are you going to do about McSloy?"

"I'm going to learn him a lesson," McKeever repeated. "He needs it. I'm told a lot of men vote the way he wants them to, and he gets big money for it. Well, he ain't going to tell no one how to vote this time, nor he ain't going to pay no one to vote; because I'm going to have Jimmy McPike flop him into the bottom of a peakie and take him downriver for a couple of days."

Noyes whistled. "That's kidnaping. It's against the law."

"And what's bustin' the gate gear and puttin' the night watchman out of business till it's done?" McKeever demanded. "The law? I got all the law I wanted this morning. The law don't help you when you need it; and, if you let it run you, it keeps you from helpin' yourself. I got to get them logs down."

And Noyes nodded agreement.

"So've I. But how about when McSloy gets back?"

"Jimmy McPike was doped and rolled in his place last year," McKeever returned. "He kept his mouth shut about it; but he can prove it on McSloy if he wants to. He'll put that up to him for a saw-off." The old logger chuckled at his own craft. "And if I know anything of Jimmy and the way he holds a grudge, there's a holy whaling coming to McSloy."

"I'll take a chance with you, then," said Noyes. "Let some of my boys help, so's we'll both be in the mess."

"Sure," McKeever agreed. "Wait till I tell McPike and Leamy. We'll let them handle it."

McPike and Leamy came at the foreman's summons, nodded a greeting to Noyes, and waited for orders. The former, a man in the thirties, was a river celebrity weighing in the neighborhood of one hundred and eighty pounds, beautifully set up and proportioned, with lithe certainty in every movement. His hair was reddish and inclined to curl; and he looked on the world with a pair of blue eyes cold to insolence.

In spite of the fact that he was the hero of a score of desperate fights, his face was unmarked by scars, his teeth were all in their sockets, and his ears retained their original proportions; but his hands, big, capable, and hard as hammers, were battered and twisted; for Jimmy McPike carried a terrific punch in each; and in his combats there had been no curled hair padding to protect them.

"Jimmy," said McKeever, "you were rolled in McSloy's place last year."

McPike nodded silently, his eyebrows drawing down at the recollection.

"He done it himself, didn't he?" asked McKeever.

"Sure," McPike replied. "I seen him. He had me doped, but I wasn't quite out. Not till later. But he thought I was."

"Do you want to take a birl out of him?" McKeever asked.

McPike suddenly flamed.

"Do I? By the mortal, I'm livin' for it!" The flash of passion was momentary. The man became cold again.

"Then here's your chance," said the river boss, and proceeded to sketch the situation. He told of the scheme to delay the drives, first by free whisky and then by lowering the water; of his interview with McSloy, and of his own plans.

"I leave McSloy to you and Leamy," he said. "I don't care what you do to him short of killing him. I'll spare you four more lads—pick them yourself—

and Noyes will give you six from his crew. With them you can put his place on the everlasting bum. After that, all but you and Leamy will come back and go to sluicing, mind that!"

"Sure!" said McPike joyfully. He turned to Noyes. "What lads have you got that has good use of theirselves?" he asked.

III.

In the little back room at Red McSloy's, Clinch was stripping money from a fat roll; and he handed the strippings to McSloy. Said he:

"Three thousand, and that's every cent we can spare. You'll have to make that go around."

"Well, I'll try to," said Red, who intended to keep at least half of it for himself. "I've spent quite a bunch of me own money already."

"You'll get it back later," Clinch promised. "How about those river drivers? Are you sure of them?"

"I've got some of them, and I'll have the best part of both crews in here by to-morrow night," Red assured him. "And I'll keep them. I fired out the boss of Crooks & Cameron's crew to-day. He had the nerve to tell me to let his men alone. Just for that I'll break up his drive for him."

"What's the use?" Clinch commented. "All we want are the men with votes."

"Maybe they're all you want," said Red; "but I got to make a living, ain't I? If them drives gets past, the men blow their pay somewhere else, and I need it myself."

Clinch rose.

"Suit yourself. But you'll get into trouble some day that way. If I know anything about lumbermen, they won't stand for having their crews broken up."

"And you *don't* know anything about them," Red returned unpleasantly. "Stand for it! They *got* to stand for it. They can't help it. I'm inside the law, ain't I? I can give anybody but an Injun whisky if I want to."

"Some one may go outside the law to get you," Clinch prophesied; and Red laughed at him.

"Let him try it," he said, stretching a huge arm. "I never seen the man I couldn't handle. If old McKeever or Noyes, either one, comes in here lookin' for trouble, he can have it quick. Why, I ain't had a good fight in a year. I'd like it."

He stuffed the roll of bills into his trousers pocket, and—Clinch having departed without further argument—returned to the bar, where he had a drink, lit a bitter and particularly atrocious cigar, and proceeded to lord it over everybody on general principles.

Business, dull in the early part of the evening, began to pick up. Men—river drivers by their costume—straggled in. They were, as McSloy noted with an experienced eye, a hard-looking lot, brown and lean, high of cheek bone and truculent of bearing; and they carried themselves with a swaggering assurance that bespoke entire self-confidence.

He knew their kind well—knew that they were full-blooded men, young, in the grandest health and condition, primitive in mind and in habit, with scarcely controlled passions and vices seeking an outlet. That was the side he saw, because it was his business. For their good qualities—courage, endurance, generosity, loyal friendship—he cared nothing.

Not that Red McSloy, whose mind was not analytical, put it that way. He said to Tony:

"These lads is just spoilin' for it. Give 'em a noseful. Start the phonograph goin'; and, when Ryan comes to the side door for his drink, slip him about five, and tell him to chase himself to the other end of his beat and stay there till morning, if he likes his job. We won't close up to-night."

Having issued these simple but comprehensive instructions, he proceeded to make a good fellow of himself, mingling with the rivermen, handing out cigars whose value lay principally in the gaudy bands with which they were adorned; telling stories of which the point lay entirely in the auditors' capacity for

the enjoyment of plain obscenity unrelieved by wit, and commanding Tony to set 'em up again with every round.

But, though he threw himself into the making of an orgy with seeming abandon, in reality he drank very little, for this was a matter of business with him. And he noticed with some surprise that the rivermen's preference was for beer, and for ponies at that; and, further, that those who took whisky did so in homeopathic doses, very different from the customary "slug."

"What's the matter with youse lads?" he asked. "Why don't yez take a man's size drink? Ain't the liquor good?" He addressed Leamy, whom he had never seen before.

"You ought to know," Leamy replied.

"It's case goods; no better anywhere," Red asserted. As a matter of fact, most of it was concocted in his cellar, with Tony as mixologist; and it contained the germs of bloody murder, neutralized only by those of total paralysis.

"Case goods, is it?" a man at Leamy's elbow cut in. "Case o' what? Poison?"

It was Jimmy McPike; but Red did not recognize him, though he had a hazy idea that he had seen him before. When he had robbed him of what was left of his season's pay a year ago, he had not even known his name; and it was not business to pick a quarrel just then.

"If you don't like it, call for what you do like," said he generously. "This is on me. Tony, give us the best in the house."

"And that come out of a jar of pickled snakes in a doctor's office, most like," said Jimmy.

Leamy took up his cue unerringly.

"Shut up!" he commanded. "You're drunk. That's no way to talk to a man that's just offered ye the best he has."

"A man in hell w'u'd gag at the drinks they sell here," Jimmy retorted. "Don't tell me to shut up. I'll talk how I like. An' as for bein' drunk, I can trim ye, me buck, drunk or sober."

Leamy picked up the challenge instantly.

"Come on an' try it."

McPike swung at him, a wild, slow-starting, round-armed blow, far different from the swift, lifting, hammerlike smash with which he was accustomed to open hostilities; and Leamy avoided it, grinning, and cuffed him on the ear.

It was clumsy but sufficiently deceptive; and McSloy had often seen drunken shantymen who put up no better performances. It never occurred to him that the men were not fighting, though he thought that the big one was playing with the other, and would go at him in earnest in a minute.

The crowd howled gleefully, and surged around the combatants. One pushed Leamy, and was himself kicked by another for interfering. In a twinkling, a second fight had started. A whisky glass, heaved by a sportive enthusiast, smashed through a framed advertisement, and the fragments fell tinkling to the floor. Plainly a roughhouse was starting; and McSloy did not intend to allow that.

He nodded to his bartender; and Tony, reaching beneath the bar, drew forth a whittled-down baseball bat which had seen active service before under like conditions. With this in his right hand, he placed his left on the bar, and vaulted. But, as he did so, a flying water jug caught him on the side of the head, and he collapsed like a shot bird, and lay where he fell.

Red leaped forward, for it was now up to him. He was a powerful man, full of brutal courage, and an adept at clearing a bar of a drunken crowd. The accuracy and promptness with which the water jug had been thrown might have aroused his suspicions, but did not. He saw merely an incipient scrap, to be quelled before it became general, as a bush fire must be checked before it spreads. And so he sprang for Jimmy McPike, partly because he took him for easier game than big Leamy, and partly because of his insulting remarks concerning the whisky.

He made the jump wide open, both hands back and at the level of his waist, ready to hit with either or both. But, as he sprang, Leamy, with a toothless grin of pure joy, thrust a foot between

his legs. Thrown off his balance, he fell forward. And Jimmy McPike met him, as he came, with a terrific right-hand lift on the jaw.

"A bird of a punch—a bird!" cried Leamy.

McPike swore and sucked his knuckles tenderly, looking down on the sprawling, senseless figure.

"I nigh bruk me hand on him—th' dog!" he said. "Tie him up an' shove his hat in his mouth to keep him quiet when he comes 'round. An' go to it, lads, before the cops gets wind of the ruction. Make a good job of her."

Instantly Leamy heaved a lead-bottomed cuspidor at the mirror; while Danny Riordan, who had thrown the water jug, bombarded the phonograph and slot machine with full bottles. Connolly ripped out the beer pumps and pounded the bar till they broke. Others jigged on the polished surface with spiked boots. Flett and Laflamme tore up the footrail, and with the end of it brought down ceiling by the square yard.

In five minutes, there was not a whole pane, bottle, or glass left in the house.

The wrecking crew descended to the cellar, where they smashed in beer kegs with ax and crowbar till the suds foamed around their feet. They filled their pockets with cigars, dumped the rest in a pile, and poured kerosene on them. And then, having torn every door from its hinges and thrust them indecently through the window sashes, they departed, taking Red McSloy with them, still unconscious, breathing awful threats to certain habitual frequenters not of their own crowd, who were reveling in free drinks.

Some time after they had gone, Tony groaned and opened unbelieving eyes upon the scene of ruin. Then he sat up, and tenderly felt that part of his head which had collided with the water jug. This brought remembrance. Seated on the floor across from him, securely propped in an angle of the wall, a regular frequenter, who had seen considerably better days, but was now merely a sponge, was drinking from a bottle. Otherwise he was alone.

"Where's Red?" Tony demanded.

The gentleman with the bottle surveyed him owlishly.

"Requiescat in pace!" said he devoutly. "Same to you. An' let me."

"Nix on the Dutch," said Tony. "Talk sense, you bum. Where is he?"

"Ask Charon," the inebriate replied. "Ask ol' Charon. Cross the Styx by now. 'Shall we gather at——' "

"Who's Charon?" Tony demanded. "I don't know no Frenchman of that name. You mean Charron or Charette."

"Charon," the other repeated. "Ol' ferryman," and broke into song with the remnants of a tenor:

"Hey an' ho! an' who's for the ferry?
The night's coming on an' the sun's going down,
I'll row ye so——"

"Choke it!" roared Tony. "Was this Charon in that gang? What ferry does he run?"

"Styx—ferry on Styx," replied the ci-devant scholar.

"Ferry on sticks?" Tony repeated, puzzled. "Aw, you dope, you mean a raft. You mean a Frenchman off a raft. Do you? Did he put Red out? Where's Red now?"

But the gentleman of better days began to weep.

"They took 'm—took 'm an' buried 'm!" he wailed.

"Buried rats!" snapped Tony. "Can't you get nothing straight? What happened?"

"Wrapped 'm up 'n 's tarp—hic!—aulin jacket!" the lugubrious gentleman replied between sobs. "See 'm later. Res'rection morn. Call m' early, mother dear. After life's fitful flever—meana-say flitful fever—he sleeps well. 'S warning t' me lead better life. Th' 'ell with 'm. Say, ol' man, le's talk of worms 'n' graves 'n' epitaphs. Le's have a drink first. Le's——" His suggestions trailed off into incoherence, and he slept.

Tony, after an effort to awake him, desisted in disgust. He searched amid the ruins, finally finding a bottle that was merely cracked; and he took a

mighty jolt, because he was sure he needed it.

"Can't get nothing out of that bum to-night," he reflected. "This Charon musta knocked Red out. Wonder which of the gang he was. I didn't hear of no rafts coming through—no square timbers, just logs. He's got it all balled up. Sticks? Now, maybe he meant the feller hit Red with a club. But what's this bunk about a ferry?

Puzzled, he shook his aching head and looked around.

"Gee, this dump is a fierce lay-out now. They done it right; but I'd like to have a crack at the feller laid me out. Betcha Red put up a peach of a scrap. Wisht I'd seen it. Not a cop around, o' course. That's Red's fault, and he'll blame me. He wouldn't give me a raise when I asked him; and it's a pipe he won't now. Well, whatever he gets is good enough for him. Let him take care of himself. I'm going to bed."

Rising, he caught the inebriate by the collar and dragged him through the débris to the sidewalk. After which, there being nothing left worth locking up, and nothing to lock it with, anyway, he retired to the upper regions, taking the bottle with him, without troubling himself to apprise the authorities of the disappearance of his employer.

And meantime McKeever and Noyes had been very busy. When the day watchman came on the dam, he was surprised to see the water above it brown with shaggy logs, which a double crew of rivermen were sluicing as though their lives depended on it. The sluiceways were big and the water was fast, and a steady stream of logs flashed down them, end to end, in a continuous, gigantic, brown wooden ribbon. Booms and chutes were manned by bronzed, lean, unkempt drivers under the personal supervision of the two bosses, who were handling pike poles themselves.

The day watchman found no trace of the night shift; but he found the water gates closed, the lifting machinery wrecked; and when he tried the phone it was dead. And so naturally he demanded an explanation from McKeever. But McKeever, who had found the night watchman amenable to argument of a pecuniary nature, was not communicative.

"I got no time to talk to you," said he. "Tell your troubles to some one else. I've got enough of my own."

"I'll get some one that'll make you talk," the indignant guardian threatened.

"Go to it," said McKeever. "Come on, boys. Feed them sticks down. We want to get out of this duck pond."

When the day watchman returned, he brought strong reënforcements; namely, the city engineer, the head of the Health Office, Clinch himself, and half a dozen policemen. McKeever and Noyes faced them, standing on the boom logs, their boot calks planted solidly in the slippery wood.

"Look here," said McKeever, "you fellows ask too many questions, and I'm not going to answer one of them. Your dam and your watchman's none of my funeral. If you think you have anything on me, you know what you can do."

"Sure, you know what you can do," Noyes backed him loyally.

"Just as a beginning," said Clinch, "we'll arrest both of you and stop your sluicing."

"Got a warrant?" asked McKeever.

"Easy to get," said Clinch briefly.

"So's bail," the river boss countered. "You arrest me and I'll be back on the job in an hour. And you won't stop the sluicing, neither."

"Indeed," said Clinch. "Why not?"

"Because you daresn't," McKeever asserted. "You control the water level by the dam and its gates. If you want to open the gates, go ahead and do it." And the old river boss grinned wickedly. "But you ain't got a thing to do with the sluices. I can use 'em long's there's water enough. That's one time the law gives a logger a fair deal. You try to hinder me, and you'll have to fight not only Crooks & Cameron, but every logging firm that uses the river; and that'll just about break *you*, me buck. What's more, the first man that touches a sluice will go down it with

the logs. Maybe you'd like the trip yourself?"

Clinch swore angrily. His bluff had failed; for, though it was morally certain that McKeever and Noyes were responsible for whatever had happened, he had absolutely nothing to go on. He knew very well what the active enmity of a dozen logging firms, whose ratings ran up into the millions, meant. He dared not touch the sluices. He could not raise the water gates to lower the surface level; and to destroy them for that purpose would be entirely too coarse. It was certain that the drives would go through, and that the much-needed votes must be lost to him—unless the resourceful Red McSloy could concoct a fresh scheme.

Therefore, he withdrew his forces and returned to town, where he learned for the first time that Mr. McSloy had disappeared as utterly as if the devil had taken him; but that against the Satanic theory—which found some upholders—was the fact that his place was a holy show to look at, and well worth a visit, merely as an illustration of "the abomination of desolation."

IV.

Through the morning mists that clung to the surface of the river glided a small river boat, flat-bottomed, flat-sided, pointed at the ends. Bill Leamy sat in the forward seat, swinging a pair of heavy oars, set in primitive thole pins, with the short, chopping, jerky stroke peculiar to rivermen and fishermen the world over.

Leamy was tired, for he had been chopping away ceaselessly at that same monotonous, ugly, but distance-covering stroke since an hour before midnight; and even his toughened sinews were beginning to complain; also, the seat beneath him, rough and splintery from the trampling of many spiked boots, was becoming unbearably hard.

"How much furder, Jimmy?" he asked. "Be th' mortal, if I'd started wid a tail like a monkey, I'd have no more now nor a bear! I'm grated raw. If the seat of me was a nutmeg, ye could dust it onto a pie."

"We're 'most there," McPike replied. "Just around the turn and into the backwater. I'm tired enough meself."

He sat in the stern, throwing the weight of his body, stiff-armed, against a paddle. So he had thrown it all night unvaryingly, while Leamy toiled at the oars. The thrust of body and arm had become mechanical; but, as with Leamy, the power was still there; and the clumsy boat jumped to each thrust of paddle and dip of oar.

Amidships, rolled in a blanket, Red McSloy lay in healthy slumber; and the sounds of it, which resembled a steam coil with air on the stomach, irritated Leamy.

"He has all th' best of it," he commented.

"For now—maybe," McPike commented grimly, twisting the nose of the boat out of the current into a backwater.

The backwater was a large slough or succession of sloughs, fringed by thick bush and swamps, reedy, cut up by ancient beaver dams, with here and there a tiny island. It was lonely, seldom visited by men; a sanctuary for fish, fur, and fowl.

The intrusion of the river boat disturbed the denizens of the sloughs, already about their morning's business. A muskrat, swimming swiftly, his forepaws tucked under his chin, came up beside them, and disappeared with a splash and a flirt of bare tail. The water swirled, and the lily pads rocked to the frightened rush of a giant 'lunge.

An old black duck and her brood, little more than downy balls, scuttled out of a patch of reeds and across a strip of clear water with prodigious flurry. A lone goose, dabbling for water roots, rose with great wing beats, clamoring. A lordly blue heron, interrupted in his fishing, flew a short fifty yards and balanced on a log, waiting developments.

Only a huge, horned owl, gorged with the spoil of midnight foray among wood mice and partridge broods, sat motionless on an overhanging limb, blinking scornful, amber eyes against the unwelcome light, and allowed the boat to pass beneath him.

McPike turned up a winding channel screened by reeds. This led to a little island, scarcely more than an acre in extent; and, as the boat's nose took the shore, he rose and stretched himself.

"Here we are, praise be!" said he. "The shoulders of me is like toothaches. Look at the devil here snorin' still. Wake up, ye dog!"

He drove his toe into the blankets. Immediately the snoring was replaced by profanity, which, though sleepy, would have been creditable, or discreditable, as a prepared effort, to any man wide awake.

Mr. McSloy sat up and blinked around him very much like the owl; and he demanded to know where in the name of several things he was, and what they meant by bringing him to an unmentionable swamp; and he prophesied for them—with parenthetical comments of a genealogical nature—a decidedly unpleasant future in this world and the next.

To all of which they listened unmoved. And then Leamy ordered him to get ashore, and be quick about it. After a glance from one to the other, he decided to obey; and he sat sullenly on a log while they dragged up the boat, carefully caching oars and paddle beyond his field of vision, brought sundry gunny sacks ashore, built a small fire of the dryest wood they could find, and set about cooking breakfast.

Leamy, the moment he had swallowed his last mouthful, lay down and slept. McPike propped his back against a tree and apparently dozed; but, whenever Red moved, he caught the glint of a cold blue eye fixed upon him. When Leamy awoke, McPike lay down, sighed once, and dropped into slumber instantly.

By this time, Red McSloy was tired of the waiting game. He did not know the name of either of his captors. He had no idea of where he was further than that it was somewhere down the river; and he had a very hazy idea of what had happened immediately after he had been hit by the hard-looking customer now slumbering so peacefully.

In fact, his first clear recollection was of finding himself in a boat, tied securely and gagged with his own hat. He had no idea of the reason for his abduction; but he did know of dozens of reasons why he should be in White's Falls just then.

"Say, look here!" he began.

Leamy lifted a warning finger.

"S-s-h-h! You'll wake him."

McSloy consigned "him" to eternal misery.

"And that'll do for you," said Leamy. "L'ave him sleep now, or I'll murder you."

He and McSloy were much of a size; and the latter, after reflection, decided to lower his voice; but more for diplomatic reasons than because of the threat.

"You and him," he said, indicating McPike, with a jerk of the thumb, "are getting yourselves into a devil of a mess."

Leamy grinned cheerfully.

"We been in them things before."

"What are you doin' this on?" McSloy demanded. "You come into my place and I give you the best there is. You an' him starts fightin', and I go to stop it, and he hits me when I ain't ready. He couldn't do it again in a hundred years."

"Ye think not?"

"I know it. An' then the both of yez kidnap me. Now why? What's in it? What do yez want?"

"He'll tell you," said Leamy.

"I'm askin' you."

"I won't tell you."

"What's your name, and his?"

"Never mind."

"What drive are yez off of?"

"Never mind that."

"Well, say, do yez know if you're alive or not?"

"Not to bet on."

Mr. McSloy threw himself back in disgust.

"I'm no lawyer," he said; "but I got the coin to hire the best there is; an' I'll do it, too. This will be worth about ten years apiece to youse guys. I'll get you for it, mind—I'll get you put to the long-handled hammer for a bunch that'll make you shiver to think of."

Leamy, slicing plug tobacco methodically, did not seem impressed.

"Tell him," he said indifferently.

"He's the boss, is he?"

"For you, he is," said Leamy.

Mr. McSloy reflected, eying McPike. There is nothing especially attractive in the aspect of a slumbering, red-headed riverman; and he was not reassured by the inspection.

"Come on, now, let's get together," said he persuasively. "You ain't got nothing against me. I dunno's I ever seen you before. Then somebody's payin' you to put me out of the way for a while. You done it clever, I'll say that. But I got to be back home—there's reasons why. Tell me how much you want to put me down by a road where I can hire a rig, and we'll let bygones be bygones."

But Leamy shook his head; and, though McSloy tried further persuasion, and, failing, had recourse again to threats, he made no progress whatever. Nor did he make more progress when McPike awoke. To propositions and threats, the riverman had but the one answer:

"I ain't talkin' to you now."

The day passed slowly, and night came. McSloy was raging. He had all he could eat and all he could smoke, and he was at liberty to walk about; but he was badly needed at home. He had counted on using that day and the next to swing the river-front vote into line. And the day after that would be polling day.

He renewed his proposals, and, when they failed, determined on a break for liberty. He thought himself a match for either of his captors; but, after the taste he had had of their quality, not for both together. But an ax was sticking in a log beside the fire. If he could get hold of that he could stand them off until he got the boat clear of the shore; and he knew that the water was too weedy for them to swim, and the bottom too boggy for them to wade.

He sauntered back and forth, drawing nearer to the ax with each turn. The moment seemed propitious. Leamy was squatting on his heels by the fire frying bacon. McPike was sitting, cross-legged, on the ground. McSloy jumped and grasped the ax helve, yanking the blade from the wood.

McPike swore, bounding to his feet. Leamy whirled, frying pan in hand, fat bacon sputtering in the grease.

"Drop that!" he cried.

McSloy laughed confidently. A six-foot man, with a light, sharp ax is, if he knows how to handle it, a match for half a dozen unarmed men.

"Watch where I drop it if yez crowd me," he jeered. "I'm goin' for a little boat ride all by me lonesome, and——"

And then Leamy, who could throw flapjacks ten feet high and catch them in the pan, and had been known, on a bet, to separate coffee beans from the edible variety in the same utensil, flipped his wrist.

The sputtering fat and crisping, golden meat shot straight into McSloy's face, blistering where it hit, blinding him for an instant.

In that instant, McPike pinned him, dodging the wild swoop of the ax head. Leamy ripped the helve out of his hand, and they put him down with a force and a solid thump that jarred most of the breath out of him.

But, having started, McSloy had no intention of giving up merely because he was down. He was as strong as the proverbial bull, and he was not afraid of anything. It was not the first time he had been forced to handle two men; and, though at a disadvantage, he went at the task with a will. The row was lively while it lasted, but the odds were too heavy. Finally they got holds which he could not break.

"The ructious devil—an' all the pork wasted!" panted Leamy. "Hold still, you"—this to McSloy—"or I'll fetch your stomach up through your teeth!" He emphasized the threat with an ungentle pressure of the knee in the epigastric region. "This is what comes of treatin' the likes of him decent. Hand over the bit of rope till I make a job."

And he did make a job, with the aid of a stick beneath the elbows and a sapling between the legs; and then stood

back and regarded his handiwork with a horrible grin.

"That's right, curse away," said he; for Mr. McSloy was finding what consolation he could in speech untrammeled by religion or decency. "An' when ye get through, start over ag'in backward. There's plenty of time."

McSloy came to appreciate the truth of the last statement. He spent the night in bonds, though comfortably enough; and the next day Leamy improvised a pair of hobbles, which permitted him to move about with care. But his captors seemed prepared to remain on the little island for an indefinite period. He tried to reopen negotiations, but met with no more success than before; and it became evident that the election in White's Falls must take place without him.

The morning of his third day of captivity found him in a murderous mood. He knew that the polls were open, and that his private property, the river-front vote, was being handled by some one else, if it was being handled at all; and, if it was not, this meant the defeat of the men who had protected him in his business for years; which, in turn, meant that his place would be closed. After his apparent desertion in the hour of need, he could hope for nothing from Clinch, even if the latter did win without him.

And for all this these two accursed lumberjacks were responsible! If he could have murdered both of them, he would have done so cheerfully, and taken chances on the law.

While he was indulging in these baleful reflections, his captors held a brief consultation, came over to him, and sat down.

"Now, then, McSloy," said Jimmy McPike, "I'll talk to *you*."

And Mr. McSloy told him feelingly where he might go to do it.

"All in good time," said McPike. "I s'pose, now, ye been wonderin' why we brung ye here?"

Mr. McSloy, who had asked both of them and himself that very question many times without eliciting a reply, merely snarled.

"It's to learn ye a lesson," McPike continued. "D'ye mind what ould Bill McKeever said to ye? Didn't he tell ye to l'ave his crews alone? An' did ye? Not much, ye didn't. Ye went yer same dirty way; an', to make good an' sure, ye had the water let out o' the dam to plug his drive."

"So this is his doin's, is it?" McSloy commented. "I'll settle with *him;* and I'll settle with *you.*"

"You'll settle wid me sooner nor you think," said Jimmy grimly. "Tell me, now, d'ye know who I am?"

Mr. McSloy did not—nor did he care.

"Yer mem'ry's bad," said McPike, "so now I'll tell ye. I'm th' drunken fool of a shanty lad that come into your joint a year gone wid the few dollars that he hadn't blowed left in his pocket. I was willin' for to spend them dollars, an' all I wanted was the chancest. An' for fear I'd spend them some other place, or bekase ye hated to see me get even the stuff ye sell for whisky for them, ye doped me drink an' rolled me for them few dollars; an' ye trun me out into an alley of a rainy night, to lie in the filth an' mud like a dead cat. That's who I am, far's ye should mind back. An' for me name. Did ye ever hear of Jimmy McPike by any chancest?"

McSloy had heard of him; and what he had heard was not of a reassuring nature. If he had known his identity a year before, he would have let him severely alone.

"I never rolled you at all," he said. "You was drunk; but you had your wad when you left my place."

"Ye lie!" said Jimmy fiercely. "The dope worked slow on me, an' I wasn't quite dead to the world when ye went through me pockets. So now I'll tell ye what I'm goin' to do. If ye have any money on ye, I'm goin' to take what's mine; an' then I'm goin' to turn ye loose an' hammer ye till ye can't stand, an' boot ye till ye can't crawl. An' then me an' Bill will put ye ashore, an' ye can go to the divil if ye like. An' mind this what I'm tellin' ye. If ye make a holler when ye get back, or try to have the law on me or anybody else, I can prove that ye rolled me. Never

mind how. I can prove it—an' I will. An' when ye get out of jail, if I ever come up with ye, I'll kill ye wid me boots. Turn out yer pockets now, till I see what money ye have."

And when, after yielding to a display of *force majeure,* McSloy did so, McPike whistled.

"He's robbed a bank," he commented to Leamy. "The likes of him never come by all that money honest. We'd better keep it till we find out."

"Give it back here," said McSloy. "It's mine."

Jimmy handed the big roll to Leamy, and slipped a sharp knife through the rope that hobbled McSloy's ankles.

"Now you're loose," he said, "an' a bigger man nor me. Limber up yer legs, an' then stand up an' fight. An' remember, yer only chancst of gettin' out of a holy whalin' is to give me one."

"And if I do, the two of yez will pile on me," said Red.

"We ain't built that way," said Jimmy.

"It shows what ye are—to think of it," said Leamy. "It's a fair fight—you an' him."

"If I beat you, I go loose with the money?" asked McSloy.

"Sure," Jimmy replied.

McSloy, making a virtue of necessity, deliberately removed his coat, rolled up his shirt sleeves, and drew in his belt two holes.

"Come on," he said. "I never seen the lumberjack yet could do me, and I'll take a chance on you."

The details of the fight that followed are not material. It raged desperately, without rounds and with nothing barred. The men were big, strong, willing, and able to take punishment.

Leamy danced with excitement, shouting needless advice to his friend. McSloy's greater weight and size were offset by McPike's superior speed and condition. Gradually the former slowed in his attack, acting on the defensive, trying to recover his wind. But this McPike would not allow. He carried the fight in, apparently unwearied, slamming loose, two handed, at the retreating man. And finally McSloy, unable to face the terrific fire, fell, utterly exhausted, fairly cut to pieces and unable to rise.

"Now give him the boots!" cried Leamy.

McPike hesitated.

"He'd do it to you," said Leamy.

"That's no reason," said Jimmy. "He's a dirty thief, but he ain't a coward. He stood up to me, while he could, like a man. I'll be no less. It'll learn him a lesson as it is, an' I think we do be about square now."

Two days afterward, the president of a certain bank in White's Falls—who was in a particularly good humor that morning because of the defeat of most of the Clinch ticket—received an extraordinary letter, written with a very poor pencil on very poor paper, reading thus:

DEAR SIR: We are sending you by express a lot of bils of your bank. They were prety near three thousan dollars but I took fifty six to pay for my pay he roled me for last year. We took them bils off of Red Macsloy he says they are his he got them from a mister Clinch for the election but he is such a lier we don't no and he may have robed you. If he is teling the trut' please give them back to him he will be in town by this time or to mister Clinch wichever you like we have no clame on them excep for the fifty six if they are his.

If you want the fifty six or us write care Crooks & Camron old Bill McKeevers river crew and we will get it and pay up when we are payed off for we nede the money now and so no more at present from

Your Obediently
J. McPIKE
W. LEAMY.

p. s. Macsloys place is no better than a shebang it is a bum one and ought to be shut up.

The complete novel in the Month-end POPULAR, out December 25th, is by Francis Lynde. It isn't exactly a railroad novel, though a railroad man is the hero. Part of the action —and decidedly exciting action it is—takes place on board ship. The novel is called "The Cruise of the 'Colleen Bawn'"

Autumn Magic

By Berton Braley

FROST on the trees—on the grass,
  A lilt to the steps that pass·
Tang in the air—a breeze
Waking an old unease;
Haze when the day's begun,
  Dawn that is brisk and chill,
Challenge and zest in the sun
  Setting the blood athrill!
Fall!—and the ducks are flying
  South on their ancient route,
Hear them calling and crying!
  Hunter—come out! Come out!

Fall—and the forest places
  Harbor the leaping deer.
Think of those wooded spaces,
  Think of the camp fire's cheer!
The sound, sweet sleep; the lisp
Of the leaves in the wind; the crisp
And cleanly smell of the pines;
Then the thrill of the chase—to find
  The track of a buck; the signs
Of his light-foot path, and to read
His ways; and to pit your mind
  Against the sight and the scent
And the weariness and speed
Of the wild, free thing you stalk:
Then the shot—and the proud content
Of bringing your prize to camp;
And, after the sturdy tramp,
Supper and smoke and—talk.
Ah, that is living indeed!
Why do you wait and doubt?
Hunter—come out! Come out!

Fall—and a sapphire sky
  And your blood in a flood that races,
And the call of the ducks that fly,
  And the lure of the hunting places!
Fall—and the air's astir
With the tingle of life—the whir
Of a myriad myriad wings
And the movement of wild wild things!
Fall—and the call to you
To come as you used to do
Back on the good old route,
Hunter—come out! Come out!

The Saintsbury Affair

By Roman Doubleday

Author of "The Red House on Rowan Street," "The Hemlock Avenue Mystery," Etc.

"A charming detective story" is how one reader characterized this story. There is no denying its charm; but it has virility as well, and a mystery cleverly sustained. You remember "The Red House on Rowan Street." This is as good a yarn—and when we have said that you know it is a great story. You will get it complete in three numbers of the POPULAR.

CHAPTER I.

THE BEGINNING OF THE TANGLE.

LET me see where the story begins. Perhaps I can date it from the telephone invitation to dinner which I received one Monday from my dear and kind friend, Mrs. Whyte.

"And see that you are just as clever and agreeable as your naturally morose nature will permit," she said saucily. "I have a charming young lady here as my guest, and I want you to make a good impression."

"Another?" I gasped. "So soon?"

"I don't wonder that your voice is choked with surprise and gratitude," she retorted, and I could see with my mind's eye how her eyebrows went up. "You *don't* deserve it—I'll admit that freely. But I am of a forgiving nature."

"You are so near to being an angel," I interrupted, "that it gives me genuine pleasure to suffer martyrdom at your behest. I welcome the opportunity to show you how devotedly I am your slave. Who is the young lady this time?"

"Miss Katherine Thurston. Now, if you would only talk in that way to *her*——"

"I won't," I said hastily. "At least, not until her hair is as white as yours is—it can never be as lovely. But for your sake I will undertake to be as witty and amiable and generally delightful as I think it safe to be, having due regard for the young lady's peace of mind——" I rang off just in time to escape the "You conceited puppy!" which I knew was panting to get on the wire.

So that was how I came to go to Mrs. Whyte's dinner that memorable Monday evening, and to meet Katherine Thurston.

But now that I come to look at it in this historical way, I see that I shall have to begin a little farther back, or you won't understand the significance of what took place that night. I had another engagement for that evening, but I thought I could fit the two appointments in by getting away from Mrs. Whyte's by ten o'clock. Under the circumstances she would forgive an early departure. My other engagement was of a peculiar and unescapable nature. It had come about in this way.

There was a man in our town who had always interested me to an unusual degree, though my personal acquaintance with him was of the slightest. He was an architect, Kenneth Clyde by name, and he had done some of the best public buildings in the State. He had a

wide circle of friends and acquaintances, and was related to half a dozen of the "old families" of the town—I am comparatively new myself, but I soon saw that Clyde belonged to the inner circle of Saintsbury.

And yet, with all his professional success and his social privileges, there was something about the man that expressed an excessive humility. It was not diffidence or shyness—he had all the self-possession that goes with good breeding. But he held himself back from claiming public credit or accepting any public place, though I knew that more than once it had been pressed upon him in a way that made it difficult for him to evade it. He persistently kept himself in the background, until his desire to remain inconspicuous almost became conspicuous in turn.

He was the man, for instance, who did all the work connected with the organization of our boat club, but he refused to accept any office. He was always ready to lend a hand with any public enterprise that needed pushing, but his name never figured on the committees that appeared in the newspapers. And yet, if physiognomy counts for anything, he was not born to take a back seat. He was approaching forty at this time, and in spite of his consistent modesty he was one of the best known men in Saintsbury.

As I say, he had always interested me as a man out of the ordinary, and, when he walked into my law office a few days before that telephone call from Mrs. Whyte, I was uncommonly pleased at the idea that he should have come to me for legal advice when he might have had anything he wanted from the older lawyers in town whom he had known all his life. I guessed at a glance that it was professional advice he wanted, from the curiously tense look that underlay his surface coolness.

"I have come to you, Mr. Hilton," he said directly, "partly because you are enough of a stranger here to regard me and my perplexities in an impersonal manner, and so make it easier for me to discuss them."

"Yes," I said encouragingly. He had hesitated after his last words as though he found it hard to really open up the subject-matter.

"But that is only a part of my reason for asking you to consider my case," he went on, with a certain repressed intensity. "I believe, from what I have seen of you, that you have both physical and moral courage, and that you will look at the matter as a man, as well as a lawyer."

I nodded, not caring to commit myself until I understood better what he meant.

"First, read this letter," he said, and laid before me a crumpled sheet which he had evidently been clutching in his hand inside of his coat pocket.

It was a half sheet of ruled legal cap, and in the center was written, in a bold, well-formed hand:

I need five hundred dollars. You may bring it to my office Monday night at ten. No fooling on either side, you understand.

"Blackmail!" I said.

Clyde nodded. "What is the best way of dealing with a blackmailer?" he asked, looking at me steadily.

"That may depend on circumstances," I said evasively. I felt that, as he had suggested, he was trying to appeal to my sympathies as a man rather than to my judgment as a lawyer.

"I heard of one case," he said casually, "where a prominent man was approached by a blackmailer who had discovered some compromising secret, and he simply told the fellow that if he gave the story to the papers, as he threatened to do, he would shoot him and take the consequences, since life wouldn't be worth living in any event, if that story came out. I confess that course appeals to my common sense. It is so conclusive."

"I infer, however, that you didn't take that tone with this fellow when he first approached you," I said, touching the paper on my desk. "This is not his first demand."

"No. The first time that it came, I was paralyzed, in a manner. I had been dreading something of that sort—

discovery, I mean—for years. I had gone softly, to avoid notice; I had only half lived my life; I had felt each day to be a reprieve. Then *he* came—and asked money for keeping my secret. It seemed a very easy way of escape. In a way, it made me feel safer than before. I knew now where the danger was, and how to keep it down. It was only a matter of money. I paid, and felt almost cheerful. But he came again, and again. He has grown insolent."

He drew his brows together sternly as he looked at the written threat which lay before us. He did not look like a man afraid.

"Can you tell me the whole situation?" I asked. "If I know all the facts, I can judge better—and you know that you speak in professional confidence."

"I want to tell you," he said. "I—he knew—the fact is, I was sentenced to be hanged for a murder some fifteen years ago in Texas. The sentence is still suspended over me. I escaped before it was executed."

A lawyer learns not to be surprised at any confession, for the depths of human nature which are opened to his professional eye are so amazing that he becomes accustomed to strange things, but I admit that I was staggered at my client's confidence. I picked up and folded and refolded the paper before I could speak quite casually.

"And no one knows that fact? Your name——"

"I was known by another name at the time—an assumed name. I'll tell you the whole story. But one word first—I was and am innocent."

He looked at me squarely but appealingly as he spoke, and suddenly I saw what the burden was which he had been carrying for fifteen years—nearly half his life.

"I believe you," I said, and unconsciously I held out my hand. He gripped it as a drowning man clutches a spar, and a dull flush swept over his face. His hand was trembling visibly as he finally drew it away, but he tried to speak lightly.

"That's what I couldn't induce the judge or jury to do," he said. "Let me tell you how it all came about. It was in August of eighteen ninety-five. I had graduated in June—I was twenty-three—and before settling down to my new profession I went off on a vacation trip with a fellow I had come to know pretty well at the university during my last year there. He was not the sort of friend I cared to introduce to my family, but there are worse fellows than poor Henley was. He was merely rather wild and lawless, with an instinct for gambling which grew upon him. We went off avowedly for a lark—'to see life,' Henley put it. I knew his tastes well enough to guess beforehand that the society to which he would introduce me would not be creditable. The Clydes are as well known in this State as Bunker Hill is in Boston, and I felt a responsibility toward the name. So I insisted that on our travels I should be Tom Johnson."

"I see. Then when the trouble came you were known by that name instead of your own?"

"Yes. That's how I was able to come back here and to go on living my natural life."

"That was fortunate. That situation was much easier to manage than if it had been the other way around."

Clyde had picked up a paper knife, and was examining it with absent attention, and instead of answering my remark directly he looked up with a frank smile.

"You can't imagine what it means to me to be able to talk this over with you," he said. "All these years I have carried it—here. Why, it is like breathing after being half suffocated."

"I understand."

"You want to know the details, though," he went on more gravely. "We were together for several weeks, going from one city to another. Henley had a special faculty for striking up acquaintance with picturesque rascals, and for a time I found it very interesting as well as novel. It was a side of life I had never before come close to. But gradually I couldn't help seeing that Henley was helping out an

uncommon knack with the cards by the tricks of a sharper. We quarreled over it more than once, and things began to grow uncomfortable. The old irresponsible comradeship was chilled, though I didn't yet feel like cutting loose from him.

"One night we had been playing cards in a saloon in Houston, Texas—Henley and I and two men we had picked up. They were rough-and-ready Westerners, and a sort to stand no fooling. We had all been drinking a little, but not enough to lose our heads. I saw Henley make a misdeal, and I told him so. He was furious, and we all but came to blows in the quarrel that followed. I left him with the others, and went off by myself. That evening had finally sickened me with the swine's husks I had been eating, and I suddenly determined to quit it then and there and get back to my own life, my own name, and my own people.

"I walked down to the station, found that a train for the North was just about to pull out, and jumped aboard. I was an hour away from Houston before I remembered something that made me change my hasty plan. I had left my bag in the room at the hotel, and, though I didn't care about the clothes or the other things, there was—well, there is no reason why I should not tell you. There was a girl's picture in an inside compartment, and some letters, and I couldn't leave them to chance. I had simply forgotten all about that matter in my angry passion, but the thought now was like a dash of cold water, bringing me to my senses.

"I got out of the train at the next stop—a place called Lester. It was just midnight. I found that the first train I could catch to take me back to Houston would go through at five in the morning, and I walked up and down that deserted platform—for even the station agent went off to sleep after the midnight train went through—for five mortal hours. I had time to think things over, and to realize that I had been playing with pitch as no Clyde had a right to."

He paused for a moment, as though he were living the moment over, but I did not speak. I wanted him to tell the story in his own way.

"I caught the five-o'clock train back, and was in Houston soon after six. I went at once to the hotel and to my room. Henley's room communicated with mine. The door between them was ajar, and I pushed it open to speak to him. He was leaning over the table, on which cards were scattered about, and he was quite dead, from a knife thrust between the shoulders."

Clyde had been speaking in a composed manner, like one telling an entirely impersonal tale, but at this point he paused, and a look of embarrassment clouded his face.

"I find it hard to explain to you or to myself why I did so foolish a thing as I did next, but I was rather shaken up by weeks of dissipation and the racketing of the night before, and my excited, sleepless night had thrown me off my balance. When I saw Henley dead over the cards, I realized in a flash how bad it would look for me after my row with him in the saloon the night before. I jumped back into my own room, and began stuffing my things into my bag pell-mell to make my escape."

"The worst thing you could have done."

"Of course. And it proved so. I had left my room door ajar; a sweeper in the halls saw my mad haste, and it made him suspicious. When I stepped out of my room, the proprietor stopped me. Of course the whole thing was uncovered. I was arrested, tried for murder, and, as I told you, sentenced to be hanged." He finished grimly.

"And yet you had a perfect alibi, if you could prove it."

"But I couldn't. No one knew I took the train. The train conductors were called, but neither of them remembered me. The station agent at Lester, with whom I had had some conversation about the first train back, was killed by an accident the next day. The fact that I was out of Houston from eleven until six was something I could not prove. And it was the one thing that would have saved me."

"But neither could they prove, I take it, that you were in the hotel that night."

"They tried to. The clerk testified that four men came in shortly after eleven, and went up to Henley's room. One of them was Henley; two were strangers; and the fourth he had taken for granted to be myself. My lawyer pressed him on that point, of course, and forced him to admit that he had not noticed particularly, but had assumed that it was I from the fact that the man was with Henley, and because he was about my size and figure. Drinks had been sent up, and an hour later two of the men had quietly come down and gone out. Nothing further had been heard from our room until the sweeper reported in the morning that through the partly open door he had seen me acting like a man distracted. Everything seemed to turn against me. I was bent on saving my name at any rate, so I could not be entirely open about my past history, and that prejudiced my case."

"What is your own theory of the affair and of the missing third man?" I asked.

"I suppose the men whom I had left with Henley in the saloon had picked up a fourth man for the game and gone to Henley's room. He probably tried to cheat again, and they were ready for him. One of them stabbed him. Then the other two waited quietly in the room, while the actual slayer walked out, to make sure that he had a clear passage, and then they followed after he had had time to disappear. They were hard-bitted men, but not thugs."

"You were tried and sentenced. How did you get away?"

"After the sentence, and while I was on the way back to jail, I made my escape. I have always believed that the deputy sheriff who had me in charge gave me the opportunity intentionally. Certainly he fired over my head, and made a poor show at guessing my direction. I think he had doubts of the justice of the verdict, and took that way of reversing the decision of the court, but of course I can never know."

"Then you came back here? This had been your home before?"

"Yes. It was the way to avoid comment. Kenneth Clyde was well known here, and nobody in Saintsbury even heard of the trial of one Tom Johnson in Houston. I have thought it best to go on living my life just as I should have done in any event. And I have done so, except that I have never—— But that doesn't matter." From the expression that swept over his face, I guessed what the exception was. He had never dared to marry.

"Then this man——" I prompted.

A fleeting smile passed over Clyde's face. He spoke with light cynicism.

"As you say, then this man. I had almost come to believe that the past was dead and buried and that I would be justified in forgetting it myself. Then this man came into my office one day, affected surprise at seeing me, called me Tom Johnson, and laughed in my face when I denied the name. I was panic-stricken. I bought his silence. Of course he came again. As I said at the beginning, I am tired of the situation." There was a tone in his voice that would have held a warning for the blackmailer if he had heard it.

"How much does the man know? Do you know whether he has anything to prove his charges?"

"It seems that he was in the courthouse as a spectator during the trial. He didn't know me at the time, though he might, for he seems to have been in this neighborhood time and again—at least in the State. He is a trouble man himself—some ten years ago he shot and killed a State senator here in Saintsbury. He was acquitted, because he got some friends to swear that Senator Benbow had made a motion as though to draw a gun, though he was found afterward to be unarmed. But he had to leave the State, popular anger was so aroused against him, and he has drifted downstream ever since—pretty far down, I imagine. Fairly subterranean at times. All this I have found out since he forced his acquaintance upon me. I knew nothing of him before."

"What is his name? Where is he to be found?"

"Alfred Barker. He has an office in the Phoenix Building at present. Whether he has any legitimate business, I do not know. He hangs out under the shingle of the Western Land & Improvement Company, but I have a feeling that that is only a cover."

"A man who has lived that sort of life is probably vulnerable," I said cheerfully. "I'll see what I can find out about him. In the meantime, I, as your attorney, will keep this appointment for you next Monday evening."

"I thought that would probably be your plan. But now that I have put it into your hands, I am more than half sorry I did not keep it to myself and meet him with a revolver."

I shook my head. "For a burned child, you have curiously little respect for the fire of the law."

Clyde had risen, and he stood looking at me with an impersonal sternness that made his eyes hard.

"My life, and, what I value far more, my reputation, my name, are in that fellow's hands. And he is an unhung murderer—his life is already forfeit."

"His time will come," I said hastily. My new client looked altogether too much as though he were disposed to hurry on the slow-paced law!

Clyde nodded, but with an absent air, as though he were following his own thoughts rather than my words, and soon took his leave.

When I decided to take up the practice of the law, I had fancied, in my youthful ignorance, that it was a sort of glorified compound of a detective story and "Gems of Oratory." I had now been at it for some years, and so far my detective instincts had been chiefly required in the search for missing authorities in the law books, and my oratorical gifts had been exercised almost exclusively on delinquent debtors who didn't want to pay their debts. You can therefore imagine that Clyde's interview left me pleasantly excited.

This was the real thing! This was the case I long had sought and mourned because I found it not! Not for worlds would I have missed the opportunity of meeting his blackmailing correspondent. To face a rascal was no uncommon experience unfortunately, but to face so complete and melodramatic a rascal, and to try to wrest from him some incriminating admission that would give me a controlling hold on him in my turn—that was something that did not come often into the day's work.

Very much to my surprise, I found unexpected light upon the career of Alfred Barker not farther away than my own office. My first step was to set my clerk, Adam Fellows, to looking up the court and newspaper records of Barker's connection with the killing of Senator Benbow. When I mentioned his name to Fellows, I saw by his sudden change of expression that I had touched some sore chord—and if Fellows had an ambition it was to conceal his feelings, moreover.

"You know Barker, then?" I said abruptly.

"Yes," he said, in a very low voice—and I guessed in what connection.

I may say here that Fellows was a souvenir of my first trial case and of an early enthusiasm for humanity. One day, not long after my admission to the bar—this was before I came to Saintsbury—the court assigned to me the defense of a young fellow who had no lawyer. He was a clerk in a city office, and was charged with embezzlement by his employers. The money had gone for race-track gambling, and he could not deny his guilt, but by bringing out the facts of his youth and his unfortunate associations, I was able to get a minimum sentence for him—the best that could be expected under the circumstances.

When his sentence expired, I was on the lookout for him, and took him into my own office as a clerk. I had nothing he could embezzle, for one thing, and the dogged stoicism with which he had met his fate interested me. Besides, I knew it would be difficult for him to get work, particularly as he did not have an engaging personality.

I think that in a manner he was

grateful, but he never could forget that he carried the stigma of a convict, and he imagined that every one else was remembering it also. This moodiness had grown upon him instead of wearing off. It used to make me impatient —but it is easy enough for one whose withers are unwrung to be impatient with the galled jade's tendency to wince.

"What do you know of Barker?" I asked.

"I know that where he is, there is deviltry, but no one ever catches him," he said bitterly. "Some one else will pay all right, but the law doesn't touch *him.*"

"Did he get you into trouble?" I asked bluntly.

"He made me believe he could make a fortune for me. He kept me going with hopes that the next time, the next time, I would win enough to square things up. It was his doing, not mine, really. But he did nothing that the law takes note of." Fellows spoke with unusual excitement and feeling, and I didn't think any good would come of a discussion of moral responsibility at that time.

"Well, look up everything possible about that affair when Benbow was killed," I said. "I want to see if there is anything in that which would give a hold on him."

"Oh, there won't be," he said scornfully. "He plays safe. But if there is any justice in heaven, he will come a cropper some day. Only it won't be by process of law. No convict stripes for *him.*"

"Let me know as soon as you find the record," I said, turning away. His bitterness only grew if you gave it opportunity.

I then took occasion to visit the Phoenix Building, in order to locate the office which I expected to visit the Monday evening following. I wanted to know my way without wasting time.

As I entered, I noticed a man standing before the building directory which hung opposite the elevators. He was a tall, athletic fellow, in clothes that suggested an engineer or fireman. His hat was pulled down over the upper part of his face, but his powerful, smooth-shaven jaw showed the peculiar blue tint of very dark men. All this I saw without consciously looking, but in a moment I had reason to notice him more closely.

The elevator gate opened, and a man stepped out—a rather shabby, untidy man, with a keen eye. He glanced at me carelessly; then his eye fell upon the tall young fellow before the bulletin board, and he smiled. He stepped up near him.

"Hello! You here?" he said softly. Then deliberately: "Are you married yet?"

The tall fellow turned, and lunged toward him, but the other ducked and slipped adroitly out of his way, and ran down to the open doorway and so into the street. The tall fellow made no attempt to follow. I think that lurch toward the other had been partly the result of surprise. But not wholly. He stood now, leaning against the wall, apparently waiting for the elevator, but I saw that his two fists had not yet unclenched themselves, and his blue-black jaw was squared in a way that told of locked teeth. He jerked his hat down farther over his face as he saw me looking at him, and turned away. He was breathing hard.

"Can you direct me to Mr. Barker's office?" I asked the elevator man.

"His office is in number twenty-three, second floor, but he ain't in. That was he that came down with me and went out."

"Oh, all right. I'll come again," I said.

The tall young fellow had gone. Had he, too, come to look up Mr. Barker? At any rate, I should know Barker when we met again.

CHAPTER II.

TWO LOVELY LADIES.

I am trying to give you this story as it opened up step by step before me and around me, not merely as I came to see it afterward, looking backward. But of course I shall have to select my

scenes. The story ran sometimes, like a cryptogram, through other events that seemed at the time to mean something entirely different, and I also did some living and working and thinking along other lines through those days. But these matters I eliminate in telling the tale. They were equally important to me at the time, but now they are forgotten, and the links of the story are the only things that stand out in my memory.

Mrs. Whyte's dinner was an important link, but before that there came another incident most significant, as I saw afterward—or, rather, two related incidents.

There was an old beggar on the street corner right across from my office for whom I had an especial affection. Of course he made a show of being a merchant rather than a beggar, by having a tray of cut flowers in summer, and hot peanuts in winter, and newspapers at all seasons, on a tripod arrangement beside him; and the police knew better than to see if he sometimes held up a wayfarer for more than the price of his wares.

I was fond of him because he was so imperturbably cheerful, rain or shine, and so picturesque and resourceful in flattery. He was an old soldier, and one leg that had danced in days agone, and that had most heedlessly carried him to the firing line in half a dozen battles of our own Civil War was buried at Gettysburg.

Barney seemed to regard this as a peculiarly fortunate circumstance, since it had made it possible for him to use a crutch. That crutch was a rare and wonderful possession, according to Barney. Hearing him dilate on its convenience and comfortableness, you might almost come to believe that he meant it all.

Well, you'll understand from this that I not only liked but respected Barney, and I usually stopped to get a flower when I passed his stand on leaving my office.

On that Monday—that eventful and ever-to-be-remembered Monday—I saw as I approached that Barney was holding forth in the spellbinding manner I knew, to another listener—a young fellow, I thought at first. But as I came up, his listener emptied a chatelaine purse upon Barney's tray, and my surprised glance from the jingling shower of silver to the face of the impetuous donor showed me that it was a young girl—a gallant, boyish-faced girl, whose eyes were shining into Barney's with the enthusiasm of a hero worshiper.

"I'll never forget that—never!" she cried, in a voice thrilled with emotion. "It was great." And on the instant she turned on her heel like a boy, and marched off down the street.

I looked at Barney with suspended disapproval, and for once, to do him credit, he looked abashed.

"Faith, and who'd think the chit would have all that money about her and her that reckless in scattering it about!" he exclaimed. Then, recovering himself, he thrust the coins carelessly in his pocket—perhaps to get them out of my accusing sight—and ran on confidentially:

"It's the Lord's own providence that she turned it over to me, instead of carrying it about to the shops where temptation besets a young girl on all sides. It's too full their pretty heads are of follolls and such, for it's light-headed they are at that age, and that's the Lord's truth."

"You worked on her sympathies," I said sternly. "You saw she was a warm-hearted young girl, and you played up to her. You made yourself out a hero, you rascal."

"You're the keen gentleman," said Barney admiringly. "Sure and you'd make a good priest, saving your good looks, for you'd see the confession in the heart before a poor, lying penitent had time to think of a saving twist to give it that might look like the truth and save him a penance."

"Never mind me and my remarkable qualities," I said severely. "What were you telling that girl?"

Barney bent over his flowers to shift the shades which protected them from

the sun, but after a moment's hesitation he answered without looking up.

"She has the way with her, that bit! When she looked me in the eye and says: 'Tell me what I ask,' I knew my commanding officer, and it's not Barney that risks a court-martial for disobedience! No, sir! If she didn't keep at me to tell her how I lost my leg, now! Your honor couldn't have held out agin' her, not to be the man you are."

I knew the story of that lost leg, and how shy Barney was of retailing that heroic bit of his history, and I wondered less at the girl's emotion than at her success in drawing the hidden tale from him. He didn't tell it to many. While I marveled, he looked up with the twinkle I couldn't help liking.

"She didn't give me time to tell her that that bit story wasn't the kind you pay to hear, but it would maybe have chilled the warm heart of her to have me push her silver back, and I wouldn't do that even if I had to keep the money to save her feelin's, the darlin'."

"Awfully hard on you, I know," I said, letting us both down with the help of a little irony. "Where's my rosebud, you rascal?"

He lifted a slender vase from the covered box beneath his table, and brought out the flower he had reserved for me. It was a creamy white bud, deepening into a richer shade that hinted at stores of gold at the sealed-up heart. As he held it out silently, something in his whimsical face told me his thought.

"Yes, you are right," I said casually, as I took the flower. "It *does* look like her."

Barney's eyes wrinkled appreciatively. "There was a mistake somewhere, sir, when you were born outside of Eire. But you got it straight this time."

I went home to dress for Mrs. Whyte's dinner, and when I was ready I slipped into my pocket, to show my hostess, a little locket which held a miniature of my mother. Mrs. Whyte and my mother had been schoolmates—that was why she was so much kinder to me than I could ever have deserved on my own account—and I knew she would like to see the picture.

I opened the case to look at it myself—my mother is still living, thank Heaven, and unchangeably young—and I was struck with the youthful modernity of it. Perhaps it was because the old style of dressing the hair had come back that it looked so of the present generation rather than of the past.

It had been painted for my father in the days of their courtship, and on his death I had begged for the portrait, though my mother had refused to let me have the old case he carried. I had therefore spent some time and care in selecting a new case, and had decided finally on one embellished with emeralds set in the form of a heart. I thought it symbolical of my dear mother's young-heartedness, but I found out afterward that she especially objected to emeralds! Such are the hazards run by a mere man when he tries to deal with the Greater Mysteries.

I have dwelt on this locket because it played an important part in after affairs—and a very different part from what I designed for it when I slipped it into my pocket to show it to Mrs. Whyte.

It is a good two miles from my lodgings to Mrs. Whyte's, but I was early, and I wanted exercise, so I walked. It was within a few minutes of seven when I came to her highly respectable street. As I turned the corner of her block, my attention was caught by the sight of a young girl in excited colloquy with the driver of a cab, which stood before the house adjoining Mrs. Whyte's.

I think I should have looked for a chance to be of service in any case, but when I saw, as I did at once, that the girl with so gallant a bearing was the same girl who had impulsively emptied her purse among Barney's flowers, and that the driver seemed to be bullying her, I felt that it was very distinctly my affair.

"But I tell you that I *have* no money," she was saying, with dramatic emphasis, "and there is nobody at home,

and I can't get in, and if you will come to-morrow——"

"Gammon," the man interrupted roughly—she had not chosen her jehu with discrimination. "You can't work that game on me——"

"I can give you my watch as a pledge," she said eagerly.

By that time I was near enough to interfere.

"It was most awfully good of you to come to the rescue," said the girl, in the direct and gallant manner that I felt was a part of herself. "I was just beginning to wonder what under the sun I *should* do. You see, I—I spent all my money downtown, and I took a cab up, thinking I'd get the money here to pay the man, and now I find the house locked up and not a soul at home—and me on the doorstep like a charity child without a penny!"

"That was unlucky certainly," I said. "I am more than glad that I could be of service. But now that the cabman is disposed of, how are you going to get into the house?"

She turned and looked at the house dubiously.

"I—don't—know. Unless I find an open window—just a teeny one would be big enough. But Gene is very particular about my not being undignified. I think," she added, with a delightfully confidential smile, "that Gene would rather have me be dignified and hungry than undignified and comfortable. Under these circumstances, would you advise me to hunt for an open window?"

"It's a delicate point to decide. Who is Gene? That might have some bearing on the question."

"Oh, he's my brother—my twin. He lives in that house. So does Mr. Ellison. He's my guardian. But it surely looks as though nobody were at home!"

"Don't you live there, too?" I demanded, in surprise.

"Oh, no. I'm at Miss Elwood's school at Dunstan. I don't mean I am there this minute, because of course I am here, but I'm supposed to be there. I just came down to surprise Gene because it is our birthday—you see we have only one between us—and now I can't get in!" And she threw out her hands dramatically.

The worst part of trying to reproduce Miss Benbow's language accurately is that it sounds silly in type, but it never sounded silly when she was looking at you with her big, ambiguous eyes, and you were waiting, always in affectionate amusement, for the next absurdity. I sometimes wondered whether that frank air of hers was nature's disguise for a maid's subtlety, or whether her subtle witchery lay really in the fact that she was so transparent that you could see her thoughts breathe.

"I have always heard that it was wise," I said, with a grandfatherly air, "to save out at least a street-car fare before flinging all my broad gold pieces to the beggar in the street."

She looked a little startled, then swiftly comprehending. I know she must have bit her inner lip to keep from smiling, but she spoke sedately.

"A street-car fare wouldn't help me to get into the house, would it? And that's the trouble now. Though, of course, if I had had a street-car fare, I shouldn't have had any trouble with the cabman, and you wouldn't have had to come to the rescue, so another time I'll be careful and remember——"

"Heavens, and they say a woman isn't logical!" I cried. "I hadn't thought out the sequence. I'm mighty glad that you were not wise when you flung away your purse since I was going to so profit by it. But now the question is, what are you going to do? I can't go off and leave you, like a charity child on the doorstep without a penny, not to mention a dinner. Haven't you any friends in the neighborhood?"

"Oh, yes, I suppose so. There's a Mrs. Whyte——"

"Of course! In that red brick house next door. What luck! I'm going there for dinner."

She glanced at my evening garb, and drew down the corners of her lips comically. "She won't like having a charity child thrust upon her when she is having a dinner party."

"Oh, that won't make the slightest difference in the world," I protested eagerly. "Mrs. Whyte is the kindest woman—and besides, it's your birthday——"

She looked at me under her lashes. "You're just a man. You don't understand," she said, with large tolerance. "See how I am dressed—shirt waist and linen collar! I didn't prepare for a party. Oh, I believe Gene is having a birthday party somewhere—that's why everybody is away! And me supperless! Isn't it a shame?" She looked at me with tragedy on her face—and a delicious consciousness of its effectiveness in the corner of her eye.

"Why didn't you come home earlier?" I asked, wondering—though it really wasn't my business—what she had been doing since I saw her leave Barney.

"You mean after I left that perfectly beautiful old soldier? How did you know about him and me?"

"Oh, I'm a friend of his, too. I happened to be quite near. My name, by the way, is Robert Hilton. I'll be much obliged if you'll remember it."

"Why, of course, I'll remember. My name is Jean Benbow, and it is so nearly the same as Gene's because we are twins, but really his name is Eugene, and when he does something to make himself famous, I suppose they will call him that. Well, after the soldier, and I wish I had had fifty times as much to give him, though that makes a sum that I simply can't do in my head—not that it matters, because he didn't get it—I remembered that I was going to get a birthday present for Gene, but I didn't remember, you see, that I hadn't any money. I don't think money is a nice thing to have on your mind, anyway. So I went to a bookstore, and looked at some books, and the first thing I knew they were closing up, and I hadn't yet decided. Have you ever noticed how time just *flies* when you are doing something you are interested in, and then if it is lessons or the day before a holiday or anything like that, how it literally *drags?*"

"I have noticed that phenomenon—and time is giving an example of flying this very minute. Really, I think you'd better come over to Mrs. Whyte's——"

"Oh, there's Minnie coming back now! She'll let me in," Miss Benbow interrupted me. A bareheaded young woman, from her dress evidently a housemaid, was hurriedly crossing the service court toward the Ellison back door, and without further words Miss Benbow started toward her across the lawn.

"Wave your hand if it is all right. I'll wait," I called after her.

The maid halted when she saw that fleet figure crossing the grass. They conferred a moment; then Miss Benbow waved a decisive hand to me, and they disappeared together in the rear of the house. Something ran through my brain about the ceasing of exquisite music—I wished I could remember the exact words, because they seemed so to fit the occasion. Miss Benbow certainly had a way of keeping your attention on the qui vive.

Even after I had made my bow before Mrs. Whyte and had been presented to the beautiful Miss Thurston, I had intervals of absent-mindedness, during which I wondered what Miss Benbow could be doing all alone in that big house. This was all the more complimentary to her memory, because Miss Thurston was a young woman to occupy the whole of any man's attention under ordinary or even moderately extraordinary circumstances.

I had to admit that this time Mrs. Whyte had played a master stroke. And that does not spell overweening conceit on my part, either! It required no special astuteness to read the concealed cryptogram in Mrs. Whyte's plans. I had had experience! So, unless I made a wild guess, had Miss Thurston. There could be no other explanation, consistent with my self-respect, of the cold dignity, the pointed iciness, that marked her manner toward me. She was a stately young woman by nature, but mere stateliness does not lead a young woman to fling out signs of "Keep off the grass" when a young man is introduced.

I guessed at once that she had experienced Mrs. Whyte's friendly interest in the same—occasionally embarrassing—way that I had, and that she wished me to understand from the beginning that she was not to be regarded as *particeps criminis* in any schemes which Mrs. Whtye might be entertaining regarding my life, liberty, and happiness. Her intent was so clear that it amused as well as piqued me, and I set myself to being as good company as my limited gifts made possible.

I knew that it was good policy, in such a case, to give Mrs. Whyte no reason for shaking her lovely locks at me afterward, but partly I exerted myself to do my prettiest because Miss Thurston attracted me to an extraordinary degree.

That does not indicate any special susceptibility on my part, either. She was—and is, I am happy to say—one of the most charming women I have ever met. No, that is not the word. She made no effort to charm. She merely *was*. She wrapped herself in a veil of aloofness, sweet and cool, and looked out at you with a wistful, absent air that made you long to go into that chill chamber where she dwelt and kiss some warmth and tenderness upon her lips and a flash into her dreamy eye.

I'm afraid that, in spite of my disclaimer, you will think me susceptible. Well, you may, then. I admit that I determined, within five minutes after my first bow, that I was not going to lose the advantage of knowing Miss Thurston, or permit her to forget me. I cemented this determination before the evening was over with an act which had consequences I could never have anticipated.

I am not going to dwell in detail upon the incidents of that dinner, because I want to get to the extraordinary events that followed it, but there were one or two matters that I must mention, because of the bearing they had on after events.

"I hear," said Mr. Whyte, at a pause in the chatter, "that they are talking of nominating Clyde for mayor."

I happened to be looking at Miss Thurston when he spoke, and I saw a sort of *breathless* look come over her, as though every nerve were listening.

"Do you think he would take it?" Mrs. Whyte asked.

"That's the rub, confound the man. I don't understand Clyde. If ever there was a man fitted for public life, it is he. His father was governor, his grandfather was a United States senator, and he has all the qualities and faculties that made them distinguished. Yet here he buries himself in a private office and barricades himself against all public honors and preferment. I don't understand it."

I did. I had wondered myself, but now I understood.

"Perhaps he doesn't care for the sort of thing that other men value," said Miss Thurston. I fancied a trace of bitterness under her sweet indifference.

"It isn't that," said Mr. Whyte frowningly. "He is thoroughly alive. And he doesn't keep out of public matters so long as he can work behind a committee. Everybody knows what he has done for the city without letting his name get into the papers. I think it's a crank notion he's got."

"It probably goes back to some disappointing love affair," said Mrs. Whyte impressively. "That sort of thing will take the ambition out of a man like—like poison."

"But wouldn't we have heard of it?" asked Miss Thurston, lifting her penciled eyebrows. "We have known Kenneth Clyde all his life, you and I, and there never has been anything talked of——"

"There wouldn't be," interrupted Mrs. Whyte. "He wouldn't talk. But what else, I ask you, could change the reckless, ambitious, arrogant boy that he was—you know he was, Katherine—into the abnormally modest man he has become——"

"I don't think he is abnormally modest," Miss Thurston interrupted in her turn. "He merely doesn't care for newspaper fame—and who does? He has grown into a finer man than his early promise. If Saintsbury can get him for mayor——"

"He won't take it," Mr. Whyte said pessimistically. "You'd have to hypnotize him to make him accept."

"Do you believe in hypnotism, Mr. Hilton?" Mrs. Whyte turned to me, evidently fearing that I would feel "out" of this intimate conversation.

"Believe that it can be exercised? Why, yes, I suppose there is no doubt of that. But I don't believe I should care to let any one experiment on me."

"Fake. That's what it is," said Mr. Whyte. "Superstition."

"Now, Carroll, I know you're terribly wise, but you don't know *everything*," said Mrs. Whyte. "I'm sure I sometimes know what you are thinking——"

"That's telepathy, my angel, not hypnotism. Only you don't. You think you do, but I'll bet I could fool you nine times out of—nineteen!"

"I once saw a girl who was hypnotized, and it was horrible," said Miss Thurston. "She was lying in a show window of a shop, home in Blankville. She had been put to sleep, I learned, by some hypnotist who was exhibiting on the vaudeville stage, and who invited people to come up from the audience. I could just imagine how the pretty, silly, ignorant girl had been dared to go up. Then he was to awaken her publicly on the stage after forty-eight hours, and in the meantime she was exhibited on a cot in the window of a shop as an advertisement. I can't make you understand how unspeakably *horrible* it seemed to me."

"Where do you suppose her soul was?" asked Mrs. Whyte curiously.

"I don't know. But I know that there is something wicked about separating the soul and body. It is a partial murder."

"Bet you she was shamming," said Mr. Whyte cynically.

"Oh, no, it was real—terribly real," she cried.

I had no opinions on the subject, but I thought Miss Thurston's earnestness very becoming, it brought such a spark into her dark eyes and broke up her rather severe tranquillity by a touch of undeniable feeling. But Mr. Whyte was unmoved.

"My dear Katherine, if there were any secret means by which one person could control the will of another and make him do what the controlling will commanded, the trusts would have bought it up long ago. A knowledge of how to do that would be worth millions —and the millions would be ready for the man who could teach the trick."

"There are some things that money cannot buy," said Miss Thurston quietly.

"I never happened to run across them," said the cynical Whyte.

"I have happened to run across things enough that money *wouldn't* buy," said Mrs. Whyte significantly.

But Miss Thurston took up his challenge—which I guessed was flung out for that purpose—with a fervor that transformed her.

"Money cannot buy knowledge," she cried. "To know how to control another's soul may be wicked knowledge —I believe it is—but it is knowledge nevertheless, and it is not at the command of your millionaires. Money cannot buy any of the best things in the world. It cannot buy love or loyalty or faith—or knowledge."

"You talk like Ellison," said Whyte, with good-humored contempt. "He goes on about knowledge of hidden forces, and I believe he is ready to believe in every charlatan that comes along and claims to know about the mysteries of nature or how to extract gold from sea water, or to use the sun's rays to run his automobile."

"I'm glad he cares about something," said Mrs. Whyte impatiently. "Certainly he doesn't care about anything human. He is a cold-blooded machine."

"Well," said Whyte judicially, "he has done pretty well by the Benbow children."

"How has he done well by them? Eugene has grown up in his house, to be sure, but he has grown up without much help from his uncle, I can tell you that. And Jean has been poked off

at school when she ought to have been coming out in society."

"Miss Benbow is at home this evening," I contributed. "I happened to meet her on my way here. She said she had come down from school to celebrate her birthday with her brother."

"Oh, is that so? Well, I'll warrant her uncle didn't know she was coming, nor will he know that she has been here when she is gone."

"She strikes me as a young lady who would make her presence noticed," I suggested.

"She is a dear child," said Miss Thurston warmly. "I must look her up to-morrow. I haven't seen much of her, but I know Gene, and I am devoted to him."

Now, do you wonder that I liked Miss Thurston? I liked her so much that I renewed my vow that she should not slip off into the outer circle of bowing acquaintanceship, and if she was afraid to be nice to me because she regarded me as in sympathy with Mrs. Whyte's matchmaking schemes, I would clear her mind of that apprehension without delay. I seized the opportunity immediately we were alone together.

"It is more than kind of Mrs. Whyte to give me such a chance to know her friends," I said. We were supposed to be looking at Mr. Whyte's books—which were worth seeing. "Just because a man is engaged is no sign that he doesn't enjoy pleasant society."

"Oh!" she breathed.

"Mrs. Whyte doesn't know," I said, looking at her steadily.

She laughed softly, and a color and kindness came into her face that made her deliciously human.

"I see! But there *is* some one——"

"There certainly is," I said, and drew the little miniature of my mother from my pocket. "Don't let Mrs. Whyte see it." She would have recognized it!

"How sweet she is!" she exclaimed. "I don't wonder!"

"The sweetest woman I ever knew," I said, and took the locket back jealously. My jest somewhat irked me now, with those candid eyes looking surprise at me from the picture. "And now will you be friends with me, instead of treating me as though I probably needed a snubbing to keep me on my good behavior?"

"The very best of friends," she cried, and laughed so merrily that Mr. Whyte, from the other side of the room, called out with interest:

"You young people seem to be having a very good time. What's the joke?"

"Carroll!" Mrs. Whyte checked him in a warning undertone—at which Miss Thurston and I looked at each other and laughed silently. I have no doubt the poor dear lady thought her plot was brewing beautifully. It was a shame to plot against her, but then it made her happy for the time. And it did most completely break down the icy barrier thrown out by Miss Thurston, so I tried to stifle the protests of my conscience. My judgment came later—judgment, sentence, and execution. But I had a very good time that evening.

I had ordered a taxicab at a quarter of ten, in order that I might waste no time getting down to the Phoenix Building for the appointment with Alfred Barker. As I went down the walk to the street, I glanced at the silent house in the next lot. There was no light in any window. I indulged in a moment's conjecture as to where Miss Benbow could be, but even as the thought went through my mind, I saw a light flare up in the corner room downstairs. Miss Benbow was exploring then. Or the rest of the family had come home. Certainly I must manage somehow to see her again.

But I confess I completely forgot both Miss Benbow and Miss Thurston as my cab whirled me down to the business part of town. I concentrated my mind on the question of how to deal with the blackmailer, and tried to prepare myself beforehand for his probable lines of attack or defense. At the same time I told myself judicially that the situation might develop in some unexpected way.

It did. Most completely unexpected. I shall have to tell it in detail.

CHAPTER III.

THE UNEXPECTED HAPPENS.

I went directly to the Phoenix Building, on the second floor of which Barker had his office under cover of the name of the Western Land & Improvement Company. The door was ajar, and the gas was burning inside, so I went in. The room was empty. I tried the door of an inner office, but found it locked, and by the curtained glass of the door I could see that there was no light in that room. I inferred that Barker had been called away, and had left the door open for Clyde.

I closed the door, not wishing to have Barker see me from the hall and turn back, and sat down by the desk under the gaslight to await his return. On the desk were a few circulars of the Western Land & Improvement Company which looked as though they had served the purpose of giving verisimilitude to Mr. Barker's office for a long time.

I guessed the same theatrical and decorative mission in the display baskets of apples, sheaves of heavy-headed wheat, and samples of other grains and fruits which adorned the room—though somewhat dustily. I had soon exhausted the visible means of supporting meditation, and my thoughts went back to the evening at the Whytes'.

I took my mother's miniature from my pocket, and looked at it with a rueful consciousness that she would most sweetly and conclusively disapprove of the use which I had made of her counterfeit. She would ask if my legal training had so perverted my instinct for simple truth that I could justify sophistries like that!

I had been lecturing myself in her name for some minutes, holding the miniature up before me to give point to the lesson, when I suddenly had that queer feeling—you know it—of being watched. I felt I was not alone.

I jumped to my feet and looked about me. The room was quite empty except for the desk, a chair or two besides mine, and the baskets of fruit and grain, which stood on a low table by the window. If there was any person on the premises, he must be in the unlighted inner room with the locked door.

Instantly it flashed upon me that Barker was probably in there, waiting for Clyde. He had so arranged things that, hidden himself, he could survey the outer room, and, when I entered instead of Clyde, he simply lay *perdu*. In that case, there was no use waiting for his return by way of the hall! I returned the locket to my pocket, looked ostentatiously at my watch, picked up my cane, and left the room.

But I did not go down the stairs. Instead I walked to the end of a short diverging hall which commanded a view of the door. If Barker was inside, he would have to come out some time, unless he took the fire escape, and I could wait as late as he could. I wanted to meet him, also I wanted to see if my queer sensation of being watched had any foundation in fact.

I had waited perhaps fifteen minutes when the rattle of the elevator broke the silence. It stopped at the second floor, and a man came rapidly down the main hall, and turned toward the office of the W. L. & I. Co. It was Barker himself! I recognized him perfectly. So my intuitions had been merely a feminine case of nerves! I was not a little disgusted with myself.

I waited a few moments, so as to give Barker a chance to see that he had not kept me waiting; then I sauntered slowly in the direction of the office. I was opposite the elevator when I was startled by a shot. For a moment I did not realize that the sound came from Barker's room. When I did, I made a jump toward it, and the elevator man, who had been waiting since Barker got out, came only a step behind me. We pushed the door open—it yielded at once—and there, outstretched on the floor, lay Barker.

I dropped on my knee beside him, and turned him over. He turned astonished and inquiring eyes upon me, and made a slight motion with his hand, but even while I was holding up his head,

the consciousness faded from his eyes, his head fell forward, and I knew it was a dead man whom I laid down upon the bare floor of his dingy office.

I had never before seen a man die, and the solemnity of the event swept everything else out of my mind for the moment. But soon I began to realize the situation.

"Do you see a weapon anywhere about?" I asked the elevator man.

"No, sir. There ain't none."

"Then he was murdered, and his murderer is in there," I said in a low voice, indicating the inner office by a glance.

The man immediately backed toward the door—and I didn't blame him. But for the credit of my superior civilization, I could not join the retreat.

"I'm going in," I said, and laid my hand on the doorknob. The door was locked.

"Is there any one on this floor at this time?" I asked the elevator man.

"No, sir."

"Or in the building?"

"The watchman."

"Find him. Or first, telephone to the police station. Then send the watchman here and go out on the street and try to find a policeman. Bring in anybody who looks equal to breaking in the door. I'll wait here and see that he doesn't get out—if I can prevent it."

The man seemed glad to go, and I took a position at one side of the inner door with my hand on the back of a stout office chair. An unarmed man does feel at a disadvantage before a gun!

In a few minutes there was a sound of running feet in the hall, and the watchman came in.

"He won't be in there by this time," he said at once. "The fire escape runs by the window!" And with the courage of assured safety he opened the door with a pass-key.

The room was empty, and the window, open to the fire escape, showed that the watchman's surmise was justified. The escape ran down to an alley that opened in turn upon the street. The murderer could have made his descent and joined the theater crowds on the street without the slightest difficulty. He had had at least ten minutes' clear time before we looked vainly out into the night after him.

We were still at the window when the police arrived—the officer on the beat, whom the elevator man had soon found, and a sergeant with another man from the station. The sergeant took charge.

"Man dead," he said briefly. "And the murderer gone by the window, eh? Tell me what you know about it."

I told him the facts as I have given them above. He examined the door between the rooms.

"Easy enough," he said.

The upper half of the door consisted of four panes of glass, behind which hung a flimsy curtain. But the lower right-hand pane was gone, leaving merely an open space before the curtain.

"He sat here watching for Barker through the curtain—dark in here, light on outside—and then, when Barker came in, the murderer shot through this opening without unlocking the door, dropped the curtain, and quietly went out by the window. He could be five blocks from here by the time you telephoned, and where he may be now—well, the devil knows. Here is where he sat waiting."

We all looked with interest at the inner room. A chair had been drawn up in front of the door, and beside it was a table with a basket of apples on it. The murderer had been munching apples while waiting for his victim! The peelings and cores had been dropped into an office wastebasket beside the chair. It was a curious detail, gruesome just because it was so commonplace and matter of fact. I shivered as I turned away.

By this time the coroner had arrived. He immediately took possession of the premises. I followed his every movement as he went from one room to the other, for I was by no means easy in my mind as to the revelations that might develop. If Barker had committed any of his profitable secrets to writ-

ing, his death would not of necessity clear the slate for Kenneth Clyde!

But they did not seem to make any compromising discoveries. The desk in the outer office held nothing whatsoever but the decoy circulars which I had already examined, a dried bottle of ink, and some unused pens and penholders. In the inner office was a cheap wooden table, but the drawer in it was empty. There was nothing on the table but the basket of apples. The coroner then went through Barker's pockets. He laid out on the floor, and then listed in a notebook, these items:

Worn purse, with eighty dollars in bills.
Three dollars and fifteen cents in loose change.
Ring with six keys.
Narrow memorandum book, worn on the edges.
Pocketknife, handkerchief, small comb.

There were no papers. Barring the notebook, there was nothing identifying about the dead man's possessions. I longed to get that into my hands.

"Perhaps this will give some clew as to his associates," I said, boldly picking it up.

But the coroner was not a man to be interfered with. He promptly took it out of my hands and tied it with the other articles into Barker's handkerchief with a severely official air.

"That will be examined into in due time," he said. "Officer, you can take the body down and then lock the rooms and give me the keys."

I watched while they carried the limp form down to the waiting patrol wagon, and saw the police sergeant place the seal of the law upon the place. I was at least as much interested as the coroner in seeing that no enterprising reporter, for example, should have an opportunity to spring a sensational story involving more reputable people than Barker.

As I turned up the empty street, I looked at my watch. It was half past twelve. Clyde's appointment with Barker had been for ten, and I had heard the town clock strike as I turned into the Phoenix Building. When had he been shot? I could not be sure. I had waited for some time, perhaps an hour, before I had had that curious sensation of being watched and had gone out into the hall.

I *had* been watched! The eyes of the murderer in the darkened room had been fixed upon me under the gaslight while he waited. What would have happened if I had stayed in the room? Would he have shot his victim just the same? Probably. The locked door between would in any event have given him the minute he needed to gain the fire escape. He had planned it well. It was all so perfectly simple.

CHAPTER IV.

CROSSED WIRES.

When I awoke the next morning from a short and restless interval of sleep, it was with an oppressive sense of something being wrong. Then I remembered. Wrong it was certainly, but it was not my affair. The only way in which it touched me—so I thought then—was as it affected my client, Clyde. How would he take the news? I imagined his receiving it in one way and another, and I felt that there were embarrassing contingencies connected with the matter. Finally I determined to call him up by my room telephone, if possible, and tell him the news as news.

Perhaps Central was sleepy or tired, or the wires *were* crossed at some unknown point on the circuit. I didn't get Clyde, and I couldn't attract Central's attention after the first response, though I shook the receiver and made remarks. Then suddenly, across the silence, out of space, and into space, a man's voice spoke with passion:

"But Barker is dead, I tell you! You are free! *Now*, will you marry me?"

And then again the buzzing silence of the "dead" wires!

Talk about the benefits of modern inventions! They don't come without their compensating disadvantages. I hung to that telephone till Central finally woke up and sleepily inquired if I were "waiting."

"Who was on this wire just now?" I demanded.

"Nobody," she said sweetly.

I called for "Information," and laid the case before that encyclopedic sphinx. Some one had been talking across my wire, and in the interests of justice and everything else that would appeal to her I must know who it was. With a rising accent and perfect temper, she assured me that she didn't know, that no one knew, that if they knew they wouldn't tell, and that I probably had been dreaming, anyhow. I knew better than that, but I saw that there was no way of getting the information from her. I should have to go to headquarters—and then probably the girl would not be able to answer.

But who was it that knew, before the papers were fairly on the street, that Barker was dead? Who was it that would cry with passion: "*Now*, will you marry me?" I gave up the attempt to get Clyde, and went down to breakfast.

I had a suite of rooms in a private family hotel where everybody knew everybody else, and as I entered the common breakfast room I was assailed by questions. Never before had I so completely held the center of the stage! I could hardly get a moment myself to read the account in the paper which had set them all to gossiping. It was fairly accurate. The police reporter had got his story from headquarters. It was not until I read at the end, "At this writing the police have found no clew," that I realized, by my sense of relief, the anxiety with which I had followed the report.

I wanted to see Clyde, but I thought it best to go to my own office first, and communicate with him from there. Fellows had not arrived when I got there—the first time in years that I had known him to be late. When he came he looked excited, though with his usual stoicism he tried to conceal all evidence of his feelings.

"Well, your friend Barker has met with his come-up-ance," I said at last, knowing he would not speak.

"Yes," he assented, and a nervous smile twitched his lips involuntarily. "But not at the hands of the law. I told you the law couldn't reach him."

"The law will probably reach the man who did it."

Fellows did not speak for a moment. Then he said slowly: "He was killed as justly as though it had been done under the order of the court. Shall I look up these cases for you now, Mr. Hilton?"

"Was Barker married?" I asked abruptly, disregarding his readiness to get to work.

"I don't know." He looked surprised.

"I wish you would find out. Also, if possible, who his widow is, where she lives, any gossip about her—everything possible."

"How shall I find out?"

"Oh, I leave that to you," I said confidently. Fellows was not learned in law books, but he was a great fellow for finding out things. I was usually content to accept the results without inquiring too closely how he obtained them.

"All right," he said shortly. Some minutes later he looked up from his work to remark, with his familiar bitterness: "I suppose like as not he has a wife who will be heartbroken over his death, scoundrel though he was, though if he had once been in prison no woman would look at him."

I had been thinking. "I'm not so sure she will be heartbroken, but you might find out about that, with the other things. Now, call up Mr. Clyde's office, and ask if he can see me if I come over."

"Mr. Clyde is ready to see you," he reported, after a minute.

I went over at once—the distance was not great. Clyde was alone, and he looked up and nodded when I entered. His manner was pleasant enough, yet I was instantly aware of something of reserve that had not been there at our former interview. "He is sorry he took me into his confidence, now that it has turned out this way," I thought to myself.

"Well, somebody saved us the trou-

ble of paying further attention to Mr. Barker," he said lightly.

"So it seems."

"Did you speak to him at all?"

"No."

"I didn't know but that you might have seen him since—since I spoke to you about him."

"I did see him the other day, but not to speak to him." And I told him of the incident in the Phoenix Building. He listened with close attention.

"I have no doubt he had enemies on all sides," he said, with a certain tone of satisfaction. "From what we know of his methods, it is easy to guess that. He has lived an underground life for years, but always keeping on the safe side of the law. His end was bound to come sooner or later."

"Do you know whether he was married?"

"I don't know. How should I?"

"I merely wondered." For some reason, I did not care to repeat that puzzling communication I had heard over the phone.

"I know nothing about him. If he has any family, they will probably come forward to claim the body. But I doubt very much that the man who fired the shot will ever be taken."

"What makes you so sure?"

"He planned things carefully. And he is probably supported this minute by a sense of right—and my sympathies are with him."

"Don't forget that Barker may have committed some of his valuable secrets to writing," I warned.

He looked startled for a moment, then he threw up his head.

"I don't believe it. He's dead, and a good-job done."

It was not my place to croak on such an occasion, but as I walked down the street to my office, I reflected that the law would not look at a shot from ambush in that light, no matter what the judgment of the Lord might be.

I stopped at Barney's stand for my buttonhole rose—and at once I knew, by the gleam in his eye, that he had something special to tell me.

"So it's yourself is thè celebrity this morning, Mr. Hilton," he said eagerly.

"I? Oh, no. I wasn't killed, and didn't kill anybody."

"But ye know a power about the happenin's, I'll be bound."

"Yes, I know as much as anybody does," I said, supposing that he wanted to ask me about some particular.

"It's the hard and revengeful heart he must have, and him so young, to shoot a man that the law has set right," said Barney craftily.

"What?" I said sharply. "What do you mean, Barney—if you mean anything?"

"Sure, an' I can't be tellin' ye anything that ye didn't know!"

"Have they found the murderer?"

"Divil a bit. He found himself, and couldn't keep the secret," Barney said, entirely happy in being able to give me this surprising information. "The officer on the beat this morning tould me that the whole department fell over itself when the young lad walked into the station with his head up like a play-actin' gossoon, and says: 'I killed him for that he killed me father.' The extra will be out by now."

I heard the boys calling an extra as he spoke, and I waited and beckoned the first one that hove into sight. There, on the glaring front, I read:

MURDERER CONFESSES

EUGENE BENBOW GIVES HIMSELF UP TO THE POLICE

FIRED THE FATAL SHOT TO AVENGE HIS FATHER

Barker Killed Senator Benbow Ten Years Ago and Was Acquitted on the Plea of Self-defense

The slayer of Alfred Barker has been found. Driven by the spur of a guilty conscience, he gives himself up to the police. The fatal shot was fired by Eugene Benbow, the son of Senator Josephus Benbow, who was shot and killed by Barker in Saintsbury just ten years ago.

Senator Benbow, whose home was in Deming, was in attendance on the State legislature when he fell foul of Barker, who was trying to lobby through a measure which Benbow did not hesitate to call a steal. He was in-

strumental in defeating Barker's measure, and this led to bitterness and threats on both sides. One day they met on the street, and after some hot words Barker drew his revolver and shot Benbow dead. When brought to trial, he succeeded in convincing the jury that he believed(?) his life to be in danger from a motion which Benbow made toward his pocket, although it was proved that the senator was, as a matter of fact, unarmed.

Young Benbow was at that time a lad of ten. The tragedy made a deep impression upon him, and he grew up, dreaming of revenge. Yesterday he heard that Barker was in town, and at once armed himself. Last night he carried his deadly purpose into effect.

It seems that, after shooting Barker in his office in the Phoenix Building, young Benbow returned to the rooms which he occupies in the house of Mr. Howard Ellison, who is his guardian and a distant relative. He spent the night there, and apparently decided then to give himself up, for he appeared at police headquarters at half past six, in a highly nervous condition, and astonished the sergeant by declaring himself the person who shot Alfred Barker. The special officers who had been detailed to investigate the murder have been recalled.

"The poor little girl!" I said to myself. The vision of Jean Benbow as I had seen her last night, gallant and boyish, rose before me. This would be a terrible morning for her.

I do not often make the mistake of rushing in where I know that only angels may safely tread, yet I was filled with a well-nigh irresistible impulse to go and look out for her. That was absurd, of course, since she was with friends—only I should have liked some assurance that they would understand her! I hardly thought of her brother, though, since he was her twin, he could be nothing but a boy, and certainly presented a touching figure, with his medieval ideas of personal vengeance.

But I was to have ample occasion to think of Eugene. Before the morning was over, Mr. Howard Ellison's card was brought to me. Mr. Ellison, who followed his card, was elderly, rather small, and somewhat bent, but alert mentally and active physically. He had the dry, keen, impersonal aspect of a student, and I could see at a glance why Mrs. Whyte thought him cold-blooded. He was given to a sarcastic turn of speech which heightened this impression—and did him an injustice if, as a matter of fact, he was especially tender-hearted.

"You have probably seen the papers this morning, Mr. Hilton."

I bowed.

"I have come to see if you will undertake that young fool's defense. As his guardian, I suppose it devolves on me to see that he is provided with a lawyer."

I am not in criminal practice, and ordinarily I should not have cared for such a retainer, but in this instance I did not hesitate for a moment.

"I shall be very glad to do so."

"That's all right, then. You look after things, and let me know if there is anything I have to know. I am engaged in some important researches, and it is most inconvenient to have interruptions, but of course in such a case I shall have to put up with it."

"Possibly you may even find them interesting," I said, in amaze. He took me up at once.

"Events are not interesting, Mr. Hilton. They are merely happenings—unrelated and unintelligent. Take this case. Gene dislikes Barker. That is interesting in a measure, although it is rather obvious. But he goes and shoots him, and what is there interesting in that? It is the mere explosive event. Besides, Gene was a fool to go and tell the police about it. That was hardly—gentlemanly."

"I suppose it weighed on his conscience."

"Conscience—fiddlededee! What is conscience? Merely your idea of what some one else would think about you if he knew. If you are satisfied yourself that your actions are justified, what have you to do with the opinions of other people or the upbraidings of conscience? If it was right to kill Barker, it was sheer foolishness to tell."

"Do you think it is ever right to kill?"

"Young man, your experience of life is limited if you can put that question seriously and sincerely. I studied surgery as a young man, and spent three years in a hospital in Vienna. After

that, I was for two years connected with the English army in India. I have no foolish prejudices left about taking life—when necessary."

"You have belonged to privileged classes," I said, striving to match his nonchalance. "But unfortunately your young cousin does not."

"No, he has been merely a young fool," he said concisely. "But Jean insisted that I should come and see you about it. She is his sister."

"I am honored by Miss Benbow's confidence," I said. I felt a good deal more than I expressed. If I didn't do the best that could be done for her brother, it would be merely because I didn't know how. "Will you tell me something about the young man? He lives with you?"

"Yes. He has the library for his study. Of course he has the run of the house. The only stipulation I ever made was that he should keep out of my way and not distract my mind. This is the consideration which he shows!"

"How long has he lived with you?"

"Why, ever since the family was broken up. Barker shot Senator Benbow, you know, and his wife died soon after. Shock. There is something interesting in the question how a purely mental blow can have effect on the physical plane. Well, Benbow was a cousin, and, as my own wife was dead, there seemed to be plenty of room in the house for the boy, so I took him. I supposed he would grow up the way other boys did. I simply told him never to bother me. For the rest he could do as he liked."

"He seems to have followed your teaching. How old is he?"

"Just twenty. It was his birthday yesterday. He was celebrating last night with some of his college mates."

"How, where, and with whom?"

"At his fraternity house. They had a supper for him. He is a senior at Vandeventer College."

"I see. You were out for dinner, too, last night, were you not?"

He looked up sharply, surprised, almost suspicious. "How do you know that?"

"I understood that no one was at home."

"Well, you are right, though I don't remember telling you. I had dinner at the club to meet a distinguished professor of psychology who is here. It is a subject in which I am interested."

"May I ask who compose your household?"

"I myself. Then Gene. Then Mrs. Crosswell, the housekeeper, and Minnie, the houseworker. There's a yardman and a laundress, but they don't live in the house."

"Were both the women away last night?"

"No, Minnie was at home. Mrs. Crosswell has been away for a few days."

"Miss Benbow arrived last night."

"Yes, I believe so. I didn't see her till this morning. She came rushing into my room most inconsiderately with this confounded report in her hand—the paper, I mean. What possessed Gene to do such a thing——"

"He must have been laboring under some excitement that carried him away——"

"Man, I am not talking about the shooting. That may or may not have been justified. But why he should make all this trouble by going to the police!"

"Do you know if anything happened at his supper to excite him?"

"Yes. His chum, Al Chapman, has been in to see me. It seems that some one spoke of seeing Alfred Barker, and it upset Gene. He came away early."

"What sort of a boy is he? Violent? Revengeful?"

"I can't say that I have noticed. He never bothered me much. I have an idea that he is a pretty hard student except——"

"Has he been working hard—overstraining himself?"

He grinned. "Brain-storm idea? Well, perhaps you might work it. He has been doing a little extra Latin with a tutor. You might make the most of that."

"Who is his tutor?"

"Mr. Garney. One of the instructors at Vandeventer."

I made a note of Mr. Garney's name, also of Al Chapman's.

"You don't think of anything else that I ought to know—anything having a bearing on Benbow's actions or his state of mind?"

He hesitated, looked at me, and shifted his eyes to the window, and finally pursed up his lips and shook his head. "No."

"Then let us go down to the jail so that I can meet my client."

We went down together to the jail, and were admitted to see Eugene Benbow. Certainly he did not look like a murderer as we are apt to picture him. He was a tall, slender youth, with a sensitive face, and in spite of his nervousness he had the best manners I ever saw. He was sitting with his face in his hands when we came in, but he sprang to his feet at once with a self-forgetful courtesy that made him seem like an anxious host rather than a prisoner.

"So good of you to come, Uncle Howard," he murmured. "I—I'm afraid I have disturbed you—I'm so sorry——"

"Sorry!" snorted Mr. Ellison. "Much good it does to think of that now. And what you ever expected to result from your going to the police with that story—— Well, there's no use talking. This is Mr. Hilton, Gene. He is a lawyer, and is going to look after your case, now that you're in for it."

Eugene bowed. "Oh, that's most kind of you. It won't be any trouble? I'm so sorry to put you to any inconvenience——"

"Don't let that disturb you," I said. "Mr. Ellison was kind enough to think I might be of use——"

"And now I'll leave you to talk things over," said Mr. Ellison, plainly anxious to get away. "When I'm needed, you know where to call on me, Mr. Hilton." And he hurried away.

"That's what I wanted," I said cheerfully. I could see that the boy was in so nervous a condition that the first necessity was to steady him. "We want to talk this over together. You know, of course, that anything and everything that you tell me is in professional confidence, and that you should not hesitate to be perfectly frank."

"I have nothing to hide," he said. "If you will tell me what you want to know——"

"When did the idea of killing Barker come to you?" I asked, watching him closely.

An involuntary shudder ran through him at my words, but he answered at once and with apparent frankness: "I don't know. I don't remember thinking of it at all. Beforehand, I mean."

"When did you think of it?"

"Why, when I woke up. Then I remembered."

"You mean that you went home and went to sleep last night?"

"Yes. Not to bed. I threw myself down on the couch in the library, and went to sleep with my clothes on. It was about five when I woke up—and remembered. Then I had to wait——" He looked at me with anxious appeal for understanding. "I *had* to wait until some one would be up at the station who——"

"Tell me what you were doing yesterday. It was your twentieth birthday, Mr. Ellison tells me."

"Yes. Why, I attended lectures at the varsity all forenoon. Then after lunch Mr. Garney came over for an hour—he's tutoring me in Latin. At four I went to the gym—guess I was there about an hour. Then I went home and read a while, until it was time to go to the frat house for supper. The fellows were giving me a spread because it was my birthday."

"Did anything come up that annoyed you? Was anything said—about Barker, for instance?"

The boy frowned. "Yes. Grig—I mean Jim Gregory—said that he saw Barker in town the other day. The other fellows shut him up. Grig is new here. He didn't know how it would make me feel."

"How *did* it make you feel?"

The boy's slim white hands were

gripping the edges of his chair nervously. "Desperate," he said, in a voice to match. "Here I was, singing and laughing and drinking and having a jolly time, and there was my father dead, shot down and unavenged. Oh, it all seemed suddenly horrible to me. I couldn't stay."

"You went away early, then. What time was it?"

"I don't know. I never thought of looking. Does it make any difference?"

"I don't know that it does. Then what did you do? Did you go direct to the Phoenix Building?"

He frowned thoughtfully. "No, I must have gone home first, mustn't I? Yes, of course I went home. My revolver was there. I went into the library, and threw myself down on the couch to think it out—and then—why, then I must have got my revolver and gone out."

"Was your revolver in the library?"

"Yes. In the table drawer. Uncle Howard gave it to me that morning, in the library, and I just locked it into the drawer."

"By the way, how did you know that Barker's office was in the Phoenix Building?"

"I don't know. I just knew it, somehow."

"What made you think that he would be there at that time of the night? It wouldn't be likely, under ordinary circumstances."

"I don't know. I didn't think. I suppose I just took it for granted." He looked puzzled and anxious, as though he were afraid that he was not answering my questions satisfactorily.

"What did you have to drink at your spread?" I asked, thinking that perhaps there might be some explanation in that direction for his vague recollections.

"Oh, champagne," he said quickly.

"Did you drink much?"

"Two glasses, I think."

"Are you accustomed to champagne?"

"I've taken it only once or twice before."

"Then I don't wonder that your memory is not quite clear. But tell me what you can of your movements. I want to follow your actions from the time you left the house."

He leaned forward, one elbow resting on the table between us, and fixed his eyes with anxious intentness on a crack in the floor.

"I went down to the Phoenix Building——"

"Did you walk?"

He hesitated a moment. "Yes."

"Go on."

"I went up to Barker's office on the second floor——"

"How did you know that it was his office? Excuse my interrupting, but I want to follow all the details. Barker's name wasn't on the door."

"I don't remember how I knew. Perhaps I asked some one."

"Whom?"

"I don't remember that I did ask. But I knew the place. I went in through the outer office to an inner room. There was no one there. I locked the door between the two rooms, and waited inside for Barker to come. There was a light in the outer office, but the room I was in was lit only by the light that came in through the glass door between the two rooms. There was a curtain over this glass door, and I pulled it aside to watch. A man came in, sat down, and waited a while, and then went away. Then Barker came. I fired through the door—one of the little panes of glass was broken, and I fired through that. Then—then I opened the window, and climbed down the fire escape and got out into the street. There were crowds of people going home from the theaters, and I fell in with the crowd."

"And went home?"

"Yes." He drew a sigh, as of relief, and looked up at me.

It is one of the indications that this universe is under Divine direction that a lie cannot masquerade successfully for the truth for an extended period. As Eugene talked, it had been coming more and more strongly into my mind that he was not telling the truth. He was going too cautiously. He seemed to be picking his way among uncer-

tainties with a studious design to present only irrefutable facts to my scrutiny. And yet the accident that had put me on the other side of that closed door should enable me to refute some of his facts, it seemed to me. I felt that I must make sure.

"You say that a man came into the office and waited a while and then went away. Did you know him?"

"No. He was a stranger."

"Should you know him if you saw him?"

He hesitated. "No, I think not. I can't recall his face."

"Or how he was dressed? Business suit, or evening dress?"

"Oh, business suit, I should think."

"You naturally would think so," I said, and added to myself: "Unless you knew." Then I asked abruptly: "Are you fond of apples, Mr. Benbow?"

He looked surprised and politely puzzled. "Apples?"

"Yes. Raw apples."

"No, I don't care for them."

"But you eat them?"

"Why, no, I don't, as it happens. I don't like them."

"Now, let's go back to Barker's office," I said, thinking hard. "Can you describe the office—the arrangement of the furniture, for instance?"

He dropped his eyes again to the floor, and frowned intently, as though he were searching his memory. But in a moment he looked up with a whimsical, deprecatory smile. "I'm afraid I can't! I can't seem to remember things connectedly. Do you suppose it was the champagne?"

"That is possible," I said, thoughtful in my turn. It was quite possible that the champagne *was* accountable for his vagueness. Then I remembered another point. "You say that you went home after you climbed down the fire escape."

"Yes. Not at once, I think. I seem to remember walking the streets."

"When you woke up this morning, where were you?"

"On the couch in the library."

"Dressed?"

"Yes."

"Then you threw yourself down there when you came in and went to sleep, just as you did earlier in the evening, when you came home from the supper?"

"I suppose so."

"When you woke up and remembered what you had done, you wanted to give yourself up at once to the police?"

"Yes, of course. A gentleman would have to do that, wouldn't he?"

"Undoubtedly," I said, with gravity to match his own. "But why didn't you think of doing that last night?"

He looked nonplused. "I—don't know! I couldn't have been quite myself." Then he looked up earnestly. "But if I remember shooting Barker, that is the main thing, isn't it?"

"I'm afraid so," I said, looking at him steadily. "You *do* remember that?"

"Yes. Distinctly." But he looked absent and thoughtful, as though the memory were not quite as clear as his words would imply.

"By the way, how did you know Barker when he came in?"

A sharp change came over his expression. His young face looked set and stern as that of an avenging angel. "I was by my father's side when Barker shot him," he said quietly.

"I didn't know. I can understand your feeling. But this idea of avenging him—have you cherished it all these years?"

"No, not in that way," he said thoughtfully. "I think it just came over me of a sudden."

"What did you do with the revolver afterward?"

"I threw it into an alley as I went by." It was never found.

"You spoke to no one of your plan?"

"No."

"And there was no one with you? You were quite alone all the time?"

"I was quite alone."

I talked with him for some time, but there was nothing more definitely bearing upon the problem which was form-

ing in my mind—and which was a very different problem from the question how to handle the case of a confessed murderer.

I went away with this new and puzzling question, putting everything else out of my mind: Was his confession true?

Of course on the face of it, the question looked absurd. Men don't go about confessing to crimes they have not committed—unless there is some powerful reason for their belying themselves. If Eugene Benbow was lying, he had chosen his position well to escape detection. I could see that it would have been hard to defend him in the face of such circumstantial evidence as surrounded him, if he had been arrested on suspicion instead of on his own confession. And yet—I could not get rid of the idea that he was concealing or inventing something which might put a very different light on things.

He might not have recognized me as the man who sat waiting in Barker's office; he might even have failed to notice that I was in evening dress—but how explain away the eaten apples? A man very fond of apples might have eaten one while waiting and given no special thought to the matter, but a man who didn't like apples wouldn't pick one up casually and eat it without taking notice of what he was doing. And those apple parings were quite fresh. That was a small but obstinate fact. I could not forget it. Had some one been with Benbow? Then I remembered his vagueness, his failure to identify me as the strange visitor, and I was inclined to change my question to: Had Benbow been there at all?

And yet what possible motive could he have for making a false confession? The only reasonable explanation would be that he was trying to shield some one. But no one else had as yet been accused. The psychology of that situation was not complete. I must try to understand the boy's nature before theorizing.

And, first of all, I must verify my facts.

CHAPTER V.

BERTILLON METHODS AND SOME OTHERS.

The first thing to do, I saw clearly, was to go back to Barker's office and verify my recollections of the place, particularly of the apple peelings. Fortune favored me. The rooms had been locked up the night before by the police, and were therefore undisturbed, and the chief did not hesitate, under the present conditions, to give me the keys.

"Our work is done," he said complacently. "The murderer is found."

I didn't remind him that the force had had precious little to do with putting Eugene Benbow behind bars. I took the keys, and went to the place of the tragedy.

I let myself into the office, and locked the door after me, so that I might be undisturbed during my examination. It looked quite as bare and unattractive as I remembered it. Here were the chair and table where I had sat examining my mother's locket when I had received that curious impression of being watched.

I examined the glass door between the two rooms and sat down in the chair which had been drawn up near it in the inner office. It commanded a full view of the outer office, and the curtain which fell over the glass made the fact that one pane was broken unnoticeable. Here the assassin sat and watched me, and here he had sat when Barker entered. I paused a moment to be thankful that the light in the outer office had been good!

Beside the chair on the floor was the little heap of apple parings I had noticed. It needed only a glance to show me that they had curled and withered and turned dark since I saw them. Then they were freshly cut—no question about that. The man who had sat there waiting and watching had been munching apples. And Eugene Benbow did not like apples!

I carefully gathered up the parings, and spread them out on the table. They showed two colors. Plainly he had sampled different varieties. Then I glanced at the basket of apples which

still stood on the table. It was like the three in the other room. I picked up one of the apples—and whistled. Cut sharply into the tough skin was the imprint of teeth! The murderer would seem to have tested this apple by the primitive method of biting it, and he had not liked the flavor.

I picked up another. The mark of teeth was on this also, and even plainer. It struck me that the mark showed irregularities that ought to help in identifying the owner. They were evidently crowded teeth, with no space between them, and on both sides the crowding had forced two of the teeth outward in a wedge. If a man could be identified by his finger print, why not by the print of his teeth? Especially when he had teeth so peculiar.

I hastily locked the office, postponing further examination of the rooms until I should have measures taken to preserve the records of the two bitten apples. I had an idea that my dentist could help me there.

As I came out into the hall, I saw a man with gray hair and beard—a countryman, I gathered at first glance—who stood looking at the door of the Western Improvement Company in a dazed kind of way. I passed him, and then hesitated, wondering if I should, in common humanity, speak to him. He looked bewildered or ill. But he paid no attention to me or my halt, and I walked on, thinking that he was probably merely one of the morbidly curious who are attracted to the scene of any crime.

It seemed strange afterward, when I realized that I had had the chance offered me of getting into touch with the man who was going to be so important a link in my chain of evidence, and that I had almost lost the chance. But as it turned out, it was as well. But I must tell things in order.

I found Doctor Kenton more than ready to be interested. He was an enthusiast in his profession, and though his dissertations on acclusial contacts and marsupial elevations—I know that's wrong, but it sounds like that—though these things bored me when I wanted to make a sitting short, I was now glad to draw upon his professional interest.

"I want you to look at the marks of teeth of these apples," I said. "Distinct, aren't they?"

"Beautiful! Beautiful!" he murmured.

"Can you make a wax model like that, so as to hold that record permanently?"

"Certainly. Nothing easier."

"Then I wish you would. Could you, perhaps, make a set of teeth that would fit those marks?"

He examined the apples carefully, and nodded his head. "I can."

"Then I commission you to do that also. Should you say there was anything peculiar about those teeth? Anything identifying?"

"Yes. Certainly. The jaw is uncommonly narrow for an adult——"

"But you are sure it is an adult?" I asked anxiously. The possibility that a child might have been sampling Barker's apples struck me for the first time. But Doctor Kenton reassured me.

"It is an adult, is it not?"

"I don't know who it is. What I want to do is to use this record to identify the man who bit these apples—let's call him Adam for the present. I am hoping that his inherited taste for the fatal fruit may in time lead to his fall. In other words, Doctor Kenton, I am trying to identify a criminal of whom I have, at present, no information except that I believe him to be the man who put his teeth into these apples. If I find my suspicions focusing upon any one in particular, I shall call upon you to examine his teeth. You understand, of course, that all this is in professional confidence and in the cause of justice."

Doctor Kenton's eyes lighted up with a glow of triumph. He put out his hand.

"Let me shake hands with you. That is an idea which I have been urging through the dental journals for years. The insurance companies should require dental identification in any case of uncertainty. There is no means of identification so absolutely certain."

"I am glad to have you confirm my impression, doctor. Now, you will have to take this impression before the fruit withers, and then I want you to come with me to the morgue and get an impression of the teeth of Alfred Barker, the man who was killed last night in the Phoenix Building."

"Did he bite that?" Doctor Kenton asked, with a tone of awe.

"I am sure he did *not*. I want to be able to prove he did not, if that claim should be made." And I explained to him enough of the situation to secure his sympathetic understanding.

"I see. I see. Well, nothing will be easier to establish than whether he did or didn't. Whoever it was that left this record of an important part of his anatomy can be identified."

"If we can first catch him," I said.

"Surely. But it is an uncommon jaw—narrow and prominent."

"Then I shall want to have you see my client, Eugene Benbow. It will not be necessary for you to do anything more than to look at him, will it?"

"That will be enough. I can tell at a glance whether his jaw has this conformation. Or, find out who his dentist is, and I will get the information from him without his knowing it."

"Good! Now, when can you go with me to the morgue? The sooner the better."

He made an appointment for later in the day, and I left him.

I hurried back to my office, for I had a number of things to see to before going to keep my appointment with Doctor Kenton.

While I was yet a block away, I saw a young girl running down the street. It did not occur to me that she was coming for me until she came near enough for me to recognize Jean Benbow. Then I hastened to meet her.

"What is it?" I asked anxiously.

"Come quick," she exclaimed—and even then I noticed that her swift run had not taken her breath away. "There's another one here to look after."

I didn't understand what she meant, but I saw that I was needed somewhere, and I broke into a run myself. She guided me to Barney's stand. Behind it, on the ground, lay a man, with a beautiful woman—Katherine Thurston it was—dabbing his head with a wet handkerchief while Barney poured something out of a bottle into a tin dipper. Barney could be guaranteed to keep some of the joy of life with him under the most desolating conditions.

"If you'll give him a sup of this, Mr. Hilton," he said confidentially, as I came up, " 'tis all the poor cr'atur' will need. A wooden leg is the divil for kneeling down, and I couldn't be asking a lady like that to handle the shtuff, ye understand."

I took the dipper, and knelt down beside the fallen man—and at once I recognized him as the rustic whom I had seen, looking dazed and bewildered, outside of Barker's office a few hours before. He opened his eyes, looked about vacantly, and tried to rise.

"Drink this, and you will feel better," I said.

A sniff had convinced me that Barney's prescription wasn't half bad. The man drank it, and coughed.

"He's coming around all right," I said. "What happened? Faint?"

Barney rubbed his chin dubiously. "I'm thinking he had his wits about him all right when he made out to faint jist at the time the ladies was coming by. If it wasn't for the sinse he showed in that, I'd say he was a bit loony."

"Why?"

"He came down the street like a drunk man, but he wasn't drunk, begging the ladies' pardon. I could see that with me eyes shut. When he came by my bit of a stand, he took hould of it with both hands, and leaned across to look at me like I was his ould brother. 'He's dead,' he says. 'Who's dead?' says I. 'He's dead,' says he again. 'He's escaped.' And with that he fell to the ground, and if the ladies hadn't come out that minute from yon door, and yourself come running, it's meself that would have had to go down on me wooden knee that don't bend, to lift his head off the stones."

I spoke to the man, trying to learn his name and address. He was not unconscious, but he seemed dazed or distrustful, and I could get nothing from him. By this time quite a group of people had gathered about us—indeed, I wondered that they had not come before, but as a matter of fact, the man had fallen only a few seconds before I came upon the scene. Miss Thurston and Jean had been up to my office, it appeared, and had been coming away at that moment.

The few words that Barney repeated from the man's dazed remarks before he fell, and the fact that I had seen him in the Phoenix Building of course made me feel that I wanted to keep him under my own surveillance until I could find out what, if anything, he knew of Barker. I therefore hurried a boy off to call a carriage, and when it came I helped the old man in and drove to the St. James Hospital.

"What's the matter with him?" I asked the attending physician—after I had got him installed.

"Hard to tell yet. He fainted on the street, you say? He is obviously exhausted, but what the cause or the outcome may be, I can't tell you yet."

"I want you to let me know the minute he is sufficiently restored to talk. And don't let any one talk to him until I have seen him."

The doctor raised his eyebrows. I handed him my card.

"There is a possibility that he may know something about the Barker murder," I said.

The doctor looked surprised. "Why, I thought the murderer had confessed. Is there anything further to investigate?"

"We haven't all of the facts yet," I answered. "This man may know something, and again he may not. But don't let him talk to any one until I have quizzed him. Will you see to that?"

"Oh, all right," he said easily. "The old fellow isn't likely to be quite himself until he has slept the clock around, I judge. I'll telephone you when he is able to see visitors. What makes you think he knows anything about it?"

"Oh, just a guess," I said.

Really, come to look at it, I had very slight foundation for the feeling I had that something was going to come out of the old man's revelations, but that isn't the first or the last time that an unreasoning impulse has been of more value to me than all the learning of the schools

CHAPTER VI.

THE FRAT SUPPER.

In the meantime there were two people I wanted to question—Al Chapman, the fellow who had told Mr. Ellison about the frat supper, and Mr. Garney, his tutor. I found Al Chapman at the fraternity house, where I had gone to make inquiries for him. He was a serious, studious-looking boy, and he came to meet me with his finger still marking a place in a copy of Cicero's "De Senectute."

"I am Mr. Hilton," I explained. "Mr. Ellison has asked me to act as Eugene Benbow's lawyer, and I wanted to ask you some questions about your birthday supper, you know."

He nodded solemnly. Evidently he felt it a funereal occasion.

"I have no doubt that you can give me some useful information that will help to explain Benbow's actions," I said, as cheerfully as possible. "I wish you would tell me about the supper."

"We didn't think it would end like this!" he said tragically.

"It isn't ended yet. Perhaps you can help me make a good ending. Tell me what happened as far as you remember it."

"Nothing happened out of the ordinary until we were smoking after the banquet was over. Then we got to telling weird stories—and some one told of a mountain feud, you know, and how they carried it on for years and years as long as anybody was left, and Gene said he didn't blame any one for feeling that way, and we talked back and forth, you know, some saying one thing and some another, and then one of the new fellows, Gregory, sang out to Gene and asked him when he was going to

settle things with the man that shot his father. Of course the other fellows tried to squelch him—they all knew how Gene would feel about that—and Gene, he got stiff, the way he does when he doesn't want to go to smash, and said he didn't know where the wretch was, and Grig, the fool, says: 'Why, he's here in town. I saw him on Main Street the other day, and a man pointed him out as the man that killed Senator Benbow.'

"Then somebody threw a pillow at Grig, and somebody else gave him a kick, and the fellows all began to talk loud and fast at once, and things passed off. I saw Gene tried to stick it out, because he didn't want to break up the shindig, but after a little while he slipped out, and I knew he had gone. I have wished a thousand times that I had gone with him, but just then I thought he would rather be alone. Besides, I wanted to stay and help finish Grig off."

"Have you any idea how Benbow knew that Barker was in the Phoenix Building? Was that mentioned?"

"No, I didn't notice that it was. But that's on Main Street, you know, and Grig said Main Street."

"Yes, perhaps. Had Benbow been drinking—enough to affect him?"

Young Chapman looked somewhat embarrassed. "We don't—usually——"

"But you did on this occasion?"

"Well, it was a birthday, you see—rather special. And we only had two bottles——"

"Among how many?"

"Twelve of us."

"Well, if Benbow didn't have more than his share, that ought not to have knocked him senseless." I rose. I hadn't learned anything that Eugene had not already told me. Chapman rose also, but looked anxious and unsatisfied.

"We've been wondering, sir," he broke out desperately. "Will they—I mean, is it—will he—be hung?"

Isn't that like youth? Jumping to the end of the story, and considering life done at the first halt in the race!

"If he should be convicted of murder in the first degree, that is the penalty," I said. "But he hasn't been tried yet, much less convicted."

"We didn't think on his birthday that he would go out like that," said Chapman solemnly. "It's as Cicero says—even a young man cannot be sure on any day that he will live till nightfall."

I glanced at the book in his hand. His classical quotation was obviously new!

"Are you reading 'De Senectute'?" I asked.

"I'm doing it in Latin—yes, sir. This is an English translation which Mr. Garney lent to me to-day to show me what a poor rendering I had made. This is translated by Andrew Peabody, and he makes it sound like English! Gene was doing it with me. I don't suppose we will ever do any more Latin together."

"Don't be too sure of that. You may both come to know more of 'Old Age,' in Latin, in English, and in life, than you now guess. But I want to ask you another question. Do you know of Benbow's associates or friends outside of the university?"

"What sort of associates?" asked Chapman, looking puzzled.

"Any sort—good, bad, or indifferent. Especially the bad and indifferent."

The young fellow looked offended. "Gene doesn't have associates of that kind," he said indignantly.

"Nothing in his life to hide?"

"No, *sir*. You wouldn't ask that if you knew him."

"I'm glad to hear it," I said absently. Of course I was glad to hear it, but it did not help out the half theory I was considering that Benbow might somehow have been "in" with Barker's murderer, though not himself the active assailant, and have been forced, by fear or favor, to protect the criminal. But there was no use committing myself to any theory until I had more material to work with.

"Will you come down to my office this afternoon and let me take your deposition about what happened at the birthday supper? I want to get that on record while it is clear in your

memory. And will you bring two or three others—fellows who were there and heard it all? If worst comes to worst, I want to be able to prove that he acted under the immediate impulse of passion aroused by what Gregory said."

"Yes, I see. I'll bring all of them, if you like."

"Bring as many as care to come. Be there by four, if you can," I said. That would give me time for my interview with Doctor Kenton.

I am not going to take time here to recount the details of that interview. Suffice it to say that Doctor Kenton made an examination of Barker's teeth which established clearly that he was not the man who had bit the apples I had found in his inner office. He took a wax impression.

While he was engaged in this task, I took occasion to ask the coroner about the articles which had been found in Barker's pockets. He was now willing to allow me to examine the little collection. In addition to the things which I had noticed in the evening, I now saw that there was a part of a worn time-table and two empty envelopes with pencil figuring on the back.

The small memorandum book which I had noticed before engaged my special attention. A number of the front pages had been torn out. On some of the other pages were pencil figurings, which held no significance that I could see.

On the last page was what appeared to be a summary. At any rate, I recognized in some of the figures the total of the scribbled sums in addition and subtraction on the inside pages. This list seemed to have some coherence, and, as the coroner had doubts about the propriety of letting me have the book, I made a copy of it, as follows:

Deering	97.50	
Junius	17.25	
Dickinson	52.00	
Hawthorne	69.75	
Lyndale	35.00	
Sweet Valley	217.25	
Illington	40.00	
Eden Valley	32.00	(+1000)
Dunstan	27.00	

I recognized the names as those of towns in the State, but that was not very illuminating. From the time-table, Barker had probably swung around this circle, and the figures might mean the amount he had made at each town. Or they might mean something entirely different. I needed more light before forming even a conjecture on the subject.

As I was about to replace the memorandum book, I made a surprising discovery. Running my finger over the edges of the leaves to see whether any other pages were used, I discovered a folded piece of paper stuck between two of the leaves, which had evidently escaped the casual examination the book had previously received. I unfolded it. It was an uncashed check for two hundred and fifty dollars, made payable to "bearer" and signed by Howard Ellison! The date was only three days old. All this I saw at a glance. I was about to replace the paper when the coroner, who had been examining the other articles, looked up and saw it. He took it from my hand, and examined it in turn.

"That's curious," was the comment. "Ellison is young Benbow's uncle, isn't he?"

"Something of that sort."

"He will be two hundred and fifty dollars ahead, since Barker didn't cash the check, eh?"

"I suppose the check belongs to his estate, in any event."

"If he has one. No one has claimed the body."

"What will become of it, then?"

"Oh, there was money enough in his pockets to pay for his burial. The authorities will see to it in any case."

"By the way, if any relatives should turn up, I'd like to know. Was Barker ever married?"

"I have never heard. If he was, his wife will probably inform us. This will be reported in all the papers everywhere."

"True. There ought to be some news in a day or two, if she intends to come forward at all. I'll call your office up later."

When Kenton was through with his piece of work, I took him with me to the jail, and, while I talked to Eugene for a few minutes, Doctor Kenton stood by, and took observations.

When we were again outside, he shook his head.

"He's not the man. I don't need to examine his teeth. The shape of the jaw is sufficient. Whom else do you suspect?"

"No one in particular. But if it wasn't Barker and wasn't Benbow, it was some one else. Who that some one is, I shall endeavor to find out."

But though I spoke firmly, I had to acknowledge to myself that so far I had very little to go on. Doubtless he had many enemies, as Clyde had suggested, but they did not come forward. Neither did his friends, if he had any. He was an isolated man. And yet he held many strings connected with other lives. That check of Ellison's meant something. But Gene had confessed!

I felt that my only hope lay in finding out who, in Eugene's circle of acquaintances, would have good reason to wish Barker removed, would be unscrupulous enough to kill him—and sufficiently influential with Eugene to induce him to take another's crime upon himself.

I gained little from the frat boys, though I examined them all that afternoon, and had my clerk Fellows, who was a notary, take their formal depositions for future use if necessary. They all testified to the remarks made by Gregory and the disturbing effect which the incident had had upon Benbow, but when I tried to probe for outside entanglements, influences, or relations, I drew blank every time. So far as his college mates knew, Gene Benbow was merely an exemplary student, more interested in his books than in athletics, but a "good fellow" for all that. It was evident that his shooting of Barker had filled them not only with surprise, but with secret admiration. They hadn't expected it of him.

"I'll go to Mrs. Whyte," I said to myself. "She's a woman and his next-door neighbor. More, she is Mrs. Whyte. She will know, if any one does."

CHAPTER VII.

CHIEFLY GOSSIP.

I went accordingly to Mrs. Whyte's that very same evening. On the way, I stopped at Mr. Ellison's to interview Minnie, the maid. I didn't expect any very important evidence from her, but as she was the only one who could have seen Benbow after he left the banquet, and would know whether or not he was alone, I wanted to hear what she had to say.

She came into the library at Mr. Ellison's summons—a very pretty girl, but also evidently a very timid girl. At each question I asked, she glanced mutely at Mr. Ellison, as if trying to read his wishes before venturing to answer. I guessed that Mr. Ellison might perhaps be somewhat severe with his servants, and that the timid Minnie would far rather lie than encounter his displeasure.

"This is nothing to frighten you, Miss Doty," I said gently, trying to draw her eyes to me from Mr. Ellison—and without complete success! "I am not a policeman. I just want to ask a few questions that will help me to understand things myself. You were the only person in the house last night, I believe. Is that so?"

"Yes," she said, drawing a quick breath, and with a darting glance at Mr. Ellison.

"Yes, Gene and I were both dining out," Mr. Ellison put in, "and Mrs. Crosswell, the housekeeper, is away for the week. So Minnie was left in charge of the house."

"You weren't afraid?" I said smilingly, trying to ease her nervous tension. But the obtuse Ellison again took the word from her mouth.

"Why should she be afraid? I told her to lock up the house and let no one in."

"Can you hear the doorbell from your room?" I asked, remembering Jean Benbow's vain efforts to make herself heard at the front door. Min-

nie had evidently been gossiping in the neighborhood, instead of guarding the house!

"Yes—not always," she stammered nervously.

"You didn't hear Miss Benbow ring?"

"Not at first," she said, in a low voice. I guessed she was afraid of a scolding for being out of the house, and shaped my next question so as to spare her an explicit statement.

"It was you who let Miss Benbow in, wasn't it?"

"Yes," she murmured, hardly above a breath. Her eyes fell, and the color came and went in her face.

"Did you leave the house at all after letting her in?"

"No," she said quickly, lifting her eyes. I was sure she spoke the truth that time.

"Then, can you tell me when Mr. Benbow came in?"

"No, sir. I—I don't know."

"Could he get in without your knowing?"

"He has a latchkey to the side door—the library door," said Mr. Ellison. "He uses the library for his study."

"Then you wouldn't know whether he came in at all last night?" I said to Minnie.

"Oh, yes, he came in," she said quickly.

"How do you know?"

"I—I saw him—go out," she stammered, with sudden confusion.

"When?"

"I—didn't notice."

"But you saw him leave the house?"

"Yes, sir. He came down—he went down the steps from the library, and went off."

"Off to the street, you mean?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did he speak to you?"

"Oh, no, sir. He didn't see me."

"Where were you?"

She hesitated and stammered. "In the dining room." I felt sure that this time she was not telling the truth, but Mr. Ellison unconsciously came to her support.

"There is a bay window in the dining room, which overlooks the library entrance," he volunteered.

"Was Mr. Benbow alone?"

"Yes, sir."

"You are sure about that?"

"Oh, yes, he was quite alone," she said positively.

"You didn't see any stranger here during the evening, either with Mr. Benbow or otherwise?"

"No, sir, there wasn't anybody here at all," she said, with a definiteness that was convincing.

I let her go at that—to her evident relief. I had seen the trepidation of perfectly innocent witnesses too often to attach any great weight to her nervousness, but at the same time I had a feeling that she had not been perfectly frank. But probably the fact that she had been out of the house when she was supposed to be in it was enough to give her that atmosphere of something concealed.

"That confirms Mr. Benbow's statement that he came home for his revolver," I said to Ellison, who, I was sure, had listened carefully, though he had made a show of indifference and inattention. "I thought possibly some one might have seen him and talked with him who could throw some light on the matter, but it seems not. How is Miss Benbow?"

"Jean? Oh, she's all right. No business to be here, mixing up in things that concern men, but what can you expect nowadays? Of course she had to come interfering."

"If you think she would care to see me——"

He shook his head impatiently. "Miss Thurston is with her. They are talking things over for all they are worth."

I rose to depart. Then the thought which had been in the background of my mind all along came forward. After all, I might as well be the one to tell him.

"Mr. Ellison, they found a check signed by you in Barker's pocket. You will probably hear of it, if you didn't already know."

He puckered his eyelids, and looked at me narrowly.

"Where did you get that bit of information?"

"I saw the check."

"A check payable to Barker?"

"No, it was made payable to bearer."

"Indeed?" He laughed a little maliciously. "I wonder how Barker got hold of it!"

"Barker had ways of getting money," I said dryly.

There was no reason why he should take me into his confidence, of course—and, judging from what I knew of Barker, probably there was every reason why he should not—but his reserve was somewhat tantalizing! It would have been natural for him to mention the fact of his own acquaintance or business dealings with Barker when he first interviewed me—unless they were of the nature that people don't discuss.

Had Barker been levying blackmail on him also? In spite of his inscrutability, I was sure my information had disturbed him, though he was not surprised. Had he been nerving him for the discovery? I reflected that ease, long continued, makes people soft. Mr. Ellison was probably less fit to meet trouble than Jean.

I went down the street to the next house, where Mr. Whyte and my dear white-haired friend were sitting on the front porch, taking in the pleasant evening air. It was early in October. They appeared to have been sitting quiet in the sympathetic silence of the long married, but from the way in which Whyte wrung my hand I could see that the quiet covered a good deal of emotional strain.

"What *can* be done for the poor boy?" was Mrs. Whyte's first question.

"I don't know yet. I am simply gathering the facts at present."

"It's a terrible business," said Mr. Whyte. "Ellison tells me that he has asked you to defend Gene, but I don't see that the boy has left you much legal ammunition. He confesses the shooting."

"The law will have to take cognizance of the facts attending the shooting—his youth, the provocation, the circumstances. I don't despair. But I want to know everything possible—his temperament, his associations, his friends. You can help me here, Mrs. Whyte."

"How? Dear knows I'll be glad to."

"Has he ever talked about avenging his father's death? Has that been on his mind?"

"He never spoke of it. I don't believe it was on his mind. You see, he was only ten years old at the time, and, though it must of course have been a great shock, he was really nothing but a child, and a child soon forgets. Senator Benbow's death killed his wife, but I don't think Gene realizes that. Mr. Ellison took Eugene to live with him, and put Jean into a good boarding school, and they both have been happy enough. Eugene has grown up just like other boys, except that he has been more alone. I have made a point of having him over here a good deal, just because he was growing up with no women about over at Mr. Ellison's. Of course his sister has been here a good deal, holidays and such, but that's different."

"Did he go anywhere else, so far as you know?"

"I know that he did not. He is too shy and reserved to care much for society. He loves to read and dream, and, aside from his college mates, I don't believe that he has any friends that you could call intimate. In fact, I can't flatter myself that he really cared to come over here to see me, except when Katherine Thurston was here visiting me."

"He had the good taste then to admire Miss Thurston?"

Mr. Whyte chuckled across the gloom. "He has been her devoted slave for a year past."

"Now, Carroll," Mrs. Whyte began, in protest, but before she could give it further expression we were interrupted by an approaching visitor. Clyde came swinging up the walk with an eager stride.

"Good evening!" he called cheerily, lifting his hat. "What a perfect evening it is! I don't wonder you are all out of doors. Evening, Hilton." His

vigorous, even happy, manner, was most alien to our mood! It struck us like laughter at a funeral.

"We were just speaking of poor Gene Benbow," said Mrs. Whyte, with delicate reproof in her voice.

"Oh, yes, of course. He was a friend of yours, wasn't he?" he said, toning his manner down to a different key from that in which he had come.

"Was and is," said Whyte simply.

"Yes, of course," said Clyde hastily, trying to right himself with the current. "Poor fellow, as you say. He must have brooded over his father's death a great deal to have such a purpose develop in his mind. But Barker richly deserved his fate, for that matter."

"Oh, I'm not wasting any sympathy on Barker," said Mrs. Whyte, and something in her crisp tones told me that Clyde was not wholly persona grata with the warm-hearted lady. "It's Gene I'm thinking about."

"Of course. Naturally," he said quickly. Then, as the pause was beginning to be awkward, he asked tentatively: "I wonder if I might see Miss Thurston?"

"She isn't at home," said Mrs. Whyte—and I was sure from her voice that she found a certain satisfaction in denying his request. "She has gone to spend the night with Jean."

"With whom?" he asked sharply.

"With Jean Benbow—Eugene's sister, you know. She is here at Mr. Ellison's—came up home last night to celebrate their birthday, poor child."

"This thing has been an awful blow to Katherine," said Mr. Whyte, taking his cigar from his mouth, and dropping his voice. "I didn't know she had it in her to feel so deeply for a friend's trouble. She is always so self-possessed and calm that I suppose I thought she had no feelings. But, by Jove, she was crushed. I never saw any one look so overwhelmed with grief. She couldn't have felt it more if she had been Eugene's mother."

"Heavens, Carroll! Katherine isn't as old as *that!*" said Mrs. Whyte impatiently.

"Well, then, his sweetheart!" said Whyte, half laughing. "I won't say as his sister. His sister was twice as plucky and sensible about it as Katherine was, for that matter. *She* didn't go all to pieces."

"Miss Thurston is very sympathetic," said Clyde, in a tone which did not wholly match his words. He rose, and stood for a moment, hesitating, as though he had not yet said what he came to say.

"They have been to see me again today about running for mayor on the citizens' ticket," he said, at last, half deprecatingly. "I—I almost think I will let them put my name up." He glanced at me with a smile as he spoke, knowing that I would understand his new attitude in the matter. "That is—unless my friends dissuade me."

"Good enough!" cried Whyte. "Go ahead! We'll work for you to a man."

"I wondered what you and Mrs. Whyte would say about it—and Miss Thurston," he added haltingly.

"I can tell you that," said Mrs. Whyte, in her most decisive tones. "Katherine won't care a pin who is mayor of Saintsbury until she knows what is to come to Gene Benbow."

"Yes, of course," said Clyde uncomfortably. "I'm awfully sorry about all this distress. If there is anything at all that I can do——"

"Thank you," said Mrs. Whyte somewhat loftily. "I'll tell Katherine."

And Clyde departed, knowing that in this quarter at least he was not quite forgiven for being alive and free and ambitious while Gene Benbow was lying in prison. I think that I, though his newest friend, was the one most sympathetic toward him that evening. I could understand how the relief, the new feeling of security, which had followed Barker's death, had made the whole world seem new made for him. Besides, he had no such feeling of personal friendship for Gene as the rest of the group had.

"I'll tell Katherine all right," said Mrs. Whyte, somewhat maliciously, I thought. "Oh, yes, I'll tell Katherine that he came around to talk about the

political situation this evening of all times."

"Now, Clara," said her husband pacifically. "The nomination is an important matter, and we can't stop living just because Gene is in trouble."

"He has never liked Gene," said Mrs. Whyte defensively. "Whenever he finds Gene here with Katherine, or finds that he has taken her out walking, or anything like that, he just stands and glowers."

"Perhaps he is jealous," said Whyte, with a subdued chuckle.

"He has no right to be jealous. If Katherine enjoys Gene's society, she has a perfect right to choose it. Not that there is anything of *that* sort between them! Katherine is not old enough to be Gene's mother, but she is older, and she would never allow anything of that sort to happen. Besides, if she had wanted Kenneth Clyde, she could have had him years ago."

"I wonder why she has never married," said Whyte, blowing smoke rings into the air.

"Too much sense," said Mrs. Whyte crisply. Then, quite obviously recollecting that this was not the view to present to me, she added significantly: "When Mr. Right comes, it will be a different matter."

"She wouldn't have a word to throw to the rightest Mr. Right in the world just now," said Mr. Whyte. "She is taking Gene's trouble pretty hard. But that little Jean is a wonder! She will be a heart wrecker, all right."

"Now, Carroll, don't put any such ideas into her head. She is a mere child."

"She is Gene's twin," said Mr. Whyte shrewdly. "If his devotion to Katherine is to be treated respectfully, you can't act as though Jean were just out of the kindergarten. I'll bet she has had a broader experience with love affairs than Katherine has."

"You don't know anything about it," was Mrs. Whyte's crushing response, and after that the conversation became more general.

I had listened with the greatest interest, not only because of the light which the conversation threw on the character of the boy whom I wished to understand, but because of the vivid interest in Jean Benbow which my brief encounter with her had aroused.

She was, as Mrs. Whyte said, merely a child, and even youthful for her years, but a sure instinct told me that she would be past mistress of the game where hearts are trumps. I was soon to prove this surmise correct!

Young Garney, Gene's Latin tutor, fell a victim at sight. By chance—if there be chance, which I sometimes doubt—that affair began in my own office, and ended where none of us would have guessed. I had asked Garney to come to my office, to see if he could tell me anything helpful about Gene, when Jean stumbled in—or ricocheted in rather. Jean never did anything that suggested stumbling. But that interview was too important to be dismissed in a few words. I shall leave to tell it in detail later on. But before I come to that, there was a strange event which I must record. It befell that same evening, after I left the Whytes'.

TO BE CONTINUED.

The continuation of this story will be published two weeks hence, in the January Month-end POPULAR, on sale December 25th.

MILHOLLAND'S BIG PLAYTHINGS

John Elmer Milholland, capitalist and president of the Batcheller Pneumatic Tube Company, has unusual recreations. Whenever he gets tired of work, he organizes a movement for prison reforms, or a campaign for greater freedom among the Russians and Armenians.

Constable Strutt's Great Task

By Barton Wood Currie

Author of "Rollo Rollins' Bargain"

Just because the honorable gentlemen of the Cedar Grove Board of Overseers have the reputation of being alive to every phase of modern advancement they receive a suggestion from a distinguished collegian which bursts as a bomb in the council chamber. Other and more disastrous bombs explode when Constable Strutt essays the great task of putting the suggestion into effect.

THE Board of Overseers of Cedar Grove were fairly overwhelmed by the request of Professor Jeroloman Slatter, A. B., B. S., Ph. D., who wrote on a letterhead of the Eastern University, of Scranton, for permission to address them at their regular monthly meeting. The distinguished savant's letter ran in part:

HONORABLE GENTLEMEN OF THE CEDAR GROVE BOARD OF OVERSEERS.

DEAR SIRS: I would deem it a great favor if your esteemed board would grant me permission to read a paper on a subject of the highest importance to all incorporated communities in this age of enlightenment and advancement. I have long watched with growing admiration the able and intelligent public administration of the affairs of your town, and it cannot be flattery to state that there is no better equipped body of public administrators in this or any other State than the Cedar Grove Board of Overseers. It must be apparent to even the most myopic observers that you gentlemen are alive to every phase of modern advancement; that you are all keen students of sociology and economics, and that you are endowed with the highest sense of honor in dealing with your public and social obligations.

I will not disclose the purpose of my mission in this letter, as I wish to avoid burdening you in advance with the problem I desire to present to you.

Believe me, gentlemen and esteemed sirs,
Your most obedient servant,
PROFESSOR JEROLOMAN SLATTER,
A. B., B. S., Ph. D.

Squire Baldwin, president of the board, shone as if from a light inside when he read the letter to his six fellow members, to wit: Silas Perkins, chairman of the Cedar Grove Board of Poultry Trade; Frank Rue, breeder of the famous short-winged brown duck; Rollo Rollins, son of the late Squire Rollo Rollins; Phineas Whackersinger, the Cedar Grove Burbank; Thornton Suggs, undertaker; and Postmaster Ridley Reins.

Overseer Rue, a congenital skeptic, ventured the opinion that Professor Slatter might have in mind to boost lightning rods or windmills.

"That there letter," pursued Rue, as he grimly faced the lightnings of wrath that blazed from beneath the bulging eyebrows of Squire Baldwin, "is too blamed sugary an' hifalutin'. I been in this board twenty year, an' I never seen none o' that smotherin' enlightenment he put into that letter. Nor I ain't never heard o' the Eastern University, o' Scranton."

There was a tense silence for a moment, during which Squire Baldwin fondled his gavel. Suddenly he cracked the edge of the table, waved the gavel in the air, and thundered that Overseer Rue was not only out of order, but ought to be indicted for slander.

"Consarnin' the enlightenment o' this board," shouted the enraged president, "you got a right to a' opinion based onto your own notion, but you ain't got

no right to call a college professor what forgot more'n you an' your whole dinged family'll ever know a liar to his face. This here chair offers an' proposes a resolution that we write an' accept Professor Slatter's invitation to come before this here board, an' read his papers and dokkerments. All them as is in favor o' this resolution kin keep their seats. The noes kin stand up."

Overseer Rue got up, shrugged his shoulders, and sat down again. He sat down to the accompaniment of the gavel and the furious announcement that the resolution had been passed.

George Henry Smith, honorary secretary of the board, wrote a grandiloquent reply to Professor Slatter, and a week later the savant arrived in Cedar Grove in an old-fashioned, two-cylinder automobile. He was a tall, hairless man of middle age, and he carried a great book under his arm, as if its presence there was necessary to maintain the insufficient balance afforded by his thin legs. Squire Baldwin led him to the platform, and introduced him to the board. All the overseers save Frank Rue came forward and shook the professor's hand, exclaiming heartily as they did so:

"Honored to meet you, professor."

These formalities ended, the A. B., B. S., Ph. D. removed his cuffs, drew a roll of foolscap from the tail of his long coat, laid it on the table before him, and began:

"Gentlemen, I promised to be brief. I must be brief. I have three important engagements for this afternoon and tonight, among them a conference with two governors and five mayors over future legislation on the scientific management of their States and municipalities. The subject of the paper I will read to you is not new, but my treatment of it *is*. Allow me," and Professor Slatter unfolded the great document. "The title is, '*Compulsory Ablution as Applied to Itinerant Wanderers.*' In other words, the forcible, and, if necessary, violent washing of tramps. I will read:

"Every community, no matter how small, must bear its burden of progress. Progress is progress. Retrogression is retrogression. Unless we progress we retrogress. Inertia is statistically inverse to dynamics. Applied dynamics is another way of expressing progress. You follow me?"

An emphatic "Yes!" from Squire Baldwin. Faint affirmative from all save Frank Rue.

"The most enlightened commonwealth," reeled off the savant, 'is the commonwealth that has for its motto, '*Cleanliness, Decency, Cleanliness.*' Cleanliness and hygiene are one and the same. Hygiene is not hygiene unless carried to the *ultima Thule*. The *ultima Thule* of hygiene is not only to keep your town clean, and yourselves clean, and your dogs and your cattle and your husbandmen, but to keep the strangers within your gates clean.

"The tramp is a stranger to all communities. He may be an unwelcome stranger, but he is nevertheless a stranger. He collects much dust in the course of his wayfaring. He is constitutionally averse to washing. Now, society to exist must make rules and enforce them. We call these rules law. If a tramp murders, we hang him. The law does that. If a tramp commits other felony or misdemeanor, we punish him. Again the law. These are the laws of the State.

"In addition to the State laws, we have city, township, and town ordinances that may not be so highly important to the body politic, but which are vastly important in bringing about social betterment.

"Gentlemen, the compulsory washing of tramps has agitated the world for ages. The fools have scoffed. The wise men have pondered and taken action. Throughout enlightened Germany it is impossible for a tramp to collect much dust. If a burgomaster sees a dusty tramp, he hails the constable. The constable secures the tramp. The tramp is laved; *nolens volens,* he is washed. Generally a fire hose is used. High-pressure hosing saves the necessity of scrubbing. The tramp goes on his way, a perfect specimen of modern hygiene. He is one hundred per cent clean. Foreigners are

amazed and delighted at the cleanliness of German tramps. This sort of thing has made Germany what it is to-day. Gentlemen, do you see your opportunity?"

"Bet he'll open up now, an' sell us a thousand foot of hose," muttered Overseer Rue.

But the cynical duck specialist was mistaken. Professor Slatter returned the foolscap to the tail pocket of his coat, hurriedly shook hands with Squire Baldwin, and a few minutes later was chugging up the road in his little two-cylinder car.

"Ha, ha!" laughed Overseer Rue, as he noted the dazed expression on the faces of his fellow members of the board.

"What are you laughin' at, Frank Rue?" snarled Squire Baldwin.

"A horse oughter laugh at the language o' that escaped lunatic," chuckled Rue. "Why, he's crazier 'n a cross-eyed crow in full moon."

"Crazy, eh!" exploded the president of the board. "Crazy becuz he lectures to this here board on scientifical progress? Crazy becuz he takes the time offen his app'intments with mayors an' governors to show us a light, an' tell us what this here town oughter do to keep its repertation up to date an' modern? Frank Rue, if your folks'd been half as crazy as that there learned purfessor an' scholar, they'd 'a' been wise enough to chop the head offern a born fool afore they christened him Frank, an' turned him loose onto Cedar Grove. The advice he gives to us is a-goin' to be acted onto, an' acted onto at this pertickeler meetin'. All the members o' this board in favor o' ketchin' tramps an' hosin' 'em keep sittin'. The noes kin stand."

Overseer Rue and Undertaker Suggs got up. The other four members of the board seemed completely under the sway of the chair. Frank Rue was still shaking with mirth, but Mr. Suggs was professionally solemn.

"Afore you pass this resolution into a town ordinance," said Mr. Suggs, in a deep, funeral bass, "I wanter say a couple o' words. The town jail is right back o' my shop, an' the fuss them tramps 'll make when you turn the hose onto them is a-goin' to raise smoke an' blazes with my business. It'll git on the nerves o' my customers when they're pickin' out a tasty coffin, an' choosin' tombstone designs, an' talkin' over the funeral arrangements. Business ain't so good as it ought to be by a dinged sight. If you got to do this thing, why can't you chuck them tramps into the creek, an' let 'em holler in the open air?"

"Be—cuz," fired back Squire Baldwin, "the creek is muddier'n a hog wallow, an' they'd be dirtier when they come out nor when they went into it. An' as for your business, this board ain't goin' to worry none if you don't sell a coffin nor a tombstone in the next ten years."

"You ain't, hey!" blazed out Undertaker Suggs. "Well, the time is comin', Rube Baldwin, when I'll measure you fer a wooden jacket, an' I wun't be so tarnation partikerler about the fit. If this tramp washin' knocks down my business half o' one per cent, I'll go up to Superior Judge Merble, an' git an' enjoinment agin' it." Mr. Suggs sat down, and began breathing like an angry bull.

Squire Baldwin cast a burning glance of scorn at the undertaker, aimed a long index finger at him, and said:

"A man o' your callin' had better keep his mouth shut, an' act simple an' nat'ral. This learned purfessor has p'inted out the advantages o' hosin' in the town jail, and a fire hose is a-goin' to be writ into the ord'nance. This ord'nance is passed by two-thirds majority o' the board, an' George Henry Smith'll write it into the town laws afore sunset. This meetin' is adj'ined till the next meetin'."

When Chief Water Warden Sidney Dew came down from a week's fishing at Pocono, and learned of the passing of the ordinance, he burst in upon Squire Baldwin, and wanted to know why he hadn't been consulted.

"This here town," complained Warden Dew, "is payin' four dollars a thousand feet for water to the North Jersey

Water Company. The reservoirs is low, an' the springs is drying up. Two mains busted up at the Thumb Point, an' they gotter buy or steal water offern somebody. It'll cost more'n ten dollars a month fer this here tramp-washin' business, which is all consarned poppycock an' frivolity."

"It ain't none o' your dinged business if it costs the town eighty dollars a month, Sid Dew," flared Squire Baldwin. "You ain't the board o' overseers, an' you ain't nothin' else o' consequence. As water warden o' Cedar Grove you git paid reg'lar, accordin' to the budget. All you gotter do is to see that the water runs into the mains, an' work the filters."

"All right," Warden Dew fired back, "go on an' waste all the water you wanter. Go ahead an' bring a famine onto this here town by washin' hobos an' sich. It ain't my funeral. I'll give you the water while it lasts, an' I'll shove the top pressure onto it. If you're goin' to wash an' bathe these thievin' an' robbin' tramps, wash 'em good. I'll give you the pressure fer it that'll tear the hides offen 'em." Thereat the water warden flung around and stamped out of the Baldwin cottage.

Constable Ike Strutt passed in the door as Warden Dew passed out. His collar was also smoking. Ripping his big star of office off the breast of his coat, he slammed it down in front of Squire Baldwin.

"You kin git a new constable," he said huskily. "I ain't ekal to the job. There's tramps comes into this town I wouldn't lay my hands onto peaceful fer less'n ninety dollars. If you an' the rest o' the overseers o' this village knew anythin' about p'lice duty, you'd know you got to baste a tramp over the head afore you tackle 'im. Most on 'em got knives handy, an' 'd jab you to death in less time 'n a cat kin blink. It ain't no one-man job, an' it can't be done kam an' peaceful, as it says in them orders o' mine writ out by George Henry Smith."

"It ain't expected to be no one-man job," retorted Squire Baldwin. "If you'd only keep your hair on you'd know more. George Henry Smith's on the way to your place now to give you extree orders an' specifications. The town is providin' you with three deperties. Most on' em old men, but husky. There's Moses Bull, Eli Yates, an' Emory Tull. They'll be here in a couple o' minutes to be sworn in an' git their badges, which has just come from Newark."

"Them three deperties'll be under me?" asked Constable Strutt, with less heat.

"They'll be under your command an' orders," replied Squire Baldwin. "You kin post 'em at the north end o' the village, jest inside the town line. They'll have ropes an' clubs an' trippin' nets, an' pistols with blank cartridges into 'em."

"Well, it ain't my funeral if they gits killed," said the constable. "The hull three on 'em is old enough to die, anyhow. They got to hold them tramps while I hose 'em. I got a wife an' family to look arter, an' I ain't a-goin' to take no vi'lent risks."

In some communities a crowd might have gathered to witness the capture of the first batch of hobos. Not so in Cedar Grove, where poultry culture is an intensive occupation, and housewifery a profound avocation. Moses Bull, Eli Yates, and Emory Tull, tall, sinewy men, with lean, thoroughbred faces and paint-brush chin whiskers of the same design worn by their battling ancestors who camped with George Washington at Valley Forge, went unaccompanied to the thicket beside the Pompton Turnpike where it crosses the line between Thumb Point and Cedar Grove. Squire Baldwin got no report on their activities until shortly after sundown, when Constable Strutt called upon him, and said:

"We got two o' them tramps to-day, squire, an' most washed 'em to the bone. One was tall an' one was short, an' both was slim built an' husky as wild cats. Moses Bull got a black eye and a busted lip, but he nailed that tall varmint by windin' him in the net an'

firin' blank cartridges at 'im. The short one climbed a tree, an' it took Eli Yates an' Emory Tull three hours to git 'im down by choppin' out the tree from under 'im. Them three deperties o' mine certain'y earned their dollar, squire."

"An' where was you all this time?" asked Squire Baldwin, boring the constable with a glance of keen suspicion.

"Down into the jail, gittin' the hose ready," replied Strutt.

"You didn't take no part in ketchin' them tramps?"

"Didn't need to," chuckled Strutt. "They was both pretty near insenseless when my deperties carried 'em in."

"An' you hosed 'em thorough?"

"Reckon! The short one come to when I squirted the first dose of water on 'im. Sid Dew had went an' put a fierce pressure onto that jail water, an' it took all I could do to hold the nozzle. The water slammed that little tramp agin' the wall, an' he let out a holler you kin hear a mile, an' come at me like three tigers. Afore I could aim a second squirt at 'im he bit me onto the ankle. But I blew 'im back agin' the wall, an' hosed all the breath an' scrap outer 'im."

"The both on 'em was hosed clean an' neat?" asked the squire eagerly.

"Both on 'em," assented the constable. "It ain't alone the dust what washes off 'em. Their clothes give way, likewise, an' mixes into the spray like dead bark. Clean ain't no name for it, squire."

"You didn't turn 'em loose naked?"

"O' course, we ain't," cried Strutt. "There's some old overalls in the jail which we give 'em. They's both so weak we has to dress 'em, but when we let 'em out onto the road the life comes back into 'em like they was struck by lightnin'. You oughter see 'em run. You couldn't see 'em fer dust, an' the nails in their shoes was strikin' sparks. Frank Rue says they passed 'im down by the Van Giesen Gap Road, an' he was drivin' his new trotter, Spangle Annie."

"Did that critter Rue notice how clean they was?"

"He didn't say nothin' on that pi'nt, squire, but he says they was scatterin' rocks an' dirt like a team o' steam shovels."

Constable Strutt was required to make a written report, which Squire Baldwin read to the board of overseers with manifest enthusiasm, winding up with the remark:

"I calkerlate them Germans ain't got an inch on us when it comes to hosin' tramps."

To this Frank Rue retorted:

"Considerin' the amount o' vi'lence used onto them two unfortunate critters, wouldn't it be a good idea to kill 'em first? Then we could give 'em one o' them hygiene funerals, an' bury 'em with a band."

Undertaker Suggs sniggered aloud. Squire Baldwin was on the verge of an excoriating blast when Constable Strutt burst into the meeting room, and exclaimed:

"Squire Baldwin, there's twenty-two o' them tramps lined up at the jail, waitin' to git hosed. Most on 'em has brought soap an' towels. Every dinged one on 'em has got a big bucket, which they says they want filled so ez not to miss their mornin' baths to-morrer."

The constable paused for breath. Squire Baldwin turned pale, and for several moments lost the faculty of speech. At last he recovered, and burst out:

"Ike Strutt, you been drinkin' ag'in! You ain't no fittin' man to protect the peace an' order of Cedar Grove."

"Come over an' see fer yourself," yelled back the constable. "I tell you there's twenty-two on 'em. They come into town by the back road around Thumb Point, missin' my deperties. They look like a lot o' bandits an' robbers. They ain't one on 'em had a shave fer weeks, or got more'n forty cents' worth o' clothes on his back."

"An' they got soap an' towels?" asked the squire faintly.

"An' buckets," replied Strutt. "None o' my deperties showed up. Is it my orders to hose off the hull gang single-handed? Ain't there no limit to that ord'nance which this here board passes? It'll take a power o' water to hose off

that mob. Hear 'em yell! They're as crazy about gittin' hosed as them two yestiddy was set agin' it."

"Hose 'em, an' give 'em the full pressure," commanded Squire Baldwin feebly. "The ord'nances o' this board has got to be carried out to the letter."

The president of the board bit his lips when his eyes fell upon the grinning countenances of Frank Rue and Undertaker Suggs. With a mighty struggle, he mastered his emotions, and got down to the tedious routine business before the board. An hour had dragged out its dull and dreary length when Constable Strutt reappeared. He was dripping from head to foot, as if he had just been dragged out of a very deep well. He staggered to a chair and slumped down.

"I hosed 'em," he gasped out, "an' I filled their buckets, an' they went off singin'. They hadn't been gone more'n fifteen minutes when eight more come down offen the Pompton Turnpike. They had two buckets apiece, an' bottles tied over their shoulders. I hosed them ruffians, an' filled up their buckets an' bottles. They went off singin' about there being nothin' the matter with Professor Slatter.

"That second bunch hadn't turned up the road afore nine more come down, an' their buckets is twice as big as the buckets o' the others. There ain't a gasp left into me, an' I tell 'em, No. But they shoves by me, an' goes on in. They're into the jail now, hosin' off theirselves. They're welcome to all the water there's left into the reservoir."

"They're into the jail?" cried Squire Baldwin. "You let nine o' them murderin' scamps into the town jail?" Squire Baldwin sat down heavily, and opened his mouth like a suffocating carp.

"I locked 'em in," replied Constable Strutt wearily. "You kin let 'em out, or you kin let 'em drown their dinged selves jest as you please. I done a day's work, an' I'm through. The missus is comin' down to drive me home. I couldn't play that hose another second fer a million dollars. Eight times it flies out of my hands, an' bangs my eye, an' one time it fetches agin' my mouth, an' blows out my plat'num-backed uppers. One o' them hobos has got them teeth, but he's welcome to 'em. I'm too consarned petered out to take 'em back offen a child. But here's the missus now. S'long!" and Constable Strutt staggered to his feet, tossed his keys to Squire Baldwin, and groped his way out.

Again a profound silence fell upon the board. It was broken by Frank Rue, who had managed to erase the smile that had illumined his features for more than an hour.

"Squire Baldwin," he began, "I reckon you're willin' to admit now that the tramp-washin' ord'nance ain't got no sense nor reason into it. We can take a vote right now, an' repeal that ord'nance, an——"

"Ain't no need to," broke in a new voice, as Chief Water Warden Sidney Dew strode in. "Ain't no need to," he repeated, then stopped and shot a glance of grim defiance at the president of the board.

Squire Baldwin roused himself, and snapped angrily:

"Why ain't there no need to, Sid Dew? This board is a free-actin' body, an' among other things it's got power to fire you out o' your job."

"Ain't no need to do *that*," returned Dew. "I'm goin' to git a vacation, anyhow. The reservoir's dry as a bone. Cedar Grove kin draw its water out o' wells, or bring it down out o' the river fer the rest o' the summer."

"Did them tramps use up the hull reservoir?" demanded the squire, in a quavering voice.

"Tramps!" ejaculated Warden Dew. "There was two gen-u-ine tramps washed yestiddy. To-day that dernfool constable, Ike Strutt, hoses off the hull male population o' Thumb Point. Yes, an' he fills up all the buckets an' barrels they could lug off with 'em. That last batch o' Thumb Pointers, headed by Ned Slatter, the new schoolmaster, fills up two sprinklin' carts an' drives them off up the gap. The menfolk o' Thumb Point hev been growin'

whiskers fer two weeks ag'in this stunt. I warned you, Squire Baldwin, that Thumb Point was dryer'n a hazel nut, an' that the folks up there hev been takin' their baths out o' teacups. I told you——"

"No use rubbin' it in, Sid," interrupted Frank Rue. "You kin make out your report in writin'. Squire Baldwin was jest proposin' a new ord'nance consarnin' tramp traffic into an' out o' this town. Go ahead, squire."

The president of the board pulled himself to his feet.

"This here board," he said hoarsely, "is done ord'nancing on tramps. There is a' old law onto the old books o' Cedar Grove what gives us the right to shoot 'em on sight. That old law is good ernuff fer me, an' my orders is that copies on it done in red ink be sent over to Thumb Point by special fast messenger. The new ord'nance'll be burned in public. This meetin' is adj'ined till the next meetin'. Any member agin' these motions kin stand up if he likes to, but he better hadn't like to."

None stood.

GETTING IN WRONG WITH WRIGHT

BACK in the days when Wilbur Wright was demonstrating that the art of splitting clouds wide open with an aëroplane was both easy and practical, Victor Murdock, who owns a newspaper in Kansas and occupies a seat in Congress, wrote for his paper a three-column article, praising Wright in glowing, glittering, and dazzling phrases.

Shortly after that Murdock, who, for political and other reasons, always says he never writes anything that appears in his paper, attended an aëroplane meet, and was approached by a quiet young man who was evidently a newspaper correspondent.

"Mr. Murdock," said this intruder, "I enjoyed immensely your article on aëroplanes, and I was wondering if you would tell me how you——"

"No, no! And again, no!" exclaimed Murdock. "I never write anything, and I never give interviews on what appears in my paper."

Whereupon the young man subsided into the crowd.

That night at a banquet given in honor of the aëronauts, Murdock was seated opposite Wilbur Wright, and, in a break in the chorus of talk, Murdock leaned across the table, and said urbanely:

"Mr. Wright, I hope you saw that article I wrote and published in my paper about you, and——"

He got no further. Right there was the blow-up, the crestfallen finish. Wilbur gave him a stony stare, and in the flash of a moment Murdock had recognized in Wright the man who had accosted him earlier in the afternoon.

"The moral of that," said Murdock, in telling the story, "is: Either never write, or never lie about your writings."

THE STORY OF A DISLOCATED SHOULDER

"PRIVATE" JOHN ALLEN, of Mississippi, was in his office one day when a very seedy and exceedingly unwashed tramp came in and told him a tale of woe.

"I need a little money," said the hobo, "for I am in a bad fix. Not only am I hungry, but I am all broken up physically. I have dislocated my left shoulder."

"In that event," said Allen dryly, "you must have tried to put on a clean shirt."

The Big Swede's Stampede

By Jack Woodson

Mr. Woodson says that his story is based on an actual occurrence during the time he was in Nome. He spent ten years of his life in Alaska and he ought to know something of the conditions there. You will find it interesting as a story, but also there is in it a warning for the would-be victims of promoters.

BLUE-SHIRTED miners ambled from one saloon to another across the dusty, boarded streets, stepping carefully over sleeping Malemutes in the sun. None of them went quickly, as in the good old days of Nome's richness and big chances, for the camp was lethargic.

This was three years ago, when the third beach line had been worked out. The third beach was the richest pay streak Nome had seen, and naturally its end brought a decline. The slump was so evident that the miners said the camp was "busted," and they'd "better get outta there." Times were not getting bad; they were already bad.

On the longest day in June, when there was no night, and the chechahcos did not know enough to go to bed before sundown, something happened. The blunt nose of a steamer shoved heavily into the roadstead; a blast from the hoarse whistle awakened the sleeping Malemutes and apathetic miners; an anchor rattled clankingly, and the craft rode on a gentle swell, smoke lazily drifting from her black funnel, and her broad stern swinging with the current.

The arrival of the vessel was of little importance, save that it brought a man who promised to save the camp from the dread retrogression that had seized it. He came ashore, his promise unknown and praises unsung; but he was a good advertiser; and it was not long till there was a fine excitement in the air because of him.

His name was Jack Racine, and he was head and shoulders of the East Siberian Company, a concern designed for the purpose of establishing the nucleus of an empire and developing a prosperity dazzling the world. Racine's plans were *skookum,* which is Siwash for big and strong.

He had just returned from St. Petersburg, where he had obtained from Russian government officials a concession to a large tract of land in Siberia. He brought the document with him; and there, above the many signatures, the Nomeites read that it gave the East Siberian Company the right to prospect for and mine gold in the Anadir district, a region a few miles from the Siberian coast.

Now, proximity has made many things historic, prosperous, and blessed, and Nome was near the Anadir, which country would be an empire redounding to the credit of Jack Racine, who was promoting and exploiting its unknown and hitherto untold riches. Wherefore his coming to Nome and announcing that he would make that place the base of supplies for his extensive operations.

The effect this had on the Nomeites was as heat applied to Mexican beans. The mayor, than whom no man dared

have more civic pride, suggestively nudged the other members of the common council, and whispered into their ears a magic word:

"Banquet!" The mayor was a grocer.

What more fitting thing than a banquet? How better express the appreciation of the public that suffered from a disastrous quiet? Indeed, there was nothing fitter, no way better. It was done.

Miners who heard of the philanthropic motives of Racine prepared to attend the "Annie Dear" banquet, as they called it, and doffed honest overalls to don more festive garb. Business men who had observed a falling off in profits laid aside the cares of a stimulus-craving commerce and went to the feast. I, too, was there, for I was on the staff of the *Midnight Sun;* and this man Racine was the source of much copy.

The last morsel of food had been swallowed; the guests had looked upon and drunk the seductive wines; a hush had fallen, and Racine was on his feet, bowing right and left to the toastmaster and the rest of the "esteemed and honorable body." He spoke.

"The East Siberian Company is a big concern," the speaker said; and satisfaction spread over the faces around him. Nome and her citizens were justified. Every one had said it was a big outfit. "And," he went on, "it will do big things." Men nodded to each other. Every nod an I-told-you so. Then:

"Our purpose is to build an empire in Siberia—one like Alaska. One man cannot build it. There must be coöperation; and that's what I expect here in Nome. It will require a small army of men to do the things that are to be done; and I am sure that soldiers of progress are to be found in this great and famous city. I see them about this board to-night, and I meet them on your streets. All Nome's citizens have that go-ahead air about them; and I am pleased, gentlemen, pleased!"

A tensely whispered "Sh!" came from the head of the table, emitted by the straining lips of the toastmaster, the mayor, who had elected himself chief cue giver for all demonstrations; and the applause which threatened died in its incipiency. After a pause, the speaker went on:

"I am satisfied that the Anadir is to become a great gold-producing district. My agent, who was there last summer, reported to me that his prospecting showed splendid placer deposits. He also got samples of quartz float that assay high; and no doubt the fall of stamps shall be heard over there, where to-day there is a stillness, a silence of the wilderness. What music to the ear of a miner is more melodious than the rattle of auriferous gravel in sluice boxes, the thud of stamps in a quartz mill, the hum of machinery? Nothing, gentlemen and fellow miners, nothing; and these things are to be heard in the Anadir.

"Now, our company shall be generous to the men who aid it in its undertaking, the development of the Anadir. We want and must have coöperation; and we are willing to give value received for what we get. We are ready to go further than that. Yes, we shall give to our coöperators a chance to realize great gains on the investment of their industry. Our plan is this: We shall let leases on our Siberian property—that to which we have concession—and the men who are fortunate enough to get them will build fortunes for themselves and establish legacies for their children. Fine opportunity, gentlemen, knocks at your doors.

"Now, we want you to help us and to let us help you. We need good prospectors and miners; and nowhere in the world can be found better ones than in Alaska. And I say this not to flatter, but to voice an honest tribute. No miners in the North are equal to those of Nome."

The mayor attempted no "Sh!" that time; and, like the voice of a mob, there rose, rumbling, a bursting cadence of applause. The roof gave forth a cracking sound—it was lifting—and the glasses danced and rattled with heavy

hands beating the boards beneath them. Cheers lifted up in recognition of the tribute. The speaker had won his way into the hearts of his hearers. At last there fell silence, and Racine resumed his speech.

"We leave next week for the Anadir," he said, "in a vessel the company has chartered, and we shall take free of charge all prospectors who avail themselves of this golden opportunity. A word regarding the preparation necessary and I conclude.

"To Mr. Ole Larsen, president of the Early Bird Mining Company, my concern has given a sub-concession to all the territory contained in the original grant. But that in no way affects the chances of the Alaskan prospectors who desire to try their luck in the new gold fields. Instead, it will give them assurance of the bona-fide character of the offer we are to make. Mr. Larsen and I are partners, so to speak, and leases on claims in the Anadir may be obtained at the office of the Early Bird Company after to-night.

"And, gentlemen and fellow miners, you all know Mr. Larsen, one of Nome's pioneers. He has lived among you, and you have seen him grow rich. He is a man of sterling ability as a builder, mine operator, promoter, and citizen. I know that you have confidence in him. He will now address you."

Ole Larsen rose to his feet.

"Yentlemen," he said, "ve got gude t'ing in dees har Annie Dear place. Ve bane make planty money, but he bane hard vork at first. Ay bane vork pratty hard in Nome country, but Ay bane all right now. Ve got to vork pratty hard prospectin' in Annie Dear, but Ay tenk Siberia got plenty so much gold as Alaska. De speaker yust before bane told vhat plans bane made, an' Ay bane no speaker but Ay say dees har now. Ay bane go to Annie Dear next veek, an' stay in Annie Dear place all sommer. Ay bane go to put on crew of tventy men an' vork in Annie Dear dees y'ar. Ay goin' for show, bay Yiminy, vhat Ay tenk of Annie Dear, an' everybody har know Ole Larsen."

Larsen had made a characteristic speech; and Racine by no means underestimated its value to their scheme. He knew that Larsen was considered by the miners as "a good man to tie to" or to follow. This was due to the fact that Larsen had made good. He had mines on Little Creek that were yielding fortunes daily. A dozen crews of men worked for him, and they were producing. Larsen's Billiken had been good to him, and was still grinning his same old happy grin.

Ole Larsen's mind was practical, economic, and speculative; a pretty good sort of mind to have when one is promoting something. He knew that the Anadir would have to be prospected far and wide before it could produce anything. He also knew that the most practical method was to have experienced prospectors do it; and that the cheapest way was to have them do it, as they say in Nome, on their own hook. His mind and methods were alike, well organized.

Larsen knew that if the prospectors found gold in the Anadir, it would mean another source of wealth for him, and was worth a chance. If not, it cost him but little in comparison with the speculative value of the venture. He had told Racine that he thought the "Annie Dear de gudest-lookin' vild cat" he had seen.

The prospectors and miners fell over each other to reach the office of the Early Bird Company next morning. Scores of them signed the leases, tucked them away in safe places, and got ready their outfits.

On the placid waters of the gray-green roadstead lay a trim little schooner, the center of attraction for eyes ashore. The craft was that chartered by Racine and Larsen, and it had been rechristened *Valhalla*, in honor of Ole Larsen's nativity, and that of the majority of prospectors in the expedition. When the vessel sailed, the people clustered on the beach waved fond good-bys to the departing empire builders, and sorrowed deep and bitter because they, too, could not go.

But some must stay at home and take care of the big business the Anadir operations would bring to the camp. Nome was to be the base of supplies; and who would doubt that the town would have a great commercial uplift just as soon as the returns began to pour in from Siberia?

On the deck of the *Valhalla*, as the schooner headed westward, stood the promoters, who were to reclaim for Nome the prosperous glory she had lost, Jack Racine and Ole Larsen. In their hands they carried small leathern bags, which they protected with zeal. None but they knew what the bags contained, though it was the general supposition that within them lay the concession and the sub-grant.

At last, the low line of the Siberian coast lay in view, ahead of the good ship *Valhalla;* and the "Annie Dear" songs of the prospectors were joyous. Like happy children, they were venturing forth into a land of promise; and, like men, they went out to win; for their backs were strong and their spirits.

Bundles of blankets and outfits of supplies were taken ashore. Twenty-five miles from the beach lay the gold fields; and the men picked up their burdens, forging ahead determinedly. It was summer, and the tundra was oozy with water from the snows just melted; but rubber boots were upon the feet of the sturdy fellows, and they splashed their way through without murmur. It was no new experience for them. When they reached the Anadir they scattered, every man going to his own claim, there to delve for the gold which the promoters said they would find.

Nadeau Creek, a stream in the Anadir, was destined, said Larsen and Racine, to outrival the famous Anvil Creek of the Nome country. Because of their faith in Nadeau, they set to work with twenty men shoveling into the sluice boxes. At the end of a five days' run, the promoters made a clean-up; and, like wildfire, the news spread over the gulches and creeks, benches and hills of the Anadir. Ten thousand dollars had been taken out of two small cuts by the promoters.

Prospectors flocked to the camp and were shown the gold. It was bright and shining like that in the Nome district, which was not at all remarkable, according to the viewpoint of Racine.

"Just as I've said all the time," he boasted. "The channel of the Nome third beach line crosses Bering Sea and runs through here. We've struck it sure, and it's going to be a dandy."

"Ay tenk ve bane have pratty gude luck," agreed Larsen, as he and his partner exhibited the gold to the prospectors.

The laymen were satisfied. Had they not seen the gold, and did it not look good to them? Then the dirt in the prospect holes flew to surface with increased rapidity. With such encouragement, the men could redouble their efforts. It was plain that, with Nadeau Creek holding such wealth, other streams thereabouts must have good placer deposits. Such was the reasoning of the miners.

"Do you think there is a chance of them finding anything over here?" Racine asked Larsen that night when they were alone.

"Vell, Ay don't know," answered Larsen. "Nelson boys got gude prospect; an' Hansen, too. Ay tenk dees har Annie Dear may have gude chances yet; an', anyvay," he suggested cheerfully, "de boys all vorkin' like hal."

But the news of the big clean-up spread farther than the little camps of the prospectors; and at East Cape, a Russian army officer, Captain Kalinikoff, acting military governor of the Thukotsk district, received news of the discovery. With a squad of Cossacks, he went to the Anadir.

There was nothing unusual in the visit, thought the promoters. And they welcomed him, for his visit would break the monotony. Having met him in Nome the summer before, they knew him to be a good fellow, and they offered him drinks of aquavit and vodka. Proudly they showed him the gold. The captain held it in his hands, hefting it gravely, but said nothing.

"Nadeau Creek, bay Yiminy, bane yust so good as Anvil!" the enthusiastic Larsen exclaimed. The officer lifted his brows.

"So!" he said.

"Ay bane go to Nome," Larsen offered. "*Valhalla* vill sail next veek, an' Ay bane take dees har gold and show in Nome yust how rich Annie Dear is. Ay bane sure ve cause big stampede over har."

"But, gentlemen, you do not understand," said Captain Kalinikoff, who spoke good English. "There is an imperial rule against the removal of any native gold from Russian possessions. I cannot allow you to take this dust to Nome. It is my duty as military governor to take charge of it and send it to St. Petersburg."

Racine and Larsen showed consternation written large upon their faces; and it was a sad sight, since, a few moments before, they had been filled with such gladsome hope, such ebullient optimism. They felt the stifling wind of red tape about their cherished plans, binding them in a fell grip.

"I will give you a receipt for the gold, stating that you had it in your possession," the officer said; "but it cannot leave Siberia except in the care of a Russian government official. I am sorry, but my instructions are like—what do you say, rules of cast iron?"

Larsen was rendered speechless by what Captain Kalinikoff said; and Racine took up the cudgel of argument and persuasion.

"Now, see here, captain," said the promoter, "our concession from the Russian government gives us the right to prospect and mine gold in this district, and we want to show this gold in Nome for the purpose of advertising the country."

"Ah! The concession gives you the right to prospect and mine gold," said the officer, reading, "but does not give you permission to take the gold away."

"It is not the intrinsic value of the dust that means so much to us," declared Racine, "but what it will do toward boosting the Anadir. It will bring many miners here, and the country has to be prospected before it can develop anything."

"I know that," admitted the officer, "but I cannot allow it. You will have to make further application to government officials at St. Petersburg and obtain a new concession. What you ask is impossible." The interview was closed.

The captain of the Cossacks went back to East Cape, where he held the gold until the arrival of a Russian patrol boat, and gave it into the hands of the supercargo.

Then and there operations on Nadeau Creek ceased, and the promoters put their crew on board the *Valhalla*. The prospectors who knew of the confiscation also boarded the schooner, and the major portion of the expedition returned to Nome.

When he landed on the beach at Nome, Larsen was wild, and it was hard to believe that he once had been a peace-loving citizen. He was for going to war with Russia at once. Ranting and swearing in Swedish and English, he cursed Russia and Russian officials. His anger was such that even his close friends gave him a wide berth, fearing he might fly into a berserk rage.

"Bay Yiminy, it is not yustice!" he declared during moments of semiquiet. Then he would ruminate over the manner of his treatment, thus working himself into another fine havoc of passionate frenzy.

The report of the confiscation caused an outburst of anger in Nome, and nearly every one got on his hind heels in indignation. The *Midnight Sun* took up the fight, saying it was a "contemptible, dirty trick of the Russian government to grant the concession, and then take the gold that had been mined according to the terms of the grant." The editor concluded by saying that loyal Nomeites and Alaskans would be glad to remember that the Japs had "licked the stuffin' " out of Russia.

Racine was more pacific than his fellow promoter. He had more to win and less to lose by having the Anadir prospected and the gold confiscated. He had taken the longer chance, and had

the better gambling spirit. Of course, he was sore. He admitted that; but he had evolved a little more than Larsen, and was better able to conceal his emotions. His was an anger, a resentment of the modern man. Larsen's was that of the cave dweller whose bone has been stolen or taken from him.

Larsen's attorney refused point-blank to sue the czar, and was fired. The promoter would have a lawyer, "bay Yiminy," who'd get "yustice" for him.

Now, Ole Larsen's mind was practical; but the confiscation of the ten thousand dollars in gold dust started a brain buzz; and it suddenly had become noncogitative. That is the reason he knew no better than to fire Dennis Horton, his attorney.

Horton was a nervous bundle of human electricity, high voltage, and heavy amperage, eminently able to supply a fine workable battery for any kind of scheme needing such a force behind or in it. And he knew too much about some of Ole Larsen's promoting methods to be booted away from a fat retainer with impunity. But Larsen was foolish and kicked him out; and because of this there were other developments.

I was on Front Street one day nosing around for news. Down on the beach, gazing seaward, stood Horton.

"Come down here," he called when he saw me. I went.

"We've been pretty good friends," he began. "Want something for your joke column?"

"Yes, if it's good," I answered, disappointed, for I thought he had news for me.

"Why not publish the joke the Russians played on Larsen?" he suggested.

"We've printed everything about that," I replied; "but where is there any joke to it?"

"Honest, now, don't you know what the game was?" he questioned tolerantly.

"No!" I snapped, hot at the superior look on his face.

"Well, my son, I'll give you the inside dope on how the Russians hooked it into the big Swede," he said, edging close and whispering. "To begin with, Larsen and Racine wanted to make a big showing in the Anadir. Savvy that? They had to produce something to do it, didn't they? Of course. And they cleaned up ten thousand dollars on Nadeau Creek, all right; but—*it wasn't Siberian gold!*"

My eyes began to bulge, and I got set for a mad dash to the office.

"Yessirree. They took the gold dust over there with them in two little grips," Horton went on; "salted the mine, made everybody think they had the big thing; but the gold came from Larsen's mines right out here on Little Creek. Now, if you——"

But I was legging it to the office for all I was worth to get the copy in. He called to me as I ran.

"Say! Will you publish that?" he shouted. "It's straight, and you can use my name. That's me!" I didn't stop to answer, but burst into the office at top speed.

For a year or more, the city editor had never called me anything but "Bonehead" and "Ivory Top"; but, when he took my copy and read the latest joke on the big Swede, he slapped me so hard on the back that I put my hands up to fight him, job or no job. I gasped when I saw the pleased look on his face.

"Fine, old man, fine!" said the city editor.

CHRISTMAS DAY and THE POPULAR—a pretty good combination. The Christmas POPULAR has a seasonable yarn by ARTHUR TRAIN, a big novel by FRANCIS LYNDE, the first part of a great serial by B. M. BOWER called "Good Indian," and a dozen other stories that ought to help along the good cheer

The Strong Men

BEHOLD the man of muscle, who wears the victor's crown! In gorgeous scrap and tussle he pinned the others down. His brawn stands out in hummocks, he like a lion treads; he sits on foemen's stomachs and stands them on their heads. The strong men of all regions, the mighty men of note, come here in beefy legions to try to get his goat; with cordial smiles he greets them, and when we've raised a pot, upon the mat he meets them and ties them in a knot. From Russia's frozen acres, from Grecian ports they sail, and Turkey sends her fakers to gather in the kale; old brooding Europe breeds them, these mighty men of brawn; our Strong Man takes and kneads them, and puts their hopes in pawn.

Behold this puny fellow, this meek and humble chap! No doubt he'd show up yellow if he got in a scrap. His face is pale and sickly, he's weak of arm and knee; if trouble came he'd quickly shin up the nearest tree. No hale man ever loves him; he stirs the sportsman's wrath; the whole world kicks and shoves him and shoos him from the path. For who can love a duffer so pallid, weak and thin, who seems resigned to suffer and let folks rub it in? Yet, though he's down to zero in fellowmen's esteem, this fellow is a hero and that's no winter dream. Year after year he's toiling, as toiled the slaves of Rome, to keep the pot a-boiling in his old mother's home. Through years of gloom and sickness he kept the wolf away; for him no tailored slickness, for him no brave array; for him no cheerful vision of wife and kids a few; for him no dreams Elysian—just toil, the long years through! Forever trying, straining, to sidestep debtors' woes, unnoticed, uncomplaining, the little Strong Man goes!

Oh, Strong Men! Soon or later the laurel you bedecks! And mighty hearts are greater than mighty loins or necks

WALT MASON.

The Nurse and the Gentleman Burglar

By Clarence L. Cullen

Author of "The Lady and the Man For'ard," "The Puncturing of Percy Pell-Pell," Etc.

The burglar tumbles right into the arms of the house detective and the man from headquarters. Things like that do happen *sometimes*. Further, the burglar is wounded. Could anything be more Providential?

THE chauffeur, snarling right and left at the wheel grippers in the machines surrounding him, cleverly maneuvered the mud-spattered car through the clutter of taxicabs and privately owned automobiles. It was the usual tangle of the after-theater hour, with about a square acre of squirming cars all trying to make, at the same moment, the main entrance to that Times Square hotel where, in summer, persons with money—even ephemeral money, if not mostly so—esteem it a joy to eat and drink, hobowise, under the light of the stars.

The growling chauffeur of the muddy car finally gained the cherished part of the curb. He was so alert in jumping from his seat that he even beat the tip-exacting opener of car doors to the handle. This extracted a grunt of mingled anguish and anger from the door opener.

"Stow that stuff," said the chauffeur, out of the starboard corner of his mouth. "My man in here'll be slippin' you somethin' later. He's the dough slipper what is. But he's sick now, and I'm handlin' him."

The chauffeur yanked the car door open, and touched the arm of a very pale and very good-looking young man with a pointed Vandyke beard, who, leaning back, with his head snugly resting in a hollow of the cushion, his hat pulled well over his eyes, appeared to be asleep.

"Here we be, guv'nor," said the chauffeur, in a tone from which the snarl had been suddenly extracted. "Think you're strong 'nough to make it 'ithout being toted in? Y'are? O. K. Just rest on me arm, then, and I'll have you at the desk and then up in your room in no time. Here, yuh rum"—this to the lordly opener of car doors, who still looked as if he felt that he had been chiseled out of a tip by the chauffeur—"lend a fin, will yuh, till we git this gent inside?"

The young man in the car slowly got to his feet without assistance, but when he gripped the sides of the door, to place his foot upon the step, he began to sway, and the chauffeur and the door opener each caught and upheld him by an arm. He was tall, wide-shouldered, a man who would be picked as an athlete with his clothes on, which is no such an easy thing to do as it may sound; but, even with the help of the two men, he was distinctly uncertain on his pins, if not actually tottery; and he leaned heavily upon the pair of them as he went up the steps of the hotel.

The chirky, jocund assortment of night clerks glanced shrewdly at this man being led up to the registering desk by a chauffeur and an opener of carriage doors. They were looking for the visible symptomata of alcoholism. But the young man's large brown eyes were of a moss-agate brightness, his extremely well-cut clothing was in perfect order, and, when he addressed the head night clerk his voice, though pitched in a low tone, was of a bell-like clearness.

"I have been taken a bit ill," he said.

"Nothing worth mentioning, and nothing making it necessary for me to go to a hospital. I'll be right in a day or so—maybe a week; all I need is a little rest. No," interpreting correctly the slight wrinkles of doubt on the clerk's forehead, "it's nothing contagious. I give you my word as to that."

The head night clerk nodded politely, and mumbled something to match the nod. The man standing before the desk was of a type who probably would have got at least civil, if not polite, treatment from the foreman of a Wisconsin lumber camp.

"About three rooms will do, I suppose," he went on meditatively, for the moment releasing himself from the grasp of the two men who still clutched his arms, in order to take the pen which the clerk held out to him. "And two baths—I shall be having a nurse."

"Er—your baggage, Mister—uh—Mister—uh——" mumbled the clerk.

"Benton—George Benton," supplied the Vandyked young man, writing his name in a round enough chirography, though with an effort to control his shaking hand, on the register. He grew still more pale as he wrote, and nodded to the chauffeur and door opener to support his arms again. "I live at Pelham Manor—if you'll be good enough to write that after my name; I'm not quite up to doing any more writing myself. There's a hand bag out in the car that brought me here; the chauffeur will get it. That's all the baggage I have with me."

The head night clerk was clearing his throat, and searching for the usual observation about persons who register without baggage of a more substantial and holdable character, when the pale young man again interpreted his thought.

"Yes, I fully understand that," he said, smiling to note the surprised and slightly flustered expression on the clerk's face. "I understand, also, that, since you don't know me, it would be folly for me to offer you a check in advance. Happily that isn't necessary," and, releasing the arm which the chauffeur held, he extracted from the breast pocket of his coat a black wallet, laid it on the desk, and opened it to reveal a thick packet of yellow bills lying neatly in one of the compartments. "If you will be kind enough to extract from that whatever you think your hospitality for a week or so will amount to, I shall be glad to——"

"Oh, that's all right, Mr. Benton," said the clerk, after gazing keenly at the plethoric packet of bank notes. "We—er—we learn to—er—gauge our guests, y'know, Mr. Benton, and no advance payment will be necessary. Three rooms and two baths? Er—I have a rather handsome suite of that kind, but the rate is—er——"

"The handsomer the better for a man who's likely to be caged for a week," put in the peculiar guest. "I should like to be in that suite in something less than three minutes, if that can be arranged."

"Yes, sir—yes, sir!" puffed the clerk. "I believe our head house physician is in his office at this moment——"

"I'll be having my own medical man, thank you just the same," cut in the odd guest. There was a slight note of impatience in his tone. "I'll call him up from my rooms—when I reach them," the impatience mounting almost to asperity with the last words.

The clerk took the hint, plucked a key from the rack, summoned a bell man to lead the way, and, by this time not much more than able to put one foot before another, the pallid young man was led to the elevator by his two supporters, while men and women in evening clothes lounging through the corridors commented sympathetically upon his pallor and weakness, the women adding phrases as to the distinction of his appearance.

When the procession reached the handsomely decorated, well-appointed suite, the ill guest dismissed the chauffeur and door opener with largesse vindicating the chauffeur's claim that his fare was the "dough slipper what is," and nodded to the bell man to remain. Then he stretched himself on a couch at the foot of a Circassian walnut bed in the middle room.

There was a telephone stand alongside the couch, and, getting the bell man to look up the number in the directory, he called up a Fifth Avenue physician of renown. The reply was that the fashionable medical man was taking his vacation abroad, but that one of his assistants would respond to the call, if that were agreeable. The ill young man wearily replied that it would be agreeable if there were no unreasonable delay, and, replacing the telephone on the stand, he turned over on his right side, and closed his eyes.

"You may go," he said to the bell man, in a weak voice. "There'll be a doctor here to see me presently. Attend to it that he's sent up as soon as he arrives, will you?"

The bell man hesitated.

"Don't you think, sir," he began, "I'd better stick around until——"

"No need, thanks; I'm all right. Go," was the reply. The bell man tiptoed to the door, and closed it softly behind him.

The chauffeur scarcely had stepped off the elevator before he was confronted by a squat, red-faced, thick-necked man, with the general look of a policeman off duty.

"C'm over here, shuff—I want you to ease me a little earful, see?" said this person, with a distinctly irritating air of authority, to the chauffeur.

The chauffeur looked the man up and down resentfully.

"Earful out of me?" he inquired, in a tone to match that of the man who had stopped him. "Whatcha handin' me? Who are you, t' be stickin' me up thisaway?"

"None o' them chest numbers from you, young feller," said the squat man huskily, projecting his chin until it was about four inches from that of the chauffeur. "I'm the fly cop of this plant, if you're inquirin'. Maybe you want it politer. Well, then, I'm the house detective of this hotel. Get that? C'm over here into the corner. I wanta have you unspool me a line or two."

The chauffeur, still bridling, followed the squat man out of the lobby, and around a bend of the corridor. His conductor stopped near the telephone booths, which had little patronage at that hour. There he planted himself, feet wide apart, and hands on hips, directly in front of the chauffeur, whom he backed up against the wall.

"Now, young feller," he said, in a threatening, third-degree tone. "I seen that guy you took upstairs. Who was he, and where'dje get him, hey?"

"He ain't no guy, any more than I'm a young feller t' youse, see?" spunkily replied the chauffeur. "If you can't tell a gent when you pipe him, then it's youse f'r that eye treatment. D'yuh get that?"

The house detective stuck a large red fist within a quarter of an inch of the chauffeur's nose, and gave a very good simulation of the wrath of a policeman —which formerly he had been.

"You'll be pickin' this out o' *your* eye, young feller, in about two minnits, if you try t' nudge me any o' that swell-up stuff—d'ye make me?" he growled. "I'm not on'y the fly cop of this dump, but I've got a headquarters shield to back it up, see? Now, you climb down from that Singer Building flagpole, and answer me proper, or I'll fix it so that the nearest traffic cop'll be holdin' up your machine before you git a block away from here."

The fear of a "pinch" at the hands of a member of the traffic squad is deeply implanted in New York chauffeurs, and this one was no exception.

"Well," he said, visibly "climbing down," "whatcha drivin' at? That gent I took upstairs is all right. He slipped me forty bucks for the ride in from Pelham Manor."

The eyes of the squat man glistened.

"Oh, that's where you got him, hey? Pelham Manor," he said. "Where in Pelham Manor? What kind of a plant?"

"Big house with grounds around it," replied the chauffeur. "He phoned to the garage in Pelham Manor where I work for a car t' bring him t' New York, and I answered the call. The house was all dark—it looked like it had

been closed for the summer—when I gits there, but the gent—he's sittin' on the steps—sings out t' me when I pull up in front, and asts me t' give him a hand into the car. He's sick, he says—and I could see that, even in the dark. So I helps him into the car, and he tells me t' beat it here as fast as I can make it 'ithout gettin' pinched. I had t' fight them muddy roads most o' the way, but I'm figurin' that I broke the record from Pelham Manor t' Times Square at that. That's all I know about it. What's wrong, anyhow? Whatcha stickin' me up thisaway for?"

"Oh, well, that ain't your end, see?" replied the house detective pompously. "That'll be about all from you, 'ceptin' the name of your garage and the number of your car."

The chauffeur gave the house detective this information, which was jotted down in a notebook.

"Yuh can be holdin' yourself ready to be minglin' up in a reg'lar case in a few days, young feller," said the house detective. Then, with a note of triumph in his tone: "We can get you whenever we want you. They ain't no harm a-comin' to you—on your way now," and he backed away to release the chauffeur from his pinned position against the wall.

The chauffeur, growling in his throat, shuffled out to his car; and the house detective, getting the young woman telephone operator to call up police headquarters for him, shot into a booth and called for a "buddy" of his on the headquarters detective staff. The house detective's voice was hoarse with excitement as he talked into the transmitter.

"That you, Ed?" he said, when he had got his man at the other end. "This is Jim—yeh, Jim, up at the hotel. Say, Ed, doin's, doin's! Who d'ye s'pose we got caged right in this plant right now? Hey? Admiral Togo? Aw, nix on that stuff! I'm talkin' serious, Ed. Say, yuh know that gent burglar that's been pullin' his stuff up in the Bronx and around Westchester County? Well, he's here in the house, with a soot o' rooms fit f'r John Jake hisself, and with a bank wad that'd choke an exhaust pipe. Came down here in a garage machine from Pelham Manor, lookin' sick all over. He's sent for a sawbones, but the doctor ain't come yet; but I'm gamblin' the guy has been plugged, and isn't admittin' it. He looks sick enough to've been shot three or four times.

"How do I know it's the guy? Why, by the circulars, of course. He's been mugged. On'y difference now is that he's got one o' them pointed beards. Answers the circulars to a T. I'm goin' t' stick around and find out what ails him after the doctor nudges along.

"Yep, I got the location of the Pelham Manor house, and all that stuff. If I find the guy's been shot, I guess it's a pinch and a cop outside his door here, hey—and me and you cuttin' the reward fifty-fifty that's been offered for his capture by them rich Westchester County folks? Hey? Yep, I'll be callin' you up again later, and tippin' you off on what I hear. Stick around. So long. I think the reward's two thousand bucks—kind o' poor to split that on'y two ways between me and you, what?"

Then the house detective hung up the receiver, and shot out into the lobby to ascertain from the head bell man whether the doctor sent for by the gentleman burglar had arrived.

The ill young man was still stretched out on the couch at the foot of the bed when the doctor, a fussy and somewhat garrulous little man, with a bald head and bulbous eyes, arrived. He turned languidly upon his back when the physician stood over him.

"Are you one of Doctor Seymour's patients, Mr. Benton?" the doctor, who was unknown to his present patient, rather inconsequently inquired before asking what ailed his man.

The patient smiled wearily.

"Yes, if that's the main thing just now," he replied. "I've always understood that Doctor Seymour brought me into the world, and, odd times, he's been doing his best to keep me in it ever since. In the meantime, I've lost a lot of blood, and I suppose I need a bit of looking after."

"To be sure, to be sure," the fussy little medical man, permitting the mild rebuke to glance off easily, hastily put in. "Lost blood, you say? Into bed with you, then. Where's the wound, and what's the nature of it?"

The young man rose slowly to his feet, and began to disrobe.

"Pistol shot of no importance," he replied, making as apparent as civilly possible his desire for a minimum of conversation. "Glancing upward hole through the fleshy part of the left shoulder. Bullet passed clean through, and so there's no lead to be probed for. I did the best I knew to stanch the blood, but I couldn't keep a lot of it from getting out."

By this time he was behind a screen, getting into pajamas.

"Er—how did you get the shot, might I inquire?" asked the physician.

"Oh, that's too good a story for me to attempt to tell you before you've dressed the wound, doctor," calmly replied the young man, getting into the bed. Then, as the physician bent over him, he showed the wound, around which he had wound a couple of very fine linen handkerchiefs. It was a deep flesh wound, and still bleeding freely.

"H'm—chap that put that ball through you must have been lying down at your feet, I should judge," said the doctor, whose specialty appeared to be conversational inconsequence. But his patient did not reply to the remark.

The doctor was about to phone to the office of the house physician for a supply of bandages, when the bell of the door rang. The physician put up the receiver, and opened the door. The trained nurse whom he had summoned upon getting the patient's call stood in the doorway, suit case in hand.

"Oh, Miss Dulaney, you're in the nick of the minute," said the doctor. "There's a bit of dressing to be done at once. Have you bandages and gauze?"

The nurse had not yet entered the brightly lighted room while thus being addressed by the doctor. She replied affirmatively in a low tone to his question as to the bandages, and as he opened wide the door she stepped into the room, and her eyes rested upon the patient.

She started so violently that she dropped her suit case to the floor, with a little thud that was mitigated by the thickness of the soft carpet; and she grew deadly pale, and clasped a hand to her head.

Then, her eyes traveling again to the patient's face, she studied his countenance intently for a few seconds, after which her color quickly came back, and she looked confused and obviously embarassed as the doctor, who had been watching her, said, somewhat testily:

"Tut, tut, Miss Dulaney, you have nursed surgical cases often enough and long enough not to funk at the sight of a bit of blood, haven't you?"

"It wasn't that, doctor," she replied, in a low tone, now in perfect control of herself. "It was——" She hesitated. The patient, whose eyes had been partly closed as she entered, now was gazing full at her with an inquiring expression.

"Well, Miss Dulaney, what was it?" asked the doctor, this time in a kindlier tone.

"It was a—a remarkable resemblance, that is all, doctor," she replied, and bent over her suit case to open it.

The patient knitted his brows and, watching her with wide eyes, appeared to be so lost in thought that he did not even hear, much less reply to, the doctor's wholly unnecessary running fire of questions.

The nurse was a handsome, somewhat sad-faced woman of perhaps thirty and odd, tall of figure, and of a certain slender plumpness which her spotless uniform, assumed before reaching the hotel, well became.

Under the doctor's directions she had the patient's wound deftly dressed within ten minutes after she had entered the room. The patient watched all of the adept movements of her hands with an interested gaze through the dressing.

The doctor called her into one of the other rooms to give her night directions, and presently took his leave, after making a somewhat prolix departure from

the patient's bedside, considering that he was to return early on the following morning.

As he neared the elevator, the doctor found his way barred by the house detective and his friend "Ed," the headquarters detective.

" 'Scuse me, doctor," the house detective began, mopping his excitement-bedewed brow, "but I'm the house detective, and this gen'l'man here," jerking a thumb toward his companion, "is a headquarters man. Er—uh—doctor, you know the law about these here cases. When there's any doubt about what's happened to a patient, the law requires that the doctor 'tendin' him must——"

"Tell the police authorities what has happened to the patient—yes, yes, I know all about that," cut in the garrulous little medical man testily. "Well, if you're inquiring about the patient I've just visited, Mr. Benton, he is suffering from a slight pistol wound in the left shoulder. Does that satisfy you?"

"So far as it goes, yes, doc," said the house detective. "Did he tell you how he got the shot?"

"No, he didn't," snapped the doctor, "and he won't tell you, either, I'll guarantee," and he passed grumpily down the hall to the elevator.

"Oh, won't he?" chuckled the house detective, clapping his "buddy," the headquarters man, on the back after the doctor had disappeared. " 'Pistol wound in left shoulder,' hey? I guess you'll be tellin' me now, Bonehead Barry, that he ain't our man! Them two thousand bucks is as good as in our mitts, Ed!"

"Well, let's take a slant at the gink, and if he looks like his gallery mug we'll pinch him and phone down for a cop to be put on his door, eh?"

"Surest dream y'ever had, Eddie!"

By this time the pair had reached the entrance door to the "wanted" patient's suite. The trained nurse answered the confident and unnecessarily prolonged pressing of the bell button by the house detective. She took them in with a surprised glance, but, holding the door only partly open, she asked them calmly enough what they wanted.

"We on'y want to take a peek at the gent you're nursin', miss," said the house detective, making as if to shoulder his way through the narrow opening. But the nurse blocked him.

"My patient is asleep," she replied, the timbre of resolution in her tone, "or, at least, trying to sleep. He is not to see anybody."

"Oh, yes, he is, miss, not givin' you a short answer," said the house detective, with mounting truculence. "Me and my friend here, from headquarters, are goin' to see him, and see him a hull lot. You get that, don't you, miss? This gen'l'man is a headquarters detective, and I'm the house detective, and we're here to look your gent over. So open up, eh?"

The same sudden paleness which had overspread the nurse's face when she caught her first glance of her patient, upon arriving at the suite, revisited her features when the house detective mentioned the phrase "headquarters man." But the pair were too keen to gain admittance to the suite to notice this. She opened the door wide for them, and preceded them to the patient's room.

It was not until they were well within that room that, upon a significant glance from the nurse, they remembered to remove their hats; and even then they doffed with manifest reluctance, and in a manner to indicate that they did so solely on account of the presence of a woman in the room.

The patient was not sleeping. Propped high on pillows, and lying on his right side for easement of the wound in his left shoulder, he gazed steadily and curiously at the two men as they approached the foot of his bed. The house detective and the headquarters sleuth stared at him for a few seconds, as if he had been an Easter Island statue of lava, and then, by a common impulse, they turned to each other, and nodded confidently, the house detective grinning in his elation.

"Guess I'm never right or nothin', eh, Ed?" he said gloatingly to his mate.

"Well, you sure have made a slam this time," replied the headquarters man. "This is that Raffles bird, all right, all right."

Then he addressed the patient, who, wrinkling his brow, as if striving unsuccessfully to gather the meaning of the talk of his peculiar pair of visitors, still gazed unflinchingly from one to the other of them:

"So you're callin' yourself Benton now, eh, Scoville? Where'd'je pick up that monaker? First you was Kellogg, then Scoville—you done your bit up the river as Scoville—and now you're Benton, hey? Well, anythin' to shift the cut, o' course. Anyhow, my gent burglar friend, you're under arrest, and there'll be a cop in uniform sittin' outside your door inside o' fifteen minutes."

The words of the headquarters man had a most extraordinary effect upon the patient. His large brown eyes twinkled, and he smiled amusedly. A slight flush relieved the pallor of his face for the first time since he had reached the hotel.

"You're a detective, I take it," he said to the headquarters man, in a bafflingly placid tone.

"You don't 'take it,' pal—you know it," was the headquarters man's reply. "But, as long as we're 'takin',' why, you acknowledge your identity, *I* 'take it,' eh?"

The tall young man, propped up on the pillows, smiled again, with obvious enjoyment.

"Suppose we defer the acknowledgments until a little later on," he replied, the beard around his mouth crisping with his smile. "What was my last job, pray, and where, and how, did I happen to get this trifling little scratch?" pointing to his wounded shoulder.

"Oh, we're not askin' you t' say nothin' t' 'criminate yourself, buddy," put in the house detective, with the ripe familiarity of the limb of the law toward a cornered crook. "But, seein' that you've forgot your last job so quick, why, p'mit me t' tell you that it was a little Pelham Manor trick that you tried t' pull a few hours ago, and o' course that's where yuh got winged."

The bearded young man, still smiling, studied for a moment, and then inquired, looking from one to the other of the two standing at the foot of his bed:

"Pelham Manor sounds familiar, I'll admit that. But have you, by any chance, gone to the trouble of looking up the place in Pelham Manor where I appear, from your story, to have been gentleman-burglarizing a few hours ago?"

"Oh, don'tcha worry 'bout that, pal," said the headquarters man. "We got men out workin' on that end of it."

"Er—have you found out yet who 'winged' me, as you call it?" asked the patient, with great serenity.

"Easy goes it, shipmate," replied the headquarters man. "I ain't here t' have you prod the dope of your case out o' me. Take it quiet, bo. I'll have the cop outside your door within a quarter of an hour, so don't try none o' that getaway stuff. It'll be a hospital for yours as soon as you can be moved. S'long, pal. Lay easy. I'll be peekin' in again in the mornin' t' see that you're all right," and the headquarters man and the house detective, grinning happily, ducked their heads to the nurse, and passed out of the room.

The house detective remained outside the entrance door until the headquarters man went below to call up headquarters to have a uniformed policeman assigned to sit outside the wounded man's door.

The policeman arrived within twenty minutes or so, and the headquarters man and the house detective joined in giving him exceedingly explicit and emphatic directions to look into the patient's room every few minutes to see that he still was in bed; this despite the fact that the trapped one's suite was on the fourteenth floor, and that there was no possible means of exit for him, barring the door outside which the policeman sat, unless he chose to jump out of one of the windows.

The policeman scarcely had warmed his chair outside the door of the suite before the manager of the hotel and the house physician, the former in an intense state of horror and mortification, appeared and were ushered into the patient's room by the nurse.

The manager, addressing the calm-eyed prisoner, spluttered about the disgrace to his hotel in having such a

guest; and the house physician had been brought by the manager to make an examination of the prisoner-patient to ascertain just how soon, or sooner, he could be removed from the hotel, with his policeman guard, to a hospital.

The patient, apparently too weary for words, but not too tired to smile, regarded the pair with half-closed eyes while this little scene was on, but said no word.

The house physician asked the nurse a few questions about the patient's wound, and then told the manager that he thought "the man" might easily be removed to a hospital within twenty-four hours.

When the nurse closed the door upon this pair of visitors, she returned to the patient's bedside. He glanced at her with a sort of grave amusement as she busied herself about the room, and when she bent over him to apply the solution to his wound he said to her:

"Miss Dulaney, I feel abashed, believe me. I am sure your experiences in nursing have been varied, but I feel that never before have you been called upon to nurse a gentleman burglar, and I——"

He broke off suddenly when he saw that she was swaying slightly, that her hands were trembling, and that once again the chalky pallor which had appeared upon her face when first she entered the room was upon her features. She recovered herself quickly.

"Don't you think you had better try to sleep, Mr. Benton?" she asked him, in a voice that had a decided tremolo in it. "The doctor left some powders in case you——"

"Oh, I shall sleep all right without powders, Miss Dulaney," he replied gravely. "And there's no need for you to sit up with me. Take either of the other rooms, please—I want you to have your sleep. Good night, and thank you for your ministrations," and, as she switched off all of the lights save one, and carefully screened that, he closed his eyes, and presently was in as sound a sleep as if he had never seen a policeman in his life.

But the policeman stationed outside opened the door with a decent regard for quietness every few minutes; and every time he did that he saw the still figure of the trained nurse in a chair beside the patient's bed through the long hours of the night.

The headquarters man and the house detective appeared, and were admitted by the nurse at nine o'clock on the following morning. Both of them looked puzzled, if not actually pained.

"The men workin' the Pelham Manor end didn't find nobody in that house where you were turnin' the trick, bo," said the headquarters man, addressing the patient, into whose face the color was rapidly returning, and who resumed his amused smile as soon as he saw the pair, "and so we ain't found out who plugged you yet. But that'll be all right. We got you snagged all cozy, and the other end'll work itself out prob'ly some time t'day."

The prisoner-patient made no reply whatever, but, turning to the nurse, asked her to hand him the telephone book. He turned the pages over with great deliberation, checking off three names.

"Be so good, Miss Dulaney, as to call up these three gentlemen at their residences. Tell each of them that, through a ludicrous misapprehension on the part of the police, a person by the name of George Benton Stuyvesant is under arrest at this hotel, charged with gentleman-burglarizing. And ask each of them, if you please, to come here at once."

The countenances of the headquarters man and the house detective as the trained nurse conversed over the telephone with three of the most distinguished citizens of New York were a study.

"He's chuckin' a bluff," said the house detective to his mate, when the nurse called up and got into communication with the first of the distinguished gentlemen; but when that famous financier, and then the two others, informed the nurse that they would be at the hotel at once, they appeared to be on the point of collapse.

The prisoner-patient did not rub it in, however, but lay quiet, and studied them through half-closed lids, although the smile still continued to flicker around the corners of his mouth.

The three prominent New Yorkers, all of them elderly men, who were recognized at a glance by the detectives from the frequent publication of their portraits in the newspapers and magazines, arrived at the suite almost together. The spectacle presented by the fat, stolid policeman sitting outside of the entrance door was sufficient to cause all of them to wear broad grins on entering the patient's bedroom.

The bearded young man took their rallying with extreme good nature, even when they told him they'd instruct their butlers to have an eye to the spoons the next time they had him to dinner. But it was not until they were all grouped around his bed that he offered to untangle the skein of events that had involved him in the predicament which they found so humorous.

The nurse placed chairs for the three gentlemen, permitting the pair of chagrined sleuths to stand at the foot of the bed, twiddling their hats. She herself stood by a window, gazing down at the cluttered Times Square scene, while her patient told his story.

"It's simple enough," began the young man. "In fact, it is too imbecilely simple, which, of course, is why the joke will be on me forever, I suppose. I was to have sailed on the *Lusitania* yesterday morning to join my mother and sisters in Scotland. But, as usual before taking ship, the night before was one of those nights"—the three prominent citizens smiled at each other knowingly when he said this—"and I overslept and missed the steamer. That didn't worry me so much, for I knew that I could get passage on the *Cedric*, which sailed today; and, anyhow, I remembered some papers that I wanted to get at my mother's place at Pelham Manor.

"I had a key to the place, and in the evening went out there, expecting to find the caretaker in charge; but the ruffian wasn't there. Apparently he'd taken it for granted that I'd sailed, and that, therefore, he could make the night of it elsewhere; he'll be looking for another job after I get out of this.

"It was after I'd taken dinner at the club, about eight o'clock, that I went out to the house. I had a hunt for the papers I wanted, and didn't lay hands on them till close on to midnight. Then I switched on the lights in the library, and sat down to read myself sleepy. As a matter of fact, I did fall asleep with the book in my lap. A cough awoke me suddenly; and there, standing right in front of me, with a pistol leveled at my head, was myself.

"No, I'm not crazy. The beggar looked so astonishingly like me that I felt sure I was dreaming—same build, same features, same cut of beard, same everything; the most startling thing I ever saw or heard of in my life; positively I thought that, if I happened not to be dreaming, then the messy things I'd drunk the night before must have put me a bit queer, the chap looked so scandalously like my very self standing in front of me. It was uncanny, blessedly so, let me assure you. But I snapped myself fully awake. I suppose the gun the man had beaded on my head helped me a good bit in doing that.

"I stared at the fellow, and he eyed me calmly without saying anything. Suddenly it struck me as being too scandalously absurd, the man looking so much like me, and standing there with a pistol covering me, and I laughed.

" 'How are you, George Stuyvesant?' I said to him, to start the ball rolling. 'Since when did you go into the gentlemanly trade of burglarizing?'

"He studied me for a minute, and then said he:

" 'That's your name—George Stuyvesant—isn't it?'

"Positively, even the man's voice sounded shockingly like my own!"

The patient was the only one in the room to hear a slight gasp from the nurse. He glanced up curiously at her. But her face was turned away, and he could not see her features. He went on, more soberly:

"Well, at any rate, I fell into talk with the man, and a very decent fellow I

found him to be. He saw that I wasn't going to jeopardize my hide by leaping upon a man in possession of a magazine gun, and so he sat down in a chair opposite me, and we had a bit of a chat.

"I noticed that he was somewhat shaky, and I judged rightly—he admitted it—that his shakiness was due to drink. I took him down to the sideboard, and we had a brandy or soda or two together. Then, of course, I asked him what a man so presentable and generally decent-seeming was doing in the burglary line. He told me.

"It was an interesting yarn, which I haven't just the strength to tell now, but I will later. He'd started out by being an engraver, had fallen into drink, and then had taken to burglarizing—that's the brevity of it. He didn't like the business, it appeared, and disliked the risk of having to do another sentence in prison—he'd already done one of three years.

"After an hour or so we parted quite chummily. After he'd gone I reflected that it wouldn't be a bad idea to have some protection in case some other less decent burglar should wander in during the night, and I remembered that I'd left my pistols up in my room.

"I went up there to get them, and, in handling one of them, I gave myself this scratch in the shoulder. I bandaged it as best I could, and phoned for a car to fetch me here. I didn't want the thing to get into the papers to worry my people in Europe, so I registered as 'Benton,' my mother's name.

"That's all, gentlemen. I'm a bit tired now. I believe I'll take forty winks, if you'll excuse my rudeness. Thank you all immensely for coming down to get me out of this ridiculous mess—and give me your word, the three of you, won't you, that you won't tattle at the clubs? As for these gentlemen," nodding in the direction of the two wholly collapsed detectives standing limp at the foot of the bed, "I really don't believe they'll say a word about it. Will you?"

The headquarters man cleared his throat, and gazed disgustedly at his mate, the house detective.

"This bullhead got me into it," he said huskily.

"I guess that's right," acknowledged the house detective, looking excessively hangdog. "But I figured my dope was right. I'm sorry, Mr. Stuyvesant, and a man can't say no more'n that, and if you'll stick in a word for me with the manager here, why——"

"Don't worry about that," said the bearded young man; and the two sleuths slouched sheepishly out of the suite. After some more bantering, the three friends summoned by the young man took their departure.

The patient lay back on the propped pillows, regarding the nurse out of slitted eyes, after they had gone. It was several minutes before she slowly turned from the window and met his gaze. He saw that she had been weeping, and that her face was very white.

"Something has distressed you, Miss Dulaney," he said to her gently. "I believe I have an inkling of what that something is, from certain circumstances since you came here to attend me. I believe that I am trustworthy. Will you give me your confidence?"

She walked over by the bed, and steadied herself to speak. Impulsively the young man reached out, and took one of her hands, which he found very cold.

"Mr. Stuyvesant," she said, in a hushed, broken voice, "did he tell you that he was going to lead a different life?"

The patient smiled reassuringly.

"He not only told me that, but I know where he is at this moment. That is, I'd be willing to wager anything that he's where I think he is," he replied. "I didn't quite finish the story—there was no need, with all those people about. But I gave him some money—more than enough, I believe, for the purpose—and told him I wanted him to go immediately to a certain place, not far from New York, where the liquor habit is treated. He gave me his word as a man—I suppose he considered I'd treated him decently—that he'd go there. When he leaves that place in a month, I'm going to see that he gets

work, and I'm going also to see that the police don't hound him. Let me have the suburban telephone book, please."

She handed him the book, and he ran rapidly over the pages until he came to a number.

"Here is the telephone number of the place I sent him to, Miss Dulaney," he said. "Kindly call up and inquire if a man calling himself Edward Murgatroyd is there."

The nurse, a new light of eager happiness in her eyes, which oddly altered the sad expression of her face, got the number, and the reply was that Mr. Edward Murgatroyd had arrived at the institution about half an hour before. The nurse barely had the strength to hang up the receiver. Then she fell back into a chair, and covered her face with her hands. The patient studied her with silent sympathy.

Presently she rose, walked over to the bed, and held out her hand.

"Mr. Stuyvesant," she said, in a voice broken with emotion, "I don't know how to thank you for doing what you have done for him."

"For him?" asked the patient gently.

"For my husband," replied the nurse.

There's another story of the man in the underworld in the next POPULAR. It is called "A Man of Business." It is a Christmas story. The author is Arthur Train. You will get it on Christmas Day.

WHEN PENCE WENT TO EUROPE

THOMAS J. PENCE, man of the world, newspaper correspondent, and crony of statesmen, decided last summer that he would take a trip to Europe; and, in making his plans, he secured the coöperation of his friend, Ewan Justice, an official of one of the big steamship lines. The morning of the day of sailing, Pence, shaved, shampooed, and generally freshened up, strolled into Justice's office jauntily, waving a handsome walking stick. Somebody said he looked as lovely as a rose; but Justice, noting his high color, likened him to a poppy.

They got aboard ship, Pence making a frightful clatter on the gangway and the deck with his cane, and becoming aware that all the officers of the boat glared at him with something like rage in their eyes. Finally Justice began to introduce him to the captain.

"I can't do it," said that official roughly. "I can't meet him. It makes me mad."

"Why, what's the matter?" asked Pence.

"Oh, nothing much," assured Justice smoothly.

The captain merely glared.

"What have I done?" insisted Pence.

"Done!" shouted the captain. "Done! In the name of a million devils, what are you doing with a cane on board an ocean liner?"

"Well, of course," said Pence apologetically, "if you object to it, I'll hide it in my stateroom."

Whereupon, Justice led him to the safe retreat and helped the downcast voyager to secrete the stick. But the damage had been done, and, until the boat sailed, all the officers looked at Pence askance, indicating that he had broken every rule of shipboard etiquette.

Arrived in London, the traveler received this cablegram from Justice:

> My apologies, but you looked too sweet, and the captain and I were only guying you about the cane. It's all right to have one on shipboard. You might want to take a stroll on the bottom of the sea.

Physical Culture with Trimmings

By Charles Meade

The humorous chronicle of a young woman's bold attempt to teach calisthenics in the "Wild" West. The cataclysm that resulted was not unexpected, for, as Doctor Johnny remarks: "To set down a pretty girl among a hundred Eveless men would precipitate an insurrection in heaven itself."

SEEMINGLY the entire drinking element of the camp had assembled at Russ' thirst emporium. One would quite naturally conclude that such an unusual gathering of the citizens was occasioned by some political urgency of more than ordinary importance. At any rate, one would hardly be justified in surmising that such a remarkable manifestation of public interest should be credited to nothing more formidable than the wholly unexpected advent into the camp of a young and pretty woman.

Such, however, was really the case. Furthermore, the event was considered of such extraordinary importance as to necessitate the employing of extra barkeeps to assist Russ, the proprietor, in dispensing "nerve tonic," the susceptible miners, reveling in rosy anticipation, recklessly surrendering to the more immediate fascination of booze.

Meanwhile, Miss Mattie Carew, the aforementioned "young and pretty woman," whose arrival was the occasion for all this hubbub, concluded her task of filling in the blank spaces in the printed circulars. She critically surveyed herself in the dingy mirror surmounting the yet more dingy chiffonnier; daintily touched up her puffs and adjusted her headgear; then, heaving a sigh expressive of modest self-approval, took up the little parcel, and doughtily set forth on her mission of conquest.

Another libation in her honor had just been happily absorbed at Russ' when one of the habitués, apathetically slouching through the open doorway of the saloon, immediately straightened up and drew back to the shelter of its portal. "Sh!" he cautioned, in awed tones. "Here she comes."

Quite naturally, Miss Carew was taken aback by the sudden swarming from the saloon, of what, to her excited imagination, appeared to be the entire masculine population of the town. Quite undaunted, however, she proceeded to distribute the circulars to the eager recipients.

"Won't you please read my advertisement?" she smilingly questioned. "I'm sure you'll oblige me," she sweetly urged; and, keenly alive to the opportunity this apparently accidental gathering of the citizens afforded, she continued in more formal tones:

"And if you can find it convenient to join my class, I am sure you will derive much benefit, both physical and mental. My terms, as the circulars declare, are fifty cents a lesson, or five dollars for the full course of twelve lessons. And——" So on to the end of a rather lengthy dissertation on the extraordinary advantages accruing to one from a course in physical culture.

Down the length of the town's one business street the captivating little miss pursued her triumphal way; distributing the hand bills, and ever adding to her tally of unquestioning sub-

scribers. Indeed, but very few of her eager advocates possessed even the remotest idea of what it was all about. But with such exquisite grace did the charming maid receive the glittering coins, acknowledging the favor with cheery word and bewitching smile, as in itself to compensate the happy donor.

Russ' emporium assumed the appearance of a literary club when the motley assemblage settled down in select groups to peruse the enticing literature. "Old Contact" Mickle, owing to his failing eyesight, with much difficulty spelled through the rather verbose preamble. This was all sufficient for his depth of comprehension, however; and, fearful of being forestalled, he at once blurted out:

"Ain't you fellers caught on yet? Pshaw!" he said, in proud contempt for their obtuseness. "It didn't take me more'n er minute to un'erstan' th' whole cheese."

Doctor Johnny, a youthful miner from the bench claims, winked quizzically at the others. "What is it, Contact?" he urged. "Come, old man, tell us all about it."

And the old man, inflated with his own importance, hastened to disgorge.

"Why, yer see," he began, "it's French. This here word, 'Delsartyism,' is French for high-toned cookin'. I'll bet th' drinks for th' crowd she'll learn us how to make sour-dough slapjacks and baked beans better'n we ever see afore."

"Good! Good for you, Contact!" Doctor Johnny laughed with the uproarious crowd. "Come up now," he added; "everybody come up and have something." And, as the thirsty mob surged against the bar, he said: "Contact, you've won already. I'll treat."

With a paid-up membership far in excess of her most sanguine expectations, Miss Carew was not disposed to waste time through procrastination. Accordingly, she announced that the school would open the following evening for its first session, and that Fraternity Hall, the most commodious meeting place in town, had been engaged for that purpose.

Flushed with success, she must now write to her widowed mother, who was holding down a homestead somewhere in the Dakotas. The concluding paragraph of her epistle read something like this:

> Yes, mother, dear, I am succeeding beyond my wildest dreams. Already I've more than fifty enrolled; and, from what I hear, there will be fully a hundred before the first lesson. The people here are very kind, and I look forward to a most enjoyable, as well as a very profitable, vacation.

Meanwhile, through the effective agency of the grapevine telegraph, the news had penetrated to the uttermost confines of the district. And an event of such magnitude, not to mention its delectable possibilities, was far more potent in arousing popular interest than even the most promising dog fight could have been. Consequently, early in the afternoon of the town's red-letter day, the sturdy miners, prinked and primmed for all possible exigencies, came trooping into town, all highly enthusiastic for the delightful cause of physical culture as exemplified by the fair exponent.

"What do ye reckon it's all about, anyhow?" "Missoury Pete" inquired of his closest friend as, linked arm in arm, they followed the crowd toward Russ' emporium.

"I cain't tell exactly," the friend answered; "but let's find Doctor Johnny. I hear he's makin' hisself solid with th' young lady already. Maybe he'll put us wise."

"Yer don't reckon that the dude stands any show, do yer?" Missoury pursued, rather maliciously.

"I don't know," answered the friend; "but, leastwise, he bought hisself a plum' new suit of clothes at old Prager's to-day, an' it looks suspicious."

"He did, hey? Whew! Well, I'll jus' drop in here myself en tidy up er bit. I wanta look 'spectable, anyhow." And, without further ceremony, Pete parted from his friend and entered the store. An hour later, resplendent in gorgeous raiment of ready-made design and venerable vintage, he sauntered magnificently into Russ' emporium.

"Where's Doctor Johnny?" he in-

quired of the proprietor, who was very busy serving the ever thirsty.

"I think he's up at the hotel," Russ answered. "You know he's to escort the young lady to the hall. But come have somethin', you look awful dry in them new duds."

Missoury gracefully acknowledged the hint. "Come up, boys; come up, everybody," he bawled. "Every one drinks with Missoury Pete."

Quite an ovation was accorded the little lady that evening as, attired in some sort of white fluffy stuff that gracefully adjusted itself to her daintily molded form, and, with her finger tips resting ever so gently on the arm of her escort, she and Doctor Johnny wended their way down the long street to the hall.

For a verity, it could be likened to a triumphal procession. The infatuated miners lined the sidewalk, and with uncovered heads stood at attention while their divinity passed in review. Then, in column of twos, they trailed along in line of march.

Judge Flighty, watching the passing of the parade, was heard to mutter:

"Too bad they haven't a brass band."

As the procession moved on, she was obligingly prodigal with her smiles, bestowing them promiscuously; while to a few more favored ones she gave a word or two, thus absolutely confounding them. She was a sensible little body, and rather relished the sensation she was creating, lending herself—guilelessly, however—to a full enjoyment of the peculiar situation. Distinctively Miss Carew was an American beauty of the Western type—courageous, self-reliant, and infinitely capable.

"My, what a crowd!" Doctor Johnny whispered to his fair companion. "Who would ever imagine these crusty old bachelors to be so appreciative of youth and beauty?"

"Oh, my!" she parried, tactfully ignoring his presumption. "Is it really unusual?"

"To the contrary, it is considered quite natural."

"What—the crowd?"

"Well, yes, considering the present occasion; although I was referring to the delightful combination of youth and beauty."

"Oh!" she said, and rewarded him with a smile.

Arrived at the hall, she at once ascended to the stage, and, nerving herself for the ordeal, resolutely faced the sea of faces that fairly glowed with eager anticipation.

"Gentlemen," she began, in well-controlled voice, "our first task is to properly arrange the class. Fortunately Mr. Doctor has very graciously consented to serve as my floor manager during the term. Now, gentlemen, we will begin with the first lesson;" and, descending to the floor with a lightness conceivable only with the birds, she flitted to and fro among the happy students.

"We must retain a distance of two yards between each student," she said, in liquid accents that instantly subdued the most intractable. "That's correct, Mr. Mickle. You take position here." She smiled in approval as old Contact meekly followed her instructions.

"Now, then, Mr. Doctor," she chirruped to her assistant on critically noting the preparedness of the class. "Are we all ready?"

"All ready," that gentleman responded.

"Let 'er go, Galler-gh-er!" came the stentorian interruption from somewhere in the farthest extremity of the hall.

Rather disconcerting certainly; but, with ready tact, she joined good-naturedly in the laugh, and, resuming her station on the platform, addressed the class.

"Now, gentlemen," she said, "you will please observe me closely, and, as I exemplify the various motions, you are to do likewise. This is the first motion." And her arms shot out horizontally their full length.

"Ouch!" came the quick response from old Contact, followed by a more profane explosion from Missoury Pete.

"You get on your own spot," old Contact contended, wiping the speck of blood from his jaw where Missoury's

sharp finger nails had effected a puncture.

"You do that-a-way ag'in en I'll bore yer," was the solacing rejoinder Missoury vouchsafed him; and the two belligerents glared at each other in open hostility.

Similar mutterings of dire warfare, evidently of similar origin, could be heard in various parts of the hall. An ominous moment, indeed; and Miss Carew, alive to the situation, hastened to placate the threatening factions.

"Gentlemen! Gentlemen!" she voiced in admonitory accents. The effect was immediate. An armistice was tacitly agreed to, and the class settled down to real work.

The simpler motions of calisthenic exercises were speedily acquired and passed over by the eager students. True enough, some of the older men realized their weight of years in their vain endeavor to reach their toes with their finger tips while retaining a rigidity of the legs. Besides, it was a very warm evening, and the interval between drinks was unusually protracted. There were indications of a flagging interest. It would never do to permit the spirit of the occasion to blunt itself in the very first session.

Miss Carew intuitively sought to apply the remedy.

"Gentlemen," she said, and her blue-gray, Irish-American eyes opened their widest, "we will now rehearse the lesson accompanied by the music. Carefully note the changes, please, and follow my every movement."

A hundred or more perspiring men, ranging from lusty youths in advanced teens to decrepit old sinners scaling well into the seventies or thereabouts, stood in their prescribed places eagerly awaiting the signal. An inspiring spectacle that augured well for the American instinct to live and learn; then learn some more.

The fair instructress nodded to the pianist whom she had impressed into her service.

"Ting-a-ling-tum-tum," came the first soft notes; and Miss Carew, her beautiful arms gyrating in graceful accord with the music, led off in the fascinating evolutions, and the fun was on.

"Touch the head with the finger ends,
Stiffen the joints as the arm unbends——"

She sang in birdlike voice, in unison with the intricate movements. And the class, already intoxicated by the witchery of her presence, became utterly flabbergasted by her sweet, melodious cooing.

It was the last straw. They began to edge closer, shifting from their assigned positions in sheer eagerness to feast their eyes on the sylphlike creature who had so completely entranced them.

Gayly the sweet maid sang on, her whirling arms and swaying form the marvel of her obsessed admirers. In ever-increasing confusion, the devotees sought to emulate the sinuous convolutions of the goddess, who, wholly engrossed in her work, grew ever more enthusiastic.

Old Contact and Missoury Pete were unconsciously drawing perilously close to each other. There had been several minor clashes on remote parts of the floor, but still the pace grew faster. The class was rapidly losing its wits, deteriorating to an uncontrollable mob. A delirium possessed them.

Bubbling over with mischief, she signaled the pianist for faster time. Up and down bent the hundred human bodies. Faster and yet faster whirled the forest of human arms. In and out. Forward and back. In circular sweeps, this way, that way. In every conceivable form of human contortion the fury of mischief led her. The ever feminine, spurred for a frolic.

"Faster! Faster!" she signaled, and renewed the movement of swinging the outstretched arms about her head in ever-accelerating sweep, until the class resembled a flock of windmills in a gale.

"Faster yet!" she urged the perspiring pianist; and the half-frenzied students drew yet closer to each other.

"Go it, Maudie!" somebody 'way back yelled in ecstasy.

"Throw her wide open!" came in a spirit of deviltry from another.

"Smash th' record, mah honey!" from another.

And Miss Carew—flushed, perspiring, her bosom heaving, a very incarnation of the spirit of fun—raced on in the furious struggle to outdo herself. In wild abandonment of all restraint, she stamped her pretty little foot for "more speed"; and her mad followers, strenuously exerting themselves to make the pace, precipitated the inevitable.

"Crash! Biff! Bang!" came the terrific collision of numerous whirling fists with unprotected craniums; and instantly the armistice was off, and a battle royal held the boards.

In vain the enchantress pleaded for order. The pianist had already fled in terror; but the frightful uproar arising from a hundred fighting men effectually squelched all other sounds. Heroically she endeavored to effect the pacification of the ferocious mob; but a closer scrutiny of their hideous savagery impelled her to instant flight.

She hastened back to the stage, frantically seeking a way of egress, when, greatly to her relief, Doctor Johnny came running to her assistance.

"Quick; this way!" he urged; and, with little ceremony, he hurried the now thoroughly frightened girl through a rear entrance to the street. But, despite her very evident fears, ere the door slammed shut behind them, she stole one parting glance at the havoc she had conjured into being; and through her mask of dismay there struggled an expression that was closely akin to exultation.

A two-seated, light-running vehicle, the driver in position and the horses pawing the earth in their impatience to be off, stood waiting at the curb.

"Drive first to the hotel," Doctor Johnny ordered the driver as he climbed to a seat beside the unprotesting girl.

They experienced no difficulty in enlisting the help of the landlady at the hotel. She, being possessed of a very capable and rather attractive young husband, cheerfully lent herself to the task of expediting the young lady's departure.

Consequently, in an incredible short period of time, Miss Carew—comfortably clad for a long journey, and with Doctor Johnny, her escort, sitting beside her—was borne rapidly down the street behind the fastest team in town.

The little lady heaved a pronounced sigh of sincere regret while passing the famous hall, where she again heard the horrible din of insane conflict that yet raged in all its glory. But the horses soon passed beyond the danger zone, and over the bridge, up the long grade to the summit, and so on to Wallace Station.

It was while the horses were laboriously climbing the steep grade to the summit when Miss Carew, meditatively addressing herself, quite audibly uttered:

"I can't make it out. I can't, indeed."

"What is it, please, that's worrying you?" her companion inquired.

"Why," she answered, "the fortunate circumstance of the waiting team and wagon at the stage door."

"Oh," he explained, "that's easy. You see, it was an easy matter to foretell the finish, and I thought it best to hedge against probable eventualities."

"Then it's to your foresight that I am indebted for my escape. Thanks, very much. But tell me, please, what inspired such accurate judgment?"

"Well, Miss Carew," Doctor Johnny laughingly replied, "my experience in the mountain country convinces me that to set down one pretty girl among a hundred Eveless men would precipitate an insurrection even in heaven itself."

"But I'm going back," she protested, with warmth. "I've accepted their money for tuition, and I must live up to my contract."

"Oh, no. You can't go back very well. The authorities will most certainly have you indicted if you do."

"What for?" with whimsical assumption of innocence.

"For maliciously inciting to riot."

"Ha! ha!" she laughed. "Not quite so serious as that, I hope." Then with emphasis: "But I have their money. I must return it to them."

"Never mind the money. You've

earned it. Besides, those miners would gladly pay a great deal more for less than half as much fun." And she could only smile at the clever conceit.

Doctor Johnny stood on the platform at the station. She was comfortably installed in her compartment; and, through the open window of the car, they were giving expression to fond adieus.

"You will write to me," she urged, with animation. "I shall be very anxious to hear the outcome of that awful fracas."

"Yes, indeed, Miss Carew," Doctor Johnny made earnest reply. "I'll have a letter for you in every mail until I succeed in selling my mine. Then, if you don't turn me down, I'll bring myself to you instead of a letter."

A soft, dreamy, far-away look came into her eyes; and just as the conductor called the final warning, "All aboard!" Miss Carew, her heart swelling in admiration for this bold knight who so gallantly had come to her rescue, gently placed her hand on his sleeve as she sweetly murmured:

"Yes, dear."

Of course you like Western stories. Be sure to get the next POPULAR, containing the first part of B. M. Bower's new serial, "Good Indian." On sale December 25th.

A FRIENDLY TIP TO AN ARCHITECT

OLLIE JAMES, who is soon to be the new senator from Kentucky, is well known for two reasons in Washington. One is his perfectly, artistically, and entirely bald head. The other is the admiration and esteem in which he is held by "Handsome Tom" Heflin, a member of Congress from Alabama.

"I tell you," said Heflin, one evening, to a crowd, "Ollie is a fine fellow. What's more, he's self-made, and he deserves a lot of credit for that. Think of it! He started out with nothing but his brains, and now he's about to be made a senator. A self-made senator!"

"Well," drawled Harry Maynard, a member of the group, "if he made himself, and did such a thundering fine job of it, why didn't he put some hair on the top of his head?"

ROUGH RAILROADING TO HEAVEN

WAYNE MACVEAGH, brother of the secretary of the treasury, is such a sparkling wit that seldom has any one the chance to put one over on him; but he tells a story proving that Archbishop Ryan turned the trick one night in Philadelphia. It was at a dinner attended by a great number of railroad men.

"Your grace," said MacVeagh, "you will notice that we have a lot of railroad officials here, and you will also notice that they are accompanied by their legal counsel. That's why I'm here. They never go anywhere without their counsel. And now I am going to make a proposition to you: The railroad men will give you passes over all their lines if you will give them free passes to heaven."

"Ah," replied the archbishop, with a smile. "I would not like to separate them from their counsel!"

HE DOES NOT LIKE TO WALK

Senator Guggenheim, of Colorado, believes in taking a ride whenever he can. He keeps ten automobiles in Washington, and has several other flocks of them in various parts of the country.

The Quarter Horse

By Charles E. Van Loan

Author of "The Rainmaker from Raton," "The Great Mooltan Mahatma," Etc.

In which our old friend Professor Hanrahan Shea becomes the sole owner of a race horse and turns his thoughts turfward. Before he got the horse he was selling axle grease, and we reckon that's about as close to the horse business as he ought to get—with safety.

EVERY man, woman, and child in Trinidad," cried Professor Hanrahan Shea, "is aware that the air of this mountain country is surcharged with alkali dust. I venture to say that not one within the sound of my voice this afternoon has escaped the painful and irritating effect of this dust upon the human eye. Before entertaining you with my impersonations of great actors of the past and present, I wish to say a few words to you upon the subject of the human eye, that most delicate organ of the body.

"You all know that the eye is constructed of three coats, the outer, or cornea; the sclerotic, or middle—commonly known as the muscular coat—and the third, or retina, over which is distributed the optic nerve which conveys the sense of sight to the brain. Now, ladies and gentlemen, if in the least iota any portion of this delicate mechanism is disturbed by inflammation, there follows a corresponding disturbance of the most valuable sense which has been given to man.

"The tiny particles of alkali lodge upon the inner or mucous coating of the lids, and this coating becomes inflamed. This inflammation closes the lachrymal, or tear, duct which conveys lubrication to the eyeball, and the cornea becomes red and watery. This condition distorts the vision which the optic nerve conveys to the brain, and the result is impaired eyesight.

"Now, in correcting the diseases which are prone to attack this most delicate of all organs, nothing but the proper ingredients, and those most soothing in their effect, must be incorporated into the unguentum which is used to annoint the injured member.

"I am here this afternoon to call to your attention the marvelous discovery of Chen Shang, a Chinese monk of the fourteenth generation; an eye ointment which has the recommendation of all the famous oculists and physicians both in this country and abroad. The secret of this preparation has been handed down from generation to generation, until I am able, here this afternoon, to offer it to you for the ridiculously small price of one dollar, gentlemen; one dollar, not a tenth part of its value," et cetera, et cetera.

Professor Hanrahan Shea had, as he sorrowfully admitted to himself, "gone back to the old stuff." He had hoped never again to recall the patter of the itinerant eye specialist; but circumstances connected with the rainmaking business had sent him back to the main line of the railroad with less than ten dollars in his pockets. So here he was in Trinidad, just over the Colorado line, vending Chen Shang's Magic Eye Ointment from an open carriage, in which there lolled one of the town drunkards —Trinidad has many—miraculously cured of an eye trouble of twenty years' standing. A few sleight-of-hand

tricks and an exhibition of ventriloquism had served to draw a crowd; and, that much accomplished, the Professor asked no odds.

There were many things which he might have done, but the manufacture of the eye ointment required small capital, little or no time spent in preparation; and it paid exactly 14,400 per cent upon the original investment, as the following figures will show:

4 gross 2-dram tin ointment boxes, at 75 cents per gross	$3.00
Small bottle carbolic acid	.20
8 boxes axle grease, at 10 cents per box	.80
Total expenditure	$4.00

The 576 tins of this sovereign remery, the plebeian odor of axle grease disguised by the introduction of a suspicion of carbolic acid, cost no more than $4; and, with luck, the Professor hoped to dispose of the lot at $1 per box.

It was degrading—the Professor admitted as much to himself—but he who has less than ten dollars in his pockets must needs choose the first bridge which offers, and cross as swiftly as possible, wasting no time in quarrels with the tollkeeper. He figured that with two "pitches" in Trinidad, two in Pueblo—business should be very good in that smoky smelter city—and another pitch in Colorado Springs, he could step off the train at Denver, organized for a campaign which might find him on a vaudeville circuit with a hypnotic act, or in Chicago, peering into the future, via the human palm, at fifty cents per sitting, and as much more as he could get.

At sundown that evening, the Professor stood upon the edge of the sidewalk, meditating upon life and its vicissitudes. His pockets were heavy with silver dollars. Chen Shang's Magic Eye Ointment was still a powerful lubricant with which to anoint the wheels of misfortune.

Down the middle of the thoroughfare came a short, red-faced, mustached person, who moved with a quick, nervous tread. In his right hand he held the end of a halter, and attached to the other end of the rope was a tall, dispirited, gaunt specter—the ghost of a thoroughbred running horse. The poor brute, which seemed to have dined upon a gigantic spiral spring, so prominent were its ribs, plodded forward miserably, oblivious of its surroundings. The fat, red-faced man was not oblivious. He was keenly alive to his predicament, and his attitude was a mixture of annoyance and indecision. As he hurried forward, he twitched savagely at the rope.

The fat, red-faced man spied the Professor at the same instant that the Professor spied him, and the light of recognition leaped across the space between the two men. The fat man had been in Butte one summer with a string of running horses, and the Professor knew him as "Old Bird" Bentick. The horse which the Old Bird was leading through the streets of Trinidad was the last of that racing stable. An hour before, there had been two horses; but Bentick had just sold one of them to a grocer for seventy-five dollars, and was anxious to be out of Trinidad before that innocent tradesman arrived at a full appreciation of his bargain.

When the Old Bird recognized the Professor, his indecision vanished in a flash of inspiration. He hurried toward the sidewalk. The Professor held out his hand in welcome, and his fingers closed on the rope instead of the Old Bird's pudgy fist.

"You've got a race horse!' said Bentick, speaking very quickly. "He's yours. I *give* him to you. Sick wife. Got to make that next train. This beetle is old Rolling Wave, and he can outrun anything in the world for a quarter of a mile. After that I can beat him myself. My jockey's somewhere up the street or behind the horse, I don't know which. He ain't much. Name's Sands—Peter B. Sands. Says he could ride once. Sell 'em, give 'em away. I don't care what you do; but they're yours, Professor, and you can go as far as you like with 'em. There comes my train. *Good-by.*"

And before the Professor could catch his breath, and while this disjointed

harangue was still hurtling around his ears, the scene was enlivened by the Old Bird's flying legs as he raced toward the railroad station.

Dazed, bewildered by this sudden gift from the clouds, the Professor looked first at the rope in his hand and then into the eyes of the patient old beast. The horse regarded the new owner with wistful and hungry orbs, and shook its head as if it would say, "Don't blame me. I didn't have anything to do with this."

A wheezing sound like that made by bellows in need of repair drew the Professor's attention to a small man who carried a horse blanket over his arm. The newcomer glared after the disappearing Bentick.

"Where's that fat stew going?" he demanded.

"I don't know," said the Professor. "He just made me a present of this horse, and said he had a sick wife."

"Wife!" snarled the little man. "Mister, that fella never had no more wife'n a rabbit. You say he *give* you the hoss?"

The humor of the situation made a sudden appeal to Hanrahan Shea, and he doubled forward with a whoop of laughter.

Peter B. Sands maintained a serious demeanor, examining the new "owner" with shrewd eyes.

"Glad we make a hit with you," he wheezed suddenly. "You now got a hoss, mister, an' you got a rider—both hungry. I been with this Bentick guy so long, I've 'most forgot how to handle a knife an' fork. He couldn't git feed money for his hosses, let alone for him an' me. I'm so near starved right now that my chest is chafin agin' my backbone, an' this pore ole lizard here ain't flopped his lips over a mess of oats in so long, his belly thinks oats is gone out of fashion and ain't used no more in the best circles. We're all in, mister, all in. How 'bout you fer the big eats?"

Tears of laughter were trickling down the Professor's cheeks, and it was an effort for him to bring forth a silver dollar. Sands wheezed his thanks, and, seizing the halter, set out lively.

"Hold on!" said the Professor. "Where are you going?"

"I'm going to put this poor ole hat-rack into a livery stable, and have 'em toss a whole dollar's worth of hay in front of him. Then I'm comin' back an' eat dinner with the new owner. What did you think?"

Later, the Professor and his new protégé surveyed each other across the bone of what had been a huge steak, smothered in onions.

"If that ole hoss was *mine*," said Peter B. Sands, as he juggled his coffee cup, "I know where I could get a lot of money with him. A smart fella could git fat off that ole skeleton."

It was on the tip of the Professor's tongue to tell Sands to take the horse and welcome; but the mention of money sent the Professor questing after further information. So far as the immediate future was concerned, the Professor's date book was virgin white.

"Bentick told me," remarked the Professor, "that this horse was like smoke in the wind for a quarter of a mile. Was that right? Can the old beetle still fly?"

"Mister," said Peter B. Sands, tapping upon the table with his fork, as if to give weight to his statement, "I give you my word that they ain't nothing—nothing a-a-a-a-tall that can head this ole fella at a quarter of a mile. Anyhow, nothing that I ever see, an' I've seen a many good hosses. After he's done his quarter, good night *shirt!*"

"I see," said the Professor thoughtfully. "That's his distance. Too short to be any good. Are you a rider?"

"Me?" piped the little man. "Me a rider? Say, mister, I ust to ride *stake* hosses onct. I win the Burns Handicap one year. In them days I was considered a-a-a-a rider, but I been a sick man. Got the asthma mighty bad. You bet if I hadn't been sick and had to live down around here, I'd never been a-beatin' the bushes with no poor boob like this Bentick. We hit all the little county fairs, but they didn't break good for us. No races short enough for this ole fella to win. He'd go into all the half-mile dashes, stand 'em all on their

heads for a quarter, and then finish ab-so-lute-ly."

"You said," prompted Shea, "that there was a way to get some money with him?"

"Sure thing!" exclaimed the little man. "Mister, the whole country south of here is just full of little Mexican settlements—'plazas' they call 'em; little dobey dumps. Every plaza has got a crack quarter hoss; and it's a pretty poor Mexican sport that can't fish out fifty or a hundred to bet on his beetle. I tell you, they're gamer with their money than you'd think. They'll bet their right eye out as quick as look at you. Now we could take the ole Wave, put a lot of burs in his mane and tail, let the hair on his hocks git long and fuzzy, never hit him a lick with a comb or a brush, and he'd look so tough that a man'd just nachelly be *afraid* to bet on him. We could trail him down through that country and clean up every plaza town between here and the line. It would be *soft*. We could make another Jungle King out of this hoss."

"Jungle King?" said the Professor. "Never heard of him."

"Pshaw!" said Peter B. Sands. "I thought everybody in the world had *heard* of that hoss. Ain't many people ever *seen* him to know him. He ust to run out on the coast tracks when he was a colt, under the name of Jack Griffith the Second. He was a streak of lightning for a quarter; but that was as far as he could go; and, of course, they couldn't get no money with him. Some smart fellas got hold of him, let his hair grow long, and took him out into the jungles and cleaned up with him. That's where he got the name of the Jungle King. He's famous, he is. I see him onct when he was a three-year-old—brown he was, with two white forefeet and a star on his forehead. I reckon they've made a fortune with that hoss, and nothing ever beat him at the quarter. Last time I heard of him, somebody slipped him into a quarter race up in Montana, and they won a lot of money with him. Probably he's dead by now.

"We can do the same identical thing with this ole Wave. Them quarter races are all won on the break, mister; and the way this ole fella can go zinging away from the post is a sight to see! Up to a quarter, he's a champion of the world. After that he's a hunk of cheese. His ole feet begin to hurt him after he's gone that far, and he quits so fast he looks like he's running backward. But at the quarter, he's oil in the can sure."

"You think he's good enough to beat these plaza horses?" asked the Professor.

"Mister," said Sands solemnly, "I take my oath I don't *have* to think about that. I *know*."

"I've got a great notion to see how your theory works out," said the Professor thoughtfully. "In the meantime, tie this handkerchief around your head and over one eye, and when I ask for volunteers to step into the carriage and have their eyes treated, you climb in quick. Savvy?"

"What is this?" demanded Peter B. Sands. "Medicine faking?"

"All of that," said the Professor. "When we sell enough of this eye salve, we'll see how far Rolling Wave can carry us. Are you for that, son?"

Peter B. Sands sighed heavily.

"I'm for anything," he said, "so long's I eat reg'lar. How 'bout us for some pie here?"

A small but dignified cavalcade was winding south through San Miguel County, avoiding as much as possible the shining steel parallels of transcontinental traffic. It consisted of two men, four horses, and an antique, wooden-wheeled racing sulky of the vintage of the eighties. Harmless as this combination appeared to be, it had, nevertheless, wrought tremendous financial havoc in the Mexican settlements of Union and Mora Counties, and had left a trail of desolation behind it.

In front, acting as the pacemaker, rode a wrinkled little dwarf of a man, who wheezed like a dry pump. He was perched upon a Mexican mustang of uncertain lineage and certain temper. Behind him came the pack horse, loaded

down with the necessaries of travel in the Southwest. The third mustang drew the ancient wooden-wheeled sulky, in which rode a slender, dark-haired gentleman, who sat that bouncing seat with all the dignity and grace of a Roman emperor.

Professor Hanrahan Shea began his pilgrimage on horseback; but the saddle galled him, and he exchanged it for the racing sulky. How that squeaking relic of the days of Sunol ever found its way into a Mexican plaza was, and must forever remain, a mystery.

Attached to the sulky by a long rope and shuffling behind in the thick red dust was a tall, angular beast—probably the sorriest-looking horse that ever made a track in San Miguel County. A tangled mat of hair hung down over the animal's eyes in a disfiguring bang; and the condition of the mane and tail would have brought tears to the eyes of a smart English groom.

The poor beast's coat was long and shaggy, and unacquainted with either brush or currycomb. There were burs in the tail, burs in the mane, burs in the thick hair of the flanks, and burs clotted at the feathery hocks. Old Bird Bentick would have had to look twice in order to recognize in that lamentable ruin the once respectable Rolling Wave. Yet the very appearance of the aged campaigner had made him the bright star of the procession, as many a financially embarrassed plaza could bear witness.

Peter B. Sands was right in his estimate of the Mexican character. The saddle-colored sons of the great Southwest had been very easy. The sporty caballeros who owned fast quarter horses grinned at the sight of old Rolling Wave, and laughed aloud at the idea of matching speed with the shaggy skeleton.

All their laughing was done before the fall of the flag, which was fortunate, for there was never a chance to laugh afterward. The Mexican riders realized too late that the little Americano with the wheezy voice could teach them many things about shooting a horse away from the post.

Peter B. Sands, riding bareback, with nothing but a surcingle about Rolling Wave's midsection, from which dangled two stirrups, rode all his finishes after the fashion of Tod Sloan, which is to say, that when Rolling Wave crossed the imaginary wire, Peter B. Sands was perched almost between his ears.

The thing worked with monotonous regularity. After the flag dropped, or the hat or handkerchief fell, there remained nothing but to collect the bets, say "*Adios*," and take to the trail again. The game was such a profitable one and the plazas so frequent that the Professor made a flying trip into Las Vegas, where he deposited twelve hundred dollars in the bank, retaining only sufficient capital to begin the Southern campaign.

Before the strange procession lay Gonzales Plaza, and a certain black colt of which they had heard some talk. Behind them was a trail of ruined communities, blasted hopes, and fallen equine idols. Northward, the peaks of the Glorieta Pass purpled the horizon. To the south lay the plateau country and the sheep for the shearing.

There were times when Peter B. Sands, recalling the winning of the Burns Handicap, smiled grimly, but the Professor had promised him twenty per cent of the gross intake *and* the old horse—and that was something. As for Hanrahan Shea himself, he regarded the expedition in the light of an immense joke; and it pleased him to think that his health could not but be benefited by the outdoor life.

At Gonzales Plaza, the cavalcade attracted a great deal of attention; but the owner of the black quarter horse refused to take the bait. He came to look, and shook his head wisely when the Professor dropped a stray remark to the effect that old Rolling Wave could run "a little."

"I believe you, señor," said the Mexican horseman. "It has come to my knowledge that your horse is better than he looks. I heard of how he won at Santa Rosa."

"But we have not been in Santa Rosa," expostulated the Professor.

The Mexican only smiled, and nothing could persuade him to bet as much as one peso.

The Professor gave the order to march southward again. Of course, the Mexican was lying. It could not be that there were two quarter horses campaigning the plazas at the same time.

It was in Guadalupe County that the Professor heard another vague rumor which annoyed him seriously. At the Rosita Ranch, where the party stopped overnight, a white cow-puncher grew confidential.

"How'd yeh make out down in Lincoln County?" he demanded. "I understand yeh tore 'em off somethin' scandalous."

The Professor remarked that he had not been in Lincoln County. The cow-puncher did not say anything after that; but it was very plain that he regarded the Professor as a liar. Once on the open road again, Peter B. Sands unbosomed himself.

"Somebody beat us to it," he said sorrowfully. "Couple of fellas been all through Lincoln County with a hoss; and, from what I hear, they done a grand business. Back there at the ranch they thought it was us."

Farther to the south there were more rumors of the campaign of the unknown; and the fame of that vague and shadowy quarter horse grew and grew. The Professor was disposed to regard this invasion of his territory as unwarranted; and, furthermore, it hurt business. The Mexicans had evidently received a strong warning of some sort; and they met all the Professor's crafty advances with sly winks and grins. The Professor's resentment grew stronger, and he was in no pleasant frame of mind when he rode into Cardenas Plaza.

The small adobe settlement was built around a general store; and in the open space before this emporium, the Shea-Sands-Rolling-Wave combination encountered two white men, mounted upon mustangs. They were leading a third horse, brown of coat, unkempt of appearance, and wicked of eye. The recognition, which was immediate, was also mutual. After the first salutation, the four men surveyed each other closely. It was not unlike a meeting of strange dogs.

Finally one of the strangers, a very thin man with a sandy mustache, who answered to the name of "Ed," opened the conversation.

"Sizing up your outfit on looks alone," said he; and there was a kindly note in his voice and an air of comradeship in his manner; "just lookin' you over, I reckon you better turn back, neighbor. They ain't much to be got where we come from."

The Professor's resentment vanished into thin air. He grinned as he made a fitting answer.

"Even so," said Hanrahan Shea cheerfully. "I'll guarantee that you won't find any hundred-dollar bets growing on the sagebrush along *our* trail. Horse and horse, it strikes me."

This provoked a general laugh, in which Peter B. Sands joined with a whistling cackle. The two strangers dismounted and leisurely inspected the ancient Wave.

"Race hoss, mebbe?" said the one called "Joe" inquiringly.

"No," said Peter sadly. "No. Of course, he kin travel over a distance; but he ain't exactly a race hoss—not exactly so."

"Jockey?" asked Ed shrewdly, eying Peter B. Sands quizzically.

"Just so-so," replied Peter modestly. "I ride a little. Come to think of it, I ain't seen nothin' around here to bother me. Speakin' of race hosses, what for a lizard is that one there? He don't resemble no McChesney to me."

The two camps sparred with great caution. The men circled about the horses like hawks, and the conversation became ceremonious and polite. They might have been about to propose a horse trade. Ed and Joe recognized Peter for a jockey at once; but they did not recognize old Rolling Wave, and the Professor's identity bothered them.

"D'ye make him, Ed?" asked Joe behind his hand, as he pretended to take a chew of tobacco.

"Never saw him before," said Ed. "Horse racing ain't his reg'lar line. Look at his hands. Don't think much of this old oat hound they got."

After some time, the Professor wearied of the circling and the sparring. A brilliant idea entered his head. He saw a way to put these troublesome interlopers out of business.

"Quit fanning the air and talk turkey," said Shea suddenly. "What's the sense in all this talk? You know my game. I know yours. You've got a race horse; so have I. There isn't room enough in this part of the country for both of us. Now, then, here's what I'll do with you. I'll run you four hundred and forty yards, standing start. If I beat you, I take your horse. If you beat me, you take mine. How does that strike you?"

It did not strike the man called Ed. Joe, his partner, broke into a hoarse chuckle.

"Friend," said Ed, "I don't want that ole crowbait of your'n. What could I do with him? If you want to bet any money, now——"

Peter B. Sands put in a word of advice.

"What do you want that other hoss for?" he demanded. "One race hoss is enough for this game. Don't you go bettin' the old hoss. Don't you do it."

The Professor was obdurate. He was willing to bet money; but he insisted on betting the race horses "on the side." The strangers withdrew and held a long confab.

"How much would you want to bet?" asked Ed at last.

"Anything up to five hundred a side," said the Professor promptly.

That remark clinched the matter. Ed did not want the old crowbait, but the five hundred appealed to him.

"This afternoon at two o'clock suit you?" asked Joe.

"Fine!" said the Professor.

At two o'clock, the inhabitants of Cardenas Plaza assembled on the level stretch of road beyond the adobes; and Ed and the Professor stepped off the distance, and a line drawn across the road marked the finish. Don José Miguel, the plaza storekeeper, recognizable at once by the stub of a lead pencil behind his ear, held the stakes. The strangers posted their five hundred in paper money of great age but perfectly respectable lineage, wrinkled and creased until it was soft as cotton cloth.

Joe and the Professor remained at the line of the finish with a red flag—a bandanna handkerchief upon a switch.

"Raise your hands when you're ready for the start," instructed Joe. "His nibs here will count three, and then I'll drop the flag."

Peter B. Sands eyed the man called Ed as they rode side by side toward the starting line. Peter took note of the thin, sandy man, and saw that he was swung well forward over the postage stamp of a racing saddle which the brown horse wore. The man's knees were not far removed from his chin, and he jigged up and down in a light, easy motion in response to the action of his mount. On the ground, he looked like an innocent countryman. On a horse's back, he appeared as a specialist. All the fun had gone out of his face, and the mouth under the sandy mustache was set in a straight line.

"Been a rider yourself, haven't you?" asked Peter.

The sandy man grunted.

"I'll show you in a minute," he said.

"Huh!" said Peter, with sarcasm. "No boob with red whiskers kin show me *anything!*"

They reached the starting line and swung about. The horses, both old campaigners, each wise with the wisdom of experience, danced nervously.

"Well, Methuselem! Any time today!" said Peter.

Together they raised their hands in signal. Peter gathered the old Wave for the break. The brown horse seemed to "set on the mark" like a sprinter waiting for the gun, and the thin, sandy man crouched low, every muscle tense, his light blue eyes on the tiny patch of red which fluttered aloft in the distance.

In a short race, fully as much depends upon the rider as upon the horse. There is more to the starting of a quarter-mile dash than the falling of the flag,

the sudden muscular movement of the rider, and the forward movement of the mount. Keenness of eye, particularly if the flag be at a distance; quickness of wit, and that unmeasured lapse of time between thought and action are all to be taken into account.

The difference between two good riders, mounts being equal, may be measured accurately by the distance between the horses after they have gone twenty-five yards. The best race rider is the boy or man in whom thought and action are more nearly synchronous.

There had been a day when sporting writers admitted that Jockey P. Sands had the best pair of hands in the West. This natural gift shows to great advantage in riding a hard finish. It is also of great use in "snapping a horse" away from the post.

Crouched for the start, horses and men might have been electrical machines waiting for the current to set them in motion; the switch to be thrown by a flash of red in the distance.

As the flag fell, Peter B. Sands yelled and hurled himself forward, fairly lifting Rolling Wave into the full racing stride; and, before the bandanna struck the ground, the old horse was running at the top of its wonderful speed. It was the trick by which all quarter races are won—a trick which the brown horse and rider knew well. Still, the difference between Peter B. Sands and the thin, sandy man was written large in the clean length which separated the horses.

The man on the brown horse was astounded. He had ridden the animal hundreds of times. This was the first race in which he had not "had the jump" away from the starting line.

Peter, a length in front, heard the thunder of the brown flyer at his heels, and knew instinctively that he had no mustang and Mexican rider behind him. As was his custom, he lifted up his wheezing voice in shrill encouragement.

"Hi! hi! Come on, you Wave!"

Behind him, he heard the whistle of a quirt. Ed had "gone to the bat."

"Hooey! Hooey!" he yelled. "Git him, baby! Git him!"

Then Ed began to curse, and gradually the brown horse poked its nose up alongside Rolling Wave's flank. Out of the corner of his eye, Peter saw the dark blur creep forward, and interpreted the triumphant note in the heavy profanity.

Jockey Sands went out on the old horse's neck, and rode the most desperate finish of his life. The dark blur ceased its advance and held level, and thus they swept over the line of the finish, the brown horse beaten by three-quarters of a length.

The momentum of that closing rush carried the horses side by side for two hundred yards, both riders drawing rein. Ed fell back, and, just as Peter turned to make some cheerful remark, Rolling Wave began to flounder, staggered out of the road, and then fell in a heap, flinging Peter headfirst into a cactus patch.

Joe found his voice for the first time since the finish.

"You win, sir," he said. "You've won one hoss, but you've lost another."

The thin man dismounted and helped Peter out of the cactus, and together they approached the fallen animal. The attitude of the little rider left no need for words.

The man known as Ed took one look and tossed up both arms. Then he stood with his chin on his chest, a thin, sandy statue of dejection.

"His last race," said the Professor, "and his best one. Must have been his heart. Well, the game was about played out down here—and he was pretty old. Good old horse."

He started to walk down the road, but Joe caught him by the elbow.

"Look here," said the man quickly, "racing hosses ain't in your reg'lar line. I knew it the minute I set eyes on you. As you say, they ain't anything left down in this part of the country, and winter's coming along. What'll you take for that hoss you just win, cash down?"

The Professor hesitated. He was watching Peter B. Sands, who was squatting beside the body of his faithful old friend.

"I'd hate mighty bad to lose that

brown hoss," said Joe sadly. "He ain't so much of a hoss *as* a hoss, but he's same as a pet to me. I'm about clean, but I'll give you two hundred for him right here *now*. Two hundred in cash; and you know you can't get nothin' more racing in these parts. The game's played out. You'd have to lay up all winter somewheres. How about you?"

"I don't want to win a horse away from a man who really cares something about him," said the Professor uneasily.

"Mister," said Joe earnestly, "I wouldn't want to go home to my little gal without that brown hoss. She just nachelly *dotes* on him."

"All right," said the Professor. "Two hundred is better than nothing. You've got a customer."

Joe drew out another roll of wrinkled and tattered currency, and began counting it into the Professor's hat.

As they shook hands on the bargain—a thing which Joe seemed eager to do—Peter B. Sands arose and walked slowly over to the brown horse. He made two complete circuits of the animal, whistling lightly between his teeth. Then he knelt down in the sand, and gently rubbed the hair upward from the hoof of each forefoot. Next to the skin it was white. Peter B. nodded his head several times, and, rising, examined the animal's forehead carefully. Then he looked over at the melancholy Ed and grinned.

Peter's eyes next rested upon the body of the dead race horse.

"Friend," said the little jockey solemnly, "over yonder lies the champion quarter hoss of the world."

Ed did not reply. Peter B. Sands stood for a moment, lost in thought. Then he removed his old battered hat, and addressed the thing which had been old Rolling Wave.

"Good-by, pal," he said softly. "You was a better hoss than I knowed—a champion if ever there was one."

Then the jockey slipped his arm through the bridle of the brown horse and walked down the road, Ed following silently.

When the Professor met the group, he was pocketing a roll of bills.

"Well, pardner," said Peter B. Sands, "we had a world beater an' we didn't know it; but we win the next best, I reckon."

"I've just sold him back to this man," said the Professor, "for two hundred dollars."

"You *sold* this hoss?" screamed the little man. "You *sold* him!"

Then language failed Peter; and Joe stepped forward, taking the bridle with a smile.

"Your boss here," said he to Sands, indicating the Professor with a jerk of his head; "your boss, he don't know an awful lot about race hosses. You're out of a job, but I can give you another one."

Peter B. Sands threw his hat upon the ground, and kicked it, whirling, into the cactus with a snarl of disgust.

"You fathead!" he wheezed. "You know what you done? Tossed off a fortune, that's all. *You just sold the Jungle King*—sold him for a measly two hundred bucks. That hoss is worth a thousand if he's worth a cent."

Ed, suddenly revived, chirped up merrily.

"Many's the time we refused a thousand for him; eh, Joe?"

"You bet!" said Joe. "You beat him to-day; but you're the first that ever done it at his distance. Well, every man to his own trade. What's yours, neighbor?"

"My trade?" said the Professor, and the ghost of a smile flitted across his face. "Before I got this horse I was selling axle grease."

"Well," said Ed, grinning, "I reckon that's about as clost to the hoss business as you ought to get—with safety."

And, before the Professor reached Las Vegas, he was forced to admit that there was some truth in the remark.

Van Loan will tell you about "The Sparring Partner" in the MONTH-END POPULAR, on sale December 25th.

A Vacant Car

By Jackson Chase

Author of "The Missing Gold Certificates"

Another problem for the ingenious solver of puzzles. Sixty-two Chinamen are loaded into the rear car of a train at Montreal. At the border, when the first stop is made, the car is discovered empty and there isn't a Chinaman in sight. What happened?

"DID you cut off that back coach, Jack?" Watch in hand, the conductor of the Air Line Express peered up and down the dimly lighted platform of a small station on the Canadian border.

"Yes, sir."

"All right, I'm mighty glad to get rid of it—all er-board."

Running from the rear came a figure in blue, on his sleeves the gold eagle of Uncle Sam.

"Say, Mack, where are those Chinamen you wired about?"

With mind on the schedule and the precious seconds that were slipping behind, the conductor arrested his signal to start, faced about, and glared at the officer.

"Why, in the rear coach, where they always are." Then sarcastically: "What's the matter—did you get into a sleeper by mistake?"

"That's all right, Mack. Perhaps you'll come back and show me—that rear coach is empty."

"You're crazy, man. It's plump full of Chinks. Don't you suppose I know? Sixty-two of them—took me all the way from Montreal to Fairfield wadin' through their tickets. Come on back here. You got in the wrong car, that's all."

Half running, both disappeared in the darkness beyond the range of the station lights.

"That's strange, inspector—lights out—burnin' bright when I took the tickets."

The conductor nervously unlatched the vestibule door, bounded up the steps, and raced madly down the aisle, with lantern flashing from side to side. Finding nothing, he returned more leisurely of foot, but with nimble tongue volleying a stream of Saxon oaths.

"Must be hidin' in the sleepers or day coaches, I think. I'll search the train."

The conductor ran forward, bellowing at the train crew; and the immigrant inspector reëntered the vacant car scratching his head meditatively. He struck a match and lit the gas lights overhead. Scattered on the floor, in the seats—everywhere was the miscellaneous litter accumulated during a three-thousand-mile journey. The very air bore testimony of long and squalid occupancy. Just inside the rear door, he picked up a queer Oriental slipper, and eyed it solemnly, turning it over and over, as though he had gone daft.

With red face and shortened breath, the conductor came plowing through the train, followed by trim brakemen and curious passengers.

"Not a sign of 'em up forrud, Blake," he panted. Meeting the interrogative gaze of the inspector, he blurted on: "There was sixty-two of them monkey-faced shirt ironers in this car when we pulled out of Montreal, and this is our first stop. That's the truth, inspector. If they jumped it, at the rate we've been going—well, you won't have to chase them far. If they just lit out, you ought to catch 'em easy."

As the two men descended the steps, the conductor looked at his watch. "Well, I'll see you on the return trip," he said. "Got to get out of here—twelve minutes late as it is. There's the way freight whistling now. Hope you get 'em all right."

Before the red tail lights of the Air Line Express had faded into the night, Inspector Blake had secured a lantern from the sleepy night operator, and commenced a search of the yard on the theory that the Chinese had quit the train after it stopped.

It was raining; and Blake's thoughts as he stumbled across the yard were not in pleasant channels. He had seen border service; years of it—Eastport, Malone, Duluth, Laredo, St. Thomas; but poking around with a lantern searching for three-score yellow men was a new experience even for veteran Blake.

Up and down he went, under freight cars, around them, and into them—the empties, which were not sealed. Gradually he made wider detours, to the freight house and beyond to the switch shanty, watching, listening, and occasionally cursing.

The twilight of early morning permitted more careful scrutiny; but the search was fruitless, and he plodded back to the station, discouraged and mystified. At five o'clock, he sent this message to all stations along the route:

> Sixty-two Chinese left No. 30 last night between Montreal and this station. Instruct section men to be on the lookout and wire any news immediately. T. L. BLAKE,
> U. S. Immigration Office.

To the information given in the telegram, each breathless narrator added a little as the story traveled from station to village, from village to farm. The news spread magically, and the whole countryside went man hunting. Those towns bordering the railroad from Montreal to Derby probably have never been searched as thoroughly as they were that morning. By team and bicycle, horseback and afoot, in companies, and by twos and threes, bearing shotguns and pitchforks, rifles and hatchets, clubs and stones, they scoured hill and dale, highway and crossroad, wood and field, orchard and sap house. It is safe to say a bright collar button would have been found; but never a skulking "Chinee" rewarded their mad quest.

Jenness and I lingered over the breakfast table in a corner of our comfortable bachelor's quarters long after the black corridor boy had vanished with the dishes, the usual dime, and the customary smile.

Of late years, we had come to value this hour of quiet fellowship before the day's work. In the old days, before my friend had become the distinguished chief inspector of the secret service, and before a convenient legacy had permitted me to relinquish my practice somewhat, we had seen little of each other.

My legal training, however, enabled me to intelligently follow the—in some cases—profound lines of reasoning by which Jenness shaped his investigations. Because I gave to his recitals the sympathetic attention which can only spring from genuine interest, I believe Jenness favored me with more of his confidence than others enjoyed, not excepting even the members of his force.

On the morning in question, we had been discussing the notorious treasury robbery;* and Jenness had been kind enough to look over the notes I had taken with an idea of chronicling the case in leisure hours.

"Telegram for you, suh."

Jenness took the message, and our talk ended abruptly. The corridor boy waited expectantly.

"No. If there is an answer, I will attend to it."

"Yes, suh. Thank you, suh." The woolly head disappeared.

Jenness drew a red leather-covered cipher book from an inner pocket. With pencil and blank paper, he deciphered the message; and, after studying the

*The story of the treasury robbery was printed in the first November POPULAR. Any news dealer can provide you with a copy.

transcript carefully, he passed it across the table to me. It read:

HOMER JENNESS, Chief Inspector, U. S. Secret Service:
Sixty-two Chinese, bound Vancouver to Boston, left Montreal Tuesday night in special tourist car attached to rear of Train No. 30. On arrival here, first stop, car was empty. Immediately searched train and yard, and section men have covered track full distance. No trace of them has been found. Wire instructions. BLAKE.

Jenness was lighting a cigar from a dust-laden box on the mantel as I looked up—his first cigar in weeks. I had observed that a cigar was the unfailing omen of an absorbing case. King Nicotine reigned when there were mysteries to be solved. In the indolent hours he was forgotten.

With the first breath of smoke my friend assumed his professional manner, donned the stoical mask, and erected the barrier of reserve, sweeping all with calm gaze of hard, gray eyes.

"Blake's report is most extraordinary," I said.

Jenness smoked a moment before replying.

"Yes; although I dare say the solution is simple enough. We usually find, you know, that the deepest mysteries are cleared up with less difficulty than the more commonplace. Great crimes are schemed by great minds—perverted, perhaps—but, nevertheless, keen, logical minds. It is much easier to follow the direct thought processes of such a mind, thereby solving the mystery, than it is to trace the aimless, mothlike flight of the petty mentality that never masters an idea; but dabbles here and there down through its noisy, fruitless course. But we digress, my dear Norman—and Blake and our problem are many miles away."

Jenness read Blake's message once more, and continued:

"Yes, I think it will be worth while. What say you, solicitor? Neglect your clients for a day or so, and get away North with me."

"Nothing could afford me greater pleasure," I replied.

Jenness began thumbing the pages of a time-table. "Let's see, it's a quarter after nine now. We can get an express in half an hour. That will be plenty of time."

Ten minutes later, we entered Jenness' office in the Federal Building. Jenness was proud of his service, of its splendid organization, and quick, far-reaching power; of the loyalty, patience, and courage of its members. "The secret service is a perfect machine," he frequently declared; "and, like a perfect machine, it operates swiftly, silently, efficiently, tirelessly."

The chief was smoking. His subordinates, from telephone operator to chief clerk, quickly noted the fact, and all gave respectful attention.

"Miss Riley, will you telephone the Motor Service Company, and ask them to have a taxi at the Water Street entrance in five minutes?

"Mr. Jones, wire Blake, at Derby, that I will arrive there about five this afternoon. Use the standard code.

"Radley, I wish you to call in fifteen of your best men, and take them north to Berlin Junction on the first train you can board. I'll wire you what to do after you reach there. Mr. Jones will provide expense funds."

Jenness entered his private office, and took from a closet the stout leather bag that had seen service in the corners of the earth. He hastily inspected its contents, and then selected a few additional articles for the present trip. Among other things, I noticed a fresh box of cigars.

"Come, Norman, the carriage waits."

We made the two miles to the Union Station in seven minutes. As we stepped out of the taxi, a newsboy held a paper in front of us. Across the first page were huge headlines:

CARLOAD OF CHINESE VANISH

Thought to Have Escaped Immigration Officials and Reached Metropolis by Airship

We each bought a paper and hurried to the train shed. Whirling northward, I spread out the lurid sheets, and read of things that never were on land nor sea. Blake's telegram to station agents was printed with much elaboration. An

interview with McConnell, the conductor, occupied a full column. Built upon these two items was a superstructure containing all the imaginative yarns conjecturable.

A Canadian town had reported a "Mammoth black airship racing south at express speed." Descriptions of the airship and the possibilities it opened filled another column.

A toll-bridge keeper had heard the train pass over, and later "terrible cries of distress in the water." Evidently the Celestials had "jumped into the river and drowned before he could reach them." So ran a half column, with an appropriate sketch portraying flying pigtails, sprawling limbs, and churning waters.

Jenness smiled and bit the end of a cigar. "Norman, I wonder that you have attempted to record any of my adventures when tales so much more sensational may be had for a penny." He fired the cigar to his satisfaction, and continued: "The regrettable fact is that the people demand such stuff, and, given it, believe it. Take this picture, for example." Jenness indicated a half-page cut which was labeled in small print:

Probable manner in which Chinese left train.

"For the lower part, we have the usual express train at full speed, and, above it, a dirigible balloon. Rope ladders have been let down from the balloon by the staff artist; and the same hand has magically hoisted the Chinese to the roof of the rear car to ascend them. See how easily they maintain equipoise; note the nerve of those on the ladders; how steady is the dirigible—but what is this? Looks like the words: *'America II.'* not wholly erased from the side."

"That ought to be a reliable clew," I interrupted.

"They were not so particular with the engine, however," Jenness went on. "B. & O. Never knew that line ran out of Montreal. Oh, well. What's the odds?" Jenness crumpled the paper and tossed it in a corner.

As we sped toward the border through the valley of the Medomack, Jenness kept to the smoking compartment. I sought him there about two o'clock, and proposed lunch. He was sitting by the window with cigar end glowing, eyes closed, and fingers tapping to the beat of galloping track joints beneath.

We had left the flat, low country and were ascending the slopes of the Appalachian watershed. The river lay below; and far over on the other side an occasional dust cloud marked the highway.

"What do you make of those black and yellow specks moving northward over there?" My question aroused Jenness from his daydream.

"At this distance they rather resemble bumblebees crawling over a green cloth," I said.

Jenness opened the leather bag, drew out a pair of field glasses, and focused them on the objects of my speculation. He gazed intently until we had left them far behind.

"Bumblebees, eh, Norman? Fine figure that. They did resemble them. We shall see what we shall see."

Years of companionship had made me familiar with the chief's methods, and I discreetly stifled my curiosity. Jenness loved the spectacular. In his own good time, he would spread his cards on the table; meanwhile, I would wait. He led the way to the dining car in excellent humor, and conversed brilliantly during the remainder of the journey, as was ever the case when affairs ahead looked promising.

At the border station, the express took water, and Jenness seemed much interested in the operation while perfunctorily greeting the phlegmatic Blake. The next act of the inspector excited not only Blake's and my attention, but the curiosity also of the passengers and station loafers.

Doubtless the latter assumed that the tall, well-dressed man making chalk marks on the station walk must be a contractor or connected with the railroad's engineering department. I noted that he indicated the position of the standpipe and each car step from front to rear.

"Just a memorandum, Norman—jotted down while available," he said.

As we walked across the yard to a sidetrack where the tourist car had been placed, Blake related full details of discovering the empty car and the subsequent search for its late occupants, in his slow, rambling fashion. We entered the car at the south end, as Blake had done the night before.

Jenness paid scant attention to the collection of rubbish, which remained as Blake had found it. Indeed, he hardly turned his head as he strode rapidly to the opposite end and what had been the rear vestibule, where he dropped onto all fours and scanned the rubber covering on the platform and trapdoors which hinge down over the steps.

He soon gave most attention to the westerly side of the vestibule, finally using a strong reading glass.

"Very well, gentlemen. Now we will see where the car stood when it was uncoupled from the train." I was glad enough to get outside, for the car still held that foul, vitiated odor.

"The back steps was just about here," said Blake, placing his foot on the rail.

"Will you stand there while I verify that?" responded Jenness.

The all-containing satchel gave forth a small reel of fine silk cord. Walking from the standpipe, Jenness took off the length of the train that had brought us, and added one extra car length by the chalk marks. Returning in our direction, the line fell about a foot short of the marker.

"Near enough," remarked the chief.

Jenness slowly circled from the spot with head bent low. At last he stooped suddenly, and again used the reading glass. Running forward a short distance, he repeated the performance, straightened abruptly, and walked rapidly back toward us.

"There is one thing you did not mention, Blake. It rained last night."

"That's so, it did," was the open-mouthed reply. "Don't see how I forgot that; 'twas narsty enough."

"No harm done, I'm sure. Have a smoke," said Jenness, passing his cigar case and taking one himself. "I think that will be all for a while, Blake."

With a "Thank ye, sir," Blake departed in the direction of his office.

We walked toward the freight house, which stood a few hundred feet northward. "Blake is not a genius," said my friend when we had passed out of ear range; "but he has the very great virtue of obeying orders and asking no questions."

Outside the freight-house door, Jenness examined his long wallet, which was divided into several card pockets, each labeled.

"When one deals with strangers," he had once said, "a disguise is not necessary, and with old acquaintances it is useless. The purpose of a disguise is usually to gain unquestioned admission. The proper card will admit one quicker than false whiskers—and by the front door."

In the present case, he selected a card engraved with the following:

S. De Vault Barnes,
Traveling Examiner,
Interstate Commerce Commission.

"I am interested in the problems of short-haul freight and demurrage," I heard Jenness say to the young man who appeared to be agent, clerk, and shipper combined.

It was pleasant outside, and a substantial chair on the station platform looked inviting. I sat down and tilted back against the freight house—almost without effort, I remembered later. Detached phrases from within indicated that Jenness was progressing. Soon I heard him say:

"Well, it's nearly closing time. You'll hear from me later, likely."

I got to my feet as Jenness came out. He astonished me by taking the seat I had vacated, leaning back as I had, and, with a pencil held at arm's length, sighting across the yard to the town's main street, which paralleled the tracks.

"That venerable chair has started a very interesting train of thought," my friend remarked as we left. We walked a few steps in silence before he con-

tinued: "Soon or late, Norman, we get back to the simple premise—all human activity is the result of thought. A man thinks a crime before he commits it. Your successful investigator, then, is that man who is able to detach his own mentality and reason from the thought basis of the criminal."

We found Blake in his small office over the passenger station, enjoying the last of his cigar. Jenness passed him another, lit one himself, and drew up to the table desk, where he pondered over a detailed road map showing the upper part of the State. A time-table followed, and more study, with occasional attention to a smoldering cigar. Jenness made a few notes, and then wrote a telegram, which he passed across the desk to me with the red leather-covered code book.

"Will you be good enough to code that for me, Norman—and have it sent at once?"

I nodded, and he continued:

"Mr. Blake, I shall want to talk with Jones in my office. Get me a connection. I expect to return before the wire is ready. If he answers promptly, we'll be able to go south on the seven-o'clock train."

Jenness was looking over his long wallet as he went out; and I wondered what card he had selected, and whom he was to visit.

The message directed Radley to come northward with his men and meet Jenness at Warren. Warren, Blake told me, was fifty miles south of us and eighteen miles north of Berlin Junction, where Radley was supposed to be, awaiting orders.

I coded the message without difficulty, and went below to the telegraph office. Jenness stood at the window. He had just passed a tissue copy book through to the operator, and on it there reposed three cigars of familiar shape.

We found Radley and his deputies awaiting us at Warren. In the gathering darkness, we attracted little attention as Jenness led us eastward to the edge of the town. Coming to what appeared to be a main road, we turned to the left and again traveled north—this time afoot. Thoughts of supper were with me as the town faded behind. We had covered two or three miles when Jenness halted, and spoke for the first time since we had left the station.

"I think this level stretch will do very nicely, Radley. Some time to-night I expect a string of taxicabs will come along this road from the north."

Taxicabs—black and yellow.

"Bumblebees!" I exclaimed.

Jenness smiled. "Each taxicab, I believe, will contain four or five Chinese who are unlawfully in this country. You know what that means, Radley. Distribute your men in these bushes beside the road. The cabs will slow up somewhat climbing that grade. As each one reaches the top have a man board it and ride on. They will be two or three minutes apart. It will be easy enough, I think. Don't use guns if you can help it, but get aboard; be sure of that—and land your men—in the commissioner's office—to-morrow morning."

Radley moved up the road talking to his men.

"We will stay here, solicitor, and guard the goal. Smoke?"

I did so, in lieu of that supper which, somehow, kept coming to mind. We had waited, perhaps, a half hour, though it seemed longer, when a friendly breeze bore us the faint throb of a motor. Jenness was lighting a cigar at the moment. For an instant I saw the play of feeling, the flash that thrills when dreams come true. His voice, however, was even and unemotional.

"They have made good time," he said.

The lights of a taxi appeared around a curve in the road, dipped into the hollow, and spun up the grade. Radley and a red lantern brought them to a stop. There was a word or two, a man stepped aboard, and they were off.

As the cab passed by us, Jenness flashed his electric searchlight through the window. We had a fleeting glimpse of alien faces under wide, black hats of a style that never changes.

For a second time we saw the twin white lights approach, the red lantern swinging slowly, and a yellow door whizzing by. Still a third, and so on until twelve cabs had passed southward. The thirteenth peeped over the crest of the grade, but failed to stop. Instead, we heard the engine's staccato bark, and the taxi jumped ahead. The red lantern crashed to the ground, and two figures hit the running board.

Jangle of glass, spurt of flame, pistol report came together. A second later, the brake "quarnked," and the car stopped. I caught the glint of nickel in Jenness' right hand as we ran forward.

"That you, chief?" inquired the man at the wheel.

"Hello, Tom. Where's the chauffeur?" responded Jenness.

"He was speeding her up, and I handed him a belt on the jaw—takin' a nap back there, I guess."

Jenness turned on the flash light. The cab door was open, and a writhing, yellow man was lying with shaven head on the running board. Clawing upward with manacled hands, he made a desperate attempt to gain a sitting posture before we reached him. Succeeding partially, he was thrown back heavily by a stout American boot. The boot was Radley's. He was braced firmly, with back against a second Celestial, who had thrust head and shoulders out of the opposite window.

"Just keep this fellow quiet, Tom, while I slip a bracelet on the other," said Jenness.

"Look out for him, chief," cried Radley. "He's a slippery cuss. I have his gun."

We stepped around, and I held the light. A flash of polished metal, a clicking noise, and slender, sinewy arms strained convulsively.

"Very neat, inspector," I remarked.

I pointed the light higher, and we beheld a misshapen face, dark with hate, yellow fangs protruding, slanting black eyes narrowed to slits—a hideous medallion in flame and shadow.

For a moment, Jenness coldly surveyed the wolfish visage.

"Very good, Radley. Let him down."

Tom deposited his charge beside Radley's, and Jenness and I set out to look up the chauffeur. We found him sitting by the roadside nursing a swollen face. Jenness explained his position without waste of words. Would he drive the taxi and obey orders, or did he prefer arrest as an accessory in an attempt to violate the Immigration Act? He would drive, he said.

The chauffeur took his place at the wheel.

"All right, Radley? Well, good luck. See you to-morrow."

Jenness gazed contemplatively after the departing taxi.

"Norman, I've seen that chink before—somewhere, in a far corner of my mind." He faced to the north, and straightened, inhaling deeply. "In my youth—perhaps."

His youth! I waited—and wondered.

My friend startled me with the nasal, metallic voice of the professional barker. "'Steeped in Chinese nut oil for fifty hours!' 'Twas he, Norman—that same crooked face, exhibiting an opium layout at an amusement park—years back."

We swung into a long, easy stride, with the north star riding ahead. My companion was exultant, quickened in voice, manner, gesture.

"Two or three miles ahead we should strike Lake Quinsigamond," he continued. "It lies to our left, and, according to the map, reaches across to the railroad. Years ago, the railroad laid a sidetrack in the wilderness at the westerly end of the lake, I have been told, to load pulp wood for one Sawyer. Our destination is near there, I imagine; but we needn't worry about that—the tire tracks will lead the way."

The electric searchlight showed them sunken deeply in the muddy stretches left by the recent rain.

"Now let us consider when our Oriental friends left the train," Jenness resumed. "McConnell says he was occupied taking their tickets for nearly a half hour after they drew out of Montreal. That establishes their presence

in the car with the train at full speed. That they left it by airship is too ridiculous for consideration. There are a thousand reasons why it is impossible.

"The idea that sixty-two yellow men jumped from a train tearing along fifty miles an hour is absurd. They would lack the physical courage. But, granting they had the nerve, they are not fools. What would it have profited them to jump? They would still be in Canada.

"No; the car was vacated after it had come to a full stop—at Derby. Of that I am certain. Blake may have searched, but only with his eyes. Had he used his mind there would have been no mystery."

"Then Blake did not enter the car immediately?" I said.

"Admitted. And, mark you, whoever managed this affair knew that he would not; knew that he first had to secure their tickets and manifests from the conductor, and then walk the length of the train; knew that the car was to be set off, and that Blake would take his time—two or three minutes we will say."

"Where could sixty-two men conceal themselves in two or three minutes?" I retorted.

"Our good friend over yonder," said Jenness, "who is to prepare our supper, by the way, will no doubt be able to tell us about that."

We had come to a trail leading westward from the highway into a virgin growth of spruce, hemlock, and balsam. By the rays of the flash light, we could see where the taxis had crossed the depression at the entrance; but, farther along, the needle-covered path had been little disturbed by its late traffic. On either side giant trunks spired to the dark panoply of evergreen above. To our right, I could hear the faint splash of waters chopping the shore.

"Lake Quinsigamond, I suppose," said Jenness.

We had walked about a mile into the silent, northern woods, when the path led down abruptly and skirted the lake. The tire marks appeared again; and in the course of a half hour they led us to the rear of a modest summer cottage.

Shrill yapping of a dog announced our arrival, and also assured us that the house was occupied. Jenness rapped sharply. A light glowed in an upper window, snuffed out, and reappeared below.

Indecision within was settled apparently by a strident voice above, unmistakably feminine:

"See what they want."

The door labored open a few inches. Through the aperture, a smallish man became visible in the light of a kerosene lamp held aloft by a corded, muscular arm. Jenness spoke quickly, his voice mellowed with that persuasive and yet authoritative tone I knew so well.

We had strayed in the darkness and had been without supper, he said, and would pay liberally for a cup of coffee and a bite to eat.

The charming lady abovestairs evidently had overheard. Moreover, she was willing we should know her sentiments.

"Don't care if they're half starved; won't get nuthin' to eat here. Pretty time o' night to rout folks out o' bed."

The little man had winced with each vinegary word. Still, he had become toughened, I thought, as he pushed the door open and invited us in. We entered a large unplastered room occupying the entire first story. Our host approached the stairs leading aloft from the center, and called:

"I'll just get 'em a snack, Nellie. It won't take long. You needn't bother about it."

He drew chairs from the long table for us, and lighted a kerosene stove in the rear.

"You mustn't mind the missus," he said apologetically. "She's kinder upset to-night."

He fussed around the kerosene stove, and shortly fragrant fumes of boiling coffee sharpened appetites already keen. Our host took a chair across the table from us while we ate.

"Come from Warren?" he inquired finally.

Jenness put down his empty cup. All

the warmth had gone from his voice as he answered:

"Yes; we walked all the way—expressly to see you, Hiram Bradford!"

Long residence in the house of Nag had taught Bradford the value of silence and the shelter of self-control, I judged. The faded blue eyes blinked across at us; but his expression conveyed nothing, asked nothing. Failing in the first thrust, Jenness tried a more direct attack.

"There are two dollars for the lunch, Mr. Bradford, and my card."

Adjusting a pair of nose glasses, Bradford held the pasteboard at arms' length, and studied it carefully.

"So you're one of them secret service fellers?" he ventured, after a time, blinking at my friend over the glasses.

"I suppose you realize that I came here to place you under arrest?"

"You don't say!" I thought there was a flicker of amusement in the tired blue eyes.

"It is useless to dissemble, Bradford. You know it. But wait. I'll tell you a few things.

"On pleasant afternoons you sit on the freight-house platform; always in the same place, so that your chair legs have worn hollows in the planking. Perhaps that is why you came to notice that the trains also always stop in the same place—to take water. You observed that the rear vestibules of the through expresses always halted on a direct line from your chair to the door of the grocery store across the street? Likely you ruminated other things as well—the old threadbare problems, I dare say—small salary—cost of living—advantages of wealth—just a few thousand—in one lucky strike?

"By and by it came—the big idea! After that you thought of little else, I fancy, for it promised a great deal. Let's see. The current price is about five hundred dollars a head. A car load, sixty-two, at five hundred each, would yield thirty-one thousand dollars. But you must have a confederate. That was a hard problem—a confederate able to go halfway around the world and speak a score of dialects to get business; an accomplice able to control sixty ignorant, superstitious men—able to teach them to move quickly and to remain silent. Such a man was not easily found. Certainly no local man would do, and you couldn't advertise with safety.

"After you had shaped the big idea, I imagine you were on the lookout for the right man wherever you went. At last you found him. It doesn't matter where—the county fair, perhaps, or some other outdoor exhibition. He stood in front of his little tent attired in Oriental garments and smoking a long-stemmed pipe with a small brass bowl. Between puffs, he barked at the crowd. After the performance you struck a bargain. Ah Wong folded his tent and slipped away, bound for Hongkong.

"Some months later you received a cablegram—the party had been assembled. About ten days ago you received a telegram—they had crossed the Pacific and were leaving Vancouver. No doubt your thoughts were with that car day and night as it moved across the continent. The day approached when it should arrive, and you had the shifting crew place an empty furniture car on the siding next the main line—told them you were to ship some things to your summer camp. Then you sat on the freight-house platform and sighted across to the grocery door. You had overlooked one detail. The car containing the Chinese would be one extra. Ah, that would have been fatal! So that night you took your pinch bar and levered the furniture car northward one car length.

"You had made a gangplank about three feet wide and five feet long, which probably was placed in the car, with a few chairs and boxes, the following morning. That afternoon you wrote the lading bill:

> "One car furniture and supplies to be taken by way freight. Consigned by Hiram Bradford to Hiram Bradford, Sawyers Siding.

"To establish a convenient alibi, you informed your clerk that you were going down on the seven-o'clock local to

unload the stuff and get the cottage in order. He went home at six, but you remained in the freight house. About midnight you crossed the yard, opened the furniture-car door, and climbed inside.

"At two o'clock, the Air Line Express drew in. Ah Wong had snuffed the lights, opened the rear vestibule door, and let down the platform over the steps. A shove, and the gangplank was across. Ah Wong had drilled his charges long and well. They came over it quickly—quickly and never so softly—in bare feet—Ah Wong last. You pushed the gangplank in after them, shut the door, sealed it, and ran to the freight house. Very soon after the express departed, the way freight came in, picked up the furniture car, and went on to Sawyers Siding and stations south. You followed by the first morning train."

Jenness had a keen dramatic sense; and, throughout his arraignment, he conveyed by intonation and gesture a great deal which cannot be imparted by written word.

Bradford had blinked enigmatically behind his glasses through it all. Now he adjusted them once more, and folded the two-dollar bill with awkward precision, placing it in a vest pocket.

Meanwhile Jenness studied the timbers overhead through fleeting puffs of blue-white smoke. At last he went on quietly, even drawlingly:

"Yours was a shrewd game, Bradford. As conceived, it was flawless, perfect; but no hand has the cunning to shape faultlessly the picture in the mind's eye. And so you bungled a little in execution; a very little, to be sure; mere trifles. For example: My office ascertained that you engaged the taxicabs to carry the patients of a closing sanitarium to their homes. That was artful, very ingenious; but you should have had them *come*, as well as go, in the night.

"Then there is the pinch bar. Had you placed a timber under it, there would be no marks on the track showing the distance you levered the car. And if you had headed the nails in your gangplank a little better they would not have left scratches in the rubber platform covering like elongated V's; one side when the gangplank was pushed over, and the other side when it was pulled back. Finally it rained. You couldn't avoid that, of course; but you might have covered the pebble lines in the dirt washed by drippings from the car roof."

For some time I had been conscious of a third auditor at the top of the stairs back of us. Suddenly the shrieking torrent descended.

"There, Hiram Bradford, see what ye get for bein' smart; see what ye get! He'll take ye ter jail, an' I won't get ye out. He'll take ye ter jail—an' what'll become o' me? Oh, dear, what'll become o' me-e?"

The wailing crescendo filled the house—a door slammed, and grateful silence fell upon us.

Bradford had risen to his feet, and we turned. With one hand he gripped the table, and with the other smoothed his thinning hair. The long silence was breaking. He spoke slowly, with irony in the words and pathos in the voice:

"Gentlemen, I've got so's I can tell jist what Nellie's goin' to say—on all occasions. If I'm late to dinner, or if I track the kitchen floor, or get ketched smugglin' a carful o' Chinamen, I can allers tell what's comin'. I've heard her talk for nigh onter thirty years now—an' I guess—I guess I need a vacation. I'm ready, gentlemen."

With Hiram Bradford walking between us, we passed out into the darkness.

Speaking of detective stories, there's a splendid one coming in the next POPULAR, in two weeks. It is called "Adventure of Prince Pozzanceit and the Pearl Necklace." It is by DANIEL STEELE, who wrote "The Good Man's Double" and "Pawn to Queen's Eighth"

The Big Fish

By H. B. Marriott Watson

Author of "The Skirts of Happy Chance," "The Devil's Pulpit," Etc.

CHAPTER XIX.

PRISONERS AND CAPTIVES.

THERE was no sign of Manuel. That was the strange thing. He had not been struck by the stones, as I found from inquiries I made, yet he had vanished completely. I had, however, no time to consider his fate, for it was evident at once that the gang designed to act forthwith. Indeed, we were no sooner in the camp than Werner opened on us. Of course, I had anticipated what would be their demand. They wanted the secret of the Big Fish. As it was known to them that Mercedes was Raymond's daughter, they had no doubt that she was in his confidence. They supposed that it was she who had removed the cache, and I think this supposition increased their respect for her. They began mildly.

"It's time we came to business, Miss Raymond," was how Werner put it, bluntly but inoffensively.

Houston twirled a cigarette in his fingers, and listened. He was a subordinate for the moment, and gave way to brute strength.

"I think I can speak for my associates," continued Werner, "when I make you an offer, an offer I made once to Poindexter. Give us your information, and you shall take a toll of the treasure, and call all things square."

Mercedes had recovered from the nervous shock of the bombardment, and was in possession of her old spirit. Her eyes flashed.

"You think I am going to put it in your power to get the treasure after the wicked and abominable deeds you have done?" she asked indignantly.

Houston looked at his nails critically.

"I do," said Werner grimly.

"Let us begin in proper form," suggested Houston suavely. "Miss Raymond, I'm sure, would prefer that. In the first place, you will please understand, Miss Raymond, that we are quite determined to lay our hands on the Fish. It's a mere question of time and —method. Of course, we should greatly prefer that the method should be of our mutual choosing, one of common consent, if you follow me." He paused. "But we are quite prepared for other eventualities, as"—his eyes moved to me—"as Mr. Poindexter knows."

I started up in a fury of passion, but realized my helplessness. Both these men were armed, and they were indifferent to me.

"Accept, then, Miss Raymond, our assurances," proceeded Houston, in his leisurely way, "that we would much rather settle the affair in a friendly fashion. I want you to think it over. There's no immediate hurry. Look round the edges of the position. Consider how you stand, and the profit and loss of it all. Strike, if I may advise you, a balance sheet, and then answer. I think I can promise that consideration will repay you. You know the situation. What do you advise Miss Raymond, Poindexter?" he ended, with cool assurance, turning to me.

I was staggered. His cunning question, put at that moment, bewildered me. I knew not how to answer, for God knows what terrible imaginings

This story began in the November Month-end POPULAR. Back numbers can be obtained through any news dealer.

were in my head. I realized the savage and unscrupulous nature of these men who, in their lust for gold, had become as callous as fiends of the Inferno. What would they not dare? What would they not do? I shuddered as I looked at Mercedes in all her proud beauty. Scorn was swelling her delicate nostrils as she met my gaze, scorn of that question, of that appeal, of these vultures who were gathered about their helpless prey.

"Miss Raymond," I managed to say, and I was conscious of stammering, "requires no advice from me. When she asks it I will give it."

I knew she would ask nothing then; her passion was moving her deeply.

"It is I who have to decide," she said, "and I have decided. I will never consent. You are the men who drove my father to death; and you have been the cause of the deaths of many others by horrible treachery and violence. I would think shame of myself if I dared to bargain with you. You have my answer."

Houston was listening without a trace of expression on his face, but Werner's features settled into a morose scowl.

"Very well," he said menacingly. "Very well. It's up to us now," and, raising his voice, he called to Jeff, who conducted Mercedes away. I would have followed, but was stopped.

"No, I guess not, Poindexter," said Werner, "not just yet. I want a chat first. The lady's all right at present. I know you're a sensible fellow. Sit down, and talk."

I waited, expectant, fearful, and Houston regarded me quizzically, as he smoked.

"You'll see, of course, the impossibility of the situation, Poindexter," he said, in his friendliest manner. "Here is primitive man on one side, meaning Werner, without offense, and, on the other, delicate woman, far from primitive. You have had ample proof of the mercilessness of our friend Werner. I hate to mention the word 'torture' in connection with the lady, but—well, as I said before, we are determined to get the Big Fish."

I was in a cleft stick. What was I to say? I was afraid for Mercedes. What was any treasure worth beside her safety? I knew not what steps they proposed to take in the event of her continued refusal, but I was sure they had their plans, and were certain of their success. If I could have slain the ruffians at that moment by a movement I would have made it, and seen them gladly dead at my feet. But all I did was to steady my voice, and contain my passion as I replied:

"You must give me time to think—you must give me time."

"Oh, I think we'll begin at once," said Houston easily. "It will save time. You can go on thinking all the same."

"Begin at once!" I echoed.

"Why, yes; we can't afford to stay here indefinitely," said he. "There's the question of supplies, also. Werner, you'd better put in operation what you've settled."

He rose. "I'll give her one more chance, here and now," said Werner, and made off in the direction of the tents.

I was left solitary, and it seemed for the moment that these people were so contemptuous of any potentiality for harm on my part as to leave me free. I found, however, so soon as I began to move that I was watched. One of the mestizos was within a dozen yards, and was armed. He followed me when I walked on. I paced the length of the camp, distraught with uneasy fears, praying for some guidance in this very terrible situation. Should I see Mercedes, and persuade her to yield? Would she be persuaded in her indignant fury? As I went, I descried Coop at some distance, and I made toward him.

"Hello!" he greeted me, and stuck his hands in his pockets. "So you got it in the neck?"

"Was that your idea—the rocks?" I asked sternly.

He shook his head. "Houston's. No, I'm tired. I started out too soon. I should be in hospital now."

He yawned.

"Werner got the key?" he asked.

"No; Miss Raymond will not deal with murderers," I said.

There was a pause. "But I reckon you're in the know," he said. "You'll have to cave in. They mean business. I shouldn't wonder——"

"What?" I asked sharply, as he stopped, but he turned his head.

"Oh, I don't know—nothing in particular. But if I was you, Poindexter, I'd own up. It isn't possible not to. You can't keep silence."

"Miss Raymond refuses," I said.

I walked from him, and I saw him looking after me with an odd expression. I went to the tents, and was endeavoring to discover where Mercedes and Mrs. Chester were when Werner emerged from one of the canvases.

"Well," he said, addressing Houston, who was with him, "that settles it."

"Yes, you can go ahead," said Houston softly, and looked at me.

I don't know quite to this day what part they meant me to take in this crisis, though I think I have made a near guess at it. I am sure, however, of one thing, and that is that one or other or both were anxious to put immediate pressure on us, and that I was tortured spiritually now, as I had been tortured physically before, to that end. I was to be worked upon so greatly that I should surrender, or persuade Miss Raymond to surrender.

"Get back!" said Werner to me, and, raising his voice: "Coop, take this man away, you fool!"

Coop had come up behind me, and he put a hand on my arm. There was a queer expression on his face, and I did not know how to read it.

"Better come quietly," he said harshly, and beckoned the mestizo over.

I allowed him to lead me away. It is true I was playing an inglorious part, was cutting an ignominious figure, but I was desperately helpless, destitute even of a shadow of a plan.

I sat with my face in my hands, thinking for hours, wondering if it were possible to strike terror into this hideous camp of lawless men by one singular act of violence that should overawe them. But I was alone and unarmed. Our Indians were under guard, and even if they had not been they would have been useless at this juncture. I sat in my allotted place with the watchful guard, and the sun passed across the meridian, and the time went by, and the shadows fell, and I was not aware of it. What was happening?

When I looked up once or twice I saw Jeff eying me curiously. Did they realize how I suffered, and what I was going through? What did Werner's words portend? I had made up my mind at last. Whatever was happening, even if nothing had happened, I must act, I must speak. Though I should go counter to all the purposes of Mercedes, and violate her wishes, I must speak. I could endure the suspense no longer. I demanded to see Werner, and, faced by him, noted his cruel jaw.

"What have you done with Miss Raymond?" I asked him hoarsely. "Where is she?"

"What affair is it of yours?" he asked gruffly. "Go back to your dreams, man. I've no concern with you."

"Werner, you must tell me," I shouted.

He turned away. "I'll see about it later. You'll be receptive enough then—and Miss Raymond, also. I reckon we shall come to some terms in an hour or two."

He was resolved to break me, to break us both. I saw it now, and I understood the diabolical cunning which was Houston's rather than his. I had nothing before me now but hours of torment. I went back to the rack, and suffered.

Night came, and brought with it Werner, to the accompaniment of shouts, of noises, of wild cries, and exclamations, of sounds of a camp in disorder.

He threw open the flap of the tent in which they had placed me, and the light of a lantern was flashed on me.

"It wasn't you, then! I thought it couldn't have been."

His face showing in the red light was a working horror, possessed by all the deadly passions.

"What is it?" I demanded, for I was not afraid of him, and I took him by the throat. Something had happened to Mercedes. "Where is Miss Raymond?"

He flung away from me.

"Escaped!" he said, and broke into savage oaths.

My heart leaped lightly from its pit of bitterness, and I smiled in his face. Mercedes gone! That was the best news I could hear.

I wanted to know more, but for the moment I rested content in the general thought, exulting on that captive breaking from her prison.

"There's some treachery at work, or she has the craft of the devil. She escaped before——" Werner's bull voice was rolling on almost unheeded. But that memory brought me up. Was it Manuel? Had Manuel escaped from the net which had been cast for us, and was he repeating his earlier feat when he rescued Mercedes from Werner's clutches?

As these thoughts were passing in my mind, some one came out of the darkness. It was Houston. Werner swung the lantern forward to see who the newcomer was, and it revealed to me a transfigured face which I should hardly have known for the man's. It was yellow in the light; his nostrils were puffed out, and his eyes aflame. His face was like that of an enraged wild beast.

"You've let her go? She's escaped," he snapped.

"Cut it out! It wasn't me," said Werner, biting back savagely, and the two faced each other like snarling dogs ready to spring.

"How was it?" asked Houston, controlling himself with an effort.

"No one knows. She was in the tent with the other, and Miguel was on guard. He saw nothing. It was pitch-black, of course; but how could a couple of women make off by themselves? Some one gave them assistance, some one who knows the camp. Two mules have gone, also. By thunder, if I find the man——"

"Miguel knows nothing—saw nothing! It's incredible," said Houston.

"He swears there was no sound. He sat by the fire all the time."

"Bah! The man's a fool! He was drunk or something. If it had not been Miguel I might have suspected him, but he'd never throw his chances away for a woman."

"Oh, it wasn't he," said Werner impatiently.

Houston was silent. "We must hunt all night. She can't have got far," he said. "Anyway, we've got a hostage."

He looked at me, and so did Werner. Their insensate fury had abated, and now, when they looked at me, it was as with the cold consideration of butchers at a victim who is to be slaughtered. But my heart exulted. I did not care. Mercedes was free.

They left me in rigid custody, and the whole camp was awake and in a hullabaloo all night. I, on my part, slept for the first time for more than twenty-four hours; and I think I passed a more restful night than I had done for many days.

I awoke to a sense of the sun, and a brisk wind which plied upon the mountains. The camp had settled down again; guards were stationed, fires were alight, and the business of the morning meal was in progress. I caught sight of Werner in the distance, but he did not come near me, nor was I visited by any one save my guard, who was now one of the half-breeds. I breakfasted with quite an appetite, when I received my allowance at the hands of an Indian, and I sat down comfortably, waiting on fate.

No one came near me for hours. I saw Werner go off with some of his men, and by that I knew the hunt for Mercedes was still going on. Somehow I felt she would not be found. I had regained faith. The sun grew in power, and was shining very hotly by mid-day, when Coop came, bringing me food and water. He sat down and watched me eat. An Indian stood on guard a dozen yards away.

"Peckish?" Coop inquired, and I grinned at him.

"Easy conscience, eh?" he went on. "For my part, I'd like a glass of beer

with my meals." He regarded me curiously. "Ain't you satisfied now?" he asked.

I nodded. "I am content. I don't mind Houston or Werner, or even Coop."

He gave a grin. "We did have a pretty rough time," he said appreciatively, "and I shouldn't have got much change out of you, Poindexter."

I reflected. "No; I don't think you would; but, on the other hand, if I had known what I know now, I fancy you might."

He chucked his thumb toward his shoulder. "Meaning Houston? That's so. Well, I've squared up a bit with Miss Raymond, anyway."

"What do you mean?" I asked, staring.

He chuckled, glanced at the Indian, and winked. "Nice little game last night! Clever, eh?"

"What?" I stared still, comprehension dawning slowly on my brain. "You! You mean it was you?"

"*Rather!*" said Coop. "What do *you* think? You see, I'm a trusted party in this biz. I've proved myself, suffered in the cause, don't you know. I can take liberties even with almighty Werner, and I don't care two cheeses for Houston. I owe him one. He's a snake. He fights with poisoned tips. Anyway, no one would think of suspecting Coop, so Coop does the trick, and appropriates the gingerbread, old man, what?"

"I am deeply indebted for this, Coop," I said earnestly. "It wipes out all scores between us. Tell me how you managed it."

He evidently looked back upon his performance with relish. He had always relished our encounters on the trail up, I believe.

"Oh, it wasn't mighty easy," he said. "Miguel has a chump of a head, but he's a nasty Spanish temper. I played some silly carmine game with him, and we had a drink. It wasn't quite a square drink, for there was something in it, a drop of stuff I had from the doctor away down there. He didn't know a red cent what happened to him, or anything about it at all. I'd got the mules ready in the dark, and one of your Indians. It was a sporting chance, anyway, and it came off."

"Yes, they're not caught yet," I said, but I marveled that they had succeeded in eluding capture, these two women and one attendant. Then I reflected on the cleverness of the Indians in the topography of the country. Perhaps that accounted for their security.

"No, they're not caught yet, but you are," said Coop, looking at me with interest. "There's one thing I had to do, Poindexter. I had to tell 'em you were free, and would meet them."

"You were right," I said, and added: "They're welcome to me."

"I say, don't you know? Ain't you in the secret?" inquired Coop, in dismay.

In that cry I saw the limitations of his generosity and of his sacrifice, and I smiled.

"If I knew anything," I said evasively, "the secret would not be mine to give away."

He pondered. "I reckon you've worked for it as much as any one," he said sagaciously. "But if you know it, it's bound to come out. I know Werner."

That took my thoughts back. "What happened to Miss Raymond?" I asked. "What did they do?"

He shuffled his feet. "Oh, I don't know," he replied impatiently. "It's yourself you've got to think of now. I say 'ware wire.' '*Verb sap!*' as they say in Latin."

When he left me, I fell back upon my reflections, which were not wholly disagreeable, and between those and dozing in the heat of the day, I got through the afternoon.

It must have been an hour before sunset that the messenger came from Mercedes, though of course I did not know he came from her till later. I did not recognize him. He was not one of the Indians, and his appearance was strange, and his dress differing from the Indians of the lower valleys and punas who had constituted our several parties. He was fully visible to me, as

was everything that went on, for he emerged from the wilderness beyond in the charge of Diego, my old enemy. I learned afterward that Werner and his two lieutenants were all engaged in the search for the ladies.

At any rate, Houston held the camp in the hollow of his hand, and Diego brought him this Indian. The interview took place within earshot of my tent. Houston spoke in Spanish, but the Indian shook his head; he tried the Cholo dialect, of which he knew a little, but the man did not understand. He made a gesture, and held out a piece of paper to Houston, who took it, wondering. He turned it over, and then exclaimed. Finally he read it, and I saw his face lighten.

He put the paper in his pocket, and said something in a sharp tone to Diego. Both disappeared, and I saw no more of them nor of any one save my silent guard for the next two hours, by which time twilight was fast falling. Then Werner returned, and Jeff and Miguel straggled in after him from other points of the compass. Coop, too, had been absent, but not on the same errand. He was regarded as being on the sick list. I gathered from their attitude and disposition that they had had no luck.

When he had refreshed himself, Werner came over to me, and gloated over his secured prisoner.

"Well, we start business with you tonight," he said. "There'll be no further escapes. We'll take you later."

I yawned. It was the best I could do to show this man my contempt for him. Jeff came up at that moment, and Werner turned. "Not found him?" he asked, and cursed. "What in Heaven's name does he want going off like this? There might have been an accident with only the half-breeds here."

"Diego's gone, too," said Jeff, "and two of his Indians. Jago says they took mules."

Werner went off in an explosion. "What fool business is this?" he cried, and seemed to turn over things. "I guess he'll be back presently," he said. "I suppose he thought he'd got a clew. We better wait for him."

He stumped away toward the tent, in which I understood Maddock lay recovering from his wound. He entered the tent, and some time later I saw him disappear into the darkness which was settling down. I retired to my tent, and tried to sleep. They were waiting for Houston before beginning upon me. I listened for sounds which would indicate his return, but I heard none.

The camp remained in stillness, and so I sank peacefully to sleep.

CHAPTER XX.

THE SURPRISE.

I was awakened by a great commotion, and I got upon my feet. The camp was in an uproar; guns were going off, and men were shouting and running to and fro. The whole place was a scene of gross disorder under the faint starlight. I ran forward, and found no guard to stay me. Figures, visible in the firelight, were moving about, apparently in confusion. It was a little time before I arrived at a comprehension of the situation, and then it was by an accident.

What I understood at once was that the camp had been attacked, for the report of guns was sufficient to make this clear. But what I did not at first realize was the nature of the enemy against whom Werner's gang was making so deplorable a stand. It was the whistling of an arrow past my face that opened my eyes to the truth. The assault was being delivered by a foe armed with primitive weapons, which, screaming out of the darkness upon the unprepared camp, had spread wide consternation.

I heard shouting amid the gunshots, and I guessed that Werner and his associates were endeavoring to rally the terrified Indians, but in these there was no heart. It was no business of theirs, this sanguinary conflict in which the brutal and mysterious white men were involved, and they refused, scattering before the flight of arrows, and seeking refuge among the bowlders.

So far I had seen nothing of the as-

sailants except their missiles, but that was to be altered presently, and in an amazing way. Werner and his men had given up the attempt to put heart into the Indians, and had established themselves behind a rampart of rocks, from which they maintained a steady fire at the invisible foe. Cries reached me in the intervals of silence from the tent in which Maddock lay, and though I had no reason to feel for the man anything but hatred, I was drawn by the elementary feelings of compassion to go forward in response to his wailing.

I crossed the open ground, necessarily exposing myself to the arrows, and had all but reached the tent when the unexpected happened.

It had been my intention to reassure him, to advise him that his safety lay in silence, and in remaining where he was; that his companions risked more by their situation in the fighting line. But sheer terror must have dragged the hapless wretch from his bed. He emerged from the tent, staggering, giddy, wasted, and gaunt, and ere he had taken two steps, and while I was yet a dozen paces away, he went forward on his face, with a shaft through his heart.

I ran toward him instinctively, passing one of the blazing camp fires. Away to the right, and out of the darkness, I heard a voice crying aloud, and I stopped, bewildered by a memory, a recognition.

But before my thoughts could settle and concentrate on an identification, a tall figure sprang toward me out of shifting and indeterminate shadows. Was it possible? Was it conceivable? Was I moving in a dream?

No, there was the voice, and the figure, too.

"Jack! You're safe, then?" was what came to me.

"Dick! Dick!" I cried. "Is it you? Back from the dead?"

"Jack, it was a miracle, a miracle! I've no time now. Come; you're in the danger zone here, open to two fires. Who's that?" He indicated Maddock's body. "One of the gang? We'll wipe them all out like that. But come away. Who's that? Werner? Where's Houston? Tell me where Houston is."

At this moment I caught sight of figures advancing out of the darkness, and a flight of arrows screamed in the air toward Werner's barricade. Cassilis called out an order, and a dark form sprang toward us—lean, fine, his face alive with the passion of battle. It was Manuel.

"Take them, dead or alive," said Cassilis, pointing to the white men. "Let the other poor devils go. Keep the attack off them."

He advanced as he spoke toward the bowlders behind which Werner and his companions had taken refuge, and I followed, reckless of risk. Silence had now fallen, and the effect was strange. When we reached the barricade we saw what had happened. The body of Miguel, pierced by an arrow, lay on the ground, and Werner and Jeff stood, with empty weapons, like beasts at bay, waiting for the end.

Cassilis shouted an order to Manuel, and the flight of arrows ceased. He turned to the two men, who were standing side by side, prepared to fight hand to hand till the last.

"Why did you break faith?" he asked. "Is this Werner? Who's that?"

I told him.

"Why did you break faith? Where's Houston? Miss Raymond trusted to your honor to release Poindexter in return for her communication."

I listened in amazement, for, remember, that this was the first inkling I had had that the letter Houston received had come from Mercedes. Ideas began to flow swiftly in my head.

"What do you mean? What communication?" asked Werner in his heavy, harsh voice.

"Why, I mean the letter she sent, giving you information as to the Fish, in return for Poindexter's release. She trusted to your honor, the honor of thieves and murderers! That's why I'm here, fools that you are."

Werner uttered a deep oath. He had received an ugly flesh wound in the neck, and the blood was running from it. Mechanically he mopped at it with

a handkerchief, while he let forth a string of horrible oaths.

"Houston! Houston! It was Houston got the letter? You ask me why I broke faith? I got no letter. Houston got it, by——" His voice broke almost into a whimper, he was so passionately moved. Houston had the secret, and had fled and left him to his fate, left him to perish in this attack! This was his final, his crowning act of treachery. He sobbed out the words in a terrible way.

"Houston's gone?" asked Cassilis. "It's Houston I want, not you. Where's Houston?"

"Houston's got the secret. Houston's got the Big Fish," cried Jeff, realizing suddenly, and cursing like his chief.

"Where's Houston? When did he go?" demanded Cassilis, and received no answer from the two infuriated men. It was I who told him.

"Then he's had all these hours' start. He has the secret, and only Miss Raymond knows it besides him. We must go back to her."

"Where is she?" I asked, surprised at nothing now.

"About two hours' distant, in a safe place. We must go back to her."

"Yes," I said, for I longed to do that. "But these men can go free."

He stared at me. "Why?" he asked, then shrugged his shoulders. "Oh, well, if you like. They're not Houston."

"I'm going to tell them where Houston is," I said

Werner had ceased his curses, and was mopping his neck. He heard the word "Houston."

"Let me put my hands on that man!" It was spoken with horribly constricted passion.

"You shall," I said. "After all, there must be some executioner. Fate demands instruments."

In the gorge where our camp had been destroyed were several gulches, which debouched upon the main channel, and added to the volume of the torrent. Mercedes and I had proceeded up one of these to the black lake of which I have written, the lake that lay in the circle of hills and dribbled its waters into the cañon. It would take nearly two hours to reach the lake, and Houston must have arrived there practically at nightfall. He could hardly have recovered the treasure during the night; all he could have done was to make exploration and preparation. He was probably engaged in that at this very moment, heedless of all else.

"The Fish lies in the lake high up in the third ravine on the left side of the gorge yonder," I said, plainly and slowly. "You will find Houston there."

Werner put a hand on my arm. "Is this genuine?" he asked.

"Yes," I said.

"Then, if it is genuine, give me arms," he said fiercely.

"You shall have arms," I said.

"Yes," said Cassilis gravely, "you shall have arms, if you are quit of this place within ten minutes."

"Give me arms and a mule, and I'll go within two," said Werner. He waddled off, but stopped to call back to us:

"I'll play your game. You can leave it to me." And then he and Jeff were lost in the darkness.

Cassilis said suddenly: "You sent him. I had reserved that for myself. If you knew——"

"Dick, I guess," I replied. "Yes, I sent him. We do not want our hands in this."

"But the Fish!" he exclaimed.

"We do not want the Fish," I said soberly. "There is a curse on the Fish. There are things in life more valuable and more precious than the Fish. Let the Fish lie where it is appropriate for it to lie—in the waters of the Black Lake."

"But they will get it, these men, one or other of them," he protested.

"I wonder."

He was silent a moment, and then his duties as leader of the party recalled him to a sense of responsibility.

We spent an hour in doing what was necessary, in burying the dead, and in succoring the wounded, and then we got together the remnant of the mules, and, collecting the Indians, moved down the valley. It was not until then that I was able to have any connected talk with

Cassilis. You will remember that I had last seen him stumbling by the stream, and had lost him down the face of a cataract. Well, here is his story:

"When I was sent on by Houston on that specious plea of 'trigging' the ground to get bearings, I crossed the next 'nullah,' as they call those rocky valleys in India, and wound over the face of the hill. I fancied I could see you as I looked back."

"I saw you," I said.

"Well, we went on for some time under Diego's direction, and I could not help wondering what on earth a half-breed Indian could know about surveying, or topographical measurements. But that didn't occupy my mind very much. Presently Diego gave an order which resulted in the Indian's trailing out in another direction, and leaving us, while we continued our way down the side of the hill, on which we were. That made me curious, and I asked Diego what we were after, adding that we could not now take any observations of your place, as you were not in sight. He explained that we were to get to the top of a hill a little farther, where we should be in full view, and able to do what was necessary. So my suspicions abated, and I went cheerily on. The next thing I was aware of was a blow from behind, which blotted out the light for me."

Cassilis paused, and drew a long breath. "Good Lord, what evil creatures! An unarmed and harmless man, your associate and partner—stabbed from behind! The foul creature undoubtedly left me for dead, and piled a cairn, as he thought, upon my lifeless body. I don't know how long I remained there, nor how I managed to survive. The man returned at dark, like a bird of prey, to feast on what he imagined to be the carrion he had left."

Cassilis paused again. "I have, in thinking it over, come to the conclusion that he returned to rifle my pockets, which he had forgotten. That must have been the reason, unless he came to assure himself that I was dead, which is not so likely. Anyway, the removal of the stones and the disturbance had the odd effect of bringing back consciousness to me. I cannot remember more than struggling to my feet, and seeing a figure approaching me. In my faint condition, I only recognized in this a danger. You say it was you who called to me. To me it was Diego, and I fled from him with all the force of the vitality I could command in my broken body. I must have gone over the cliff, but fallen only a little way, and the cold water roused me from my torpor.

"I don't know how I succeeded in getting down the face of the cliff. I retain only a vague recollection of my wanderings that terrible night. Remember, I had a dangerous knife wound which, it was found out afterward, just missed a vital place. But I think the cold water, or—I don't know what—saved my life by stopping the hemorrhage. I was in a state of half-consciousness all the time, and have no doubt I would have succumbed in time if the Indians had not come upon me. As a matter of fact, they found me stretched out upon the rocks more dead than alive. It had been my last effort.

"They carried me to their village huts, and carefully tended me. Jack, I owe my life to those poor Indians—a simple, primitive folk who trace their origins to the ancient Incas, and who regard as sacred anything connected with their ancient history and their ancient religion. That was what maddened them about the priest."

"The priest!" I echoed. "Was it those Indians who rescued you?"

He nodded. "The Indians of Astarnok. I was lying in one of the huts when Houston was searching among them for the priest. I was concealed by my Indian friends, who feared this white man and his gang. The Cholo Indians were strange to them. Yes, I lay there, and came slowly back to life. My splendid physical condition assisted that return. The wound healed rapidly, but it is by no means well yet.

"Events forced me to action. I learned, one way and another, of Houston's doings, and of Werner. I even gathered that you were still with the

gang, and I wondered, realizing that Houston must have marked both of us for death. I could, of course, get no word to you, for I had nothing to write with, and the Indians' language was unknown to me.

"Presently I found that the village was in a terrible state of excitement, and I succeeded in discovering why. Ingres, their chief, who had the sacred duty of looking after the temple ruins, had been murdered; and the murderer was one of the white men.

"That is about all, except this: One day a strange Indian appeared in the village, and I recognized him at once as Manuel. You may guess how eager and delighted I was to see him. I obtained all the news of Miss Varley—I mean Miss Raymond—and Mrs. Chester from him, and learned of the attack, and what had befallen you. He had escaped from the pit in which you were overwhelmed, and was casting about for some way to aid Miss Varley. That had brought him to the Indian village. And see how fortune favored his errand in the nick of time! He found the Indians thirsting for vengeance, and he promised them what they wanted.

"They fitted out a hurried expedition, and departed, and I went with them. Then this surprise followed. Manuel, hanging about these scoundrels' camp to reconnoiter for operations, came upon Miss Raymond and Mrs. Chester making their escape."

"Yes, it was Coop," said I.

"Yes, Coop," he said. "I shall never deny again the possibility of miracles. My rescue was a miracle, and Miss Raymond's escape was a miracle. What has touched that stony heart?"

"Coop is not of that class," I said, for I had begun to understand the cockney. "He is not a ruffian, nor even a villain by nature. He is only what he would call 'a sport.'"

"Well, anyway, he did one good action, which shall go to his credit. Manuel took us to the ladies' hiding place, which was snug enough in a cave, and then I learned more, and that you were still in the hands of the gang, and about that—torture. If I had one debt to pay before, Jack, now I had two. We set out, found the camp unsuspicious of anything, made our nocturnal assault, and—here we are."

As Cassilis finished, he turned and listened, as did I. There was a sound behind us, a voice rising out of the darkness. We had been traveling for the better part of an hour now, and we stood in wonder as to what or who this could be. The next moment a mule blundered down on us, and Coop's voice called out:

"I say, who the devil are you? I'm lost. I don't know where the deuce. Hold this beast, some one."

The mule staggered, and the man fell off in a heap against me. I helped him to his feet, but he was very weak, and trembled.

"Oh, it's Poindexter, is it? I dunno but I'm glad. I'm pretty sick. I got one of those damned arrows in me. Where the dickens is Werner & Co.? Lucky I tumbled on you. I'd no idea where the brute was taking me."

I examined him, and found he had a flesh wound, and had probably lost blood, but in his already weakened condition this might prove dangerous. We got him back upon the mule, and secured him there, and proceeded on our way, Coop querulous at first, with an attempt at gayety, and then falling silent, and, I guessed, unconscious. It was in this way that we reached the cave in which Mercedes and Mrs. Chester had been lodged by the faithful Manuel.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE BLACK LAKE.

Mercedes met us at the entrance, and though I could not see her face, I was conscious of a silent exchange between us as our hands met and our spirits mingled.

"You are safe?" she cried ecstatically. "I feared it was too late."

"The danger was for you, dear," I answered. "Yes, we are safe, all of us, and I think no risk can touch us now, not, at least, from those cruel adventurers."

She put her face to mine. "I prayed for you all night," she whispered. "I was ashamed to have left you so. But they told me you were free, and I should find you. That man, Coop, assured me so. How I hate him!"

"Poor devil, he did his best," I said. "He couldn't release both of us, even if he had wanted to."

"When I knew," she went on breathlessly, "I was like something mad. I felt I had given you up again to torture. I would have gone back, but Manuel prevented me. And then I thought of sending the secret, and bidding them free you in return for it. But they played me false, and I sent out Manuel and Mr. Cassilis and the Indians."

"Dearest," I said, "it was Houston," and I told her the story.

She listened gravely, and then sighed. "They had not begun to—to torture you?" she asked wistfully.

"No; or, rather, they had, for their torture was mental. I feared for you. I was afraid of what they were doing to you. What did they do, dear heart?"

"Nothing," she said quickly. "They did nothing. They told me it was you they would—'operate on,' was the horrible way they put it. They said they would give me till the evening, and then begin. I had determined to give in, but Coop came and set us free, and said you were free, also."

"That was it, then," I said, seeing the plan wholly for the first time. "They were using us one against the other. I, too, had made up my mind to tell them, even against your wishes, and I would have done so if the news of your escape hadn't arrived. It was an ingenious plan, and I think I seem to see the hand of Houston in its cruelty as well as in its ingenuity."

The night was full of stars and peace; the roar of a distant cataract was dulled to a murmur in the ears, and the cool breeze fanned our faces. We spoke of many things, of Cassilis and his miraculous escape; and Mercedes associated Mrs. Chester's name there.

"Freda is another woman," she said softly. "She is no longer the tragic figure. I am glad—so glad."

"We can be glad in their gladness," I said, and then, realizing that I had not told quite all my story, I went on: "When I told Werner about the lake, I had an object. Perhaps I was wrong."

"You wanted to satisfy him," she said.

"No; if you think, you will see we had no longer any cause to be concerned with his enmity. He was impotent. I told him the secret; and I gave him arms."

She was silent a moment, and I was afraid. There was nothing in the world I dreaded so much as her disapproval.

"Then they will meet—those men," she said at last slowly. "What will happen? I don't know—I think—— Dearest, I haven't any longer a sure mind. Perhaps you did right."

"If ever any man deserved death for his crimes, it is Houston," I said.

"Yes, yes, I know. His life is duly forfeit. All my mind is clouded with a doubt. I think—oh!" she said suddenly, holding on to me. "I don't know, but I think I want peace in all the world now, peace and forgiveness—even for those terrible men."

This time it was my turn to be silent a little; and then I said: "You're right, as always." I turned.

"Where are you going?" she asked.

"I'm going to undo the mischief I did," I said. "I'm going to the Black Lake."

She cried out at that, dear heart, to have all her peace disturbed. But I insisted, and, calling up Manuel, I made preparations hastily for departure. We took two mules, and as we were setting out Mercedes joined us, and announced her intention of coming with us; nor would anything I could say dissuade her. Cassilis we left in charge of the cave, for he was still very weak, and Mrs. Chester was tending him and the unfortunate Coop.

The night was far spent when we started, and dawn was across the eastern peaks when we defiled through the gully and entered the basin in which the lake lay. The dark water lapped silently on the rocky beach from which Mercedes and I had formerly surveyed

it. It had still that ominous look, that brooding sense of oppression affecting the spirit.

"It was under that cliff," said Mercedes. "That is where my father sank the treasure. There is a ledge there, his letter said, one fathom deep, and he sank all the treasure there, and covered it with stones."

We moved toward the cliff she pointed out. No one was visible—nothing with life in it as far as the eye could see, on the shores, and on the environing chain of heights which rose about the lake. The cliff was black and jagged, and curled over at the summit, but a slip of foreshore ran between it and the water, and gave us access to the hiding place of the Big Fish. We peered down. The rocks about us were splashed with water, and mud was scattered everywhere.

"These are Houston's traces," I said. "He has been here. The question is whether he has succeeded. It is odd that no one is visible. I had certainly expected to find signs of Werner."

Mercedes was peering down into the water. "It is dark," said she. "I can see nothing. What if he has found the treasure?"

She looked at me doubtfully, almost with regret upon her face. I bent down and peered into the lake, but my eyes could not penetrate the obscurity. I went back to the open, and hunted about until I found a pole which had been the branch of a tree that grew in the sheltered hollows; and, armed with this, I returned, and probed the waters. The pole went down into deeps, until I had exhausted the length, and still I had not touched bottom. I stood up.

"Are you sure the ledge was here?" I asked Mercedes.

She was positive. "I can repeat my father's letter almost word for word," she said. "'On a ledge of rock just under the curling cliff upon the left hand of the pass as you enter.' There can be no mistake about that, can there?"

"No," I assented, and inquired: "Were there any other particulars for guidance?"

"Only this," said she. "The ledge was a fathom down, as I have told you."

A fathom! My pole was at least ten feet long, and the water was still unplumbed. I reached a conclusion.

"The ledge has broken away," I said. "It is no longer here. Possibly the water has sapped it, corroding the rock, which seems of a soft material." I examined the cliff. It was of a marly nature. "Yes," I went on, "the ledge has given way under the action of the water, and has sunk in the lake. Heaven knows how deep is the water here. It does not shoal anywhere apparently."

Was that, then, the solution? we asked ourselves mutely—that the Big Fish was sunk in the abysmal depths of this dreadful lake, lost to the sight of man, and beyond his recovery?

I looked along the broken line of cliffs and dark headlands. The wind in those quarters prevailed from the east, and came down the pass upon the waters of the lake. The scour of the water would go westward and along the headlands where the rock was, as I could see, already much undermined in parts. That body of water would move inward, and drive or carry its débris with it.

"What do you think has happened?" asked Mercedes.

I shook my head. "I will explore a little farther with Manuel. It is clear that the treasure has eluded Houston, but where is Werner?"

I found a little, quiet recess, where I established her and the mules, and then I proceeded with Manuel up the hills to the right of the lake.

We had not been gone more than half an hour when I was startled by the swift and sudden rising of something in front, and a hideous vulture swept on its wide wings toward heaven. I watched it float and drift, and hang above the black waters. It seemed, somehow, to characterize the place, to be emblematic of what the scene stood for. Then I recovered my thoughts, and walked on, and there was Diego's dead body stretched out in the gray light, his evil face to the sky. He had been shot at close range, the first victim of Werner's vengeance.

As I stood considering this first element of the tragedy, Manuel called to me, and pointed. I followed his finger, and I thought I discerned a moving figure across the lake on the cliffs, about three quarters of a mile away.

Leaving the half-breed to his solitary resting place, we retraced our steps, and descended to the pass, where I found Mercedes safe, but anxious. I reassured her, said nothing of the fate of Diego, and told her that we had finished our exploration in that direction, and were trying the other side of the lake.

It took us nearly half an hour to reach the headland on which we had seen the figure, for the ground was very rough, and we had to ascend and descend many times. But at last we attained a point above abrupt cliffs in a little bay in that shore line, and we looked down at the water. The headland abutted into it, and descended in a series of rude steps almost to the water's edge.

Upon the lowest ledge was a man whose identity I determined at once. It was Houston, and he seemed busy over some operations. I saw him throw out what I took to be a line, as if he were sounding. I had some notion of what he was about. As I have said, the scour of the water under the strength of the easterly winds had washed out these cliffs and headlands, and would carry down on that side of the lake the detritus from above. Houston had been shrewd enough to see this, and, having failed to recover the Fish from the ledge which had disappeared, was looking for it lower down, where the tides might trawl it.

While these considerations were passing in my mind, Manuel was exploring in the neighborhood, and presently, with a grunt, he drew my attention to the hills farther to the west. On the crest of one of these two figures were advancing, who could be no other than Werner and Jeff. The former's odd, square-built body was unmistakable.

I guessed now what had happened. Werner had no knowledge as to the exact point where the Fish had been deposited, and, having arrived in the night, had explored at random, chance taking him up the hills on the right. Here the wretched Diego had been encountered, sent by Houston, no doubt, upon some errand, and he had been killed out of hand. Werner and his companion had then continued their journey in search of Houston, and had thus made a circuit of the lake. We saw them now returning on the final arc. I think they espied Houston just about this time. They had been moving in a leisurely manner before, as men worn out through being afoot all night; but now they quickened their steps, and plunged down into a trough in the hills at a run. We lost sight of them here, but it was clear to us that they would make for the headland on which Houston was.

Calling to Manuel to follow, I began to go along the cliff at a rapid rate. My idea was to reach Houston and warn him, but I had the vaguest notion of my future intentions. I don't think I saw beyond that almost instinctive mission.

I went as fast as I could, but was hindered by the uneven nature of the ground, and when I reached the next height I saw that Werner and his companion were nearer to the headland than I was, and must reach it before me.

I began to run, stumbling over the bowlders; and as I ran I shouted. It was some time before they heard me, but it did not check them more than for a moment.

Jeff shaded his eyes, and stared up at me, and then, with a gesture to his companion, began to hasten. They disappeared round a bend on the hill, Werner rocking and rolling grotesquely.

I put on all the speed I could, and got to the summit of the headland as the two were tumbling down the rough slope beyond. I shouted again, and though I thought my voice must have waked the dead, though its echoes volleyed from the crags, Houston paid no heed. He was stooped over the water, playing something—a line. It flashed through my mind, in the grim, humorous way in which such things do, that he was baiting a line for the Fish that lay at the bottom of the lake.

I called, but there was no response; and I descended precipitately to the ledge below. By this time Werner and Jeff were very near their victim. Again I hailed Houston, and this time something troubled him in his preoccupation. I dared not see a man go to his death like that. Houston heard, and turned, and saw his enemies. They had now reached the ledge on which he stood.

I saw him put his hand in his pocket and pull it out. There was a sharp report, and Jeff, who had been leading Werner, stumbled and fell on his face. The next moment Werner fired. I don't know if he hit, but, at any rate, Houston did not drop. He leveled his revolver again, snapped it ineffectually, and hurled it aside. Then he drew a knife, and made a rush at his enemy.

Werner had fired three times, but each time failed to put Houston out of action. He fired hastily as he ran, and may have missed. Houston's way was surer. As the two men collided, he struck. The huge, unwieldy frame of Werner crushed him like a shell in that impact.

The pace at which Werner had come up carried him on. He fell on the edge of the rock, with his powerful arms cracking the life out of Houston, and the two rolled, locked in this death struggle, over the verge of the ledge, and down into that soundless water, with a heavy splash. It was as if it had opened to receive them; and then it closed upon them forever. A few bubbles issued to the surface and broke, and then there was stillness. The Black Lake resumed its brooding silence.

When I had made sure that Jeff also had passed beyond human aid, we turned to go back. Fate had decided that our mission should prove a failure. Was I sorry? Did I reproach myself? I have had my doubts sometimes, but I have none now. These men's lives were forfeit, and they perished by each other's hands. If I had not freed Werner, might not the evil have been greater? The responsibility rested on their own bloodstained shoulders. If any be mine, I will willingly bear it.

And so the Big Fish rests in that black and somber lake, where the protagonists of the tragedy lie, also. I never regretted the decision we came to—not to attempt to recover it. For all the treasure I want I have—in my wife. And I think—indeed, I know—Cassilis is of the same opinion.

We made a comfortable journey down to the coast, with Coop slowly getting back his health.

"Bad luck! Second time I've come down this way!" he said; but his spirits were unperturbed, and when he had heard the story, or such of the story as I deemed it well for him to hear, he remarked reflectively:

"What a rum end!" and added cheerfully: "Anyway, we've had a run for our money." Which, when you come to think of it, was an odd summary of the terrible venture.

THE END.

"The only good Indian is a dead one." It's an old saying, and like many another old saying, it isn't true. B. M. BOWER will tell you about a "GOOD INDIAN"—that's the title of the story—in the next POPULAR. It's a good story and a long one. It will run through three or four numbers. You'll get the first part on Christmas Day. ***Pretty good sort of present—what?***

A LOT OF GOLF

Major Jay J. Morrow, United States army, holds the record for long-distance golf. One morning, when he was stationed at Seattle, he jumped out of bed, ran out to the links, and spent the entire day playing one hundred and nineteen holes of golf, and walking forty-one miles to do it.

Miss Sweeny

By Charles R. Barnes

Author of "Sweeny, the Detective," "Sweeny's Dumb-waiter," Etc.

Mrs. Sweeny says: "She came runnin' into our lives like a sunbeam slippin' through the window and makin' a bright spot on the floor." You didn't know there was a "Miss Sweeny" in the family, did you?

IT was five o'clock in the afternoon. Mrs. Belle Sweeny entered her cozy apartment in Central Park West, and was pulling the pins out of her hat, when she heard the Boarder passing along the hall on his way out. She called to him.

"Say, mister," she said, "come on in here a minute. I been to a pitcher show."

The Boarder entered the living room, hat in hand.

"Sit down," came the order, "if you got some time that don't have to be worked to death."

He obeyed.

"I was going for a walk in the park," he told her, "and then to dinner. I've plenty of time."

Mrs. Sweeny removed her gloves, poked her fingers into suspected mussiness of her hair, and then seated herself.

"I just had a certain time brought back to me," she began, "and it all was so clear and plain that I got to talk about it. Ever have them pitchers out of the past come up real vivid, like soup spots on a gent'm'n's coat lapel?"

"I understand," said the Boarder. "Something happened that reminded you of some incident."

"Ezac'ly," agreed Mrs. Sweeny. "The lady in the movin' pitchers this aft'noon kinda walked like her—or there was somethin' about the clothes she had on. I'm sure it ain't her, though. Gee, I hope it ain't."

The Boarder looked puzzled.

"Mrs. Sweeny," he reminded her, "a story, as I take it, has a logical beginning and a logical ending——"

She lifted an interrupting hand.

"I get you," she said. "You mean that you don't know w'at I'm drivin' at. Of course you don't, yet, but you're goin' to. And you just stop and remember that ladies has got their own ways of tellin' things. If I stood up for my rights, I'd begin by describin' the lovely fit of the dress that the lady in the pitchers had on. But I'll pass that up, and tell you about the beautiful little girl that me and my poor dead Danny was pa and ma to, onct.

"She was four years old, and she came runnin' into our lives like a sunbeam slippin' through the window and makin' a bright spot on the floor. She seemed to come from nowhere but a hedge. And there wasn't nothin' to tell who she was but a funny sort of a monogram worked in the corner of her little nandkerchief. The thing was a red triangle, inclosin' the letters G. L. N."

Mrs. Sweeny paused; then, encouraged by the interest in the Boarder's face, she proceeded.

"It happened like this, mister: There I was, sittin' in the park one aft'noon about three o'clock, with nothin' on my mind but a hatpin that was pullin' a bunch of hair. I went into the park real often, them days, b'cause Danny had got it in his head that the race track

This new series of the reminiscences of Belle Sweeny began in the first November POPULAR. Back numbers can be ordered through any news dealer.

wasn't no place for a lady. He was a man to get funny notions, my husban' was; and so w'en he got this one, it was him to the track and makin' book, and me to the park, where there was lots to rubber at. And that aft'noon, bein' sunny, yanked me out of the house and over w'ere the grass and trees and funny bugs on horseback is. I wasn't expectin' nothin' to happen—and take it from me, mister, them is the times that things alwus happens. Did you ever notice it?"

The Boarder nodded assent.

"Well," went on Mrs. Sweeny, "somethin' sure did happen, that day. I was all alone on a bench. A little ways from me was a sort of a hedge, made of some kind of bushes that was loose put together. They swayed a little in the breeze that was blowin', and part of the time I was a-watchin' them, and thinkin' how graceful they was. I'd turned to look at somethin' else, w'en I kinda felt a movement in them there bushes; and my eyes went back to 'em, just in time to see—well, w'at do you think I seen?"

"The little girl?" guessed the Boarder.

"Yes, sir," Mrs. Sweeny confirmed, "that's just w'at I seen. She was almost through that hedge, and was lookin' at me out of the prettiest baby eyes you ever seen. My gosh, mister, the sort of shy, laughy way she looked at me went straight to my heart. You see, me and Danny didn't have no children, and I guess folks like us is more took with real nice babies than them that knows w'at it is to put up with kids that screams their heads off and tumbles out of bed. Anyway, that child by the hedge got a grip on me, like she was a monkey wrench, and I was a gas pipe, so to speak, and I just sat there and stared at her.

"She was a reg'lar pitcher, mister, with big blue eyes, and the freshest, pinkest cheeks you ever seen. Her hair was silky and curly and blond; and her little white dress was spicker and spanner than if a dozen laundries had worked a week apiece on it. And there she stood in front of that hedge, eyin' me, backward like, and seemin' to want to come to me. I couldn't help holdin' out my hands to her; and, as I did it, I thought I heard somethin' like a moanin' sound, back of them bushes.

"'Dollin',' I says, 'come and tell me w'at's on your chest,' I says.

"She comes straight to me, and crawls up on the bench beside me like her and me'd been usin' the same dressin' room all season, and makin' up out of the same box.

"'Dis,' she says, 'for you.' And she opens one of her hands, and gives me a piece of paper. I got that paper yet, mister, and if you'll wait a minute, I'll get it for you, instead of yippin' out the stuff that was on it from memory." She got up and went out of the room, returning with a folded paper, that evidently had been often handled. The Boarder took it from her, and read this:

I have been watching you for three days, and I know where you live and how you live. I knew this was coming, and there was something in your face that made me trust you—made me feel that you are a woman who can feel for one in distress. I am sending my little girl, Grace, to you, because I am destitute and cannot provide for her any longer. I won't bother you with detailing my troubles—perhaps you will realize that they must be crushing when they compel me to give up the dearest, sweetest little girl in the world.

Perhaps you can give her a home. If you can't, won't you please advertise for some one to adopt her and see to it that she is well placed? I can't do this because I am penniless. To-night will see the end of me. Something tells me that my little girl will be well treated. I can't bear to think of her being in an institution. I am going to watch as she goes to you—I can tell by your manner toward her what her future will be.

There was no signature to the note. The Boarder read it through carefully, and then handed it back to Mrs. Sweeny.

"Rather unusual," he commented.

"Yes," she admitted. "I can't say that I get things like this every time I go to the delicatessen after three cents' worth of dill pickles. I had to read it twice b'fore I got wise to it that some doll had unloaded somethin' on me.

"At first I was kinda mad; then, w'en I turned and looked again at the dainty little girl b'side me, I couldn't feel noth-

in' but sorry—sorry for the poor lady, and sorry for the kid that didn't have no mother no more. I could tell by the looks of the child that her ma idolized her. That lady musta gone down in her sock for her last cent to get that dress out of the laundry. Gee, mister, it looked more tragic to me than w'en Jack Dalton gets cussed by the villain, on the stage, and is warned that them papers is a-goin' to be used against him, and there's no tellin' how things will turn out.

"I guess I sat there and studied over the business for five minutes, b'fore I done anything. Then I begun to talk to the kid, but I couldn't get nothin' much out of her. She wasn't ezac'ly w'at you'd call a' expert rag eater; almost any guinea, three weeks in this country, could of beat her to a gasp at handlin' the English languidge. She told me her name was 'Dace,' and that her ma's name was 'mamma,' and that was about all she knowed. And the cute little handkerchief she had told me all I knowed for a long time about her. It was monogrammed, as I told you, with a triangle, inclosin' the letters 'G. L. N.' And that wasn't w'at you might call a Bertillon record of her, was it?"

The Boarder admitted that the information furnished by the monogram was not elaborate.

"I suppose you reported the case to the police?" he asked.

Mrs. Sweeny sniffed.

"Do you s'pose," she snapped, "that I was a-goin' to turn that sweet little girl over to a gang of bone-headed, flat-footed cops, and have her hangin' round a p'lice station, w'ere there's tramps and crooks and a lot of women that is too disgraceful to think of? No, sir, not me.

"I tell you w'at I done. I took that little thing by the hand, and went back of them bushes, huntin' her ma. But all I seen was some prints of high heels in the soft grass. I follered 'em to a gravel walk, w'ere they got lost. And so, there I was, with the kid on my hands, and feelin' gladder and gladder every minute that she'd been sicked on me.

"There's somethin' they call mother love in a woman, mister, and w'en it gets waked up, somethin' has went and got started. And somehow, from the very first, the little one had me stirred up.

"I took her home with me; and believe me, mister, if any one had tried to take her away from me then, I'd of bit him. I remember that I felt guilty—like I was stealin' my neighbor's milk bottle off the dumb-waiter—but it seemed that w'at I was doin' was puffec'ly right.

"Of course, there's folks that will say I ought to of gave that kiddie to the p'lice, but, darn 'em, I didn't do it, and you wouldn't of did it, if you'd of been in my place. She was such a girly little girl that nobody could of helped lovin' her. I couldn't help it, and, as mebby you've saw several times that I don't do nothin' halfway, you can imagine that I got stronger for the child as the hours went by. I did, mister; and by the time we had got to the house I was as attached to her as a fat man to eatin'. Honust, I was fonder of her than I was of any new hat I ever got.

"Well, by and by, my husban' come home, and I pointed out the kid, and says: 'Look who's here.' He looked, and looked, and it appeared to me that it was his reg'lar business to look. He couldn't take his eyes off that little thing. After a while, he says:

"'Belle,' he says, 'the answer,' he says, 'is somethin' I just don't quite get, all to once,' he says.

"'You're lookin,' I says, 'at what might as well be Miss Grace Sweeny,' I says, 'for she ain't got no ma but me, and no pa but you. And if you can't see her,' I says, 'you got about as much taste as a man with a bad cold,' I says.

"Then I went and told him all about the little lady comin' to me through the hedge, and I showed him that note. He didn't have nothin' to say for a while, but just sat there, and stared at the little dollin', and her a-lookin' back at him with them laughy eyes of hers.

"Pretty soon he says:

"'Belle,' he says, 'this here kiddo is all to the——'

"He stopped talkin' that quick, and somethin' come in his face that made him look like he was lookin' at hisself, and wasn't standin' for w'at he was sayin'.

"'Belle,' he says, ''scuse me till I go out in the kitchen and bark at myself,' he says. "This here little doll ain't a kiddo,' he says, 'for kiddos is somethin' common,' he says. 'She's Miss Sweeny, if you want it that way; and if you don't,' he says,' the rum sellers is goin' to profit large from me,' he says, 'for a week or two, till I get over my grief,' he says.

"And that's how it come, mister, that me and Danny become a pa and a ma to the darlin'est, lovin'est girlie that ever drawed in and pushed out a breath. I wisht you could of saw her. You'd understand better how crazy we both was about her.

"She took to both of us like a collidge boy to cigarettes. And you can just bet I was glad of it. W'y, honust, mister, she was better than a gold cure for Danny. He got to comin' home early in the evenin's, and at times he wouldn't drink nothin', b'cause he figgered that the little lady might be one of them dolls that goes round shoutin': 'Lips that touches booze can't never touch mine.'

"Yes, sir, that new daughter of ours was a great piece of work to have round the house. Danny got to be such a reg'lar gent'm'n I hardly knowed him; and the way he blowed money on the kid was a caution. He'd take her downtown, and make a reg'lar pest of hisself in the department stores, yellin' for the best that there was in the house. I tell you, mister, that kiddie of ours had some swell scenery, she did. If Danny seen a dress he liked on any other little girl, he'd go and get Grace one just like it. I bet she had forty or fifty new dresses before she'd been with us two months.

"Of course, after the first day or two, we sort of come to our senses, and made a sort of a try at locatin' the kid's relatives. Danny went to some of his p'lice fr'en's, and ast if any lady with that funny monogram on her had took poison or been fished out of the river. And we put a ad in the papers, askin' fr'en's or relatives of Grace Blank, handkerchief monogrammed G. L. N. in a red triangle, to please write.

"But nothin' come of w'at we done, so, after six months had went by, we begun to look at our little dollin' as Miss Sweeny, and called her that b'fore folks.

"And how we did love the kid! Danny and me had been right happy, all by ourselfs, but we both realized that somethin' was missin' to make our married life w'at it should be; and as soon as Miss Sweeny come to us, we knowed right off that all homes ought to have a little party around to be complete. You, mister, bein' a single man, can't understand this here part of it, but all married folks can. And they can dope out in one big hurry w'at the child meant to us. They'll know, too, how shivery it made us feel w'en we run into that red monogram again.

"Nothin' happened right away. I guess it was a month longer, b'fore the big jolt come. You've been to movin' pitcher shows, haven't you, mister?"

"Yes," answered the Boarder, "I know what they are, but I haven't attended them much."

"You've missed a lot," Mrs. Sweeny informed him. "I go all the time, and I tell you, there's some truly great shows pulled in them houses. Sometimes I get so excited that I can't hardly sit still. And little Grace took to them shows almost as hard as I did. Her and me went real often to one that was over on Columbus Avenue, close to here. We'd go in the afternoons, and hang round till they was ready to put us out. This here thing I'm goin' to tell you about happened one day after me and Danny was beginnin' to hope that no excess mas or pas would show up to steal away our kid.

"I forget w'at the show was about, only that there was a man and his wife havin' some fam'ly troubles over a misunderstandin'. It wasn't one of them grippy shows, and I wasn't watchin' it close, till a pretty hired girl, in a cap and apern, come on the screen. She

come out of a door at the rear of the stage, and walked straight ahead into the pitcher, till she was life size. Then she done w'at sent them shivers down my back again, and made me catch little Grace by the arm and hold on.

"She took out a handkerchief, and b'gun to cry. And even from where I sat, I could see that triangle monogram in the corner of it.

"I drawed in my breath quick, and was for gettin' the kid out of there, when the lady took the handkerchief from her face, and I got a fine look at it. She was a stunnin' looker, slender and graceful.

"I looked down at our daughter, and seen that she was starin' like one possessed at the lady in the pitcher. And then, b'fore I could stop her, she slid down off the seat, and hollers:

" 'Mamma!' "

Mrs. Sweeny stopped here, as if the recollection of the tragic scene were too much for her. She clasped and unclasped her hands a number of times, before proceeding. Then she said:

"That, mister, was the beginnin' of the end. It was puffec'ly clear to me that the baby's mother had went into the pitcher show-actin' business. You know, they rehearse all them shows just like they do reg'lar ones, and they have real actors and actresses workin' out the plots. I don't know much about the business, but I know that much, and I knowed it then.

"So, that night, w'en Danny come home, I told him w'at had happened, and ast him w'at we better do. He says for me to get the name of the film that had the lady on it, and the name of the house that made it. And I done that very thing the next day.

"It happened that the film concern was in New York, and so Danny went to the boss of the place, told him all about the little girl, and was give the lady's name and address. He went round to see her then, and found her in a messy little hall room of a cheap theatrical boarding house. And wasn't she glad to hear how the kid was gettin' along!

" 'I've sneaked round your house a lot of times, and watched her walkin' to the park with your wife,' she says. 'I'd of come and took her away long ago, but it's all I can do to keep myself goin'. The work ain't reg'lar,' she says, 'and so most of the time I'm down and out.'

"Then she goes on to say that her husban' is a well-known actor, that deserted her b'cause he thought she done somethin' she didn't.'

" 'If he knowed how it was,' she says, 'he'd come back to me and we'd take back the child and be happy again,' she says. 'But he's one of them temperamental guys,' she says, 'that won't lissen to no reason,' she says, 'and so here I am, down and out, and I know he's miser'ble. The only one that gets any kind of a good deal out of it all,' she says, 'is Grace. It's the one consolin' thing in my life to know that she's in a good home, and is bein' well took care of,' she says.

"Danny, he went out of there, thinkin' hard. He wasn't at all keen about startin' nothin', but him and me both agreed that we ought to leave our feelin's out of the business, and do w'at was right. The kiddie b'longed with her pa and ma; and if puttin' her with 'em was a-goin' to bust our hearts, and start Danny drinkin' hard for a couple of weeks, the thing must be did, anyway. So Danny thinks and thinks, and then goes and hunts up a fr'en' of his that b'longed to the Lambs Club, and got interduced to our daughter's father. You notice I ain't mentionin' no names in this here story. You're alwus writin' up w'at I say, and I don't want the whole world to have this here thing on our daughter and her pa and ma.

"My Danny was one of them fellers that takes with men, and it wasn't but a few days till he'd got in so thick with that actor that you'd think they'd been borryin' money from each other for ten years. And so, one evenin', he invites the guy to our house for dinner. He telephoned for me to entertain him.

"Belle,' he says, 'fr'en' husban' has got a little business to attend to, and

may be late. But you hold the ham,' he says, 'till I get there. And have the best dinner you ever had in your life,' he says.

"Well, the stage party showed up about happast six, and I yipped him in a s'ciety way, waitin' for Danny. I'd sneaked the kid in the lady's flat that lived across the hall, for I wasn't goin' to show w'at was in our hand till I'd got a proper steer from my husban'. So I just set there and yipped and yipped, and 'pologized for Danny bein' late, and all such a line of talk, until seven o'clock. Then I heard the key slide in the door, and says:

" 'There,' I says, 'is my husban' now,' I says.

"But the next minute, mister, I knowed there was two people walkin' along the hall. And I sensed it right away that somethin' was goin' to happen. It did, too. For w'en Danny come in, he was leadin' our daughter's real mother.

" 'Belle,' he says, 'I told her to come for dinner,' he says, 'b'cause there was somethin' about the girl we wanted to talk over with her. And so,' he says, 'she's here.'

"The lady looked round the room, and seen her husban'. And, my gee, but you ought to of saw the look on her face. She says: 'Oh!' and stops still. Danny says:

" 'Belle, fetch on Miss Sweeny,' he says. And I run across the hall, and drug in the little girl.

" 'Now,' Danny says to them two, 'this here foolishness has got to quit. I ain't tryin' to get rid of Miss Sweeny,' he says, 'for it's the Gawd's truth that I go on the water wagon for her,' he says, 'for as long as three days at a stretch. I'd give her my shirt,' he says, 'and the new one I'd have to buy w'en it was give away. And Mrs. Sweeny, here, would go downtown without her make-up,' he says, 'if that little doll said so. We love her, we do, but things ain't as they ought to be. You,' he says, pointin' to the man, 'are in wrong. If the lady was w'at you insinuated she was, she wouldn't be starvin' to death, actin' in movin' pitcher shows,' he says. 'Have some sense,' he says, 'and look at it right.'"

"He quit talkin'. The lady spoke first.

" 'Gene,' she says to the man, 'you were wrong.'

"That's all she said. And then the two of 'em just stood there, and looked at that sweet little baby, which was watchin' both of 'em, not knowin' w'at to make of it. I guess it was quiet for about a minute, then the man run at the kid and grabbed her in his arms. He turned to the lady.

" 'Natalie,' he says, 'I was wrong.' He loosed one arm from around the kid, and grabbed his wife.

" 'This means,' he says, 'that there's goin' to be a new start—don't it?"

"The lady didn't answer, but just flopped her head down on the feller's shoulder, took one of the little girl's hands in hers, and b'gun to cry.

"That was the end of it, mister. That minute we didn't have no daughter no more and we knowed it. And w'en them people went away, after dinner, I couldn't think of nothin' better to do than bawl. Danny went to the window, and looked out a long time. Sure he cried. Everybody does w'en their daughter is took away from 'em."

Dan Sweeny as an inventor! Versatile man is Danny. You'll hear about his "Brick-scrape Machine" in two weeks, January Month-end POPULAR, on sale December 25th.

SOMETHING GOOD OUT OF BROOKLYN

Robert W. Chambers, the author, who was educated in Paris and has achieved fame as a painter as well as a writer, was born in Brooklyn, but he never brags about it when he is awake.

The Manhandler

By J. Frank Davis

Any sailor will tell you that a man doesn't work up to be first mate at twenty-two without having a few fights. Young Ward is no exception, and he gains the reputation of being able to take care of himself—then he meets "the Manhandler"

FOR three years and more Jack McCabe bullied the beach from Kobe to Sakihama, and a list of the sailing masters he manhandled would have read as long as the titles of a reigning family. Joint keepers on every water front let him live at their expense indefinitely, if only he wouldn't put their bars out of business, for in those days there was mighty little protection for that sort from the Japanese police. If a Yankee or an Englishman wanted to run a beach dive, let him take care of his own property, was their theory. So what Jack McCabe wanted, he took. And he was bad, all through—as bad a man as I ever saw, and I've held down jobs in some pretty bad places, one time and another."

We had rounded the Florida Keys, left Dry Tortugas glaring on our starboard quarter, and were slipping across the Gulf under a big tropical moon. There wasn't any more of a sea than you would get going from New York to Hoboken, and the passengers, fresh from the icy winds of the North, were basking in the balminess of the glorious December night. The minister to Mexico, en route to his post, was the center of an interested group.

"I don't suppose there ever was a worse fighting man than Jack McCabe," he went on, "leaving out hired assassins and that sort of thing. This you could say for him, that he fought face to face with his man, and with at least some slight warning, but you couldn't say much else. He was a Liverpool Irishman, and he had been in Japan ever since he did time in the Kobe jail for a bit of mutiny on an English bark. Nobody ever knew much about him, or what his real name was. They aren't so fussy about real names on the Eastern beaches.

"I was vice consul at Kobe then—let's see, that was back in eighty-eight or nine—and I heard plenty about McCabe. But the Japs wouldn't interfere with his carryings-on, so long as he stuck to the water front, and it wasn't any of my business.

"Three or four times, as I remember it, he got into trouble and spent a little while in jail. That would be when he would get on one of his tears—he was always either getting on one or coming off—and ship with some master that wanted a crew and didn't know who he was, nor care. He made it his practice the first morning aboard to beat the captain, the mate, and such other people as interfered, to a pulp. It wasn't mutiny, because they weren't yet clear of the harbor, and sometimes they'd have him arrested, and stay in port long enough to see him sent up, but more often they put him ashore, and were glad enough to be rid of him without further trouble. Bum and bully, that was McCabe's reputation, and everybody was afraid of him. He stood six feet four in his stockings, if he ever had any, and was as wide as a door. When he fought, he put his man completely out of business. When he stopped, it was because the other fellow was just short of dead.

"This was how things stood when

the sailing ship *Prescott Martin* put into Kobe one day, with old Jim Trimble as master, and Calvin Ward as first mate. She was a New Bedford ship, and old man Trimble was as good a captain as ever shortened sail ahead of a squall, barring his failing. He was a relic of the old whaling days, I guess—one of those short, stout, spade-whiskered, apoplectic-looking men that could swear at a crew from eight bells in the morning watch to four bells in the second dog, and never repeat himself. Everybody knew him for a first-class sailor and a fair boss—when his failing wasn't on top. Give him a quart of rum, and two days to drink it in, and he was the devil on wheels.

"Some captains with the habit indulge only at sea, and when the weather is fair, but Trimble had been known to get raving, blind drunk with a typhoon coming on—and handle his ship, at that, better than most men could have handled her sober. And when he struck shore he was likely to have a spree, with the result that sometimes he got into trouble.

"He had just been through one of these experiences, a little while before the *Prescott Martin* dropped anchor in Kobe, that May. It was up at Nagasaki, and I had heard something of it, as most of us Americans had. There wasn't a lot of news about your own people in Japan in those days, and what there was traveled all over the island. It seems that the captain had been invited to a dinner, at which the American consul and a lot of other decent people were present, with their wives, and had drunk too much, and used a lot of bad language, most of it directed at the consul for some grievance connected with a previous visit. They got the old man back to his ship after a while, but the consul was mad clear through, and when he got to his office the next day he wrote a letter about it to the old man's owners in New Bedford.

"The *Prescott Martin* was a long time in Kobe that trip. It took her a month to discharge her cargo, and six weeks longer to get another. All told, it was more than three months after she dropped her mud hook before she was ready to pull it up again. And it was during that time that the things happened which I started to tell you about when one of you gentlemen used the word 'manhandled.'

"Calvin Ward, first mate of old man Trimble's ship, was only twenty-two years old, then, but he had been following the sea ever since he was big enough to box the compass. He was a second mate when I first met him, some three years before this story. I wasn't very old myself, and we got to be pretty good friends.

"He came from some coast town in Massachusetts, where everybody took life pretty seriously, and went to church four times on Sunday, to say nothing of three or four extra times during the week, and he ran away to sea. He went home to see his folks, though, between voyages, and thought a lot of them. He wasn't very wild, for a sailor, and he had told me something about a girl, back there somewhere, who was waiting for him to get his master's ticket. So, at twenty-two, he was out on his maiden voyage as first mate, very much resolved that he wouldn't sail many cruises before he would have a ship of his own.

"He was a fine-looking chap, but you didn't realize how big he was unless you happened to go in swimming with him, or something like that. He stood a fraction under six feet, weighed about a hundred and ninety pounds, and didn't carry an ounce of superfluous fat on his whole body. I think his shoulders were the best developed I ever saw, not barring professional athletes, and his arms were like sticks of cordwood, with wrists almost as wide as his hands. I remember once he had a lot of fun getting us to try to handcuff him firmly, and every time he slipped his hands out with perfect ease.

"A man doesn't work up to be first mate at twenty-two without having some fights, and young Ward had the reputation of being able to take care of himself. He was nothing of the bully, understand—just fought when it was

necessary for self-protection or discipline, and never seemed to really like it.

"The thing I'm going to tell you about really began with old Jim Trimble's tantrum up at Nagasaki, but something that helped it along happened one night in One-eye Helpin's saloon. McCabe was there, mixed in with the crowd, and talking loud, as usual, when young Ward came in, looking for one of his port watch that had overstayed his leave. He found him, and was starting him toward ship without any ceremony, when McCabe took a notion to ask Ward to have a drink. The youngster declined, shortly enough, and kept on toward the door.

"McCabe made some vile remark, at which most of the sailors laughed, and Ward went white around the lips, and slowed up, as if to resent it. Then he kept on his way with the man he had come after, and as he went down the street he heard McCabe call him a teetotaler Yankee coward, with appropriate adjectives.

" 'I never got into a fight that I didn't have to, yet,' the lad told me, when I asked him about it, a few days later. 'Besides, the old man had sent me after Billings, and I was on ship's duty. And, again,' he added, as a sort of afterthought, 'I should probably have been licked.' Ward was brave enough, but he had caution, too. And to get into a fight in a saloon full of drunken sailors, in that place and those times, a sailing officer needed to have a gun. Ward didn't make a practice of carrying one.

"About a fortnight after that the letter came that really started the trouble.

"It was addressed to Calvin Ward, and was from the New Bedford owners. They had received the complaint of the consul at Nagasaki, had been much wrought up over it, and went over Trimble's head to ask Ward if it were really true that the captain drank to excess, and so far forgot himself as to insult the representative of the United States government in the presence of ladies.

"Ward came to me with the letter. He was in a deuce of a quandary. He had a rather fine sense of honor—didn't want to lie to his owners, who trusted him enough to write him such a letter. At the same time, all the traditions of the sea are against a mate reporting on a master's actions, and even if they weren't Ward wouldn't want to go against Trimble, who had always treated him fairly enough, he said.

"We talked it over half an afternoon. Then suddenly Ward got an inspiration. 'See here,' he cried. 'As I think it over, it occurs to me that I have never seen the old man take a drink. He always has loners, in his cabin. Suppose I write the owners that I never understood Captain Trimble to be a teetotaler, and that I presume he takes wine with his meals on shore occasionally, but that on my word I have never seen him take a drink.' And we decided it that way.

"Then Ward laid up trouble for himself, just by his New England sense of right and wrong. 'It's no more than right that the old man should know about it,' he said. 'I'd want to know, if I was cap'n, and my mate got a letter like this. I'm going to show him the letter from the owners, and my reply. Yes, by George! And I'm going to give him my letter to mail, and then he'll know I'm standing by him.'

"Well, he did it. Trimble was some taken back, I guess, when he saw the letter, but he didn't say much. He mailed Ward's letter home—and then he began to think it over, and a little mean streak that nobody had ever suspected in him began to work, and he acted like a blackguard.

"I suppose it galled him to think that his owners would trust his mate more than they did him. Maybe he had that hate some small men feel toward a subordinate who places them under an obligation. Anyway, he made up his mind to be rid of Ward at the first possible minute. He didn't dare discharge him, and he looked about for some way to make him quit. One way he knew—a way to make any self-respecting mate throw up his job. And he set out to accomplish it.

"A few days afterward I was in a third-rate sailors' hotel, where I had

gone to look up some matters connected with an American sailor that had filed a complaint at the consulate, when Jack McCabe slouched in. The fellow that ran the place merely glanced at him, and said: 'Go right up to fifteen. The cap'n's waitin' fer yuh.' I was still talking with my man when McCabe swaggered out, a nasty grin on his battered face, and two or three minutes later who should pass through the room but Captain Jim Trimble!

"I got the significance of this a few days later, just before the *Prescott Martin* was ready to sail, when Calvin Ward dropped in for a little talk. He was very quiet that afternoon, and there was plainly something on his mind. After a while he told me.

"'The old man has shipped Jack McCabe,' he said quietly.

"'What?' I could hardly believe my ears. The idea of any sailing master who knew Kobe and its beach shipping McCabe was preposterous.

"'Yes. Shipped him to-day,' said Ward. 'Just told me of it before I left the ship. Said we would be short-handed, and he needed just such a rugged man. Didn't look me in the eye when he told me.' There was a pause, during which we both thought pretty hard. Then—— 'Harry,' said Ward, 'he's hired McCabe to make me quit—by nearly killing me. He knows I'd throw up my job if I couldn't run the crew, and here's a man nobody could ever run. It's to get square with me for that letter from the owners.' Another silence fell.

"I voiced a thought that had come at once. 'You could get another berth easily enough,' I said.

"Ward's jaw set. 'But I won't,' he replied. 'No. If I threw up this berth I'd go back to second mate, and it might be years before I got my chance again.' He hesitated. 'When I left home this time,' he went on, with that slow embarrassment that prevents men from cold climates talking of their closest thoughts, "I told—that little girl I've mentioned—that I'd have my master's ticket within two years, and that then —— No. I'm going to stick.'

"'Then you think you can whip him?'

"'I'm almost sure I can't.' There was the same hard set to the jaw and a glint in Ward's eyes that would have struck terror to most men, although hardly to such a self-confident brute as McCabe. 'I'm going to do my best, and if he licks me he'll kill me. And if I lick him I think I shall kill him.'

"Ward rose to go. 'We finish loading to-morrow,' he said, 'and I expect McCabe will come aboard some time in the afternoon. It's dollars to marlinespikes the old man is ashore when he comes. We are to drop down with to-morrow night's tide, to be ready for the morning breeze. If—along toward night—you see the doctor's flag in our rigging, come out with the sawbones, will you?'

"He stuck out his hand, and I took it. A fine figure of a man, was Ward, but beside Jack McCabe he would look like a child. 'Good luck, old man,' I said. 'You'll have a pistol, I suppose, so if worst comes to worst——'

"'No. I've heard all about McCabe, and he never carries one. We'll fight equal, anyway.'

"This struck me as bravado. 'That's absurd!' I cried. 'You are mate of that vessel, and have a right to enforce discipline. Put on a gun, and if it becomes necessary, use it. The consulate will stand back of you.'

"Ward didn't answer, but smiled, and shook his head, and, after a minute or two, he went away. I watched his broad shoulders swinging down the street with as strong a feeling of regret as I ever felt in my life. What Quixotic idea was this that he must fight his battle against odds? I thought I saw. He was staking his all upon the throw. If he lost the fight, his master's ticket receded into that future of the thirties that looks so far away at twenty-two. But if he beat the redoubtable Jack McCabe, notwithstanding the handicap, the prestige would go far toward helping him get that ship, and the girl that was to come with it.

"What happened the next day I heard from others. For that matter, we heard

about little else in the American colony at Kobe for more than a week.

"Captain Trimble, as Ward had predicted, went ashore in the morning, telling Ward that he expected to be back soon after noon, but if he wasn't, to finish loading, and drop the *Prescott Martin* down the stream with the tide. He didn't mention Jack McCabe. Neither did the mate.

"When the captain had gone over the side, Ward went to his room, and got a short, hardwood billy that somebody had once given him, but he had never used, and a pair of brass knuckles. He put the knuckles in his left-hand trousers pocket, and the billy in his right-hand hip pocket. Then he went on deck and bossed the line of little Japs that was monotonously walking up and down at the end of a long rope, swinging in the last of the cargo from the alongside sampan.

"At three in the afternoon, a boat came nosing through the shipping, with McCabe and another ruffian in the stern. They had dunnage with them, and came aboard with considerable fuss and much cursing of the native boatman who had brought them. The boatman seemed glad enough to be rid of his notorious freight, and rowed away as fast as he could.

"Without looking at the mate, McCabe and his friend swaggered into the captain's room, and sat down. Ward found them there two minutes later, a bottle of liquor on the table between them.

"'What are you doing in here?' he snarled. 'Get forward!' He told me afterward he expected the trouble to begin then and there, but, for some reason, McCabe wanted to postpone it, or perhaps he was astonished at the mate's sand. Ward snatched up the bottle, and pocketed it. 'I'll take care of any liquor on board,' he added. To his surprise the men, muttering and cursing, got up, and went forward to the forecastle.

"It was wonderful what additional courage he got from this first encounter. He felt that intangible advantage that goes with *authority*—the same advantage the policeman's shield gives him when he does battle with a jail-fearing thug.

"He turned to the second mate, a colorless man, who had reached his promotion limit, and knew it. 'Get all hands at that windlass, Mr. Jones,' he commanded, 'and haul up till you're nearly clear of the mud. Then belay.' Then he went back to his coolies and the unloading of the last sampan.

"A few minutes later he went forward. Both watches were at the windlass, but neither McCabe nor his companion was with them. 'Where are those new men, Mr. Jones?' he snapped.

"'They won't come out of the fo'c's'le, sir,' replied the second mate.

"Ward went to the door of the forecastle. 'Did you hear that call of all hands on deck?' he demanded threateningly.

"McCabe sat on the edge of a bunk, scowling. The other man's courage oozed. 'Aye, aye, sir,' he muttered, and slid past the mate and up to the deck. 'Oh, I'm sleepy,' growled McCabe. 'I'll be up in a little while.' And, to emphasize his contempt, he rolled over into the bunk, as though to go to sleep.

"What happened then happened with terrible quickness. Ward made one leap to the bunk, and before McCabe could sit up had him by a shoulder and a leg. He raised him clear, for all his gigantic bulk, and dashed him to the deck, remembering, even in that moment of excitement, to hold on to his leg a little longer than to his shoulder, with the result that his head struck the planking a blow that would have taken the fight out of less a bully. It only served to inflame McCabe, however, and he came to his feet with a roar, great paws outstretched.

"In the second of grace, Ward's hands had gone into his pockets and come out again. The brass knuckles on his left caught McCabe squarely in the mouth, and he staggered. But he came right on, and Ward ducked a blow that shot over his shoulder like a battering-ram, stepped sidewise, and swung with the billy. And here was an odd thing, a sort of psychological phenomena, I

should call it. Even while the club was in the air, it came in upon Ward's consciousness that he didn't need any weapon, for all McCabe's inches—that he could whip him *with his bare hands,* whether McCabe might have brass knuckles or any other instrument short of firearms. And he twisted the billy, so that it struck only a glancing blow.

"Then he threw knuckle dusters in one direction, club in another, and struck with all his might at McCabe's jaw. The blow landed squarely. It would have felled an ox. And then, as McCabe, blinded and dazed, but still dangerous, lurched to his feet groggily, the first mate went to work on him. And for every captain that he had ever heard of McCabe's manhandling, he himself manhandled a few.

"When we got out to the *Prescott Martin,* in response to the flag in her rigging—I had been watching for it, and caught the doctor as he boarded his launch—the last bit of cargo was going over the side from the sampan. McCabe was stretched out in the shade.

"'He will probably die,' the doctor said. 'And, in any event, it will be some time before he recovers consciousness. We'll get him to the hospital.'

"Ward, looking entirely himself, except for some bad bruises and cuts on his hands, stood quietly by. 'Doctor,' he said very earnestly, 'I want that man to sail with us to-morrow morning. If he dies, I promise you he will be given good Christian burial, which is more than he would get on shore. If he lives—he'll help work this ship.'

"I added my pleadings to Ward's. 'It's very irregular,' the doctor said, but he knew McCabe, and his desires and duty lay at right angles.

"'All right,' he finally said, with a gesture that indicated he washed his hands of the whole matter. 'Take him.' He gave a few directions as to treatment, and he and I went over the side together. At the rail, he stopped. 'Professionally speaking,' he said, 'the man has shocking injuries.' He paused. 'But man to man,' he added, 'it's the best job I ever saw.'

"I shook hands with Ward. 'Good-by, old man. You'll be coming back in your own ship,' I whispered. His eyes were bright, and there was a confidence in his manner I never saw before. 'I hope you're right,' he replied. His eye traveled toward where we had left the wreck of McCabe, and back to the sampan, now moving into the stream. 'And I got back on deck in time to tally the next load that came over the side,' he said."

The minister to Mexico stopped and relighted his cigar. "Isn't there any more of it?" asked the insurance man. "What ever became of McCabe?"

"I heard that long afterward," said the minister. "He got well after a while—off Valparaiso, three months later, as I remember it, and as soon as he was able to work Ward put him at it.

"The *Prescott Martin* was beating up past Scotland Lightship when McCabe came aft, and asked Ward if he could speak to him. 'Go ahead,' said the mate shortly. It was the first time he had exchanged a word with the bully, except to give him orders, since the fight. 'I just want to say, Mr. Ward, that you licked me good, and I don't think it did me any harm,' said McCabe, 'and I want to say that I ain't got any hard feelin's, and hope you are the same.'

"'No,' said Ward slowly, 'I haven't any hard feelings, McCabe. You came aboard to manhandle me, as you'd manhandled fifty others, and you didn't do it. We are going to tie up to a dock here in New York, McCabe, and you are going to stay aboard and clean the ship. And when you get through you are going to walk down the gangplank to the wharf, and then you're going to turn around and take your hat off, and say: "Good-day, Mr. Ward." And if you don't I'm going to give you a worse beating than I did before.'

"And when they tied up it came out just as Ward had said, even to McCabe's taking off his hat after he had stepped off the ship and was free, which was unprecedented. And I never heard of him again. Ward never did, either."

The After-Honor

By Rupert Hughes

Author of "Memling's Wholesale Automoburglary," "The Great Cinematographic Crime," Etc.

This is a new type of story from the creator of the "Memling" yarns. We believe that you will like the sturdy Irishman, Daniel Canavan, just as much as you did the clever, nimble Dick Memling. And, by the way, we're going to have some more "Memling" stories.

IT amused Mrs. Cadbury to talk to Mr. Daniel Canavan in what she supposed to be an imitation of his Irish dialect. And it amused him to butter the brogue thick on his own speech because it amused her. But more because it was a remembrant luxury on his tongue. It filled the roof of his throat with youth to make words as he had made them when he was the young Gael that left the peat heaps of Erin for the gold-bearing bushes of Broadway. Time had worn away his Irish; but it was easy to resume it when it suited his whim.

Mr. Canavan was widowed these five years of the red-headed, gray-eyed bogtrotter he had brought with him from Ireland; her that had prospered in their poverty and languished when politics began to make a rich man of him. Mrs. Cadbury had lost her husband six months back, and her costume was belatedly following her heart into half mourning. Widower and widow—and philandering.

This day she had lured Canavan to the Ritz-Carlton for lunch, and she was just after asking him:

"Where are you after going to-morrow, you wearer of the grane?"

He winced indulgently. "Your grammar is that bad it gives me the toothache in me ears. Anny Irishman that said 'grane' for 'green' would be a Dutchman; and how can I tell what I'll be after doing till I'm after doing it?"

"You're not answering my question."

"Well, if it is that you must know, to-morrow is visiting day at Sing Sing, so I'll be going up to see one of me friends in the pinitintiary."

"Not so loud, for Heaven's sake! The waiter will hear you."

"Is it a waiter you fear most? Rich and poor are exactly alike, they're so different. The poor are afraid the police will hear them; and the rich, the waiters. I'm thinking that if I had a gang of butlers and feetmen drawing their pay off me, it's little I'd care what they thought of me. And of all things to be afraid of—a waiter! And him scared to death for fear he'll l'ave the mate fall on you. But perhaps the word 'pinitintiary' hurts you because you can't forget how close your Late Laminted come to joining the lodge."

"That's pretty low of you, Mr. Canavan."

"Not so low as you think, maybe. For I'm one of thim that believes there's manny a fine lad wearin' stripes—only they don't wear stripes now. Anny-how, some of the best friends I have, and min I admire, too, are doing their bit up the river."

"Ugh! How can you say that!"

Mrs. Cadbury could never outgrow the feeling that Canavan was a kind of

gorgeous reptile, something cold and sinister and floundering, yet fascinating and potent, something from his own bogs. She had but the vaguest idea what a bog might be.

And she was as curiously wonderful to him, as fragilely exquisite, as helplessly royal as the chained princesses must have been to the dragons that desired them.

Each was an unfailing novelty to the other. He had known no woman like her, and he was as unlike the men of her acquaintance as different specimens of the same genus could well be.

Her husband had inherited a superhuman fortune which left him a violent idler, a weakling in everything except polo.

Almost anybody could "ride off" Rodman Cadbury from any important effort outside the game; but, when he sat like a huge clothespin on his catlike pony, he feared no hardship, no desperation of endeavor, no risk. After breaking most of his bones, he had finally broken his neck in a practice match. He had been genuinely mourned by his teammates, for the lack of him lost them the tournament of that year with the visiting Englishmen.

In his obituary, none of the newspapers had failed to mention that Cadbury had narrowly escaped criminal prosecution for consenting to certain financial manipulations that fell into sudden obloquy a few years ago. This was about the only old-fashioned thing Rodman Cadbury had ever been guilty of. None of the newspapers had mentioned that it was Daniel Canavan who had saved Cadbury, for that was one of the few things that none of the newspapers knew. Canavan had shunted off the prosecution as invisibly and by as complex a leverage as a man in a switch tower sidetracking a distant freight train.

Cadbury had had a way of dropping people who had been useful, for gratitude was a painful emotion to him. But his wife had gone on cultivating Canavan, though hardly so much from gratitude as from curiosity.

Then, too, he had the innate gentlemanliness which distinguishes almost all Irishmen, for that talk of kings is not entirely fiction. He was afraid of no man, and not even of any woman. He was no snob, and he would not truckle. Such a man usually succeeds in the highest society, if he chooses to frequent it. For about all that the upper circles demand of anybody is to be interesting, to have money enough to go along with the procession, to be a little different but not too different, to have self-respect, and not to care a —— too much about what other people think.

So Mrs. Cadbury had made a sort of pet of Canavan. Where other women of her stratum affected musicians and artists, exotic noblemen or Pomeranians, she toted a politician about. Today she had ventured with him into the Ritz-Carlton for luncheon, and he had rewarded her with bland allusions to his friendships among convicts. Seeing her dismay, he was moved to seriousness, and he stooped to an uncharacteristic effort at justifying himself.

"There's as much luck in jail as in horse races, Mrs. Cadbury," he said. "And it's a matter of honor, too."

"Honor among thieves?" she sniffed.

"Sure, there's honor among thieves," he beamed. "There's honor everywhere, of one kind or another. There's a million kinds of honor, all told; but there's wan kind of honor that few people seem to reco'nize. Everybody is always tahking about the kind of honor that keeps a man out of timtation; but nobody seems to re'lize that there's another kind of honor that tries to save the pieces—a kind of *post-mortim* honor."

"That sounds profound," she said, lifting her brows with a sarcasm which he smothered under a sort of gigantic condescension.

"Let me see if I can explain it so's you'll understand it. I have it. It's like ahtomobiling. Everybody that drives a cair lahng enough is sure to run over somebody some day. The before-honor is a matter of being ahful careful going round carners, and zippin' through crowded streets with kids

bouncin' off the curbs like popcorn from the top of a stove. Some of these chauffeurs scoot through Sixt' Avenyeh like they was areoplaning the Milky Way and nobody in sight. Others go careful till they hit the country, then they let fly.

"Sure, the finest modern examples I've iver seen of a perfect trust in God is the way some of these motor lads shoots round a shairp turn in a road.

"But careful or not careful, wan time or another you're sure to boomp somebody with the cowcatcher.

"And now it is that the second kind of honor comes in. Once you've scored your first knockdown, what do you do?

"It used to be the fashion—till they passed a lah against it—not that that iver does any good—but, annyhow, the quick get-away used to be the fashionable t-thing. The man behind the radiator would back off till he cleared the human obsthruction, and then he'd jam on full speed ahead, and try to kick up enough dust to hide the tail number.

"It's haird to blame people for runnin' away in such cases. They niver mint to swat the victim. They had no special wish for to have their headlights dinted or their limonsine spatthered with red. If they stop to apologize they're li'ble to be manhandled be a mob. They're sure to be taken to the station house, and to get some ahful pitchers in the papers.

"And there—as handy as may be—is the little lever that'll jump them out of trouble at a speed of about a million miles a minyoot. Why should they wait? They don't.

"But there's some—not many, but some—who says to themselves: 'It was the old lady's own fahlt, she just naturally jumped off the wahk into the wheel. But there she lays. She's hurted bad. First, I'll get her to the horsepital, then I'll give me real name to the officer, and take my medicine as it comes.'

"They're the kind I lift me hat to. Of course they oughtn't to have hit the lady; but, annyhow, they stand fasht. They have nothing to gain, everything to lose. But they stand fasht.

"Blame them as you will for the accident, it seems to me there's a rebate comin' to them for standin' fasht. It's true of other crimes than motoring. The same thing holds. Once the deed is done, there's the devil to pay. Some folks repudiates even that debt. But I honor the man that pays his bills to the Old Nick.

"It is some of those last that are in the pinitintiaries to-day. Not all, mind you. I'm not throwin' anny bo'quets at convicks. There's a lot of thugs in Sing Sing I wouldn't vote for for president even if the Hall supported them. I wouldn't trust everybody in a jail—anny more than I'd trust everybody in a church.

"But manny's the man Up There doin' his bit who might have done worse than he done; might have been more of a coward or a brute blagyard than he was; might have dragged other people into the muck with him.

"That's wan of the reasons they've taken the stripes off them in Sing Sing. It's a grand place, Sing Sing. Was you never there?"

Mrs. Cadbury gave him one look of condensed, concentrated reproof.

Canavan smiled as at an impudent infant.

"The first time I wint up, I says to the wairden: 'Wairden,' I says, 'they tell me you've got a fairly gamy lot of ex-citizens here. Is it so? You ought to know them. How is it?'

"The wairden—a nice quiet felly he is, too—he says to me: 'Mr. Canavan,' he says, 'I've got the ones that got caught,' he says. 'They's plinty here that are as good as the average outside. There's plinty outside that's worse than the worst here. Ah! over the country cashiers is tappin' the tills to play the races or buy their sweethearts something. Some of 'em has luck—the horse wins and they put it back in time, and nobody the wiser. The rest of them come up here and board with me.'

"That's the wairden's own word for it, and it's true. Everywhere in the wurruld there's people doing funny tricks in business and not gettin' exposed. There's burglaries goin' on this

minyoot in this town that nobody will ever be laid off for. There's millionaires this minute doin' fancy finance that would get them a transfer from their yacht club to the State boarding house if the searchlight fell on them at just the right time.

"It's on'y exthraordinary good luck that keeps some of us out, and it's on'y exthraordinary bad luck that put some of thim in. But now and thin wan of thim goes in for r'asons of honor. It was that way with the young felly I'm visitin' to-morraw."

"He is a young fellow, then?" Mrs. Cadbury caught him up with an unconscious quickening of interest that did not escape Canavan. Again he absolved her with a smile.

"You women are funny t-things. You ahlways must have your heroes young whatever, mustn't you? Age is what you hate and fear most, but for a man it is a fine t-thing to grow old—when he doesn't overdo it. It would never do in a novel; but there's heroes in reel life that's baldheaded—and I've even known fat min to be brave.

"But, annyhow—this lad is still young—and good-looking, too. I'll introduce him to you when they let him out."

"No, thanks," snapped Mrs. Cadbury.

"Oh, you should be proud to know him," said Canavan. "He's the most honorable thief I ever sah. If it wasn't for his high sinse of honor, he'd be a free man to-day."

"His honor got him into the pinitin—the penitentiary!" she gasped.

"Sure! They sintinced him for it."

"How—why?"

"Let's pay the waiter and move ahn. He's lookin' as if he wanted to rint our table to somebody else. I ahlways hate to keep a waiter waitin'. Their poor feet get so sore. Did you iver notice a waiter's feet? He may look like ahl the dooks of England in the face, and he may wear his dress soot like an illusthration, but if you wish for to onmask him, look at his feet. A waiter's idea of heaven is to set in a kitchen with his shoes off and his feet on a chair."

Mrs. Cadbury was averagely human; but to sit in the Ritz-Carlton and hear a disquisition on waiters' feet was a mite too trying. She was glad to get out into the open air, and she was nerving herself to give Canavan a little lesson in the A B C of manners, when she found that he had forgotten her to shake hands with the big footman who opened her motor door for her.

She turned with a gasp of horror to find the footman looking down into Canavan's outstretched palm, and blushing as he brought his saluting hand from the visor of his cap. The man was afraid to look at Mrs. Cadbury. He could fairly sniff the brimstone she was thinking. But Canavan was clapping him on the shoulder and giving him blarney.

"If it isn't McNulty! And lookin' like the admiral of the Irish navy. And how's the old woman who bore ye to the glory of the sod? Tell her there's a box of the turf comin' to me anny day now, and I'll sind her the fillin' of a flowerpot."

Then Canavan waved Mrs. Cadbury in and clambered in after her. In place of being abject with the apology she was determined to exact, he was florid with pride.

"That lad McNulty is the fine lad for you. Talk about your heroes! He's the heroest of thim all. Besides being Irish, which makes him a fighter—did ye iver read me friend Jo Clairke's great pome on 'Kelly and Burke and Shea'—'The Fighting Race'? No? Sure they recite it Fridays ahl over Ireland. I think ahl Ireland knows it be hairt. I'll tell it to you some day—well, oh, yes, it's McNulty I'm afther sp'akin' of. McNulty is a born soldier, built for airtistic bloodshed—wasn't he a sergeant in the airmy in the Philippines before he was twinty—and some day a lootinant as sure as I'm not English.

"But what should come to him just as he's reënlistin' but a letter from his old mudther sayin' how she was lonelying for um now that his father was kilt in the railroad yairds, and his yoonger brudther a fireman boornt blind savin' about siventy-five hysthetical Polish

Jewesses from a fire trap in a shirt facthry? And what does he do but refuse to reënlist, and come home to be near the two of thim?

"And ahl the job he can get is opening carrudge doors for dudes and dudettes, and salutin' overfed plotocrats—him that was not long since saluting his superior officer, and sayin': 'Captain, if you'll lind me the loan of four min, I'll shwim this river and enfilade the pants off thim haythin that hasn't anny on!' Excuse the language, but it was his, and not mint for ladies. And didn't he do it, too? Five of thim cl'aned out a trinch that held up a rigimint for two days."

Mrs. Cadbury was moved to exclaim: "What a hero!"

"Hero's the word; only he's more of a hero now than thin, for it comes natural to the Irish to fight; but it takes the blood sweat of a martyr for wan to be a footman. But McNulty does it, and takes the scorn of people who ought to be cl'anin' his shoes for 'im. And ahl for the sake of lettin' his old mudther smoke her pipe with him evenings.

"That's the kind of hero work that gets a man no headlines in the papers, and no chapthers in the histhry books; but it's fine work, fine work it is, whedther it lades a man to bein' a door opener or to bein' a convick."

Mrs. Cadbury felt a stir in the dust of a little-used room in her heart. Canavan's earnestness and volubility thrilled her beyond idle curiosity, and she was like a child pleading for a goblin story when she said:

"You were going to tell me about your friend in the penitentiary." The word came more simply now. "Was he a hero like Mr. McNulty? You said it was his honor that got him there."

"Oh, yes. McNulty knocked him out of my head. He was a—but here we are at your home."

"Let's take one turn round the park while you tell me, if you don't mind?"

"'If you don't mind' said the angel to the poor sinner as she led him off to heaven in a chariot."

Mrs. Cadbury flushed with pleasure at the Irish of this, and gave the driver instructions, then leaned back and nodded a "Go on" to Canavan. He took from a waistcoat pocket a cigar about the size and shade of a chocolate éclair, and, without troubling to ask permission, pinched off one end and lighted the other.

Somehow she liked his assumption of authority; and she admired his careless ease as he snapped the match with a finger nail and shielded it from the gusty wind in the hollow of one hand.

"That's wonderful!" she cried. "My poor husband would have had to stop the car and use up a box of matches before he could get a light in such a breeze—and usually I had to open an umbrella. Where do you Irishmen learn the knack?"

"I learned in a ditch," he said, and she felt jolted again; but he mused blandly on: "Three or four matches in a hatband had to keep the clay stub goin' all day. It's funny how much a man can do when he's got to. That's the strongest wakeness of the rich; there's so manny things they haven't got to do. But I was goin' to tell you about O'Gara—Dermot O'Gara. He's no such man as McNulty, mind you. O'Gara has as little fight in him as a man could have and be pure Irish. And he was sure that.

"His father's from my county; but his mother is from Kilbeggan, in West Meath. His father was ahlways as honest as the day is lahng—and the day is plinty lahng to a day laborer. Maybe he was honest because he never sah annything to swipe; ahl the money that iver come nare him was in the envelope they shlipped him through the windy of the pay shanty.

"But the boy Dermot, he always had a liking for the cash—a newsboy at six—saved his money, too—soon had other boys workin' for him—ran a bootblackin' business beehune extras. By the time he was twelluv, he was a depositor in a savings bank. Later, he was goin' to night school. He had his soul set on the bankin' business; and be the time he was twinty-wan he was assistant paying teller in a Hairlem branch. He'd

paid a bonding company to insure his honesty; and he was shovin' money out through the grating like it was lettuce for a rabbit.

"His father took a day off just to stand outside and watch him at it. The old man called a policeman over to show him, and said:

"'Whist, Dugan, that's me own bye there. You'd think it was clods of mud he was jugglin'; but it's boondles of boodle. He has the bachache nights from shovelin' the gold coins out the way. He learned shovelin' from me. As soon as he's practiced the thrade of money a little betther, he's goin' to build a bank of his own. I'm to have the cellar to dig. He wants a good cellar.'

"And it looked as if the lad would get his wish. The president of the bank told me himself the boy had a big future. He promised me he'd give him his chance. But, oh, Joseph and Mary, what a gulluf there is bechune the future a man's goin' to have and the future he's after havin'.

"Here's me that niver did annything but see how far I could bind the lah without breakin' it, ahlways pushin' meself forward and wahking around thim I couldn't wahk over; and here I am lollin' in a motor with the most beautiful lady in the wurruld at me side—and she payin' for the gasoline.

"And there's Dermot O'Gara, who was ahlways thinkin' of somebody else, always afraid he wouldn't do the rightest of two right things, always frettin' over the honorable coorse—and there he is sleepin' in a steel cell at night and wearin' the livery of shame by day, whilst his wife and childer blush to be known be his name—and at that it was for their sakes he come to his misery.

"The Lord love ye if it wasn't for fear of bein' blashphemious, I'd say that this earth is governed worse than New York."

II.

Mrs. Cadbury was amazed to find the bluff and burly Canavan in a state of such cynic philosophy. Somehow, after the curious fashion of woman's interest in man, it endeared him to her to find him capable of helplessness and despair. The commonplace life he described was so strange to her that she feared to interrupt his unusual flow of talk. She merely urged him on with another query:

"His wife and children sent him to the penitentiary, you say?"

"Them and his father and mudther—but it was the wife that started it. I'm after telling you how young he was to be where he was. Well, he was a good lad, and she was a good girl, and nayther of thim thinkin' of marryin' for years to come. But they wint one holiday on a chowder party gave be a ward politician, and, through losing their way and wan thing and anudther, they miss the boat, and can't get home till next day.

"There was no evil done excipt by the lahng tongues of the neighbors; but Dermot he was that worried he could think of only wan answer to the sheandal, so he marries the girl. She's a nice girl, and manes well, but she has the fatal habit of presintin' him with a bye or a girl as fasht as the lahs of nature—excuse me, but—well, annyhow, befoor the time for Dermot to be thinkin' of taking a wife at all, he's the father of a family of six. And he's pulling down the magnificent salary of eighteen a week.

"There's a flat to furnish on the installment plan, and docthors and druggists and groceries and the like, till he's drove nearly wild to stretch the money out. And the worst about greenbacks is that they're not printed on rubber. You can break thim, but you cannot stretch them.

"And all the while that Dermot O'Gara is counting the pennies at home, at the bank he spends his days shufflin' hundred-dollar bills like they was pinochle cairds. By and by throuble begins to gather round him like the Old Nick was testin' him out.

"His wife cooks with wan hand and dandles a baby with the other; and wan day she blisthers her cookin' airm at the gas stove that bad that he has to have a woman in to get his dinner and do the

wash—not to mintion another baby comin'. Typhoid fever lays up wan of the flock for three months, and when they're shut of that, the ipidimic of infantile parolysis lays holt of anudther wan, and there's a horrible battle to save it from bein' a twishted cripple for life.

"Dermot shlips behind in his rint, his furniture installment is overdue two months, and his premium on his life insurance has two days' grace only, and he's borried to the hilt on his policy. He feels like a lonely Roosian surrounded be a pack of hungry wolluvs; and ivery day he's payin' out thousands of dollars to annybody who pushes a check at him. But the money begins to slide through his hands kind of reluctant. That old felly Tantalus had nothin' on O'Gara."

Mrs. Cadbury was harrowed by the picture. "It's a crime," she broke in, "not to pay those poor bank clerks more money. No wonder they go wrong so often."

Canavan was immune to illusions. He sighed. "If they had a million dollars a week, would it make them honest?"

"They ought at least to have enough to live on," Mrs. Cadbury insisted stoutly.

"How much is that? How much is enough?" said Canavan. "Whin I was takin' in ahl of a dollar and a half a day for tin hours' grubbin' in a nice cool sewer, we had just barely enough, me and Honoria and the baby we had thin—God rest the sweet souls of thim! And we owed nobody—a good r'ason, too, for nobody would trust us for a pint of beer. A few years later I was hauling in me twenty-five thousand dollars a year—no matter how—and at that I wasn't sleepin' nights for wondherin' how I'd pay off the fifty thousand dollars I owed."

He shook his head dismally. "No, Mrs. Cadbury, if it's going to make human bein's honest you are, I'm thinkin' you'll have to poultice something besides the pocketbook.

"But, annyhow, it's every man for his own problim—and Dermot O'Gara's problim had his head shwimmin'. He borried some money off some loan sharks to tide him over, and they tided him under. The time came whin he wanted fifty dollars, and wanted it bad, and eighteen dollars was comin' in—and the loan sharks was howling for that. Where was he goin' to get it?"

"I wish he had come to me," sighed Mrs. Cadbury. Canavan laughed at the fantastic regret; but he could not help reaching out to squeeze her hand.

"There's plinty more lads in O'Gara's shoes this day if you're lookin' for thim and could find thim and they you. Or if you could invint a way to bring together those that want help and those that want to help, you'd go a lahng way toward savin' the worruld. But, annyhow, no angel like you strolled O'Gara's way; or if she did, she came up to his windy, drew out her satchel full of cash to pay a dressmaker or a milliner, and passed on—the cage was bechune them. Dermot went on pushin' through the cage the money that would have mint salvation to him, and he niver dr'amed of touchin' it for himself. The only way he could think of to invest eighteen dollars and make one hundred and fifty dollars was on the ponies.

"He had niver seen a harse race except in the movin'-pitcher theaters; but near where he lived was a thick-doored house, with a sad-looking man always standin' near the steps. Somebody told Dermot he was the lookout for a pool room.

"Young O'Gara had walked by ivery day for years. Wan day he passed it and wint back, and passed it again. So he did until the lookout begun to grow unaisy, thinking he was a deteckatiff. The last time Dermot passed he didn't. He wint in.

"Whether it was because of what they call beginner's luck, or because they saw he was a good come-on to encourage, they let him win. He wint home with the one hundred and fifty dollars, and told his wife a grand little lie about how he got it. That night in his prayers he asked God's blessin' on that pool room, and he breathed deep for days.

"It wasn't manny weeks, though, till the doctor took him outside in the hall and told him to get his wife and babies to the mountains or he'd be sorry. It was the mountains or Woodlawn. Dermot wint back to the pool room—put up his eighteen dollars, and lost it.

"But he narely won; and a slinkin' tout gave him a tip that couldn't fail on a race to be run in New Orleans next day—a dark horse named The Mudhen, because he could shwim home whin it rained.

"O'Gara wint home with legs and head wabblin'. He was dead droonk on misery. He had to rest three times on the stairs to his flat. He was sick and afraid, and he wanted to run home to his mudther and cry in her lap. Outside of his own dure he was a wake, sick, dishtressful lad. The minyoot he stepped through the dure he was the head of a family. The kids howled, 'Papa's home! Papa's home!' like they was sayin' 'Clang, clang! here comes the firemen, we're saved.'

"His wife turned her big eyes his way and flopped on his neck, and he re'lized that he didn't have time to be sick or to give up. He drew a stiff upper lip; and us Irish has a large upper lip for the purpose. Sure, it's lots of exercise we've had at endurin' since Brian Boruma passed out and the English passed in.

"To hear Dermot O'Gara talk to his flock that night, you'd 'a' thought he had just been adopted by John D. and Andrew K. and presented with the threasury.

"He laid awake that night and figured it all out. He worked over his duty like a bookkeeper who can't strike his trile balance. He told me all about it whin it was too late for me to do annything—for he was tried be a joodge I had no control of whatever.

"Here he was the trusted empl'yee of a bank. It would be dishonorable to look twice at anny of the bank's money. But here he was the trusted father of a family. It would be dishonorable to l'ave the childer starve or grow up wakelings, and his wife to die for lack of a little mountain air.

" 'What kind of a man,' he says to himself, 'would he be to desert the helpless wans the Lord had sint him, and to murdher them just from lacking courage enough to pick up a little money where it was layin' round be the bar'l.'

"He told me he remimbered something from the Good Book. 'Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treads out the grain!' or somethin' like that. There he was in the bank tramplin' on money like it was corn shucks, and yet he felt sure that if he picked up a few bills and asked the president for them he'd be fired. Maybe he wouldn't have been; but, annyhow, he was afraid to risk it.

"So there was a grand battle of honor against honor, and may the best honor win. And it did, accordin' to his lights. He said to himself: 'I'd rather be a thief and branded than murdher me own holy kin. I'd rather bear the reproach of all mankind than look into the eyes of me own babies and refuse thim what I have but to put out me hand to get for thim.' He figured that honor begins where charity does—at home.

"And with that same he fell asleep like a child."

III.

"The next afternoon at closin' time, whin Dermot is carryin' the bank's money from his cage be the double arrum load like it was kindlin' wood, and pilin' it up in cords inside the safe, he just flicked off a couple of fifties and vest-pocketed them unbeknownst to annyone.

"He makes thracks for the pool room, and gets one of his fifties down just in time for the New Orleans evint. And it rainin' in New Orleans; and what does he do but make a tin-to-wan killing on the Mud-hen. The tout was so surprised he had barely stren'th to claim a big commission and hike for a box of headache powdthers. And Dermot flew for home with five hundred and fifty dollars for ballast. He told his wife he had found a liberal fri'nd to make the loan, and they spint half the night packin' the thrunks.

"The next mornin' he took her and

the babies to the train, and kissed thim ahl good-by with trimblin' lips. And now he was left alone in New York, and ahl he had for company was a bad case of ulcerated conscience. He was havin' about the laste fun out of crime that iver man had, for he had no wickedness in him.

"He had none of the makin's of a politician or a crook. He spint nothin' on clothes or liquor or ladies or jools. He didn't even go to see the harse races he bet on. He celebrated his luck be payin' installments on the furniture and on a doctor's bill and his accident policy. He hated debt that bad, he paid off all he could. He overpaid, l'avin' himself no margin for future throuble.

"His letters from his wife was small comfort. He found that the expinses of the mountain hotel was more than he expected they would be, and he expected they would be. The sick did not get well by anny miracles. O'Gara could see only wan way to pay those bills and pay back what he had borried unbeknownst from the bank—and that was to borry some more, make anudther invistmint in the pool room, and make a killin' big enough to pay off iverything.

"But it was himself he was killin'. He couldn't seem to win, so he borried more. He got to takin' the bank's money so fast, he had to figure out a way to double cross the double intry. Maniacs is clever to a point, and Dermot was goin' crazy. He devised a shcheme that worked temporary. But he was gettin' into deeper and deeper wather.

"That's wan of the r'asons, I'm thinkin', why the moral lahs is made so sthrick. The honesty of a man is like the purity of a woman; and the moral lah is like the rope that holds a skiff to the dock. Once you onloosen that, there's no tellin' where it's goin' to drift."

IV.

"All this time, Dermot O'Gara has been so worried over his wife and kids, he's well-nigh forgot he has parents of his own. But he's so ashamed of so manny things this is just one more drop in the bucket. And thin one day, a Friday it was, his father and mudther sind for him to dinner. The whole family, includin' four other childer, day laborers and servant girls, are envyin' Dermot for his aisy life.

"They gathers round the table, and whin the dinner's over—they had a dispensation from the priest so that they could have mate that dinner—and the priest himself was there, and not overfond of fish himself—whin they've passed from ice cream to beer, the old man tries to make a speech, and the old woman has to finish it for um. She explains that this is a grand surprise party, for this very day she and the old man have paid off the last cint of the mortgage, and they own their own home clear and free.

"It's hairdly more than a shack in a back yaird, according to your ideas, Mrs. Cadbury; but it's theirs, and it's a palace to them, and they have no more rint to pay, nor interest. They can live there in p'ace and quiet the rest of their days so long as the old woman's back don't fail her at the washtoob and the old man can lift a pick and l'ave it fall. The childer is surprised to find that the old folks has had anny money they might have borried; but it's too late to lay hold of it now, so there's grand hilarity in the O'Gara tribe that night, and the old couple is idiotic with pride in their home.

"Finally the old woman grows garrulious wit' pride and other things, and she cackles: 'We're all proud of the roof that shelters us, and Mary be praised for it; but it's a prouder day that none of our childer is in disgrace, and that wan of thim—I needn't say which—wan of thim is in a bank, trusted and respected be the rich and the powerful.'

"And Father O'Brine adds a few words tellin' how proud he was for to have Dermot in his parish, and hadn't he married yoong and raised childer and been a credit to the church and the nation, and were there more like him it would be well and betther.

"And the old man O'Gara is so over-

coom wit' prosperity and beer that he thries to take Dermot on his lap and kiss him like he was a babby again, and such laughter and cacklin' from the rest as you'd think it was a wake.

"It was haird sleddin' for Dermot, that dinner. The more he blushed and begged off, the more they praised his modesty. He had a wild wish for to tell them then and there, for his secret was fair sweatin' through the pores of him; but he thought it would be murderous cruel to spoil the hilarity of the old people with such a blasht as that on the wan glorious night of their haird lives.

"So he told thim he had to be goin', and he wint—straight for the river.

"But on the brink he paused. He could ind his own troubles there; but he'd l'ave behind him poverty and disgrace for the others to fight, and him not there for thim to lane on. So he wint away from the comfortable-lookin' river and crawled back to his lonely flat with no wife or chicks to cheer him, and only the creakin' furniture lookin' unpaid installments at him. He found there a letter from his wife—she was comin' to her time, and she was wearying for him to hold her hand, and—well, he did a dishonorable, selfish thing for once—he just laid down on his bed and cried like a gurrul.

"The next morning, a Sathurday, he was half a minyoot late to the bank, and he found ivery wan in a flurry. A tip had come that a State bank examiner was arrivin' Moonday morning to surprise them. Everybody was set to work cl'anin' up for inspection.

"And now Dermot O'Gara knew that he was bechune the divil and the deep say. He was like a man in a burnin' ship. He could stay aboard and be cooked, or step off and be drownded.

V.

"The president and cashier of the bank and the whole foorce worked late that Sathurday afther the dures was closed; but along about four on the clock, the housecl'anin' is done, and iverybody rehearsed to look surprised whin the inspecthor turns up Moonday marnin'.

"The laste excited mimber of the whole crew was Dermot O'Gara. He'd had ahl the excitement in him burned out in the pasht few months. But when he takes the lasht boondle of lahng green into the safe, he passes a nate packudge of bills into his inside pocket. There's a label round thim with a lahng pin into it, and it's marked 'two thousand dollars.' He might have taken tin while he was at it; but his sinse of honor to the bank held him back.

"It made a perceptible boolge in his right side; but iverybody was in that haste to be off nobody noticed it. Dermot had sint his soot case to the station the morning, and now he took a street cair to the New York Cintheral excavation, and got the five-o'clock ixpress.

"He was knockin' at his wife's dure in the hotel the next marnin' befoor she was up. She was scared to see him, but the childer attackted him as if they were a band of Indians, and nightgowns was flyin' through the air like the week's wash in a high wind.

"As soon as ivir he'd disentangled himself from the childer, he sint thim off to breakfast, and towld his wife he had asked for a vacation so as to be with her and hould her hand like she wrote him for to do. But since he was tired of people and n'ise, would she mind l'avin' the hotel for a smaller wan in the woods, where he could have a bit of fishin' to rest his nerves?

"If she suspicioned annything, she was afraid to pay attintion to it just thin; and he managed to get his flock away from the hotel and vanish into the wilderness, l'avin' no clew whativer. He'd been plannin' it, and he pulled it off as nate as if he was old Settin' Bull slippin' his squaws and all through a cordon of the United States airmy.

"It would take a bookmaker to tell how he moved from place to place like a hunted animal with his pack; but he managed it. He wasn't missed at the bank till Monday noon; and thin a note arrived sayin' he was called away be sudden sickness, and the hue and cry wasn't raised till a Winsday.

"Whin the baby was born, it was in the North Woods of Canady. A few days later, the proud father took his wife out into the forest and tould her the whole thing. It was a sad day for her; but he persuaded her that his motives was all honorable; and, for the sake of his family, however, they boomped against the moral codes of the lah. And she believed him. Sure, hadn't she proof of it in the miserable, forlorn, pale-faced scrawn he was?

"So now a woman's wit was added to the man's, and they moved farther north to a new mining camp, and changed their name and taught the childer a new game of pretendin' to belahng to the family of McCann.

"Dermot tried for to make a killin' in the mines, for the fever was in his blood, the millionaire microbes filled his system, and he dr'amed of payin' the bank back and cl'anin' the slate for a new start. But fate was against him. It was surprisin' how many people wanted to know his past histhry; and the childer kept forgettin' the pairts he had learned them.

"Wan day, O'Gara heard that there was a stranger in camp makin' inquiries about him, and he knew his hour had coom. He knew that thim banks niver let up on a man, and he had another sarious tahk with his poor wife. He put into her hands all that was left of his two thousand except a hundred for himself, and that night he stroock out across the mountains to another railroad.

"He didn't dare l'ave his wife know his whereabouts. Faith, he hardly knew them himself. His ups and downs was ahl downs, and in three months or so he turned up in a horsepital in San Francisco in a delirium of typhoid. He got his sacrits off his chist at last, and the trained nurse, who was sweet on a plain-clothes man, passed thim alahng. She figured that the rewaird would make a nice nest egg for to be married on. And, whin Dermot O'Gara came out of his thrance, it was to find a copper for a nurse.

"They took him back to New York as soon as he was able to stand the journey; and he tould me it was a joy to have an ind to the game of hide and seek, with him ahlways It."

VI.

Canavan paused to light a fresh cigar, and Mrs. Cadbury sighed.

"So that was the end of your honorable gentleman's problems."

"The ind?" said Canavan. "It was only the beginning. That's what I'm afther sayin'. People seem to think that honor is a mather of a few decisions here and there. Honor is like breathin'. You're usin' it ahl day long.

"No sooner was poor Dermot safe in cold storudge, than he was approached by the surety company that had gone his bond. They had been scoutin' round to find some way of savin' themselves from making up what Dermot had appropriated.

"Somehow they had learned that old man O'Gara had a family home up at Nine Hundred and Ninety-nine East Nine Hundred and Ninety-ninth Street, or wheriver it was. They had brought pressure to bear on the ancient couple, and their hearts were that broke and their pride that blashted they'd have pawned their souls for the lad.

"So down to the Tombs prison comes the agent of the bonding company so oily with smiles that rain would have slid off him. 'It's all right, Mr. O'Gara,' he says. 'Your throubles are over and done. Your father and your mudther have agreed to martgage their home for the two thousand dollars. The bank has consinted to accept resthitution and shtop prosecution, and you'll go free.' "

At this point, Mrs. Cadbury wanted to applaud, like an East Side child at a melodrama. "How splendid!" she cried. "Those poor people often have the noblest motives, haven't they? Think of that old couple sacrificing themselves so gloriously for their son!"

Canavan looked at her as if a child had spoken at a political caucus. He smiled dolefully.

" 'Think of that old couple,' you say. That's what Dermot O'Gara thought of. And it was hard thinkin'. On wan side

was freedom for himself, another chance to win back, and the society of his wife and his childern. On the other side was the prison, the losin' of his years, and losin' of his vote—that's a big thing to an Irishman, losin' his vote. He had his mouth open to say 'Glory be!' whin he remimbered his father and mudther. He remimbered the dinner they gave, the pride they took in the house they had bought for to shelter their gray hairs. He saw the sthruggle they'd make to pay interest, to pay off the martgage, and the sure black day whin they would be foreclosed, turned adrift with broken backs, broken lives, and the big terror in their old gray souls.

"He wanted to take the money. He wanted to chance the future. He wanted to believe that he'd win out big yet. But exparience had learned him that such things happen oftener in fairy stories than in rale life, and somethin' inside of him said No! Somethin' took him be the throat and paralyzed him from consinting.

"He tould the agent he couldn't accept the sacrifice. The agent turned scairlet with rage, and called him a fool and a scoundrel, but he shook his head.

"Dermot begged the agent to l'ave him free till he could work and pay back what he had lifted from the bank. But the man laughed at him. He threatened him with the full limit of the lah if he didn't consint to the martgage; but O'Gara said No! The agent sint for Mrs. O'Gara, and she begged the lad to take annything from annybody rather than go into the dark volley of livin' death. But he said No.

"It was his sinse of honor, of coorse, and nought else that made him do it. It was love of his wife and his childer that drove him to the airly crimes. A man of less honor of wan kind and more honor of the usual would have left his family to sicken and starve from the first; but Dermot couldn't do that. And he couldn't l'ave his old folks buy him out of the deep hole with the price of their own last pinny.

"Dermot's wife turned against him, and called him a baste wid a hairt of stone. But Dermot said No. The agent called him ivery name he could lay tongue to, but Dermot said No. The bank pushed the prosecution, and Dermot got the limit. It was a shatthered man they took up to Sing Sing; and they jammed him in with crooks that had broken into houses, broken skulls, stolen for the love of luxury and for the scorn of dacincy. There's no drawin' of fine lines in Sing Sing. But me—well, somehow I've always felt that I'd rather have been Dermot O'Gara goin' to jail than some min goin' to Congress. I'd have held me head higher."

Mrs. Cadbury, the exquisite and the inconsequential, the dandled pet of luxury, who had never in her life known the remotest approach of moneylessness, stared at Canavan and studied him. In him she seemed to study the whole of that foreign world of his where people do incessant battle on the steep edge of the ravine of pauperdom, where the solid ground is just a few inches from the direst want.

She felt that her own life had been a mere tinsel flippancy. She was a doll at the side of a man, a tragic, life-bruised man, uncouth but acquainted with realities. She was Helen of Troy on the walls, and the amusing politician was a Hector home from the wars, victorious himself, but saddened with the memory of companions who had been crushed and trampled under in the tumult.

Her life seemed to have been but a gliding about in artificial pleasances like the park through whose smooth roads her automobile was smoothly sweeping. Outside, she knew, were the hard streets where millions were waging the struggle for life.

She was pondering aloud: "I know the governor very well. I'm to be at a dinner with him next week. I wonder if I paid back what the poor fellow stole, and if I guaranteed to see to his future—I wonder if the governor wouldn't——"

Just then the car shot through a curving glade, and a tattered little boy playing ball with a distant friend leaped

backward into the road to catch a wild throw. He leaped into the front wheel, and was borne down, spun round, butted hideously along the gravel, and then—the wheel rose and thumped down as it passed across the little sack of bones.

Before the frantic chauffeur could bring the car to a stop, the rear wheel, too, had risen and thumped.

Canavan had been smitten aghast by the suddenness of the disaster. He was used to quick action in a crisis; but here he was a passenger, far from wheel or brake, and ignorant of their uses. He was abjectly helpless. He saw Mrs. Cadbury glance back, then forward. No one was in sight except the terrified playmate fleeing in the distance. The road was clear. Mrs. Cadbury bent forward to call to the chauffeur.

"François, quick!—quick——" Her frantic eyes caught Canavan's dumb stare. She finished her sentence. "Quick!—let me out. I must go to the child."

Canavan wrenched the door open as she flitted past and tottered down the steps. Before he could swing to the ground, she was kneeling in the dust, with the dusty little wreck of childhood in her lap. She was staggering to her feet and tripping on her own skirts when Canavan took the limp form from her arms.

They got back in the car, and now it was full speed for the nearest hospital, past staring crowds that saw a disheveled beauty with a lavish hat askew and mopping with a lace handkerchief the dust from a ghastly white ragamuffin.

At the hospital, it was hard to say from the looks of them which had been rolled in the dust, Mrs. Cadbury or the child she carried. Perhaps some extra attentions were paid to the real victim when it was learned that the great Mrs. Cadbury stood sponsor for him. Reporters, somehow, seemed to spring out of the ground, and a photographer set up his terrifying tripod to catch her as she came forth of the hospital.

She had made the doctors learn from the child his home address as soon as they brought him back to the agony of consciousness, and she was off again in her motor.

"I must find his mother and break the news to her, and bring her here in the car," she was chattering to Canavan.

Throughout the last half hour Canavan had felt useless and awkward. And even now he could only stare in unusual homage. But he was too sincerely impressed for blarney. The best he could manage to hand her was a peculiarly Canavannish posy:

"There's matee-rial in you, Mrs. Cadbury. I'll have you educated yet so that you'll be a credit to me wan of these fine days."

AN OLD WISH IN NEW WORDS

MR. D. P. SEERLEY, of Chicago, is an art connoisseur, but sometimes he allows himself to be taken away from pictures and sculptures, and led into a concert hall. He had yielded to this one afternoon when the friend beside him noticed that he looked bored, weary, and wan, not to say exhausted and disgusted.

"What's the matter?" he asked Seerley; to which question Seerley replied with a prolonged yawn.

"It's true," admitted the friend, "that that piano player is missing some of the notes, and——"

"I wish," cut in Seerley, "he had missed 'em all!"

BUILDING THE MILLION-DOLLAR PIER

John L. Young, the man who built Young's new million-dollar pier at Atlantic City, began life as a carpenter, on a salary of less than ten dollars a week—which is some building, says John, the builder.

Police!

By Frank Condon

Author of "Hiram in Search of a Gold Brick," "A Study in Sociology," Etc.

Suppose—suppose by some remote chance a highwayman attacks you in New York. What do you do? You simply shout for the police, and instantly help comes. This isn't a fairy story; it's fact. To prove it the chief of police frames up an uncontrovertible illustration.

YOU will notice, if you look back over the history of the known world, that things generally run in threes. Sometimes they hobble painfully, or limp, but still they go in threes. There are the three virtues—faith, hope, and a leather-covered bank book full of neat, clerkmanlike writing on the left-hand pages; there were the Three Musketeers, the three days of grace, the three crises in American history, the three Fates, the three Graces, three meals a day, and the new three-dollar fall hats.

And coming down to modern times, there were Maloney, Malarkey, and Flood, common or garden patrolmen; soldiers of the back alleys of Greenwich Village; guardians of the peace and defenders of the law; stout-hearted bluecoats, who were afraid of nothing in the world except staying too long in Clancy's, and, in consequence, going home late for supper and in time for the wifely remonstrance.

Greenwich Village is that part of New York City lying at the foot of Eighth Avenue. There was a time in the bygones when the population of the village was never expected to exceed ten thousand souls. All of a sudden, the city began to grow. The metropolis placed its foot on the neck of Greenwich Village, and leaped forward to the north.

Maloney, Malarkey, and Flood patrolled New York City from one year's end to the other. They suppressed riots, made large, red marks on rowdies, chased the leaping burglar from crag to crag, stopped runaway coupés containing beautiful heiresses, and in a general way conducted the business of being a cop with decorum and éclat.

Occasionally they played checkers together in the station house while on reserve duty; and it was on such occasions that they discussed their wrongs and explained to each other what they would like to do to the "Old Man" if it were possible to catch him up a dark alley some evening.

The Old Man was William Joseph Crawford. He was a large, comfortable giant, with red, billowy cheeks and iron-gray hair; with eyes that sometimes twinkled happily, and sometimes spat fire and brimstone; with a mind that acted with the sudden decisiveness of a trip hammer. He was a brave man. No one had ever questioned his courage; and he was an honest man, although this latter quality was often sneered at and doubted. Why?

Because William Joseph Crawford was the chief of police in the greatest city—festive, twittering, ready-with-the-lead-pipe little old New York. And no man has ever been chief of the New York police without having his character shot at.

The cause of the trouble between the

chief and the trio was something vague and elderly. It was a matter of absolute knowledge to the chief that Maloney, Malarkey, and Flood were the three best policemen in the greater city; but even while he admitted that cheerful fact, Chief Crawford put on the screws whenever the three men perpetrated official crimes, such as sneaking a tub of suds from the back door, or snoozing on the job, or failing to report, or doing any one of the hundred unruly things a policeman may do.

Maloney had often been fined. Malarkey had been sentenced frequently to a beat nine miles from the nearest railroad. Flood had been called before the chief to listen to a speech, the import of which was that Flood was a worthless tramp, and would have to stop disgracing the department.

The three patrolmen went about their business cheerfully. They were melancholy only when they foregathered in the barracks for reserve duty, and naturally fell into discussions concerning the Old Man. The barracks were in the exact center of Greenwich Village, and formerly were known as the Eighth Avenue Station House; and it happened that Chief Crawford lived for many years on the southern extremity of the village. He lives there to this very day, although another man stands at the head of the uniformed force.

When three able-bodied patrolmen nurse a sort of dull, aching peeve for a number of years, the object of their smoldering rage had better beware, even if he happens to be the chief of police. Individually, not one of the three—Maloney, Malarkey, or Flood—hated Chief Crawford. At the signal of his upraised arm, they would have fought their way through regiments of Black Handers or Saturday-night bums; but, in a general way, they desired to hand the chief a return compliment for the various trifling attentions he had accorded them during a period of three years.

There is an old motto up in the glass frame that informs a waiting populace about all things. It indicates that all things come to him who stays at home waiting for the phone call; and, after Messrs. Maloney, Malarkey, and Flood had shredded their chief's reputation orally for three years, and poured the vials of their wrath upon him, the thing came; the opportunity offered itself.

Inspector Archibald Waxman, of Scotland Yard, was the thing. He arrived in New York on board the liner *Senegambia,* and the object of his visit was to look over our metropolitan manner of police guardianship and compare it with the London style. Inspector Waxman had visited Paris, Berlin, Vienna, and Buenos Aires, and, when he set foot on Broadway, he was full of information and theories.

Chief Crawford welcomed the British visitor cordially, and explained to him that Paris and Berlin and those foreign places were doing as well as could be expected; but that there was really only one city in the world that had the right to call its police force a *police force.*

"I'll take you around New York," the chief told the inspector; "and I'll show you things about guarding the lives and property of citizens that you never saw before. I don't like to boast about the New York police force, because I'm at its head; but I can state with absolute truthfulness that, for efficiency, thoroughness, and perfection, New York City makes the other large centers of population look like a lot of cheeses."

"I shall be delighted, indeed," murmured Inspector Waxman. "I have heard a great deal about your police methods."

"Come up to the house and have supper with us," continued Chief Crawford. "I want you to meet the wife and children."

"Charmed, I'm sure," replied the inspector; and thus it came that the representative of Scotland Yard, which isn't a yard at all, entered the sacred and sometimes tumultuous confines of Greenwich Village, which similarly isn't a village at all.

Later on, the three brigadiers learned of the presence of the British invader. They found out that the foreigner was

visiting New York in search of police ideas.

The source of their information was Georgie. If you do not know who Georgie is, it is an instantaneous sign that you have never lived at the delta of Eighth Avenue, and that you have never regaled your olfactory, gustatory, and digestive appurtenances with the excellences of White's Chophouse.

The barracks were a block and a half away from the front door of the chophouse. In the window of the latter was an enormous eagle with outstretched wings, and inside was Mr. Johnny White, his wife, his son, and Georgie, the head waiter, and the finest food and drink man could desire. The chophouse was long and narrow in form, and at the rear of the dining room was a doorway that led quietly and unobtrusively into the alley. This door was the most important piece of architecture in Greenwich Village—to the policemen on duty in the barracks. The reason was simple.

Having excellent chops, fish, coffee, and other delicacies, and selling them at very moderate prices, Johnny White made particular appeal to the guardians of the law. It was a common sight to behold the rear of the White dining room filled with the muscular forms of bluecoats, and it was still more common to perceive these dauntless heroes leap from their tables with a hollow moan, desert their steaming coffee and fragrant chops, and scurry through the rear door into the alley, conversing with each other and with Providence in terms of annoyance and profanity.

Such sudden departures meant only one thing. Chief Crawford was coming in the front door. It was part of Georgie's duties to keep an eye on the street and report the approach of the chief, and, as the chief approved unreservedly of Johnny White's Chophouse, his appearances were frequent, and consequently the exoduses into the back alley were also frequent.

Officers on reserve duty are not supposed to wander away from the station house in search of either broiled chops or good coffee. But the appeal of White's Chophouse was too great to be resisted, and the police of neighboring stations walked miles for the privilege of throwing a leg beneath the pine tables in the rear.

Maloney, Malarkey, and Flood had been interrupted at lunch so often that they had come to expect the chief with the dessert. They had invented a new form of flying wedge, the virtue of which lay in the fact that the last man in the line could remain at his table until Chief Crawford had actually placed his hand on the front-door knob.

And among the first things the chief provided in the way of entertainment for Inspector Waxman, of Scotland Yard, was a large and diversified meal at Johnny White's. When the two distinguished officials appeared, arm in arm, their entry caused the flight of no less than fourteen plain-clothes men and uniformed cops.

"It's always my bloomin' luck," Mr. Flood complained to a brother unfortunate. "I just got started on the soup. How far did you get?"

"I was down to the boiled potatoes," replied the other. "I've got so I can feel the chief coming five blocks away."

Flood walked down the alley in mournful indignation, and returned to the barracks, where he found Maloney and Malarkey deep in the intricacies of a chess game.

"Well," Flood remarked bitterly, "the old stiff butted into Johnny's just as I was beginning my meal."

"Why didn't you kill him on the spot?" Malarkey replied cheerfully.

"He had the Englishman with him," continued the aggrieved Flood. "He's been showing him over New York, and the Britisher has been writing down notes in a little book."

The three comrades indulged in appropriate remarks, their general tenor being that Chief Crawford was an unpleasant man.

In the meantime, the chief and his guest sat down before what proved to be a sumptuous repast. Georgie, the efficient head waiter, served them with the humility and skill that befitted their rank. The chops were done to a turn;

the salad was an epicure's dream; the potatoes were mealy and white as the driven snow; and the coffee steamed fragrantly, and assailed both palate and nostrils so pleasantly that even an Englishman could not complain.

As the dinner progressed, Chief Crawford discoursed upon the subject nearest his heart, boasting of the efficiency of the New York Police Department, and begging Inspector Waxman to use the evidence of his own eyes; to reflect upon what he had beheld; and to compare New York's police with the police of any other city in the world.

"I can't help boasting a little," the chief said; "but there's no denying the fact that we've a fine body of men; a body of men the city is justly proud of. Crime grows less each year. We mix mercy with our justice; and I think I'm safe in saying that the citizen of New York is almost absolutely safe when he walks abroad, be it bright noonday or middle of the night. Look at Chicago, for instance. Have you ever been in Chicago?"

Inspector Waxman indicated that the pleasure had not been his.

"Well, in Chicago," Chief Crawford went on, with the natural jealousy of the New Yorker, "you're just as safe as you'd be on the field of battle. You go out after supper for a five-cent cigar at the corner store, and a man hits you on the head with a piece of pipe and takes your watch. A woman never thinks of leaving her home after sundown. It's an awful place. Compare New York with it. You can go anywhere in the city. Suppose—suppose, by some remote chance, a highwayman does attack you. Suppose you are cornered or slugged. What do you do? You simply shout for the police, and instantly help comes. It doesn't matter where you are when you shout. You can be in the outermost sections or in the midst of the business section. There's always a policeman within earshot for the citizen of New York. That's our motto."

"Remarkable," admitted Inspector Waxman. "It seems almost unbelievable."

There was doubt in his cold, calculating Scotland Yard eye. Chief Crawford noticed it.

"Not at all remarkable," the chief protested. "It is simply one of the things that makes New York the great city it is."

"It really doesn't seem possible," continued the Britisher meditatively.

"I'll prove it to you," exclaimed Chief Crawford warmly. "You doubt it. I'll prove it. When we have finished our meal, we will walk out together. This is a dark and comparatively deserted part of the city at this time of night. We will walk down this street one block and turn to the left, where there is a small park. When we reach the park—the lights there are very dim—I will pretend to attack you precisely as a robber would. You will then shout for assistance, and we'll see whether I'm correct or whether I have exaggerated the efficiency of our police."

There was a great deal more to the conversation than the part which has here been so accurately narrated. But Georgie, the head waiter, paid no particular attention to the rest of it. He was interested in what he had heard, and he manifested signs of this interest immediately.

At a moment when he knew there would be plenty of time, he slipped out of the rear entrance of Johnny's place and tore away through the alley. His scurrying feet landed him among the reserves in the barracks in a few seconds. Maloney, Malarkey, and Flood listened to his report of the conversation with huge joy. The reserves gathered round Georgie and hugged him.

"Good old Georgie," said Malarkey approvingly. "So the chief is going to prove to Inspector Waxman that a man can call for help in this big town and always be certain of getting it. Men, we all know the chief. He's a grand man. There isn't a better man to-day in New York. But there are several million small scores to be paid off by each and every one of us. The point is: Does Inspector Waxman get help when he calls for it?"

He closed one eye and looked at the reserves with the other.

"He does," solemnly replied Flood, Maloney, and a dozen policemen.

"The time is short," Malarkey added. "We will act with haste. They ought to be through their meal and ready for this demonstration in half an hour."

Malarkey grinned pleasantly for a moment. Then he entered the telephone booth, and Maloney and Flood could see him chuckling as he spoke.

In the course of time, Chief Crawford and his guest concluded their dinner. The chief led the way into the street. About them were silence and darkness. Here and there a dim light came from the half-closed window of some citizen. The street lamps threw uncertain, flitting shadows about them. There were no pedestrians, for the hour was growing late. It was as silent as the tomb. The tap-tap of their heels echoed sharply as the two officials strode along.

Reaching the corner of the deserted street, they turned toward the park in which the experiment was to be attempted.

"Now, remember," said the chief, "I'll be pretending to bang you with my fists, and you pretend to struggle violently, yelling the while for the police."

"Perfectly simple," returned Inspector Waxman.

The little park lay peacefully sleeping in the shadows. Surrounding it were the old-fashioned buildings of a previous era. There were courtyards and numerous passages leading into mysterious nooks and crannies. The silence of the night grew more intense, as though it felt the approaching tumult. Then suddenly it shattered into a million pieces, and a hoarse yell assailed the slumbrous atmosphere.

"Police!" said the yell distinctly. Then it repeated, in an even louder tone:

"Police! Help!"

Two murky, half-visible figures struggled together. A brawny arm rose and fell upon a chuckling British detective.

And then!

Well, did you ever read the Pied Piper of Hamelin? You may recall that gentleman's unparalleled success as a rat catcher.

In precisely the same manner did the shout of Inspector Waxman result. Instead of rats answering the siren call of the piper's pipes, the cops came. Into the streets they came tumbling—great cops, small cops, lean cops, tall cops, fat cops, tawny cops, gray cops, scrawny cops. They came from dark areaways and side streets, from basements and doorways. They came on the run, gallop, lope, and trot. It rained policemen from every point of the compass; from the earth and from the air over the earth.

About twelve and one-fifth seconds after Inspector Waxman had shouted for aid, he and his make-believe assault and batterer were surrounded by a body of bluecoats that in general proportions resembled the combined Union forces on the hillside just before the battle of Gettysburg.

The energetic and assiduous police leaped to the rescue, and grabbed Chief Crawford by a dozen different parts of his anatomy without stopping to consult his wishes. They beat him soundly with their fists, taking care not to hit the chief too hard or in a vital spot. They pummeled him, rolled him in the gravel of the park walk; sat upon him; muffled his cries of rage; and, when they had reduced him to a mere trace of his former portly self, they allowed him to rise, and then they discovered, for the first time, with agonized astonishment, that they had been beating up their own chief.

Whereupon they set upon his assailant, Inspector Waxman, and handled him with equal ferocity for several moments, releasing him only after Chief Crawford had threatened immediate and wholesale murder.

Three large, enthusiastic Irish policemen led the charge. It was Maloney's red fist that first reached the soft roll on the chief's stomach, just above his waistline, and caused the chief to gasp painfully. It was Malarkey who sat on his chief's head and rolled him in the gravel. It was Flood who pounded gently but firmly upon

any portion of the chief's anatomy that showed itself. Other policemen took vigorous participation in the mêlée; but the trio seemed to play the leading part, and when the mistake had been detected they were most contrite of all.

"You blithering idiots!" Chief Crawford yelled at the huddled army of cops. "You boneheaded imbeciles! You—you—you!"

Then the chief added a number of expressions, indicative of his thoughts, which sounded appropriate at the moment, but from which the type modestly shrinks.

Inspector Waxman said "My word!" several hundred times rapidly, and then brushed the soil of lower New York from his garments.

"Go back to your beats," Chief Crawford roared at the shrinking bluecoats. "Get out of here before something happens to you. I'll investigate this to-morrow. I'll know why this happened and who started it or I'll bust."

Slowly and remorsefully, the blue army enfiladed, detoured, and cascaded down the street; and not until the vanguard reached the next block did the entire corps emit, as one man, a sound which generally comes from between the clenched teeth in a semihissing manner, and is invariably a sign of concealed merriment. Another block away, the army burst into tears of joy, and Malarkey sat down on a stoop and pounded his knees with his fists in a delirium of ecstasy.

"Oh, my eye!" Malarkey exclaimed delightedly. "Did anybody see me when I banged him on the chin?"

When the reserves of lower town started for their respective stations, Malarkey led his comrades toward the barracks.

"I'm only sorry the Brooklyn reserves didn't have time to get over for the fun," he said regretfully. "They'd enjoyed it."

"I'm even with the Old Man," remarked Officer Flood contentedly. "I got in just one good kick, and if he don't use arnica on the spot, he has no judgment."

"I have not the smallest complaint to make," Maloney added.

Silence descended again upon Greenwich Village and environs. Slowly and somewhat painfully, Chief Crawford conducted his English guest to his own domicile, and there was practically no conversation to speak of on the way.

At the door of the chief's home, Inspector Waxman smiled for the first time. He laid a hand upon the chief's arm, and said:

"After this, chief, I shall take your word for everything."

"Come inside," replied the chief gloomily, inserting his latchkey in the door. "Come inside before we are murdered by the police."

NOT EXACTLY HANGING ON HIS WORDS

HE was a young man, reveling in the information which had been given him by several young women to the effect that he was ravishingly fascinating. The girl who sat beside him in his touring car was at that time the adored of his heart, and he was busy with the job of making a hit with her, keeping her entertained, and convincing her that he was the only clever talker she had ever seen.

But his air of confidence sustained a severe blow.

"Shall we run out on Twentieth or Twenty-first Street on the way home?" he asked, not having quite finished laughing at the funny remark he had just made.

"Yes," she said agreeably. "Isn't it funny how the time does drag? To-day's the twentieth, and to-morrow will be the twenty-first."

A Broken Bootlace

By Donal Hamilton Haines

Author of "A Matter of Tactics," Etc.

How a frayed piece of leather lost a battle. One more instance of the importance of little things. A story of modern warfare in which one hears of the strategy, the objectives gained or lost, the perfect working of one device or another, not of blood-soaked battlefields or intrepid charges.

GENERAL CRAMPTON was calm and unflurried. He had just shaved, and his orderly, during the night, had seen to it that the general's clothes were brushed, and that his riding boots were unspotted of mud. He made a fine figure of a soldier as he stood on the porch of the unpainted farmhouse that had been brought out of a half century of obscurity and suddenly made the most important building in a hemisphere as the nerve center of a great army in action.

It was only fitting that the general should look the part, for his achievements bade fair to make him the foremost soldier of his time. And this approaching preëminence was due largely to the fact that he was many other things besides a good strategist.

War, to him, was a business, and, like any other business, it was to be conducted profitably by a happy combination of excellent organization with those ingenious features which leaders of an earlier date knew not.

He might sit on the sagging porch of the farmhouse and watch the progress of a battle flaring over a sixteen-mile front without so much as stirring from his chair.

Did he wish to know how it was faring with Moffett in the broken woodland to the north—there was a wireless dispatch not fifteen minutes old at his hand.

Did he care to note the effect of Grimes' massed batteries hammering at the enemy's center—he need only beckon to a slender man to whose head was strapped the receiver of a field telephone. He sat with his finger on every nerve of his army.

And if he craved knowledge of such hurried dispositions as the enemy had made during the night to meet as best it could his masterful attack, there were piled on a little table near him the reports brought in during the gray hours of the dawn by the thin, goggled aviators of the aëro scouts.

The tremendous roar of a great conflict did not so much as quicken the general's pulse. He stood on the lowest step pulling on his unsoiled gauntlets. The riot of sound in his ears was to him only as the clash and clatter of a great machine shop is to the man who leaves his rosewood desk to walk through the shop and listen to the music of the monster he has built.

It was no more than the healthy sound of the day's work well begun; and, while Crampton's ear could not pick out the sound of every detail, he knew that all was going as it should, so he waited the coming of his horse and his staff with perfect composure.

Once in the saddle, with the clatter-

ing staff in motion behind him, he went over with his gray-haired, sad-eyed chief of staff the details of the day's work. Yet he was in no mood for haste. This day's work, so perfectly appointed in every direction, could wait a moment, and the general was moved to be philosophical.

"It is a perfect day," he said easily to the man at his side, holding out his cigar case.

Lane, the chief of staff, selected a cigar without looking, bit off the end, and left the weed sticking at a sharp angle from the corner of his mouth.

"Quite," he agreed shortly.

The general took a deep pull at his cigar, threw out his big chest, and continued in the same vein.

"Too beautiful for all this slaughter—yet we will not learn better. The years will not teach us."

The man at his side only muttered a grunt, which was cut in two by the fat cigar in his teeth.

"I sometimes believe," pursued the general, "that it is only because we have learned to kill each other almost without touch of hands that we go on fighting. For the rest, we have grown too finicky for it. The sight of blood is too much for us. Because we kill men from a distance without all the old cut-and-thrust, hand-to-hand grisliness, war is not so awful. It is all scientific. Look at the dispatches, the difference in their tone. You read of the strategy, the objectives gained or lost, the perfect working of one device or another, not of blood-soaked battlefields or intrepid charges. The number of dead and injured are thrown in almost parenthetically, like statistics in a magazine article, which everybody skips. The organization overspreads everything else; human details are lost. War can't even breed the heroics that it did. And perhaps because it is such a science, and we human beings all so scientific, we keep it up."

And then, as Lane did not seem greatly impressed, nor at all inclined to answer, Crampton plunged into the serious business of the day; and his subordinate gave to him the profound attention which he had up to now devoted to his cigar.

It did not require any great wealth of detail; the organization was too perfect for such need. Crampton's speech dealt with big units. He spoke in terms of divisions, brigades, corps. Such small fry as battalions and squadrons—to say nothing of individual troopers or infantrymen—seemed to play no part in his calculations. There was no cause for him to work down to such minutiæ; they were well oiled and self-adjusting; yet the wires from all of them ran back, gathered into cables, beneath his fingers—there could be no slips.

"To-day," he ended, "must finish him. Yesterday he wavered, to-day he will reel; but I will not be satisfied with that. We must grind him to powder; yet not so slowly that there may any bits drift off. That is why I want to ease up a trifle in the center. If we can draw off a bit of the pressure there and push harder on the wings, we become a vise instead of merely a battering-ram, and the thing is done."

While the fresh orders of the day clicked over wires or throbbed from the coils of the wireless out into space, and the white-winged fliers of the aëro scouts edged this way and that, and the great battle throbbed steadily, the general and his staff viewed what cloudy details they could see from sheltering ridge tops, and clattered back to the dingy farmhouse, unmuddied and satisfied.

"Really," said the general as he gave his horse over to an orderly, "it is almost a poem, the working out of a great battle."

And then, because the day was hot and riding not altogether a pleasure, he sat longer than he had intended on the shaded porch.

Fisher, of the aëro scouts, should have been born in the days of buccaneers. He would have made a pirate of the perfect type—and he might then have found the state of absolute excitement which he was forever craving. Naturally his restless spirit had sought

the army. Yet it had not found all that it required. The army blotted out individuality too thoroughly, so Fisher turned aviator, and was almost happy.

It was always Fisher who brought back the greatest wealth of information, always Fisher who could get more mileage out of his supply of gasoline, apparently make his engine run smoothly without oil, and do the thousand and one other things which made him invaluable.

So to Fisher had been given the task of wheeling like a hawk about those operations on the enemy's right destined to play their part in that squeezing in the vise which Crampton had planned.

All the morning Fisher swirled and swooped about the enemy's position, playing with their marksmen and with their "balloon-gun" batteries as a squirrel on the side of a tree does with a frenzied terrier. Once a bullet clipped through one of the planes and made a guy wire hum angrily; but Fisher only showed his white teeth between his thin lips and lifted his craft the merest trifle.

Then suddenly, somewhere about ten of the morning, Fisher's mechanic heard a noise that made him turn white, for they were soaring an even three thousand feet above the earth. He called sharply to the pilot, and Fisher set them on a long slant downward. Before ever they had dropped half the distance, the engine was dead. Their speed increased with sickening rapidity. The mechanic had time to spread the parachute coat which he wore; but Fisher, obdurate and cursing the balking apparatus to the end, stuck to his levers, and frantically tried to save the plunging craft. The mechanic found himself in one corner of a field with a broken leg. A hundred yards away from him lay the wreck of the aëro scout, and in the midst of it a still shape that was Fisher.

Shankhurst, who commanded the artillery on the left, always followed the dicta of textbooks where he found them as good as, or better than, his own ideas. He had done this for many years; and he had been driven to the writing of a textbook of his own, which had been hailed with delight by brother officers. But, among the tenets of his army, he had found some of unquestionable soundness, and to them he adhered rigidly.

Never were the gunners of Shankhurst's batteries wont to call into use the supply of ammunition in the limbers of their pieces until not another shell was at hand. To this adage Shankhurst clung firmly—with a host of others.

But there was another point on which he did not agree with the experts. He did not believe that smokeless powder when confined in shells deteriorated as fast as they said it did. He had written a monograph on that subject, bolstering up his contentions with several pages of convincing statistics, the results of exhaustive experiments.

When Crampton's orders brought about an easing off of the tremendous pressure on the wings, it necessitated a more rapid inroad on Shankhurst's supply of ammunition. But Shankhurst knew that there was still much in the reserve ammunition wagons—and were there not many rounds of that untouched supply still in the limbers?

But Shankhurst had not calculated that the resistance of the enemy in front of him would be as stubborn as it proved; and he never guessed that of those precious supplies in the limbers, every shell, in the face of all his theories, was bad.

It had been necessary to place one of the stations of the field telephone in a marshy spot. It was a bad place; but it was completely screened from any possibility of interference by the enemy, and it had to be done. And, anyhow, it had been placed in charge of Gordon, and Gordon was a giant. Men believed that he could make a telephone or any other electrical contrivance out of thin air if need arose.

He was a big man, with a bull's voice and strength, and it seemed perfectly advisable to leave him as the one man in charge of the post. Nothing could happen to him—and suppose it did,

everything dovetailed into everything else so beautifully that the wireless or the aëroplanes would take care of things if the field telephone was crippled.

Gordon was busy, very busy, sending orders which were transmitted to him, for an hour or more, and then things slowed up, and he found time to roll a cigarette. He swung his foot from the log on which he was sitting and looked into the depths of the marsh, now listening to the roar of battle, now watching a wheeling aëroplane.

Incessantly he swung the single foot. The English puttee—which he surreptitiously wore because he preferred it to the regulation pattern—in some way became unfastened at the top, and began to unroll as Gordon swung his leg. Presently there were several inches of bare leg exposed, and at the next swing of his foot, Gordon—who was at the moment speculating about a freak battery he had seen illustrated in a scientific magazine, and resolving that the inventor was a fool—kicked an old, ugly "water moccasin" in the head.

A good many snakes would have slipped off among the reeds; but this specimen possessed a temper and some considerable degree of courage. He lay inert a moment, then crawled back and bit Gordon in the fat part of the leg where the puttee had come unfastened.

Gordon swore, shot the snake with his revolver, looked at the short, squat body of the thing, and was not afraid. Being essentially an electrician, he did not know much about snakes. Also he was not afraid of anything, and he was very healthy.

"Rats!" he grunted scornfully. "A little chap like that couldn't hurt a fellow."

At that instant, the buzzer of his instrument signaled him, and he was flooded with orders again. When he got through, he was a very sick man, and knew it. There was a good path, but Gordon was too sick to find it. He had no whisky. Things began to swim before his eyes, and he groped for the instrument. Then he grew frightened, and tried to get out, only to wade into unfathomable black mud.

In the official reports, Gordon is simply reported "missing."

It was probably half past nine in the morning when the wireless system on the left became seriously crippled by a stray shell. It was no very bad thing in itself. It could be repaired very easily in no great length of time. It might have been ugly had there been any press of events, but everything seemed running with perfect smoothness. Besides, the wireless people knew that there was still the field phone and the aëro scouts, for at that instant Fisher's motor was still whirring without a skip, and Gordon's puttee fitted his leg as closely as did ever those of the fashion-plate pictures.

This was at half past nine. It must have been, according to the accounts which developed afterward, somewhere around half past ten when those tremendous columns of unguessed reserve strength began trickling into the lines of the enemy's right. By the statement of Fisher's mechanic, the wrecking of the air craft must have occurred twenty minutes before this. As the other aëro scouts were far to the other flank, there was no one to see this fattening of the opposing lines. The first intimation that the hard-pressed foe had gained from somewhere strength enough actually to fight back came in his first counter, the hurling out of sudden columns into the very teeth of Shankhurst's batteries.

For a time the artillery mauled these fresh troops unmercifully; and then, because mauling uses up ammunition very swiftly, the gunners had to draw on the supply in the limbers. A few minutes later, every one knew that the forty-eight guns of the eight batteries were as useless as so many snowplows—and would be for an hour.

There were frantic calls for fresh supplies, while available infantry were hurried toward the threatened point. The enemy's columns were wavering then. Had the shells been good they would have broken; but when Shankhurst's guns fell silent, they took heart, reformed, and came on.

Like the twin blows which a skillful pugilist sends in quick succession to the point of his antagonist's jaw, there fell upon the forces of the left wing the consciousness that their fighting strength and their intelligence system had been crippled at almost the same instant.

Of course, there was fresh ammunition for the guns some distance to the rear—but Crampton was never one to clog the swiftness of his army's movements by having his train too close to the fighting front. It would take time to get those needed shells; and there was no longer any almost instantaneous way of flashing back the word of the crying need. Already men were busy putting the wireless back into shape and others hunting for the break in the telephone circuit. But at the same time, the waves of the enemy's infantry were swarming thicker in front of Shankhurst's silent guns, and the seconds were ticking inexorably into eternity.

Gibbons knew from the manner in which men usually calm gibbered with excitement that something of magnitude had gone wrong. Being only a young and rather zealous cavalry subaltern who had been made aid-de-camp to a corps commander because he was intelligent and could ride like a plainsman, he did not bother his head with idle wondering as to the nature of this threatened catastrophe, but received those orders which were given him and did as he was told.

There was nothing complicated about his duty. He had to ride ten miles—as near as he could judge in the small second during which he had been allowed to gaze at the map—in the shortest possible time, and get the reserve ammunition forward with all possible speed. The excited staff officer who gave him the orders had not said as much; but it was evident from his manner that it did not in the least matter whether Gibbons ever appeared to the eye of mortal man again or not once he had delivered his message and got the blue wagons to hurrying forward behind the straining teams.

Gibbons' horse was one among a thousand. He had legs that were tireless and lungs that made nothing of one hour piled on another of hard galloping. Gibbons put him over six of the ten miles, stretched out almost flat against the animal's neck, at a speed that kept the road clear for a good bit ahead of him and thick with dust for a hundred yards behind. At the time these six miles were covered, Shankhurst's guns were firing at about one-tenth their required rate, forced now and again to resort to salvos by battery to check what lay in front of them.

Halfway through the seventh mile of the mad ride, a particle of dust got into Gibbons' eye. Had it been the right it would not have mattered, for he would have instinctively thrown his head to the right of the horse's neck as he rubbed his eye with the free hand. But the dust lodged in the left eye, so that Gibbons dodged the other way, and so did not see the little gully in the road into which the hurrying horse put one slender foreleg.

Gibbons picked himself out of a tangle of burs and weeds by the roadside, found that he was unhurt, and that the horse had a broken leg. He shot the horse mercifully through the brain, shortened the strap of his little-used dispatch bag, and pushed along on foot, breaking into a run.

Even then it would not have been too late, for Shankhurst's guns were getting yeoman service from the supporting infantry; and two cavalry brigades, who had seemed destined for nothing, had been shoved into the breach, and their annihilation took a sharp half hour, which was worth much. Even after Gibbons' bay put his slender leg into the gully, then it would not have been too late—for the smoothness and perfection of that machine of which Crampton had boasted was no small thing, after all—had Gibbons been an infantry instead of a cavalry subaltern, and so been versed in the virtue of caring for his feet.

But it was seldom that he had to walk farther than fifty yards at a time, and his feet were not fit for service. He had two or three painful corns on

one foot, and the least bit of chafing made them almost intolerable tortures. He had to keep his boots laced very tightly to walk at all.

Now walking, now running, hoping every turn of the road and top of a hill to chance upon some bit of horseflesh that would carry him the remaining distance, Gibbons pushed on. He met no teams—nothing.

He had walked half a mile when his tight-laced bootstring, strained by the unaccustomed tension caused by rapid walking over a heavy road, snapped in two places.

An infantryman would have seen that the lace was fresh. Gibbons had only noted casually that morning that it was old and frayed. He gave a scant fifteen seconds now to a clumsy-fingered attempt to patch it, and failed miserably. Then he pushed on with the shoe flapping horribly. The pain of his sore feet became torture of the most acute sort.

It might have taken him three-quarters of an hour to complete his journey in tight shoes that did not rub his feet. Hobbling as he did, he consumed an hour and a quarter, delivered his message, and set about finding a new bootlace.

In no very long time the wireless was working again, and the gap the three-foot "moccasin" had caused in the telephone was found and plugged. The perfect intercommunication of the smooth-running army was repaired. Too late, the aëroplanes from other points came scurrying across to take up the work which Fisher had left unfinished.

Also the army's left was turned.

The porch of the little farmhouse was deserted. General Crampton and his staff—the general covered with dust, his shining boots a mass of dirt, his usually placid face distorted, striped with sweat and dust, wrought frantically to save himself from paralyzing defeat, not quite comprehending what had occurred, realizing, among other things, that the unspotted reputation of the probable preëminent commander of the age was in danger of a serious smirch.

Under the tutelage of a mule driver who understood such matters, Gibbons cared for his burning, throbbing feet. When he had nursed them, greased them, and gotten them again into his shoes, he cast the broken bootlace into a ditch, accompanied by strong language. He did not swear, however, as he would have done had he known that the frayed piece of leather had lost a battle.

A COMEDY OF NAMES

CHARLES EGBERT CRADDOCK and Will Allen Dromgoole are two authors who are chums. Moreover, they are both women, and their masculine names have given them some trouble and a lot of fun. Miss Dromgoole's name is her own, but Mary N. Murfree is the real name of Craddock.

Miss Murfree on one occasion was invited to a big dinner in Boston by her publisher, who knew her only as Charlie Craddock. She accepted with pleasure, and at the appointed hour appeared at the banquet-hall door, dolled up to a fare you well—but she never got in.

"I would have you understand, miss," said the wooden-faced man on the door, "that this is strictly a stag affair, and there ain't no woman that can come to this party."

Miss Dromgoole once received a letter from James Whitcomb Riley, congratulating her on a book she had written. The letter began: "Dear Will," and concluded with a pressing invitation that "Will" should run up to Chicago and "hit it up with the boys."

A Chat With You

WE quote from a letter which a lady of Louisville, Kentucky, has been kind enough to send us:

"The advancement of the world has come through kindly, and sometimes stinging, criticism. You invite confidential talks with your readers; so in all sincerity I shall make some suggestions. Being a woman, I shall veer to all points of the globe, but finally reach port if you have patience to journey with me. Years ago, by accident, I saw your magazine in Philadelphia at the Broad Street Station. I read and enjoyed it, and have been a faithful reader ever since. Being a book-loving family we read aloud a great deal and are refreshed by the open-air, virile, clean, 'tonicky' atmosphere of your stories. We long for the West of your cowboy stories, the freedom from the shut-in life, the breezes of your seagoing stories, the absolute difference one finds from our other monthly diet. Yours is meant to be a man's magazine, but is that quite generous to the wife?—for there are wives in lonely seclusion in the West and East and South who could look forward each month to a treat in the shape of a small part of THE POPULAR. Your letters of appreciation usually come from some isolated man, and their tone shows the man. If he is uneducated it is your duty to raise him intellectually and morally before he knows it. He is an ardent admirer of your 'bully' magazine! Teach him that there is good English just as expressive as slang. A trip just completed of six months around the world has shown me the glories, the wonders, the adventures, the mysteries, and local color of the mysterious East. Your readers would be captivated at your new tone. Tell them of China, India, pearl fishing in Ceylon. My husband says the editor will read a part of this letter, laugh, toss it in the wastebasket, and say: 'Well if she doesn't like THE POPULAR she needn't buy or read it.' I have more faith in you; I am talking not for one cranky woman but for the wife in the prairies whose husband thinks the magazine 'bully.' Some of the women have a dozen magazines to select from, so it is only for those whose supply is limited that I write. It is argued—not agreed—that woman's stories are weak and sentimental. Yet all concede, woman lives the life, bears the children, suffers the deepest, shoulders the responsibilities usually without a murmur—in other words, she is a woman! Can you not give something to her? With thanks for the many delightful stories, et cetera, et cetera."

THE courteous close of this letter which we have foreborne to quote in full, in which the writer admits that she has read many delightful stories in THE POPULAR and will continue to read it, is to our way of thinking the best answer to her plea for stories that will interest women. We *do* print stories that interest women. They read them; isn't that the best proof that they are interested in them? We believe that normal, real men and womanly women have many of the strongest interests in common. If a woman has enough intelligence to bring up a family and run a household, isn't it just to suppose that she's going to be interested in the work of the world, in politics, in business, in the adventure and freedom found by those whose work takes them to the wide-open places? Did you ever take a girl to a baseball game or a football game? In the present number of the magazine, which went to press long before we read the letter we have quoted, there are a number of women to be found well worth knowing. There's one altogether charming girl to be met with in the first installment of Roman Doubleday's mystery serial, "The Saintsbury Affair." There's another real live woman in Cullen's story, "The Nurse and the Gentleman Burglar." Then there's the inimitable Mrs. Sweeny to

whom Charles R. Barnes has introduced us. She's a woman worth knowing.

THE late Professor William James, teacher of philosophy and psychology at Harvard University, once spent a week or so at Chautauqua. He mentions the fact in one of his essays. He dwells on the beautiful, peaceful atmosphere of that place, where normal, decent people gather for self-betterment. There one may dwell in a sheltered intellectual atmosphere, protected so far as is humanly possible from the unpleasant, disagreeable, evil things of the world. The strongest drink there is ice-cream soda, one hears little slang and no profanity, there are no crooks there, no intemperate, uncivilized, or disagreeable people, no gamblers, no blacklegs, no vulgarians. Even the waters of the lake are smooth and have none of the treacherous, menacing quality that underlies the surface of old ocean on even the fairest day. A delightful place, said Professor James, but after a time it began to pall upon him. The smoothness of the lake became an oiliness, the sheltered, protected air of the place became stifling. It was a good place to rest, a good place to study—so is the cloister—but not altogether so satisfactory a place to live. To be really alive one wants to know that there are disagreeable things as well as pleasant.

WE don't pretend to have, nor do we desire, the atmosphere of a Chautauqua in THE POPULAR. Undoubtedly there are delightful sleepy nooks in the Ancient World where a lotus-eater would do well to dream the years away. It is here in America, however, that the real work of the world is being done. For thousands of years the march of civilization has been northward and westward, from Asia to Egypt, from Egypt to Greece, to Rome, to France, to Britain, to America westward and northward latterly into the Canadian wild. It is in the fighting advance guard of this march of human progress that the greatest heroes are found, the most stirring deeds enacted. The farmer who makes "number one hard wheat" grow where it never grew before interests us more than the still, sunny backwaters of our race. We want to read stories of the North and West. Omar tells us that "the lion and the lizard keep the courts where Jamshid gloried and drank deep." We willingly leave them to the care of the lion and the lizard.

OF course if we can find the stir of adventure in the Far East, if we find white men doing a man's work there, and some one who can tell about it in good fiction, we want to give it to you. In future numbers of THE POPULAR you will find in stories by Henry C. Rowland the proof of our sincerity in this wish. Taking THE POPULAR, fortnight by fortnight, we think you will find in it just as many good stories of legitimate interest to women as in any magazine published. We believe the world has improved a great deal, but it isn't perfect yet. Also it takes a good many people to make up a world. All business men are not honest, there is treachery, strife, contest everywhere. The refreshing thing is that in the great majority of cases the best man wins. Generally he wins in a double sense, both over his opponents and over the lower side of his own nature. We want stories with this strife in them. We don't want stories of people and things as they ought to be, but as they are. Without blinking any unpleasant facts we are optimistic about both present and future. And if a woman likes that sort of a viewpoint, she's pretty sure to like THE POPULAR.

HAVE we been at all successful in telling the kind of stories we like, the quality that suits us best in fiction? We hope so. We think that you are of the same mind and taste. We had meant in this "chat" to talk a little more about the next issue of the magazine, out in a fortnight, but we have come to the end of the space permitted us for one issue. There is room to say, however, that the next issue has plenty of the stir of adventure, the thrill of high endeavor, the enthusiasm and charm of real things and real people. We also believe that if you ask any woman of your acquaintance to read it, she'll thank you afterward.

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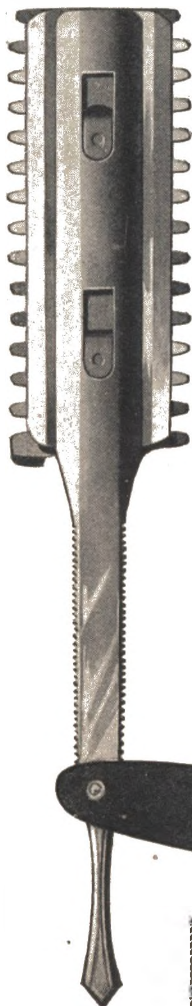

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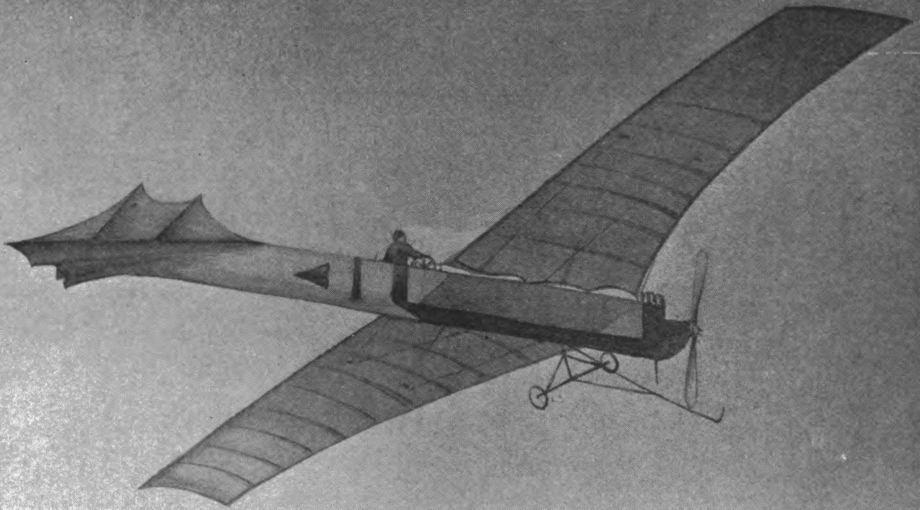

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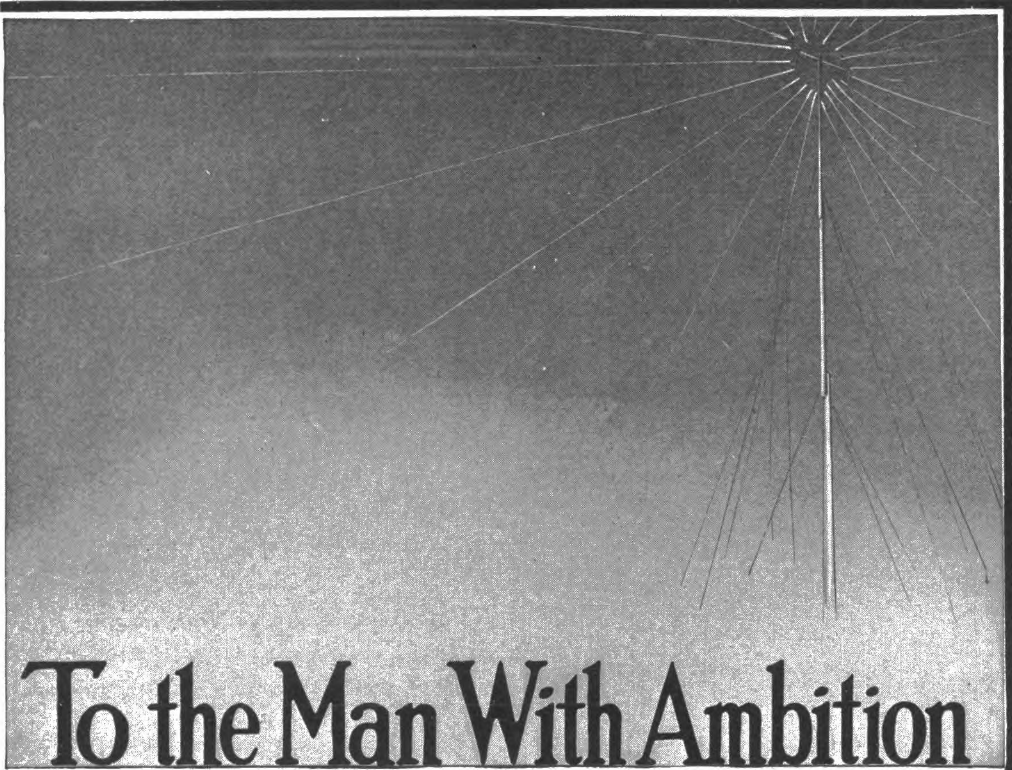

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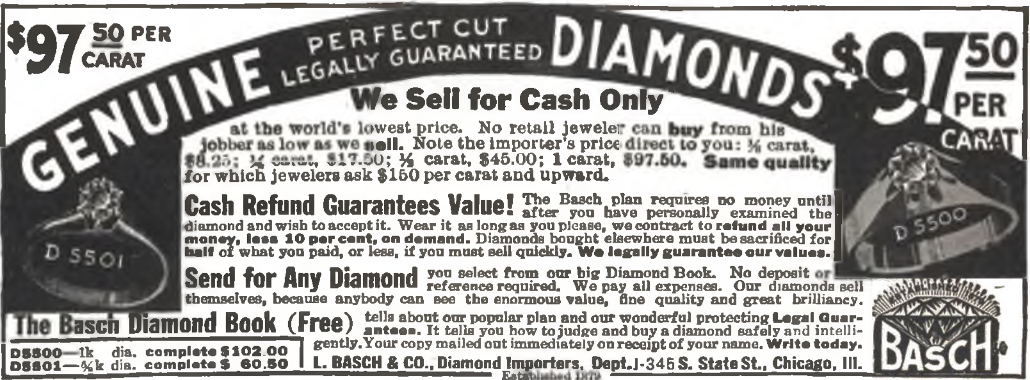

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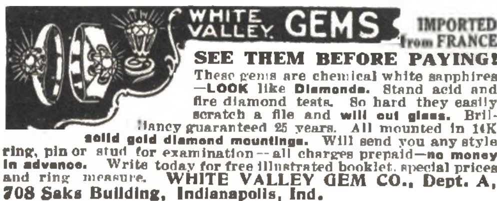

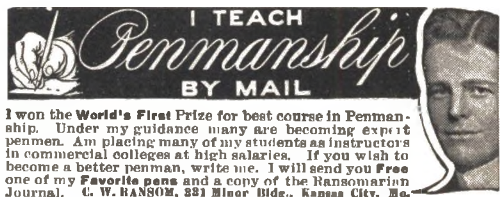

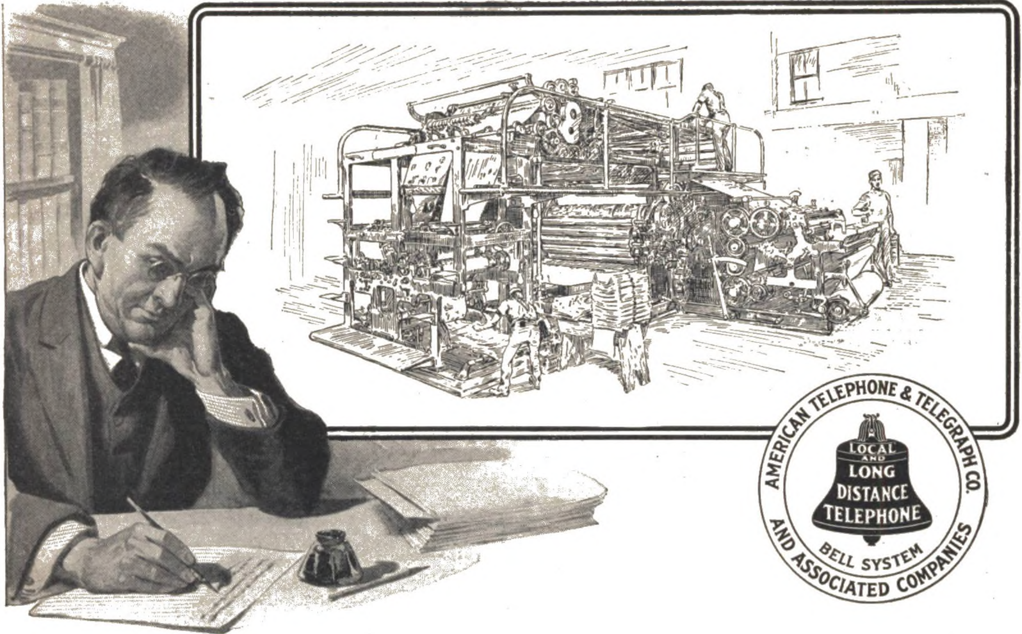

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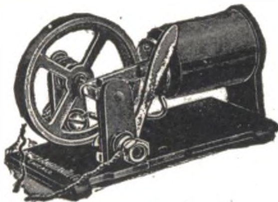

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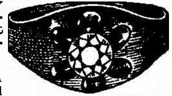

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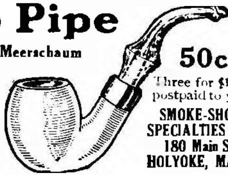

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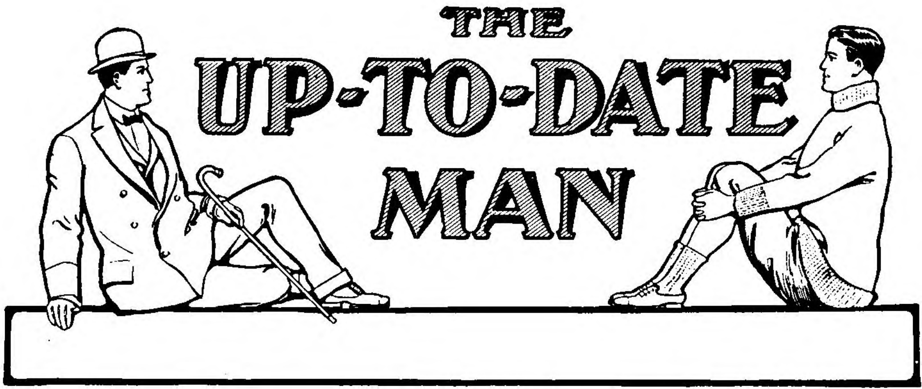
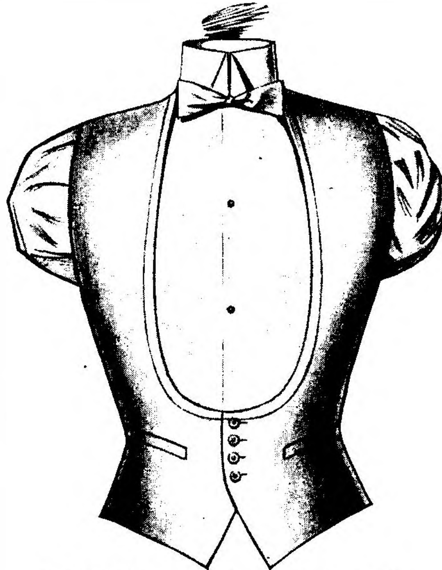


The readers of the magazine may write to this department about any problem of dress. Every question will be promptly answered, provided that a stamped, self-addressed envelope is enclosed.

TRUE fashion, like good manners, does not change fundamentally from season to season. The incidentals vary, but the essentials are preserved. I am speaking, of course, of fashion in its broad sense, and not of that narrow and silly "faddism," which makes a mountain out of the placing of a button and an epoch out of the curve of a lapel. A fop has been wittily described as "one who has no mind above his collar," and in that opinion all men of rational ideas about dress will concur.

The twin faults to avoid are eccentricity and exaggeration. The eccentric dresser strives, oh! so hard, to be "different," and in his pursuit of originality he is akin to the fearfully and wonderfully garbed "slap-stick" comedian of the music halls. Exaggeration in dress means to take a sensible mode and "go it one better" on the theory that, if the original is fashionable, the other must be ultra-fashionable. Both views disregard the clear fact that good taste, and not a fancied style, lies at the root of correct dress. I have frequently summed up the real purport of fashion here in four words: *Becomingness to the individual.* That is the be-all and end-all of dressing well.

HEWES.—Though fobs are seen on some men, they are not indorsed by the best usage. The fundamental principle of evening dress is simplicity, and the fob, twirling and fluttering with the wearer's every movement, has an appearance of fussiness that doesn't accord with the fitness of things. Ordinarily no watch chain is needed, for the watch may be tucked into the change pocket of the trousers. If, however, a watch chain be worn, either for greater security or from habit, it may be slipped in and out of the suspender ends, buckling to the front of the trousers under the waistcoat. The newest idea is to wear a broad white silk ribbon in place of a watch chain. This has a solid-gold buckle which is fastened to the center buttonhole, and extends diagonally down to the lower waistcoat pocket.



Evening Waistcoat and Correct Accessories.

DOW.—What you call "full dress," and what is more correctly known as evening dress, consists of the swallow-tail coat of black un-

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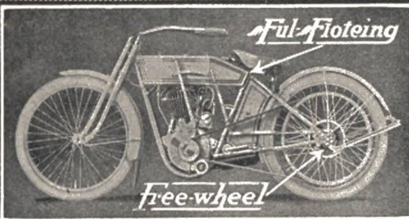

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finished worsted and trousers of the same material with outer seams braided, a white waistcoat, single or double-breasted of linen, pique, or silk; a plain shirt with cuffs attached; a poke or wing collar; a white tie of plain or figured linen or silk; white glace gloves with self backs; patent-leather shoes (buttoned) with kid or cloth tops; a silk hat and pearl or moonstone cuff links and shirt studs. Evening dress is worn on every formal occasion when women are to be met, such as an evening wedding, reception, formal dinner, and the theater. It is just as correct

The New High-crown Soft Hat.

Sunday as on week days. In the instance that you cite we do not suggest formal evening dress, because it will evidently not be worn by the other guests. While a man should, as much as possible, follow the best customs and usages, it is not considered well-bred to render one's self unduly conspicuous by wearing clothes totally different from those worn by one's fellows. To avoid embarrassment, especially in a small community, it is well to learn in advance from the reception committee of any formal affair whether ceremonious evening dress is intended to be worn.

As regards the Tuxedo jacket, we maintain that with most men it is simply a lounge coat, and for that reason

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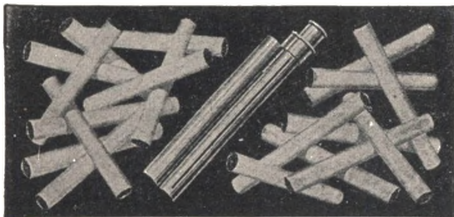

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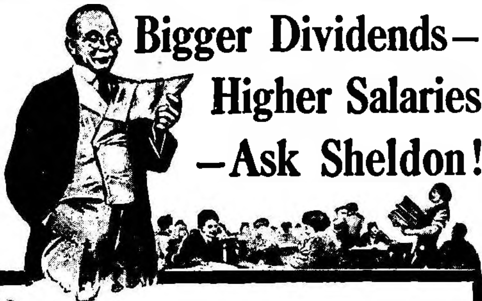

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unsuited for wear in the presence of women. The Tuxedo is in no sense a formal garment, and common breeding requires that a man pay deference to the gentle sex by the manner of his dress. The only exception to this rule is when one dines at home or surrounded by intimate friends. Three or four years ago it was common to see the Tuxedo worn at many formal assemblies, but that misuse of the garment has created a noticeable reaction against it, at least in urban communities.

You err in assuming that we lay down the law of dress arbitrarily in this department, and that we express only personal views. On the contrary, we aim to present the weight of opinion of men of assured taste and recognized social position. As we have often said, there must be a standard in fashion. Otherwise this whole thing which we call fashion crumbles. It is not expected of every reader of this department that he will follow blindly every suggestion that is put forth. We only intend to offer a trustworthy guide to those men who perhaps have not the leisure and the opportunities to study social forms and usages.

BULLOCK.—If you do not care to wear the evening dress suit because none of your friends does, you may wear a black cutaway, with gray-striped trousers. We do not advocate fulfilling the strict requirements of formal dress when by doing so a man renders himself disagreeably conspicuous. Appropriateness to a place and circumstance is an integral part of good form. In many smaller communities, evening clothes are rarely seen, because the occasions demanding them are few. In setting forth the fashions, I do it, of course, from the viewpoint of the city and with the aim of supplying a guide to those who have neither time nor opportunity to follow urban styles and usages. Conditions differ in widely separated communities. Common sense ranks above a fancied "style," and one must be careful to distinguish between the fixed fashion and the fugitive fad.

LYTTON.—Your tailor doubtless means well, but he doesn't know. Padded shoulders are no longer in vogue.

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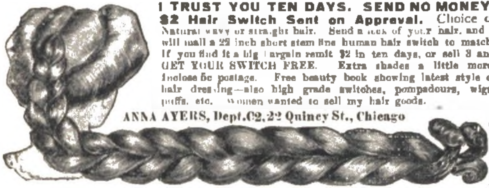

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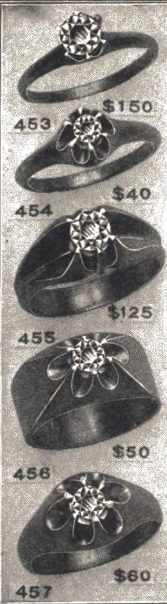

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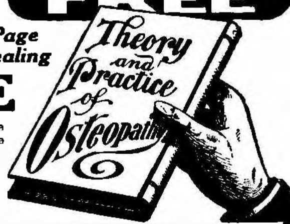

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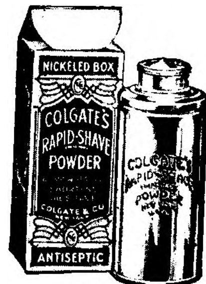

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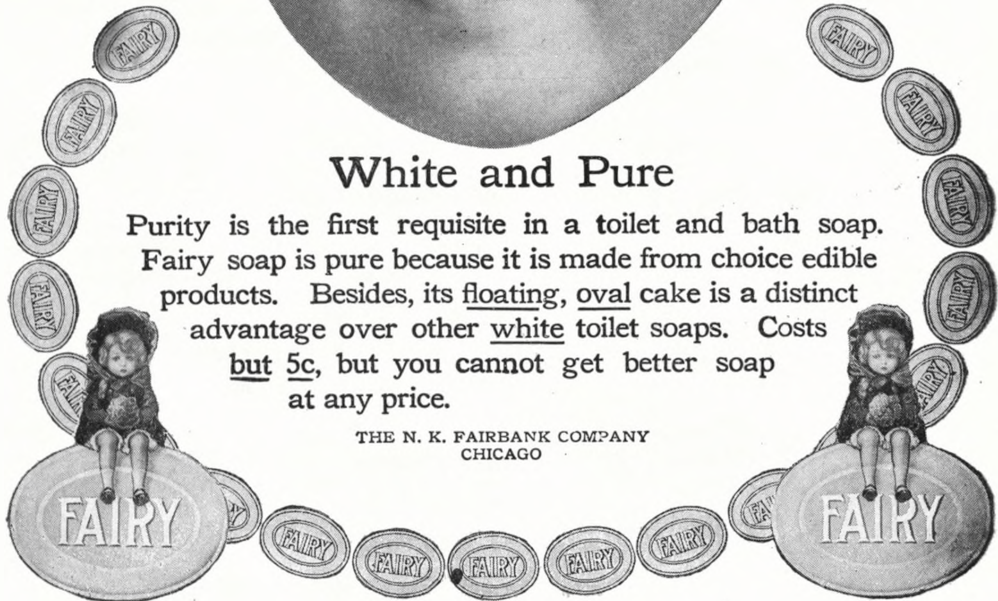

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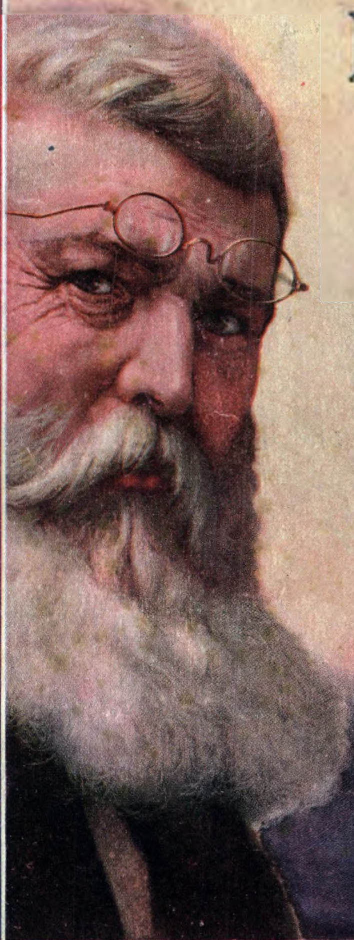

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