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The Popular Magazine

JULY
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OUT-JUNE 23, 1914



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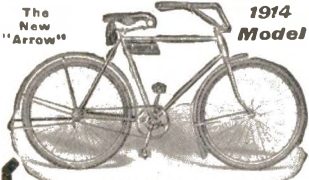
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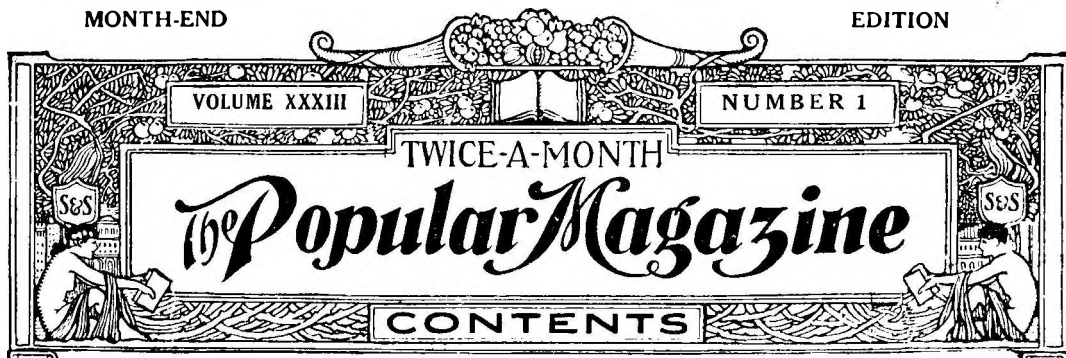


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JULY 15, 1914

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THE POPULAR MAGAZINE

VOL. XXXIII.

JULY 15, 1914.

No. 1.

Fountain Island

By Frank Blighton

Author of "Fate Plays a Masse Shot," Etc.

We have taken somewhat of a risk this time in giving you a novel in which there is no girl character. The only reference to womankind occurs in a single paragraph where, as the hero, handcuffed with three other men, passes along the street, the author says: "From the door of the railroad station a group of nightworkers poured out; among them was a girl whose face wore a look of pity as Val passed." There is no other mention of the gentle sex in the long novel. Some day, if the feminist movement progresses, a story of this kind may teem with women characters; but to-day the work is man's work—war—war in which Japan, pygmy among nations in area, but giant in purpose and a veritable Hercules in the past, is the aggressor. It is the grand entry of the island kingdom into the theater of nations. A great story, and intensely interesting despite the fact that never again do we hear of the little girl who looked pityingly at the handcuffed man.

(A Book-length Novel.)

CHAPTER I.

SHADOWED.

WHEN the flunky in uniform at the entrance to the Café Cecil reached for the handle to open the taxicab door, another like vehicle drew up simultaneously at the curb across the street.

As Valjean Borden alighted from the first cab, paid the driver, and stepped between the illuminated agate pillars framing the entrance of the newest and most ornate of Broadway restaurants, the passenger of the cab opposite did not wait to receive the change

for the bill he tendered the other chauffeur. His precipitancy in plunging across the avenue toward the same entrance which Borden had already passed through brought a pucker of surprise to the face of the chauffeur, who had obeyed his instructions to keep Borden's vehicle in sight from an obscure hotel away down in the cañons of lower Manhattan.

The pursuing chauffeur's pucker faded into a grimace of satisfaction as he pulled up the flag to the "vacant" signal, and began negotiating the turn with his machine. Never before had a sober patron handed him a ten-dollar

bill when the tariff was less than three dollars, and then, without waiting for change, plunged out of sight.

"Some pickin's," whispered the taxi pilot as he scanned the throng on the sidewalk for other passengers. "Now, if I was hep to why he was following that guy with the straw-colored hair, and could pick up the other chap for a trip back down the avenue, mebbe I'd be good for another fiver from him as velvet for the tip-off."

But Valjean Borden, tall, fair-haired, with an easy, swinging walk that suggested habitual athletic training, did not emerge from the Café Cecil to avail himself of the ideas incubating in the chauffeur's acquisitive brain. Instead, he doffed hat and topcoat, and plunged into the main dining room, scanning the gay throng at the tables with a series of rapid glances.

Valjean Borden was unconscious of the splendor of the scene, as unconscious as he seemed to be of the presence of the muscular figure of medium height who had followed him from the taxi into the foyer—a man between forty and fifty, with a short-cropped mustache which heightened the effect of his determined mouth.

Although outwardly calm and poised, Borden was experiencing an inward ferment of thought verging on "a brain storm."

His ideas were cyclonic knots, whirling from the knowledge that he, so recently a poverty-stricken, sickly student, was now not alone brimming with vitality, the possessor of a secret whose possibilities for money getting were fabulous, but that he was also the storm center of a mystery whose fibers reached from the treasure vaults of New York trust companies to the fog-curtained, storm-tossed stretches of the Bering Sea.

So, swiftly, surely, and impassively, he continued to sweep the wonderful picture before him for a sight of the

man he had come to the Café Cecil to meet. Suddenly he smiled slightly, appearing to see the little knot of expectant head waiters for the first time, and the next instant starting for the other side of the room, waving aside their services.

At a table set for two an elderly man rose to greet him.

"Good evening, Val."

"Good evening, doctor," replied the younger man. "Have you been waiting long?"

"A matter of fifteen minutes, I should say."

"Sorry," returned Borden, dropping into the chair on the opposite side of the table and picking up the bill of fare. "I am rather hungry myself, and I despise a man who cannot keep an appointment—especially with a person of the standing and prestige of Doctor Hugh Fitzmorris, who generally keeps even his millionaire clients biding his pleasure instead of waiting the convenience of others."

The physician smiled. His face was careworn, his eyes had a dull, tired look which even the careful grooming and the effect of his immaculate evening attire could not entirely conceal.

But the smile was genuine enough—as spontaneous as the tribute of the younger man across the table. Doctor Fitzmorris, although already established in his profession and in a fair way to acquire a fortune, nevertheless was susceptible enough when it came to appreciation from an admiring friend.

"It's mighty strange," mused Borden, when the discreet waiter had glided away with his order, "what changes five years will bring, isn't it? Who would have ventured the prophecy, for instance, when you were teaching me the intricacies of bacteriological research up at Brender Laboratory, that to-night I'd keep you, a man already eminent as a specialist, waiting for fif-

teen precious minutes at a dinner engagement?"

"Don't let that worry you, Val," replied his friend. "Of course there must be an explanation."

"And a reason, Hugh. I would not presume on your former kindness to me to the extent of fifteen minutes of time—unless it was unavoidable. Now, listen, please."

Borden reached for his glass, and moistened his lips before continuing. Also, he glanced warily around the restaurant, and from time to time peered into the mirror in the wall alongside, as if afraid of some scrutiny from unfriendly eyes.

"As I have already told you, doctor, I was forced by ill health to leave college during the final year of my attendance at the medical school. Frankly, I was overworked. My nerves were all but gone, my nutrition was poor, and the dean himself shot me out of the campus with the admonition to rest for at least twelve months before coming back to work.

"But what could an impecunious youth do? He hinted that I would become tubercular, unless I took mighty good care of myself. So I trekked with my last dollar into the Southwest. I spent a year punching cows down at Bill Greene's ranch at Herford, on the line between Mexico and Arizona. The old fellow knew my dad, and gladly gave me a berth. Then he became involved financially, and I took my shoe string of accumulated wages and went over to Los Angeles. From there I drifted up to San Francisco. Mighty good town, and the bracing climate agreed with me, but no chance for work that I cared to follow turned up until I got a situation on the *Senator*, a steamship going to Nome. I signed on as a purser's assistant, thinking the voyage would put the final edge on my returning health."

"You certainly look entirely well

again," observed Fitzmorris, as Borden paused, frowning slightly.

"Fit and fine, thank you. If I hadn't been—well, I don't know whether you'd have seen me at all to-night. I'm going a long way around to explain to-night's delay, doctor, but I'll arrive presently. We made Nome on the outbound voyage on schedule. I had a whirl around that Alaskan port while we reloaded for the trip back. It was growing late in the fall and delays were dangerous. Everything was ready when they found that one of our engines needed repairs, and we were hung up another week longer than we expected.

"We started south, however, in ample time to make the passage through the Aleutian Islands before the big ice from the north could overtake us—under ordinary circumstances. But the second day out something happened.

"First, there was a violent magnetic disturbance. Our compass went wrong. Then we ran into the most awful cloud of vapor—not the fog that rises when the Japan current strikes the cold water of the Bering Sea, but a dank, impenetrable, clinging, clammy sort of mist that was just like the atmosphere of a steam room in a Turkish bath. The next day it grew worse, and when the sailors dropped their buckets over the side of the *Senator* for water to swab the decks—it was so hot that we could almost boil an egg in the pail they brought up!"

The physician stared incredulously. His ascetic face flushed at the penetrating look the younger man bent upon him, and the wave of color flooded over his features until it disappeared at the top of his high, broad forehead among the roots of his sandy hair.

"No Sinbad-the-sailor stuff, either," resumed Borden, at the other's silent incredulity. "Plain, unvarnished truth. Pretty near boiling water, doctor, on the North Pole side of fifty degrees north latitude, mind you. And then,

not an hour afterward, we ran into a shower of ashes that kept us scooping this half-boiling water out of the sea with a steam pump and squirting it over the woodwork of the *Senator* to keep from catching fire.

"Talk about the tales of the Ancient Mariner! The only thing we lacked was the albatross. Every one was scared to death. We didn't know where we were going, nor what we would find when we got there. We might have been steaming back in a circle toward Nome—we might be headed for the harbor of Vladivostok—or any other direction. The compass kept spinning at times like a whirling dervish; the water kept getting hotter and hotter. Dead fish in shoals began floating alongside; a few seals went thrashing past in the mist, yelling like human beings, weird and mournful. No chance to shoot the sun; no chance to figure our position by dead reckoning because of the unaccountable deviation of the compass."

Borden paused again as the waiter approached with the meal. He took another casual glance around the room, and only resumed his narrative after the man had left.

"The way things have been breaking, I can't be too careful, doctor," he muttered, "and I think you'll agree with me when I've concluded. Well, two days later, the *Senator* went high and dry on the rocks out toward the tip of the Aleutian chain, somewhere—we never did know just where. No fault of the captain or any of the crew—just fate—the same implacable, overruling, whimsical destiny that brought me to you when I got back to New York.

"The fog was thinning out. All of the passengers and crew got off in life rafts and the ship's boats. The *Empress of Japan*, more than two hundred miles to the north of her regular course between Vancouver and Yokohama,

picked up every one but five of us who happened to be in the gig—Captain Wallace, the purser, two passengers, and myself."

"How did she miss you?"

"I'm coming to that. We had become separated from the others, and two days later we hit on an island that no chart ever showed. The sun came out. The observations were taken by Captain Wallace, and I scrawled the exact latitude and longitude in my diary. We wanted to stretch our legs and have a look at the place. It was barren, a lava formation throughout; not a sign of an animal or vegetation, and as bleak and drear a place as you would want to look at except for two things: in the center of it was a geyser of fresh water, boiling hot, but cooling as it ran down the rocks and emptied into the sea. And half a mile or so farther on was an open vein of the finest coal popping out of the rock that the eye of man ever gazed on—a mountain of it—running as far as we could see and ending at the part of the island where we had come ashore, in a cliff two hundred feet high."

"You say this was an uncharted island?"

"Never had been seen before we landed so far as I know—and not down on any map issued by the United States Geodetic and Survey Service. That's what's got me going, doctor—that and the other thing you know something about already. It isn't likely the government knows of it, although it keeps a revenue cutter up that way to warn off the seal poachers that drift over from Japan, and I have also seen several of the lighthouse tenders that ply through those waters.

"It was there I got the stuff you know about and hid it in a small sea chest in which I had kept my duffle. A little thing like that in reserve sometimes means a good deal in an open boat when you're waiting to be picked

up, you understand. The same night we made sail for the south. Three days later we were picked up by a tramp whaler. It was four months before we got back to Vancouver—and we had a tough time on that greasy old tub.

"And now, think this over: Captain Wallace sickened and die the day before we got into port—very mysteriously, it seemed to me. The first passenger to go went on a drunk and got a knife in his ribs in a Vancouver crimp joint—at least, the coroner gave that verdict. The second passenger was found strangled. The purser chose appendicitis for his exit from this vale of tears. I'm the last survivor of that ship's boat. The Jap cook on the whaler stole all of Captain Wallace's stuff before we landed. No one knows about that island but myself, except possibly that sphinx-faced gentleman, because Wallace warned us not to talk. I had a hunch of trouble breeding—and beat it out of Vancouver, pronto. A Jap followed me across the continent when I went to San Francisco to draw my pay from the company there. It wasn't that brown man on the whaler, but another of the same breed.

"And now, I'm ready to account for that fifteen minutes of delay. Some one went into my room at the hotel this afternoon. Some one pried the lid off the top of that old sea chest that I brought to New York. And some one was disappointed in not finding a certain something in that same chest—for the simple reason that I had brought it to you two weeks ago—with my own conjectures regarding its qualities."

"I understand, Val," returned the physician. "Those little brown men are the most pestiferous of all Orientals with whom we have to deal. They have an uncanny fashion of doing things that is certainly mystifying. I wouldn't swear that they couldn't project their astral bodies through the key-

hole of the door or a solid wall, either, for that matter, should other means fail and it became necessary. When it comes to achieving their object with celerity and secretiveness—well, a Jap is fiendishly clever, to say the least. I assume, of course, that they were the intruders."

Borden's candid, half-boyish face grew colder. The ingenuous expression faded away. The features were stern and forbidding, from the icy gleam that had suddenly crept into his gray-blue eyes with the physician's last words to the thin red line where his lips clamped tightly together.

He did not at once reply. When he did his answer was not in words, and he appeared not to have heard the other man's remark concerning the men from the land of the cherry blossom.

He slipped abruptly from his seat with a meaning glance at his companion, who silently followed. The obsequious waiter with the check hurried up to him. Val slipped him a bill, and kept on toward the foyer, where both procured their coats and entered the waiting limousine bearing the initials of Hugh Fitzmorris.

As they purred across the side street, the younger man turned to his friend with a gleam of triumph dancing in his gray-blue eyes.

"Sorry to terminate our dinner, doctor," he breathed between chuckles. "But one of the two men who broke into my room at the hotel this afternoon is still in the bathroom where I locked him, if he hasn't managed to get out before this. The other fellow, who was waiting in the lobby when I hurried down to keep my dinner engagement with you, was sitting directly behind me, back in the Cecil. He followed me in a taxicab when I tried to cut down my delay in keeping the appointment."

Fitzmorris returned the smile of the

younger man with an expression of perplexity.

"And," went on Borden, without waiting for the question to be uttered, "I'd like to have you make a note of the fact that neither of them was a Jap—but as simon-pure Anglo-Saxon in looks, at least, as either you or I."

He ceased speaking, a puzzled look overspreading his face.

"I don't understand why he has made no attempt to follow me now," he went on.

CHAPTER II.

FINANCED.

With the habit of a man whose professional research inclines him to think well before expressing an opinion, Doctor Hugh Fitzmorris waited until the limousine had reached Fifth Avenue and was turning north toward his residence before speaking.

The youth beside him also maintained a reticence which matched his own, and the wonderment died out of his eyes, leaving them as cold as before.

"I wonder," began the physician, several blocks farther along, "why he was following you? And why did his companion, if you are not mistaken, have the temerity to enter your room? Such a proceeding, Val, is hardly a thing to be attempted openly in a city as well policed as New York."

"Precisely what I've been thinking all the evening," crisply returned the younger man. "And, you might add, ordinary burglars do not, even when working in pairs, take such chances as Mr. Fashionable Diner back there, by following their intended victim for miles after being caught in the act, and then try to overhear his conversation with a friend at a dinner engagement in a public dining room like the Café Cecil."

"Are you sure?"

"I watched him for some time trying

to maneuver into that table behind us," averred Borden positively, "and when he slipped the head waiter a bill, I discerned it clearly, even though I was peering into the mirror. No, doctor, you are quite right about these men being no ordinary burglars. Else why did they pass up my baggage and devote their attention to prying the padlock off the old sea chest in which I brought that stuff from the island to New York?"

"Was nothing else disturbed?"

"Nothing."

"Have you any theory regarding the affair?"

"Only suspicions," frankly replied Borden. "Obviously, the Jap who was so intent on watching me after we landed at Vancouver had a pal who took up the trail where he left off. Perhaps the second chap understood English better than the cook on the whaler. Whatever the reason, the first man dropped out of sight, but I could not shake off the one who took his place.

"Now, mark carefully what happens. I come to New York. I see that my former instructor at Brender Laboratory, in the five years that have elapsed since I first met him, is already a physician of consequence—a specialist considered an authority in his line of work. The newspapers give me your name and address. I meet you. You and I talk over a certain proposition. You agree to help me to find out if a conjecture of my own will stand scientific tests. I give you something I found on a volcanic island—and then what happens?"

He broke off, staring intently at the other occupant of the limousine.

"Well," drawled Fitzmorris, "we both got rather enthused, I guess. I'm all but certain that the famous Seven Cities of Cibola which Coronado, the Spaniard, hunted, held no treasure com-

parable to that which you have stumbled upon."

Borden nodded. His eyes gleamed in the semidarkness of the speeding car. His firm jaw set, outlining the somewhat angular contour of his face with an expression suggesting the militancy burning within.

"The Café Cecil is quite some restaurant, doctor," he irrelevantly replied. "At a guess I should hazard the opinion that it cost at least a hundred thousand dollars to fit up that very nifty interior. And the diners must have some income to be able to afford the equipage, the attire, and the wherewithal to liquidate the meal checks, if they eat there often, eh?"

"It's the crack dining salon of the city," acquiesced Fitzmorris.

"And yet," went on Borden, his voice lowering a little, "what is it compared to what I have—and the place from which I procured it? All so much dull, base lead—worthless, unsatisfying, mere ashes of disillusion. Why, doctor, if we had even one ten-thousandth part of the stuff on that island here in New York and stored away in your laboratory, we'd make the fellows who put up the billion-dollar steel corporation, the transcontinental railroads, and the banks and life-insurance companies resemble children playing with mud pies, wouldn't we?"

"It would appear so, Val."

"It is so," warmly responded Borden. "Now, when you ask me what I think about this affair at the hotel, you will understand why I can't formulate any theory that will appear logical and reasonable when I see myself possibly growing as wealthy as your wealthiest client, who is the second wealthiest man in the world—according to the Sunday newspapers."

"Do you think the Jap on the whaler got a peep inside that chest?" asked Fitzmorris. His hands were twisting

nervously together, and he hung eagerly on the words of young Borden's reply.

"I'm positive he didn't. The lock was never tampered with until this afternoon, when I found it pried off the chest and the partner of the gentleman over in the Café Cecil standing there with a young crowbar in his hand."

"But why," persisted the physician, "were they so intent on following you after you landed?"

"Yes—why? Not a soul in the Senator's gig knew what I had in that old slop chest of mine."

"Are you sure?"

"Sure? Why, how *could* they know when I didn't comprehend it myself until I started to open the chest after I got back here to New York?"

"What kind of a chest was it?"

"A very antiquated teakwood affair with an air-proof lining of lead—the kind in which they used to ship tea during the days of the Pacific merchant marine. They bring it over in straw matting nowadays, wrapped in lead foil—straw's cheaper than wood."

"What gave you the first idea of its medicinal value?"

Borden shrugged his shoulders.

"After all the exploitation this particular commodity has received in books and magazines," he replied, "is it surprising that a fourth-year medical student should recognize some of its manifestations? But even then I couldn't be *sure*. That's why I'm equally sure the Japs were absolutely ignorant of the contents of my slop chest—even if part of it did turn out to be fabulously valuable. If *I* didn't know it, how could *they* guess it—even if that steward on the whaler was a mind reader?"

"Fabulous is a fine word," agreed Fitzmorris, breathing a sigh of relief. He turned to the younger man with something nearer enthusiasm than he had exhibited during the entire evening.

"One question more, Val. Why is

it that you mentioned the difference in nationality of these men who are so anxious to pry into your business that they took a long chance on penal servitude on a burglary charge—and even after discovery, both of the futility of their attempt and your knowledge of their intrusion, they keep on following you? Do you think they have any connection with the Japanese gentleman who first started the espionage of your affairs on the Pacific Coast?"

"That's easy—in theory, at least, doctor. The Jap couldn't take anything like the chance that a Caucasian could take around a hotel here in New York. So my hypothesis is that he went to one of these semi-crooked private detective agencies in the city, and paid them to do what he was afraid to try to do for himself—pry into that old chest. Can't imagine what my Japanese shadow expected to find in it. Not money, certainly, for I had to work my passage on the whaler. Neither Captain Wallace nor any of the other ill-fated three men who afterward slipped cable for the last voyage they will ever take, knew what I had secreted against a possible prolonged period while we remained adrift. Therefore, from all I can patch together of fact or theories, the Japs know nothing whatever—but are intent on some weird theory of their own."

Doctor Fitzmorris nodded. "I am greatly relieved at your conclusions, Val. Frankly, a secret as tremendous as you have revealed, with possibilities so staggering, not only from the standpoint of science, but from the monetary reward to follow its control, has been rather wearing on my nerves. They are very much frayed, anyway, after the long battle over my wealthiest patient."

Borden nodded sympathetically.

"Glad I'm not you, doctor. I only wonder that you found time to see me at all. This thing of battling for a

man's life when he happens to be worth in the neighborhood of a billion makes a physician earn all he gets in the way of a fee. By the way, how is he?"

Fitzmorris did not reply. The limousine was pausing before the entrance to his home on upper Fifth Avenue. He stepped through the door, beckoning the young man to follow him.

"I think, in view of the fact that we must talk a little further before concluding our business, that you had better come in, Val," said he.

The two men entered the house.

As they did so, a figure peering over the park wall across the street rose and waved a handkerchief twice. Another man, strolling at the corner below, walked hurriedly away toward Madison Avenue. Neither of the two bore any resemblance whatever to the subjects of the Mikado. On the contrary, they seemed to be well-set-up, alert, vigorous young Americans, somewhere around thirty years of age.

The man who hurriedly left the corner did not go far. He merely entered the private phone booth of a cigar store on a cross street near Madison Avenue.

"Hello, is this Stuy. 2121X? Well, then, this is Number Nine speaking. The young party and the older one just now went into the nest. No, I didn't see 'em. Number Seven's planted there—he gave me the sign when the birds fluttered in. What's that? Thought they shook Number One? A fat chance they had of that. The devil you say! Why, we had already covered the nest, so we were perfectly safe on that score. All right—I'll expect relief by midnight. Sure. If anything breaks, I'll keep after the young gink."

Whereupon "Number Nine" walked quickly back to his former position at the end of the street. From where he maintained his patrol, he could discern the watcher before the house, to

whom he had alluded as "Number Seven."

And, unconscious of the dual espionage, within the house Doctor Hugh Fitzmorris and Valjean Borden entered the privacy of the former's study.

"Let's see, where were we?" began the physician, tendering his friend a cigar.

"I had just asked you how Old Cræsus was getting along?"

"Quite so, Val. I recall the question now. Well, to be frank, he shows a wonderful improvement. Notwithstanding his advanced age, I have succeeded in arresting the more malignant symptoms of his ailment, and, proportionately, his optimism is returning."

"No one knows, as yet, that he has——"

"S-s-sh!" Fitzmorris raised his hand with a frown. "No one but you and me, Val—himself, and God! What is more, no one must know—or even suspect the terrible nature of his indisposition. I have given it out as indigestion—which is strictly true—but not all of the truth. You apologized to me tonight for your delay. My boy, I haven't yet told 'Old Cræsus,' as you refer to my wealthy patient, that I have strong hopes of his recovery. I have learned to keep my hopes to myself—and let the patient's condition reveal the improvement which I anticipate will follow the treatment I am giving. But permit me to now apologize to you for the delay which has occurred since our first conference. I wanted to be certain—although I could see a difference after the first day. Old Cræsus is going to get well—perhaps—and the credit is due, not to Doctor Fitzmorris, as the second wealthiest man in the world mistakenly thinks—but to you, Val."

"You mean the——"

Again the warning half frown and the upraised hand of the physician checked the impetuous youth's words.

"I was intending to mention what

I had brought, not the malady," said Borden, with a slight flush of annoyance.

"How long will it take you to get another and larger supply of it?"

The physician's brusque query took no cognizance of the other's excuse.

"I cannot say definitely, doctor."

"Well, approximately?"

"It would all depend on the resources at my disposal."

"How much money will you re-require?"

"Haven't thought. I'd need a ship, a crew, a navigator, suitable containers—and there's the element of luck to consider. Fortunately, it's spring already, and the ice will be running out when I get up that way—if I go."

"When can you be ready to start?"

"As soon as I get my clothes."

Fitzmorris made a gesture of impatience. Then his face wreathed in a gentle and winning smile.

"Pardon me, Val, you don't realize yet what this affair has come to mean to me—and my patient. Don't go back to the hotel for your clothes. Don't take any chances at all of a renewal of this mysterious espionage. Here's the second richest man in the world—doomed to die a slow, agonizing death. Only one thing can save him—the assurance of his physician that he has one of the rarest medicaments in the world at his disposal. Can you be reasonably sure of securing another supply if you have ample backing?"

"If the island is still there, I ought to, doctor. But, you must remember, it is of recent volcanic formation."

Fitzmorris searched the speaker's face with eyes in which the uncertainty of the battle for his patient's life reflected a haunting melancholy.

"Val, there's nothing in chemistry of which I cannot avail myself, provided money will buy it. In the treatment of this malady we must take into account one of the most peculiar and inexplica-

ble facts in all Nature—a fact which is absolutely incontrovertible, even while only partially comprehensible.”

“What do you mean?”

Borden leaned forward in his chair. His flushed face and shining eyes showed the suspense that filled him. He realized the tremendous significance of the moment—the confirmation of his fondest hopes or the destruction of his fabric of dreams would follow the end of that conversation.

“I will illustrate,” said Fitzmorris, relighting his cigar deliberately.

“Over in Germany there is a certain well of water of unusual properties. They use it to make photographic paper of exquisite sensitiveness. Vast quantities are imported yearly of this paper, running into millions of dollars in value. On all this a heavy duty has to be paid, not because they are philanthropists, but because they cannot do otherwise.

“So the photographic manufacturers who pay these enormous duties upon this paper have sought for years to analyze this water, in order to make this paper in America.

“The German chemists, with their superhuman patience, have catalogued every organic and inorganic element known to chemistry. But always in the case of this peculiar water, there has remained a subtle residuum which would not resolve. Hence, they cannot manufacture it in the United States, although they have spent hundreds and hundreds of thousands of dollars in the effort to wrest this secret of chemistry from the fluid of this German well.”

Borden's nod showed that he comprehended. The physician continued:

“We don't have to go to Germany for an illustration, however. Right up here in New York State we have a similar example. The water around Gloversville and Johnstown possesses certain recognizable, but also incomprehensible, properties which make for

wonderful treatment of the leather used in making gloves. I am told they cannot artificially create that quality by any chemical research with which we are now acquainted. You can see how important this principle is in the case of my patient and the peculiar medication I require for him. Money means nothing to him. Cræsus of old was poor compared to his gigantic financial resources. But ‘all that a man hath will he give for his life.’ How much money will you need to go after a fresh supply, and how soon can you be back here with it?”

Borden pondered. The earnestness of his former instructor left him a little dazed. The transition from poverty and obscurity to a position where he was privileged to name his own figure for his services was a new experience to a young man not yet twenty-six years of age.

“I could get along for less, perhaps,” he began, after a long period of thought, “but I don't see how I could be hindered much if I had fifty thousand dollars available for any emergency that might arise. And, with good luck, I might get back in ninety days.”

Fitzmorris rose from his chair, went to the safe at the side of the study, and whirled the combination. Unlocking the inner door with a key, he abstracted a package of bills.

These he brought over to the waiting young man.

“Here are a hundred thousand dollars, Val,” said he as quietly as if the transaction were one involving only a hundred. “Now you understand why I said: ‘Don't bother to go back for your clothes, and don't take any chances.’ In an hour the fast night train leaves for Chicago. Take my limousine direct to the terminal and board that train. Telegraph to Cleveland or Buffalo for what clothes you need en route. Have them brought to the train. From Chicago you can make

Seattle in three days by any one of several different routes. I don't know how far it is to Vancouver, nor how far Vancouver is from your mysterious island."

The physician paused impressively.

"I only know that with this sum you should be able to beat *Father Time* to a fine, white froth. Rent a boat, buy one, do anything which in your judgment is necessary. Only, get to your island as soon as you can, and get back as quickly as you can."

CHAPTER III.

SUSPECTED.

For seven long hours the Secretary of State of the United States had worked at his desk, following a secret cabinet meeting at which the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate had conferred with the President and his advisers.

Another meeting, this time of even greater possible significance, was scheduled to take place within twelve hours. The American nation was trembling on the brink of the most terrible crisis which it had faced following the acute and precarious position it had occupied with regard to Mexico, when that turbulent country had been torn by inward strife of a virulence unparalleled in its history as a republic.

Even a Secretary of State is not physically impregnable; and notwithstanding his giant's physique and years of wholesome living, he felt the frightful strain which had been his portion for months past.

Holding himself resolutely to the unending routine of his duties as chief cabinet officer, he felt his strength slipping away; his taut nerves seemed about to shriek their protest at the excruciating pain resulting from the overstrain to which they had long been subjected; his wonderful and abounding vitality ebbed more and more under

the accumulated work which he must still dispose of before seeking the rest which outraged nature so grudgingly gave.

For months the Secretary had been on the firing line; his smiling face had masked the forebodings of the brain struggling with the problem of placating an Oriental nation whose persistency in matters of American legislation warranted the belief that Japan was only seeking some subterfuge to justify a war of aggrandizement in the Far East—another conflict in which the territorial expansion of old Nippon could be achieved.

For months the Secretary had uncomplainingly borne the barbed taunts of the press of his native land; he had maneuvered each delicate bit of statecraft intrusted to his high office with superhuman ingenuity and patience; he had personally rushed across the continent to California to protest against legislation in the Golden State which might further inflame an already restive and intolerant nation; he had brushed aside the insistency of the Japanese ambassador with the sheer magnetism of his personality; he had evaded, explained, cajoled, until there was no loophole of diplomacy, no trick of fence with the rapier of international custom, usage, or precedent with which to longer turn aside the threatening sword of the Samurai—only the last ditch of a reference to the Congress and the President of the United States for action; and with that reference a copy of the ultimatum which left no alternative but a war should Congress and the President in turn refuse to modify the agreements which the Secretary himself had framed in his last effort to meet the wishes of the Mikado.

And this—he smiled as he thought of the futility of that last step into which he had been forced—could only avail as a further pretext for a delay of perhaps a month, perhaps six weeks,

before war, horrid, exhausting, repulsive—war which was a synonym for hell itself—war whose incredible cost in lives and human energy, as well as national wealth would stagger what was left of humanity when it had been concluded as no conflict ever before staged on earth had shaken its survivors.

The ghost of a grim smile twitched his lips as his heavy eyes rested on the wall maps grouped against the side of the room directly in front of his desk. They were all cased in a restful shade of green, rolled tightly when not in use, and drawn to their full length by green cords, terminating in green tassels at either end.

On one side of the wall where they reposed hung a life-size portrait of Abraham Lincoln; on the niche opposite was Ulysses S. Grant's picture in a frame of the same dimensions; just above the top map hung a smaller portrait of George Washington.

But it was not the presence of these three portraits which caused the half-humorous, half-derisive twitch at the corners of the Secretary's mouth. Each map was lettered plainly in gold. The contrast was so marked that the names were visible from where he sat.

Instead, it was the sudden realization of the fact, which in all his term of office had hitherto escaped his attention, that the top map was the largest of all, in breadth and length; that it was nearest to the untroubled, peaceful, and, just now, particularly reassuring countenance of Washington, father of his country—although the five sinister letters to-day blazed back at him in a baleful glare which spelled the name of "Japan."

The Secretary rose and walked around the room in profound thought. His leonine head bent forward as if the weighty ideas within found it necessary to support themselves partially by resting his chin upon his huge chest; his large hands, with their strong,

square-ended fingers, were thrust into his trousers pockets; and the unseeing eyes took in no detail of the familiar surroundings.

The worried man's vision was wholly introspective. The nation had begun with Washington. Would its glory end with Japan? Were these two things—the portrait in oil and the lithographed map—the symbols of destiny's Alpha and Omega?

There was much to sustain the whimsical conclusion—if one looked with the eyes of material perception upon the impending crisis. Japan, reputed for years following her war with Russia to be bankrupt, had, nevertheless, sent the officer second in command to Togo around the world on a pretended "diplomatic mission," in which a cousin royal of the Mikado had carried a decoration from the ruler of Japan to King Edward, of England, in return for the "Order of the Garter," which that merry monarch had bestowed upon him. The Secretary's smile broadened and the grim character of it was intensified as he recalled the scrapbook at his home in which he carefully preserved a clipping from a Seattle morning newspaper—long since defunct—which had appeared in 1907.

One man in all the world had "called the turn" upon that farcical entourage—masking the diabolical subtlety of Japan's real purpose—a young reporter.

It was Fred Kilgore who had notified the Pacific Coast, the day before the Japanese admiral and his accompanying officers sailed on the *Dakota* for Yokohama on their last leg of the world tour, of the real significance of their mission.

It was Kilgore who had called to the attention of the unheeding world that every man in that group had been either an army or navy officer of the Mikado's forces, save only Prince Yoshama, the royal cousin, who had been met by the others at Paris, and

there returned, after the bestowal of the Mikado's gift upon England's then king.

It was Kilgore, astute, ebullient, and patriotic to the core, who had asked the Japs, point-blank, why fighting men, instead of diplomats or other members of the royal family, had been sent as ambassadors to England for such a purpose; it was Kilgore who had printed the names of each Japanese in the party, with his official title; who had "played up" the unguarded boasts of Japan's chief naval constructor of the visits the party had made to the docks at Kiel, in Germany; to the naval depots at Havre; to the long inspection of England's fighting craft at Portsmouth; to the Fore River yards in Massachusetts and those on the Delaware at Philadelphia—in America; while other men from old Nippon had likewise gleaned priceless military information from army posts in all countries visited.

It was this which had attracted the attention of the Secretary of State, then a senator, to the young newspaper man; and from his small and otherwise unnoticed incident had developed his confidence in Kilgore, now, ten years later, his confidential man in the Department of State.

And, ever afterward, Japan, the supposed bankrupt, had been lavishly expending vast sums, preparing—*for what?*

Kilgore had seen what he himself had guessed; and now the prophecy of the trenchant newspaper writer as well as the latent fear of the former senator was justified in the hopeless situation with which the government of the United States was confronted: either a humiliating surrender to the dictation of a foreign ruler in the matter of framing America's immigration laws or—he shuddered at the awful significance of the three letters—W A R!

The door to the room of his private secretary opened.

Fred Kilgore stepped in.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Secretary," he began, with a strict observance of the official etiquette of their respective station, "I know you are very busy and very tired. But this dispatch from the Department of the Pacific, although innocuous enough of itself, is a thing which I feel we should not disregard in the present state of affairs."

"What is it, Fred?"

"A wire in cipher from Number One. A young man passing under the name of Valjean Borden, posing as a purser's assistant, but working as an able seaman on a tramp whaler, sir, left Seattle last night. Number One says that in his company, constantly, is a Japanese whom he has had under surveillance for a long time as a suspected spy. Also, the Jap steward on the whaler was seen hanging around this Borden's lodging house in Vancouver—according to Number Three, who passed the tip to Number One. One says that Number Seven, whom he assigned to the duty of shadowing the suspect, reports that the two are very cautious. They are never seen together, yet the Jap and Borden are always in the same town on the same days; often in the same hotel; that wherever Borden goes the Jap goes."

The Secretary looked curiously at his confidant.

"But that is not of itself suspicious, is it, Fred?"

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Secretary. You know what occurred only four months ago near the extreme end of the Aleutian Islands. The revenue cutter which reported the discovery of the volcanic upheaval and the significance it might have for Japan——"

"Oh, yes, it quite escaped me for the moment. Of course, Fred, that makes anything from the Bering Sea region quite well worth our attention. Has this Valjean Borden been up there—or does Number One know?"

"I was about to add, sir, that he represents himself as the sole survivor of five men who escaped in the captain's gig, when the Pacific Steamship *Senator*, bound from Nome to San Francisco, went aground near that volcanic disturbance, but on one of the already well-known Aleutian Islands. Borden seemed desperately anxious to get into Seattle from Vancouver. Number Three came with him. Another Japanese met the steward of the whaler—and that suspect is now accompanying the Caucasian East. Did I mention that Number One says the two have already left Seattle? Yes? Well, Number One wants instructions."

"Tell him to run out the clew and report in person here if it is confirmed," rejoined the secretary.

Kilgore withdrew.

The Secretary of State turned back to his desk—his mobile mouth framing a sneer of contempt for any American who would permit a Japanese within a hundred feet of him at such a time; to say nothing of cultivating a voluntary intimacy for any reason under the circumstances so pregnant with evil.

"Thank God!" he muttered. "We still have the most efficient and dependable system of secret agents in the world—men whose real names are known only to the President—although their numbers and the identification word each carries are known to me. In the midst of such a period as this their unceasing vigilance and unpurchasable integrity are miraculous. Men who may be called on any hour to suffer an ignominious death for their country; men whose pay is absurd when it is considered what hazards hang over them; men without anything but an unwritten word—nameless men to all the world—men sworn never to breathe a whisper of their occupation, no matter what the provocation; men whose heart's blood helps keep alive

Freedom's holy light. Thank God we have such men in America."

CHAPTER IV.

PURSUED.

The more ominous the situation in diplomacy, the less likelihood exists of public information regarding it. It is only the surface of disturbed governmental relations that is quickly reflected in the news of the day.

In the case of anticipated trouble with an Oriental nation like Japan—and even when the inevitable rupture grew hourly more imminent—so, inversely did the officials at Washington permit the real state of affairs to become known. As for Japan, her own minister gave the lie to suspicions regarding his nation by his habitual professions of amicable intent.

It was not strange, therefore, that Valjean Borden should fail to realize a situation which other people, with far less of the unusual to demand attention, were entirely ignorant concerning. Even had the newspapers featured the real facts, it is doubtful if he would have attached more than casual significance to them.

There were two reasons for his lack of interest in such an affair. First, a far more compelling idea dominated him—the prospect of enormous wealth. Again, the "Japanese war scare," so-called, has been a fruitful theme of discussion, particularly upon the Pacific Coast, for years. And, in proportion, it has lost much of its power to alarm.

Always, in times of economic stress, the Caucasian has risen in his wrath and demonstrated his contempt for the quiet, recondite Asiatics and their habit of acquiring where others cannot exist. Riots and inflammatory utterances have not been uncommon. Pacific Coast politics have always taken into account the "race question" since the days of Dennis Kearney on the sand lots of San

Francisco, and his terse slogan, echoed back from ten thousand throats: "The Chinese must go!"

But, however often the cry of "Wolf!" has been raised in the hinterland beyond the Rockies, the actuality itself, even if it had been known, would have produced at first only an incredulous smile. The idea of Japan at hand-grips with the United States is too absurd a topic for debate, save by members of the Asiatic Exclusion Society.

This complacent attitude, however, was not the prevailing state of mind of official Washington—particularly in the office of the Secretary of State.

For months past his secret agents in Europe, in the Far East, in British Columbia, in Mexico, and along the Pacific Slope from Tia Juana to the straits of Juan de Fuca, had reported the true condition of affairs.

The masses of Japan were not now raging nor uttering boasting words. The jingo press of that country was not indulging in its periodical spree of editorial defiance, nor fighting trans-Pacific verbal duels with editors from Seattle to San Diego.

Outwardly there was nothing to arouse suspicion. "From all appearances," as the Tokyo correspondent of one New York newspaper began a cablegram to his journal: "There is no sign of any enmity toward the United States." But the dispatch, after all, referred to appearances; and appearances, especially in all matters Oriental, are not always the reflection of reality.

While the commercial and diplomatic intercourse between the two nations remained outwardly serene, the Secretary of State and his fellow cabinet officers could have told some very significant and not altogether reassuring facts.

They knew the huge proportions of war material purchased by Japan from European manufacturers and shipped to South America, and reshipped around Cape Horn to avoid suspicion.

The Secretary of War had a duplicate of the original order calling out the Hoju—sometimes known as the Ersatz reserve—composed of all citizens not in the active army or active reserve, between the ages of seventeen and forty. It was in the official language of the country and one corner was stained with the blood of a faithful servitor of Uncle Sam who had given his life for the information.

The Secretary of the Navy knew daily the shifting positions of every fighting craft afloat from the twin dreadnaughts *Fuso* and *Settsu*, with their displacement of twenty thousand tons, down through the long list of battleships of the first and second class, armored, protected, and unprotected cruisers, to torpedo craft and submarines.

Yet none of the information at their disposal could be relied upon as authentic save from the staff of secret-service men swarming in Asiatic seaports; and these cables in cipher were sometimes delayed in transmission until the whereabouts of the maneuvering ships might be a thousand miles from the place at which they were reported when the message was sent.

In one thing, however, there was absolute unanimity. Japan was feverishly mobilizing both her army and her navy, but with that profound and characteristic secrecy which made her military strategy so formidable. Hither and yon marched or sailed the forces of the Mikado—but no man might tell for what purpose nor to what point of the compass they were really intended to be dispatched when all had been concentrated.

The preparations indicated that nothing which could contribute to the efficiency or comfort of any branch of their forces on sea or land was lacking. They were as prodigious in the expenditure involved as the details were undiscoverable.

This, then, was the situation on the same afternoon that Valjean Borden, still obsessed by the great idea which rendered him careless of all else, stepped out on the wayside platform of a little Wyoming station, facing the unwelcome knowledge that he was undoubtedly the object of surveillance by a fellow passenger.

He knew he could not be mistaken.

His intuitive feeling that he was being followed, that every act was scrutinized, that he was never quite alone, had been growing since he left Chicago.

Once he had caught the watching eyes of this same individual at the cigar counter of a railway eating station; he had also noticed that whenever the train approached a scheduled stop the same fellow kept him in sight until it was again under way.

And now, as he stepped around the corner of the station in the purpling dusk of the coming night to stare at the first fringe of the higher Rockies, the same individual had appeared on the other end of the otherwise deserted platform, and under the pretext of lighting a cigar had promptly assured himself that Borden was still there.

Val stepped back to the train in an ugly mood.

His life had been clean, open, and utterly without legal reason for this continued espionage. He wondered how and why he was being followed. He knew nothing whatever of the famous "foreign legion" of diplomatic agents with their domestic affiliations. Few people ever do, and these—aside from the President or his cabinet officers themselves—only by hearsay. Like all else that is vague and intangible instead of concrete and obvious, Val believed the stories of this organization to be fiction—interesting, complex, or thrilling, but, nevertheless, merely fiction.

Suspicious come naturally to a man bent upon a secret mission. When he

also carries a small fortune belted around his body and has experienced other mysterious interference with his affairs fifteen hundred miles away, the suspect may be excused some slight apprehension.

"He isn't either of the fellows who came into my room," reasoned Borden, as he reentered the club car. "But he's altogether too persistent in his artless watching to make it accidental. I wonder who he is and what game he is playing?"

Once more he filtered through his mercurial brain the sequence of events which had led him to New York. The result was the same. No other conclusion was possible than that which he had given Doctor Hugh Fitzmorris regarding the affair in the hotel.

"They couldn't know what I had in the chest," obstinately averred Borden, "because I didn't know it myself until I'd been there a week. I haven't told any one except Fitzmorris, and I'm dead sure he hasn't told any one, not even his patient. This circle loops the loop from the Aleutian Islands to the Café Cecil, and it ends where it began—with either those pesky Japs or their hired men. Ah!"

He straightened back in his chair with the exclamation. It was all very simple—so simple he wondered why he had not thought of it before.

The volcanic island held a wonderful vein of coal.

Likewise, it was fully as near to the seacoast of Japan as it was to the mainland of the United States proper.

Coal on the land on which it is located, for that matter, is the property of the nation first laying claim to it. Val dimly remembered something about grants by reigning monarchs to subjects with "a pull."

"That must be it," he mused. "Of course there's coal in Japan. But more coal means more money. If Japan claims that island, well, I'm likely to

have trouble getting what I'm after. They don't know there's something else there that makes the coal look foolish—but I know it. Seems to me there may be something in this hunch that will pay me to think over carefully. This gentleman who takes such an interest in my affairs is evidently reporting to some one—and is paid for doing it—otherwise he wouldn't be here.

"Now, let's see what else, if anything. If Japan knows about this island, it's a cinch the Mikado's government knows about the coal. Even if they have plenty of coal in their own country, a little slice a few thousand miles away would come in handy for a fleet. That's it. They had a clause of some kind in their English treaty a few years ago providing for a coaling station up Vancouver way; and our government kicked to Johnny Bull, and the clause was abrogated, if I remember rightly. That's the idea—coal by right of prior discovery spells naval base. No wonder the Japs have enough coin to hire American detectives to follow me around. All right so far, if my premises are correct; and if they are not—but, pshaw! They *must* be!

"If Japan hires these detectives they must be private detectives, which is another name for legalized crooks. So I needn't be too scrupulous in my treatment of them, in case it comes to a show-down."

From over the top of the illustrated London periodical he was pretending to read Borden appraised the figure of the chap at the other end of the car. In case of a fight, he decided, he would not be far behind the other in physical prowess, now that he had deduced his probable character.

At the same time he must proceed cautiously. He must match craft with guile; for, to win the fortune which was his by right of discovery as much as the coal might belong to Japan, he would need every ounce of physical

strength he possessed, to say nothing of more finesse in maneuvering circumstances than he had ever been called on to exhibit prior to this time.

Hour after hour, as the train climbed slowly up the eastern slope of the Rockies, Valjean Borden formulated theory and plan, weighing, dissecting, analyzing, rejecting, and again combining ideas until the porter from the diner bellowed his final call for dinner.

He rose languidly, strolled forward to enjoy his evening meal, and whispered an order to the waiter to take a few sandwiches to his berth for a light lunch later on in the evening.

Then he returned to the club car and busied himself in observing the route of the railway along which they were traveling. Likewise, he carefully studied the schedule of passenger trains, made copious memoranda, and then retired to his berth.

In the lower of the sepulchers which serve as beds on railway trains, the former medical student began the practical phase of his strategical operations against his unknown watchers in the most simple manner. He first slipped his shoes beneath the concealing curtain so that they could not be overlooked by any one passing. Likewise, he allowed his derby hat to remain in the unoccupied upper berth, and plainly discernible through the gap in the curtains which he closed carefully below.

From his suit case he took a close-fitting, visored cap, and a pair of shoes which he had formerly worn. The jacket of his pajamas he drew on over his other clothing. Fully attired and with the cap in his coat pocket, he drew up the bed covers close to his chin—and waited.

After a long time, and when the heavy puffing of the two engines ahead showed that they were approaching a still steeper part of the ascent over the continental divide, through a tiny aperture next the end of the berth in which

he was simulating sleep, Valjean Borden reversed the order of things by watching the man who he believed was spying upon him, as that individual strolled through the darkened car.

His heart bounded as he noticed the slower gait with which the spotter glided past; he wanted to reach up and strike the face which cautiously inserted itself between the curtains. The boldness of the otherwise stealthy performance was incredible.

It was the last link in the chain of suspicion which the former student had been weaving together during the earlier hours of the night.

"Just like the nerve of those fellows who came into my hotel and pried open the chest," he angrily whispered to himself, when the figure in the natty gray-checked suit had stolen on.

"Foxy, too, ain't he? Saw the shoes, saw the hat—but wasn't taking any chances on a plant. Well, any time I can't outfigure a plain, mercenary crook like that I hope he puts such a crimp in me that I fall down on the biggest thing in the world. I hope he anchors me fast to some rock out here in the middle of this God-forsaken country. But, if he does, he'll have to go somewhat speedier than he's started out to travel, so far. I wonder how they picked up my trail again after I slipped away from that guy in the Café Cecil?"

He debated the matter for a few seconds. The fellow for whom Val's dislike was now growing more intense with every moment came cautiously back through the car. Even before the younger man had caught sight of the now familiar and odious clothing pattern through the chink in the berth curtains, his stimulated perception detected the spy's individuality through his walk.

"Must have had a pal outside watching, and, of course, they could have tracked the limousine over to doc's

house from the café, and then again to the station," he muttered to himself.

Then, with a tightening of nerves at the increasing tenseness of the situation, a momentary sense of humor rescued Borden from downright anger. The uneasiness of the man watching him showed that the simple artifice he had planned would not be likely to succeed unless the unknown man was again convinced that his quarry was still in the berth.

For his own part, Val felt that he must hammer that hateful face, should the features be again inserted into the privacy of his sleeping apartment.

He knew that such an action would be entirely justified. Nevertheless, in his volatile brain something whispered that it would be better to meet the craft of his pursuer with superior guile—a trick calculated to throw the watcher completely off his guard while the supposedly unsuspecting object of his scrutiny should leave the vicinity.

The inspiration came with his resolution.

Val sat upright in his berth. As his deft fingers reached for the window and shoved the noiseless curtain up far enough to permit the window to be fully raised, he simulated a gentle snore.

The man moved on.

In another moment, and while the locomotive ahead whistled its hoarse and fortuitous warning for an approaching grade crossing, Val slid the window to its full height. Immediately he drew down the curtain. The night breeze bellied it inward, showering the apartment with the cooler air of the higher altitude into which they were still climbing.

Much to his disappointment, the speed of the train began to accelerate. So, for the next few minutes, forcing upon himself a calmness which was a sharp contrast to his feverish inward excitement, he lay down again. At certain intervals he would snore gently—

then raspingly, and, breaking it off short, grin at his acting to an audience of one.

He sat bolt upright as the renewed laboring of the two engines and diminishing speed of the train showed that the former spurt had been but the prelude to a still more trying climb for the Limited.

"If that fellow is going to sit up there all night, how and when does he sleep?" he asked himself. "There must be two of them, at least—and maybe more. Probably they take turns."

His train of reverie terminated abruptly.

From the deep-throated exhaust of the engines ahead, from the creaking of the wheels on the curves around which they were painfully crawling, from the increasing cold and mental calculation of the distance traveled as well as the figures of altitude which he had carefully studied in the time-table against this very moment, young Borden knew that they were nearing the summit and that his opportunity of escape—if ever—must be taken now.

He emitted a final, long-drawn, stentorian snore.

Before it had gasped and died, he was outside, hanging with one hand to the edge of the window sash and fumbling for the catch above with the other.

As the leading locomotive shrieked again, this time signaling the station a half mile farther on, Val permitted the window to fall, and, releasing his hold, he dropped to the path alongside the tracks.

He landed without injury, and flattened himself against the ground. The train rumbled and creaked slowly around the curve. Its twinkling green and red signal lights vanished.

With a chuckle of satisfaction, despite the chill of the night air, the young man with a mysterious mission plodded along behind, intent only on keeping out

of sight of every human being until he could devise some method of continuing his journey which would afford him a respite from the strain he had been under the past six hours.

Ten minutes afterward he almost overtook the train. They were changing engines at the summit.

On the passing track alongside lay a long freight.

He dodged around the end of the caboose, thus interposing the cars between himself and the passenger train, mindful of the fact that the watching man might descend to the station platform to stretch his legs. It was the first stop for a long time.

As he crept stealthily along in the shadow of the waiting freight train, an idea occurred to him.

He could not be sure, but it was probable that the man whose vigilance he had just eluded might take a notion to again peer into that berth—especially if the snores were no longer emanating from it.

It might be five miles, ten miles, or fifty miles farther on. But, sooner or later, no matter what distance the already-departing passenger train might have traversed, his absence would be discovered.

Then, judging by all that had gone before, there would be a prompt and vigorous search for his whereabouts.

The men who had followed him from New York halfway across the American continent were well financed. They would not be lightly dissuaded from their purpose—as their pursuit from the hotel to the Café Cecil, from the café to the residence of Doctor Fitzmorris, thence to the railway station, and now to this lonely spot in the Rocky Mountains surely evidenced.

Since leaving Rawlins, the railway had struck off at a tangent to the northwest. Val had already seen, from the map, that the line ultimately came out on the Pacific Coast, after emerging

from the mountains into the valley of the Columbia River.

It was the only railway for many miles. Before him, ere he could reach Portland or Seattle and make his way to Vancouver before striking out on the last leg of the eighteen hundred miles he must travel from the British seaport to reach the coveted island standing stark and drear amid the fogs of the Arctic Ocean, a great many miles still intervened.

Roads, in such a country, were likely to be precarious and perhaps impassable. Automobiles were rare in localities so sparsely populated. The omnipresent telegraph, however, could pick him up easily enough, should he avail himself of such conveyances.

If he were again found and followed, what had he gained?

So, the particular side door of the big box car standing just ajar, gaped an invitation that appealed for more than one reason to the young man who so badly wanted to double cross his trailers. By taking the westbound freight, he could keep on in the direction he must still follow to get to Seattle with the minimum expenditure of time.

Likewise, he would be closer to the train ahead than his pursuers would be likely to apprehend—once his absence from it were noticed. Unless they were omniscient, they would hardly foresee such a clever move as he was about to make.

He smiled as he heard the passenger train pulling out. For several minutes he was motionless, watching the flashing of the conductor's lantern between the cars, as he returned from the station to the caboose.

No one guessed Val's presence there, and he renewed his speculations.

By ensconcing himself in the empty freight car he could keep on. By watchful care during the hours of daylight, he might baffle the hateful espionage of

his movements—uninterrupted, probably, until now. He might even assume a disguise and ultimately succeed in reaching Seattle without discovery.

Two things decided him. The night was far colder than he had believed could be possible at the time of the year. The clank of the buffeting drawheads backward, as the engineer shunted each integer of his train close together in order to "pick up" with the least expenditure of power, warned him that he must get in or remain stranded on the mountaintop until the next train.

Then it started with a briskness that was surprising.

Val clutched for the car door.

He pushed it wider, threw himself inward on his chest, and scrambled to his feet inside. The car lurched ahead with a bang. With difficulty, he managed to retain his footing, but the momentum sent him spinning across the blackness which he had not yet had time to explore.

He stepped on something soft and yielding, but it writhed from beneath his heel, spitting out a string of oaths.

The train leaped forward, dashing down the grade behind the passenger train which had whirled over the same tracks ten minutes before. With "home" and "distance signals" of white to beckon him on, the engineer sent it clattering into the night at a speed which forbade Val to exit by the way he had entered.

Then a match blazed up.

In the Cimmerian darkness of the car, it radiated a more than sufficient light to reveal to the youthful adventurer three as brutal and ferocious countenances as he had ever seen pictured.

As it flickered and died, he suddenly remembered that he had more than ninety-nine thousand dollars in currency on his person!

CHAPTER V.

INCARCERATED.

As Valjean Borden more fully realized his unenviable situation, the first shock of surprise bordering on terror gave way to outward composure, and he instinctively shifted his position.

Hence, the hobo on whose face he had stepped, who was still breathing blasphemy as he hurled himself forward where he supposed the intruder to be standing, merely brought up abruptly against the side of the car.

A chorus of warning and advice rose from his two companions. Then another match flared, and a bit of candle in the hand of the man farthest away again revealed the interior with its flame.

Val, with his hands in his coat pockets, stood leaning against the side opposite where they had supposed him to be.

"Looks as if I'd got into the wrong berth," he said.

The three stared.

The incongruous appearance of the young man provoked a momentary perplexity. His neat clothing and unsoiled linen showed that he was no hobo. Also, he still wore his pajama jacket which he had pulled over his clothes in the Pullman berth. In the excitement of leaving the train he had forgotten to remove it.

Something of his friendly attitude was reflected in the face of the third and least evil looking of the three hobos—the man holding the candle. He was younger than either of the others. Also there were traces of intellectuality on his clean-cut face, and dissipation had not altogether wiped out a certain resoluteness which Nature had stamped upon it in earlier years.

He might have been anywhere between twenty-eight and thirty-five—probably younger than he seemed, Val concluded. And to him the intruder

addressed his remarks, ignoring the man with the bruised face, who was still growling imprecations.

"You see," went on Borden, addressing the youngest man of the trio, "I had to hurry. It was cold outside, and I didn't want anybody to see me. The train started so quickly that I had no time to look around." He turned to the man on whom he had stepped. "I'm very sorry, old man. If there's anything I can do to square this——"

"Yes, you can take this wallop——" And the man made a rush at him.

Val jerked his hands from his pockets and clenched his fists.

But there was to be no fight in the car. The man with the candle intervened. With one hand he grabbed the belligerent hobo and spun him around.

"Cut that out!" he said. "Ain't no need fer any scrappin' so far as I can see." Then he turned to Val. "Omaha, here, is some hot-headed. But c'n ye blame him? S'posin' it was you, bo, gittin' a little sleep, and somebody crunched a heel down on your face—hey?"

"I'd swear some myself, I guess," grinned Borden.

"I guess he ain't got no reason to croak ye for an accident, 'specially as we've got other business in this section. Hey, Omaha?"

The guttural apology for assent from Omaha was not altogether reassuring, but it signified that the impromptu truce was gaining headway.

"Querer rig," said the leader, looking at Val's pajama jacket.

Borden nodded. "I was in a hurry to get away back there at the summit. I was in the Pullman, another fellow was just outside my berth, and I beat it out of the window while I had a chance."

"From what?"

The direct, terse question was voiced with a latent authority which Val had

noticed when the man with the candle had interfered to explain Omaha's righteous indignation. Something of the real character of the speaker tinged the words. They suggested a mailed fist in a kid glove.

Nevertheless, Borden's composure remained unruffled. He smiled broadly back into the face of his inquisitor.

"I haven't known you very long," he replied, "but I guess you are not the kind to press for details from a fellow fixed like I was. I've told you that I wanted to make a get-away—and I made it. And the farther I get away, the better I'll be pleased."

"Sure you was in the Pullman?" retorted his questioner.

Val's hand plunged into his inside pocket and he pulled out the unused portion of his ticket.

The other nodded and a little of the dubiety died out of his face. "This freight's going the same way," he continued.

"I know it. But they won't think I kept on toward Seattle—they'll be looking back along the road toward Rawlins for me. That's where I double-crossed 'em. Now," he went on, replacing the ticket, "you boys can see that there was no way I could know that you or any one else was in this car. My business is mine, just the same as yours is yours. I'm very sorry that I mussed up our friend there, but what's the use of fighting over what can't be helped now, when we've all got something more important to do—at least I have. I said I'd like to square it—and all you've got to do is to tell me how."

There was a further period of silence while the three drew apart to confer.

Val lighted a cigarette, and the glow of it outlined his face when they occasionally peered back at him from the forward end of the car.

"I tell you he's a 'fattie,'" cried Omaha after a prolonged parley. "I'm

gittin' sick of these fresh bulls. Ain't it bad enough to be jest——"

"Shut up!" hissed the leader venomously.

"There you go again," wailed the other tramp. "Hain't I got no rights on this here expedition?"

"Not while I'm runnin' it—and if you want to run it yourself, I'll quit cold. You listen to me, Omaha——"

Again the lowered voices merged indistinguishably into the roar of the train.

Finally the other two lay down in the end of the car, spreading their shabby coats over their shoulders as they pillowed their heads on their arms. The leader walked back to where Val was standing. The bit of candle he carried was almost consumed, and the grease was guttering down on his hand.

"If you don't mind, bo, I'd like to have you come acrost with a little more stuff about why you left that train," said he. "Omaha and my other friend don't like the way you kicked in here. You hain't a bo—that's a cinch. And I don't believe you're a bull in plain clothes. But all three of us have been up against some tough propositions with that kind of people. That's why I'm asking you what made you jump the cushions and glom a rattler bound the same way, when you had a ticket."

"I'll admit it looks queer," laughed Val. "But I'm no bull, and both of you boys back there ought to know it. A bull wouldn't come in here single-handed, without a gun, if he knew you were here, would he? Surely not unless he had a friend or two waiting outside. So, if I was an officer, it wouldn't help Omaha or either of you others to try to hand me anything, would it? If I had friends outside you wouldn't have a chance. Now, I'm neither a bull nor a hobo. I simply had mighty good reasons for leaving that train. Come over here a minute."

Borden finished his sentence with a

mysterious nod toward the opposite end of the car. The other followed. Screening his act by his body, the intruder pulled out a roll of bills.

The hobo's eyes widened admiringly, his doubtful face clearing.

Then he laughed.

"I make you now," said he, with a chuckle. "You're a dip. You made a touch in the Pullman and the mug spotted you. Sure—that's easy."

Borden stripped off several of the larger bills and handed them over with a slight smile.

"I am not making any explanations," he equivocated, "and I'm traveling alone, as you see. But if this will square it with you boys, here's some of what I carried with me when I dropped out of that window. I ain't out of the woods yet," he significantly concluded.

The other man nodded comprehendingly.

"Always glad to meet a good gun, even if he's a dip instead of a box man, which same is me," he explained, with a touch of pride. "I'm Kansas City Kennedy—K. C. Kennedy is my monicker—mebbe you've heard of me."

"This is my first trip West," parried Borden, relieved to find that the hundred dollars with which he had parted possessed such potency in shunting aside the last suspicion in the leader's mind.

Kennedy's understanding smile was now one of real friendliness.

"You're a New York gun, then?"

"Left there three days ago and was trailed all the way," truthfully averred the other. "That's why I had to lam out of the window—they might have pinched me at the summit."

"Wise move," approved Kennedy. "I'd travel alone, myself, but in box work you can't. Gotta have a man outside, and one to help with the tools and juice."

It was Val's turn to nod affirmatively. He began to discern that his com-

panion was a safe robber. The argot of the underworld, often obscure and likewise subject to change, was new to him.

"Workin' alone gives you all the best of it," went on the other, as the flickering candle expired. "The squarest pals in the world, when they fall and are up against a long stretch in stir, sometimes squeak. Then the dicks git your description. That's why I'm up in this country. They've got me mug floatin' all over Missouri. But they hain't got me—yit!"

He fell into a reverie which Val did not disturb. The reaction from the strain of the evening was beginning to affect him. He was tired. He lighted another cigarette to keep awake and sat down on the floor of the car. The motion was decidedly different from the Pullman, with its triple-wheeled trucks and long springs, yet it was better than he expected.

"No gain without some loss," was the thought that filtered into his mind as Kennedy dropped alongside and accepted a smoke.

Borden was silently speculating on what would follow the discovery of his flight from the Pullman. If the sleuth who had been at such pains to assure himself of his actual presence in the berth should take it for granted he was still there during the night, it would be morning before he would be missed.

By morning there would be quite a gap between the swift flight of the limited and the slower freight on which he was trailing behind. His plan, so feasible at the time he left, might miscarry in spite of all the discomforts he would undergo or the danger he had so luckily staved off.

Val hoped that the pursuing detectives would miss him quickly—and this, he reasoned, might enable him to creep by without observation, when they put out their feelers by wire or in case they doubled back toward Summit.

In spite of all his desire to remain awake, he succumbed gradually to the lethargy stealing over him. The clatter of the train died into a hypnotic drone. Kennedy was already snoring complacently by his side, and a moment later he was also in the land of dreams.

Had he known that even then the man wearing the neat gray-checked suit, forty miles ahead, was feverishly penning a cipher telegram to Washington as well as another wire in intelligible terms addressed to the railway detective at Summit calling for a watch on all eastbound trains, it is more than probable that Valjean Borden would not have slumbered.

It is certain that no sleep would have visited his eyes could he have read the telegram which Fred Kilgore transcribed and handed to his chief in the capital city of the United States within a few minutes of its receipt the following morning. For the telegram in cipher when translated read:

SODA SPRINGS, Idaho: Borden, Caucasian spy suspect, eluded Number Seven and Nine near Moyer Junction, Wyoming, about midnight. Evidently back-tracked toward main line. Number Seven following on first train. Cover Ogden West. Granger, and all points East. Evidently knows he is followed. I shall search division between here and Granger. Notify Seattle office.

NUMBER NINE.

Destiny, however, with its callous cosmic disregard for the plans and wishes of its unwilling human puppets, did not permit Valjean Borden to clairvoyantly perceive the contents of that pregnant message received by the Secretary of State. No sublime vision that he was only a pawn to negative the menace hovering over his native land permeated his slumber. He was as unconscious of this as he was of the next step he was taking in the world drama when the door of the car was thrown back and the circle of light from an electric pocket lamp in the fingers of the officer, gripping a pistol in his other

hand, fell upon his calm, untroubled face.

"Come out of there!" rasped the voice.

Kansas City Kennedy stumbled to his feet. Borden slumbered on. The two hobos at the far end of the car rose.

"Come on—get up!" roared the impatient man at the door.

Kennedy dropped his hand to Borden's collar, and shook him as he lifted him to his feet.

The marshal covered the floor with an unwavering vigilance.

He was a determined-looking fellow, and that wicked muzzle permitted neither delay nor debate.

Borden drowsily complied, lowering himself into the chill air outside with a shiver. Kennedy, Omaha, and the other vicious-faced hobo followed silently.

Another figure came creeping over the bumpers. It, too, balanced a pistol. A third descended from the opposite end of the car, closing the end door with a bang.

"Jest four of 'em, Tom," said the last man.

"The telegram said three," growled the marshal. "Slip on the cuffs, Larry."

Borden, now wide awake, experienced a terrible pang of regret as the circle of steel bit painfully into his wrist. He was linked to Kennedy. Omaha and the other were behind.

The seven men stumbled down the rock-strewn street of the junction town of Soda Springs. From the door of the railway station a group of night workers peered out. Among them was a girl whose face wore a look of pity as Val walked past.

A man in a natty gray-checked suit emerged from the dining room. He looked curiously at the returning group of employees, among whom was the telegraph operator. The worthy answered Number Nine's unvoiced query.

"Marshal's just nabbed some safe blowers," he importantly explained. "Got a wire yesterday with their descriptions. Found 'em on a freight."

Number Nine smiled his appreciation.

"Tough-lookin' bunch," went on the garrulous telegrapher. "All wanted down in Missouri for a big job. Five hundred reward is some pick-up, eh?"

A locomotive whistle broke in on his chatter.

"There's your train east," concluded the operator, leading the way to the platform.

The four men under arrest turned sharply to the left a block farther along, and, in the refulgent light of the dawn just creeping over the great peaks to the east, they beheld the city jail.

As they approached the structure, Borden wondered what he ought to do. He could easily show that he had left the train at the summit. Every moment of time was precious—millions of dollars hung on the days that would elapse before he could reach his destination and return.

His decision was practically forced. If he revealed anything regarding himself, he might only make matters worse. The presence of the huge sum he carried would only tend to connect him the more surely with the accusation of being a member of the "gang." Val concluded to keep silent.

The jail was an unpretentious, oblong building, built of heavy hemlock timber, and obviously new.

Within, a steel cage filled the quadrangle, save for a narrow corridor on all four sides. After a perfunctory search, during which various incredulous exclamations burst from the marshal and his aids at the money Kennedy and Borden disgorged, but during which the money belt was not discovered, all four were locked in the steel cage.

CHAPTER VI.

ON THE BRINK.

The Secretary of State returned from the deferred cabinet meeting with the calmness of despair. The President's illness for the preceding forty-eight hours had been a matter of the gravest concern—another of the hateful complications entangling the nation in its hour of dire extremity.

War with Japan was now inevitable and only a question of days.

The immigration measures the Mikado's minister had flatly declared to be odious, which had been referred to Congress with a carefully guarded pretense of recommendation for passage by the Chief Executive, by filibustering tactics were temporarily shunted aside; and upon this slender diplomatic thread the Secretary had based his last hope of delay to enable the United States to make whatever belated preparation was possible before the frightful rupture.

His meeting with the Japanese minister earlier in the day had been provocative of nothing beyond the perfunctory courtesies common to their respective stations.

The Viscount Tamekichi Tongo, ambassador extraordinary and minister plenipotentiary, remained politely affable and inscrutable.

He graciously conceded the further delay for the legislative consideration by Congress of the pending measures. He took his leave with the profound assurances of his personal esteem and the growing gratification of his imperial majesty, the Mikado, at the eminent fairness of treatment accorded his nation, in a way that left nothing to be desired, outwardly.

It was only when the cipher codes began pouring in upon the devoted Kilgore and several translations of various messages from the Far East had been placed in his hands that the Secretary of State began to perceive what irony

lay beneath the pseudo decorum of routine diplomatic intercourse.

He was glad that the interview with the ambassador had come before the belated cabinet conference. In the security of that gathering of grave-faced men the unexplainable disappearance of the principal war vessels of the inscrutable nation that had defeated China and Russia with ease, acquired a significance verging upon alarm.

"It would seem," said the President, following the Secretary's reading of one code cablegram, "that Japan is not only intent upon the quarrel, but her tactics will be those in the nature of a surprise—practically the same she used against Russia when attacking Port Arthur."

The quiet solemnity of the utterance sent a shiver around the table. Never before had the Chief Executive conceded that war could not be avoided. To-day, weak and worn, he not only conceded, but his first admission confirmed the secret fears of his advisers.

"The mystery," remarked the Secretary of the Navy, "lies in the probable destination of the absent vessels. It is a large fleet. Where will they first strike?"

Opinions differed. Naturally, the vulnerability of the Philippine possessions, with Hawaii as the next logical step, found adherents. But the Secretary of State, with an insistence bordering upon downright doggedness, argued to the contrary.

"To begin with," said he, "Japan is sure to do what we do not expect her to do. That is typical of the Oriental viewpoint. We have pointed at the comparatively unprotected Philippines for years—and counted the Mikado's subjects on the plantations there so many times that we know almost every man of them by sight. For the reason that we expect trouble there, if for no other, Japan will not first attack us at that point."

Back and forth raged the tide of discussion.

At last the Secretary of State sprang his surprise. It was in the form of a confidential report from the Department of the Interior, and even the cabinet officer representing that branch of the government stiffened unbelievably.

Stripped of technical language and formalities, it was to the effect that the recently noted volcanic island, lying a little south and west of the extreme tip of the Aleutian group in Alaskan waters contained coal and an abundance of fresh, running water at the edge of the coast line near by.

"Japan," almost shouted the Secretary of State, "cannot cross the Pacific Ocean without seriously impairing the coal supply her ships' bunkers will contain. With a fleet of slow-going colliers her progress is further hampered. If our destroyers sink them, she is lost. What then? With all due respect and apologies in advance to my colleagues in the war and navy for my temerity in intruding upon matters which are their special concern, I wish to assert that I have long believed that Japan will move down upon us from the north.

"In that latitude she is most unlikely to be prematurely observed. From this new island, which the Department of the Interior has not yet charted out of deference to my wishes, she replenishes her bunkers without fear, takes on an abundance of fresh water, thus economizing in coal for condensing sea water, and has only half the journey in miles to make that she must otherwise cover to reach either Seattle or San Francisco from Yokohama."

"What is the distance?" asked the President. "Is it more advantageous for her to come from the north because of the shorter route?"

"There is a difference of precisely one mile between San Francisco and Yokohama and Seattle and the same

Japanese port," replied the Secretary of the Navy. "Forty-one hundred and sixty-two miles to San Francisco—one mile less to Seattle."

"Decidedly," replied the President, "unless for the coal and water, there would be no appreciable superiority gained over our forces by a descent from the north. But, if this conflict which we have so sedulously sought to avoid, with honor, cannot longer be delayed, it would seem to be the part of wisdom to take some precautions, particularly in view of the reported absence of such an armada as that which we are told has flitted away from Japan's ports within the past three or four days, without official announcement as to its departure."

There was a chorus of hearty assent. If war must come, the intolerable strain of the past few months would shift uncertainty to the background, and the activities of the prelude to such a struggle would be, in comparison, a relief.

The summary of war vessels in commission by the United States became the immediate order of business, taking precedence over all else now that it was definitely known that the Japanese warships had secretly sailed to some unannounced destination.

The Secretary of the Navy read his concise figures:

"We have, all told, twenty-nine modern battleships, nine older battleships, five first-class cruisers, three second-class cruisers, four third-class cruisers, twenty-one gunboats, ten monitors, forty-nine destroyers, thirty-two torpedo boats, thirty-five submarines; manned by fifty-seven thousand one hundred and seventy-eight officers and men. Besides this, we have available, in case of a call to arms, the naval reserve of seamen, comprising twenty-six thousand two hundred more. This does not include ships of any class now un-

der construction or authorized by Congress."

"What is Japan's strength?" asked the Chief Executive.

"Who knows?" cryptically returned the Secretary.

"Nominally, Mr. President," he went on, "they are accredited—or I should more properly say they were definitely known two years ago to possess—the following: Twenty-one first-class battleships, four cruiser-type battleships, four older battleships, thirteen first-class cruisers, seven second-class cruisers, thirteen third-class cruisers, six gunboats, eighty-five destroyers, one hundred and eighty-five torpedo boats, eighty-three submarines; and upon these were fifty-eight thousand six hundred and forty-nine officers and men. Their naval reserve at that time was one hundred and fourteen thousand men—all well trained—most of whom had worked their full term of enlistment in the regular navy before re-entering civil life."

"And now?"

The Secretary of the Navy shook his head, spread his palms, and shrugged his shoulders.

"The Secretary of State has transmitted many reports to me during the past three years which would seem to indicate that Japan's war footing, if we include known purchases from abroad and suspected manufacture at home, may easily have become twice what it was then."

"It may be much greater than we have definite knowledge of," returned the President, steadying himself by gripping the table over which he was leaning. "Have you any other facts tending to show why this last statement of yours is likely to be true?"

"Mr. President," frankly returned the Secretary of the Navy. "I have not. But what can we expect from a nation as secretive as Japan? Her men from boyhood are trained and inured

to military discipline and hardship. They have one supreme ideal—the glory of Nippon and loyalty to its ruler. Expansion of territory needs no urging on people in such a crowded country—it is a normal impulse with every one—from the nobles down to the lowest caste coolie.

“Look at their methods of life and their scanty earnings. While we pay an admiral of our navy thirteen thousand five hundred dollars a year their pay for the same rank is two thousand nine hundred and eighty-eight dollars of our money. A captain on one of our battleships or cruisers receives four thousand dollars a year—theirs twelve hundred and forty-three dollars. Our next of rank officers, the commanders, receive thirty-five hundred—theirs nine hundred and forty-five.

“Is it reasonable to suppose that this disparity in pay is not accounted for in other directions? Japan's war and naval budget is enormously large. Where have their huge appropriations for the past ten years gone—those millions upon millions they borrowed in Europe? Not to the men, Mr. President—but into vast purchases of new ships and armament!”

The Chief Executive bowed. His pallor was more accentuated, but his firmness and tactful kindness remained unchanged during the balance of the meeting.

It was decided to send a cruiser on scout duty into the Alaskan waters without delay.

The nearest vessels available for that vicinity were the armored cruisers *California* and *Brooklyn*, both at Bremerton Navy Yard on Puget Sound, and both in commission.

“Which shall we send?” became the next question.

Again the Secretary of the Navy pointed out the salient facts which made an intelligent decision possible.

Ordinarily the question would not

have come before the cabinet at all, as it was distinctly a prerogative of his office. But, under the circumstances, the others hung breathlessly upon his words.

If the Japanese fleet were planning an attack in force from the north, for the strategical reasons which the Secretary of State had advanced, upon the fighting and steaming qualities of that cruiser would depend the first information—possibly the fate of the American nation so far as the immediate outcome on the Pacific Coast was concerned.

“The *Brooklyn* has a displacement of only nine thousand two hundred and fifty tons, as against the *California's* thirteen thousand six hundred and eighty tons,” he resumed. “Both have the same speed—twenty-two knots per hour. The *Brooklyn* has a little heavier battery than the *California*, but the latter's secondary armament is far superior. The *Brooklyn* has a maximum coal-carrying capacity of thirteen hundred and fifty tons with engines of eighteen thousand four hundred and twenty-five horse power, while the *California* can carry from nine hundred to more than two thousand tons, and has twenty-nine thousand horse-power engines. Decidedly the last-named cruiser is my choice. Besides, her commander, Captain Alexander S. Hawley, is one of the finest men in the service—young, aggressive, and very reliable, and those are qualities which may make all the difference in the world in the success or failure of her mission.”

The Secretary of State fancied he observed an increase of pallor on the face of the Chief Executive at the mention of Hawley's name. But the discussion as to the time the Japanese would consume in crossing the Pacific, should that be their intention, made him forget the incident.

It was pointed out that unless proceeding at the maximum of speed and under forced draft two weeks might be

counted upon before the dread specter of the hostile fleet would be discernible off the straits of Juan de Fuca, marking the entrance to Puget Sound.

"If they really plan a stop at this volcanic island to coal, it will be longer," averred the Secretary of State. "The *Minnesota* passenger steamship takes thirteen days between Yokohama and Seattle eastbound; and a day more, owing to the change of time in mid-Pacific westward, if I remember the schedule correctly."

The Secretary of the Navy supplemented this information by calling attention to the fact that the *Nippon Yusen Kaisha*, a name signifying "Japan Mail Steamship Company, Limited," possessed a fleet of ninety-five luxurious vessels with a displacement aggregating three hundred and forty thousand tons, all equipped with wireless, and that at least ten of these were twin-screw steamers of speed superior to anything else in trans-Pacific commercial service. He emphasized the reported cancellation of several regular sailings as indicating that Japan might be planning to use these vessels as troop transports.

"It would seem," said the President, when the five-hour session was nearing its close, "that within three weeks, at most, the Japanese ambassador may request his papers. He can be out of the jurisdiction of our flag inside twelve hours—en route to London—and we are powerless, until his departure, to definitely announce the calamity overhanging us unless we, ourselves, assume the initiative."

All of which the Secretary of State mulled over and over in his brain after he returned to his own office. The *California*, with the collier *Prometheus* to follow, had been already ordered out into the North Pacific.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Secretary," said Kilgore, who had been vainly waiting some minutes for recognition.

The Secretary started. His introspective habit was growing of late.

"What is it, Fred?"

"A communication from the President, sir," replied the confidential man, handing it to him unopened.

The Secretary's feet came down with a bang from the chair on which he had stretched them, as he read.

His face paled as had that of the Chief Executive during the cabinet meeting when Commander Hawley's name was mentioned—and for the same reason:

I to-day received news from Vancouver that Albert Hawley, a brother to the commander of the *California*, and known to me alone as the individual carrying the number Twenty-five in the secret diplomatic service, was murdered in that city some weeks ago, while returning from Nome, where I sent him on a confidential mission. Identification was made by a photograph received from the coroner of that city, confirmed by agent Number Eighteen, who saw the picture, and who went to Vancouver and exhumed the body to make sure. Young Hawley was last seen in the company of an American named Valjean Borden, with whom he came ashore from a tramp whaler; but the coroner says that he was reported killed by an unknown Japanese in a cheap hotel. This for your confidential information.

The President's initial was the only signature.

Kilgore took the message from his chief.

"What do you make of that?" asked his superior.

"It would seem to confirm the tip we received from Number One a day or so ago," replied Kilgore, trying to steady his trembling voice.

"Did you know him?"

"Yes, sir, a few years ago, but I did not know that he was in the service."

"Nor I," replied the Secretary of State. "Well, you had better notify his family that he died abroad and his body will be shipped to them."

"Yes, sir."

"About this fellow Borden—where is that telegram mentioning him we re-

ceived this morning? I cannot recall its context."

Kilgore procured the paper requested and handed it to the cabinet officer for a more thorough perusal.

"Notify the agents in charge of this matter to arrest and hold that man for examination," directed the Secretary of State, as he returned it. "If he is innocent, I hope he'll be able to prove it," he concluded, rising and signaling for his automobile.

He walked down the steps and entered the waiting vehicle with eyes in which tears struggled with weariness.

CHAPTER VII.

WING AND WING.

"How many times have I told you, Pinhead, that them paws o' yourn are worse than a bear's feet when it comes to makin' tracks?"

Thus adjured, Pinhead Martin, understudy to K. C. Kennedy, the safe-blowing star, hung his head sheepishly, and kicked aimlessly at the two-inch concrete floor of the Soda Springs jail.

Omaha and Valjean Borden, hard by in the same inclosure of steel to which they had been returned following their arraignment before the local justice of the peace, listened to a scathing excoriation of the third member of the trio of yeggs.

"There wasn't anything on us at all," grimly continued Kennedy, "until they mugged that thumb print o' yourn on the Joplin box we blowed. It was a soft job, and a good, clean picce o' work," he went on proudly. "Now here we are, snagged hard and fast because you neglect instructions about your gloves."

Still no attempt on the part of Pinhead to justify or excuse his lack of caution. Like a reproved boy he submissively listened to the acid remarks.

Kennedy's face softened a little.

Leadership was an innate part of his

nature. Had Pinhead tried to evade the consequences of his folly, there would have been a scene. His humble silence negated the chief's smoldering wrath. Fire must have substance on which to feed or combustion ceases.

"Try and do better next time, Pinhead."

"Leave it to me," replied Pinhead Martin fervently.

"Of course"—Kennedy turned to Valjean Borden—"a run o' bad luck jest natcherly ties you up whether you like it or not. We're here in stir—not speshully because we're crooks, but because we hain't hypocrites. Everybody's crooked—and some of 'em get away with it. The marshal and jestic is crooked. That's why they'll hold all of us here pending extradition papers from Missouri. They hain't got nothin' on you at all—there wasn't any rap agin' you fer that Pullman job, and you ain't wanted like we are—but you're here, jest the same, hain't you?"

Val gloomily assented with a wordless nod. It irked him beyond words to admit the fact that his slender quota of time was slipping away while he lingered in a steel cage, innocent of any offense against the law.

"'Cause why?" continued Kennedy. "Not that they had anything on you, but because every day you're here they git fees. All accordin' to law, mind you. Fees feed the old mare and buy shoes fer the kids, and dresses fer the wimmen. Both the jestic and the marshal is married, and Soda Springs ain't the biggest place in the world. Nobody in jail but us. Lean times. We fatten things all around. So we're jest natcherly due to stay a while—if they have their way."

He glided pantherlike around the walls of the place, scrutinizing the bars with the air of a connoisseur in metals. Kennedy was proud of his ability to tear open treasure boxes, and his face was wreathed in an enigmatic smile

when he had finished his tour of inspection.

But he made no mention of his conclusions. Instead he showed another phase of the latent manliness which prompted him to prevent a fight in the car the night before. Young Borden's respect for the yegg was growing. According to his code he was "right." His perspective of life was very different from that of more carefully nurtured men of his age. It was the usual story of a grim struggle against poverty and ignorance in the slums into which he had been born. Still, his first words after his inspection showed him not wholly vicious.

"It does beat thunder about that coin you slipped me. Here the three of us broke and you pass me half a double century just as if we'd known each other fer ten years. And then, before we git a chanst to spend a dime of it, we're frisked and the dicks pretend they're goin' to hold our money fer evidence that we robbed a safe in Joplin. Won't even let us hold out the price of a square meal. That's the way the luck breaks sometimes. If we was out, with nobody on our trial, a dip like you could finance us out of town right down here at the railroad station. We'd hit the cushions north before they knew we was gone. Never mind, kid. That was sure white—splittin' your roll the way you did. K. C. don't fergit. Wait and see."

The arrival of the alleged supper interrupted the discourse. The meal was a little better than what had been previously brought them and they ate heartily. The marshal and his aid left for the night, after building a good fire in the stove in the corridor and serving out blankets.

Val lay down to sleep because there was little else to do. He did not reproach himself for the result of his futile effort to evade the mysterious trailers to follow him from New York. It

was unavailing to regret what had occurred. In three or four days at the latest, the officers from Missouri would arrive. They could not truthfully include him in the last of offenders from that State. In any event, if worst came to the worst, he would send for the marshal, demand that he telegraph Doctor Hugh Fitzmorris, and engage a lawyer to procure his release on habeas corpus.

He could have done that when arraigned in court, but he hated to acknowledge his unwisdom in leaving the train when the stake he hoped to win was so gigantic. It might impair the confidence of Fitzmorris in his ability to go through with more difficult things—perhaps result in a prompt recall by the disappointed surgeon if the childish course of the man he had relied upon was revealed to him.

So Val decided to stand pat for another twelve or fifteen hours, and await developments.

Resigning himself to the inevitable, he began to picture his future once he had revisited the mysterious island in the Arctic and triumphantly returned to New York with the treasure he was seeking. There was no apparent line of demarcation between his waking ideas and those continuing in sleep.

He only knew he had been dreaming when some one gripped his shoulder, and Kennedy's voice bade him rise and put on his clothes.

Val obeyed drowsily.

Kennedy sat down on the floor alongside him and began replacing the saws in the hollows of his heels. He screwed the heels back into normal position with a celerity that appeared miraculous. As Borden became more wide awake, he was bewildered to see both Omaha and Pinhead already walking in the corridor outside the cage, tiptoeing carefully, pausing at last beneath one of the windows affording a view of the street.

"O. K.," whispered Omaha.

"Come on," said the leader to the dazed youth.

"Come on where?" gasped Borden, staring at the locked door of the cage.

Kennedy winked, led the way to one side, stooped, and a section of the steel barrier came away in his hand. Val fell to his knees and crept through it. The other man followed, carefully replacing the severed cross-section in place, after liberally soaping the ends of the bars. A little dust rubbed on the severed portions made the cuts invisible.

"Some other guy that's right may find it," whispered the safe breaker, gliding like a ghost toward the window. "I told you this burg was full of grafters. That cage ain't steel—the iron cuts like it was cheese. Somebody got their rake-off, all right, all right!"

"Nobody in sight," announced Omaha from his sentry post.

Kennedy pulled two bars from the grated window.

The four dropped into the calm blackness of the night.

Never had the soft breeze seemed so superlatively delightful to the youngest member of the quartet. Never had the moist, magnetic earth beneath his feet so thrilled him with its yielding support.

With caution they moved down toward the railroad yards. A whispered colloquy followed. Then Kennedy turned to Borden.

"Here's where we split up, pal," said he. "Good luck and good-by. We've got work to do—and there's no use o' you takin' any chances."

The three melted away.

Borden kept on toward the railway. En route he extracted another hundred-dollar bill from his money belt. He had left the pajama jacket in the jail, and was reasonably sure he would not be recognized. He walked confidently into the station and purchased a mileage book, with a smile that disarmed suspicion. A southbound train hissed

in before he had received his change. Val hurried out, boarded it, walked through one car, and stepped off in the shadows on the far side before it left.

The bulletin board in the station informed him that another was due for Seattle within half an hour.

Fortunately it was on time.

With some timidity, fearing the marshal might be prowling around the train or through it, Val entered a Pullman. He washed thoroughly and arranged his hair. By the time the train was moving he was no longer the untidy tramp he had appeared.

He purchased a berth and tendered his mileage.

There was no comment on the fact that he was without baggage, and a liberal tip dissolved any lingering doubts in the porter's mind as to his desirability as a passenger.

Sixteen hours later the welcome glint of the Columbia River was visible through the car windows, and the limited was snorting down the last leg of the journey toward Seattle.

Val ate his meals with more relish after the Oregon State line had been crossed, and he left the train at Portland the same evening.

He visited a haberdashery and purchased a suit case, toilet articles, and new attire throughout, before going to a hotel. He was somewhat undecided as to his next move toward the north until the headline of an evening paper caught his eye in the restaurant where he was eating a late supper.

Then all indecision was resolved.

The first-page story told of the escape from jail at Soda Springs of four desperate characters; of their daring robbery of a bank in the town; of the pistol duel which had resulted, and the posse which was pursuing the fleeing quartet to the hills. Also it contained a very full description of all four men—particularly himself.

Val decided it would be imprudent to

risk the railway station again, even at that distance.

Instead, he procured an automobile and drove a few miles to the north to another little town, taking a local from there instead of a through train, and again leaving it on the outskirts of Tacoma.

Time no longer possessed the fabulous value that it seemed to have when he left New York. His perspective of it and other things was losing the distortion of his first enthusiasm.

He was already two days behind his schedule. But he did not permit this to keep him from making the trip from Tacoma to Seattle by trolley instead of train.

The Idaho robbery continued to play a prominent part in the telegraphic news, even at that distance. The next editions of the papers declared that the yeggs had been overtaken, Kennedy had been seriously wounded, and that all three were recaptured after a battle royal with the posse.

"The fourth man, young, intelligent, and evidently the brains of the gang, is still at large," the dispatch concluded.

In spite of his regret at the disastrous events following the escape, Val could not forego a grin at the characterization of himself as the "brains of the gang." Had it not been for the man with the "monicker" his chances of continuing his journey with only the loss of a day would have been rather tenuous—to state it optimistically.

Val did some very hard thinking before he debouched from the trolley at the totem pole in Pioneer Square. He must now exercise a superlative caution, for there were now two sets of pursuers instead of one with whom he must calculate.

His first act was to check his baggage at some transfer office until he was ready to slip on board some vessel which he hoped to be able to charter.

Twice he left a cable car headed toward Lake Washington to make sure no one boarded it but himself. At a little news stand near the lake he bought the afternoon papers, a lunch, hired a boat, and rowed out toward the island to think and plan.

In the shelter of the primeval forest which covered it he read carefully the advertisements to find some private lodging house where he could remain unnoticed until he was ready to sail. He made note of several, deciding that frequent transfers would tend to render his trail more obscure.

As he refolded the paper, another item caught his eye.

It hit him hard—three terse words—but mighty interesting under the circumstances confronting the fugitive. "Yacht for Sale," stared up at him, and he grinned with pleasure as he read the balance of the advertisement. It gave an address in Bellingham—a city considerably nearer the upper end of Puget Sound than Seattle and proportionately safer.

Val decided that he would wait until nightfall before venturing back into Seattle. So he curled up in the woods and relaxed, after eating his lunch, with a growing gusto at the prospect of more action along a line of decidedly less resistance than he had experienced since dropping out of the Pullman window.

CHAPTER VIII.

TRACED.

Speeding toward the same city on the same day two exasperated men who signed numbers to their cryptic telegrams instead of names—Number Nine and Number Seven—hotly discussed the elusive character of their quarry.

"Number One ought not to do any roasting," averred Nine, "for this kid handed him a neat get-away right in the glare of a big restaurant. What if he did slip out in the night from

us? That wasn't as bad as walking out on the chief himself."

"As soon as I get my hooks in reaching distance of him again I'll gamble a little money he don't pull that Pullman fade-away stuff again," gritted Seven. "He must be an old-timer—for all he looks young. I'll bet he's been round the world for the Japs."

"I don't particularly care where he's been," retorted his companion. "What I want to know is which way he's gone now."

"Heading for Seattle," said Seven promptly. "He's in a terrible hurry to get back to the coast before something breaks. I don't know why, but I'm going to do all I can to find out. There's a reason—somewhere. Anyhow, I'll bet you a new hat that we pick up his trail there."

"I need a new hat," ruminated Nine.

"So do I," affirmed Seven, with emphasis.

"May the right man wear it," grinned the other.

Number Nine studied Seven's broad shoulders and aggressive figure whimsically as he followed him to the station platform when their train drew up at the terminal in Seattle a few hours later.

"We'd better report to the office first," suggested Seven.

"Right," replied Nine.

They beckoned to a taxi, and were whirled away.

Crossing the viaduct they turned into Second Avenue and drove to the Alaska Building. The chief of the division was temporarily absent, and both men waited for his return. Presently he came in.

"Well, I've trailed your bird," said he jovially. "You were right—he came straight here."

"Where is he?"

"Oh, seeing the sights around our fair city. I'm not going to sweat blood

to find him to-day when I'll meet him to-morrow."

"How will you meet him?"

The divisional chief grinned tantalizingly.

"I'll take you boys along when I keep the tryst," he scoffed. "The right way to handle a smooth article like this Borden is to let him catch himself."

Seven spread out the last telegram which he had received from the Secretary of State. The divisional chief whistled.

"Better not take chances," warned Seven. "Things are breaking bad with Japan, and this is rather important—at least, Washington thinks so."

"Well, I wish I didn't have to wait," admitted the Seattle agent. "I've had every man in town out all day looking for this lad. They've frisked the hotels, the restaurants, the boarding houses, and watched the terminals and docks. But we'll get him to-morrow, sure."

He tossed over a copy of a telegraphic message.

Seven and Nine fell on it like starving dogs on a bone.

DOCTOR HUGH FITZMORRIS, No. — Central Park West, New York: Arrived Seattle. Sail to-morrow for Vancouver on *President*. From there as agreed.

VALJEAN BORDEN.

"What did I tell you?" demanded Number Seven, turning to Number Nine.

"Well, tell me something else to-morrow," said Nine, laughing at his own discomfiture.

"What will you want to know then?"

"The size you want the new hat—you may need a bigger one by then," cautiously retorted his companion.

Seven looked thoughtfully at the message the divisional chief was filing.

"How cold is that?" he demanded.

"Hot from the griddle—got it at ten o'clock this morning."

"It's three-forty-five now. What do

you say to a turn around the docks and stations?"

"They're covered," replied the divisional chief. "What do you think I am—a boob to fall for a wire that may be a stall?"

"Hardly—that isn't the way you earned your promotion. But none of your men here have seen this suspect. Nine and I have traveled with him in the same Pullman. He may change his mind about sailing to-morrow—he's fickle about such things."

"Go to it," observed their superior.

Ten minutes later both officials were making a thorough search of the union station. No trace of their man could be found.

Undismayed, they went over and over the ground, tactfully inquiring of every station employee, describing the wanted man minutely.

"Seems to me I seen a feller like that," at last admitted the station master. "Yes, come to think of it, he was in here this forenoon. By gum! I must be losin' my brains. But he was wearing a frock coat and a top hat, and had a bunch of coin. Wanted to get to Vancouver bad enough to hire a special."

"When was this?" demanded Seven.

"About nine o'clock this morning. Train got away at nine-thirty. It's only a twelve-hour run on regular schedule to Vancouver."

Seven tendered a cigar with as much urbanity as if the disappointment within had not sickened him. The run to the international line could be made in five hours—including all probable delays—and his jurisdiction ended there.

"What did I tell you?" said he again to Number Nine as they retraced their way to the office. "He filed that fake message and walked to the train. Ain't he the canny young imp?"

"And considering the fact that he has doubled on his own trail so often it's probable Borden didn't go to Van-

couver at all," rejoined the other agent. "Likely as not he's halfway to Spokane or San Francisco."

Which happened to be nearer true than either of them imagined. Tired of unexplained surveillance, Valjean Borden wandered back to Seattle, determined to henceforth be more than a passive factor at the game of cross-purposes in which he was so obviously, although unwillingly, cast for a long appearance.

For this reason he had intentionally filed the misleading telegram which the events of the next day conclusively proved. No one of his appearance sailed on any steamer from Seattle. Likewise, the special train which he engaged to take him to Vancouver, and for which he had paid three hundred dollars, arrived at that city without him.

The perplexed conductor sweat blood at the empty car. After a long search, he decided to ignore the incident in order to retain his job. He had not the remotest suspicion that his solitary passenger had dropped off the rear platform in Bellingham. The suit case he had abandoned the conductor left at the baggage room "to be called for."

And, in the interim, by one of those fantastic incidents which reunite the raveled threads of destiny into the pre-ordained pattern, the commander of the armored cruiser *California*, waiting for his vessel to finish coaling, ran over to Seattle from the navy yard to close up his affairs before what proved to be the most momentous voyage any commander had ever begun since the American navy first flung the flag of the republic to the winds of any sea.

CHAPTER IX.

CLOSING IN.

The people of the United States, after all, are an unwieldy nation. The man in Maine rarely hears of the man in Minnesota—unless one or the other

breaks into the telegraph news of the day with a felonious assault or an announcement that he owns a hen which lays double-yolked eggs.

Serenely unconscious of the secret menace which was closing down with hideous but invisible folds, ninety-four millions of human beings went about their usual avocations the same morning that Valjean Borden hired his special train for Vancouver and quietly deserted it at Bellingham.

Save for a few very perturbed officials in Washington, no one, happily, comprehended that anything out of the ordinary was likely to occur. And these apprehensive men, to whom had been confided the reins of government, although a prey to the wildest alarms, were, nevertheless, almost as much in the dark as every one else.

Of one thing only they were sure—the formidable armada of Japan had left its own shores. No report had been received of its arrival at any other port—no mercury of Hertzian waves ticked across the vast wastes of the Pacific with the announcement of its presence.

Scouting cruisers to the north and east of the Philippines monotonously reported their "2-5-7" in the naval code, signifying "nothing new." The agents on board the trans-Pacific commercial lines plying between San Francisco and Hongkong sent their particular cipher messages to the same effect.

Even Valjean Borden, so strangely mired down in the web of circumstance that every effort of the most astute men in the employ of the State Department not otherwise engaged was being exerted to apprehend him, and also in the very territory where the most significant incident of all was transpiring, was oblivious of either the event or its real meaning.

Number Seven stumbled across the same thing in the Seattle depot, but his incipient suspicions had other things

to consider; and how was he to guess that the innocuous trainloads of Japanese laborers, with picks, shovels, and like tools, were not in the employ of the railway contractor, as he was told, but were obeying the command of a lieutenant colonel who had stormed Iteshan Hill and the trenches of Port Arthur under the eyes of General Nogi himself? Or that when the signal came these men would not build railways, but destroy both of the northernmost connections with the east leading to Puget Sound points?

As for Borden, his special passed other similar trains of flat cars carrying laborers on almost every siding the first few miles out of Seattle. But he was ensconced behind drawn shades, pretending to sleep. Thus he could not know that the wily Orientals were not only withdrawing their regiments of the "Ersatz reserve," which had been "planted" for this very hour years before, under the guise of commercial immigration, but coöperating with the board of strategy in the war college at Tokyo, for the first blow.

Thus, while Doctor Hugh Fitzmorris doled out the scant store of the medicament that his former pupil had so strangely brought, and fought back the death gripping for the heart of the second richest man in the world; while the Secretary of State strode to and fro in his office, with the grim shadow of War at his back; while Seven and Nine went into executive session with the divisional chief at Seattle, and wired Vancouver to "cover the bird" on the arrival of his special—the armada of the Mikado steamed on and on, blanketed in the dense mists of the Pacific; with muffled sirens; with position pennants that held each ship just so far and no farther from its neighbor—a grim, silent procession across the unresisting waves separating them from their destination.

The mathematics of their respective

positions was only a microscopic fragment of the detail upon which the whole scheme of Japan's strategy was erected. As surely as three hundred yards separated the *Kashima* from the *Katori*, for instance, in a smooth sea, so surely did twice that space intervene between the troop transports whose crowded decks were bunched in great knots of steamships, ringed round with battle craft.

On schedule they swept on, and on schedule they would arrive at their first stop; to coal and water at the bleak little volcanic island which the Creator had popped from the ocean bed bearing on its bosom a seam of coal. His hand had laid there in the carboniferous era countless centuries before.

Coal and water!

Well indeed did Japan know with what certitude of purpose she might now act. Coal and water were the mainsprings of her diplomacy, daily growing more irascible in Washington—as well as the mediums by which she would energize her warships for the swift stab in the dark to follow her ambassador's withdrawal.

And the Secretary of State visualized all this as he strode up and down his office.

"Coal and water!" he groaned. "Heretofore, the absence of a coaling station has been, in a measure, of more protection than our meager coast defenses. Without coal Japan could not hope to attack us by sea—whatever she might attempt in the Philippines or Hawaii. But now, coal and water both rise out of the sea in her very hour of need. Fresh water, which means the last unit of economy in fuel because she will not need to condense huge quantities of sea water to supply her troops or boilers; and more coal than a thousand fleets would use in a thousand years!"

No fleet at America's command could hope to cope with Japan's mighty ar-

mada. With tens of thousands of miles of coast line to be protected the United States did not dare to concentrate even an inferior force to go through the futile motions of repelling attack from that quarter.

Who could really say, after all, that Japan was coming that way? From all the actual knowledge at the disposal of the Secretary of War or the Secretary of the Navy, the Japanese might be sailing around the north of Europe, through some hitherto undiscovered channel of the Arctic Sea—to drop down from the fog banks of Newfoundland, instead of Alaska.

The cruiser *California* was their only hope for the final warning. Meanwhile, preparations for resistance went on with unremitting care. In the end the United States must triumph. At first they would unquestionably be at an enormous disadvantage.

So the President and his cabinet had dedicated the *California* to the sacrifice. The *California* was due to leave Seattle the next morning. With the collier *Prometheus* trailing, she would take a position far out in the Pacific, to confirm or disprove the suspicions of Japan's approach in that direction. If their worst fears were confirmed, the swift cruiser would never return. Once the Mikado's vessels were sighted, Japan would recall her minister and the war would be on.

The men on the cruiser were certainly doomed—if Japan *did* come down in force. Fast as the *California* was, she was no swifter than many of the cruisers of her enemy.

Nor was that all.

No ship ever launched could steam as fast as the "mosquito air fleet" of Japan could fly. Monoplanes, designed for enormous speed—a winged engine on which two men rode—were with that hidden armada.

How many? None could say—except they would be enough and to spare.

Once the *California* was sighted, two, three, ten—a hundred—if needful, of these monoplanes would shoot skyward. They climbed a thousand feet in a minute and a half. At any height the pilot chose, one, at first, would plunge down—an aerial torpedo guided by a diabolical brain. One after another they would continue to plunge until at least *one* "mosquito" should reach the deck with its terrible, steel-pointed nose burying in the ship's armor—to explode "by percussion contact" the charge of—what?

The Secretary of State did not know—nor any other Caucasian.

No white man had ever known—and continued to live. It was something of this which had led Twenty-five to his ignominious death in Vancouver. The President had hinted as much to his Secretary of State.

Whatever that explosive was—it spelled annihilation to everything within the radius of a hundred yards. The steel frame, armor, guns, boilers—everything or anything—became so much tissue paper in the hands of an impish boy.

The boys—for the Japanese pilots who rode these engines of destruction were very young—died with it. But of all peoples on the earth it is perhaps the Japanese who faces death the most calmly. The fighting man from old Nippon thinks nothing of his own life when his country demands the sacrifice.

Fred Kilgore in the outer office, cleaning up the mass of dispatches for the afternoon, came upon one from the divisional chief at Seattle just before six o'clock. The difference of three hours of time accounted for its delay in transmission from the day before.

Although nominally only the confidential man of the Secretary of State, in all matters pertaining to the "third section" operatives Kilgore never ad-

vised with any one else than the Secretary of State himself—not even the under secretaries.

The Secretary had gone to a secret cabinet meeting, and had not returned. The dispatch was most important.

Kilgore acted on his own initiative. The divisional chief was told to run down the suspect, Valjean Borden, apprehend, and hold him. If he had left Seattle and not arrived at Vancouver—as Three's wire to both Washington and Seattle declared—he must be somewhere between those two cities.

Three hours later the Secretary approved the telegram.

Next morning, Valjean Borden, walking blithely down the streets of Bellingham, met Eustace McIntyre, a young Englishman with a yacht for sale.

"Good morning," smiled the young American.

"Good morning," returned McIntyre with sufficient punctillio to maintain the traditions of his nationality, yet not enough to repel a prospective purchaser of a yacht he was quite anxious to sell.

He grew slightly more affable when Val exhibited the advertisement and stated the object of his visit.

"Yes, I have a very neat little tub," averred McIntyre. "Would you like to have a look at her?"

"I should be pleased," returned the American.

They chatted amiably on their way to the wharf. McIntyre, albeit a trifle restive, appeared frank enough.

He usually spent his summers cruising back and forth between Bellingham, where he had realty investments, and Victoria, where he had a summer cottage, he explained. This year he wanted to go back to England, instead of sojourning in America. For that reason he decided to sell his yacht.

"Would you care to entertain a proposition to charter it?" asked Val.

"I would rather sell," returned McIntyre, eying him narrowly.

"I have a little money," diplomatically continued Borden. "On the whole, while I shall probably not be at sea more than a few weeks, I should prefer to charter a boat. Subsequently, I might buy her outright if she proved thoroughly seaworthy and fast."

"How far are you going?" queried the other.

The question hid a latent anxiety which the Englishman was hoping to conceal. Disquieting rumors of trouble with Japan, the cocky attitude of his former valet of that nationality, who had disappeared without explanation, and the wild rumors filling the ears of any one caring to listen, all made him anxious to effect a deal without undue delay.

Val, although ignorant of McIntyre's purpose, likewise recalled the necessity for rigid secrecy regarding his own affairs. He conveniently dropped the first lie which rose to his lips.

"I was thinking of cruising to San Diego." He ingenuously smiled.

"That's rather a long trip," countered McIntyre, wondering if the prospective purchaser had any idea of what might befall him on such a cruise.

"My health," explained the other, "improved so much during my last voyage that I wouldn't mind the time."

McIntyre was signaling a boatman from the wharf.

"The *Sparrow* is a hundred and twenty-five footer, steam turbines," he interpolated. "Also I have this little gasoline dinghy—handy thing to run ashore or to the anchorage."

"Decidedly," acquiesced Val, eying the fourteen-foot tender with approval.

Its graceful lines showed speed. He was fighting time. Speed was his first essential. With such a tender, if the price of the yacht was not prohibitive, he could anchor safely off the volcanic island, run ashore, pick plenty of the

thing he was risking so much to obtain, shoot back to his yacht, head south—and fight Father Time back to Vancouver, as Doctor Fitzmorris had bidden him.

For the first time since dropping out of the Pullman window, Val felt a sudden access of genuine enthusiasm. The two descended to the landing stage, entered the motor boat, and chugged out toward the *Sparrow*.

"You will see, Mr.—" hesitated McIntyre.

"Phelps—William Phelps," supplemented Borden, without hesitation.

"You will see, Mr. Phelps," resumed the *Sparrow's* owner, "that this is by no means an ordinary boat. I had her built under my own personal supervision at Alameda, California. She has never been used except for myself and family, with such guests as I have invited. She is stanch, seaworthy, and unusually fast. I have never seen a boat of her class that could nose her out. My friends all joke me about owning a small liner."

"What is her speed?"

"She can do twenty-five knots at a pinch."

"That's unusual, isn't it?"

"When I start to go anywhere, I like to go at whatever pace suits my mood," complacently returned the owner, as they drew alongside.

He led the way below from the deck. The cabins were finished in rosewood; the mirrors were imported French plate; the dinner service was solid silver; the quarters for the crew were ample; the cook's galley a model; the engines sturdy and dependable, and even the bunkers were brimming with coal.

After a thorough inspection, Val mutely decided that here was the biggest piece of luck he had encountered, aside from what he had found on the volcanic island and his meeting in New York with his former preceptor. For a

moment he was almost grateful for past worries.

"What are you asking for her?" he queried.

"She cost me in the neighborhood of two hundred thousand dollars."

"Prohibitive!" replied Val firmly. "Of course, this, in a way, is a forced sale. That is, you have reasons, I take it, for selling. What will you take for her—just as she lays—say at Victoria? And can you sign on the present crew, in your own name, for a cruise of eighteen hundred miles and return."

"Their pay goes on, whether I have her tied up or on cruise," returned McIntyre.

Evidently the young American smelled a rat. The *Sparrow* also ate up money pretty fast when not in use. The Japs, according to rumors, would devastate that coast long before a vessel of that class could get out of reach, unless all signs failed. McIntyre's friends at Victoria were particularly pessimistic regarding the probability of trouble between the United States and the Japanese. Yachts, on an unprotected seaboard during an invasion, depreciate rapidly, if they escape confiscation.

McIntyre studied the impassive young man who lounged nonchalantly against the rail. He was wondering how much he would stand.

"I might cut it in two," he ventured, "for cash."

"Too much," returned young Borden.

The perturbed owner wavered.

"I'll tell you what I'll do," went on the American. "I'll charter this boat for ninety days and deposit with you twenty-five thousand dollars cash guarantee in Victoria. But ten thousand of that amount for a three months' cruise is all I can afford. Or I'll give you fifty thousand cash for her in Victoria after you have procured your clearance papers for San Diego. I prefer to deal on this basis only. Other-

wise, I'll look around at Victoria or Vancouver for another boat."

McIntyre stood out for another ten thousand. Borden was unyielding. It ended with the sale going through at the price named, fifty thousand dollars.

"When do you want to start?" asked the owner of the *Sparrow*.

"Now," replied the new owner. "Here's a thousand dollars to bind the bargain. I'll pay the balance in Victoria."

Delaying only to send word to his family that he had been called away, McIntyre issued the necessary orders. In two hours they were steaming out across the upper neck of Puget Sound.

But fate, ever mindful of the unities involved, and with an eye single to the ends of destiny—regardless, as always, of the purposes of individuals—picked up the lost thread of the fugitive's whereabouts for Numbers Seven, Nine, and Three ere the *Sparrow* weighed anchor.

Captain Benjamin Hale, the yacht's commander, bluff, hearty, whole-souled, himself dropped the scent afresh by remarking to the chief of police of Bellingham that he could not whip him at pinochle that afternoon, and explained why.

Likewise, he described Valjean Borden so accurately that the flood of telegrams emanating from the office of the divisional chief at Seattle, covering every town to the international border, of which Bellingham's chief was duly apprised within an hour after the *Sparrow* had left, enabled the head of the police department of that city, although angry at the loss of one thousand dollars rewards, to "take a chance for a few cents," as he phrased it.

He notified the Bergen Detective Agency at Seattle—which name masked the divisional chief's official activities—that his "bird" was in Victoria or would be there that evening.

The divisional chief ripped out a

real man's oath as he handed that dispatch the same afternoon to Seven and Nine, while he also ordered it relayed to Three at Vancouver to again "cover the bird" at Victoria instead of Vancouver.

Another message was sent to Washington, informing Kilgore of the latest trace of the fugitive.

"What'll we do now?" demanded Nine, with a slight asperity.

"Wait instructions," snorted the divisional chief. "But Washington'll order us after that gink again—if they have to follow him to Tokyo. They want *him*—not to know where he is."

"We might stick his head in a sack at Victoria," rambled on Number Nine, wondering at the enigmatic expression which just then flitted over the face of Number Seven.

"What chance?" gibed the chief. "He's out of Bellingham two hours ago—on the *Sparrow*. Is he heading for Victoria or the other side of the Pacific? She's coaled and provisioned. Why should he take a chance?"

"Under the British flag—why not? They're allies of Japan," retorted Nine.

Seven reached over and picked up the Bellingham telegram from the operator's flexed fingers.

"Chief, I'm going after this fellow—alone!" he announced.

They stared.

"And I'm going to get him," supplemented Seven quietly. "He got away from me on my trick in the Pullman back there in Wyoming. Wire Washington that I've gone."

The door slammed.

Nine looked over at the chief. "I'll be hanged," he muttered. "And me his pardner for five years!"

Nine would have been more puzzled had he followed Seven. He knew that no steamer was due to leave Seattle that day. There were trains, by way of Vancouver, of course—but Number Three was to drop down to Victoria

and flush the "bird" from that quarter, if possible. Logic and deduction were traditional with Seven, among the older men of the "third section." What could he be thinking of now?

Seven was already rushing down to the trolley leading to Bremerton. He bridged the gap between the terminal at the navy yard and the docks with space-devouring strides.

Straight past the guard at the wharf he rushed.

The stern-faced marine, seeing only a civilian, presented his bayonet.

"Out of my way," hissed Seven. "I've got special dispatches for Captain Hawley."

"Orders!" incisively returned the marine. "You cannot pass unless by permission of the officer of the deck. The *California* is about to weigh anchor for sea."

"Signal him!" commanded Seven.

The marine obeyed.

Ten minutes later Captain Hawley received the man with the alleged message. His face, lined with sorrow, held a transitory pleasure as Seven gripped his hand.

"What about this message from Washington?" demanded Captain Hawley of Number Seven—in private life his older brother, Bertram. "I received one of a private nature not an hour ago. Does this contradict it, I wonder?"

"That was my bluff," explained Seven. "I had to take a chance before waiting instructions from Washington. This must never go further, Alexander. I'm in the 'third section' of the diplomatic agents. Even the Secretary of State does not know my name. Only the President. Here——"

He thrust his telegraphic instructions of the day before into his brother's hand.

"I heard you were ordered out into the Pacific. My man, Valjean Borden,

slipped through the net this morning——”

He stopped.

The commanding officer of the *California* reeled back against the side of his cabin.

“You, too?” gasped Captain Hawley, deathly pale.

“Sure, why not?” replied his other brother. “Of course, Alec, only the exigencies of the situation excuse me for informing you of this. I am sworn not to reveal my identity—except when it will further the nation’s interest and there is no other alternative.

“Listen,” he went on. “Alec, this Borden is a suspect. I think he’s a Japanese spy. For all I know he may be on his way to Japan now. I’ve got to get him—do you understand?”

“Yes,” answered his brother. “I understand only too well, Bertram. See!”

He unlocked a drawer to his escritoire and brought out another bit of yellow paper. Seven—otherwise Bertram Hawley—read it with a dazed face.

“A copy of the telegram the President sent to the family—telling them that brother Albert had been murdered in Vancouver by a Jap,” continued the *California’s* commander.

Bertram’s face went white. He plucked another code message from his pocket.

“Confirming my first words, officially, by further proof, Captain Hawley,” he formally began, “I may say to you that this suspect I am pursuing is named Valjean Borden—and he was the last Caucasian seen in Victoria with the deceased, Albert Hawley.”

Captain Hawley bowed.

“Under the circumstances,” he precisely replied, “leave is granted to you to accompany the *California* outbound, in pursuit of this Borden. Did I understand that he had chartered a yacht?”

“The *Sparrow*, owned by a man

named McIntyre, of Bellingham, Washington, Captain Hawley.”

The commander bowed again.

“You will please make my quarters your own until I have time to assign you elsewhere,” said he. “I am needed now on the bridge.”

Eight hours later the *California*, poking her nose into the thick blanket of fog around Victoria, slowed her engines for the first time.

CHAPTER X.

THE STERN CHASE.

With a thankful heart, Valjean Borden saw the straits of Juan de Fuca racing under the forefoot of the *Sparrow*. The gallant little craft slithered through the water at a speed which her log showed averaged twenty knots.

Ten miles out in the open sea, Captain Benjamin Hale began to lay his course for San Diego. The new owner was pacing back and forth on the deck, apparently quite preoccupied. The *Sparrow’s* commander did not think it necessary to disturb him, as the clearance papers at the port of Victoria read “San Diego, California.”

The young owner was not just then thinking of his beautiful craft; neither was he congratulating himself upon the bargain which he had secured. Other and more practical ideas surged through his mind—together with a new bewilderment.

So Captain Hale, with the reserve which a man in his position naturally feels for a new owner with a plethora of money, gave his orders while the promenading man continued to weigh the extraordinary occurrences at Victoria that afternoon.

There was ample food for thought in the events surrounding his leaving. Again the mysterious influences which had tracked him across the continent and back again into Wyoming had all but checked his progress toward the

little island where fabulous riches waited his coming.

On arrival at the British city, Val had gone up to a commercial house and made several final purchases. Ten two-gallon jugs, carefully crated and sheathed throughout with protecting metal, were among the most important of his orders.

After he had paid for them and received the assurance that they would be immediately delivered to the *Sparrow*, young Borden hurried to the bank, where he also paid over to Eustace McIntyre the balance of the purchase money agreed upon, received his attested bill of sale, the clearance papers for the voyage south, and started on his return to the wharf.

Things had been coming so smoothly that he quite overlooked his habitual caution in the first block or two.

Then, from an alley, sprang a Japanese, with an upraised knife. An inch or two to the left and the vicious blade would have torn its way to Borden's heart.

As the assailant fled back through an alley, Borden recognized the same man who had been the nominal steward of the whaler which had picked up the *Senator's* gig months before.

Without delay the former medical student entered a hardware store. His purchase of an automatic pistol and suitable ammunition was his first act; a half dozen vacuum bottles came next, and, thus equipped, Val started toward the wharf where his yacht was lying off-shore.

The recent attempt upon his life exasperated him. The persistence of the agents of the Japanese, who had caused him so much trouble, was an evidence that they would stop at nothing—provided they felt safe—to prevent his carrying out his plans. Future interference of any kind, the youth decided, would no longer be met with mere pas-

sive resistance or attempts to elude either Japs or their agents.

He paused to grip the loaded pistol in his coat pocket, shifting his package to his left hand, as he began the walk down the dimly lighted wharf at the far end of which the dinghy was lying, waiting his return.

A man bulked out of the shadows, blocking his path.

Instantly Val's ready pistol flashed from his pocket, covering the figure.

In some indefinable way the harassed young man realized that here was another of the detectives who he had long ago concluded were employed by the Orientals to dog his footsteps, break into his rooms, pry open his baggage, and commit other more or less overt acts of an unlawful character—not to mention an assassination when all else failed to turn him aside from his quest back to the volcanic island.

"Your name is Borden?" began the big man, blocking the way and known on the registry of the State Department at Washington as "Number Three."

"Put up your hands!" defiantly returned Borden.

The other did not obey. Instead, his own hand flipped backward toward his hip pocket.

Instantly Val fired.

The bullet struck the fingers gripping the weapon.

The pistol in the hand of Number Three fell to the wharf.

"If you try any more monkey business with me, my friend," continued Borden, "I'll kill you. Stand aside!"

"See here," furiously shouted the man, "do you know——"

"I know all about you," vehemently replied Borden. "You are one of the men who have been trailing me across the United States. Stand aside or I'll shoot you down like a dog!"

The man obeyed.

Ten minutes afterward, the *Sparrow* put to sea under full steam.

Two hours later the *California*, under forced draft, was lying off shore. Number Seven came ashore and conferred with Number Three, noting his bandaged hand with a grimmer smile than he had hitherto worn.

"We were right—all the way from the first tip I sent the chief at Seattle," commented Three, at the conclusion of his story.

"This kid is a Jesse James when he's cornered. I had him right—he's a Jap spy, posing as a medical student. Else how does it come that he has a bank roll that would choke a bull calf? He paid down fifty thousand dollars for the *Sparrow* to-day.

"Why, every move he's made from the beginning has been crooked. He hands the chief a get-away in the most fashionable restaurant in New York; he slips away from you boys over in Wyoming and doubles into Seattle; there he hires a special to Vancouver—and leaves it at Bellingham. Then he shoots my gun out of my hand when I was going to strongarm him until I get in—and beats it on a yacht he's bought for cash. What honest man would pull all that stuff?"

Seven did not reply. He handed over the same telegrams to Number Three which he had shown Captain Hawley of the *California* in Seattle.

Three vented his disgust in a wry smile.

"If he hadn't beat me to the draw, I'd 'a' held him—dead or alive!" he exclaimed. "Poor Twenty-five. He was a right decent kid—always enthusiastic, always had a good word for his pals!"

"Where did the *Sparrow* clear for?" asked Seven, with an ominous calmness.

His hard eyes were glowing with the red rage which filled him.

"Port officer says San Diego, California."

"Which is another of his lies," said Seven, as he turned wearily back to the launch of the *California*, mindful of the cruiser's warning siren.

On board the vessel he sought out the commander and related what he had discovered.

"My orders from the Secretary of the Navy, of course, take precedence over our own ideas," explained Captain Hawley.

Seven nodded. "Suits me. This Borden person isn't going to San Diego. That's another of his stalls. He plays everything that way. The last time we jumped his track he hired a special to Vancouver from Seattle—and left it at Bellingham to buy this *Sparrow*. If you're going out toward the Aleutian group, he'll be somewhere just ahead of us. Where else would he head for except the Jap fleet? Take your time, Alec. He can't get away now, unless he meets them ahead of us. And if you get within five miles or so of his boat, there's more than one way of closing the gap without wasting coal, if he don't lay to on signal. This man's wanted bad by the State Department. Would you mind reporting by wireless to Bremerton that I'm with you? Ask them to notify the Navy Department—my big boss at Washington will then know I'm still after the man he's ordered me to bring in."

Destiny, grown kindly for a moment, allowed the *California's* searchlight to pencil the horizon behind the *Sparrow* with a mile-long flash just as Captain Hale turned to the south.

Valjean Borden, thus apprised of the change of the yacht's course, ran to the bridge.

"I intended to tell you, Captain Hale," said he, "that I've changed my mind about going to San Diego. I'm going to run out toward the tip of the

Aleutian group first. Here's the final destination."

He tendered a paper bearing the latitude and longitude of his island goal. Captain Hale studied it with a troubled face.

"This isn't altogether regular, sir," said he respectfully.

"What do you mean, captain?"

"We're liable to get into trouble with any port officer when we make harbor again, because we cleared for San Diego."

"That, Captain Hale, is a responsibility that I shall assume from now on," smiled Borden. "This is not a commercial vessel. If I wish to go to Nome instead of San Diego, that is my pleasure. Please see to it that my orders are obeyed forthwith."

"Very well, sir," said Captain Hale. "But there is another matter, sir, of which I should like to speak."

"You may proceed."

"It was reported in Victoria this afternoon that the Japanese are contemplating a descent upon this coast, sir. There are rumors that they left Japan some days ago. What if we encounter them?"

Borden grinned.

"I encountered a subject of the Mikado this afternoon in Victoria—and had the unpleasant duty of shooting up one of their Caucasian handy men," said he. "But, Captain Hale, I may say to you I would not forego my present intention, even though I did not know of the rumor until now. I have reason to believe that something is afoot with Japan—have had my suspicions for several months past, in fact. Nevertheless, I must go on. Of course, I shall allow you and the crew a remuneration proportioned to the increased hazard. When you have laid the course we will settle that matter in my cabin."

"Very well, sir," saluted Captain Hale as the new owner left the bridge.

"What do you say to triple pay?"

asked Borden when the discussion was again resumed.

"I think it is very handsome of you, sir," quietly commented Captain Hale.

"Thank you. And, in addition to that, if I reach the destination I have indicated within five days from the time of leaving Victoria, you will also be paid a bonus of one thousand dollars more upon our arrival in that port."

Captain Hale's reply was not expressed in words.

But the *Sparrow's* speed was increased to the maximum. The *California*, hull down on the horizon behind them, did not sight her that night nor for four days more.

But her commander peered out at the North Pacific, searching the sky line with feverish, avid eyes.

His brother's avowal that the *Sparrow* was heading toward the point where the Japanese fleet was expected gave him a dual reason for vigilance.

Sometimes he would dash from those relentless eyes a salty spray that was not from the sea.

And once or twice, when quite alone, a broken word, a sudden heaving of his chest accompanied the motion. At such times, had it not been for the shriek of the wind across the trim decks of the cruiser, one might have discerned a word or two that sounded like:

"Poor brother—I wonder if you know that I'm right behind him now—that is, if Bert is right?"

For three days Valjean Borden watched the gallant little yacht cleave the brine. Every league brought him nearer his goal. Each night he paid a mysterious visit to the little motor dinghy. One by one he installed in it some of the purchases he had made at Victoria.

The evening of the third day found him distraught and restless. Something was wrong. He knew it as surely as he had divined that he was watched

in the Pullman berth which he had impulsively abandoned.

He assured himself that the idea was absurd. Nevertheless, it persisted. So, without a word to officers or men, he made a personal inspection of the craft, overlooking nothing.

There were no stowaways on board. Again he assured himself that none of the crew had even seen him before he had paid Eustace McIntyre the price agreed on for the *Sparrow*.

Still, the impression of incipient trouble would not be assuaged.

It was midnight when the new owner furtively carried food and six well-filled vacuum bottles to the little dinghy. It already carried a compass, a mast was lashed alongside, and there were gear and a sail in another locker.

Alongside these Val stowed a chronometer and a spare compass which had been in the owner's cabin. Disdaining sleep, he walked the deck, scrutinizing the sullen waves in the *Sparrow's* wake.

The steady pur of the turbines continued. The *Sparrow*, pointing like a setter dog for an indiscernible covey of birds, was shifting more and more to the north, toward its invisible destination.

At noon the day before, Captain Hale had assured him that another twenty-four hours would see them at the latitude and longitude given him. The commander's calculations allowed for more mileage than Borden had roughly estimated, and they were sailing on the arc of a great circle. Since changing their course, a circumstance formally entered in the ship's log, the mileage for each day was set down in detail.

Daybreak would bring Captain Hale to the bridge. Dead reckoning, with the help of the yacht's progress during the night, would then follow. The number of miles they had traversed since leaving Victoria would be finally computed, and the *Sparrow* would then be enabled to pick up the island as ac-

curately as if it had been following an invisible thread all the way.

The *Sparrow* should not be more than a hundred and eighty miles from the island, allowing for possible errors in the *Senator's* chronometer after the wreck, unfavorable currents, or other probable factors of variation.

Nevertheless, the more nearly they appeared to physically approach the place upon which all his hopes were concentrated, the more that inward feeling grew that the *Sparrow* would never anchor there.

He was walking toward the companionway leading to his cabin when there came a roar from below, and a jet of steam burst from the raised skylights of the engine room. The next instant the yacht's speed began to abate.

Shouts and muffled orders came from below. The murmur of the whirling turbines dulled and died. Vapor belched up in great clouds.

Presently the *Sparrow* was broached to, tossing up and down on the regular swell of the North Pacific like a tired gull whose flight has suddenly exhausted it.

In a moment the chief engineer came up from below.

"High-pressure steam pipe's busted!" he announced. "I had to shut her down because the break happened in the feed pipe to the first turbine."

"Is it serious?" stammered the owner, appalled by the suddenness with which his inward forebodings were being realized.

The engineer laughed.

"It's a joke. Lucky it happened where it did. All I've got to do is cut off the section of busted pipe, thread a coupling on each end, fit in a new piece—and we're off again as gay as you please."

"How long will it take?"

"Possibly a couple of hours—hardly more. We have all the tools and plenty

of pipe. I'll notify the captain so he can compute our position."

The hearty assurance of speedy repairs afforded a temporary relief to the owner. But the obsession of brooding trouble returned almost immediately.

There was something uncanny about the way that pipe had chosen that particular time and place to burst. Why should it not have occurred the day before? Or four or five hours later? Pipes are not animate things—and the singular character of the episode transpiring when the *Sparrow* was within a few miles of the island augured ill.

Captain Benjamin Hale laughed at Val's qualms.

"It is very trivial, sir," said he. "Such things are to be expected at sea. We are most fortunate that nothing else has resulted, for I've been driving her almost top-notch all the way. From my last computation, the island is quite close."

The owner's exultation rose again.

"How far?" he demanded.

"According to your figures for latitude and longitude, I should say within thirty-five or forty miles, sir."

"Which direction?"

"Almost due north."

"Thank you."

Borden turned away. The announcement altered his intention to seek a little sleep. How could he sleep when—

"God bless me—it can't be real," he muttered, walking aft to vent his emotion where he could not be overheard.

He gazed down at the dancing waves of the interminable Pacific. They were as hopefully blue as the eyes of his first sweetheart. The dawn was rising majestically in the east—behind them. A curtain of mist was wreathing the horizon to the north. But the threatened fog did not dampen his suddenly rekindled hopes.

Mist is common in those latitudes.

The Japanese current, constantly combating the waters of the Pole whirling down through Bering Strait—one warm, the other cold—breeds fog as inevitably as the clash of an optimist and a pessimist breeds argument.

The repairs progressed more rapidly than the engineer had calculated.

At last Val left the men putting the final twist to the new connection. He leaned over the stern rail and gazed at the tinted water.

Suddenly he heard the hurried step of Captain Benjamin Hale behind him. He turned to face the commander.

There was something in the man's eyes that sent a shock to Borden's brain—something awed, tragic; something which in a less-seasoned veteran of the sea would have expressed itself as a monumental fear.

"What is it?" cried Val sharply, without waiting for the other to speak. His voice was querulous, rasping, high-pitched.

Captain Benjamin Hale did not speak.

He merely extended his hand toward the western horizon. The outstretched fingers quivered.

Val felt his skin prickling; little shudders rose tremulously along his spine; chills crept over his body; he stiffened as if the blood within his veins was turning to ice.

Captain Benjamin Hale's arm swept swiftly in a circle. He pointed to the east as he had pointed to the west.

And again the *Sparrow's* owner followed that compelling gesture.

Then he realized why he had been a prey to such sinister forebodings during the swift, silent watches of the night. The *Sparrow* was very fast—but fate was faster.

The *Sparrow's* turbines wove into their steel circles the supreme cunning of man for ocean propulsion. But what is man save a pygmy—clinging to a fleck of spinning sand—and what are his most superlative devices for short-

ening distance compared to the strides of destiny devouring sidereal spaces? Spaces, the least of which, man, the braggart, has no numeral of sufficient magnitude with which to express its smallest integer?

Afterward Valjean Borden recalled two thoughts of that epochal instant—two only among myriads. He was glad the mist from the north was no farther away, and wondered whether high-pressure steam pipes did not possess intelligence.

CHAPTER XI.

SEVEN SIGHTS HIS QUARRY.

Sunshine slanting in yellowish gold from the east; beneath the mighty prow of the *California* a quivering expanse of blue-green water showering back the scintillations of the orb of day; far, far below the curvature of the earth to the northwest a nimbus of smoke so huge in its expanse, so rapidly increasing that it appeared unbelievable; and between the cruiser's position, midway toward the dished horizon, motionless at the moment of discovery, with lithe, white lines like the nude limbs of a Marathon runner, the disabled *Sparrow*.

Seven, squatting in the substitute for the "crow's nest" which adorned the forward military mast, drew his breath sharply. The faint, hissing inspiration was the only outward indication of the psychic tornado within. Seven had hunted much, but never before had his every deduction been justified with the accuracy of results that his pursuit of Valjean Borden repeatedly evidenced.

The lookout beside him was telephoning:

"Yacht on the starboard bow, distance about eight thousand yards. Smoke cloud on the northwest horizon, rising rapidly."

Seven slipped down to the deck as Captain Hawley appeared.

"He's there," said he simply.

The commander nodded.

At the most dramatic moment of his active service he had two duties to perform—for the wireless had officially confirmed Seven's request when they were still able to communicate with Bremerton with orders to overtake and apprehend the elusive young medical student as well as report back the position of the invading fleet, the moment it was sighted.

Beneath the commander's feet poised thousands of tons of obedient steel; at his command waited a complex but disciplined assortment of human energy; immured in his magazines were the inexorable gases and the powerful projectiles which rode ahead of them; and as he lifted his hand, the bugle sounded the call to quarters.

Against this supreme hour the nation educating Captain Hawley had expended millions upon millions of treasure and billions of ergs of physical and mental human energy. So perfect was the discipline, however, that one would have supposed the *California* was merely going into target practice had it not been for one peculiar difference.

No flag of the nation broke its inspiring folds from her stern—no pennant fluttered overhead. Grim, gray, relentless, and naked of marks that would identify her nationality at a distance, the cruiser drove forward on a slightly altered course toward the disabled yacht some five miles away.

The fire-control men shinned into the superposed turrets; the chugging engines reduced speed to ten knots; the rumble of the ammunition hoist bit through the teasing seconds, and the languorous sigh of the testing air blast came like an anticipatory note of regret from the ship's heart; on the bridge the navigator's footfalls became curiously strident amid the awed hush.

Then a puff of vapor from the *Sparrow*, and her turbines began to revolve.

Like an impudent boy who has "played hooky" from school making faces at the truant officer, who unexpectedly comes upon him, so the yacht which Valjean Borden had bought began plunging through the water as she resumed her course.

Seven's face went chalky white at the insult.

The lieutenant turned toward Captain Hawley expectantly. There was a muttered command. The spotter on the turret sunk to his knees and the yeoman by his side automatically followed his example—each man turning his cap backward.

From the depths of the forward turret the twelve-inch starboard gun turned its muzzle with a malign swerve into the arc of a circle, in the center of which the fleeing craft was scurrying wildly toward the wall of mist from the north.

A voice filled the firing control down the rubber tube:

"Five thousand yards! Deflection three eighty-seven!"

In the pregnant second preceding the repetition of the command in the depths of the forward turret, the clicking of the timer's watches became a prelude to the "Commence firing!"

Two feet of flame edged the vast yellowish smoke disk revolving inward upon itself. Every man on deck braced against the slam of the blasting back draft—a gust that jerked the cylinder of the twelve-inch gun as if it were a willow wand in the hands of a grown man.

The skipping shell, invisible at first, fell two hundred yards beyond and ahead of the *Sparrow*. The spouting column of water following its plunge suggested a leviathan of the deep rising for breath.

The yacht swung slowly round, lying broadside on, stopping obediently to the signal. The dinghy on the side opposite the cruiser swayed invitingly, as

Valjean Borden's staring eyes wandered from the battle craft toward the friendly mist creeping down from the north.

"What do you suppose that means?" he asked steadily of Captain Hale.

"A visiting card from the Japanese, sir!" unhesitatingly replied that officer, loosening his hold of the engine-room telegraph. "The next will cut us in two. They are all around us, it would seem. You will remember that I mentioned——"

Borden walked quietly back to the side of the yacht on which the dinghy swung from her davits.

The *California*, seeing that the admonition which admitted of no alternative had been heeded, slowed down. A knot of men were busy at a launch on her port side.

"They intend putting a crew on us, sir," went on Captain Hale, whose eyes were alternately fixed on the grim, gray craft behind and the grimmer cloud of smoke rising on the northwest horizon.

As one fascinated, he continued to gaze. The *California*, still fully two miles distant, was describing a circle as she came about; the launch she had lowered was puffing in their direction; the mist from the north was closing in upon the devoted little *Sparrow*.

Rousing, Captain Hale stepped to his cabin for his glass. As he emerged, he was too full of his own thoughts to hear the rattle of the blocks on the davits from which the dinghy swung as he adjusted his binoculars to an accurate focus upon the ship which had so imperiously signaled them to "lay to."

A great grin lit up his face.

He turned toward the owner, who had been standing by the rail.

"Why, Mr. Phelps," he began, "she ain't——"

He stopped, and stared. He was speaking to empty space. The owner was not there. Captain Hale hurried

to the cabin, and shouted down the companionway.

Still no response. Impatiently he leaped to the door of Borden's cabin and pushed it open.

The place was empty.

As he reached the deck, in the trailing wreaths of mist which were clutching at the little vessel's sides, he discerned the crew peering out toward the swiftly approaching launch.

"By Jove," shouted the mate, with unmistakable relief, "they don't look like Japs!"

Captain Hale snorted.

"I knew that five minutes ago," he averred. "Say, where's Mr. Phelps? Did he go forward?"

"No, sir," replied the sailor on lookout, already partially invisible in the dank fog.

The commander ran to the side, where the trailing tackle at the davits told the story of the missing man's whereabouts.

Out of the impenetrable wall to the north floated back the faint "chug-chug" of a gasoline motor—a derisive answer, it seemed, to the louder throbs of the one arriving on the opposite side.

Seven and an ensign leaped up the companion ladder which Captain Hale had lowered.

"Your papers, sir!" demanded the man in uniform.

The *Sparrow's* commander led the way below.

Seven, with one hand on a gleaming pistol, followed.

"Where's the owner?" demanded the ensign sternly, as he balanced the clearance papers in his twitching fingers.

"He left the ship a moment ago, in the dinghy, sir!" respectfully answered the captain. "We thought you were Japanese."

"You will consider yourself under arrest!" continued the ensign.

Captain Hale stared.

"For what, sir?" he brusquely demanded.

"For aiding and abetting the escape of a criminal," interpolated Seven.

"I think not, gentlemen," emphatically replied Hale. "I simply obeyed the orders of my owner. If he was a criminal, I was ignorant of his character. His instructions were mandatory—and I shall stand upon my rights under the maritime act, gentlemen. I refuse to consider myself under arrest on such a trivial pretext as this!" He rose belligerently and faced them. "And, unless you assure me that you are acting by some authority which I am compelled to recognize, I shall demand that you leave this vessel," continued the doughty commander.

"Very well," said the ensign. "If you prefer to be shot to pieces by the Japanese, that's your privilege. Otherwise, you will understand that technicalities, in such a case as this are unavailing."

"Has war been declared?" retorted Hale.

"It will be within an hour, unless all signs fail."

Seven interposed with a request that the *Sparrow* should be searched.

The yacht was tenantless.

And, however much authority existed for "bringing in" one Valjean Borden, Seven realized that he had no specific orders to apprehend an innocent commander of a ship whose owner had cleared for one port and altered his course for another—a privilege an owner may reserve, provided no obvious illegal purpose is subserved by so doing.

"Why did this Valjean Borden quit the ship when we came up?" demanded Seven.

"I don't know any such person," parried the commander. "I said that my owner, whose name is Mr. William Phelps, and who purchased this yacht several days ago in Bellingham, left her

because we first thought you were a Japanese man-of-war. After I got out my glass and saw the jackies in the launch, I turned to tell him of the mistake. But he was already gone."

Seven's lip curled derisively.

"What kind of a man was this Phelps?" he sarcastically retorted.

"An American, unusually tall, quite young, bright yellow hair, and a very determined way with him."

A trifle mollified, Seven nodded.

"He was under an assumed name, captain," he explained.

"It was the name under which he bought the yacht," obdurately replied Hale, "and the name he gave when I signed to navigate her. Who wants him?" he bluntly demanded.

"The government of the United States," returned Seven.

Hale regarded him curiously.

"For what?" he insisted.

Plainly he did not believe this individual in civilian clothes who had boarded his vessel on the high seas like a pirate with a naked pistol in his hand.

"For an offense which need not be disclosed," significantly replied Seven, a steely glitter in his gloomy eyes. "But he evidently knew he was wanted from the way he left, didn't he?"

"I told him that the shot you sent across this ship's bows was from a Japanese man-of-war," replied Captain Hale. "How were we to know who you were? I repeat, sir, you showed no flag. Had I thought you an American vessel, I should not have stopped my engines, sir. Instead, I should have broken out my flags and signaled for your reasons for such extraordinary conduct."

"I do not accuse you of complicity," replied the agent of the third section, with official incisiveness. "But Borden is wanted for many things—all the way from breaking jail to murder. And

murder is not his gravest offense," he significantly added.

Captain Hale shrugged his shoulders.

"We are on the high seas, and this vessel flies the British flag," he replied. "Mr. Phelps may not be your man. Frankly, gentlemen, I think there is a mistake. He is still my owner, and I shall make every effort to pick him up and explain matters."

"There is no mistake," returned Seven frigidly. "As a representative of the United States, I shall, in the event of the owner returning to this boat, proceed to place him under arrest and transfer him to the cruiser *California*."

Captain Hale bowed punctiliously.

"In the event of force, I shall have no option but a complaint to His Majesty's government at Victoria, gentlemen. If we have finished, I shall proceed on my course."

He escorted them to the rail.

The ensign turned to observe, before lowering himself down the ladder to the launch:

"If you value your skin, Captain Hale, you will turn tail and run. There will be hell popping around here presently."

The *Sparrow's* commander did not reply except with a formal inclination of his head as the roar of the *California's* siren tore through the mists, signaling for her launch to return. With that signal for a guide, the launch stole away.

Captain Hale peered out toward the north.

He was wondering what his duty was under such extraordinary circumstances. In all his experience, from cabin boy to commander, he had no precedent with which to guide him. Finally, he signaled half speed, and turned the nose of the *Sparrow* to the north.

At the same moment, Valjean Borden, with pallid face, but with deter-

mined fingers gripping the steering wheel of the diminutive dinghy, bent forward to advance the spark on his engine, and opened the muffler valve, as he discerned no sound of pursuit.

"I can't lose," muttered the perplexed young man. "If they get me, they get me—that's all. I've come here to get something, and I'll keep on going if I have to swim. This hoodoo that's following me is the prize jinx in the whole menagerie of hard luck. But thirty-five miles isn't so far. I ought to make it in three hours. Wonder if I can hide out on my little island if the pesky Japs should sneak up on me before I get off again?"

Due north he steered.

It was a fearful hazard—this impulse which had hurled him out into the trackless wastes of the North Pacific with such a fragile craft. He thankfully remembered that there was deep water to the south of the island. With one eye on the compass and the other on his engine, he drove the lilliputian boat as Captain Hale had driven the *Sparrow*—at top speed.

The irony of the situation galled him. On that island was wealth so fabulous that no man in the world could equal him in whatever power money confers could he but reach it, procure the thing he was seeking, and, in some way which he could not now foresee, make shift to carry it back to some Pacific Coast seaport on the American continent.

That bellying cloud of rapidly rising smoke below the western horizon spelled the coming of myriads of Japanese. Nothing short of an armada of prodigious power could smudge the sky to that extent. They and he were approaching a common goal along converging legs of an isosceles triangle. Behind, on the base line, lay another vessel whose warning shell had halted a far more seaworthy craft than that in which he now found himself.

The chances were a million to one

that a prize crew was already installed on the *Sparrow*—and fifty thousand dollars of real money was already swallowed up.

But what was fifty thousand dollars to the inexhaustible opulence that would be his could he come out of this desperate enterprise unscathed?

Three hours and ten minutes from the time he leaped into the dinghy, according to the chronometer in the locker, Valjean Borden, straining his eyes in the thick mist ahead, saw a denser, blacker something jutting high up before him. As he drew still nearer he recognized it for the great cliff of coal on the eastern side of the island.

With a low, exultant laugh, he whirled the dinghy to port and skirted the southern rim of the land. Farther on was the very place where he had previously landed in the *Senator's* gig. The current set rather sharply in his direction, but the tide was high, and the little launch ran up to the gently shelving sands as nimbly as a lover trips up the steps of his sweetheart's cottage.

As his whole being glowed with gratitude and triumph, Valjean Borden dragged his tiny craft into a niche between two great rocks. With the mystic abruptness of that far-northern latitude, the tide began to ebb. In ten minutes the path was clear for him to walk around the rocks toward the mainland, and the dinghy, for some hours at least, was safely aground.

Also, he was quite alone.

CHAPTER XII.

HEMMED IN.

The topography of the newly formed island reconstructed itself before the eyes of its sole occupant. With extreme care, he dragged from the covered bow of the dinghy the metal-protected jugs which he had bought and crated in Victoria.

With one under each arm he strode off in the mist toward the stream which trickled down from the pulsating geyser. The water, boiling hot as it emerged, cooled rapidly as it rippled down toward the sea in a sizable rivulet.

Depositing the containers on the rock at his feet, Valjean Borden stood for a few moments motionless, fascinated by the limpid fluid at his feet. He knew it for fresh water, springing from the heart of the rock of which this bleak land was composed. Around him for miles and miles was only the salty waste of the Pacific, stretching from Pole to Pole and from the Old World to the New.

No lofty mountains on this island reared their tips into the upper levels of the atmosphere to condense the wisps of fog which drifted past. No timber caught the snowfall for the returning sun to feed that stream during the brief arctic summer. Unlike any other source of fresh water in the world that the former medical student had seen or heard of, save the geysers in the Yellowstone, it jetted up from the hot heart of the earth beneath, bearing with it the thermal units of volcanic fires kindled, perhaps, in the Archæozoic period.

Back behind the most remote traditions of primitive man, back behind the age of mammals, of reptiles, of coal plants, of fishes, or of invertebrates which had successively preceded the arrival of humanity in its lowest forms—back to the azoic age itself—those fires had burned.

The world a few cosmic moments before was "without form and void." And, through all the innumerable ages, those fires had continued; the ceaseless chemistry of the Creator had evolved those very drops of water now flowing past him—water so precious that only one other element known to mankind could compare to it in value.

And that element, whose monetary worth was quoted at two millions of dollars an ounce—seventy thousand dollars a gram—was so rare that in the whole world there had been produced barely sixteen grams, all told, during the entire previous year. And this, too, with the most avid searching, the most painstaking care, the most prodigious effort, and by employing the greatest scientific minds of the day in the eager quest.

What a contrast with the unrestrained, endless, liquid opulence flowing at his feet—immortal water that was much like time in that its source was beyond comprehension, its character beyond analysis, its existence and mysterious powers differing from all other water in the world, discernible only through the effects it produced.

Val smiled as he replaced his hat and stooped to fill the first two jugs. He was most careful in the operation. Not one drop was allowed to touch his hands, and when the jugs had been securely corked, the tops sealed with an air-tight cap of lead, they were placed in the lead-lined crates and taken back to the boat.

When all had been filled, the jubilant young man sat down to devour a meal. He ate as if the precious freight were already transformed into gold coin and as if he had only to step out of the rocky niche in which his little dinghy was hidden to plant foot on Broadway and order his next meal from the Café Cecil.

The mists were thinning under the rays of the sun. As they became more and more tenuous, Val lost a little of his jaunty confidence, and began to take a more common-sense view of his position.

"Guess I'll have a look at that gasoline supply," said he, after some moments of study. "Well, that isn't promising for a trip of eighteen hundred miles," he breathed, repiacing the tank

cap. "Looks as if I'd have to get out my oars before the trip's ended."

He began to feel drowsy. The unrest of the night before, the excitement of the escape, and the swift drive to the island, the labor of filling the containers, not only kept him awake, but furnished a physical outlet for his nervous energy. Now the inevitable reaction was commencing.

Therefore, Borden decided to sleep. There could be no quitting the place until the flood tide reached the keel of his little boat; he might run into a storm and find it impossible to sleep for hours once he was again afloat; he must husband all his strength for whatever was ahead when he started on the return journey, and he was surely entitled to some real repose on general principles.

Therefore, he saw to it that the dinghy was not likely to drift from the niche if his nap was prolonged, cuddled himself in his blankets, pillowed his head on the boat cushions, and closed his eyes.

As calmly as the most stoical of Orientals, he drifted to the land of dreams, and slept the deep, calm, rejuvenating slumber of an innocent child.

Captain Benjamin Hale, the sturdy heart of him torn with anxiety for the venturesome youth who had replaced Eustace McIntyre as owner of the *Sparrow*, poking the yacht's nose gently northward toward the spot that "Mr. Phelps" had bade him seek and find, picked up the very intersection of the invisible lines the intellect of man has traced over the surface of the earth.

It was high noon, and the fog was now so lessened that he could "shoot the sun" with some allowance for refraction.

"Holy mackerel!" exclaimed Captain Hale, as he jotted down his position. "This must have been the place he was looking for."

He signaled the engine room to "re-

duce speed." The *Sparrow* held just sufficient motion to give her good steerage way. Her commander blinked at the great gash of black coal jutting out into the ocean.

"Forward there! Mister Noble," roared Captain Hale to his mate, "heave the lead for soundin's!"

The obedience to the command showed that the water shoaled from fifteen fathoms to six within three hundred feet of the cliff. Nearer than this Hale was unwilling to take his boat, even with her light draft. The currents, the tides, concealed rocks, were all factors with which he must reckon.

He steamed carefully astern until he had room to bring the *Sparrow* around with her nose pointing south. This island was not on any map in the yacht's chart room.

Yet it occupied the very place which his new owner had so quietly insisted upon reaching. Well, the *Sparrow* was arrived. But her new owner was gone.

Captain Hale got out his binoculars, and studied the island with a practiced eye. He wondered if the *Sparrow's* owner was roaming over that bit of bleak rock, and what he was doing if he was there. Also, what had become of the dinghy if he had really landed upon the place?

"Sound the siren, Mr. Noble," he at last ordered.

The wailing echoes that rose and fell from the yacht's lusty whistle helped to relieve the steam pressure rising in her boilers. Captain Hale circled slowly past the southern fringe of the tiny sea-bound rock. His binoculars swept every exposed bit of the island for some trace of his owner.

With the siren continuing its warning signals, they crept at last to the extreme western side of the only land the Pacific boasted between the last of the Aleutian Islands until the bleak shores of Siberia rose on the continent of Asia.

No sight or sound of the missing man revealed itself to the anxious watcher, for no glass ever ground could steal the sparse light from the darkly shadowed cleft in the rocks where the little dinghy was wedged fast.

And only Gabriel's trump could, just then, have roused the exhausted youth slumbering profoundly in her stern.

As the *Sparrow* skirted the last of the island, Captain Hale came to another conclusion.

"He must have been making for this place, because those were his orders when he changed the course off the straits of Juan de Fuca," he assured himself. "And in the fog he must have run right past her—we were lying a little to the east of south, as I recall it. Now there's only one thing for me to do. I'll come about, weather this land on the east, rig the searchlight, and keep on for a few miles to the north. If he was on this island he must have heard our siren. He could see us a whole lot plainer than we could see him. If he was actually there, why didn't he signal?"

Before he had time to assure himself that his latest theory was correct, another series of ideas burst upon the mind of Captain Hale with what might have been termed "explosive force."

The shout of the mate in the prow, as the *Sparrow* began her cautious circle to the south brought the commander back to the present and recalled very vividly another incident of the extraordinary day.

On the northwest horizon a mighty fleet—the same whose smoke he had observed earlier in the day—was now in view. For miles the sea was crammed with silent, onrushing battle-ships. Their prows, cleaving the unresisting waters, tossed streaks of white spume on each side. In the first amazing moment those white-topped billows seemed the teeth of a gigantic shark whose widespread jaws yawned for the

Sparrow—or any other craft manned by Caucasians.

And at the peak of each military mast flew a flag whose red center and radiating beams were the color of the dying sun behind the soundless, oncoming armada—the naval flag of Japan—pygmy among nations in area, giant in purpose, and a veritable Hercules in past conflicts with other world powers.

Captain Hale decided that there were other and more important things to engage his attention than a prolonged search for a venturesome and erratic owner. He was in no wise responsible for what "Mr. Phelps" had done. But he was responsible for the feeding, clothing, and education of a wife and bairns. The long-rumored Japanese invasion was already a fact—or would be with another eighteen hundred miles of eastward travel.

Captain Hale galvanized into sudden activity as he realized that a long war might indefinitely defer his return to his family. He was a British subject, but red tape unrolls slowly. Before he was compelled to resort to technical procedure to obtain his release he decided to make the most of present opportunities to make release unnecessary by avoiding capture.

He signaled for "full speed ahead."

The *Sparrow* shot back along the southern fringe of the island. In a hundred yards she was out of sight of the tremendous fleet bearing down from the northwest.

In another three hundred yards Captain Hale had so maneuvered things that the cliff of coal lay astern. It was rather comforting to know that any possible shot in their direction must first traverse at least twelve miles and penetrate that cliff before the yacht, now running like a greyhound, would be in danger from the projectile.

Thirty miles or so to the east, steaming slowly in pursuit of the lost Val-

jean Borden, the cruiser *California* likewise took cognizance of the steadily approaching fleet by means of the nimbus of smoke which had been sighted at daybreak that morning.

Captain Hawley, painstaking and conscientious in every duty his position imposed, was satisfied in his own mind that this was the thing he had been ordered out to find.

Yet he must bring his ship much closer than at present—close enough to positively identify the craft composing the mighty squadron, their numbers, their probable strength, their armament, the number of troopships they were conveying, their rate of progress and any other data available.

Under cover of the welcome night much of this might be obtained by his scouting hydroaëroplanes. So the *California* turned her willing nose to the west, intent only on the duty assigned her commander.

There was less danger than appeared in such procedure. Whatever the intentions of Japan, war had not been formally declared. A conflict was unlikely, unless the arrival of the Japanese armada at the volcanic island was to be coincident with the withdrawal of the ambassador at Washington.

Warships on cruise are not necessarily hostile—even if they will be within a few hours. Captain Hawley knew that everything in the whole scheme of Japan's hidden purpose was already ascertained—event, time, place.

Therefore he steamed confidently westward, only observing such precautions as might conduce to his advantage in the event of treachery. Not a sound emanated from her beyond the throbbing of the great engines and the swish of the sea parting before her gigantic bulk.

No bugle call enlivened the monotony of the day's routine.

Silent, serene, watchful, the great

ship plowed sturdily into the descending night.

And silent, serene, and uncomprehending any of the drama around the island he had come so far to reach, Valjean Borden slept.

CHAPTER XIII.

SEVEN TRUMPS AN ACE.

Waking after a slumber whose length must have approximated twelve hours, the former medical student, suspected spy, alleged murderer, and actual jail breaker beheld a stupendous spectacle.

He was not entirely unprepared for what he saw, owing to incidents which had immediately preceded his arrival at the island. In this case, anticipation, however, fell far short of realization. He had expected to run the gantlet of hostile war vessels. How he had not planned. He would gladly have left the island before their arrival, and he well knew they were due to arrive shortly after he had effected his own landing.

But the physical exhaustion and the ebb tide forbade.

In none of his conjectures had Valjean Borden dreamed of seeing so many ships at one time—to say nothing of encountering them in such an obscure nook of the world.

Battleships, cruisers, torpedo craft, submarines, and troopships were gathered completely around the as yet uncharted bit of rock when he opened his startled eyes. Many things grew clear now to the crouching young man hidden in the crevice of rock where he had dragged his dinghy.

The mysterious efforts of the Japanese steward to make way with him; the continued espionage, as he still believed, by Jap agents; the complications which had arisen from the spies on his railway journey were all clearly traceable to the present hour—the hour

when the mightiest armada of modern times would seek this secluded place for a final coaling, ere it steamed away to inaugurate the long-anticipated struggle between the white men and the brown.

Searchlights streaming through the semidarkness; launches dropping here and there; the crash of wireless from the great floating fortress flying the admiral's pennant; flitting troop transports whose decks were covered with thousands of stoical, silent men; first the supremacy of the discipline pervading it all—this and much that he could not classify Valjean Borden peered out upon—the only white man in the world to witness what was transpiring.

He could not guess the miracles of coaling that were going on at the eastern side of the island; although the dulled detonations that crumbled thousands of tons signified that some explosive was being used on the bituminous cliffs, and he shrewdly conjectured that it was to loosen the exposed veins of fuel for easier handling.

But no mere medical student, nor any other Caucasian for that matter, would have surmised that the Japanese had already erected a wonderful model "coal hoist" in less than three hours on that towering cliff; nor that they possessed the engineering skill to run a warship within fifty yards of the deposit nor the seamanship to anchor it precisely in place while it was coaled so quickly that ordinary naval feats of the same character resembled the efforts of farmers using their bare hands.

Ship after ship steamed up into position; ship after ship stowed into its bunkers a steady stream of coal; before the next was anchored beneath the great spidery, overhanging frame of steel, with its buckets on endless chains, the Japanese on the great black cliff were already impatiently waiting for the machinery on shore to resume the titanic labor.

For twenty-four solid hours, during

all of which Valjean Borden lay unseen in his dinghy, the fleet coaled.

Then came the supreme test of his concealment.

No sooner had the last vessel steamed past his hiding place to take on fuel than the first was again opposite him, but this time a little farther off shore.

A half score of puffing launches whipped ready pontoons into position. Improvised anchors dragging from each side held the long line of planked boats immovable, save for the rise and fall of the structure with the fluctuations of the tides.

A tall chap, whom the hidden American guessed to be an officer of engineers, marched solemnly ahead of the swift-striding squads of men dragging reel after reel of large-diameter hose. The faultless precision of their movements was like every other operation of that mighty fleet of fighting machines—the superlative achievement of men dominated by one idea—discipline in microscopic details as well as a predetermined strategy of the mass.

For some three hundred yards the quadruple line of hose extended seaward and it vanished up the side of the fire-bitten rock into a hollow which the geyser overflowed on its trickle to the sea.

"Great guns!" groaned Val. "They're drinking up my geyser!"

A terrible suspicion leaped into his brain.

What would follow the storing and use of that miraculous, precious water on warships?

These midgits of men were bent only on conserving the last shovel of fuel until their swift, stealthy stroke against the unsuspecting and feebly protected seacoast of the United States in the far northwest should enable them to be sure of another abundant coal supply.

Once down Puget Sound, with myriads of fighting men from those transformed liners debouching upon Seattle,

the coal mines to the south of that city would fall into their hands; the transportation system connecting the mines with the harbor would be manned by soldier-mechanics as efficient as those navigating the ships.

Japan, thus securely intrenched on the Pacific seaboard, would then proceed to harass the interior at her pleasure.

It was all very plain to the watching young man—so plain that it would have been obvious to any one knowing the country and the enemy's intention, even though the science of military or naval strategy were a sealed book in all other respects.

An army must have a base; a navy must have coal and water.

Then Valjean Borden vented a low, sinister chuckle.

He thought again of the inextricable web of circumstance into which he had been thrust since he had first landed upon this island; of his hardships ere regaining Vancouver; of his flight from the fate which had overtaken his companions in the *Senator's* gig; of the mysterious and continued espionage by the Japanese and the men he still regarded as their agents.

How absurdly simple it was in view of the present drama which no one guessed he was observing?

And yet how curiously complex—how freighted with the weal or woe of the millions of men of alien blood, religions, ethics, and ambitions, and of millions more yet unborn.

Valjean laughed because behind it all, as through a glass darkly, he faintly discerned the purposes of immutable preordination—he saw Fate at the loom through which ceaselessly pours the round of occurrences which men term "life."

"They're drinking up my geyser!" he whispered. "They're putting into their tanks and storage reservoirs the most precious fluid that ever trickled to the

surface of the earth! And they don't even guess what will happen before they can cover that next eighteen hundred miles."

He crouched lower as the marching column halted near him and a lieutenant began wigwagging a signal to the ship lying just beyond.

The four lines of hose bulged as the pumps settled into a steady throb on the admiral's flagship. The rush of the geyser's water along the lines of flexible conduit ceased to interest the young American from the perspective of mechanical detail. It now all but paralyzed his mind with the certain knowledge of what would follow when the irresistible fighting craft which Japan had massed here should again put to sea.

"God put that geyser there!" he whispered to himself, in an awed undertone, "not for the destruction, but for the healing of the nations. I wonder how far away they'll be before the 'residuum that will not resolve' begins to manifest? I hope they are a good long distance from where I am—if not, I might be caught in the web they are spinning, as well as they.

"What transcendent stupidity—what incomprehensible ignorance! The race is not always to the swift nor the battle to the strong. There is something else these Orientals must some day understand behind the march of civilization besides men and guns. They may imitate us, but they must also learn to develop the creative intellect.

"Here is the most terrible thing in the world as well as the most beneficent—water from God's geyser—and they're going to use it to make steam for their boilers, to cook, to drink!"

Lying prone in the dinghy, protected by the deep shadows of the cleft into which he had impulsively dragged his tiny boat on landing, Val ate and drank. Then he again tucked the blankets around his inert body and slept.

When he next woke, the fleet was gone.

He crept stealthily around the island's end, wondering if any had been left to guard it.

Not a human being was visible.

The great coal cliff bore the scars of the explosive, its crest was shattered and slanted obliquely toward the base where the fuel had been torn away; the print of many feet was in the sand along the channel in which the geyser again jetted its way to the sea. The steady pulsations were still throbbing countless thousands of gallons to the surface, and the water was again purling merrily over the same course it had taken since the island came into being.

At flood tide Val floated his little boat.

He stepped the mast, rigged the sail, made everything taut and secure, squinted at the chronometer, scanned the compass, noting the wind was from the north, and, inwardly commending his soul to his Creator, he started his long homeward journey.

Somewhere to the south and east of him was that mighty armada. It must traverse the same distance to reach the United States that he must cover. And, as Val well knew, there lay the most terrible peril of all—not starvation or wreck of his little dinghy in the chartless wastes—not capture by the foe that was preparing to strike his native land with the same subtle craft that they had delivered their first blow against Russia years before—but something so transcendently more malign in its frightful capacities for destruction that no comparison was possible because the whole history of the world held no parallel for what Japan's fleet would undoubtedly experience.

Who could say how many miles distant from the fog-wreathed island that awful blow would fall? Who could foretell the scope of the devastation

that would follow? Who could visualize the extent of the final catastrophe?

"They're going to boil the water from the geyser of God," whispered the white-faced young man, as the night again drew down upon his fragile little boat tossing from one wave to another, the sport of the fathomless, limitless ocean on which he had embarked.

"The geyser of God!" he repeated dully. "Well, as far as I may be from land—and I may never get much closer—and as frail as my boat is, I feel sorry for those fellows! They're brown and we're white. They're aggressive and we're confident, maybe without reason. But what a terrible tale the world will hear—if it ever does hear—of what befell that fleet, before another twenty-four hours!"

The rising wind soon required all Borden's meager skill to keep the little craft flying before it. If two of the pursuing waves in succession should pounce down on him from behind, Val was sure he would go to the bottom. He trimmed the little sail with rare skill for a landsman, meeting the gusts with a slackening of the sheet and a twitch of the wheel to keep from swerving broadside on.

Under the circumstances he held to his course quite well. But the long hours, with their ceaseless watchfulness, were very fatiguing. He still had some gasoline in his tanks, but this he was reserving for the time when the wind should die away.

Now and again he moistened his lips from one of the vacuum bottles. He used his supply of water very sparingly. But always his eyes were sweeping the horizon for some sign of the fighting craft which left the island ahead of him in the hope that he might, by some miracle of amateur seamanship, avoid them.

The wind died down gradually and the sea became calmer toward midnight. Val was quick to avail himself of a lit-

the rest. For nearly twelve hours he had battled with the waves. It was an unaccustomed occupation and entailed a corresponding expenditure of strength.

Now he found that the wheel could be lashed and the sheet made fast. He was sitting idly in the stern, recuperating a little of his lost energy, when out of the darkness a short distance away, a rocket rose in a brilliant curve.

He gave an incredulous gasp of joy as he whipped open a locker in which he had secreted signals of the same sort for a possible emergency. For the whiff of momentary brilliance which the other rocket had ripped through the murky darkness had revealed the lost *Sparrow*.

His answering signal brought a blast from the siren in quick response.

Fifteen minutes later Valjean Borden saw his dinghy rising to the same davits where it had previously hung, and he leaped from it to the deck.

"Come below, please, Captain Hale," he remarked, leading the way to his own cabin.

The *Sparrow's* commander obeyed. Inwardly he was eager to hear what his owner had to offer. But the loyal heart of him was already warming toward one he had almost given up for lost, as he noted the phlegmatic yet assured bearing of the returned man.

"Sit down, captain," said Val, closing the door to his cabin. "I don't know how to express my gratification at finding you so opportunely. I think I've lived more in the last three weeks than any other man of my age—particularly in the last forty-eight hours. How does it come that you did not fall into the hands of the Japanese?"

"The cruiser behind us was an American," replied Captain Hale, studying the frank face across the table. His relief was growing.

Val's surprise was very apparent.

"Can it be possible?"

"They sent a boat to interrogate me, sir."

"Of American officers and sailors?"

"Unquestionably, sir."

Young Borden's eyes contracted in a thoughtful frown.

"But why did they send a shot across our bows?" he demanded. "And, as I recall things that eventful morning, the cruiser was flying no flag. What ship was it?"

"The *California*, sir. You are quite right about the absence of the flag—I raised the same point with the officer who came aboard and insisted upon searching us, sir."

The perplexity on Borden's face deepened. He merely signaled the captain to continue.

"There was a civilian with the boat's crew, Mr. Phelps," went on Captain Hale, with a trace of embarrassment. "He said that the owner of the *Sparrow* was a crook, a jail breaker, a murderer—and wanted by the government of the United States for even worse crimes."

Val threw back his head and laughed uproariously.

"Pray go on, captain—this is most interesting," said he.

"Well, sir, I could only tell them that you had left the *Sparrow* under the impression that the cruiser behind us was also a Japanese man-of-war. He appeared very dissatisfied, but I 'stood pat,' as you Americans say. I even went up to where my orders from you were to take the *Sparrow*—longitude one hundred and seventy-seven degrees eighteen minutes fifteen seconds west by fifty-five degrees thirty minutes twenty-seven seconds north latitude.

"On arrival I sounded the siren repeatedly and skirted that little island, trying to get a trace of you. I failed, and when I saw a great fleet of ships whose smoke we had seen the same morning coming down upon that bit of rock, I ran off to the east, sir. I have

been cruising around, trying to find you, although my impulse was very strong to steam directly back to Victoria, in view of all the peculiar things what have happened since we left that port."

Val nodded. He was at a loss for a reply. The peculiar character of the remarks attributed to the civilian who had boarded the *Sparrow* mystified him. The fact that a cruiser of the government was also in pursuit of him showed how serious the mysterious situation had become.

At last he spoke:

"What kind of a chap was this fellow you mentioned?"

"Well, sir, he was not exactly a talkative person—by that I mean garrulous. He seemed to be a middle-aged man, not over thirty-five, I take it. He wore a neat gray-checked suit, and he carried himself as if he were a man of authority."

"I think I've seen him before," remarked the *Sparrow's* owner. "I do not pretend to understand his statements about my committing offenses such as he mentioned to you. He's either mistaken or lying."

"That civilian also said that your name was not Phelps, sir," went on Captain Hale. "He gave you another name—very unlike the one you gave when you bought the yacht, sir."

"What name did he ascribe to me?"

"Burden or Boreman—something of that kind. I did not note it down, and so much has happened since that I cannot exactly recall it."

"Don't try," said Val, with a winning smile. "Captain Hale, I deeply appreciate your loyalty and faithfulness. I shall only ask you to exercise those same qualities until we are again in Victoria. I may then take you further into my confidence. Events will determine."

Captain Hale rose.

"Very well, sir. Have you any orders?"

"How soon can you make Victoria?"

"It will all depend, sir."

"On what?"

"On the cruiser that halted us before and the other foreign ships we sighted, sir."

"I understand, Captain Hale. I was much closer to those vessels than I wish to be again. I shall trust to your judgment as a navigator to bring us back to Victoria safely. But, if we sight the *California*, you will please signal her without delay that the *Sparrow's* owner is again on board. I wish to have speech with that civilian, as well as——"

There was a sound of an opening door.

A man bulked from the tiny wardrobe immediately back of where Valjean Borden was sitting.

"Why not talk here?" said Number Seven, coming around the table.

CHAPTER XIV.

ENEMIES EVANESCENT.

"With all my heart," incisively retorted Valjean Borden. "Captain Hale, as soon as you have laid the course, you may return. I desire you to be present during this interview. By the way, sir," he turned to Seven, "by what name am I to address you?"

"Jones," cryptically replied Seven, lighting a cigar and puffing it with relish.

Silence ensued until Captain Hale reentered the cabin. Val placed a chair for the navigator next his own.

"Mr. Jones," he quietly began, "you have evinced much interest in my affairs of late—along with several other gentlemen. Why?"

"Orders," phlegmatically returned Seven.

"From whom?"

"My superiors."

"Do you care to intimate who your superiors are?"

"Not now. Later you will know them."

"Not better than I do now, perhaps," meaningly returned the young man. "How came you here on my boat?"

"I climbed back unseen over the rail from the launch as we were leaving a couple of days ago."

"You have been here since?"

"Yes."

"Have you eaten?"

Seven shook his head.

Borden pressed the push button connecting with the steward's pantry. That member of the crew promptly appeared.

"You will please serve supper for two in this room," directed the owner. "Have you any preferences, Mr. Jones?"

"Some eggs, soft boiled—open them here."

"A steak, medium, with potatoes au gratin, and coffee," ordered Borden.

"Yes, sir," said the steward, as he hurried out.

"You have seen fit to make some rather serious charges against me," went on the young man, turning again to the intruder. "I want to know what such extraordinary conduct on your part means. You say you are acting under orders. Are they issued by the same authority that directed you, with other men, to follow me to my hotel in New York, enter my room, break open my baggage, and then try to ascertain my subsequent plans?"

"The same," replied Seven, in his monotonous voice.

"What is the name of the private detective agency with which you are connected?"

"Did I mention such an agency?"

"No. Neither have you denied it. I am referring to the private detective agency retained by the Japanese who followed me across the country to more

easily harass me. You are a member of the same agency, are you not?"

Seven remained silent, but appeared restive. He could not understand what prompted the query, nor could he reply and disclose the real character of his occupation.

"You then proceeded to follow me from New York westward," went on Borden, inexorably keeping up the advantage he perceived had been gained.

"You were not alone. Even in Victoria, under the British flag, both the Japanese and another of your law-breaking associates were present. The Oriental tried to kill me as I was returning to my yacht. A few blocks farther along another man, who I have reason to believe was also coöperating with you, attempted more interference. Him I shot. To-night I discover you a trespasser on my ship—for what object I do not know."

He paused, leaning over the table, holding the older man's eyes with his own, which were blazing with defiance.

"You have maligned my character, you have accused me of crimes which I have neither committed nor contemplated. Now, Mr. Jones, I do not know who you are. I do not even know whom you claim to represent—nor do I care. I am a law-abiding American citizen.

"Therefore I warn you that I shall submit to no exercise of your authority, real or pretended, until I know you both possess authority and are lawfully exercising it. If you attempt to interfere with me in any way, until my present business is finished, I'll use whatever measures I deem necessary to protect myself and the business I have in hand.

"You are on a ship which I own. As soon as the cruiser *California* is sighted, I shall signal her, go aboard, and inform her commander of my experience with you. I shall tell him what I suspect. In view of what has transpired and of what is to follow, I shall be guided by his instructions. Other-

wise, I shall turn you over to the authorities at Vancouver, charging you with suspected complicity in an attempt to murder me—and, when I am at liberty to do so, I'll look up the other men likewise involved."

Seven blinked. His face wore a look of astonishment, but nothing of perturbation was evident.

"Captain Hale," went on Val, "before this man Jones came out of his hiding place, had I not already instructed you to signal the *California*?"

"You certainly had, sir."

"Those instructions continue in force. As commander of this ship you will now search Mr. Jones for weapons. If he resists——"

The little automatic was over Seven's heart before he divined the purpose of the young man across the table.

Captain Hale removed a heavy-calibered pistol from the other's breast pocket.

"There are some papers here, sir," he observed.

"Remove all documents, seal them in a package unread, mark it with Mr. Jones' name, and enter the fact in the ship's log," snapped Borden. "Mr. Jones, is there anything you care to say?"

Seven studied him without replying.

This determined young man manifested none of the guilt which criminals usually exhibit. In speech and action he was impetuous; but, under the present circumstances, within his rights. Also, he was eminently fair in the disposition of the papers taken from Seven's person.

Dimly the State Department agent began to discern that his present beliefs regarding Borden's past were largely surmise, partly deduction, and, aside from his incomprehensible behavior, based more on suspicions than facts.

Long experience with unusually clever men, however, had made Seven

sagacious. He knew that some minds are phenomenally astute; that their owners seize on circumstances to make black appear white.

But, invariably, so far as his own experience ran, such clever men left open the way for their ultimate undoing.

As the steward entered with their meals, Seven phlegmatically accepted the inevitable, moving his chair a little farther back as he continued his reverie. The interruption enabled him to plan a new attack.

Captain Hale returned to the deck.

If young Borden kept his word, Seven had nothing to fear. Aside from the present inconvenience, his position was by no means an intolerable one. When the steward had left and both men were eating ravenously, the barrier between them grew perceptibly less.

Seven poured his second cup of coffee thoughtfully.

"You asked me if I had anything to say, Mr. Borden."

"Yes, sir."

"I should like to ask a few questions."

"Proceed. I reserve the right to reply or keep silent, as you have seen fit to do."

"Very well. What was your purpose in leaving the Café Cecil without finishing your dinner that night in New York?"

"I wished to rid myself of espionage."

"You knew that I was following you on the train between Granger and Soda Springs?"

"I suspected it—yes."

"And then you left the train?"

"I did."

"Why?"

"For the same reason I left the Café Cecil—I wanted no prying into my affairs."

"You were engaged in something of importance?"

"Of extraordinary importance—and secrecy."

"Did that business necessitate your coming up into the Arctic Ocean all these miles?"

"My business, Mr. Jones, is my own concern. And, as it is still unfinished, I shall decline to discuss any phase of it. Why do you ask?"

"It strikes me as peculiar that your arrival should coincide with that of a fleet of war vessels from another nation."

"My arrival was delayed—as you know—and because of reasons for which you and your associates were largely responsible."

Seven scrutinized the speaker carefully.

"You seemed to experience no difficulty in again leaving the locality of the fleet," he dryly observed.

Val flushed. The implication was unmistakable.

"I was not seen by any one around or upon that island," he retorted. "I prepared for what I had to do as well as I could by provisioning the dinghy for use in an emergency. When the anticipated obstruction hindered my use of the *Sparrow*, I took to the small boat."

"Also, you found your yacht again," hazarded the pseudo Mr. Jones, with irritating gravity.

"A fortunate accident, as Captain Hale will testify. I had no idea where the *Sparrow* was or that I should ever see it again. In fact, I had given it up for lost, believing the *California* a Japanese man-of-war."

Seven nodded, with a pretended urbanity.

"You will concede that these coincidences might arouse suspicion," he remarked, with a half smile. "Few people know of that island."

"Four other men knew of it beside myself," replied Borden quietly, "be-

cause they were with me when I first visited it."

"Have you any objection to stating the circumstances regarding your recent visit?"

"I prefer to make my statement to people in authority. I shall go to Washington very soon after my return to the United States."

* The steward came in to remove the dishes.

"If you care to go on deck, Mr. Jones," said Borden, "you may do so. Perhaps, instead, you will accept another cigar?"

"Thank you—I'm rather tired and will retire early, if you have no objections."

"None whatever, I assure——"

The sentence remained unfinished.

A sailor leaped down the companion-way and unceremoniously burst into the cabin.

His voice trembled as he addressed Borden.

"Captain Hale's compliments, sir, and will you please come on deck without delay? There's something very unusual——"

"In what way?" sharply replied the owner.

"Captain Hale will explain, sir."

The voice broke in a quaver of alarm so marked that it bred a new dismay in the heretofore undaunted young man to whom he was speaking. As they turned to ascend to the deck, Val noticed that the fellow could hardly walk.

The man calling himself Jones followed.

As the three emerged and walked forward toward the wheelhouse they perceived the figure of Captain Hale within, bending over the compass.

When they entered, the faint light from the binnacle lamp showed that his usually ruddy, wholesome face was pasty white and a glimmer of fear drowned the bright resoluteness of his eyes.

"What's wrong, Captain Hale?" asked Borden.

"I am unable to say, sir, but whatever it is, it places us in a position of extraordinary peril. Watch the needle, sir."

Both Borden and Jones bent over it intently.

The infallible adjunct to navigation was moving erratically across the face of the figured chart. It would hold to its normal position for one instant, then swerve to the east—again to the west or south, then aimlessly and with a mystifying irregularity at various subdivisions of the cardinal points.

"What do you make of it?" said Borden to the detective.

He shrugged his shoulders.

"I never saw but one other thing that behaved in such peculiar fashion," replied the man, with a saturnine smile, "and that was a three-legged device called a planchette, moving around the alphabet."

Borden turned to the *Sparrow's* commander.

"I have seen something of this before in these latitudes," he explained. "When the *Senator* was lost we had the same trouble. But there is no sign of the volcanic disturbance which occurred on that occasion."

Captain Hale left the wheel, linked his arm with the owner's, and led the way to the far end of the bridge.

"If you will look there, sir," he whispered, "you may see something that strongly suggests another eruption."

Borden turned to comply.

There was a peculiar glow to the south and east of where they were lying. It was brilliant, yet strangely diffused. Also, it was rising rapidly.

"If it were in the north," observed Hale, "one might be excused for believing it a manifestation of the aurora borealis. But the direction as well as the nearness of the thing makes that explanation impossible."

Seven came out of the wheelhouse.

Borden beckoned to him. "What do you make of that?" he queried.

The peculiar and indefinable radiance was increasing with prodigious rapidity. Seven peered out at it, then shook his head.

"Beats me," said he laconically. "Do you know what it is?"

"I do," imperturbably replied Borden, turning to note the relieved look on Captain Hale's face. "Never mind your compass, captain," he continued. "There, at least, is a point to steer by. Utilize it."

"But which way shall I head the yacht, sir?"

"Proceed slowly toward that light, until we have a better look at it. Then, when I give the word—get away from it at full speed—if you ever expect to see Victoria again."

"Beg pardon, Mr. Phelps," expostulated the commander, "I hope you're not taking any chances on one of the volcanoes which were reported hereabouts a few months ago."

"I'm taking worse chances," calmly replied Borden, "and with a vastly more terrible element of destruction than the mightiest volcano history knows. Be kind enough to obey my orders literally, Captain Hale. Proceed, under half speed, until I give the order to turn—then run for it."

"Which way, sir?" asked Captain Hale over his shoulder.

"Whatever way you find easiest to steer—and once you start, don't stop until the light is below the horizon."

Seven touched the brooding young man's arm.

"May I ask what that is?" he asked, with a new respect in his voice.

"I'll swap information with you," flashed the owner. "What is your real name and what is your business?"

"Mr. Borden, it distresses me to refuse you a reply. There are vital rea-

sons why I must keep that information to myself."

"All right. But you won't mind telling me why you were following me, will you?"

"I must give you the same answer, sir. Not that I wish to appear obdurate or uncivil—but I have no choice in the matter."

"I'll give you one more chance, Mr. Jones. Were you employed by the Japanese to follow me, break into my room, search my possessions, and interfere with my plans?"

"I can assure you that I was not. Quite the contrary, sir. I have always believed—and have no reason at this time to change my former views—that you were identified with that nation."

"Your frankness is refreshing," grunted Borden sarcastically. "I wish I'd known all that a few weeks ago. It would have saved me much inconvenience. May I at least assume, Mr. Jones, since you came from the cruiser *California*, that you are in government employ?"

"I must decline to either affirm or deny anything you assume, Mr. Borden—for reasons which I have already stated."

"Thank you."

"If you will permit me, without any intention of offense, I should like to repeat my former question regarding what is happening off there," said Seven, waving his hand in the direction of the unaccountable radiance, now spreading far out across the horizon and dispelling the murk of the night as if some behemoth of illumination had risen from the ocean bed.

"Oh, that," replied Nat indifferently, "is some of the same stuff I have in the dinghy over there."

Seven stared.

Then a hoarse cry broke from his lips, and he clutched the rail of the bridge for support.

His shout of alarm brought Captain

Hale to where the two were standing. The old sea dog did not echo that yell of mingled astonishment and terror. His faculties were too petrified. He could barely gasp as he continued to stare, wide-eyed and dumb, at the awe-inspiring, terrific spectacle rising above the horizon.

The same titanic armada of Japanese warships and troop transports was coming rapidly into view.

But how terribly changed from the proud, defiant aspect they bore when first seen.

Every fragment of their steel bodies was glowing with some superhuman light—an illumination hitherto undreamed in the experience of all the world. Bow on they were rushing aimlessly through the water—streaming fire from their huge funnels, belching iridescence from their threatening gun turrets, showering the same mystical, all-pervading radiance from their military masts, decks, and sides.

Like grotesquely modernized replicas of the *Flying Dutchman*, they tore through the waves, the horrid, terrifying scintillations of cold, phosphorescent light mocking the flag of the Rising Sun which each vessel carried.

"Great Heaven!" breathed Seven, shuddering as his panic-stricken face turned toward the untroubled countenance of the young man at his side. "What is it, Borden?"

"Yes," echoed Captain Hale, his barely audible whisper rattling in his throat, "what is it?"

"We are close enough, captain," said Borden. "Bring the *Sparrow* about and run at full speed directly away from them. There will be a more terrible spectacle presently."

His calm, inexorable accents matched the gravity of his features. Human as he undoubtedly was, he appeared to the others at that appalling moment an archangel of omnipotent wrath, pronouncing the inflexible judg-

ment decreed from the beginning of the world.

Captain Hale staggered back to the wheelhouse.

As the *Sparrow* whirled in a narrow circle and the thrill of the turbines beneath their feet responded to the signal the commander telegraphed to the engine room, Borden spoke again.

"Let us go aft and watch the rest of the play, Mr. Jones. I imagine it will be a long time before the stage is set for another tragedy of this magnitude."

Seven followed, and Captain Hale, at Borden's request, also joined them.

"That big dreadnaught in the foreground," explained Borden, "is the *Manchuria*, the admiral's flagship. She is the pride of the Japanese nation—and the dry docks that were built to accommodate her were a thousand feet longer than even England had ever built. But, look at her now!"

The two other men fastened their gaze upon the mighty battleship, which seemed to hesitate, then stagger.

Before their amazed eyes another incredible event occurred.

The *Manchuria* seemed suddenly to grow transparent.

Her sides dissolved, yet cohered, and a momentary flare of red shone angrily in the vitals of the ship.

Still radiating the ghastly light, her steel sides one moment as translucent as plate glass, the *Manchuria* at the next raised her mighty prow clear from the water, and appeared to leap from the element to which she had been dedicated.

Across the intervening miles came a stupendous, all-dominating roar. Then a cyclonic blast of whirling gases swept the three observers to the deck of the *Sparrow*. The mighty ocean beneath them trembled with the thud of the hammer of nitrogen with which the exploding magazine smote it from above. That suddenly freed force became a cylinder of superlative power—venting

in one hideous convulsion the accumulated terror till that moment wedged in the bowels of that Brobdignagian battleship for the destruction of the Pacific coast seaboard.

The wave which upreared behind the *Sparrow* seemed to reach the sky. But its hissing crest broke in a curl of foam just abaft the madly fleeing little vessel, and the three men gazing on the inexpressible catastrophe escaped with only a wetting.

Straight into the black heart of the night the racing yacht continued to plunge. Behind her the mightiest fleet of fighting craft that any nation ever gathered, hemming in a hundred transformed liners crammed with infantry, artillery, and cavalry, staggered aimlessly hither and thither—mingled in the melting pot of infinite wrath—showered from the heavens above by the shreds of the annihilation of the ill-fated flagship.

Captain Hale, Valjean Borden, and Seven crept, at last, back to the bridge. Then through the heavy blackness ahead on the low-lying clouds above, appeared the light reflected from the funnels of another massive vessel.

"I think that may be the *California*, Captain Hale," observed Borden. "Suppose you signal her?"

CHAPTER XV.

HOMEWARD BOUND.

The telegraph operator in O-P Tower leaned from his window and snuffed his repeater watch the second the nebulous mass of engine and Pullmans whirled the tail lights under the imaginary line drawn between the window sash paralleling his eye and the scarred pine on the other side of the cut.

The "lightning jerker" was proud of that repeater, and prouder still of his job in O-P Tower, guarding the cross-overs and passing track of the steel rib-

bons reaching their gleaming length eastward. The repeater was evidence of the company's appreciation of his fidelity; the difficult tower job showed that he was still a long way from the pension list.

But his face was dubious as he opened the key and called the next station.

"If this here clock's getting lame in the cogs, I'll be up on the carpet for having a bum time dipper," he ruminated. "I've seen some speeding over this division in ten years—but that special is certainly singing ragtime with every hoot!"

The sounder snapped the answer from the man he was calling.

"Special Number Eighteen, east-bound, passed O-P Tower at nine-five," he announced.

"O. K.," rattled the other operator.

"Say, Jerry," went on the tower man, slithering his platinum points together with the glib coherence which made him the marvel of all the division operators for rapid sending, "be sure and get that right—nine-five, not nine-fifteen. At the rate eighteen's hitting the grit she'll ramble to the city and back again before the sun gets over his surprise. Better nail down the loose swag on your desk or she'll suck everything through the window of that shack of yours."

There was reason for the operator's semihumorous warning.

The special, on the last leg of a trans-continental journey, was already far ahead of all previous time records for the same distance.

"Must have a whole hatful of money," growled the operator in O-P Tower, closing his key—"a whale of a lot," he repeated, "to go poundin' the right of way to pieces like that. Wonder if Death Valley Scotty's found another glory hole? He ran the closest to that of any man except Harriman I ever heard of."

The special held two men, besides the porters and crew—Seven and Valjean Borden.

Also it not only carried the details of a nation's reprieve from a prolonged, needless war with a foreign power, but a miracle of healing for one whose life was hanging in the balance until that three-car projectile would strike home in the New York terminal.

Valjean Borden was spending money lavishly in his final effort to obey the instructions of Doctor Hugh Fitzmorris.

Seven, scarcely less inscrutable than before, for other reasons was fully as anxious to reach Washington.

The *California*, convoying the tiny *Sparrow* down the Arctic until Vancouver was reached, had helped the speed program quite materially. The train was waiting when the *Sparrow* docked. Wireless messages from the cruiser while still at sea sent railway officials scurrying for their crack equipment; shunted their proud limited trains into sidings; stimulated operators and section men to a rigid vigilance over the multitude of traffic orders, all that the last possible second of time might be hoarded on that run of three thousand, one hundred and sixty-two miles from ocean to ocean.

"I wonder why the *California* had so much trouble with her wireless that night?" mused Seven, as Val, for the fiftieth time since they had started east, inspected the row of crates resting on pillows, which, in turn, reposed on springs along the cushioned seats of the Pullman.

No mother with an ailing babe could have been more devoted than the former medical student to those mysterious, delicately handled containers. Seven knew—or thought he did—something of the nature of their contents.

But the reticent young man watching over them volunteered no information. He kept his own counsel, impliedly con-

senting to a tacit truce between the agent of the State Department and himself, until New York should be reached.

"Once I have finished my business," he told the man who had pursued him so long and so far, "I am entirely at your disposal. Until then—well, if you fancy that I am a man to be treated carelessly, remember that I told you I knew what ailed that Jap fleet, that I also have the same dope under my hand now, and can get plenty more of it at any time."

That was absolutely all Valjean Borden would say.

Beyond communicating with Captain Hawley, of the *California*, in Seven's presence, the news that the Japanese fleet would never again be seen on any coast, he met all inquiries with an obdurate reticence.

He refused to tell why he had come to the Arctic. He neither affirmed nor denied that he was instrumental in the unprecedented and appalling disaster which had overtaken the would-be invaders.

"Isn't it better for you to remain absolutely ignorant of anything, Captain Hawley?" queried Borden, with slight asperity, after remaining silent under a number of questions.

"I was sent out here for information," retorted the naval officer, flushing hotly.

"That's just the point," countered the young man. "You were sent here to get information, and you failed to get it. Why get peevish when you cannot get it from me? The thing you expected to materialize has disappeared. If that was really the Japanese fleet, and you have neither first nor second-hand official or private knowledge of its whereabouts, there's no chance for any diplomatic or departmental brawl over you, is there?"

Captain Hawley's eyes widened.

"You saw this fleet in the distance,"

went on Borden. "You never saw it again. You fired one shot on this cruise—across the bows of my boat. Your executive officer, your various subordinates, even the men of the crew, know nothing. Hence, whatever the result to Japan, at least America cannot be charged with destroying vessels of that country before a declaration of war."

"He's right, Alec," remarked Seven, as Val rose and strolled out of the captain's cabin. "You have no jurisdiction over his person. I have him technically under arrest. We're going back to the States."

"But what put them out of business?" insisted the vexed officer.

"You can search me," gravely replied Seven. "Whatever it was, it was some dope, all right. Hell was loose for a few minutes, and the sky rained guns, steel armor, and men from the *Manchuria* for half an hour. I'm going to hold back the details until I get to Washington."

"What about this murder charge?"

"Alec, I haven't got to the bottom of that yet. The theory that this kid was working with the Japs, however, is very improbable. It never was anything but a theory, and after what I saw I'm sure the theory was erroneous. He's busy with something and is taking it somewhere. I'm going to stick around until he's back in New York. Then we'll both go on to Washington."

As the train thundered eastward, Seven concluded that he himself knew practically nothing regarding the contents of those crates, while he surmised the taciturn Borden knew far more of his own occupation than he of the former fugitive's.

With Seven an unknown but admittedly existent factor of a problem possessed a fascination inversely proportioned to the delay with which it was identified. That was the purpose behind his tentative remark concerning the *California's* inability to "raise"

Bremerton for fully twenty-four hours following the meeting with the *Sparrow*.

Val divined the ambushade lurking behind the otherwise innocuous query. The persistence of "Mr. Jones" had amused him highly since the two had roared out of Vancouver.

"Why hold post-mortems over dead issues?" parried Borden, "especially when you will soon have the pleasure of trotting out proof of my manifold crimes? You ought to be making a list of the witnesses in that murder episode; your foresight ought to have procured a photographer to mugg me while we hurried east. Just fancy what a cozy dark room the porter's linen closet would have made!"

The biting satire hit hard at Seven's pride. He was already satisfied in his own mind that Valjean Borden was no more the murderer of Number Twenty-five than he was. For one thing, there could have been no possible motive for the crime—now that Borden's mission, whatever it was, had nothing to do with aiding the Japanese.

So Seven ignored the thrust and took cognizance, instead, of a railway station which leaped behind them. A fringe of scurrying roofs, then a kaleidoscopic commingling of buildings followed.

"That's Amsterdam," observed Seven. "We change engines at Albany. I wonder if we'll smash records or smash ourselves on the river division?"

"The ordinary fast trains make the down trip in three hours for the one hundred and fifty miles," replied Val. "We may cut it twenty minutes, but the heavy traffic is hard to handle; in places there are only three tracks and some of the way only two. Then we have to change to an electric engine before entering the terminal."

"Do your New York people know you are so close?"

"I gave the man most interested in my whereabouts the train number and

probable time of arrival. If he's not posted, that's his fault."

Val's prophecy came true almost to a second. In two hours and forty minutes the special was standing on track fourteen in the terminal. The thirty-two hundred and sixty-two miles from Vancouver had been made in eighty-two hours—including all stops. It was a new record for the distance, and the agent for the State Department wondered who and what had so facilitated matters. Specials, regardless of cost, take potluck if the occupants of the train are plain plebeians. That was as mysterious, in a way, as the crates which the porters were tenderly trundling to the station platform. A monarch could not have been accorded more watchful solicitude, once their train was en route. And the courtesy continued, no matter what particular system was utilized for the route.

A tall, slender man with sandy hair was rushing down the platform. He wrung Val's hand with wordless joy.

"How are you, doctor?" inquired the young man.

"I'll be better when I get hold of what you've brought. So you made it, after all, and in a marvelously short time."

"Pretty fair, considering a few unforeseen impediments," smoothly returned the grinning youth. "Now there's ten two-gallon jugs of pure quill in those packages—all sealed in airtight, radiation-proof containers. Each gallon contains one hundred and twenty-eight fluid ounces; therefore twenty gallons are equal to twenty-five hundred and sixty fluid ounces. Assuming that our solution will average one per cent strength—though maybe it won't—we have, conservatively speaking, at least twenty-five ounces of absolutely pure concentrate. At the prevailing market price of two million dollars an ounce, you are indebted to me, Doctor Fitzmorris, to the sum of

fifty million dollars. Terms, C. O. D. How about it?"

"Better come up to my study," laughed the physician. "I have two reasons for the request—one is my check book is there, the other I want to renew my patient's treatment without delay."

"How is he?"

"Marvelously improved. Of course, you understand, I had to dilute the solution."

Borden nodded, the glow of professional interest lighting up his eager face. He had entirely forgotten "Mr. Jones."

"I'm sorry I cannot go up just now, Hugh," returned the former medical student. "Permit me a couple of questions, will you?"

"Certainly, Val."

"What strength have you been using on him?"

"I dissolved the liquid equivalent of a gram of the bromide form of the medicament," began Fitzmorris, with a swift, apprehensive glance at Seven's gaping face, "in approximately seventeen quarts of water. I have given him one hundred cubic centimeters of this four times a week—until the X-ray photographs showed that the subsidence of the malignant tumor had begun. The backward growth of the cell life began with miraculous rapidity. I may even abort the entire condition without a surgical operation—which, in the case of such an aged patient, is particularly to be desired."

"Thank you, doctor, I must be off now," replied Borden. "Handle those containers with circumspection—and don't forget I'm trusting you with property worth probably more than seven hundred and twelve millions of dollars."

"But—see here," expostulated the specialist, reaching out and grasping the tails of the younger man's coat, "why are you rushing off like this?"

"I have no option," replied Borden,

a satirical smile wreathing his face. "Doctor, everything we get in life has to be paid for. I've got to stand trial, according to Mr. Jones here, for murdering some gentleman whom he persistently refuses to name; for breaking jail which I undeniably did; but, worst of all, for being in the same State one day with a Japanese gentleman who loved me so well he tried to kill me on our last meeting. Mr. Jones, here, has done everything but fly to keep up with my most eccentric orbits—and, believe me, I actually ran rings around myself once or twice since I got out of your limousine in this same terminal. If I don't return shortly, look me up in some Class A, twenty-four-carat jail, will you? I gnaw out of the phony ones with ease."

With this lucid statement of conditions, Valjean Borden tendered his arm to "Mr. Jones," with a derisive smile.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE RESIDUUM RESOLVES.

"I suppose it's handcuffs, from here on," said Val. "And, of course, although I've been a malefactor of great wealth for at least seven minutes and a half, I must expect the same treatment that you would accord the humblest prisoner."

Seven's shamefaced expression pleased his prisoner.

"Kid," he replied, "you're all to the good. Rub it in, but don't use sandpaper of too coarse a grade. If you want to trot along with me, I'll be mighty pleased to have your company as far as a certain Washington office. If I go in alone with such a yarn, they'll ring for the huskies and stuff me into a crazy ward over in the Arlington Hospital. Are you on?"

"If you're off—we are both headed for the same asylum."

Seven sobered considerably as they whirled on toward the nation's capital.

"Would you mind letting me in on this, so I can make an intelligible report?" he asked.

"Why not?"

"Begin with the wreck of the *Senator*, please," said the detective.

In detail Val sketched his peculiar peregrinations until he was back in New York; of his various conversations with Doctor Fitzmorris and the conclusion that he must return to the volcanic island without delay.

Seven raised his hand.

"I know I'm awful thick," he shamefacedly admitted, "but what the devil was in that water that made you want it so bad? Was all that guff about coin this morning on the level? And what was it blew up the Jap ships—not the water, surely?"

Val did not laugh. The devotion and pertinacity of the man by his side forbade ridicule at such a time. All men have their respective fields of endeavor.

"It was radium that blew up the Jap fleet," said Val, in a tone inaudible except for Seven's ears.

"Radium?" The agent's face was incredulous. "How could it be radium? Radium's scarce—there won't be enough in the world for a hundred years to come to do what I saw happen to that fleet. Aren't you mistaken? It would have taken a ton of radium to tear those ships apart. Who got it? Who put it on them? Where did it come from?"

"Easy," laughed Val. "Remember, we don't want any one to know about this for very good reasons. There's no mistake, Mr. Jones. It was radium that achieved what you saw, just as it was radium, manifesting in that way, which ionized the air around for miles until the *California* couldn't work her wireless."

"But, man, it is simply impossible," insisted Jones. "Radium doesn't exist in such quantities. If it did, the man

controlling the source of supply would own the world, or as much of it as he wanted."

"I can understand your disbelief," quietly went on the former medical student. "The radium was in the water which the Japanese took on at my little island. They used that water to cook with, to drink, and to make steam. With the flagship, when it reached the magazine, it blew up. The men aboard, however, were probably already dead, and with the admiral gone there was no supreme authority to direct the future operations of the fleet."

"I'll be blest. Did you say *your* island?"

"I intend to file a claim on the water right of that geyser as soon as I reach Washington."

"I never heard of radium in water," went on the agent. "I thought it was a mineral."

"No one knows what it is. It is a mysterious entity. It has smashed a lot of our scientific theories, and it will uproot others when it is generally available. But it is already known that radium will impregnate water. It can be reprecipitated and, while it will give water its own characteristics to a degree, nevertheless it apparently weighs the same when it comes out of the water again."

"Give me the tip," pleaded the listener. "How did you tumble to it?"

"The chief of the bureau of mineral technology of the United States Bureau of Mines once wrote a monograph on that mighty interesting topic," Val resumed. "I found that volume in a cabin of the *Senator* while outbound for Nome.

"Having some idle time, I devoured it—from the account of the carnotite ores assaying two per cent uranium oxide in the Paradox Valley of Colorado, and the reappearance of the same vein in Utah, to the medical aspects of the thing they were extracting from it.

"Think of the most precious element known to man, wasting away under the action of frost or heat, drying up and blowing away. Not the pure element—that isn't nature's way—but the rock containing it.

"The ore deposits from which radium may be withdrawn in microscopic amounts and with infinite care and huge expense are both very rare and very small. Most of those in the United States are also owned abroad.

"I read up on the subject of radioactive ores. I learned the difference between radium bromide and radium chloride. At the time I felt a well-posted chap might possibly do something along this line in Alaska, if he had enough backing. With gold worth twenty dollars an ounce, a claim of carnotite ore in the north would be decidedly worth locating, with radium worth one hundred thousand times as much.

"These things were in my mind when I started homeward with the *Senator*. Then came the trouble with the compass, the loss of our way in the dense clouds of vapor, the volcanic eruption somewhere near us, the danger of fire, and finally the wrecking of the ship.

"By a miracle, we found land. On the same island of which you know the captain took the longitude and latitude the first clear day. We were far out of the beaten track of vessels. Our supplies were none too plentiful. So, to guard against possible torture from thirst, I filled a jug with water, and secreted it in my sea chest. As we were picked up before any occasion to use it arose, it stayed there until my return to New York.

"The chest, which had been originally used for carrying tea, preserved the jug of water intact. I opened it in New York. The presence of the radium impregnation was obvious. I took the water to Doctor Fitzmorris for a test,

and he financed my journey back to the island for more of the fluid, as he was treating a very wealthy man for a cancer.

"That's how and why I went back to the island. That's how and why I was determined to shake off those Japanese—the steward of the whaler which picked up the crew of the gig, and his compatriot.

"Of all the men who reached the island in the gig, I alone am alive. I suspected that the captain's death was inspired. He was the first to go, and died before we reached Vancouver. The steward died of appendicitis, I was told. The two passengers, one of them a young, lovable chap, were undoubtedly murdered by the Japanese or their agents—because they, as well as I, knew of this island and the huge coal deposits there. That's all, Mr. Jones."

Jones put out his hand.

"Thank you, Mr. Borden. You have made my duty clear and much easier that it would otherwise have been. If you will put up at the New Willard, I shall be glad to arrange to have you meet a warm friend of mine, who also happens to occupy a high official position. You will understand my previous attitude when I say that the young man strangled in Vancouver was a relative, and you were the last white man to see him, according to my information."

The two hours intervening after their arrival before Val again heard from Jones gave him time for a very needful visit to a barber. The telephone rang as he reentered his room.

Ten minutes later Val was walking up the steps of a massive building in which are located the departments of war, navy, and state.

Jones met him in the corridor on the second floor.

Together they entered a small office, in which a very busy young man looked

up pleasantly from a pile of dispatches in cipher.

"Shake hands with Mr. Kilgore," said Seven.

"Glad to see you, and go right in," beamed the confidential man of the Secretary of State.

They passed into the next room. It was furnished with a sumptuous elegance that stopped just short of luxury; the desk in the center was ornately carved and of solid mahogany; the chair in which the man was sitting was heavily upholstered.

He was a man with a massive frame, and his face matched those of councilors of the nation whose portraits lined the room. The lofty brow, the piercing eye, the aquiline nose and huge hands evinced the strength of the dominant intellect within.

He rose as the two men came forward.

"Mr. Secretary, I have the honor of presenting Mr. Valjean Borden, the young American of whom I have been telling you."

The Secretary's hand bit down hard upon Borden's.

His snapping eyes bored into the candid orbs of the adventurer, who returned his gaze unflinchingly.

"Sit down," smiled the Secretary of State.

Val complied. The nearness of this American whom many of his countrymen idolized did not embarrass him. The Secretary was kindly, although dignified. Neither one nor the other was a poser, and every visitor to his private room came out with the conviction that statesmen still live—even in Washington.

"This gentleman has told me some things which I will not repeat—even to you," said the Secretary, with a twinkle in his eye.

Borden bowed silently.

"I trust that my example in this respect will sufficiently indicate the im-

portance of the matter we discussed," went on the Secretary more gravely. "Mr. Borden, there are many events in the world of diplomacy which both parties to any negotiation thoroughly realize the other knows. Yet neither of them ever mentions the subject. Such topics are taboo. This matter is one of that character. If the reason for what has occurred is never explained, America for a hundred generations to come will hold the whip hand of Japan. Do I make myself clear?"

"Perfectly."

"As I understand it, only this gentleman, yourself, and the captain of your yacht witnessed the annihilation of the enemy's biggest vessel?"

"That is all, Mr. Secretary."

"I am sure of you two men. But how about the captain of your yacht?"

"He has no idea of the nature of the element which caused the catastrophe."

"I am very glad of that," replied the Secretary, in a relieved voice. "Mr. Borden, is there anything I can do for you before you leave Washington?"

"I wished to file on a certain water right with the Department of the Interior," said Borden. "If you can suggest anything that will expedite my claim, I will be very glad of your aid."

"Where is the water right located?"

"On an island of recent volcanic formation, situated in the North Pacific, near the extreme west end of the Aleutian group of islands, at one hundred and seventy-seven degrees thirteen minutes fifteen seconds west longitude, by fifty-five degrees thirty minutes twenty-seven seconds north latitude."

The Secretary stepped to the roll of maps in green cases facing his desk. He drew down the one marked "Alaska."

"It does not seem to be on this map," said he, after tracing out the intersection. "Are those figures correct?"

"I am reasonably sure of their cor-

rectness, Mr. Secretary, since I have just returned from the place."

"H'm. What is the nature of the water right?"

"A geyser. It is the only water on the island."

There was an interruption when Kilgore's head appeared at the private door.

"I beg pardon, Mr. Secretary," he apologized, "but here is a dispatch from the department of the Pacific which I thought you would want to read without delay."

The Secretary of State perused it with an impassive face.

He did not immediately revert to the former discussion. Instead he twisted the bit of paper nervously in his fingers and paced rapidly back and forth across the floor of his office.

When he did speak, the solemn tone of his voice awed them to a hushed silence.

"Gentlemen, some weeks ago I walked this room in fear and doubt. I was so overwhelmed with the gravity of an international problem that, at times, I questioned the infinite wisdom and mercy of the Ruler of all things." He paused to smooth out the wrinkled paper. "To-day my doubts are resolved. I do not simply have faith—I know beyond cavil. The diplomatic crisis which existed then has been averted. You two gentlemen and myself alone know how and why—aside from the Omnipotent Power whose will it was that an island should arise from the sea to apparently aid an Oriental nation to attack our shores. Coal and water were upon that island in superabundance. The fleet was not disturbed when it took as much of both as it could carry away. But where is that fleet to-day?"

The ominous pause remained unbroken until the secretary resumed.

"Mr. Borden, I am unable to assure you of my assistance in the filing of

the claim you mentioned. Here is the reason."

He extended the telegram. It read:

STATE DEPARTMENT, Washington: Island recent volcanic origin at one-seventy-seven west longitude fifty-five north latitude to-day disappeared. Slight tremors noted seismograph on Pacific coast points, but no eruption. Revenue cutter *Polcstar* will make soundings and rechart location for coast and survey service. HARRINGTON.

Val was stunned.

His business strategy had suffered a reverse almost as overwhelming as that of the Japanese in their naval operations. It was several seconds before he could realize that the water he had brought to Doctor Fitzmorris still constituted a fortune, even if the source of supply was gone forever.

"If you will excuse me now, Mr. Borden," said the Secretary, with grave kindness, "I have an engagement which may not be postponed."

He held out his hand in farewell.

Val gripped it and passed through the door into the main corridor. He took several steps before he realized that he was quite alone.

"I wonder what became of Jones," he muttered.

Val wanted, very much just then, to talk with Jones. In the hour of his achievement he could not forget Kennedy—Kansas City Kennedy—the man accused of burglary, robbery, jail breaking, and other crimes.

Plainly, had it not been for Kennedy, he might not have been able to carry out his extraordinary mission. And Kennedy was wounded, in durance vile, and without a friend in the world except the youth who had broken jail with him at Soda Springs.

From what he had seen of Jones, Val felt that he could be trusted. If he could send some man like Jones to Idaho, Kennedy's deplorable condition might be somewhat mitigated.

He heard footsteps in the corridor.

A small, intellectual-appearing,

brown-faced personage, wearing a silk hat and frock coat, walked stiffly past, accompanied by an imperturbable man of his own race, who ambled deferentially a little behind him.

The man's face was an inscrutable mask, but his hands twitched nervously. As Val watched, the door through which he had just left the state department opened. A sonorous voice announced:

"His Excellency, the Viscount Tamekichi Tongo, the Ambassador of Japan!"

The brown man entered, and the door was closed.

As Val emerged from the building into the clear light of the untroubled day, he saw that he was very near the White House. A flag over the President's domicile caught the breeze and shook its unsullied folds in his direction.

His eyes were a little misty. Somehow the flag of his country had never before appealed to him in quite the same way. Every flutter became a gesture as if that emblem of the American nation realized, as well as he, the peril which had been averted.

It all seemed very strange.

The flag, the nation, K. C. Kennedy, Jones, the vanished Japanese flagship, the retreating, crippled, leaderless armada, the water from the geyser, himself.

Each and all a part of everything else—all warp and woof on the loom of destiny.

Each with possibilities for good and evil, each containing potencies unmeasured, possibilities undreamed—each with a residuum of individuality manifesting in its own peculiar way—a residuum which would one day resolve in ultimate harmony and supreme good.

The publication of the Bechdolt novel, "The Red Beach," which we promised you in this number, has been postponed till September. In the next POPULAR Rowland will tell us the further adventures of the BUM CLUB.



THE LAST WORD IN PRECAUTION

TWO friends boarded a great transatlantic liner and set sail for Cherbourg. One was a Good Fellow. The other was a Niggardly Man. The first night out, they went to their stateroom.

"Say, Bob," said the Niggardly Man, "I wish you'd step out on deck while I undress."

"That's a remarkable request," objected the Good Fellow. "Why have you developed this streak of bashfulness at this late day? I never saw any signs of it before."

"Never mind about that," said the Niggardly Man. "You get out!"

After a long and acrimonious argument, the Good Fellow went out on deck and stayed half an hour. When he returned to the stateroom, the Niggardly Man was stretched out in the upper berth. Moreover, he was dressed up like a Christmas tree in a beribboned nightgown and a woman's boudoir cap.

"Say!" exclaimed the Good Fellow. "What in thunder is the matter? Why have you got that make-up on?"

"Look at me and be wise," said the Niggardly Man. "Remember the *Titanic*. In case of a wreck, women and children first."

McHenry and the Blue Ribbon

By Holworthy Hall

Author of "The Terrible Freshman," "Pepper," Etc.

Thrusting Pepper McHenry into the rôle of a reformer of morals and founder of a prohibition society at Harvard. A joke that was taken seriously by the press of America and put Pepper on the first page of every newspaper

AFTER he had once learned to play the banjo, McHenry played it regularly every morning and evening, and at all other times when he felt the joy of living, until dissuaded by physical violence, or moral suasion. When he remembered to lock the door, as in the present instance, the only solution to the problem of universal peace was for the man whose room was directly over his to draw a baseball bat quickly but firmly across the radiator coils, thus creating an accompaniment so immeasurably superior in tonal quality to the banjo that McHenry generally gave up in disgust, with the loud remark that the world was going to the dogs, and nobody appreciated good music.

The man upstairs had just laid down his bat in grim triumph, and McHenry had once more unbarred his portal, when Monk Spinden came in with the morning papers, and helped himself to Pepper's cigarettes.

"I can't tell you, old fellow," said Spinden, inhaling luxuriously, "how glad I am to see you still keep these things in your room. I've heard that tobacco injures the health."

"Monk," said his host, "I'd brain you—if you had anything to brain!"

The civilities having been accomplished, Spinden disposed himself on

McHenry's divan, and blew smoke rings at the ceiling.

"I heard a whale of a row last night when I went past the Lampoon Building," he remarked. "What was it, another initiation?"

"It was all of that," said McHenry reminiscently. "There was a large, corpulent neophyte built on the classic lines of a hack—and the candidates gave a play, a sort of allegorical farce, in which there had to be a typhoon. Well, this two-hundred-and-sixty-pound lad was the typhoon, and, after he had about six steins of punch in him, I want to tell you that he was a pretty good imitation of *two* typhoons. He broke three chairs and one window, and we've made a rule that hereafter no candidates' play can have anything more allegorical than a gentle breeze."

"It seems to me," said Spinden severely, "that you funny men on the *Lampoon* are much too convivial. It ought to be stopped—unless you send me an invitation to your next punch. Here—want to see the papers?"

"Thanks," said McHenry, accepting them. He turned to the sporting page of the *Herald*, and read it carefully. Spinden smoked, and watched him. McHenry pawed over the financial columns, utterly disregarded the editorials, and came to rest at the local news. Sud-

denly his jaw dropped startingly—and Spinden lighted his second cigarette, and looked out of the window.

"Holy mackerel!" breathed McHenry, tightening his grip on the *Herald*, and devouring the first column with all the symptoms of mental indigestion.

"Anything interesting, Pepper?"

"Why—why——"

"Go on—read it, if it's any good!"

McHenry wet his lips, and breathed stertorously. Then, with eyes opened very wide, and a mouth which twitched in spite of his wrath and indignation, he slowly read the following item of political and social importance:

PROHIBITION CLUB AT HARVARD.
Students Revolt Against Excesses of the
Gold Coast.

Insurgents Led by J. P. McHenry.

CAMBRIDGE, October 20.—It was reported to-day that a number of prominent undergraduates, led by James Pepper McHenry, son of one of Chicago's noted financiers, have revolted against the unbridled license of the Gold Coast. During national political campaigns, Harvard students have usually formed clubs in support of the various parties, and Mr. McHenry purposes to enlist a majority of the representative men in the university in a Prohibition Club, which will advocate total abstinence from alcohol or tobacco in any form.

At the State Prohibition headquarters it was admitted that Mr. McHenry's organization has asked to be affiliated with the State and national bodies.

Mr. McHenry is secretary of the sophomore class, a member of several exclusive clubs, and well known in Cambridge, Boston, and Chicago. His father is a leading broker of the Chicago Stock Exchange, and his uncle, F. G. Prince, is an officer of the New York Anti-Cigarette League.

"Holy—mackerel!" said McHenry, dropping the paper to the floor.

"Ha—rather good, you know!" volunteered Spinden, in the accent popularly supposed to be English. "The idea—Pepper McHenry on the water wagon! *Woosh!*"

He placed his cigarette much too carefully on the window ledge, and

rolled on the divan in paroxysms of mirth. In an instant McHenry was upon him, struggling for the hold which the handbooks say is unbreakable. The handbooks never assumed that one of a hundred and thirty pounds would attempt to practice manhandling on one of a hundred and sixty, so that the results were not in the least according to the illustrations. McHenry was deposited, panting, on the floor.

"You did that, Spinden!" he croaked. "I know you did! You—you——"

"If you call me any more names," promised his guest, resuming the cigarette, "I'll throw you in the ash barrel, Pep. Anyway, now we're square."

"*Square!* You play a trick like that on a man you can lick, and call it *square?*"

"Pause, dear friend," said Spinden amicably. "Let's walk hand in hand through the dim vista of the past. Perhaps you don't recall a little episode of freshman year. One Spinden, a trustful youth with no acquaintances in Cambridge, met one McHenry on the avenue on the first day of college, and took him for an upperclassman—that was because you were so darned cocky, Pep. Said Spinden asked for a little advice, after which he dashed over to Mem to apply for membership in the Dining Association. The auditor was very decent until I said that my application was backed by a prominent sophomore. Then he grinned, and said that, since there was room for only sixteen hundred men in the joint, I needn't worry."

"That was merely a passing jest," said McHenry feebly, scrambling to his feet, and reaching for the *Herald*.

"Once again, dear friend. I didn't go over to Brine's to ask for a Freshman Bible, because that really did sound too fishy, but I didn't see anything out of the way in reporting to the president. You see, I'd been in England that summer, and I knew how

the freshmen at Oxford have to report to the vice chancellor, so I just naturally waltzed up to prexy's office, got by the Ethiopian, and introduced myself."

"A little idea of my own," said McHenry, trying to smile.

"Quite so. Then, since you'd told me your name—or I thought it was your name—and where you lived, I slammed into somebody's room in Thayer ready to slay you. The name you'd given me was A. B. See. The senior in that room suggested that I'd better go look at a dictionary. So I started out, mad as a hornet, and just as I got down on the walk, a fat little man bumped into me, and knocked me off my feet. I was busy explaining his pedigree to him when I saw it was the dean."

"Oh, Lord!" groaned Pepper, slumping dismally into his chair. "They've got an *editorial* on me—it's headed: '*Good for McHenry!*' Oh, Monk—you—you're a human error! Look at it—it congratulates me—they'll copy this in the New York papers, and when that uncle of mine sees it! Monk, you've ruined me!"

"It was a pretty clever lunch," admitted Spinden joyously. "It's in the New York papers, too—they're all there if you care to look at them. You see, it was like this: I was in town chasing ads for the *Monthly*, and when I was having lunch at the Parker House it occurred to me that we've had Republican, and Democratic, and Progressive Clubs out here during the campaigns, but never a Prohibition Club. So I had another high ball, and went up to the State headquarters, and told them what a pure, high-minded lobster you are, and how you were out to down the high cost of living, and all those things—and——"

"But *my uncle!*" said McHenry, in utter wretchedness, "my uncle's coming over here in a few days, and—of course, it doesn't make any particular difference for a rhinoceros like yourself

—but my birthday comes along about then, and I half was expected to—say, how did you know he's one of that Anti-Cigarette gang?"

"You told me yourself," crowed Spinden, appropriating a third cork-tipped specimen. "And Pepper, dear, don't you suppose your uncle will be happy to know his little Pepper's growing so manly at college?"

"Manly!" roared McHenry. "How do you suppose I'm going to get out of this mess, you young hyena? This is the roughest deal I've ever had in my life! What in thunder do you mean by it?"

"Oh, a lad as clever as you are ought to handle it all right," said Spinden carelessly. "If I could get away with reporting to the president, and asking for A. B. See, and talking dialect to the dean, I guess you ought to manage one innocent uncle easily enough. You're *such* a clever boy!"

It was the first time in his brief college career that McHenry had ever been on the defensive, and he didn't relish the part. At the same time, he saw very clearly that his reputation with the class, with Spinden, and with his family was at stake. It was still another opportunity to display that wealth of strategy which, according to the general rumor, was the characteristic feature of his genius. He smiled—feebly.

"It'll mean that I'll have to give up smoking for a few days," he murmured.

"Smoking's poison, anyway—where are the matches?"

"On the table—was that somebody knocking?"

"Come in!" said Spinden lazily

An infinitesimal messenger poked his head around the corner of the door, and came in leisurely. In one hand he held a telegram, and in the other the signature book. McHenry scrawled his initials in the proper space, and tore open the yellow envelope. He read the

message once, twice—and then he rose, and chased the messenger into the corridor.

The telegram was from the reformer-uncle, and it read, in substance:

Congratulations. Shall arrive Thursday morning and spend several days with you. Anti-Cigarette League heartily indorses your project. Stand ready to furnish money for propaganda among the students. Will be pleased to address your club at your next meeting.

"And this," said McHenry bitterly, forgetting all about the Dining Association, and the president, and A. B. See, and the dean, "this is your long-legged, slab-sided, red-headed, pigeon-toed idea of a *joke!* Spinden, I'll remember this!"

"You bet you will," agreed his friend, in great glee.

As soon as he had finished the cigarette, he took his departure, and during the interval he had exchanged no further words with the great tactician, who sat moodily at his desk, drawing meaningless squares and circles on a theme tablet. McHenry thus employed was dangerous, and Spinden knew it.

"By gosh!" said the jester to himself, as he hurried down the long hallway to his own room, "I wonder if he *will* remember it? Doesn't the poor prune know when we're *square?*"

That contingency, if the truth be told, hadn't even occurred to McHenry.

II.

Mr. Frederic G. Prince, reformer and idealist, sat in his nephew's comfortable room, and examined the minutiae thereof with lively interest. It was the first time he had ever bearded a student in his den, and he liked the scenery.

"But I had an impression, James," he said, "that the boys went around—er—visiting—that is, more than they seem to do. No one called this afternoon, and no one has been in this evening. Isn't that rather unusual?"

"Oh, no," said Pepper promptly. "The fact is that my friends are—well——"

"Naturally," opined Mr. Prince, "if they're the sort of boys who believe in moderation and dignity, they're diligent students. I hadn't thought of that. They're probably studying."

"Undoubtedly," said Pepper, with great relief, but his respite was of unmercifully short duration, for a tremendous rap on the door was followed by the entrance of John Phillips in an old master's gown and hood, Spinden with a luxuriant pair of false whiskers, and Ted Sewall in a cutaway coat and silk hat.

"I beg your pardon," stammered Sewall, "we didn't—we only wanted to interview you about the Prohibition Club!"

"Come in, gentlemen, come in!" invited the uncle warmly. "I'm delighted to see you!"

McHenry, taken completely off his guard, stood petrified while his three friends introduced themselves under charmingly romantic aliases, as a proctor, a tutor, and a class president, and seated themselves about the room. By the time he came to his senses, he realized that he couldn't expose them without exposing himself. He was trapped. He tried desperately to grin.

"As an officer of the university," began Phillips, rolling up his sleeves, and fanning himself with his cap, "I called to congratulate your nephew, sir, on the stand he has taken for purity in morals. He's—well, sir, he's a perfect demon on morality. He's one of the best little moral students we've got here."

"Ah—indeed!" said the reformer, watching Phillips' sleeves as though fascinated.

"You bet he is!" confirmed Sewall, producing his silver case. He extracted a cigarette, and continued: "Your nephew, Mr. Prince, has the unqualified support of the—er—the right crowd."

We're with him tooth and nail!" He pinched the cigarette, and doubled with agony at the reminder which Spinden conveyed to his shin through the medium of his number tens. "This," said Sewall, with marvelous presence of mind, although his eyes were swimming with involuntary tears, "this, sir, is the curse of modern youth!" He held up the cigarette for inspection, and laid it on the table.

"Right!" exclaimed the reformer. "That and cocktails."

"Speaking of cocktails," said Phillips quite unconsciously, "there's a new bar —"

"Some one at the door!" thundered Spinden.

McHenry, who was by this time on the verge of nervous prostration, beheld Roger Ward, dapper, energetic, deferential, on the threshold with a notebook in his hand.

"Beg pardon," apologized Ward, bowing to each of the five in turn. "Which is Mr. James McHenry? I represent the press of Boston."

"Didn't I tell you, James?" beamed his uncle. "A man who undertakes some uplifting mission like yours is infinitely more important to the community than a lazy, purposeless student! Come in, sir—my nephew has a message for all the youth of all the world to hear."

"What I really wanted," explained Ward, holding his hand to his face, as he caught sight of Spinden's whiskers, "was a statement of—of the—the details——"

"Exactly!" cried Mr. Prince. "The more publicity the better! James, here's the chance of a lifetime!"

Under the window there was the sudden roar of many voices. Phillips, who was fast losing control of himself, rose, and looked down into Mount Auburn Street.

"Hurray for our side!" he choked. "It's—it's a demonstration!"

The multitude, which was largely composed of the small gamins of Cambridge, who can be hired for any temporary emergency at the current rate of five cents, cheered obligingly.

"Speech! Speech!"

"Hurrah for Mac—t'ree cheers for McHenry!"

"Yes! Speech!"

"Speech! Put out your bean, Mac!"

"We want McHenry! We want McHenry!"

The reformer fairly bubbled with pride and excitement.

"They want you, James! Say something to them! I tell you, gentlemen, this is a wonderful triumph for the clean-minded young men of this university! Go on, James—make them a speech."

Pepper, who was hardly able to stand on his feet, staggered to the window and peered out. The crowd cheered wildly.

"Speech! Speech!"

"Hey, mister, scramble a cent!"

"Fellows," said McHenry hoarsely, "the saloons must go!"

"Yea, bo!"

"So—so—so let's all help to keep 'em going!"

"I told you he's clever!" yelled Sewall, pounding Spinden on the back—to make up for the punishment accorded to his own shin.

"I thank you!" said Pepper, closing the window with a bang. The crowd outside yelled vociferously, and added catcalls to its repertoire.

"It seems to me you missed an exceptional opportunity," complained the reformer, wishing that the populace had inquired for him instead. "Why, James, where are you going?"

"Just outside a minute—I'll be back in ten seconds," promised the strategic one, escaping to the hallway.

Upon his return, he found his uncle rehearsing the creed of the Anti-Cigarette League to the four men who tried

to look interested as they listened. He took his seat in the darkest corner, and waited. He knew his uncle very well, and two or three times he almost smiled as their visitors attempted to turn their attention to himself, and were as promptly brought back to the subject by the indefatigable idealist. Ten minutes passed, and twenty—Mr. Prince dilated upon the unsullied boyhood of his nephew, and related countless anecdotes touching upon his veneration of truth, his love of modesty, and his yearning for a higher life.

Pepper writhed, but waited confidently. He observed with joy that Spinden's whiskers were drooping pitifully, and that Phillips was growing very warm in his padded gown. He suffered exquisite pain when Sewall, stretching himself, threatened to put his foot in his silk hat, and missed it by the merest fraction of an inch; but he rejoiced a thousandfold when Ward, in pushing back his chair, scraped the nap from the fourteen-dollar tile, and ruined it hopelessly. His content was all the greater because Sewall, having assumed the rôle of a moralist, couldn't be profane about it.

And then, just when Pepper was beginning to despair, when his jocular friends had worn out their imagination in his behalf, and his uncle was on the point of demanding personal revelations, there came a reverberating tattoo on the study door, and for the first time that night Pepper felt no uneasiness.

"Come in!" he shouted.

"James!" reproved his uncle.

There entered a young man in a brilliantly checked suit. The vamps of his shoes were patent leather, while the uppers were of a particularly insinuating shade of tan. His hat was of green velours, with a bow behind, and his vividly striped tie rested on a pleated shirt which was several months ahead

of the fashions. He was smoking a fragrant cigar.

"McHenry?" he asked of the company.

"Right here!" said Pepper. "Have a seat. What can I do for you?"

"I'm from the *Herald*," vouchsafed the newcomer.

"If you'll allow me the suggestion," interrupted Mr. Prince, bristling, "none of these gentlemen believe in the use of tobacco—from moral, economic, or hygienic grounds——"

"Well, I *do*—are you the McHenry who runs the Prohibition Club out here?"

"Certainly I am," admitted Pepper engagingly. "Can I give you a story?"

"That's what I came for," said the reporter, starting unabashed at the remarkable assortment of costumes which confronted him.

"Well, we're all organized—officers elected—all ready for business."

"Fine!" The man who claimed to be from the *Herald* produced sheets of copy paper, and a stubby fountain pen. "Let her slide. Any big athletes in the crowd?"

"Oh, yes—I'll give you the list. I'm president, of course. The vice president is John Phillips——"

"On the football team?"

"Oh, hold on there!" said Phillips, suddenly waking to the sound of his own name.

"Yes, he's the one. I'll give you a list of his clubs later. The secretary is Robert A. Spinden——"

"Sure—crew man, isn't he?"

"Wait a minute," begged Spinden, not noticing that part of his whiskers had loosened. "He isn't—oh, I know him well!"

"Crew," insisted McHenry, "class baseball team last spring, and in the musical clubs. His father is Spinden, of the Flour Trust."

"Go ahead—anybody else?"

Pepper glanced at the four men, who

were looking very serious and uneasy; and at his uncle, who nodded proudly at each name. Pepper knew exactly what he was thinking—how delightful it was that men socially and athletically prominent in such a great university should be so deeply concerned with moral issues.

"The treasurer," said Pepper very distinctly, "is Theodore P. Sewall——"

"That the Sewall who was mixed up in the theater riot last year?"

"Oh, don't!" said Sewall miserably.

"He's the one. And the chairman of the executive committee is Roger Ward. That ought to be a good bit, because Ward's family are in the distilling business in Louisville."

"Peach of a story," agreed the reporter, scribbling rapidly. "Next?"

"That's all the officers. Now I'll go ahead with the constitution——"

"Just a moment, please," the reformer broke in. "If it would add weight to your report, sir, you might add that Frederic G. Prince—this young man's uncle—of the New York Anti-Cigarette League, has donated the club the sum of five hundred dollars with which to promote the admirable work——"

"What!" exclaimed Phillips, sitting bolt upright.

"Five hundred——"

"To be used," said Mr. Prince graciously, "precisely and unequivocally as my nephew shall determine. I trust his judgment absolutely."

"Just one more thing," added Pepper. "would you mind holding the story up for a day or two? There's a lot I'd like to get into it—plans that aren't quite settled, and it occurred to me that it might run better as a Sunday feature—photographs, you know—I'll get pictures of the officers, if you like—and a lot of drip about how Harvard has changed since the disgusting days when men smoked horrid cigarettes, and drank rum in their tea."

The reporter looked at him curiously, and allowed his eyes to twinkle slightly. He was an acute young man, and he was already fairly well acquainted with the situation.

"Yes," said Pepper, "and to clear up any uncertainty, I'll present you to the gentlemen now. Mr. Reporter, this is Mr. Ward on your right——"

"Glad to meet you, Mr. Ward."

"Mr. Sewall——"

"Sewall, Sewall?" repeated the reformer. "I thought—I must have misunderstood your name, Mr. Sewall. I thought you said Hamilton."

"Excuse me," said Spinden, leaping to his feet. "I—I have an appointment. I'll see you again, Mr. Prince, I hope——"

"I've got to go, too——"

"I'm late now——"

"If you'll wait one second," pleaded the reporter, "I forgot all about him—I've got a photographer out in the hall with a flash-light camera. It won't take half a second——"

"I'm fearfully late," stammered Spinden.

McHenry stood in the doorway, and folded his arms.

"The vestry meeting isn't for half an hour," he declared solemnly. "I know, because I was invited myself. There's plenty of time. Bring on your flash light!"

III.

The clock struck two. John Phillips, who had argued loudest and said least, yawned whole-heartedly, and reverted to the original and vital query: "Well, what are we going to do about it?"

"Don't ask *me*," retorted Spinden aggrievedly.

"Why not? You got us into the mess, didn't you?"

"I can see my dad reading that dope in the papers," said Ward, whose face was pathetic. "It's a fine advertisement for him, isn't it?"

"Yes," said Sewall, "and maybe you'd like to know that after our young theater party last year—although I'll swear I didn't throw a single lemon—my own paternal ancestor on my father's side said that if I got my name in print like that again, I could quit this gilded life, and begin to draw six dollars a week in the factory. That's a pretty picture, isn't it? What *are* you going to do about it, Monk?"

"You fellows make me sick!" blurted Spinden aggressively. "Weren't you there, too? Don't blame it on me! How in thunder did I know that Pep was telephoning a real reporter to come out and make hash of our reputations? I *told* you he's clever!"

"What gets me," added Ward, "is how he's going to keep it up?"

"Don't worry about that part of it," advised Sewall. "You just keep busy thinking how *we're* going to live it down!"

"As a last resort—I've heard that you *can* bribe newspaper men——"

"Yes—when they've got a chance at a comic feature like this! Where were you when you heard it?"

"Well—we could *try*——"

"All right," said Phillips briskly. "How much has anybody got on tap?"

The conspirators shook their heads in unison.

"I'm overdrawn four dollars now.——"

"I've got thirty to last for six weeks."

"And I?" said Ward, "had to write home last week for enough to get my shoes shined. I stand a fat chance to draw another wad before Christmas."

"I suppose two or three hundred would look pretty big to that newspaper chap," mused Phillips. "And there's a little leeway, too—we mustn't forget that—Pep told *him* to hold it for Sunday."

Spinden relighted his pipe, and es-

sayed to smile cynically at the same time.

"Two or three hundred—chicken feed!" he scoffed. "He wouldn't smell of anything less than five!"

"I suppose we might go to Pepper," said Sewall timidly.

"To borrow *his* five—the five his uncle gave him?"

They all showed faint signs of appreciation, but even a good joke was powerless to remove their pall of apprehension.

"No—to explain it to him—and tell him to call it off, like a good fellow."

"Fine! The same way *we* called it off—like good fellows!"

"The only trouble with the whole business," insisted Spinden, "is that the fat-headed brute couldn't see when we were square! I was perfectly willing to let by-gones be by-gones——"

"Dear man," said Phillips, "I know Pep McHenry like a book! He'd have called it off fast enough if we hadn't butted in on his uncle that way! What bothers me is that Pep has a disgusting habit of turning a little joke like this to his own advantage, at the same time that he's rubbing it in on the other fellow. I tell you, Pep's about as safe as a buzz saw to monkey with!"

"There's one thing we can do," said Spinden suddenly. "By gosh, we're a lot of silly idiots not to think of it before! Why, we can simply sit down and write to the *Herald*, and deny the whole business—*before they print it.*"

"Then how about Pep's uncle? You've got to remember that both he and the reporter got our real names—and heard us shooting off all that rot about the cause, and that sort of thing."

"Pep's uncle won't stay here forever, thank Heaven!" said Phillips piously. "We don't need to consider him at all. No—I think this affair is right up to Monk, because in the first place he went to the State headquarters, and in the second place he got us into Pep's room

to-night. All I did was to raise that noble mob of Romans, and, if I do say it myself, that was the only part of the show that got anywhere. Did you hear those boys yell for a speech?"

"I absolutely refuse to accept the responsibility!" flashed Spinden. "Apparently you've forgotten how you howled, and said what a fine scheme it was when I first told you! We're all in it together!"

"Well, it's too late to do any more to-night, anyway—I move we all go to bed. We'll see Pep in the morning. Gee! I feel like a licked postage stamp!"

"Somebody in the house feels happy, anyway," said Sewall, as they went quietly out into the dark hall. Seemingly from a great distance, the strains of familiar music came to them, the music of a stringed instrument, and the sound of a joyful voice, singing hesitatingly but firmly: "You Can't Keep a Good Man Down." The conspirators halted, and glared at each other through the darkness.

"For the love of Mike," whispered Phillips, who knew what he was talking about. "We *have* to look out for ourselves! It's Pepper!"

IV.

On the following morning Roger Ward dropped casually into Pepper McHenry's room, and invited him home for a week-end. Twenty minutes later Monk Spinden lounged into the McHenry study, and suggested a theater party that night—at Spinden's expense. Shortly before noontime, John Phillips, who scorned subterfuge, came stalking along with the announcement that much as he hated to do it, he would be compelled to spank his little friend unless he kept the story out of the *Herald*; and, immediately after his one-o'clock lecture, Ted Sewall breezed in with the information that his sisters were planning a wonderful house party for

Christmas, and claimed that it would be a hopeless failure without McHenry.

To all of these overtures Pepper grinned modestly, but only to Sewall did he volunteer any consolation.

"Ted," he commented, "your little playmate is a very great man."

"You bet he is," said Sewall feelingly.

"I've got some bully flash lights here—maybe you'd care to see them."

"You bet I would," said Sewall, even more feelingly.

"But—on second thought—let's wait until this evening. You get the crowd around here—don't be scared, Ted, my uncle was called back to New York very unexpectedly—and we'll have it out."

"You bet I will," said Sewall, and this time he spoke most feelingly of all.

It was hardly long enough after dinner to conform to the books of etiquette when the four jesters came upon McHenry, and found him playing his banjo. They didn't reprove him—not one of them ventured to request that he cease—they merely sat down, and asked where he had put his cigarettes.

"There aren't any," said Pepper, missing a bar of "Silverheels" by the response.

"What? Nothing to smoke?"

"Your little playmate is a moral man," he told them. "Anybody have some chewing gum?"

"No, thanks——"

"You'd better," maintained McHenry solemnly. "It's good for the nerves."

The four all took chewing gum, and chewed.

"Now, then—I suppose what you really want is for me to use my influence with the press?"

"Hang it all, Pep," said Spinden aggrievedly, "we didn't know you'd take it so hard, or——"

"Or you wouldn't have done it? Exactly. Well, here's the answer—I've sworn off!"

"No!" they chorused, aghast.

"Wrong. I have. I've cut everything out absolutely. I never cared much for the stuff, anyway. You gave me a darned good excuse, and so I've quit until the first of June." He whistled a bar from an opera, and tried to play it—with woeful results. "First off, Monk, I want you to go in to the State headquarters, and tell 'em it was a mistake about the Prohibition Club. Do you care to do that?"

"I'm crazy about it! Sure I will! Honestly—have you sworn off?"

"I certainly have—why not? And you people agree—of course—to let the whole business drop, don't you?"

"Good Lord, Pep! Couldn't you trust us that much?"

"Indubitably—indubitably! I don't imagine anybody cares to buy any of these flash lights——"

"What's the price?" demanded Ward eagerly, and Pepper burst out laughing.

"My innocent young friends," he said, "you've done a lot more than you realize for me. If you'll absolutely swear not to try to get funny any more, I'll let you into some good news."

"I'll swear anything!"

"You've got us, Pep—have a heart!"

"Anything on earth—if you can call off the *Herald*!"

"I'll go in there myself," promised Phillips, "and make 'em print a retraction—if they will."

"Where are the flash lights?"

Pepper laid his banjo tenderly on his desk, and dug into a drawer. Instead of the proofs they expected, he brought forth two or three letters, and two telegrams.

"By 'flash lights,'" he explained kindly, "I meant flash lights on a great career—mine, if you have to be personal. I didn't mean pictures. Let me say right now that as soon as I saw that stuff in the *Herald* the other morning I—er—took steps to make it count. I couldn't explain to everybody very well, and, as I say, I never cared a lot for

high life, so—here's the first flash light. I won't tell you who it's from, but I'll admit in strict confidence that it's from a—young lady. Omitting the first few words:

"I can't begin to tell you, d——, to tell you how happy you've made me by giving up smoking for my sake. I never said much about it, because it wasn't my privilege, but when you come home, perhaps I can show you——"

"Omitting the rest of it," repeated McHenry, "that'll give you an idea of what it's about. That's from the one and only—for the present. Then we have the following message from my father:

"Your club has first-page story in Chicago papers. Am writing you this morning. Will double your allowance if you keep to it for the balance of the year.

"And again," continued Pepper, ignoring the remarkable expressions on the faces of his friends, "and again we have a letter somewhat as follows:

"DEAR JAMES: According to my promise, I am inclosing herewith a check for five hundred dollars payable to your order. You are to use this as you think best for the promulgation of the doctrine of Prohibition.

"Then, finally," said McHenry, turning to the last telegram, "we get this cheerful little word from my mother:

"Delighted to learn of your decision. Father says to tell you that you may have your runabout this summer.

"There's only one more piece of news," said the young politician, regarding his stricken friends with deep commiseration. "My doctor says that one reason I never got any fatter was because I used to kill my appetite by smoking too much. He swears I'll get up to a hundred and fifty if I cut it out for the rest of the year."

"Allowance—runabout——" gasped Spinden.

"And we're square?" hesitated Ward. McHenry grinned.

"If you want to call it that, Roger."

"But—how about that reporter? How can we keep that story out of the Sunday papers?"

"Children," stated McHenry, breathing hard, "when you rambled in here disguised like a side show, I couldn't let you have it all to yourselves—I just couldn't! So I telephoned to a cheap photographer I know——"

"You mean—that man——"

"Surely I do. I simply told him what to do when he got here—what to say, and how to act. He's an honest-to-goodness photographer, all right, but he's no more a reporter than you are."

"And—there won't be anything printed?"

"We're *square*, Pep—you'll let it drop?"

"Holy mackerel, boys! There isn't anything to drop!"

The conspirators, actuated by a timely impulse, crowded around McHenry, and wrung his hand. Each one of them had the same prevailing thought in his mind—let McHenry alone! It was Phillips, the ever practical, who first recalled Mr. Prince, and his unconditional bequest.

"But, Pep—about your uncle——"

"Simplest thing in the world—I'll write him that the club disbanded from lack of support, but I'm still true to the cause—for a consideration. It'll be perfectly all right."

"No—I meant the five hundred."

"Why," said McHenry, the clever, as

he picked up his beloved banjo and set about tuning it, "he said to use it for the propagation of virtue. I thought Monk had better take it in town with him when he goes—I've indorsed it over to the State Prohibition committee!"

He swept his hands across the strings. Overhead there was the echo of angry footsteps. The man above had seized his baseball bat, and scraped it quickly but decisively over the radiator coils.

"Shut up!" roared Phillips.

"Cut it out!" yelled Sewall.

"Quit that, or we'll come up and slay you!" bellowed Spinden.

The noise ceased abruptly. Ward addressed the complacent McHenry with uncommon deference.

"Go ahead, Pep," he said, voicing the sentiment of the assembled company. "You're improving a lot. What's that you're playing—'Dill Pickles?'"

"No," said McHenry pityingly. "It's 'Annie Laurie.'" At the same time, he was a very forgiving man. He played his entire repertoire through for them twice.

And when, somewhere about the middle of the performance, a dozen Cambridge gamins, remembering their instructions of the night before, came under McHenry's window and cried for a speech on Prohibition, Phillips and Spinden and Sewall and Ward arose en masse, and deliberately and accurately threw cold water on them.

In "Putting It Over," Holworthy Hall's next story, which will appear two weeks from to-day, you will hear how Pepper organized the funniest athletic meet ever known at Harvard.

Up to the Coxswain

By Daniel Steele

Author of "The Bad Man," "The Emerald Snake," Etc.

Presenting Judy Phillips—veteran—coxswain of three winning crews and looking forward to his fourth and last chance to steer a thousand-dollar piece of stiffened paper to victory. But Judy's sister happens into the picture; and charming though Vera Phillips undoubtedly was, she was indirectly responsible for an upset of Judy's program that to his mind spelled defeat for his crew.

EIGHT men, lithe of naked limb and colored by the sun and salt spray, swung in step down the swaying gangway. They carried a shell, bottom up, glistening, four men on a side grasping its gunwales. Its bow hung quivering in air, pointing like the blade of a shifting sword, and one feared its own small weight or the lightest breeze would break it off. At the word came the overhead toss; eight men toed the edge of the float and sixteen hands dropped the thousand-dollar piece of stiffened paper upon the bosom of the harbor as gently as a mother lays down her baby.

Followed a boatman bearing twelve-foot sweeps. These were javelined carefully into clicking locks. The stroke oar, who was also captain, growled: "Hold her, Port; in, Starboard!" and a moment later, "Hold her, Starboard; in, Port!" And the men having gotten in settled down upon their slides and with oar handles caught under arm fell to lacing their foot stretches. The starboard oars, One, Three, Five, and Seven, leaned gingerly out and fastened their oarlocks.

A light figure in flannel trousers and shirt, a plaything of a boy, hurried out

of the big brick boathouse down to the float and stepped daintily across half a yard of open water into the coxswain's seat. He ran his hands along the tiller ropes, and smiled into the sullen face of the stroke, as the boatman grasped the edge of Two's blade and shoved lightly, and the shell swung away and drifted clear till the port oars slapped the water with four lazy, distinct sounds.

"Ready all!" trumpeted the coxswain.

The sullen giant in the stroke's seat slid aft, doubling over his knees and shooting his wrists, with a vicious motion, almost into the left side of the coxswain, who waited nonchalantly while eight bodies wiggled and shifted, shoulders lifted and sank. There was a second's poised rest, and then——

"Row!"

The lifting catch of the blades was followed by the roar of the slides as the crew sank back like men falling into rocking-chairs. Then came the instant splash of blades torn accurately out, and arms that had been pale under their tan came back for the second stroke reddened under the tan. The shell, arrowwise, shot away from the

float and shrank in size as a receding express train shrinks before the eye. In a little while it was far away on the harbor, a mechanical, floating toy; a sort of manikin fish whose fins twinkled in the afternoon light; save that the echo of the slides came back over the water in gentle roars with the reminder that the thing was an eight-oared crew boated for a practice spin in a racing shell.

The coaching launch poked her mahogany nose into the leaden water, and slid by, aiming for the speck a mile away. The head coach stood up in the bow with his hand on the wheel. He wore a black oilskin pea-jacket and a hat that hid half his weather-beaten face. The "Old Man," as he was called, looked little like a college graduate and very much like a fisherman. Beside him stood a newspaper reporter who was meditating a two-column Sunday article. Beyond the harbor's rim rose the towers of the town's water front, blackened against the reddening sky, and the reporter turned to the head coach with a platitude. "It's a wonderful sight!" he said.

The head coach was squinting at the crew, and paid no attention. "Who is that child that is steering them?" the reporter asked at length. He was not from the sporting department.

The Old Man's eyes glinted into his questioner's with the mild anger one is permitted in cases of inexcusable ignorance. "Child!" he answered sharply. "That's Judy Phillips—veteran—cox of three winning crews." But, remembering the respect due to Journalism, the Old Man vouchsafed further explanation. "Son of H. S. Phillips, you know. Rowed on the crew in '67. Member of the University Corporation." The last item seemed to be an afterthought. "Had an uncle pitched for us in the eighties. Brother held the pole-vault record four years ago. Judy's too small for anything else but

a cox, but we had to use him for something. Yes, remarkable family."

Farther aft a group of three or four young men stood or sat upon the coaming. Among them was a girl. Above the whir of the muffler they were talking and joking with her.

"You really must stay over for it, Miss Phillips," said one young man, leaning his arm upon another's shoulder and balancing easily in the swaying craft. "It's only one more day. Judy as good as told me you would be there. And we'll promise to bring Tom Allen. Of course, Judy and Tom will have to go early."

Vera Phillips laughed. "I suppose it would be unorthodox for the sister of the coxswain not to impose on the people she's visiting to stay over and meet the captain. He must be a wonderful man. You all are so anxious to have me meet him."

"He is, Vera," put in the man who sat beside her. "His captaincy of the crew is the least thing about him. Why——"

They were interrupted by the coxswain's voice:

"Avast!"

Vera looked out over the watery plain and tried to imagine that it came from that dull speck away off. She was a slight, dark girl with a certain boyish, angular grace and directness of movement, and a vivacious manner. Her face flushed with interest as she gazed ahead. She had learned in past years much from her brothers, particularly from Judy, about the crew, and she took a sister's keen interest in it all and had not missed a race since Judy had been in college. But this was the first time she had ever seen things at close range. And she had been particularly delighted when Dick Ainsworth, a classmate of Judy's, had invited her to go out in the launch and meet the coaches; especially as she knew it was a privilege rarely accorded

a girl. The head coach had welcomed her at once as his mascot. Something told him, he said, that she was going to help them to win the race.

The launch slowed down and stopped half a boat length away from the shell. The men, resting on their oars, had looked up, and then looked seriously away, save only the stroke and captain, Tom Allen, who kept his eyes in the boat. Judy sat with his back to her and did not look around.

"Eight!" called out the head coach, leaning over the side of the launch, "you were pulling at twenty-six, and you weren't getting that full swing of yours on the catch."

The stroke nodded obediently, his eyes still in the boat.

"And, Seven!" he pursued. "I've got something to say to you!" His voice had a threatening note in it. But glancing back he was reminded of Vera's presence, and hesitated. The younger coaches smiled. "We'll have the expurgated edition to-day," one of them said sotto voce to Dick Ainsworth.

"Your time is—ah—very poor," said the coach weakly. "Disgraceful that I should have to mention a thing like that at this time of year—I could see it stick out a mile away. You men are supposed to be a crew, not a—not a—windmill." He waved his hands alternately, like a duck paddling. Seven looked solemnly up at him and nodded. "The rest of you are not worth notice. Now try it again. Tom, keep her down at twenty-six."

"Dick, how does he know when he's rowing twenty-six strokes a minute?" Vera whispered.

"Ready all!" cried her brother. The men slid quickly aft, their nervous faces drawn into concentration on what they were doing, all save the stroke, whose face wore a sort of dull calmness. Vera noticed the difference, and wondered, as the crew shot away again

and the launch tore ahead after them. "Seven!" bawled the man in the oil-skin pea-jacket. "Up! Up!" His voice rose to a wild shriek.

"I'll tell you, Vera," Dick answered her question the first chance he had. "Any stroke can do that, you know. They keep a sense of actual time in their heads. Tom Allen is a wonder at it."

Vera was watching the leap of the eight bodies that coiled up and snapped away like springs. She looked for the anathematized break in the time, but couldn't see it, but her eye noticed the rise and fall of the shell itself, as though with every stroke it were picked up away from the water.

"Fancy being yanked along like that in a race!" she thought.

The coaches were now all crowded together into the bow, watching critically; one of them engaged the Old Man in an earnest discussion. Dick was talking to another. The reporter gazed blankly and admiringly, and Vera, alone for the moment, let her eyes follow down the row of swaying heads and shoulders until it rested on the fragile little figure that sat upright in the stern and seemed to meet and draw away from the others. And as the crew and launch together raced ahead over the harbor, a feeling of pride thrilled her as she thought how that fragile-looking brother of hers, on three different June days in different years, had sat tense, and steered dominantly his silent crews to victory over four miles of straight-cut battled river waves—her brother who had one race still before him. And Vera offered up a tiny prayer that he might win again.

II.

The following day Vera Phillips met the great Mr. Allen. She found herself with him—it was at a tea—apart from the others, in the corner of a

bay window. Much-heralded pleasures often result lamely. The crew captain was a little awkward, rather preoccupied in his manner, and wholly Aristotelian. In conventional clothes he seemed smaller and quite ordinary. Vera thought he was positively sleepy.

"I enjoyed watching the crew very much yesterday," she offered. "It was wildly exciting."

"Yes, your brother told me that you were in the launch," he answered.

She questioned him about rowing. He explained the mysteries of the stroke—of the body swing, the leg drive, the snap away of arms at the finish. In illustrating, he accidentally flicked a spoon into her lap. He blushed deeply, apologized, and went on stolidly with his dull and rather endless explanation.

"And the steering," she said; "that must be hard to learn, too."

He informed her that a coxswain was usually born; that it wasn't so much practice as a naturally cool head and nerve; and that the trick of steering a shell was to begin to press gently—"as if," he illustrated. "I should begin now to steer in order to make a slight bend away out there on Whitney Avenue."

"Oh, yes; I know!" Vera ventured enthusiastically. "I have steered Judy and the other boys in our old pair-oar shell. When we were children we spent whole summers in bathing suits down at Madison. I should just love to steer a racing shell. I know I could do it!"

Allen smiled. "Oh, it's hardly a thing a girl could do, you know," he said. "It takes a lot of nerve. That's why your brother is good."

"Evidently, Mr. Allen, you don't believe a girl has——" But Vera checked herself. She saw Allen's look stray across the room. Her brother, edging his way past her at that moment with a cup of tea in each hand, grinned, and

asked under his breath: "How do you like him?"

"Very much, Judy," she answered dutifully. "Mr. Allen," she said, "I want to have you meet Carrie Ainsworth before you go—Dick's sister, you know. There she is over there."

Later that afternoon, in the same window corner, she talked with Dick Ainsworth. Dick, who had never had an oar in his hands and whose title to distinction was membership on an editorial board, outlined the crew situation for her in a couple of minutes, and predicted a close race. Then they fell into a discussion of the poetry of Alfred Noyes, and Dick amused her by reciting a parody of the "Barrel Organ" he had just written.

"Come down to Hugh's in summertime. It isn't far from college."

He was in the midst of this burst of genius when he happened to glance out of the window. "Here they come!" he announced.

There was a general crowding to look out; laughter and gay comment, as the crew went by on their daily run to the boathouse. Vera, glancing out across the lawn, saw a motley string of men bundled in sweaters, who ran silently in sneakers along the sidewalk. Several of them looked up as they passed. But the leader plodded on, and looked neither right nor left. "I suppose he knows just how many steps a minute he's taking," thought Vera. "I hate him!"

III.

The spring passed and drifted into the warmth of June. Two weeks before the race, the crews, freshmen and varsity, with their substitutes, abandoned their spacious brick boathouse on the harbor, and traveled many miles to an old farmhouse on the banks of a river. Beneath it a weather-beaten boathouse touched the edge of the

water. Here, on the very course on which the race was to be rowed, the coaches spent these last days putting on the finishing touches.

Twice a day Tom Allen took his crew out for longer or shorter spins under anxious, critical eyes. The rest of the time was livened by visits from old oarsmen, heroes of former days, songs in the evening that drowned out the battered old piano, or occasional walks along roads perfumed with late-blossoming orchards.

Through the day the men wasted the time in the sleepy laziness of loafedom that clings to the relaxed oarsman in the pink of training. Reports from the enemies' camp farther down the river were discussed, and substitutes were sent out to lie on the river bank in the hot sun, watch in hand, spying out the times and strokes of the enemies' crews.

At length the morning of the race dawned. The usual annual crowd had begun to pour in the day before by the trainload, the country roads were alive with countless gay automobiles swiftly converging to the noisy little seaport where the river joined the Sound. And echoes of it all came up to the little white farmhouse, enveloped now in the funereal solemnity of waiting for the race. Glimpses down the river showed the countless shifting river craft that would be part of the final amazing panorama. Often it rained, and the races had to be postponed to the next day, but this year the weather was ideal.

Early in the forenoon, the little weather-beaten boathouse down at the water's edge sent out its first quota of oarsmen to the preliminary races. Then others went; in all, freshman four, freshman eight, and varsity substitutes in a four-oar shell. One by one, after interminable delays, as the warm, breezy morning dragged itself on, they came back beaten. Tom Allen's vet-

erans, loafing through the morning reading in easy-chairs, or lying rolled up in bed, stretching weary limbs, waited and heard the bad news with long faces.

The race of varsity eights was scheduled to take place at four o'clock in the afternoon. The river was subsiding under a dying breeze that swept its broad expanse, and it was not likely that the start would be postponed beyond five o'clock at the outside. At two o'clock, as Judy Phillips was lying on a cot on the porch and yawning over a magazine, he was handed a message. He tore it open, and read, scrawled on a hotel letterhead:

If you possibly can come I must see you for a short time. VERA.

The Old Man looked at Judy with a worried frown. "I suppose you know I've let Hengist go," he said. "He wanted to see the race from some yacht or other. Got a girl there, I guess. And the freshman cox has gone off, too. Not that we could use either of them in the eight, but if anything should happen to you—well, you will be back by half past three."

"Oh, it's all right," said Judy. "She's sent the car up for me."

"Remember me to your sister, Judy!"

Down through the quiet country lanes bordered by stone walls glided the car with Judy alone in the tonneau, until the four dusty miles into the town were past, and all at once the car ran upon paved streets between shallow gutters. Judy caught glimpses to the right of quaint little side alleys that climbed steeply an impossible hill, and to the left glimpses of the blue boat-flecked river.

"Where to, sir?" asked the driver.

"Crocker House," replied Judy.

A moment later the car slid into the confusion of a wider street; crawled through a flag-flaunting, joyous carnival of people that jostled upon the

sidewalks and the street indiscriminately; swung around and touched the curb.

Judy got out, waded into a jammed lobby, sprang up an old-fashioned staircase, and found himself in an upstairs parlor confronting a rather perturbed Vera. He hadn't seen her for weeks. Her cheeks and hands were tanned by the early summer sun, burned nearly as brown as his own. "Hello, Vera," he cried, "what is the trouble?"

"Judy, the most embarrassing thing has happened. I'm all alone!"

"All alone? Isn't——"

"No. She isn't here at all," his sister explained hurriedly. "You know, I was going to see the races from the Stockbridges' yacht—the *Gloria*. And Mrs. Ainsworth and Carrie were going to the race, too. They had seats on the observation train. Well, at the last minute Carrie got sick and couldn't come, or maybe she'll come later on the train. And before that, you see, I wrote that we would all be here for lunch at one o'clock. And I was to go with Dick and the others on the *Gloria*, and I said I could come alone, all right, and meet them, and I did come in the car. But I forgot to mail the letter," she broke off with a grimace, "and they must think I'm with the Ainsworths, and *they* think, of course, I'm on the *Gloria*. I know it's all my own fault!" Vera finished somewhat breathless.

"Can't you call them up?"

"No, they're all on board ages ago. You couldn't get a boat to take me out to them. They wouldn't allow you on the course at this hour?"

"Lord, no!"

"Well, here I am, alone and friendless, in a town full of college men. I suppose I shall get eloped with or something."

"Don't talk nonsense, Vera." Judy led the way to the elevator. "Wait

here for me a minute. Perhaps I can get you out there somehow. Why——"

Accidents have a way of irrelevantly thrusting themselves unforeseen in upon things. As Judy spoke, they were standing in front of the iron door, which had been carelessly left partly unclosed. Neither of them afterward remembered just how it all happened, but Judy, looking back at her, must have slipped on the edge and pitched head forward as the car dropped slowly by, and the stupid boy brought it to a jolting stop four feet below the level of the floor. Clutching his rope in a panic, the boy brought the car up again, crying: "Oh, what shall I do, miss! What shall I do!"

Judy lay still, doubled up in the corner.

"Ice water!" commanded Vera dominantly, but with her heart in her throat. They got him into a bedroom on that floor, unconscious and bleeding; and in five minutes a doctor had taken charge.

"Well?" said Vera, after an agony of waiting.

"Miss—Miss Phillips," said the doctor, "your brother's condition is not serious." They were standing in the hall, outside the door. "He's got a bad wound in the scalp there, and I had to straighten out a dislocated shoulder. How the thing ever could have happened, I don't know. But the point is, he will be all right if he stays quiet for several days. I should advise a nurse, and will send one if——"

"But," broke in Vera, "he can't, he can't! He's the coxswain——"

"What!" cried the doctor. "Not *Phillips!* Your brother is Judy Phillips!"

"You've simply got to put him in condition."

"I'm afraid that's impossible."

"But he's *game*," urged Vera, with a half sob in her voice. "You don't *know* how game he is."

Judy stopped groaning when Vera

came into the room. She sat on the side of the bed.

"Don't waste any time on me," he said in a weak, slow voice. "They're both gone—Hengist and the freshman cox. You two people rush out—and see if you—can't—can't get hold of one of them—on the telephone—or, wait a minute—no, try——" Painfully he gave directions. And the doctor and Vera obediently left him.

After what seemed an endless time Vera came back alone, and he saw failure written on her face even before she spoke. "You can't," he said. "Well, then, go and send word to the Old Man. He's got time to get hold of some one yet."

"The doctor's doing that now," said Vera.

She went to the window, and tried to think what could be done. It was the eleventh hour. Below, the street was still filled with the gay, moving crowds, carrying flags, horns, balloons. The town and river front were an immense haystack wherein the finding of any needle, no matter how important, was a practical impossibility. A blue balloon, slipping from its owner's hand somewhere in the crowd below, bobbed slowly upward past the window and touched the glass in passing, turning round and round, and dangling its string. A joyous shout from below greeted the escape.

Vera turned away, and came and sat down beside her brother. Soon he was sobbing in her arms. The two faces together on the pillow looked very like. They had that uncopied resemblance of suggestion which often exists in brother and sister. Judy's face was haggard and drawn with emotion, rather than pain.

"Oh, Vera, I must be in the boat. I'd give my diploma! I'd give everything! And you know what college has meant to me all along. I simply can't go back on old Tom Allen this

way! His last race and mine together! And without me he'll lose it. I'm a disgrace to the family. Uncle Jo would never forgive me. Father wouldn't, either. And Harry thinks I'm a quitter, anyway. Oh, what an *utterly* footless thing I've done! Vera, I must be in that boat if I don't live another day!"

"I wish I could do it for you," sobbed Vera.

"I wish you could. Though you are a girl, I'd sooner trust you than even Hengist. Yes, I would. But don't let's think of it." In a moment the doctor entered.

"Can't you drug me?"

The doctor looked seriously at him without answering. At length he said: "Move your right arm."

Judy moved his shoulder, and a scream escaped his set teeth. The doctor smiled grimly.

"You don't—understand——" said Judy.

"Yes, I do," replied the doctor. "We're both college men, Mr. Phillips. Your crew rows against mine to-day—but, I want to tell you, I'd give a great deal to be able to put you in your shell this afternoon." He took Judy by the hand, and looked him in the eyes. "Do you think you could steer with that arm?"

Judy jerked himself up in the bed. "Yes!" he gritted between set teeth, and fainted.

IV.

At the old farmhouse, in an upstairs room, lay silent forms swathed in blankets. In one corner three of the younger coaches talked in whispers. Their faces varied in expression from a deep patience to a glazed alarm. "If we can't get hold of Hengist," said one, "there is Villiers, bow of the freshmen. He's as cool as they make them. That race this morning would

steady him, and it has probably pulled pounds off him—ought to be under one-thirty——”

“A hundred and thirty in the stern! Lord!”

The head coach came stamping up the stairs, breathing sighs of relief. “He’s coming—just heard—doctor’s fixed him up! Oh, Tom! You better have them get dressed in half an hour.”

Allen nodded silently. His dour expression had not changed at the good news. He was sitting on the edge of a cot by the window, staring out. Below lay the blue river on which, by and by, he would be embarked. He thought back over the long days of training, of which this one was the last. Across the river to the left, half a mile below, he saw the enemies’ camp—the red-roofed house flying its crimson pennant against fleecy clouds. Beyond them the sky was clear, and a gray haze lay in the south like a coverlet the sun had thrown to one side. He sat silent, inexpressive, his hands drooping over his knees, waiting as men wait upon the hour of battle.

Down the swaying gangway for the last time swung eight men, and laid their shell upon the water. Captain Allen gave his orders in a restrained voice: “Hold her, Starboard; in, Port.” And when the port oarsmen had climbed gingerly in, “Hold her, Port; in, Starboard!” The men settled gravely down upon their seats, tried them by sliding up and down, and went through the details of getting ready with an air of performing a solemn rite. Their backs deep-colored by the hot, baking June sun, and their shoulders, where the thick reins of Greek muscle fell over on to their chests, were hid under sweaters that would be peeled off only when they lay alongside the other boat at the start.

A slight figure appeared in the doorway of the little brown boathouse. The

Old Man was walking with his arm around the coxswain’s shoulder, whispering final directions. A murmur of cheers greeted the apparition, but they died at the pallor of the face. It was a white ghost of Judy, shrunken, with heavily bandaged head, and eyes gleaming like those of a victim drugged for a sacrifice, that slid out of the long coat and stepped into the shell.

The thin hands trembled adjusting the chin-strapped megaphone, and trembled as they picked up the rudder cords. And as the two sat facing one another again it was the stroke this time who looked into the eyes of the coxswain and smiled. There he sat upon the thin wooden slide from which he was to arise a victorious or a beaten captain, and looked into a pair of blazing eyes, where, behind the sick fear, he saw courage. And realizing at last that he was boated for the race, his men all with him; that the interminable waiting was over, he gave a short laugh of pure delight. His dourness was swept away, and his face was relaxed and alive with the fierce joy of the warrior. “Darn you, Judy,” he said, “steer straight!”

The coaches came to the edge of the float, and silently, from stroke to bow, shook hands with the men—the last act in the ritual of farewell.

“Ready all! Row!”

It was a pathetic parody of Judy’s old voice, but it had a ring in it. And the first lift of those eight backs nearly snapped off the little bandaged head. Sick or well, dead or alive, it seemed to mean they would pull Judy Phillips over the line a winner for his last race. And so they rowed—paddled they would have called it—down toward the bend in the river, where the crack and rattle of organized cheers burst upon them as they came in sight of the crowded observation trains, growing louder every moment, and enveloped them like a cloud.

V.

The observation trains on each bank were waiting at the upstream end of the course. The bend of the river brought the start within fifty yards of the west shore. From this point the train on the east bank looked like a thin, colored serpent. Cheers came sweeping across the broad expanse of water, the crew from the red-topped boathouse were warming up, close under the railroad embankment on the east bank, prancing back and forth in short spurts.

Soon Tom Allen's crew came in sight, paddling down, and slipped under the noses of the official yacht, the press boat, and the few other privileged craft that were to follow the race. A few minutes later both crews lay side by side just in front of two anchored row-boats in which two men grasped and held the rudders of the shells.

There was a silence as the shells swung into position. A tiny, sloping bank ran down from the railroad track in front of car seventeen of the west-shore observation train to the water's edge, and from that car one could have tossed a stone into either shell.

The referee's voice broke the silence. He stood upon the prow of the official yacht, outlined against the shining river like the culprit fay on the cliff. The pistol shot cracked ominously, and, under the gaze of thousands, and before many of them realized it, the crews were away, tearing the water in tiny cascades with their quick, racing starts before they settled down to the long swing and the four-mile battle of skill and endurance.

Cheers swept across the river again from the train on the east shore. The west-shore train started up with toot and rattling jerk. In car seventeen a young girl who wore violets pinned to her dress gasped with excitement. "I think this is the most exciting part of

the race—to see them so close, awfully lucky we got seats in this car. Carrie Ainsworth, aren't you glad you came?"

"Yes, indeed, I am."

A moment later: "Which is Captain Allen and which is Judy Phillips?"

"Why, Judy is the coxswain, facing the others. No, that's our boat nearest to the shore. Allen is next. He's the stroke."

"Why, I thought he was number eight. You know, I'm just crazy about rowing. I met him at the Stockbridges' at a tea this winter. I wonder how Vera Phillips feels now."

"Where is Vera?"

"Oh, pshaw, they've gone behind that hill! She's on the *Gloria*."

"You can't see the race yet from the *Gloria*. It's away down at the finish."

Two minutes later, in car five, several young men huddling upon each others' shoulders: "There they come now. By George, they're ahead!"

"What flag is that—the half mile?"

"Yes."

"Harry Phillips, how much do you make it out we're behind?"

"We're not behind; watch them as they pass their flags. See, they're together!"

On board the press boat following the crews: "Yes, I saw them row two months ago—went out in the launch. They've improved vastly since then." The speaker wore a knowing look. "Do you notice, they've actually rowed stroke for stroke so far? How about it, Bill? Close race?"

"I should say. Going to be the closest in years. Lend me your glasses. They're exactly together, all right—absolutely even, and rowing so that one crew might be a reflection of the other in a looking-glass. Most remarkable circumstance; wonder how long it will last. Stroke for stroke! Looks like a thirty-three to me. There we come

to the mile flag now. I wonder what the official time is. By Jove! Allen's hitting it up to thirty-six. Look! *Pret-ty* work! He's jumped ten feet on them already. Say! it's a close race. Why, I remember in '88 when——"

Across the river, on the east bank, in car twenty:

"Mother, don't look so scared. Tom is all right."

"I know he is, dear."

"Mrs. Allen, won't you have these glasses? Look, we're catching up. I think we were behind a minute ago."

"Oh, thank you so much. Why, it looks so easy. Are they really rowing hard?"

"Of course it looks easy, my dear, from 'way off here. Both crews are rowing beautifully."

"How much farther is it, Tom?"

"Two miles and a half. Here we come to the mile-and-a-half flag now. Yes, by Jove! We're even with them! But we're rowing a higher stroke!"

Away off in the middle of the river, like tiny manikin fishes with twinkling fins, the crews, paralleled by the distant observation trains, slipped almost insensibly along in the silence of that historic battle for glory, drawing ever nearer to that last mile that lay waiting for them, between anchored yachts—a thin, blue lane.

The *Gloria* was anchored near the three-and-a-half-mile flags, half a mile from the finish. To right and left the amazing sunlit panorama of boats of all kinds filled the river, from the yawls, motor boats, and other small river craft to the yachts and huge steamers. Behind them people flecked the sloping, grassy hills above the shore, and near where the black railroad bridge's spanning arches crossed high above the finish, crowded the embankment and tops

of buildings. Directly across the course from the low-sided *Gloria* a huge steamer careened, her double decks empty on one side and the other so black with humanity one almost expected people to drop over the rails into the course below.

One of them—a slight, undersized boy—lay apart from the others, a telescope in his hand, gazing past innumerable prows of vessels silently up the course to where the bright expanse of river vanished among the low hills to the northward. Some one called out to the watchman: "If anything had happened to Judy Phillips you wouldn't be here, eh, Jack?"

The young man with the telescope answered without changing his position.

"Not a chance," he said grimly. "Catch Judy out of his last race!"

"Don't bother Jack Hengist any more," laughed a third, "he's busy. By the way, has any one heard about Vera?"

"She's with Carrie's crowd, somewhere on the observation train. Isn't she, Dick? I wonder how she feels now. I'll bet she's half crazy."

There was a silence that lasted several minutes, broken only by an occasional remark. Dick Ainsworth came over, and flung himself down beside Hengist. A moment later, the substitute coxswain, lying prone, his eye glued to the telescope, said: "I see them, but I can't tell who's ahead. They're near together, all right."

"Where? Give me the glass. Which is ours, Jack—to the left?"

"Yes, can you see them? Here, give it back to me."

There was a general crowding to the port rail to look up the course, and one of the girls appropriated the telescope.

Two minutes later: "Our crew is splashing badly. Who's that?"

"Four and two," Hengist replied

grimly. Already his hands were clenched. The minutes sped rapidly on, and, as the crews drew near, the shriek of a hundred whistles began their deafening welcome. "Come on, Tom Allen; hit it up. You've got to do it, Tom," the little substitute coxswain implored. "That's it, Frank, old boy! Rad! Keep it up!" And so on, from stroke to bow, he talked to the crew, calling them by name and beseeching them one by one to row harder, in a voice that was drowned in the general din, and did not even reach his own ears.

At last the crews entered the lane of yachts and drew momentarily closer and larger. "Look at Tom," Dick Ainsworth shouted in Hengist's ear; "he's all in! No. Judy's splashing him! How much do you make it we're behind—third of a length?"

The crews swept by the polished hull of the *Gloria*. For a few seconds one could see the yellow, braced network of the insides of the shells, and the swirl of buried oar blades, and above it straining faces and the heave of wet bodies, and then they were past and gone like a dream, and were changed again into machines that crawled down the last half mile of the blue bottom of that noise-drowned cañon. And one was to realize, afterward, that there had been no open water between them for a single minute of that terrific hand-in-hand journey of four miles.

VI.

In the shells themselves, at the finish, when the gun was fired, both crews stopped rowing almost together, and Six and Three in the boat beside Tom Allen collapsed suddenly, and the bow oar lay back slowly. The rest hung, drenched and dripping from the cessation of pain, over their trailing oars. Allen's face was gray, his eyes glazed. His head hung forward and waved gently from side to side, his mouth was

open. In his mind there was but one thought. The race was over! The booming of cannon, the noise, the kaleidoscopic miles of moving humanity above and around him on trains, shore, buildings, the river alive with boats, yachts, all did not exist for him. It was the price he had paid for winning, winning by a sustained spurt at the finish that would go down in history. And he was beyond caring.

At a float anchored somewhere below the bridge, Allen got out. His legs trembled under him, and he was dimly conscious that three or four men were wringing his hands. A trained athlete comes back quickly from any kind of punishment, and so, as he began to feel alive again, he forced a wan smile to his face. Then he heard voices behind him, "Judy's fainted!" "No, he hasn't." And turned to see the coxswain still in the shell.

He leaned over and picked up the frail form in his great arms. "Not a step do you walk," he cried out, and with still somewhat halting steps he strode along, conscious of a buzz of noise and crowding about him of red-burned shoulders and tousled heads mingled with serge and straw hats. Across a plank to the shore where a hushed crowd wonderingly made way for him, he strode, unconscious of his great, beautiful, half-clad body, like some Goth of old, and set his burden down in the car that was waiting there.

"I think I'd better go up with Judy," he called back, in a matter-of-fact voice. "Good-by, fellows. I'll see you later." Some one tossed in a handful of sweaters and the car shot ahead. Allen drew a couple of coats from the rack, and, swaying from side to side, clumsily managed to wrap one around his companion. "Isn't it great! Isn't it great!" he kept repeating, as simply happy as a child at Christmas.

The car flew past houses and streets. Through an opening they glimpsed

again the river panorama which jumped magically into view and disappeared. Then they were out upon the road that would lead back to the little old farmhouse up the river. At a turn a sharp dig in the roadway sent the tonneau up with a swirling heave, and flung the little head back against the leather cushion, where the bandage slipped and a soft loop of dark brown hair fell into view. A little dirt-stained hand was raised and felt it, and a sweep of color darkened the pale face. A pair of scared eyes looked out in which the deceit stood aïl confessed.

Allen wore a glare of utter surprise.

"Judy c-couldn't come," the voice stammered pitifully. "He tried—and tried—and tried——"

"Do you know what you've done?" Allen demanded. His long-since exhausted brain struggled to grasp a fact, the shock of which seemed to wrench his slow, methodical mind away from reality. It seemed to him that the wonderful thing she had done was unbelievable, as indeed it was. "How on earth—how could you do it? Do you know what you've done?" he said, over and over, in a kind of vague monotone. He looked into eyes that had the same brave glint as Judy's, eyes that he, unknowing, had gazed into through an age-long fierceness of four miles, wherein they had seen naught but each other, and now a sweep of realization new to his boy's soul rushed through him. "You!" he cried, and then stopped, abashed. "It—it was *you!*"

They rode on in silence for a little while, these two actors in the historic pageant of the day, alone, unknown of all the joyful thousands in the streets of the town they had left behind them. And the tremendous secret quivered between them. Allen gave up trying to grope his way to steadiness in a sea of sensations in which he was always confusing the greater with the less.

After a while a thought came to him, and he said:

"You must despise me."

"Why?"

"For swearing, every little while, through the race. I must have said some awful things. But it was the only because——"

"Oh, it was like praying! I never knew men were so wonderful. You looked as though you were dying, and yet you——" Her voice broke with the recollection, she smiled, and leaned back with parted lips, too tired to finish. They were both tired, too tired even to think, as yet, that they were mistakenly being carried farther and farther from Judy.

For them as they sat there in the swaying car, the conventions of life had dropped away, and were forgotten, leaving only life itself. The summer twilight closed down around them, a man and a girl who had fought together, and won; and the grimy earth of it was still on their faces and hands. The elemental reality of things involved them.

She sat back in her corner of the wide seat, the coat drawn around her body. Allen's arms that had so lately held her tingled with the memory of it, and he felt ashamed and strangely happy. Something utterly new and virginal was at work within him. His eyes had opened on a strange world, and a strange, wonderful creature beside him. He looked at her as though she were a being who couldn't exist in his poor scheme of things mundane.

"He couldn't—he tried—for the sake of his family—for everything—and there wasn't time to think——" Her voice was weak with physical exhaustion. She saw the expression in his eyes. Suddenly she relaxed and fell forward, sobbing hysterically. "I don't care. I don't care," she cried. "We've won! Oh, Judy, Judy!"

Battler Binks—Scoreboard Man

By Robert Emmet MacAlearney

Author of "All the World's a Fillum," Etc.

When Battler's battling days were over and he became scoreboard man for a New York newspaper he only traded the fight fever for the baseball germ. Up there on his little platform, with the shouting thousands beneath him, he had an even stronger sense of the dramatic values than he had ever had in the squared circle

THIS Message-to-Garcia thing is all right in its way. And only a fathead fails to get a real thrill out of the cornet who lugged the news of battle to Napoleon and said, "I'm dead, sire," unwrapping his cloak to show how nicely the Austrians had shot him to pieces, and tumbling off his horse right in front of the annoyed Little Corporal. But there's a deal of message carrying that never gets into the history books.

Battler Binks was one of these un-hymned message bringers. Oh, yes, you do! You've seen him many a time in front of that big blackboard across from City Hall Park. Baseball? Of course. Battler Binks was the baseball bulletin man of the *Evening Gloat*.

Not always had the Battler been in the spotlight. Like any other public character, he had been forced to fight hard for a toehold. Fight, with the Battler, is to be taken literally. From newsboy, cruising in the theater belt, he had become the best of "prelim" scrappers at one of those East Side "athletic clubs" that furnish gladiatorial steam escapement for hard-faced gangsters on Saturday nights.

It was via the Corbett, Junior, Athletic Club that the Battler became a component part of the press, its far-flung sidewalk picket. Tod Lundgren, sporting editor of the *Gloat*, was the deus ex machina. Tell that to Binks,

and he'd think you were talking about a disease. Lundgren does the boxing dope on page twelve, with fearful and wonderful perspectives of bruisers who display freight-car torsos and pipestem legs.

Regard the Battler in the glare of the electric bunch light illuminating the arena of the Corbett, Junior, A. C., when that two-story fire trap is turning 'em away. Mark the tight-drawn nose and mouth of the unnourished feather-weight, every rib showing; nothing but hate in his heaving little chest for the battler who sits in the opposite corner—that is, nothing save a blurred dream of the top-bone sirloin and hashed brown potatoes he'll blow himself to if he makes good.

Says the Ticker Man to Tod: "That kid is the goods. I've seen him before. He'll die ten years ahead of his time, going in for mixed-ale scrapping before the meat is on his bones. But he's got a wicked left for baby slugger. Watch him!"

The Ticker Man is the father of a family, and fond of his own kiddies out in Long Island, even if he does go to a prize fight every night and tap into the high wicker baskets of a thousand gin mills a few dozen yards of paper tape bearing such runic stuff as: "Round four. Battler forces fighting. Sweeney clinches, but fails to protect, Battler jabbing kidneys at will.

In breakaway Sweeney closes Battler's left eye. Battler grins and keeps boring. Sweeney swings and misses, Battler hooking to point of jaw. Referee counting. Sweeney up at nine, groggy. Battler puts one over on same spot and walks to corner. Referee is count—Battler's round and bout."

Tod Lundgren has been sharpening a soft pencil while the Ticker Man is sending. Tod is waiting for the heavy-weight class. But something in the famished youngster's face attracts him as the Battler and his enemy come out of a clinch. "By thunder!" says Lundgren. "It's a cub wolf, that's what it is! I'll bet he's fighting for a mouthful of raw meat. I'll give him a boost. Maybe Charley Flushton will teach him to box."

And now, look who's here! Battler Binks, featherweight. He's one of Charley Flushton's regular "stable." Gets enough to eat and a chance to train in clean air, even if Flushton is tight with the spending money. And he's beaten 'em all, save one or two that must be put away before the champion will take him on.

Pretty soft for Battler, eh? When his nose is pushed out of plumb, or when Spider Cleary, the Cherry Hill scrapper—who has a Kilkenny kick in either one of the smeared mitts he is forever reaching out to lay violently upon your map—spoils two perfectly good gold front teeth, put there to take the place of incisors gone the way of the uppercut, it is Charley Flushton who sends Binks to the dentist. And he never once bleats about the bill, although the Battler worries for a month, getting so peevish that he nearly does for Hell's Kitchen Harry, who goes on at one of the Saturday night "at homes."

Perhaps Flushton doesn't give Battler wha-for in the dressing room. "You little runt!" he yells. "D'ya want to go to the chair? If they have to wake that kid from Corcoran's Roost

I'll take you down to the Tombs myself, and turn you in like a dirty rain check. You finished a good, showy boxer in one round, without lettin' him stay for five. D'ya think we're runnin' this club for fun?"

Which greatly relieved the Battler; he knew Flushton would pay the dentist and not stop the price out of his "stable" envelope.

The Battler was just turned twenty-one when he got married. Mrs. Battler was in the athletic line herself. Maymie Muggins had been the best kicking member of an English pony ballet sandwiched into most of the Cammerstein productions. Maymie Muggins' toe and heel showed first from the left when the ponies took their radium dance curtain calls.

It was a very satisfying toe and heel. Maymie was no slouch on dancing, or looks, either—even if her hair was hybrid, and the "h" page had been torn out of her dictionary and pasted in wrong. She was fond of the Battler, but not quite fond enough to chuck the other five stage Shetlands for a gas stove and a dumb-waiter that the family underneath won't help keep clean. Which she told to the featherweight who had hopes of being a champion, but Binks only showed his new gilt incisors and muttered: "Well, I'll just stick around, Mayme. You might change your mind."

As a matter of fact, she really never did change it; it was changed for her, although the Battler didn't and doesn't understand. Men never do. One night, the four hundred and sixteenth of "The Little Jade Joss," some careless stage hand left a paint pot protruding from a bit of scenery.

Remember the business? Mazie Breeze, the medical missionary heroine in Shensi, has been singing "I Want to be Alice in Wonderland," and the chorus of Red and White Queens, and White Rabbits, and Frog Footmen is

swaying in the background. Then in come the ponies, six Lewis Carroll Alices, just as Sir John Tenniel drew them in the book—Alice before she has eaten the magic cakes that make her open and shut like an accordion. Some song and some stage business that was! It made Fred Gayburn, at R. U. E., rub his hands and grin as cheerfully the four hundred and sixteenth time as it did when he first got it working without a hitch.

Maymie Muggins, sachem of the ponies, caught the Gayburn grin as usual while she poked toe and heel toward the zenith and began inching out to the apron, five other zenith-indicating feet chaperoning her. The paint pot did the rest. Maymie went down with an involuntary split that engulfed her five satellites completely. When they picked her up, her dancing skirt was a sight, and the ambulance doctor who fingered her ankle hinted that it was dollars to an empty cold-cream pot she would never dance again.

One week later she said to the Battler, who came, bringing ringside gossip and a sporting extra: "Bless your 'cart, Battler, you're a little bit off, all right. Who's got my plice?"

"Trix," answered Binks. "But she ain't Maymie M. Fred Gayburn says so."

"No, Trix 'asn't the toe 'oist right; that she 'asn't," agreed the damaged dancer.

"'Stwreth, you 'ave been wytin'," mused Maymie, with a color in her cheek that wasn't the Casino brand. Binks was too good a ring general not to know when he had his opponent weakening. Now was the time for his right cross.

"They've matched me with Bull Gallagher week after next. An' if I lick him—an' I'll trim him, all right, all right—Flushton will let me challenge Abe."

The prostrate pony pulled at the yel-

low-and-blue afghan that draped the boarding-house sofa. "A champ," she murmured.

"I'll be the champ."

That was all. Battler had crossed with his right. He'd never planted a blow more cleanly. If Charley Flushton and his handlers had been there to see, they'd have grinned to note how their pupil used the trick they'd taught him; that they'd been drilling into him against the day he'd smear Abe, the title holder, and smear him good.

"Nine, ten, and out," Binks mumbled as Maymie and he and the yellow-and-blue afghan clinched, with no referee to break them.

Bull Gallagher rosined his shoes on the mat of the Corbett, Junior, A. C., and butted in the style that had earned him a stockyards label. Charley Flushton and his fist faculty shrieked directions from the Battler's corner so impassionedly that a rasped referee called all the gods to witness he would wring their rough-house necks if they didn't quit.

"There's something gone wrong with the Battler," said the Ticker Man, at his everlasting key tapping, to Lundgren.

"You're right," said Tod. "The kid's boxing; he's showing more than he's ever had. But where's the punch? That isn't the way to come through to challenge Abe."

There were ten rounds in this go, the final. By the fifth, Binks was barely able to walk to his chair. Flushton himself handled the ammonia bottle, and the strenuous flapping of his faculty's towels swept rosin dust in an eye-smarting mist as far as the boxes. The Ticker Man and Tod Lundgren had to lean against the dollar barrier until the bell rang.

"I'll turn you loose!" snorted Flushton into the ear of the boy with bulging eyes and a drumming in the brain.

"Where'ja git your stream of yellow? You rotten little four-flusher, doncha know your challenge for the title's wrapped up in this?"

Battler Binks didn't need Charley Flushton's alcoholic wheeze as a reminder. But there was something queer that ran up and down his legs and through the back of his head, jumbling together a vision of the low forehead of Bull Gallagher, puffing but happy in the other corner, and the face of Maymie Muggins framed in a halo of shiner "tararas." It wasn't any streak of yellow. And it wasn't dope. He'd tasted chloral once. Never mind. He'd put that right across, and then—perhaps—

"That's better," remarked the Ticker Man, at the ending of the seventh. "Maybe the Battler's been breaking training. But it's going to be a close call."

It was. Bull Gallagher roughed his man unmercifully against the flannel-wrapped ropes in the ninth. He began it again in the tenth. He even leered once in a clinch, down at where Tod Lundgren sat with astonished gaze and idle pencil. Bull knew what a Tod Lundgren picture story in to-morrow's *Evening Gloat* would do. He had hardly broken when the Battler lunged. As he drove a wicked left toward the chin of the Bull, he knew that if it failed there wouldn't be a straw's strength to keep him on his feet against a tap with the back of a glove. He felt his fist land, and it did not slip; it stuck, sure sign that the punch had been behind it.

Almost incredulously he watched the Bull's brows quiver and meet, the skin along the nose wrinkling with that puzzled expression prize fighters wear when they are being knocked out. And weakly, not stopping to look further, without the least fear that Bull Gallagher's hairy arms would be swinging at him from behind, Battler Binks,

challenger, tottered to where Charley Flushton and the towel-and-bottle faculty were yelling their heads off.

"And by the Lord Harry!" exclaimed Tod Lundgren to the Ticker Man—who had just tapped into the high-ball haunts. "Battler wins. Flushton will challenge Abe—that was some fight. But, take it from me, he'll never be champion."

The Ticker Man was wrapping up his sender in newspaper, hurrying to get the midnight train to Long Island and the kiddies. "What did I tell you that first night?" he said. "His carbons are burned out. That was a last flicker."

A week afterward, Battler Binks and Maymie Muggins were married. Maymie limped to the alderman who tied the knot.

"You're marrying a champ, Mrs. Binks," said the Tammany district leader, who came to the City Hall once a week to see that his news-stand privileges were farmed out properly. He knew the Battler. Now and then he had acquired a bundle when Binks was cleaning them up in five rounds; he staked them to the ceremony, dead-head.

"Go on, Battler! Quit your kidding!" he chided, when Binks pulled out his roll. "Just put me wise the day you meet Abe. I'll want to know if you're fit. My money'll be on you."

The Battler shook his head, and led Mrs. Battler away from there. He didn't tell the alderman that he would never lick Abe; he hadn't even let Maymie know he'd had trouble putting the Bull out. Marrying Maymie, when he knew he could never be champion, was the only mean thing Battler had ever done.

Now, the doctor end of prize fighting is mostly bluff. But there has to be some one with an M. D. to look over bruisers before they go in the ring;

otherwise fussy uplift folks are always butting into things. Doc Sparks was a fight fan himself.

"Look-a-here, Charley," he said to Flushton one day, after the challenge to Abie had been sent and accepted, and the Battler had begun training. "What's the matter with the feather boy? He's going back."

"I begin to think he's yellow," growled Flushton, who had been seeing, more plainly than the doctor, that the Battler was only a shadow boxer now.

"Yellow, nothing," said Sparks. "I'll look him over after he's been rubbed down. An undersized kid ain't made of Bessemer steel. You've gaited him too fast. The Battler's worked out. You'd better postpone that Abie fight."

And when Binks came out of the shower, there was old Doc Sparks, stethoscope and all.

"Chase yerself!" snarled the Battler, who felt more jaded than usual.

"Going to look you over, Bat," said Sparks, with a grin. "You're stale; that's what." He bent down with his instrument. Then he summoned Charley Flushton to come and listen, too. The "stable" owner raised his head with a puzzled look. "What's wrong with him, doc?" he asked.

"Heart murmur, and a bad one," said Sparks.

"Heart murmur? It's a *thunderstorm!*" snorted Flushton. "He's foun-dered, then—for keeps?"

"He'll never fight again," was old Doc Sparks' verdict. But he slapped Battler on the shoulder kindly. "You've lost your chance, kid. That's why he went on the Fritz when he fought the Bull, Charley. He licked Bull Gallagher on nerve. He might have dropped landing that knock-out punch. Battler, you've been a game chicken. I'm mighty sorry."

The featherweight who had just challenged a champion rocked inside, as he

had rocked the night Bull had him going. He eyed Doc Sparks balefully.

"Are you stallin'?" he asked. "Tryin' to throw the match?"

"I couldn't pass you in, boy—honest," said the doc. "Every dead man pushes the game back another notch. Anyway, Abe would lick you. He'd find out you were made of glass, and break you to pieces a bit at a time. Abie likes to do things like that."

Charley Flushton batted puffy lids at Doc Sparks, twiddling the stethoscope, and the Battler, who had just been rubbed off the slugging slate. Flushton saw only the thousand he had posted to bind a championship match; saw it buying wine for that Abie crowd. They wouldn't hold him to that forfeit. Oh, no! And then the panning he'd get in the papers; they'd say he'd been boosting the fight on hot air to help the handbook men. Some curser, Charley was, when his flues were warmed up. Plain and fancy Billingsgate was his specialty.

"Beat it, you mutt!" he yelled after his first spasm was over. "Why 'n 'ell didneha train? I'd oughta killed that weddin'-bell frame-up when I seen it comin'. You've been blowin' your skirt to bubble water and broiled live, and watchin' the sun rise from taxi windows. You've chucked a champ-ionship for a few cases of fizz, aineha? Beat it while the goin's good!"

Old Doc Sparks hadn't time to interfere before the Battler's left countered neatly on the Flushton maxillary.

"Nix on lugging in the skirt," he growled at his prostrate owner. "I got one more of them punches left, too, if any one needs it. S'long, doc!"

Maymie didn't get wise in time to save much of the Battler's roll—Flushton had been a tightwad, even with the boy who was going after a title. In six months the pony who had kicked Trix and Trix's five sister Shetlands onto a row of electric letters in front

of Cammerstein's, could have found the way, blindfolded, to Finkel's "Private Loan Entrance for Ladies," just around the corner, on Third Avenue.

Tod Lundgren had been on a long vacation, in a new sixty-horse-power car. He came back to a heavyweight bout, and found at his elbow the Ticker Man, a bit browned, too. The Ticker Man hadn't been motoring; not he, on twenty-five a week; he had put in seven days with the kiddies at Rockaway Beach; he felt fine, and was sending: "Chief Devery and Fire Commissioner Jobson are in a box with Senator Jawley. Tom Sharkey will be in Morris' corner. There is ten thousand dollars in the house."

In a moment, though, he swapped "H'w-are-yous." "Heard about the Battler?" he asked.

"No," said Lundgren. "Is Flushton going to match him again?"

"Down and out, and crooking his elbow besides," explained the Ticker Man.

"Poor kid!" said Tod. "That white hope's hog fat, Bill. He won't last six rounds. It's strongarming the crowd to take their money for this. Huh! So the Battler's down and out? Well, the booze gets the best of them. I made that kid with a ten-cent lead pencil. I guess I owe him a job."

Lundgren was as good as his word. Binks isn't behind with the rent these days, and Maymie has lost the trail to Finkel's pawn parlor. The Battler is baseball-bulletin board man of the *Evening Gloat*. He doesn't play to the gallery he used to play to, under the bunchlight at the Corbett, Junior, A. C. Even Charley Flushton wouldn't recognize him, upon his scantling runway, writing the innings' story.

Little by little the Message-to-Garcia thing wove itself through Battler's being. He got to know that he held this jostling throng in the hollow of his

chalk-smear'd paw, just as he had known he could make the dollar seats go crazy by picking out a difficult opening in the guard of the boy fighting him, and shoving his glove home. He had traded fight fever for the baseball germ. He was playing the game all by himself, every day, with his own audience—just as frantic an audience as you'd find on the bleachers. Once in a while, when he had an afternoon off, Tod Lundgren would give him a pass, and he'd watch the nines perform on the diamond. But it seemed dull by comparison, there in the sun field, with peanut and ice-cream cone vendors in your way. He missed the pleasant shiver that went with reading tissue slips, the making his audience cheer or hiss as he chose.

Gaze, then, one snappy October day, upon the Battler; maimed derby screening both ears, a more than usually I-hate-to-do-this-but-they-pay-me-for-it expression on his chalky features, but hot tumult within his bosom. "If old Doc Sparks clamped that stethoscope on me now he'd bust an eardrum," was his reflection as he eyed the swarm below, a swarm that five traffic-squad men were trying to herd back from the Broadway cars. This was a day of days, for the Cubs and Giants were playing a game that would decide the championship; would give the winner a right to face those Red Sox, who had copped in the other league.

Binks knew the crowd was discussing his old derby, his cauliflower ears, the bored way he took the tissue from that red-headed Kennedy kid, who shoved the slips through a hole in the window. It was chilly; he buttoned his shiny jacket tight and turned up the collar. But he'd be warm enough when the first batter toed the plate. He'd be playing this game as well as the Rube and Larry and the rest of them.

It was the Battler who would bring

the message the crowd waited for. He'd go home with their yells stinging his cheeks. The Giants would be heroes to-morrow. Yes, to-morrow. But now, just now, the spotlight was on him—B. Binks. He'd have a story to tell Mayme that night; Mayme, who would be waiting with the stew on the back of the stove, and a little blanket she was making with wooden needles. It was to have a blue edge, that blanket. Blue means a boy. The Battler had learned his first bit of nursery lore last evening. They hadn't used blue-bordered knitted blankets on Randall's Island, you see; he was thinking about it when the red-headed Kennedy kid passed out the first inning.

"Nothing-nothing." Of course. The pennant goes with to-day. The teams won't be putting over anything in the taking chances line—not in the first, anyway.

Thirty-third degree fans or only as far along as the Baseball Blue Lodge, you can write the story of that game as well as I. You know how the Cubs nosed ahead in the third, by pulling some of that Tinker-to-Evers-to-Chance stuff; then how Matty worked the fade-away, with even Joe Tinker falling for it, until they were all square in the ninth, and both going strong. If you get the old thrill hearing about it now, how do you suppose the Battler felt, up there on his green wooden perch, regarding the howling jam beneath with ineffable scorn, when it showed signs of losing heart.

In the clamor and fading light he bent over and shouted: "Root, you cold-footed mutts! Root! Pull for 'em, can't you?"

Eleven—twelve innings. Now into the thirteenth. Battler knew it would be the last. The street lamps were beginning to glimmer; a few of the howling thousand were hurrying to subway and L. Then the Kennedy kid's hand shot out with penciled slip; Bat-

tlar held it toward the pink-streaked sky to read. Within, the ticking of the telegraph had ceased.

Binks read the tissue once; read it twice. He saw:

End of thirteenth. Cubs, 3; Giants, 0.

It came to him suddenly. He was the bringer of a message. By a scratch of his bit of broken chalk he could start a cheer that would rattle the gilt scales in battered Miss Justice's grasp on City Hall dome; or he could conjure up a groan that would send a regiment of fans home to curse at cold dinners. It was for him to bring the message that he chose.

And the Battler chose; chose quickly. With a sweep of the wrist he scrawled the figure "3" and held up his hand. Binks didn't know it, but in the good old days of an arena far more classic than that of the Corbett, Junior, A. C., men had held up their palms in just this way, with "Ave! morituri," and the rest of it. In the jubilant uproar he tore the battered derby from his cauliflower ears and flung it into space. Thumbs down for the Cubs this night, at all events. He'd won a pennant for the Giants. To-morrow? To-morrow could look to itself. This was his crowded hour; he felt the warm surge that comes to the conqueror only in the heat of first knowing. What is afterward doesn't count. As he slunk into the hallway, bareheaded, the red-haired Kennedy kid came darting out of the telegraph room where the sounders had begun to clatter.

"Hey, Bat!" called the youngster.

"G'wan! Chase yourself!" growled Binks. And the sidewalk drift claimed him.

It was as he knew it would be at the flat. There was Maymie, with the white stuff and the wooden needles; there was the stew on the back of the stove; there were most of the things that once had drifted over to Finkel's,

salvaged now. Even with the uplift of his crowded hour heavy upon him, the Battler knew this was worth more than many pennants. He had traded it—for what?

"Where's your 'at?" cried Maymie, as he entered.

Shall we peach on a good friend? The Battler put his chalky head down on the kitchen-table oilcloth and wept. Then he told her.

You've surely got to hand it to that ex-Casino pony. She may have taken a tighter grip on her needles, especially when she eyed the ball of blue yarn she hadn't begun to work into the border yet; but that was all she did, save to get everlastingly busy dishing up the stew, so busy that she didn't let herself think whether she'd know how to find the trail to Finkel's again.

"Cut out the weeps," she urged, shoving a plateful where he could get a whiff of the onions. "You ain't to blame. I knows 'ow you felt."

There were other than chalk smears on Binks' face as he raised it to this wonderful pal, who had stuck and would stick through thick and thin.

"You see, I had to get the hand, Mayme," he explained. "I just had to get the hand."

"H'it's the hartistic tempramunt, Bat. Hi'd 'ave done the same."

No recording angel marked down that Maymie lie.

"You mean it, Maymie?" There was a healing in this voice; it ministered to the bruised spirit of the man who had brought the message the crowd had yearned for.

"Crost my 'art," said Mrs. Binks.

These are not snuffles; what you hear is the Battler tucking away Irish stew—and such a stew! Its steamy spell

banished thoughts of lost job, of what Tod Lundgren would say, of that red-headed Kennedy kid who had handed out the unlucky thirteenth.

And now there came a sound from the corner, a sound different from anything else in the whole world—the yelp of the New York newsboy, giving tongue with the baseball "uxtry." The Battler dropped his fork. He hadn't thought of that. It wasn't he who had lied to the crowd on the sidewalk. He'd made the *Evening Gloat* lie! He'd made Lundgren lie! He'd sold out the "stable"; ne'd done worse than break training!

"Uxtry - uxtry — fullaccountu - huh-uhuh—oor—uh!"

It snote its way into the Binks flat and tainted Mayme's stew; it pointed the road to Finkel's once more; it made the foundered featherweight sick, so sick that he shook off roughly a hand that the woman laid upon his shoulder.

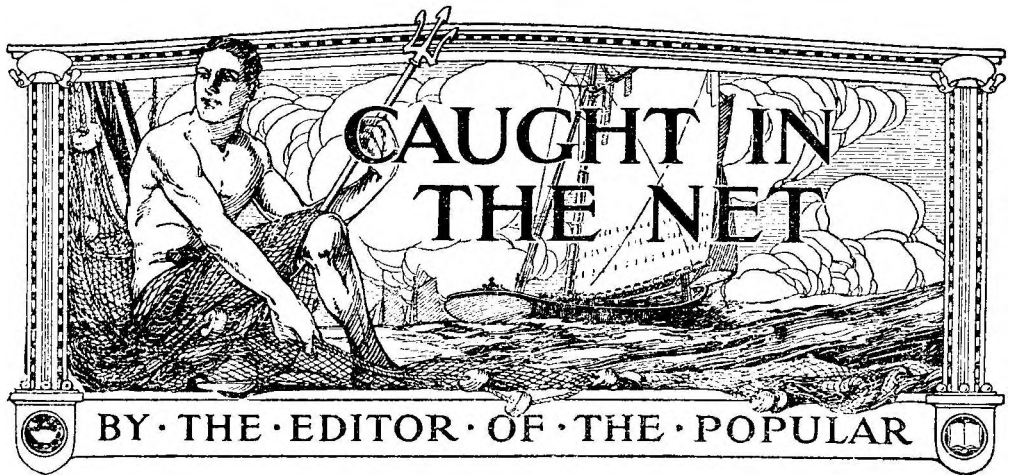
"'Ark, Bat!" she whispered. "'Ark! i'hy, Bat!"

Up from the kitchen chair leaped Battler Binks; and down the rickety stair into the street. With a copy of the damp sporting edition he lurched to a corner lamp.

There was Tod Lundgren's seven-column flagpole picture, framed up a week ago for use if the Giants copped. There was the score that he had chalked upon the board: "Giants, 3; Cubs, 0." The Battler had told the truth to his waiting thousand!

"The little devil!" sobbed the broken featherweight, hugging the smeary sheet against his shiny jacket. "The little red-headed devil! He was callin' me back to gimme the c'rected score. The wire man took it wrong."

Maymie, at the third-floor landing, heard him gasping as he climbed.



THE BOOM IN SHIPBUILDING

IT is a sign of prosperity when the builders of delivery wagons are busy. The merchant ships are the delivery wagons of the sea. They carry to and fro the merchandise of the department stores of the world—the great manufacturing and shopkeeping nations of the globe. Never before have there been so many ships hurrying over the ocean roads. Never before have there been so many ships a-building.

Human beings want everything the world produces. Quicker and cheaper transportation by sea affects every one—even those who live far inland. It means the lowering of prices on necessities and luxuries alike, for it brings the ends of the earth closer together. Maritime commerce is the great equalizer and stabilizer of prices. It is more important than land commerce because no one country produces all that its people need.

Building a railroad into some new region is a momentous task. Before it can be constructed the right of way has to be bought. The roads of the sea are free to all. It costs a great deal to build and equip a new railroad. Fifty miles of track with its cars and engines and stations costs more than a ten-thousand-ton steamer. A train cannot diverge an inch from the rails without disaster. Ships can change their courses at will, and seek trade anywhere.

There are several causes for this tremendous boom in shipbuilding. One is the opening of the Panama Canal, which will create five new ocean routes, some of them across watery wastes of the Pacific that hitherto seldom have been traversed by steam or sail. Another is that the commerce of the world is on the threshold of a great era of change and expansion. The cutting of the Isthmus will throw open a vast treasure house of natural resources.

South America is practically undeveloped. There will be a great shifting of peoples, especially from Europe and Asia—probably the greatest that the world has ever known. The effect of the conjunction of cheap land and cheap labor in an incredibly rich continent can be figured out pretty accurately. What will follow from the mixing of opposite races no one can tell. But in all this the merchant navies of the world will play the most important part.

There are about forty thousand ships on the seas now, and their number is being increased at the rate of about three a day. How much are they worth?

It is almost impossible to tell. A ship's value fluctuates according to its age and the demand for its services. But the shipbuilders are so busy that the price of new steamers is about sixty per cent more to-day than it was two years ago.

Great Britain builds two out of every three ships that are launched—more than all the other countries of the world put together. This has been the case for years. Ninety-nine new vessels out of a hundred are steel steamers. The sail is disappearing from the seas.

England's merchant navy outranks all others. The United States comes next, and Germany third. But last year the United States was the only nation that showed a decrease in shipbuilding. Germany broke all previous records in the number and tonnage launched.

BRAINS AND CRIME

MANY people get a notion that criminals, especially burglars and train robbers, are unusually brainy men. They have an idea that criminals of this type are marvelously shrewd and inventive, and very brave.

Such is far from true. Criminals, like animals that prey, often develop a great deal of stealth and cleverness in concealing themselves. But even the shrewdest of these nearly always have a blind spot in their judgment which causes them to do very foolish things.

Recently three men burglarized a bank in a small Western town. They did a good job; got six thousand dollars in gold and currency; got safely out of town, and were captured next day by a lone county constable and a shotgun.

When searched they had on their persons two thousand three hundred dollars of the currency taken from the bank—that the cashier recognized instantly; and also they carried part of a bottle of nitroglycerin. Ten days after the burglary they were sentenced to twenty-two years in the penitentiary. No one had seen them in town, no one saw them rob the bank. They carried their own conviction. After they had confessed, one of them was asked why he still carried the nitroglycerin. He replied that he was afraid to hide it lest somebody find it and suspect him.

Childishly simple as that is, some of the shrewdest burglars and thieves manifest similar weak spots. The fact is they are not brainy men; they are not well-balanced, intelligent men, much less brilliant ones. Very few of them have good average mental powers.

The matron in the Iowa State Penitentiary said that during the six years she had charge of the women in that institution only two women came under her who had more than very ordinary ability. The Chicago survey of vice has reported that of women of ill repute in that city a very large per cent can neither read nor write, and only a very few have ever been past the eighth grade in the public schools.

Criminals may, and often do, have an abnormal shrewdness in some direction, but rarely—almost never do they have a clear, trained intelligence. For the most part they are defectives, degenerates, undeveloped and untrained mentally. Only in the lurid imagination of some deluded youth is crime a brilliant profession. For not only does the criminal inevitably get caught, but he finds, aside from the physical danger, the fruits of his work very bitter. For even if he possessed more than usual ability, the ignorance and disgusting loathsomeness of most of his associates would make a pleasant and sensible use of his spoils impos-

sible. To escape the law might at times be possible; but to escape one's associates in crime is never possible.

ON THE GIVING AND TAKING OF ADVICE

OF giving advice there is no end. It is one of the things which is very easy and pleasant to give—and very hard to take. America is an advice-ridden nation. We are preached it from every nook and cranny, from pulpit and platform, from the most obscure nook in a remote agricultural paper to the pages of our heaviest magazine.

And most of it is good advice, only it isn't good to take. It sounds good, it is reasonable, it is based on moral principles, but it fails in that it doesn't fit. We remember, when a small boy, hearing a song on bearing each other's burdens, one verse of which ran: "Meekly bear thine own full measure and thy brother's share." In the speculative way of a child we got to wondering if everybody took that who would have any load to carry. That is the defect in most advice. It is too sweeping, too general, or too radical. It wants everybody to do the same thing, or it wants the individual to quit everything and do the one thing. Now, meat may be an excellent thing for John Henry, and he may feel justified in advising the eating of meat. But it often falls out that Tom Jones, who gets the advice, is not the right fellow to eat meat.

Most of us give advice with the view of radically changing the other person's purposes. That is seldom wise. No matter how excellent my plans are, they are seldom good in exactly the same way for Bud Simmons and Bill Smith. My way of doing things would very likely prove awkward or impossible to them.

It is good to give advice—unless the advice is born purely of egotism, for it shows a friendly interest in our fellow men, but it is not good to give it dogmatically and get humptious if it is not followed as we give it. For, after all, the very best advice is not that which persuades others to give up their way and accept ours, but that which serves as a mere encourager to stimulate them to carry out their own best intentions.

BURIED TREASURE

WHEREVER the blood-red gleam of sack and loot flames across the pages of history you are pretty sure to find a tale of buried treasure. Conqueror and conquered alike have hidden their wealth when hard pressed. But little of these lost riches ever has been recovered. No one has found the combination to the sandy safety deposit vaults of the pirates in the desert isles of the Caribbean. Tall ships, laden with bullion and plate, still lie undisturbed beneath the surface of the seas. Ruined cities still keep the secret of the hoards hidden by their inhabitants, who have been dead and dust for thousands of years.

The lure of hidden treasure has called for the expenditure of more money and energy with less profitable return than any other venture that avaricious man ever has entered upon. In winter the hunters go to the tropics—to Cocos Island, for instance, which they believe holds a hundred millions left there by the buccaneers. In summer, however, the diggers and delvers are busy in the temperate zone. No one can say how many attempts are made during the warm weather, along our North Atlantic coast, to find the treasure of Captain Kidd—although it has been pretty well proved that it doesn't exist.

This summer the business of seeking lost gold and gems is unusually active elsewhere than in the United States. A New York firm of contractors has been engaged by the Italian government to dredge the Tiber and recover some of the treasures cast into it in times past. The site of Carthage is being explored for the vast store of gold and gems hidden there by Genseric the Vandal. The French are searching at Carcassonne for the loot of Alaric the Goth, and at Avignon for the lost treasures of the popes. The English are probing a marsh near London for the wealth cast there by King John in his flight. Farther afield a British expedition is seeking the lost tombs of the Great Khans of Tartary and the incalculable wealth they hold. In India the lure is the famous treasure of Shawmut Jung, Begum of Murshedehad.

—Ingots of gold and silver bars,
And jeweled plunder from wild, wild wars,
But where they are laid, no man can tell,
Though known to a thousand stars.

But although the desire to go somewhere and dig for buried treasure is latent in every one's breast, it is unprofitable, and should be sternly repressed, unless one is merely seeking physical exercise.

There is a charming story by Nathaniel Hawthorne of a man who dreamed, as a boy, of three tokens that would show him the place where great riches were hidden in the earth, the way to power over his fellows, and the woman whom above all others he would love. He wandered about the world for years, but never saw the symbols that were to mark the end of his quest. Wearily he returned home at last. He saw the signs carved on a tree in his mother's dooryard—long before, by himself. He read the lesson aright, and prospered—tilled the soil, taught the village school, and married the girl who lived next door.

BOSH

A TRIO of sturdy detectives—William Kenney, James Gegan, and Henry Oswald—have made a study of the New York and Newark cases of Poison Needle and Perfumed Handkerchief. The newspaper stories ran that the girl had been jabbed with a poisoned needle by an abductor, who planned to carry her away to a life of shame. The alternate version was that a handkerchief, full of a sweet-smelling drug, was pressed to her nostrils. In both methods, the girl was to fall unconscious in the crowded street or theater, and then unostentatiously was to be hustled away to a waiting taxicab, and so on to her doom. The more publicity given to the method, the more numerous the cases reported. The greater the danger to the abductor, the more frequent the charges of attempted abduction.

The work of the detectives covered many weeks. We have been over their records—it was a careful investigation. There was no evidence in any case of a drugged handkerchief or of a poisoned needle. There was no evidence of an abductor. The women making the charges were victims of hysteria. The very form which their hysteria took is, as ex-Commissioner Dougherty pointed out to us, a recognized phase of mental disturbance. Such cases have been familiar to continental experts for generations. It is a pity that the necessary work of publicity on sex maladjustment should be overlaid with such foolishness. Sober folk, stirred by outré sensation, lose the power to respond to the authentic horrors of prostitution.

Fortune's Football

By B. M. Bower

Author of "Flying U Ranch," "The Gringos," Etc.

SYNOPSIS OF FIRST PART

Across the sun-baked land Marthy and Jase trek to find their Eden, and finally lay claim to a cove on the Wolverine. They are its earliest settlers, and Marthy assumes most of the herculean labors consequent to home-building, for Jase is lazy and shiftless. In time other pioneers locate, among them the MacDonalds. Their child, Billy Louise, becomes the one bright spot in Marthy's hard life, and secretly she pays for the child's education. At eighteen Billy Louise is left to take care of her mother and the MacDonald ranch, to meet debts as well as she can. Jase dies, but Marthy continues her work stoically despite her age; however, she sends for a nephew, Charley Fox, who comes to help the old lady. Also appears on the scene a stranger, Ward Warren, who aims to run a cattle ranch when he gets enough money. Ward offers his services to Billy Louise and she hires him one winter. During that period the man and girl become pals, though Ward has difficulty in keeping to that relation. In the springtime he leaves the MacDonald ranch for a claim of his own. He buys a few head of cattle. On Marthy's place her nephew is doing wonders; building improvements, increasing the stock, etc. But he confides to Billy Louise that cattle thieves are at their game. Others in the region report the same experience—stolen cows and calves. Meanwhile, out shooting wolves one day, "Fortune's Football"—as Ward Warren calls himself—discovers bits of gold in a den. A meager deposit he concludes, but one that will enable him to purchase a good showing of cattle, and put his feet solidly on the road to his goal—Billy Louise.

(A Four-Part Story—Part Two.)

CHAPTER X.

HELP FOR THE COW BUSINESS.

WARD had no gold pan of his own, since this was not a mining country, and his ambition had run in a different channel. He therefore took the tin washbasin down to the creek and dumped the sand into it. Then, squatting on his boot heels in the edge of the stream, he filled the basin with water and rocked it gently with a rotary motion that proved him no novice at the work. His eyes were sharper and more intent in their gaze than Billy Louise had ever seen them, and though his movements were unhurried, they were full of eagerness held in leash.

Several times he refilled the basin, and the amount of sand grew less and less, until only a few spoonfuls re-

mained of coarse gravel and a sediment that clung to the bottom of the basin and moved sluggishly around and around. He picked out the tiny pebbles one by one and threw them in the creek. He peered sharply at a small bit and held it in his fingers while he bent his face close to the pan, his eyes two gimlets boring his gaze into the contents.

He got up stiffly, backed, and sat down upon the low bank with his feet far apart and his shoulders bent while he stared at the little bit of mineral in his fingers.

"Coarse gold, and not such a whale of 'a lot," he pronounced to himself with careful impartiality. "But it's ^{so} pay dirt, and, if there's enough of it, it'll help a lot at this end of the cow business." He sat there a long time, thinking and planning and holding himself

sternly to cold reality, rejecting every possibility that had the slightest symptom of being an air castle. He did not intend to let this thing turn his head or betray him into any foolishness whatsoever. He was going to look at the thing cold-bloodedly and put his imagination in cold storage for the present.

His first impulse, to ride straight to the Wolverine and show Billy Louise these three tiny nuggets, he rejected as a bit of foolishness. He was perfectly willing to trust Billy Louise with any secret he possessed, but he knew that he would be feeding her imagination with dangerous fuel. She would begin dreaming and building castles, and prospecting for herself, very likely; and that trail led oftenest to black disappointment. If he made good, he would tell her—when he told her something else.

He would not tell anybody. He raised his head and looked at the hills where his cattle would feed, and pictured it cluttered with gold hunters—greedy, undesirable interlopers doomed to disappointment in the long run. Ward had seen the gold fever sweep through a community and spoil life for the weak ones who took to chasing the will-o'-the-wisp of sudden wealth. Tramps of the pick-and-pan brigade—they should not come swarming into these hills on any wild-goose chase, if he could help it. And he could, and should. This was not, properly speaking, a gold country. He knew it. The rock formations did not point to any great deposit of the mineral, and if he had found one it was a fluke—an accident. He resolved that his first consideration should be the keeping of his secret for the mental well-being of his fellows.

Ward did not put it quite so altruistically. His thoughts formed into sentences.

"This is cattle country. If men want to hunt gold, they can do their hunt-

ing somewhere else. They can't go digging up the whole blamed country just on the chance of finding another pocket like this one. I'm in the cattle business myself. If I find any gold, it'll go into cattle, and stay there."

Ward's memory was like glue, and while it held things he would give much to forget, still it served him well. He had ridden past a tiny, partly caved-in dugout, months ago, where some wandering prospector had camped while he braved the barrenness of the hills and streams hereabout. Ward had dismounted and glanced into the cavelike hut. Now, after he had eaten a few mouthfuls of dinner, he rode straight over to that dugout and got the gold pan he remembered to have seen there. It was not in the best condition, of course. It was battered and bent, but it would do for the present.

By the time he reached the wolf den the sun was nearing the western rim of hills, but Ward had time to examine the locality more carefully than he had done at first, and to wash a couple of pans of gravel. The test elated him perceptibly; for while there did not seem to be the makings of a millionaire in that gravel bank, he judged roughly that he could make a plumber's wages if he worked hard enough—and that looked pretty good to a fellow who had worked all his life for forty dollars a month. "Two hits a pan, just about," he put it to himself. "And I'll have to pack the dirt down here to the creek; but I'll dig a nice little bunch of cattle out of that gravel bank before snow flies, or I miss my guess a mile."

As nearly as he could figure it, he had chanced upon a split channel. For ages, he judged, the water had run upon that ledge, leaving the streak of gravel and what little gold it had carried down from the mountains. Then some freshet had worn over the edge of the break in the rock until the ledge and its deposit was left high and dry on the side of

the gulch, while the creek flowed through the gully it had formed below. It might not be the correct explanation, but it satisfied Ward and encouraged him to believe that the streak of pay gravel lay along the ledge within easy reach.

He tried to trace the ledge up and down the gulch, and to estimate the probable extent of that pay streak. Then he gave it up in self-defense. "I've got to watch my dodgers," he admonished himself, "or I'll go plumb loco, and imagine I'm a millionaire. I'll pan what I can get at, and let it go at that. And I've got to count what gold shows up in the sack—and *no more*. Good Lord! I can't afford to make a fool of myself at this stage of the game! I've got to set right down on my imagination and stick to hard-boiled facts."

He went home in a very good humor with himself, and the world, for all that. So far as he could see, the thing that had been bothering him was settled most satisfactorily. He had wanted to spend the summer on his claim, making improvements and watching over his cattle. There was fence to build, and some hay to cut; and he would like to build another room onto the cabin. Ward had certain fastidious instincts, and he rebelled inwardly at eating, sleeping, and cooking all in one small room. But he had not been able to solve the problem of earning a living while he did all this—to say nothing of buying supplies. And he really needed a team and tools, if he meant to put up any hay.

Now, with that pay gravel within reach and the gold running twenty-five cents to the pan—and the occasional tiny nuggets jumping up the yield now and then, he could go ahead and do the things he wanted to do.

So he set to work the next morning in dead earnest with pick, shovel, and pan to make the most of his little find.

He shoveled the dirt and gravel into a gunny sack, threw the sack as far as he could over the ledge at the end where it was not hidden and cluttered with the cherry trees and service berries below, and when it stopped rolling he carried it the rest of the way. Then he panned it in the little creek, watching like a hawk for nuggets and the finer gold. It was back-breaking work, and he felt that he earned every cent he got. But the cents were there, in good gold, and he was perfectly willing to work for what he received in this world.

After a couple of weeks he stopped long enough to make a hurried trip to Hardup, a little town forty miles farther up in the hills. In the little bank there he exchanged his gold harvest for coin of the realm, and he was well satisfied with the result. It was not a fortune, nor was he likely to find one in the hills. But he bought a team, wagon, and harness with the money, and he had enough left over for a two months' grubstake and plenty of tobacco and papers and a few magazines. That left him just enough silver to pay Rattler's bill at the livery stable. Nothing startling, but still not bad—that wolf-den find.

He had a lot of trouble getting his wagon to his claim, but by judicious driving and the liberal use of a log chain for a rough lock, he managed to land the whole outfit in the little flat before the cabin without any mishap. After that he settled down to work the thing systematically.

One day he would pan the sandy gravel, and the next day he would rest his back digging postholes or something comparatively easy. He worked from daybreak until it was too dark to see, and he never left his claim except when he went to wash gold up in the gulch. The world moved on, and he neither knew nor cared how it moved; for the time being his world had narrowed

amazingly. If Billy Louise had not been down there in that other world he would scarcely have given it a thought, so absorbed was he in the delightful task of putting a good, solid foundation under his favorite air castle. That fascinated him, held him to his work in spite of his hunger to see her.

Week followed week as he followed that thin, fluctuating streak of pay gravel along the ledge. Sometimes it was rich enough to set the pulse pounding in his temples; sometimes it was so poor that he was disgusted to the point of abandoning the work. But every day he worked it yielded him something—though there was a week when he averaged about fifty cents a day, and lived with a scowl on his face—and he kept at it.

He went out in June and bought a mower and rake, and then spent precious days getting them into his valley. There was no road, and he was compelled to haul them in a wagon, through country where nature never meant four wheels to pass. He hired a man for a month—one of those migratory individuals who work for a week or a month in one place and then wander on till their money is spent—and he drove that man as relentlessly as he drove himself.

Together they accomplished much, while the gold pan lay hidden under a buck brush and Ward's waking moments were filled with an uneasy sense of wasted time. Still, it was for the good of his ranch and his cattle and his air castle that he toiled in the gulch, and it was necessary that he should put up what hay he could. There would be calves to feed next winter, he hoped; and when the hardest storms came his horses would need a little. The rest of the stock would have to rustle—and it was for that he had chosen this nook among the hills, where the wind would sweep the high slopes bare of snow and the gulches would give shelter with

their heavy thickets of quaking aspens and willow and alder.

CHAPTER XI.

WHEN EMOTIONS ARE BOTTLED.

One day, when the sun was warm and the breeze that filtered down the gorge was pleasantly cool, Ward straightened his aching back, waded out to dry ground, and sat down to rest a few minutes and make a smoke. His interest in the work had oozed steadily since sunrise, and left nothing but the backbreaking toil. He had found a nugget the size of a hazelnut in the second pan that morning, so it was not discouragement that had made his monotonous movements grow slow and reluctant. Until he had smoked half the cigarette he himself did not know what it was that ailed him. Then he flung up his head quite suddenly, and gave a snort of understanding.

"Hang the gold! I'm going visiting for a change!"

He concealed the gold pan and his pick, shovel, and sacks in the clump of service berries and chokecherries that grew at the foot of the ledge and hid from view the bank where he dug out his pay dirt. That did not take more than two or three minutes, and he made them up after he had swung into the saddle on the farther hillside.

It was not a good trail, and, except for his first exultant ride home that way, he had ridden it at a walk. Now he made Rattler trot where loping was too risky; and so he came clattering down the steep trail into the little flat beside his cabin. He would have something to eat, and feed Rattler a little hay, and then ride on to the Wolverine. And now that he had yielded to his hunger to see the one person in the world for whom he felt any tenderness, he grudged every minute that separated him from her. He loosened the cinch with one or two yanks and left the sad-

dle on Rattler, to save time. He even turned him loose in the hay corral with the bridle off, rather than spend the extra minutes it would take to put him in a stall and carry him a forkful of hay. He thought he would not bother to start a fire and boil coffee; he would eat the sour-dough bread and fried rabbit hams he had taken with him for lunch, and he would start down the creek in half an hour.

He flung open the door of his cabin—and went white with sheer astonishment.

"'Lo, Ward!" Billy Louise had been standing behind the door, and she jumped out at him, laughing, just as if she were ten years old, instead of nearly twenty.

Ward tried to say "'Lo, Bill," in return, but the words would not come. His lips trembled too much, and his voice was pinched out in his throat. His mind refused to tell him what he ought to do—but his arms did not wait upon his paralyzed mental processes. They shot out of their own accord, caught Billy Louise, and brought her close against his pounding heart. Ward was startled and a little shocked at what he had done, but he held her closer and closer, until Billy Louise was gasping.

Next, Ward's lips joined the mutiny against his reason, and laid themselves upon the parted lips of Billy Louise as though that was where they belonged.

Billy Louise had probably not expected anything like that—though of a truth one can never safely guess at what is in the mind of a girl. She tried to pull herself free, and when she could make no impression upon the grip of those arms—they had been growing muscles of iron manipulating that gold pan, remember!—she very sensibly yielded to necessity, and stood still.

"Stop, Ward! You—I—you haven't any right to—"

"Well, give me the right, then!" Ward managed to find voice enough to

make the demand, and then he kissed her many times before he attempted to say another word.

"You'll give me the right, won't you, Wilhelmina?" he murmured against her ear, brushing a lock of hair away with his lips. "You know you belong to me, don't you? And I belong to you—body and soul. You know that, don't you? I've known it ever since the world was made. I knew it when God said 'Let there be light' and there *was* light. You were it."

"You sill-y thing——" Billy Louise did not seem to know whether she wanted to laugh or cry. "What do you think you're talking about, anyway?"

"About the way the world was made." Ward loosened his clasp a little and looked down deep into her eyes. "My world, I mean." He bent and kissed her again, gravely and very, very tenderly. "Oh, Wilhelmina, you know"—he waited, gazing down with that intent look which had a new softness behind it—"you know there's nothing in this world but you! As far as I'm concerned, there isn't. There never will be."

Billy Louise reached up her hands to his shoulders and tried to give him a shake. "Is that why you've stuck yourself in these hills for three whole months, and never come near? You fibber!"

"That's why, lady girl. I've been sticking here, working like one son of a gun—for you. So I could have you sooner." He lifted his bent head and looked around the little cabin like a man who has just wakened to his surroundings. "I knocked off work a little while ago, and I was going to see you. I couldn't stand it any longer. And—here you iss!" he went on, giving her shoulders a little squeeze: "A straight case of 'two souls with but a single thought,' don't you reckon?"

Billy Louise, by a visible effort, brought the situation down to earth.

She twisted herself free and went over to the stove and saved a frying pan of potatoes from burning to a crisp.

"I don't know about your soul," she said, glancing back at him. "I happen to have two or three thoughts in mine. One is that I'm half starved. The second is that you're not acting a bit nice, under the circumstances; no perfectly polite young man makes love to a girl when she is supposedly helpless and under his protection." She stopped there to wrinkle her nose at him, and twist her mouth humorously. "The third thought is that if you don't behave, I shall go straight home, and never be nice to you again. And," she added, getting back the coffee-pot, which looked new, "the rest of my soul is one great big blob of question marks. If you can eat and talk at the same time, you may tell me what this frantic industry is all about. If you can't, I'll have to wait till after dinner; not even my curiosity is going to punish my poor tummy any longer."

She pulled a pan of biscuits from the oven, lifted them out one at a time with dainty little nabs, because they were hot, and stole a glance now and then at Ward from under her eyebrows.

Ward stood and looked at her until the food was all on the table. He was breathing unnaturally, and his jaws were set hard together. When she pushed a box up to the table and sat down upon it and rested her elbows on the oilcloth and looked straight at him, with her chin nested in her two palms, he drew a long breath, hunched his shoulders with some mental surrender, and grinned wryly.

"So be it," he yielded, throwing his hat upon the bunk. "I kinda overplayed my hand, anyway. I most humbly ask your pardon!" He bowed farcically, and took up the washbasin from its bench just outside the door.

"You see, William Louisa," he went on quizzically, when he had seated him-

self opposite her and was helping himself to the potatoes, "when a young lady invades strange territory, and hides behind strange doors, and jumps out at an unsuspecting but terribly well-meaning young man, she's apt to get a surprise. When emotions are bottled——"

"Never mind the bottled emotions—I'd like some potatoes, if you don't want them all. I see you haven't the faintest idea how to treat a guest. Charlie Fox would have died before he would help himself and set down the dish away out of my reach. You could stick pins into him till he howled, but you couldn't make him be rude to a lady."

"I'd sure like to," muttered Ward ambiguously, and handed her every bit of food within his reach.

"You can talk and eat at the same time, I see. So tell me what you've been doing all this while." Billy Louise spoke lightly, even flippantly—but her eyes made love to him shyly, whether she knew it or not.

"Working," answered Ward promptly and briefly. He was thinking at the rate of a million thoughts a minute, it seemed to him, and he was afraid to let go of himself and say what he thought. One thing he knew beyond all doubt, and that was that he must be careful or he would see his air castle blow up in small fragments and come down a hopeless ruin. He needed time to think, and Billy Louise was not giving him a minute, even. So he clutched at two decisions which instinct told him might help him win to safety: He would not make love, and he would not tell Billy Louise about the gold.

"Working—well, so have I. But working at what? Did you hire out to Junkins again? I thought you said you wouldn't till fall?" Billy Louise was watching Ward rather closely, perhaps to see how far she might trust his recovered inscrutability. "Why don't you show some human inquisitiveness about my being here?" she asked irrele-

vantly, just as Ward was hastily choosing how he would answer her without saying too much.

"It wouldn't be polite to be inquisitive about a lady, would it?" Ward retorted, thankful for the change of subject.

"No-o—but then you never bother about being just polite! Charlie Fox would——"

"Charlie Fox would think you came to see him," Ward asserted uncharitably. "My head isn't swelled to that extent. Why did you come, anyway?"

"To see you"—Billy Louise lost her nerve when she saw the light leap into his eyes—"to see whether you were dead or not," she revised hastily, "so mommie would stop worrying about you. Mommie has pestered the life out of me for the last month, thinking you might be sick or hurt or something. So—I was riding up this way, anyway, and——"

"I see I'll have to ride down and prove to mommie that I'm very much alive. I'm sure glad to know that somebody takes an interest in me—as if I were a real human." Ward's eyes watched furtively her face, but Billy Louise refused even to nibble at the bait.

"Why didn't you come before, then? You know mommie likes to have you."

"How about mommie's child?" Ward's look was dangerous to his good resolutions.

"Listen here, Ward." Billy Louise took refuge behind her terrible frankness. "If you make love I won't like you half as well. I might have known better than to—to startle you. You always, eternally, do something nobody'd ever *dream* of your doing. The first time, when I threw that chip, you pulled a gun on me——" The voice of Billy Louise squeezed down to a wisp of a whisper. Her eyes were remorseful. "Oh, Ward, I didn't mean to—to——"

"It's all right. I've got it coming."

It was as if a mask had dropped before Ward's features. Even his eyes looked strange and hard in that face of set muscles, thin, bitter lips, and quivering nostrils, to show that there was feeling behind it all. "I see where you're right, William. You needn't be afraid—I won't make love again."

Billy Louise looked as though she wanted to beat something—herself, most likely. She stared as they stare who watch from the dock while a loved one slips farther and farther away on a voyage from which there may be no return; only Billy Louise was not one to watch and do nothing else.

"Now, Ward, don't be silly." The fright in her voice was overlaid with a sharpened tenderness. "You know perfectly well I didn't mean that. You're only proving that in the human problem you're raised to—— Stop looking darned needles at that coffeepot, and listen here!" Billy Louise leaned over the table and caught at his nearest hand, which was a closed fist. With her own little fingers digging persistently into the tensed muscles, she pried the fist open. "Ward, behave yourself or I'll go straight home!"

She held his straightened fingers in her own, and drew a sharp breath because they lay inert—dead things so far as any response came to her clasp; the first and middle fingers yellowed a little from cigarettes, the nails soft and pink from much immersion in water. A tale they told, if Billy Louise had been paying attention.

"Ward, you certainly are—the limit! You know as well as I do that that doesn't make a particle of difference. If I had been a boy instead of a girl, and had bucked the world for a living, I'd probably have done worse—and, anyway, it doesn't *matter!*" Her voice raised as if she were growing desperate. "I—I—like you—to pieces, Ward, and I'd—I'd rather marry—you—than any one else. But I don't want to think

about that for a long while. I don't want to be engaged, or—or any different than the way we've been. It was good to be just—pals. It was like my pretend Ward. I—I always wanted him—to love me, but I wouldn't play that he—told me, Ward. Oh, *don't you see?*" She shut her teeth hard together, because if she hadn't she would have been crying in another ten seconds.

"I see." Ward spoke dully, evenly, and he still stared at the coffeepot with that gimlet gaze of his that made Billy Louise want to scream. "I see a whole lot that I'd been shutting my eyes to. Why don't you feel insulted——"

"Ward Warren, if you're going to act like a—a——" I suspect that Billy Louise, in her desperation, was tempted to use a swear word, but she resisted the temptation. She got up and went around to him, hesitated while she looked down at his set face, drew a long breath, and blinked back some tears of self-reproach because of the devils of memory she had unwittingly turned loose to gibe at this man.

"This is why," she said softly; and, leaning, she pressed her lips down upon his bitter ones, and let them lie there for a dozen heartbeats.

Ward's face relaxed, and his eyes went to hers with the hungry tenderness she had seen so often there. He leaned his head against her and threw up an arm to clasp her close. He did not say a word.

"After I have k-kissed a man," said Billy Louise, struggling back to her old, whimsical manner, "it won't be a bit polite for him to have any doubts of my feelings toward him, or my belief in him, or his belief in himself." Her fingers tangled themselves in his hair, just where the wave was the most pronounced.

She had drawn the poison. Now she set herself to restore a perfectly normal atmosphere.

"He's going to be just exactly the same good pal he was before," she went on, speaking softly. "And he's going to bring some water so I can wash the dishes, and then bring Blue so I can go home, and he isn't going to say a single thing more about—anything that matters two whoops."

Ward's clasp tightened and then grew loose. He drew a long breath, and let her go.

"You do like me—a little bit, don't you?" His eyes were like the eyes of the damned asking for water.

"I like you two little bits." Billy Louise took his face between her two palms and smiled down at him bravely, with the pure candor that was a part of her. "But I don't want us to be anything but pals; not for a long while. It's so good, just being friends. And once we get away from that point, we can't go back to it again, ever. And I'm sure it's good enough to be worth while making it last as long as we can. So now——"

"It's going to be quite a contract, Wilhelmina." Ward still looked at her, with his heart in his eyes.

"Oh, no, it won't. You've had lots of practice," Billy Louise assured him confidently; and began putting the few dishes in a neat little pile. "And, anyway, you are perfectly able to handle any kind of a contract. All you need do is make up your mind. And that's made up already. So the next thing on the program is to bring a bucket of water. Did you notice anything different about your cabin? I thought you bragged to me about being such a good housekeeper! Why, you hadn't swept the floor, even, since goodness knows when. And I've made up a bundle of your dirty shirts and things that I found under the bed, and I'm going to take them home and let Phoebe wash them. She can do them this evening and have them ready for you to bring back to-morrow. When I was a kid

and went to see Marthy and Jase, I used to promise them cookies with 'raisings' in the middle. I thought there was nothing better in the world. I was just thinking—I'll maybe bake you some cookies with raisins on top, to bring home. You don't seem to waste much time cooking stuff. Bacon and beans, and potatoes and sour-dough bread—that seems to be your regular bill of fare. And tomatoes for Sunday. I reckon—I saw some empty cans outside. Don't you *ever* feel like coming down to the ranch and getting a square meal?"

"Oh, you William the Conqueror!" Ward stood with the water bucket in his hand, and looked at her with that smile hidden just behind his lips and his eyes. "You sure sabe how to make things come your way, don't you?" He started for the door, stopped with his toes over the threshold, and looked back at her. "If I knew how to get what I want as easily as you do," he said, "we'd be married and keeping house before to-morrow night!" He laughed grimly at the start she gave. "As it is, you're the doctor, William Louisa. We remain mere friends!" With that, he went off to the creek.

He was gone at least four times as long as was necessary, but he came back whistling, and he did not make love to her except with his eyes.

CHAPTER XII.

THIS PAL BUSINESS.

"You've got quite a lot of hay put up, I see." Billy Louise remarked, when they were leaving.

"Sure. I told you I've been working." Ward's tone was cheerful to the point of exuberance. He felt as though he could work day and night now, with the memory of Billy Louise's lips upon his own.

"You never put up that hay alone," she told him bluntly, "and you needn't

try to make me believe you did. I know better!"

"How do you know?" Ward glanced over his shoulder at the stack, then humorously at her. He recognized the futility of trying to fool Billy Louise, but he was in the mood to tease her.

"Humph! I've helped stack hay myself, if you please. I can tell a one-man stack when I see it. Who did you get to help—Junkins?"

"No, a half-baked hobo I ran across. I had him here a month."

"Oh! Are those your horses down there? They can't be." Last April, Billy Louise had been very well informed as to Ward's resources. She was evidently trying to match her knowledge of their well-defined limitations with what she saw now of prosperity in its first stages.

"They are, though. A dandy span of mares. I got a bargain, there."

Billy Louise pondered a minute. "Ward, you aren't going into debt, are you?" Her tone was anxious. "It's so *beastly* hard to get out, once you're in!"

"I don't owe anybody a red cent, William Louisa. Honest!"

"Well, but——" Billy Louise looked at him from under puckered brows.

Ward laughed oddly. "I've been working, William. Last spring—I—hunted wolves for a while; old ones, and dens. They'd killed a couple of calves for me, and I got out after them. I—made good at it, the bounty counts up pretty fast, you know."

"Yes-s, it does." Billy Louise bit her lips thoughtfully, turned and looked back at the haystack, at the long line of new wire fence, and at the two heavy-set mares feeding contentedly along the creek. "There must be money in wolves," she remarked evenly.

"There is. At least, I made good money hunting them." The smile was hiding behind Ward's lips again, and threatening to come boldly to the sur-

face. "They haven't bothered you any, I hope?"

"No," said Billy Louise, "they haven't. I guess they must be all up your way."

For the life of him, Ward could not tell to a certainty whether there was sarcasm in her tone, or whether she spoke in perfect innocence. The shrewdest of us deceive ourselves sometimes. Ward might have known he could not fool Billy Louise, who had careworn experience of the cost of ranch improvements, and could figure almost the exact number of wolf bounties it would take to pay for what he had put into his claim. Still, he was right in thinking she would not quiz him beyond a certain point. She seemed to have reached that point quite suddenly, for she did not say another word about Ward's affairs.

"What all's been happening in the world, anyway?" he asked, when they had exhausted some very trivial subjects. "Your world, I mean. Anything new or startling taken place?"

"Not a thing. Marthy was down last week and spent the day with us. I never saw anybody change as much as she has. She looks almost neat, these days. And she can't talk about anything but Charlie, and how well he's doing. She lets him do most of the managing, I think. And he had some money left to him this spring, and has put it into cattle. He bought quite a lot of mixed stock from Scabeck, and some from Winters and Nelson, Marthy says. I passed some of his cattle coming up."

"Going to have a rival in the business, am I?" Ward laughed. "I was figuring on being the only thriving young cattle king in this neck of the woods, myself."

"Well, Charlie's in a fair way to beat you to it. I wish," sighed Billy Louise, "some kind person would leave *me* a bunch of money. Don't you? Cattle

are coming up a little all the time. I'd like to own a lot more than I do."

"Well, we——" Ward stopped and reconsidered. "If wolfing continues to pay like it has done," he said, with a twitch of the lips, "I intend to stick my little YG monogram on a few more cowhides before snow flies, William. And when you've had enough of this 'friend' business——"

"Oh, by that time we'll all be rich!" Billy Louise declared lightly, and for a wonder Ward was wise enough to let that close the subject.

"We're getting neighbors down below, too," she observed later. "I didn't tell you that. Down the river a few miles. The country is settling up all the time," she sighed. "Pretty soon there won't be any more wilderness left. I like it up where you've located. That will stay wild forever, won't it? They can't plant spuds on those hills, anyway."

"And—did you hear, Ward? Sea-heck and some of the others have been losing stock, they say. You know Marthy lost four calves last fall, by some means. Charlie Fox was terribly worried about it, though it was his own fault, and—well, I thought at the time some one had taken them, and I think so still. And just the other day one of Scabeck's men stopped at the ranch and he told me they're shy some cows and calves. They can't imagine what happened to them, and they're lying low and not saying anything much about it. You haven't heard or seen anything, have you, Ward?"

"I've stuck so close to the hills I haven't heard or seen anything," Ward affirmed. "It's amazing the way the days slip by when a fellow's busy all the time. Except for two trips out the other way, to Hardup, I haven't been three miles from my claim all spring."

"Hardup—that's where the bank was robbed, a few weeks ago, isn't it? The stage driver told me about it."

"I don't know; I hadn't heard anything about it. I haven't been there for a month and more," said Ward easily. "Nearer two months, come to think of it. I was there after a mower and rake and some wire."

"Oh!" Billy Louise glanced at him sidelong, and added several more wolves to the number she had mentally put down to Ward's credit.

Ward twisted in the saddle so that he faced her, and his eyes were dancing with mischief. "Honest, William, I'm not wading into debt. Every cent I've put into that place this summer I made hunting wolves. That's a fact, Wilhelmina."

"I wish you'd tell me how, so I can do it, too," Billy Louise sighed.

"Well, I will—when you're through playing pals," he assured her cruelly. Ward did not know women very well, but he believed curiosity to be one of the strongest traits in the sex. "That's a bargain, William Louisa, and I'll shake hands on it if you like. When you've had enough of this 'just-friend' business, I'll show you how I dig dollars outa wolf dens." He grinned at the puzzled face of her. It was a riddle, and he had practically put the answer before her, and still she could not see it. There was a little streak of devilment in Ward, and happiness was uncovering the streak.

"I never said I was crazy to know," Billy Louise squelched him promptly. "Not *that* crazy, anyway. I'll live quite as long without knowing, I reckon."

She almost won her point—because Ward did not know women very well. He hesitated, gave her a quick, questioning glance, and actually opened his lips to tell her all about it. He got as far as: "Oh, well, I suppose I'll have to—" when Billy Louise saw a rattlesnake in the trail ahead, and spurred up to kill it with her rope. She really was crazy to know the answer to the riddle, but a rattlesnake will interrupt

anything from a proposal of marriage to a murder.

Ward's fingers had gone into the pocket in his shirt where the nugget he had found that morning was sagging the cloth a little. He had been on the point of giving it to Billy Louise, but he let it stay where it was, and, instead, took down his own rope to get after the snake, that had crawled under a bush and there showed a disposition to fight. And since Blue was no fonder of rattlesnakes than he was of mud, Billy Louise could not bring him close enough for a direct blow.

"Get back and I'll show you why I named this cayuse Rattler," Ward shouted. "I'll bet I've killed five hundred snakes with him——"

"Almost as many as you have wolves!" Billy Louise snapped back at him, and so lost her point just when she had practically gained it. Ward certainly would not tell her, after that stab.

Rattler perked his ears forward toward the strident buzzing, which once heard is never forgotten, and which is never heard without a tensing of nerves. He sighted the snake, coiled and ready for war in the small shade of a rabbit bush. He circled the spot warily, his head turned sidewise and his eyes fixed upon the flattened, ugly head with its thread of a darting tongue.

Ward pulled his gun, "threw down" on the snake, and cut off its head with a bullet.

"I could have done that myself." Billy Louise asserted jealously.

"Well, I forgot. Next time I'll let you do the shooting. I was going to show you how Rattler helps. He'll circle around just right so I can make one swing of the rope do. But Mr. Snake stuck so close to that rabbit brush—and I was afraid if I drove him out of there with my rope, he'd get under those rocks. I'm sorry, Wilhelmina. I didn't think."

"Oh, I can get all the snake shooting I want any time." Billy Louise laughed good-humoredly. "I wish you'd give Blue a few lessons—the old sinner!"

"Not on your life, I won't!" Ward leaned from the saddle, picked up the snake by the tail, pinched off the rattles, and dropped the repulsive thing to the ground, with a slight shiver of relief. He gave the rattles to Billy Louise. "I'm glad Blue does feel a wholesome respect for rattlers; he'll take better care of himself—and his mistress. With me, it doesn't matter."

"Oh, doesn't it?" asked Billy Louise—and there was that in her tone that made Ward's heart give a flop. "There's some of Marthy's cattle right ahead," she added hurriedly, seizing the first trifle with which to neutralize the effect of that tone.

"MK monogram," said Ward absently, reading the brand mechanically, as is the habit of your true rangeman. "Pretty fresh, too. Must have just bought them."

"He got them a month or so ago," said Billy Louise. "Marthy says——"

"A month?" Ward turned and gave the cow nearest him a keener look. "Pretty good condition," he observed idly. "Say, William, when these hills get filled up with Y6s and big Ds, all these other scrub critters will have to hunt new range, won't they?"

"It will be a long while before the big Ds crowd out so much as a crippled calf," Billy Louise answered pessimistically. "I lost two nice heifers, a week or so ago. They broke through the upper fence into the alfalfa, and started to fill up, of course. They were dead when I found them."

"Next time I cash in my wolf——" Ward started to promise, but she cut him short:

"Do you mind if we stop at the Cove, Ward? Mommie wanted me to stop and get some currants. Marthy says

they're ripe, and she has more than she knows what to do with."

"I don't mind—if you're dead sure it's the currants."

"You certainly are in a pestering mood to-day," Billy Louise protested, laughing. "You can't jump any game on that trail, smarty. Charlie Fox is a perfectly lovely young man—but he's got a girl in Wyoming. The stage driver says there's never been a trip in that he didn't take a letter from the Cove box to Miss Gertrude M. Shannon, Elk Valley, Wyoming. So you needn't try——"

"Nice, mouthy stage driver," Ward commented. "Foxy ought to land on him a few times and see if he'd take the hint."

"Well, I knew it before he told me. Marthy said last winter that Charlie's engaged. He's trying to get prosperous enough to marry her and bring her out to the Cove; it will be his when Marthy dies, anyway. I must say Charlie's a hustler, all right. He keeps a man all the time, now, since he bought more cattle. Peter Howling Dog's working for him. Charlie's tried to range herd his cattle so he and Peter can gather them alone—and he offered to look after mine, too, so I won't have so much riding to do this hot weather. He's awfully nice, Ward, really. I don't care if he is a rah-rah boy."

And Ward merely grunted.

They came upon Charlie Fox sitting on his horse beside the crude mail box, reading avidly a letter of many crisp, close-written pages. Billy Louise flashed Ward an I-told-you-so glance.

"Why, how do you do?" Charlie came out of letterland with a start, and turned to them cordially, while he folded hastily the letter. "Going down into the Cove? That's good. I was just up after the mail. How are things up your way, Warren?"

"Fine as silk." Ward's eyes swung

briefly toward what he considered the chief bit of fineness.

"That's good. Trail's a little narrow for three, isn't it? I'll ride ahead and open the gate."

"They've got a new gate down here," said Billy Louise trivially. "I forgot that important bit of news."

"Well, it is important—to us Covers," smiled Charlie, glancing back at them. "No more bars to be left down accidentally. This gate shuts itself, in case some one forgets."

"And you haven't lost any more cattle, have you?" The question was a statement, after Billy Louise's habit.

"Not out of the Cove, at any rate. I—can't speak so positively as to the outside stock, of course."

"You've missed some?" Billy Louise never permitted a tone to slip past her without tagging it immediately with plain English. Charlie's tone has said something to which his words made no reference.

"I don't like to say that, Miss Louise. Very likely they have stray—drifted, I mean—back toward their home ranch. Peter and I can't keep cases very closely, of course."

Billy Louise shifted uneasily in the saddle and pulled her eyebrows together. "If you think you've lost some cattle, for Heaven's sake why don't you say so?" Ward smiled to himself at her tone. "If there's anything I hate, it's hinting and never coming right out with anything. *Have* you lost any?"

Charlie turned, with a hand on the cantle, and faced her with polite reproach. "Peter says we have," he admitted, with very evident reluctance. "I hardly think so myself. I'd have to count them. I know, of course, how many we've bought in the last year."

"Well, Peter knows more about it than you do," Billy Louise told him bluntly. "If he has missed any, they're probably gone. Ward, there certainly is rustling going on around here; and

no one seems to know a thing beyond the mere fact that they're losing cattle. Seabeck has lost some——"

"Oh, are you sure?" Charlie's eyes widened perceptibly. "I hadn't heard that. By Jove! It sort of makes a fellow feel shaky about going into cattle very strong, doesn't it? It—it knocks off the profits like the very deuce, to keep losing one here and there."

"A fellow has to figure on a certain percentage of loss," said Ward. "This the new gate?"

"Yes." Charlie seemed relieved by the diversion. "Just merely a gate, as you see; but we Covers are proud of every little improvement. Aunt Martha comes up here every day, I verily believe, just to look at it and admire it. The poor old soul never had any conveniences that she couldn't make herself, you know, and she thinks this is great stuff. I put this padlock on it so she can lock herself in nights when I'm away. She feels better with the gate locked. And then I've got a dog that's as good as a company of soldiers himself. If either of you happen down here when there's no one about, you will have to introduce yourselves to Cerberus—so named because he guards the gates—not the gate to Hades, please remember. 'Surbus,' Aunt Martha calls him, which is good Idahoese, and seems to please him as well as any other. Just speak to him by name—Surbus, if you like—and he will be all right, I think." He held open the gate for them to ride through, and gave them a comradely look and smile as they passed.

Ward took in the details of the heavy gate that barred the gorge. He did not know that he betrayed the fact even to the sharp eyes of Billy Louise, but he could not quite bring himself to the point of meeting Charlie Fox anywhere near halfway in his overtures for friendship.

"The weight is so heavy that the gate shuts and latches itself, you see."

Charlie went on, mounting on the inside of the barrier and following cheerfully after them. "But that doesn't satisfy Aunt Martha. She and Surbus make a special pilgrimage up here every night."

"She must be pretty nervous." Ward could not quite see why such precautions were necessary in a country where no man locked his door against the world.

"Well, she is—though you wouldn't suspect it, would you? When one thinks of the life she has lived, and how she pioneered in here when the country was straight wilderness, and all that. Of course, I didn't know her before Uncle Jason died—do you think she has changed since, Miss Louise?"

"Lots," Billy Louise assured him briefly. She was wondering why Ward was so stiff and unnatural with Charlie Fox.

"I think, myself, that the shock of losing him must have made the difference in her. There's Surbus—how's that for a voice? And he looks just as bloodthirsty as he sounds, too. I'd hate to have him tackle me in the gorge, on a dark night. He's too savage, though it's only with strangers, and we don't see many of them. He almost ate Peter up, when he first came. And he gave you quite a scare last spring, didn't he, Miss Louise?"

"He came within an ace of getting his head shot off." Billy Louise qualified laconically. "Martha came out just in the nick of time. I absolutely refuse to be chewed up by any dog—and I don't care who he belongs to."

"Same here, William," approved Ward.

Charlie laughed. "I see Surbus is not going to be popular with the neighbors," he said easily. "I do feel very apologetic over him. But Martha wanted me to get a dog, and so when a fellow offered me this one, I took him; and as Surbus happened to take

a fancy to me, I didn't realize what a savage brute he is till he tackled Peter—and then Miss Louise."

"Well, Miss Louise was perfectly able to defend herself, so you needn't feel apologetic about that," said Billy Louise, a trifle sharply. She hated Surbus, and she was quite open in her hatred. "If he ever comes at me again, and nobody calls him off, I shall shoot him." It was not a threat, as she spoke it, but a plain statement of a fact. "You'd better serve notice, too, Ward. He's a nasty beast, and he'd just as soon kill a person as not. He was going to jump for my throat. He was crouched, just ready to spring—and I had my gun out—when Marthy saw us, and gave a yell fit to wake the dead. Surbus didn't jump, and I didn't shoot. That's how close he came to being a dead dog."

She glanced at Ward and then furtively at Charlie Fox. If expression meant anything, Surbus was yet in danger of paying for that assault. She caught Ward's truculent eye, smiled, and shook her head at him. "We're pretty fair friends now," she said. "At least, we don't try to kill each other whenever we meet. 'Armed neutrality' fits our case fine."

"I think I'll volunteer under your flag," said Ward. "I'll leave Cerberus alone as long as he leaves me and my friends alone. But I'd advise him not to start anything."

Charlie laughed. "That's all Surbus or any one else can ask. Come on, old fellow! Pardon me," he added to his companions, and rode past them, to meet the great, heavy-jowled god. "Be still, Surbus. We're all friends here."

The dog lifted a noncommittal glance to Ward's face, growled deep in his chest, and dropped behind, nosing the tracks of Blue and Rattler, as if he would identify them and fix them in his memory for future use.

Ward had never seen the Cove in summertime. He looked about him

curiously, struck by the atmosphere of quiet plenty. Over the crude fence hung fruit-laden branches from the jungle within. There was a smell of ripening plums in the air, and the hum of bees. Somewhere in the orchard a wild canary was singing. If he could live down here, he thought, with Billy Louise and none other near, he would ask no odds of the world or of Heaven. He glanced at Charlie Fox enviously. Well, he had a fairly well-sheltered place of his own, up there in the hills. He could set out fruit and plants and things and have a little Eden of his own—though, of course, it couldn't be like this place, sheltered as it was from harsh winds by that high rock wall, and soaking in sunshine all day long, as it did. Still, he could fix his place up a lot, with a little time and thought and a good deal of hard work.

He looked at Billy Louise and saw how the beauty of the place appealed to her, and right there he decided to study horticulture so that he could raise plums and apples and hollyhocks and things for her.

CHAPTER XIII.

WAS IT THE DOG?

"That old dame down there thinks a lot of you, William." Ward had closed the gate and was preparing to remount.

"Well, is there any reason why she shouldn't?" The tone of Billy Louise was not far from petulant.

"Not a reason. What's molla, Bill?"

"Nothing that I know of." Billy Louise lifted her eyes to the rock cabages on the cliff above them and tried to speak convincingly.

"Yes, there is. Something's gone wrong. Can't you tell a pal, Wilhelmina?"

There was no resisting that tone. Billy Louise looked at him, and though

she still frowned, her eyes lightened a little.

"No. I can't tell a pal—or anybody else. I don't know. Something's different down there. I don't know what it is—and I don't like it." She thought a minute, and then smiled with that little twist of the lips Ward liked so much. "Maybe it's the dog," she guessed. "I never see his ugly mug that I don't feel like taking a shot at him. I like dogs, too, as a general thing. He's got a wicked heart. I know he has. He'd like nothing better than to take a chunk out of me."

"I'll go back and kill him; shall I, Bill Loo?"

"No. Some day maybe I'll get a chance at him myself. I've warned Marthy, so——"

"Are you dead sure it's the dog?" Ward looked at her with that keenness of glance which was hard to meet if one wanted to keep a secret from him.

"Why?" Billy Louise's tone did not invite further questioning.

"Oh, nothing. I just wondered."

"You don't like Charlie; anybody can see that."

"Yes? Foxy's a real nice young man."

"But you don't like him. You never do like anybody——"

"No?" Ward's smile dared her to persist in the accusation. "In that case, I've no business to be fooling around here when there's work to be done. That Cove down there has roused a heap of brand-new wants in me. Wilhelmina. Gotta have an orchard up on Mill Creek, lady fair. Gotta have a flower garden, and things that climb all over the house, and smell nice. Gotta work like one son of a gun to get all those things and get 'em quick, so I can stand some show of—getting what I really do want."

"Well, am I keeping you?" Billy Louise was certainly in a villainous mood.

"You are," Ward affirmed quite calmly. "Only for you I'd be hustling like the mischief right this minute along the get-rich trail. Say, Bill, I don't believe it's the dog!" He looked at her with the smile hiding just behind his lips and his eyes. And behind the smile—if one's insight were keen enough to see it—was a troubled anxiety. He shifted the pail of currants to the other arm, and spoke again:

"What is it, Wilhelmina? Something's bothering you. Can't you tell a fellow what it is?"

"No, I can't." Billy Louise spoke crossly. "I've got a headache. I've been riding ever since this morning, and I should think that's reason enough. I wish to goodness you'd let me alone. Go on back to work, if you're so crazy about working—I'm sure I don't want to hinder you in any of your get-rich-quick schemes!" She shut her teeth together with a click, jerked Blue angrily into the trail when he had merely stepped out of it to avoid a rock, and managed to make him as conscious of her mood as was Ward.

Ward eyed her unobtrusively, with his face set straight ahead. He glanced down at the pail of currants, which was heavy; and at the trail, which was long and lonely. He twisted his lips in brief sarcasm—for he had a temper of his own—and rode on, with his neck set very stiff and his eyes a trifle harder than they had ever been before when Billy Louise rode alongside. He did not turn off at the ford—Billy Louise betrayed by a quick glance at him that she had half expected him to desert her there—but crossed it beside her, and rode on up the hill.

He had made up his mind that he would not speak to her again until she wiped out, by apology or a change of manner, that last offensive remark of hers.

He did not once speak to Billy Louise on the way to the Wolverine; but his

silence changed gradually from stubbornness to pure abstraction as they rode leisurely along the dusty trail with the sunset glowing before them. He almost forgot the actual presence of Billy Louise, and he did actually forget her mood. He was planning just how and where he should plant his orchard, and he was mentally building an addition to the cabin and screening a porch wide enough to hang a hammock inside, and he was seeing Billy Louise luxuriously swinging in that hammock while he sat close and smoked and teased and gloried in his possession of her companionship.

His thoughts shuttled to his little mine—though he seldom dignified it by that title. He speculated upon the amount of gold he might yet hope to wash out of that gravel streak—though he had held himself sternly back from such mental indulgence all the spring. He felt that he was going to need every grain of gold he could glean.

They rode over the crest of the bluff and down the steep trail into the Wolverine. However cloudy the atmosphere between the two, the ride had seemed short—so short that Ward felt the jar of surprise when he looked down and saw the cabin below them. He glanced at Billy Louise, guessed, from her somber face, that the villainous mood still held her, and sighed a little. He was not deeply concerned by her mood. He understood her too well to descend into any slough of despondence because she was cross. Then he remembered the reason she had given—the reason he had not believed at the time. They were down by the gate then.

"Head still ache, William?" he asked, in the tone which he could make a fair substitute for a caress.

"Yes," said Billy Louise, and did not look at him.

Ward was inwardly skeptical, but he did not tell her so. He swung off his

horse, set down the pail of currants, and took Blue by the bridle.

"You go on in. I'll unsaddle," he commanded her quietly. And Billy Louise, after a perceptible hesitation, obeyed him without looking at him or speaking a word.

If Ward had resented her manner, which was unreasonably uppish, he could not have chosen a more effective revenge. He talked with Mrs. MacDonald all through supper, and paid no attention to Billy Louise. After supper, he spied a fairly fresh Boise paper, and underneath that lay the *Butte Miner*. That discovery settled the evening, so far as he was concerned. If he and Billy Louise had been on the best of terms it is doubtful if she could have dragged his attention from those papers.

Several times Billy Louise looked at him as though she meditated going over and snatching them away from him, but she resisted the temptation, and continued to behave as a nice young woman should behave toward a guest. She left him sitting inside by the lamp which her mother had lighted for his especial convenience, and went out and sat on the doorstep and stared at the dusky line of hills and at the Big Dipper, and tried to think out the tangle of tiny, threadlike mysteries that had enmeshed her thoughts and tightened her nerves until she could not speak a decent word to any one.

She felt that the lives of those around her were weaving puzzle patterns, and that she must guess the puzzles. And she felt as though part of the patterns had been left out, so that there were ragged points thrusting themselves upon her notice—points that did not point to anything.

She sat with her elbows on her knees and her chin in her cupped palms, and scowled at the Big Dipper as if it held the answer away up there beyond her reach. Where did Ward get the money

to do all the things he had done this spring and summer? If he expected her to believe that wolf story—

What became of the cattle that had disappeared, by twos and threes and sometimes more—in the last few months? Was there a gang of thieves operating in the country—and where did they stay?

Why had Ward hinted that she did not like Charlie Fox, and why didn't he himself like Charlie? Why had she felt that weight of depression creep over her when they were leaving the Cove? Why? Why?

Billy Louise tried to bring her cold, common sense to the front. She had found it a most effective remedy for most moods. Now it assured her impatiently that every question—save one—had been born in her own supersensitive self. That one definite question was the first one she had tried to answer. It kept asking itself, over and over, until in desperation Billy Louise went to bed and tried to forget it in sleep.

Somewhere about midnight—she had heard the clock strike eleven a long while ago—she scared her mother by sitting up suddenly in bed and exclaiming relievedly: "Oh, I know—it's some new poison! He poisons them!"

"Wake up! For the land's sake, what are you dreaming about?" Her mother shook her agitatedly by the arm. "Billy Louise! Wake up!"

"All right, mommie." Billy Louise lay down and snuggled the light blanket over her shoulders. She had been awake and thinking, thinking, till she thought she never could stop, but she did not tell mommie that. She went to sleep and dreamed about poisoned wolves till it is a wonder she did not have a real nightmare. The question was answered, and for the time being the answer satisfied her.

Ward was surely an unusual type of young man. He did not seem to re-

member, the next morning, that there had been any outbreak of bottled emotions on his part the day before, or any ill temper on the part of Billy Louise—or anything at all out of the ordinary.

Billy Louise had prepared herself to apologize—in some roundabout manner which would effect a reconciliation without hurting her pride too much—and she was rather chagrined to discover that Ward seemed neither to expect nor to want any apology.

"Sorry I gotta go, William," he volunteered whimsically, soon after breakfast. "But I gotta dig. Say, Wilhelmina, if I stay away long enough, will you come after me again?"

"A wise man," said Billy Louise evasively, "may do a foolish thing once, but only a fool does it twice."

"I don't believe it's the dog," Ward shook his head at her in mock meditation. "It wouldn't last overnight if it was just the dog." He looked at her, with the hidden smile. "Are you sure that——"

"I'm sure you know how to pester a person!" The lips of Billy Louise twisted humorously. "Lots of things bother me, and you ought to help me out instead of making it worse." She walked beside him down to the corral, where Rattler was waiting, saddled and bridled, for the homeward journey.

"Well, tell a fellow what they are. Of course, if it's the dog——"

"Ward Warren, you're awful! It isn't the dog. Well, it is, but there are heaps of other things I want to know that I don't know. And you don't seem to care about any single one of them."

Ward leaned up against the fence and tilted his hat to shade his eyes from the sun. "Name a few of them, William Louisa. Not even a brave young buckaroo can be expected to mind read a girl. If he could——"

"Well, is it poison you use?" Billy Louise thought it best to change Ward's trend of thought immediately. "Last

night it just came to me all at once that you must have found some poison beside strychnine——"

"Eh? Oh, I see!" He managed a rather provoking slur on the last word. "No, William." His eyes twinkled at her. "It isn't poison. What's the other thing you want to know?"

Billy Louise frowned, hesitated, and, accepting the rebuff, went on to the next question.

"What happened to Seabeck's cattle, and Marthy and Charlie's, and all the others that have disappeared? You don't seem to care at all that there seems to be rustling going on around here."

Ward gave her a quick look. His tone changed a bit.

"I don't know that there is any. I never yet lived in a cow country where there wasn't more or less talk of—rustling. You don't want to take gossip like that too seriously. Anything more?"

Billy Louise glanced at him surreptitiously, and looked away again. Then she tried to go on as casually as she had begun:

"Well—there's something about the Cove. I don't believe Marthy's happy. I couldn't quite get hold of the thing yesterday that gave me the blues—but it's Marthy. She's grieving, or something. She's—different. She's changed more since last winter than she's changed since I can remember. You noticed something—at least, you spoke about her coming up the gorge——"

"I said she thinks a lot of you, Wilhelmina." Ward's tone and manner were natural again. "I noticed her looking at you when you didn't know it. She thinks a heap of you. I should say, and she's worrying about something. Maybe she'd rather have you in the Cove than Miss Gertrude M. Shannon. Don't you reckon an old lady that has had her own way all her

life kind of dreads the advent of a brand-new bride in her domain?"

"Why, of course! Poor old thing—I never thought of that! And here you hit the nail on the head just with a chance thought. That shows what it means to be a brave young buckaroo, with heaps and piles of brains!" She laughed at him, but behind her bantering was a new respect for Ward's astuteness. "Go on. Tell me why you don't like Charlie Fox—or why you refuse to admit how nice and kind he is and——"

"But I don't refuse——"

"Well, I put it stupidly, of course, but you know what I mean. Tell me your candid opinion of him."

"I haven't any." Ward smoked imperturbably for a minute, so that Billy Louise began to think he would not tell her what she wanted to know. Ward could be absolutely, maddeningly dumb on some subjects, as she had reason to know. But he continued, quite frankly for him:

"Has it ever struck you, William Jane, that, after all, Foxy is not sacrificing such a hell of a lot?" He bit his lip because of the word he had let slip, but since Billy Louise took no notice, he went on: "He's got a pretty good thing, down there, if you stop to think. The old lady won't live always, and she's managed to build up a pretty fine ranch. It stands Foxy in hand to be good to her, don't you think? He'll have a pretty good stake out of it. Far as I know, he's all right. I merely fail to see where he's got a right to wear any halo on his manly brow. He's got a good hand in the game, and he's playing it—a heap better than lots of men would. Dot's all, Wilhelmina." He turned to her as if he would dismiss the subject. "Don't run off with the notion that I'm out after the heart's blood of our young hee-ro. I like him, all right—far as he goes. I like him a heap better," he owned frankly, "since

I glommed him devouring that letter from Miss Gertrude M. Shamon.

"Don't you want to ride a ways with me?" His eyes made love while he waited for her to speak. "Don't?" when she shook her head. "You're a pretty mean young person sometimes, aren't you? Wha's molla? Did I give you more mood than I wiped off the slate?"

"I don't know. You say a sentence or two—and it's like slashing a knife into a curtain. You show all kinds of things that were nicely covered before." Billy Louise spoke gloomily. "I'll see Marthy as a poor old lady waiting to be saddled with a boss, from now on. And Charlie Fox just simply working for his own interests and——"

"Now, William!"

"Oh, I can see it myself, now——"

"Well, what if he is? We're all of us working for our own interests, aren't we?" He saw the gloom still deep in her eyes and flung out both hands impatiently. "All right, all right! I'll plead the cause of your young hee-ro, then. What would old Marthy do *without* him? He's made her more comfortable than she ever was in her life, probably. I noticed a big difference in the cabin yesterday. And he's doing the work and taking the responsibility, and making the ranch more valuable—even put a bell on the gate. I see, so she'll know when company's coming and can get her kitchen swept. He's done a lot——"

"For himself!" In her disillusionment, Billy Louise went too far the other way. "And the cabin is more comfortable for that girl when he brings her there to run over Marthy!"

"Well, what of it? You don't expect him to put in his time for nothing, do you? In the last analysis, we're all self-centered brutes, Wilhelmina. We're thinking once for the other fellow and twice for ourselves, always. Im working and scheming day and

night to get a stake—so I can have what means happiness to me. Marthy's letting Foxy have full swing in the Cove because that gives her an easier life than she's ever had. If she didn't want him there she'd mighty quick shoo him up the gorge—or I don't know the old lady. We're all selfish——”

“I think it's a horrid world!” rebelled the youthful ideals of Billy Louise. “I wish you wouldn't say you're just thinking of yourself——”

“I'm human,” he pointed out. “I want my happiness. So do you, for that matter. We all want to get all we can out of life——”

“And at the other fellow's expense!”

“Oh, not necessarily. Some of us want the other fellow to be just as happy as we are.” His look pointed the meaning for him.

“I don't care—I think it's mean of Charlie Fox to bring——”

“Maybe not. The chances are, the young lady will take to housework like a bear cub to a sirup keg, and old Marthy will potter around with her flowers, and be perfectly happy with the two of them. Cheer up, Bill Loo! Lemme have a smile, anyway, before I go. And I wish,” he added quizzically, “you'd spare me some of that sympathy you've got going to waste. I'm a poor, lonesome devil, working away to get a stake—and you know why. I don't have nobody to give me a kind word, and I don't have no fun nor nothing, nohow. Come on and ride a mile or two!”

“I have to help mommie,” said Billy Louise—which was not true.

“Well, if you won't, darn it, don't!” Ward reached down, caught her hand, and squeezed it—and took a chance on being seen. “Gotta go, Wilhelmina—mine! Adios, I won't stay away so long next time.” He turned away to his horse, stuck his foot in the stirrup, and went up into the saddle without any ap-

parent effort. He swung Rattier close to where she stood beside the gate.

“Sure you want to be just pals, Wilhelmina mine?” he asked, bending close to her.

“Of course I'm sure,” said Billy Louise quickly—a shade too quickly.

Ward looked at her intently, and shrugged his shoulders. “Ail right,” he said, in the tone which made plain his opinion of her decision. “You're the doctor.”

Billy Louise watched him up the hill and out of sight over the top. When he was gone, she caught Blue and saddled him, mounted, and with her gun buckled around her hips and her rope coiled beside the saddle fork, rode dismally up the cañon.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE LITTLE DEVILS OF DOUBT.

Wolverine Cañon, with the sun shining down aslant into its depths, was a picturesque gash in the hills, wild enough in all conscience, but to the normal person not in the least degree gloomy. The jutting crags were sunlit and warm. The cherry thickets whispered in a light breeze and sheltered birds that sang in perfect content. The service berries were ripening, and hung heavy-laden branches down over the trail to tempt a rider into loitering. The creek leaped over rocks, slid thin blades of swift current between the higher boulders, and crept stealthily down to shady pools where speckled trout lay motionless except for gently moving tail and fins that held them stationary in some deeper shadow. Not a gloomy place, surely, when the peace of a sunny morning laid its spell upon the land.

Billy Louise, however, did not respond to the cañon's enticements. She brooded over her own discouragements and the tantalizing little puzzles which somehow would not lend themselves to any convincing solution. She was in

that condition of nervous depression where she saw her finest cows dead of bloat in the alfalfa meadows—and how would she pay that machinery note, then? She saw John Pringle calling unexpectedly and insistently for his "time"—and where would she find another man whom she could trust out of her sight? John Pringle was slow, and he was stupid and growled at poor Phœbe till Billy Louise wanted to shake him, but he was "steady," and that one virtue covers many a man's faults, and keeps him drawing wages regularly.

Her mother had been more and more inclined to worry as the hot weather came on; lately, her anxiety over small things had rather gotten upon the nerves of Billy Louise. She felt ill-used and down-hearted, and as if nothing mattered much, anyway.

She was in this particularly dissatisfied mood when she rode out of the cañon at its upper end, where the hills folded softly down in grassy valleys where her cattle loved best to graze. Since the grass had started in the spring she had kept her little herd up here among the lower hills; and by riding along the higher ridges every day or so and turning back a wandering animal now and then, she had held them in a comparatively small area, where they would be easily gathered in the fall. A few head of Seabeck's stock had wandered in among hers, and some of Marthy's. And there was a big, roan steer that bore the brand of Johnson, over on Snake River. Billy Louise knew them all, as a housewife knows her flock of chickens, and if she missed seeing certain leaders in the scattered groups, she rode until she found them. Two old cows and one big, red steer that seemed always to have a following, wore bells that clumped pleasant little blobs of sound in the alder thickets along the creek as she passed by.

She rode up the long ridge, which gave her a wide view of the surround-

ing hills, and stopped Blue while she stared moodily at the familiar, shadow-splotched expanse of high-piled ridges with deep-green valleys and deeper-hued cañons between. She loved them, every one; but to-day they failed to steep her senses in that deep content with life which only the great outdoors can give to one who has learned how satisfying is the draft and how soothing.

Far over to the eastward a black dot moved up a green slope and slid out of sight beyond. That might be Ward, taking a short cut across the hill to his claim beyond the pine-dotted ridge that looked purple in the distance. Billy Louise sighed with a vague disquiet, and turned to look away to the north, where the jumble of high hills grew more rugged, with the valleys narrower and deeper.

Here came two other dots, larger and more clearly defined as horsemen. From mere objects that stood higher than any animal and moved with a purposeful directness, they presently became men who rode with the easy swing of habit which has become a second nature. They must have seen her sitting still upon her horse in the midst of that high, sunny plateau, for they turned and rode up the slope toward her.

Billy Louise waited, too depressed to wonder greatly who they were. Seabeck riders, probably—and so they proved. At least one of them was a Seabeck man—Floyd Carson, who had talked with her at her own gate, and had told her of the suspected cattle stealing. The other man was a stranger whom Floyd introduced as Mr. Birken.

They had been "prowling around," according to Floyd, trying to see what they could see. Floyd was one of these round-faced, round-eyed young fellows who does not believe much in secrecy, and, therefore, talks freely whenever

and wherever he dares. He said that Seabeck had turned them loose to keep cases, and see if they couldn't pick up the trail of these rustlers who were trying to get rich off a running iron and a long rope. If you are of the West, you know what that means; and if you are not you ought to guess that it means stealing cattle, and let it go at that. It was not until he had talked for ten minutes or so that Billy Louise became more than mildly interested in the conversation.

"Say, Miss MacDonald," Floyd asked by way of beginning a new paragraph, "how about that fellow over on Mill Creek? He worked for you folks a year or so ago, didn't he? What does he do?"

"He has a ranch," said Billy Louise, with careful calm. "He's working on it this summer, I believe."

"Uh-huh—we were over there this morning. Them Y6 cattle up above his place are his, I reckon?"

"Yes," said Billy Louise. "He's been putting his wages into cattle for a year or so. He worked for Junkins last winter. Why?"

"Oh—nothing, I guess. Only he's the only stranger in the country, and his prosperity ain't accounted for——"

"Oh—but it is!" laughed Billy Louise. "I only wish I had half as clear a ticket. When he isn't working out he's wolfing; and every dollar he gets hold of he puts into that ranch. We've known him a long time. He doesn't blow his money, you see, like most fellows do."

Floyd found occasion to have a slight argument with his horse just then. He happened to be one of the "most" fellows, and the occasion of his last "blow-out" was fresh in his mind.

"Well, of course if you know he's all straight, that settles it. But it sure seems queer——"

"That fellow is straight as a string.

Don't you suppose it's some gang over on the river, Floyd? I'd look around over there, I believe, and try to get a line on the unaccountables. There's a lot of new settlers came in, just in the last year or two, and there might be some tough ones scattered through the bunch. Better see if there has been any cattle shipped, or driven, through that way, don't you think?"

"We can try," Floyd assented, without eagerness. "But as near as we can figure, it's too much of a drib-drab proposition for that. A cow and calf here and there, and so on. We got wind of it first when we went out to bring in a gentle cow that the deacon wanted on the ranch. We knew where she was—only she wasn't there when we went after her. We hunted the hills for a week and couldn't find a sign of her or her calf. And she had stuck down in the creek bottom all the spring, so it looked kinda funny." He twisted in the saddle and looked back at the pine-clotted ridge.

"There's a Y6 calf up there that's a dead ringer for the one we've been hunting," he observed. "But it's running with a cow that carries Junkins' old brand, so——" He looked apologetically into the calm eyes of Billy Louise. "Of course, I don't mean to say there's anything wrong up there," he hastily assured her. "But that's the reason I thought I'd ask you about that fellow."

"Oh, it's perfectly right to make sure of everybody," smiled Billy Louise. "I'd do the same thing myself. But you'll find everything's all straight up there. We know all about him, and how and where he got his few head of stock, and everything. But, of course, you could ask Junkins, if you have any doubt——"

"Oh, we'll take your word for it. I just wanted to know—he's a stranger to our outfit. I've seen him a few times—what's his name? Us boys call him

Noisy. It's like pulling a wisdom tooth to get any kinda talk out of him."

"He is awful quiet," assented Billy Louise carelessly. "But he's real steady to work."

"Them quiet fellows generally are," put in Mr. Birken. "You run stock in here, too, do you, Miss MacDonald?"

"The big Ds," answered Billy Louise, and smiled faintly. "I've been range herding them back here in these foothills this summer. Do you want to look through the bunch?"

Mr. Birken blushed. "Oh, no—not at all. I was wondering if you had lost any."

"Nobody would rustle cattle from a lady, I hope? At any rate, I haven't missed any yet. The folks down in the Cove have, though."

"Yes, I heard they had. That breed rode over to see if he could get a line on them. It's hard luck; that Charlie Fox seems a fine, hard-working boy, don't you think?"

"Yes-s," said Billy Louise shyly; "he seems real nice." She looked away, and bit her lip self-consciously as she spoke.

The two men swallowed the bait like a hungry fish. They glanced at each other, and winked knowingly. Billy Louise saw them from the tail of her downcast eye, and permitted herself a little sigh of relief. They would be the more ready now to accept at its face value her statement concerning Ward—unless they credited her with the feat of being in love with the two men at the same time.

"Well, I'm sorry Charlie Fox has been tapped off, too. He's a mighty fine chap," declared Floyd, with transparent heartiness, his round eyes dwelling curiously upon the face of Billy Louise.

"Yes—I must be going," said that young woman self-consciously. "I've quite a circle to ride yet. I hope you locate the rustlers—and if there's any-

thing I can do—if I see or hear anything that seems to be a clew, I'll let you know right away. I've been keeping my eyes open for some trace of them, and—so has Char—Mr. Fox." Then she blushed, and told them good-bye very hastily, and loped off up the ridge, and left them.

"Bark up that tree for a while, you two!" she said, with a twist of her lips, when she was well away from them. "You—you *darned* idiots! To go prowling around Ward's place, just as if—Ward'll take a shot at them if he catches them nosing through *his* stock!" She scowled at a big D cow that thrust her head out of an alder thicket, and sent Blue in after her. Frowning, she watched the animal go lumbering down the hill toward the Wolverine. "Just because he's a stranger, and doesn't mix with people, and minds his own business and is trying to get a start, they're suspicious—as if a man has no right to— Well, I think I managed to head them off, anyway."

Her satisfaction lasted while she rode to the next ridge. Then the little devils of doubt came a-swarming and a-whispering. She had said she knew all about Ward; well, she did, to a greater extent than others knew. But— She wondered if she did not know too much; or if she knew enough. There were some things—

She turned, upon the crest of the ridge, and looked away toward the pine-dotted height locally known as the Big Hill, beyond which Ward's claim lay snuggled out of sight in its little valley. "I've a good mind to ride over there right now, and *make* him tell me," she said to herself. She stopped Blue and sat there undecided while the wind lifted a lock of hair and flipped it across her cheek. "If he cares—like he says he cares—he'll tell me," she murmured. "I don't believe it's wolves. And, of course, it isn't—what those fellows seemed to think. But—where did he

get the money for all that——” She sighed distressfully. “I hate to ask him—he’d think I didn’t trust him, and I *do*. I *do* trust him!” There was the little head devil of doubt, and she fought him fiercely. “I *do*! I *do*!” She thrust the declaration of faith like a sword through the doubt devil that clung and whispered. “*Dear Ward! I do trust you!*” She blinked back tears and bit her lips to stop their quivering. “But, darn it, I don’t see why you didn’t tell me!” There it was—a perfectly human woman resentment toward a nagging mystery.

She headed Blue down the slope and as straight for the Big Hill as she could go. She would go and make Ward tell her what he had been doing.

There was no trail that way, and the ridges were steep and the cañons circuitous. But Blue was a good horse, with plenty of stamina and much experience. He carried his lady safely and carried her willingly. Even her impatience could find no fault with the manner in which he climbed steep pitches, slid down slopes as steep, jumped narrow washouts, and picked his way through thickets of quaking aspens or over wide stretches of shale rock and lava beds. He was wet to his ears when finally he shuffled into Ward’s trail up the creek bottom; but he breathed evenly, and he carried his head high and perked his ears knowingly forward when the corral and haystack came into view around a sharp bend. He splashed both front feet into the creek just before the cabin, and stopped to drink while Billy Louise stared at the silent place.

By the tracks along the creek trail she knew that Ward had come home, and she urged Blue across the ford and up the bank to the cabin. She slid off and went in boldly to hide her inward embarrassment—and she found nothing but emptiness there.

Billy Louise did not take long to investigate. The coffeepot was still warm on the stove when she laid her palm against it—and she immediately poured herself a cup of coffee. A plate and a cup on the table told that Ward had eaten a hurried meal and had not taken time to clear away the litter. Billy Louise ate what was left, and mechanically she washed the dishes and made everything neat before she went down to look for Rattler. She had thought that Ward was out somewhere about the place, and would return very soon, probably. Blue she had left standing in plain sight before the cabin, so that Ward would see him, and know she was there—a fact which she regretted.

While she was washing dishes and sweeping she had been trying to think of some excuse for her presence there. It was going to be awkward, her coming there on his heels, one might say. She remembered for the first time her statement that she had to help mommie, and so could not take the time to ride even a mile with him!

Billy Louise began to wish she had not come. She began to feel quite certain that Ward would be surprised and disgusted when he found her there, and would look at her with that faint curl of the lip and that fainter lift of the nostril above it, which made her go hot all over with the scorn in them. She had seen him look that way once or twice, and, in spite of herself, she began to picture his face with that expression.

Billy Louise was on the point of riding away a good deal more hastily than she had come, in the hope that Ward would not discover her there. Then her own stubbornness came uppermost, and she told herself that she had a perfect right to ride wherever she pleased, and that if Ward didn’t like it he could do the other thing.

She went to the door and stood looking out for a minute, wondering where

he was. She turned back, and stared around the room, which somehow held the imprint of his personality in spite of its rough simplicity.

There was a little window behind the bunk, and beside that a shelf filled with books and smoking material and matches. She knew by the very arrangement of that shelf and window that Ward liked to lie there on the bunk and read while the light lasted. Well, he was not there now, at any rate. She went over and looked at the titles of the books, though she had examined them with interest only yesterday. There was Burns—and she knew why it was he could repeat Tam O'Shanter so readily with never a moment's hesitation. There were two volumes of Scott—"Lady of the Lake" and other poems, much thumbed and with a cigarette burn on the front cover, and "Kenilworth." There were several books of Kipling's, mostly verses, and beside it Morgan's "Ancient Society," with the corners broken, and a fine-print volume of Shakespeare's plays. Then there was a pile of magazines, and beyond them a stack of books whose subjects varied from Balzac to strange, scientific-sounding names. At the other end of the shelf, within easy reach from one lying upon the bunk, with a cigar box full of smoking tobacco, a half dozen books of cigarette papers, and several blocks of small, evil-smelling matches, which men of the outdoors carry for their compact form and slow, steady blaze.

At the head of the bed hung a flour sack half full of some hard, lumpy stuff which Billy Louise had not noticed before. She felt the bag tentatively, could not guess its contents, and finally took it down and untied it. Within, were irregular scraps and strips of stuff hard as bone—a puzzle still to one unfamiliar with the frontier. Billy Louise pulled out a little piece, nibbled a corner, and pronounced, "M-mm! Jerky! I'm going to swipe some of

that," which she proceeded to do, to the extent of filling her pocket. For to those who have learned to like it, jerked venison is quite as desirable as milk chocolate or any other nibbly tit-bit.

The opposite wall had two sacks of flour stacked against it, and boxes of staple canned goods, such as corn and tomatoes and milk and peaches. A box of canned peaches stood at the head of the bed, and upon that a case of tomatoes. Ward used them for a table, and set the lantern there when he wanted to read in bed. "He's got a pretty good supply of grub," was the verdict of Billy Louise, sizing up the assortment while she nibbled at the piece of jerky. "I wonder where he is, anyway?" And a moment later: "He oughtn't to hang his best clothes up like that—they'll be all wrinkled when he wants to put them on."

She went over and disposed the best clothes to her liking, and shook out the dust. She had to own to herself that for a bachelor Ward was very orderly—though he did let his trousers hang down over the flour sacks in a way to whiten their hems. She hung them in a different place.

But where was Ward? Billy Louise bethought her that Blue deserved something to eat after that hard ride, and led him down to the stable. There was no sign of Rattler, and Billy Louise wondered anew at Ward's absence; it did not seem consistent with his haste to leave the Wolverine and his frequent assertion that he must get to work. From the stable door she could look over practically the whole creek bottom within his fence, and she could see the broad sweep of the hills on either side. On her way back to the cabin, she tried to track Rattler, but there were several stock trails leading in different directions, and the soil was too dry to leave any distinguishing marks.

She waited for an hour or two, sit-

ting in the doorway nibbling jerky and trying to read a magazine. Then she found a stub of pencil, tore out an advertising page which had a wide margin, wrote: "I don't think you're a bit nice! Why don't you stay home when a fellow comes to see you?" and folded it neatly and put it in the cigar box of tobacco over Ward's pillow. It never once occurred to her that Ward, when he found the note, would believe she had placed it there the day before, and would never guess by its text that she had made a second trip to his claim.

She resaddled Blue and rode away, more depressed than ever, because her depression was now mixed with a disappointment keener than she would have cared to acknowledge even to herself.

CHAPTER XV.

THE CORRAL IN THE CAÑON.

Where the creek trail crossed the Big Hill and then swung to the left, that it might follow the easy slopes of Cedar Creek, Blue turned off to the right of his own accord as if he took it for granted that his lady would return the way she had come. His lady had not thought anything about it, but after a brief hesitation she decided that Blue should have his way; after all, it would simplify her explanations of the long ride if she came home by way of the cañon. She could say that she had ridden farther out into the hills than usual—which was true enough.

Billy Louise could not feel depressed for very long, and before she had climbed over the first rugged ridge that reached out like a crooked finger into the narrow valley, she was humming under her breath, and riding with the reins dropped loose upon Blue's neck, so that he went where the way pleased him best. Before she was down that ridge and beginning to climb the next, she was singing softly a song her

mother had taught her long ago, when she was seven or so:

"The years creep slowly by, Lorena,
The snow is on the grass again;
The sun's low down the sky, Lorena——"

Blue gathered himself together and jumped a washout three feet across and goodness knows how deep, and jarred that melancholy melody quite out of Billy Louise's mind. When she had settled herself again to the slow climb, she broke out with what she called Ward's Come-all-ye, and, with a twinkle of eye and both dimples standing deep, went on, with a very slight interruption in her singing:

"'Oh, a ten-dollar hoss and a forty-dollar saddle'—that's you, Blue. You don't amount to nothing nohow, doing jack-rabbit stunts like that when I'm not looking! 'Coma ti yi youpy, youpy-a!'" She watched a cloud shadow sweep like a great bird over a sunny slope, and murmured while she watched: "Cloud boats sailing sunny seas—is that original, or have I cribbed it from some honest-to-goodness poet? Blue, if fate hadn't made a cow-puncher of me, I'd be chewing up lead pencils trying to find a rhyme for alfalfa, maybe. And where would *you* be, you old skate? If the Louise of me had been developed at the expense of the Billy of me—and I'd taken to making Battenberg doilies with butterflies in the corners, and embroidering corset covers till I put my eyes out, and writing poetry on Sundays when mommie wouldn't let me sew. . . . I wonder if Ward . . . Maybe he'd have liked me better if I'd lived up to the Louise and cut out the Billy part. I'd be home, right now, asking mommie whether I should use soda or baking powder to make my muffins with—Oh, gracious!" She leaned over and caught a handful of Blue's slaty mane and tousled it till he laid his ears flat on his head and flipped his nose around to show her that his teeth were bared

to the gums. Billy Louise laughed, and gave another yank.

"You wish I were an embroidering young lady, do you? Aw, where would *you* be, if you didn't have me to devil the life out of you? Well, why don't you take a chunk out of me, then? Don't be an old bluffer, Blue. If you want to eat me, why, go to it; only you don't. You're just a-bluffing. You like to be tousled, and you know it—else why do you tag me all over the place when I don't want you? Huh? That's to pay you back for jumping that washout when I wasn't looking!"—a twitch of the mane here, that brought Blue's head around again, with all his teeth showing—"and this is for jarring that lovely, weepy song out of me. You know you hate it—you always do lay back your ears when I sing that, but—— Oh, all right—when I sing, then! But you've got to stand for it. I've been an indigo bag all day long, and I'm going to sing if I want to. Fate made me a lady cow-punch instead of a poet-ess, and you can't stop me from singing when I feel it in my system."

She began again with the "ten-dollar hoss and forty-dollar saddle," and sang as much of the old trail song as she had ever heard and could remember, substituting milder expletives now and then, and laughing at herself for doing it, because a self-confessed "lady cow-punch" is, after all, hedged about by certain limitations in the matter of both speech and conduct. She did not sing it all, but she sang enough to last over a mile of rough going, and did not have to repeat many verses to do it.

Blue, because she still left the reins loose, chose his own trail, which was easier than that which they had taken in the forenoon, but more roundabout. Billy Louise, observing how he avoided rocky patches and went considerably out of his way to keep his feet on soft soil, stopped in the middle of a "Coma

ty yi" to ask him solicitously if he were getting tender-footed; and promised him a few days off, in the pasture. Thereafter she encouraged the roundabout progress, even though she knew it would keep them in the hills until dusk; for she was foolishly careful of Blue, however much she might tease him and call him names.

Quite suddenly, just at sundown, her cheerful journeying was interrupted in a most unexpected manner. She was dreaming along a flat-bottomed cañon, looking for an easy way across, when Blue threw up his head, listened, with his ears thrust forward, and sniffed with widened nostrils. From his manner, almost anything might lie ahead of them. And because certain of the possibilities would call for quick action if any of them became a certainty, Billy Louise twisted her gun belt around so that her six-shooter swung within easy reach of her hand. With her fingers, she made sure that the gun was loose in its holster, and kicked Blue mildly as a hint to go on and see what it was all about.

Blue went forward, stepping easily on the soft sidehill. In rough country, whatever you want to see is nearly always around a sharp bend; you read it so in the stories and books of travels, and when you ride out in the hills you find it so in reality. Billy Louise rode for three or four minutes before she received any inkling of what lay ahead, though Blue's behavior during that interval had served to reassure her somewhat. He was interested still in what lay just out of sight beyond a shoulder of the hill, but he did not appear to be in the least alarmed. Therefore, Billy Louise knew it couldn't be a bear, at any rate.

They came to the point of the hill's shoulder, and Billy Louise tightened the reins instinctively while she stared at what lay revealed beneath. The head of the gulch was blocked with a corral

—small, high, hidden from view on all sides save where she stood, by the jagged walls of rock and heavy aspen thickets beyond.

The corral was but the setting for what Billy Louise stared at so unbelievably. A horseman had ridden out of the corral just as she came into sight, had turned a sharp corner, and had disappeared by riding up the same slope she occupied—but farther along, and in a shallow depression which hid him completely after that one brief glimpse.

Of course, the gulch was dusky with deep shadows, and she had had only a glimpse. But the horse was a dark bay, and the rider was slim and tall, and wore a gray hat— The heart of Billy Louise paused a moment from its steady beating, and then sank heavily under a great weight. She was range born and range bred. She had sat, wide-eyed, on her daddy's knees and heard him tell of losses in cattle and horses, and of corrals found hidden away in strange places, and of unknown riders who disappeared mysteriously into the hills. She had heard of these things—they were a part of the stage setting for wild dramas of the West.

With a white line showing around her close-pressed lips and a wide-eyed horror in her glance, she rode quietly along the side of the bluff toward where she had seen the horseman disappear. He was riding a dark bay, and he wore a gray hat and dark coat, and he was slim and tall— Billy Louise made a sound that was close to a groan, and set her teeth hard together afterward.

She reached the hillside just above the corral. There were cattle down there, moving uneasily about in the shadows. Of the horseman there was, of course, no sign; just the corral, and a few restless cattle shut inside, and on the hilltops a soft, rose-violet glow and in the sky beyond a blend of purple and deep crimson to show where the sun had

been. Close beside her, as she stood looking down, a little gray bird twittered wistfully.

Billy Louise took a deep breath, and rode on, angling slightly up the bluff, so that she could cross at the head of the gulch. It was very quiet, very peaceful, and wildly beautiful, this jumble of hills and deep-gashed cañons. But Billy Louise felt as though something precious had died. Range born and range bred, she should have gone down and investigated and turned those cattle loose; that is, if she dared. Well, she dared—it was not fear that held her to the upper slopes. She did not want to know what brand they bore or whether an iron had seared fresh marks.

"Oh, *God!*" she said once aloud; and there was a prayer and a protest, a curse and a question all in those two words.

So trouble—trouble that sickened her very soul and choked her into dumbness and squeezed her heart so that the ache of it was agony—came and rode with her through the broody dusk of the cañons and over the brighter hilltops.

Billy Louise did not remember anything much about that ride, except that she was glad the way was long; and that Blue carried her steadily on and on, and needed no guiding, and that Wolverine Cañon was black dark in most places, and that she liked it so.

John Pringle was standing by the gate waiting for her—which was unusual, if Billy Louise had been normal enough to notice it. He came forward and took Blue by the bridle when she dismounted—which was still more unusual, for Billy Louise always cared for her own horse both from habit and preference.

"Your mommie, she's sick," he announced stolidly. "She's worry you maybe hurt yourself. You better go, maybe."

Billy Louise did not answer, but ran

up the path to the cabin. "Oh, has *everything* got to happen all at once?" she cried aloud, protesting against the implacableness of misfortune.

"Your mommie's sick," Phœbe announced, in a whisper. "She's crazy 'cause you been so long. She's awful bad, I guess."

Billy Louise said nothing, but went in where her mother lay moaning, her face white and turned to the ceiling. Billy Louise herself had pulled up her reserves of strength and cheerfulness, and the fingers she laid on her mother's forehead were cool and steady.

"Poor old mommie—is it that nasty lumbago again?" she asked caressingly, and did not permit the tiniest shade of anxiety to spoil the reassurance of her presence. "I went farther than usual, and Blue's pretty tender, so I eased him along, and I'm fearfully late. I suppose you've been having all kinds of disasters happening to me." She was passing her fingers soothingly over her mother's forehead while she explained, and she saw that her mother did not moan so much as when she came into the room.

"Of course I worried. I wish you wouldn't take them long rides—— Oh, I guess it's lumbago—mostly—but seems like it ain't, either. The pain seems to be mostly in my side——" She stirred restlessly, and moaned again.

"What's Phœbe been doing for it? You don't seem to have any fever, mommie—and that's a good thing. I'll go fix you one of those dandy spice poultices. Had any supper, mommie?"

"Oh—I couldn't eat—Phœbe made a hop poultice, but it's awful sippy——"

"Well, never mind. Your dear daughter is on the job now. She'll have you all comfy in just about two minutes. Headache, mom? All right—I'll just shake up your pilly, and bring you such a dandy spice poultice I expect you'll want to *eat* it!" Billy

Louise's voice was soft, and had a broody sweetness when she wished it so, that soothed more than medicine. Her mother's eyes closed wearily while the girl talked; the muscles of her face relaxed a little from their look of pain.

Billy Louise bent and laid her lips lightly on her mother's cheek. "Poor old mommie—I'd have come home a-running if I'd known she was sick, and had to have nasty, sippy stuff given her——"

In the kitchen, a very different Billy Louise measured spices and asked a question now and then in a whisper, and breathed with a repressed unevenness which betrayed the strain she was under.

"Tell John to saddle up and go for the doctor, Phœbe—and don't let mommie know, whatever you do. This isn't her lumbago at all. I don't know what it is. I wonder if a hot turpentine cloth wouldn't be better than this? I've got a good mind to try it—her eyes are glassy with fever, and her skin is cold as a fish. You tell John to hurry up. He can ride Boxer. Tell him I want him to get a doctor here by tomorrow noon if he has to kill his horse doing it."

"Is she that bad?" Phœbe's black eyes glistened with consternation. "She's groaned all day, and shook her head like this all time."

"Oh, stop looking like that! No wonder she's sick if you've stood over her with that kind of a face on you. You look as if some one were dead in the house!"

"I'm skeered of sick folks. Honest, it gives me shivers——"

"Well, keep out, then. Make some fresh tea, Phœbe—or, no, make some good, strong coffee. I'll need it, if I'm up all night. Make it strong, Phœbe. Hurry, and——" She stopped short and ran in to the bedroom, called there by her mother's cry of pain.

That night took its toll of Billy

Louise, and left a scared place in her memory. It was a night of snapping fire in the cookstove, that hot water might be always ready; of tireless struggle with the pain that came and tortured, retired sullenly from Billy Louise's stubborn fighting with poultice and turpentine cloths and every homely remedy she had ever heard of, and came again just when she thought she had won the fight.

There was no time to give thought to the trouble that had ridden home with her, though its presence was like a black shadow behind her while she worked and went to and fro between bedroom and kitchen, and fought that tearing pain.

She met the dawn hollow-eyed, and so tired she could not worry very much about anything. Her mother slept uneasily, to prove that the battle had not gone altogether against the girl who had fought the night through. She had her reward in full measure when the doctor came in the heat of noon, and, after terrible minutes of suspense for Billy Louise while he counted pulse and took temperature and studied symptoms, told her that she had done well, and that she and her homely poultices had held back tragedy from that house.

Billy Louise lay down upon the couch out on the back porch, and slept heavily for three hours, while Phœbe and the doctor watched over her mother.

She woke with a start. She had been dreaming, and the dream had taken from her cheeks what little color her night vigil had left. She had dreamed that Ward was in danger—that men were hunting him for what he had done at that corral. The corral seemed the center of a fight between Ward and the men. She dreamed that he came to her, and that she must hide him away and save him. She tried to hide him, but there was something—some menace.

Billy Louise went softly into the house, tiptoed to the door of her mother's room, and saw that she lay quiet, with her eyes closed. Beside the window, the doctor sat with his spectacles far down toward the end of his nose, reading a pale-green pamphlet that he must have brought in his pocket. Phœbe was down by the creek, washing clothes in the shade of a willow clump.

She went into her own room, still walking on her toes. In her trunk was a blue plush box of the kind that is given to one at Christmas. It was faded and the clasp was showing brassy at the edges. Sitting upon her bed with the box in her lap, Billy Louise pawed hastily in the jumble of keepsakes it held: An eagle's claw, which she meant some time to have mounted for a brooch; three or four arrowheads of the shiny, black stuff which the Indians were said to have brought from Yellowstone Park; a knot of green ribbon which she had worn to a St. Patrick Day dance in Boise; rattlesnake rattles of all sizes; several folded clippings—verses that had caught her fancy and had been put away and forgotten; an amber bead she had found once—she turned the box upside down in her lap and shook it. It must be there—the thing she sought; the thing that had troubled her most in her dream; the thing that was a menace while it existed.

It was at the very bottom of the box, caught in a corner. She took it out with fingers that trembled, crumpled it into a little ball so that she could not read what it said, straightened it immediately, and read it reluctantly from the beginning to the end, where the last word was clipped short with hasty scissors. A paragraph cut from a newspaper, it was; yellow and frayed from contact with other objects, telling of things. . . .

Billy Louise bit her lips until they

hurt, but she could not keep back the tears that came hot, and stinging her eyelids while she read. She slid the little heap of odds and ends to the middle of the bed, crushed the clipping into her moist palm, and went out stealthily into the immaculate kitchen. As if she were being spied upon, she went cautiously to the stove, lifted a lid, and dropped the clipping in where the wood blazed the brightest. She watched it flare and become nothing—not even a pinch of ashes; the clipping was not very large. When it was gone, she put the lid back and went tiptoeing to the door. Then she ran.

Phœbe was down by the creek, so Billy Louise went to the stable, through that, and on beyond, still running. Farther down was a grassy nook—on, beyond the road. She went there and hid behind the willows, where she could cry and no one be the wiser. But she could not cry the ache out of her heart, nor the rebellion against the hurt that life had given her. If she could only have burned memory when she burned that clipping! She could still believe, and be happy, if only she could forget the things it said.

Phœbe called her, after a long while had passed. Billy Louise bathed her face in the cold water of the Wolverine, used her handkerchief for a towel, and went back to take up the duties life had laid upon her. The doctor's team was hitched to the light buggy he drove, and the doctor was standing in the doorway with his square medicine case in his hand, waiting to give her a few final directions before he left.

He was like so many doctors—he seemed to be afraid to tell the whole truth about his patient. He stuck to evasive optimism, and then neutralized the reassurances he uttered by emphasizing the necessity of being notified if Mrs. MacDonald showed any symptoms of another attack.

"Don't wait," he told Billy Louise

gravely. "Send for me at once if she complains of that pain again, or appears——"

"But what *is* it?" Billy Louise would not be put off by any vagueness.

The doctor was still like so many others. He told Billy Louise, in terms that carried no meaning whatever to her mind. She gathered merely that it was rather serious, if it persisted—whatever it was—and that she must not leave her mommie for many hours at a time, because she might have another attack at any time. The doctor told her, however, in plain English, that mommie was well over this attack—whatever it was—and that she need only be kept quiet for a few days, and given the medicine—whatever that was—that he had left.

"It does seem as if everything is all muffled up in mystery!" she complained, when he drove away. "I can fight anything I can see, but when I've got to go blindfolded——" She brushed her fingers across her eyes and glanced hurriedly into the little looking-glass that hung beside the door. "Yes, mommie—just a minute," she called cheerfully.

She ran into her own room, grabbed a can of talcum, and did not wait to see whether she applied it evenly to her telltale eyelids, but dabbed at them on the way to her mother's room.

"Doctor says you're all right, mommie—only you mustn't go digging post-holes or shoveling hay for a while——"

"No, I guess not!" Her mother responded unconsciously to the stimulation of Billy Louise's tone. "I couldn't dig holes with a teaspoon, I'm that weak and useless. Did he say what it was, Billy Louise?" The sick are always so curious about their illnesses!

"Oh, your lumbago got to scrapping with your liver. I forget the name he gave it, but it's nothing to worry about." Billy Louise had imagination, remember.

"I guess he'd think it was something

to worry about, if he had it," her mother retorted fretfully—but reassured, nevertheless, by the casual manner of Billy Louise. "I believe I could eat a little mite of toast and drink some tea," she added tentatively.

"And an egg poached soft, if you want it, mom. Phoebe just brought in

the eggs." Billy Louise went out, humming unconcernedly under her breath, as if she had not a care beyond the proper toasting of the bread and brewing of the tea.

One need not go to a war or voyage to the far corners of the earth to find the stuff heroes are made of.

TO BE CONTINUED.

The third part of this novel will appear in the first August POPULAR, on sale July 7th.

THE GENTLE ART OF BEING PRESIDENT

HALF a dozen men in the lobby of a New York hotel were discussing the frequency of revolutions and assassinations in Mexico and other Latin-American countries. A short, dumpy little Englishman, who had a cold, gray eye, told this:

In a country which we will call Dumala there was a president whom we will call Harera. He had made it the custom, by official proclamation, for the guard of honor, which consisted of sons of prominent families of his country, to present arms whenever he emerged from the presidential palace. While the men and officers presented arms, the standard bearer raised the great flag and exclaimed:

"Viva Harera!"

People who wanted Harera put out of business bribed the standard bearer and six members of the guard of honor to assassinate him. The plan was that, when he came out of the palace, the standard bearer was to hold up the flag, shout "Viva Dumala!" and throw the heavy banner over the president. While he was knocked down and blinded by the folds of the flag, the six traitors were to shoot him.

At the appointed time, Harera came out. The standard bearer, holding his flag aloft, shouted "Viva Dumala!" and hurled the banner over the president, the folds of it enveloping him and throwing him.

The traitors, seeing him helpless on the ground, fired at his head under the banner. That was where the plot went wrong.

As Harera went down under the weight of the falling flag, he had the presence of mind to lie flat on his back and hold one of his arms straight up from him, thus supporting the flag, and giving the impression that his fist was his head. The only wound he received was one bullet through his hand.

The traitors, having figured that six of them shooting at him would be sure to kill him, did not have extra cartridges. When he stood up and threw off the flag, their companions arrested them.

"You must have your hand dressed," suggested one of the officers, seeing the blood flowing from the president's wound.

"I'll do that," said Harera, "as soon as these traitors have been executed."

He had them lined up in front of the palace, and gave the word that resulted in their death from a volley by their companions. After that, he went into the palace, and had his wound dressed—all of which indicates that the gentle art of being president in Latin America calls for quick thought and speedy action.

Low and Inside

By Bozeman Bulger

Author of "The Mascot's Notch," Etc.

There are people who do not believe in the jinx; but you will rarely find them among the ball players. There is a story current of one of the big-league batters who bested the jinx and made an average of .300 for the season by digging up the plate and placing beneath it the left hind foot of a graveyard rabbit. Bulger knows of one ball player who didn't believe in the jinx. This is his story

THAT there are those who do not believe in the jinx is a lamentable fact pointed out to show that general education in this country has been sadly neglected despite the philanthropic efforts of our millionaires. There may be some who have never heard of the jinx—this mystic who made the original design for hard luck. There is still another class in darkest ignorance of the fact that college education is his choicest feeding ground; that Mr. Jinx has been picking on rah-rah boys ever since they first broke away from the reservations and began to edge their way into the leagues—major, minor, and lush.

It is a sad commentary upon our educational institutions that when Dick Horton, six feet two, and as smart as a whip, jumped right out of trigonometry and joined the Taunton Terrors, his mind was an absolute blank on these important matters. His father's hard-earned contribution to education had been wasted. Dick didn't know that the mystic jinx had so permeated the ranks of major and minor leagues with animosity toward collegians that they were looked upon as an unnecessary evil. Some of the old heads still regard them as an evil, but, being admittedly of more necessity, they are tolerated.

Three other college boys jumped

with Dick, and the moment the quartet, who had wrestled with the songs of Vergil all year, showed up, the bushers began to mutter and shake their heads. Here was some pretty soft pickings for the jinx, and these old birds knew it would happen. It did.

The Taunton Terrors blew up in June, taking the league with them, and leaving the players so thin in the vest that a worn dime would have felt like a watch. The newspapers attributed the blow-up to a rascally manager and consequent lack of patronage. But wise old leaguers knew better. It was the jinx working against the club. The presence of the rah-rah boys had offended.

Whatever the cause, here they were flat broke and miles from the old fire-side. And, of these, Dick Horton was the flattest. The others had return tickets.

There was no appealing to the folks back home, Dick having left college for the express purpose of showing his father, who appeared a little dense on the subject, that ten years in the big league would redound more to the fame and bank roll of the Horton family than a whole string of university sheepskins hung in a row around the wall of the parlor. It was now baseball or nothing for Dick, and he yearned to go the route. All he needed was one more

chance. It couldn't be figured his fault, this time, for the league blew up beneath him.

Up to the time of the crash young Mr. Horton had led the now defunct league in pitching, and his record of fifteen strike-outs was a mark that other twirlers might shoot at for years to come.

To indicate progress in the working out of his baseball idea, Dick occasionally had sent back clippings from the Taunton *Times* showing box scores and headlines—selected, of course, from issues having a direct bearing on the name of Horton. Dick to-day is among the few ball players who recognize the power of the press. Right there in Taunton he had the proof.

One by one Dick saw his late teammates away on the train, and when the last had gone he turned into the lunch room of the station wondering how he was going to assist his stomach in a double play. The hit-and-run out of town was to be taken up later. As he stopped at the cashier's desk to contemplate the situation, there was a tugging at his coat tails. Dick turned and looked downward into the eyes of a messenger boy, and in the boy's eyes there was still the worship of a hero.

"There's a message at the office for you, Mr. Horton," he said. "Come on, and I'll take you."

"Message for me?" Horton asked in surprise. He was wondering if the folks back home had heard of the end of the Terrors.

"Sure thing," urged the boy, "and it's important. Job, I think."

Instead of going toward the door the boy pulled his hero in the direction of the counter. Dick didn't understand and pulled back.

"Say, Mr. Horton, won't you please come over here and have a sandwich wit' me?" Dick shook his head and smiled.

"I know you ain't hungry," ex-
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plained the boy, "but them rummies over there says I don't know you, and if you eats wit' me it will square me for a long time."

That was the best sandwich that Dick Horton ever tasted. When he had finished, the boy took his hero by the arm and directed him to the telegraph office, losing no opportunity on the way for making fans see him in company with the strike-out king.

At the office Dick discovered that others besides his home folks had read those headlines in the *Times*. It was there that he fell in love with the press. The message, handed to him across the counter, read:

CLIFTON, Virginia, June 29th.

Your newspaper record looks good. Job for you. Can you report at once? Answer immediately.

ED MILLER, Manager, The Sea Gulls.

Ed Miller was of the old school of managers who watched for the blowing up of bush leagues so as to grab players without the necessity of official release, and the consequent payment of purchase money. This time he landed.

Dick answered immediately. That night there came a telegraphic money order for a railroad ticket and five dollars additional for expenses. Nothing was said about terms; but, right then, that was a secondary consideration. Dick went.

On the way down Horton purchased a copy of a baseball weekly to look over the batting order of the Clifton club. Among them he recognized the names of a few old-timers who had slid back from the big leagues, and amused himself trying to get a mental picture of the others. Of one thing he was certain: none of them had played at college, and it was some satisfaction to know that the club was not jinxed from the start. On account of his lack of early tutelage, Dick had never been able or disposed to figure himself the jinx. There was much he had to learn.

It was ten o'clock in the morning when Horton reported at the hotel in Clifton, where the manager was to meet him, and found the whole club waiting.

Manager Miller's welcome was sincere though not enthusiastic. After a perfunctory handshake he pointed out the other stars. Immediately Dick began to revise his mental drawings of the Sea Gulls—that being the name by which most water-front ball clubs are called. His imaginary picture of Steve Welsh, the catcher, was a bad piece of work. Instead of the broad-shouldered, good-natured, straight-as-an-arrow fellow that he had pictured, Dick found Steve a tub-shaped, tobacco-chewing grouch who looked upon universities as an evil element that had crept into the grand old game, and to whom college ball players in general were pests.

Ed Miller, the manager, proved himself a much better fellow, being diplomatic enough not to take undue advantage of the unfortunate fact that Dick had been to college. Young Horton did not attempt to deceive Miller, but made a clean breast of it, and the manager appreciated his straightforwardness.

"Oh, that's all right, I guess," said Miller consolingly. "I've known a few college fellows who had sense like regular folks. But, of course," he added, "they've got a lot to learn and in most cases it takes too much patience to fool with them."

"But I didn't graduate," Dick explained, as a mitigating circumstance, and apparently hit the mark. The manager of the Sea Gulls brightened right up.

Dick also had learned to chew a little tobacco and forced his advantage by pulling out a package of the brand so well known to ball players. That got them down to real business.

The best Manager Miller could do in the way of pay was seventy-five dollars a month, and a pass to all the theaters,

there being three. The sight of ten dollars in advance money ended all hesitation on Dick's part, and he signed then and there.

"Is Welsh, over there, going to catch me?" asked Horton, indicating by a nod of his head the big catcher, lounging in a lobby chair.

"Sure," the manager replied. "He's the only catcher we've got. And he's a good one, too. Steve's getting a little along in years, and has his cranky spells, but he knows more about the weaknesses of the batters in this league than all the rest of the backstops put together.

"Say, Steve," the Sea Gull leader called to the veteran. "Take this young fellow out in the morning and give him a work-out. They tell me he's got a barrel of speed."

"Does he know what to do with it?" Steve asked, wobbling over to where the manager sat. Welsh had the trick, so often employed by veterans, of making a youngster feel his place by not speaking to him directly. "You know," the old fellow went on, "we haven't got any players to spare, and we can't have any of our regular men beamed by a wild busher. S'pose he could hit the ground with his hat?"

"I've got pretty good control," Dick edged in, "if that's what you mean." This idea of being referred to in the third person galled the young collegian. "I'm not boob enough to use my speed all the time. I've got a big curve——"

"Well," and Old Steve directed his glance toward Miller, "he'd better put that curve in his suit case." The old-timer switched the stump of his cigar from one side of his mouth to the other reflectively.

"Oh, well," he said finally, "send him out, and I'll look him over."

The next morning Dick was amazed to see in the papers that he had been advertised to pitch that very day against Portsville. In those days the appearance

of a new player in a bush league was always good for an increase in attendance, and Ed Miller played this system to the limit. A newcomer had a chance the first day, so the fans could see for themselves how he acted under fire.

In view of the newspaper announcement, Steve Welsh made the morning work-out very short and disagreeable, telling Dick to save something for the afternoon.

"What are your signs?" young Horton inquired as the old catcher was about to walk away.

"Same as 'most everybody uses," he answered. "Two fingers in the mitt for a curve, one for a fast one, and—well, if you've got a slow one I'll find it out."

Not so easily squelched, Dick insisted on Steve going through the signs with him, especially as he was to pitch that afternoon. The old fellow did so reluctantly, glaring at the youngster all the time.

"To hear him talk," Steve remarked to one of the outfielders standing near, "you'd think he was going to play one of them big-league teams for the championship of the world."

"Yes, and I will, too, some day," young Horton blurted out, "when you are carrying water."

"That college stuff'll come out," Steve observed to the outfielder, who, in ball-player fashion, was enjoying the jawing match, "no matter how deep you hide it. This club is jinxed already."

At that, Steve liked the show of spirit well enough to address the young fellow directly for the first time.

"Don't bother about tryin' to figure them batters out to-day," he advised Dick. "I know 'em all, and I'll give the signs."

As Steve went to the water keg and fished out the tin dipper, he began to think over that crack the kid made about his having to carry water. Something inside of him began to rankle.

Scientists may not know, but ball

players will tell you that that rankling inside Steve was the jinx. He came in the form of a little black man, whispering things in the catcher's ear about an old-timer letting a squirt of a kid get away with fresh talk. Not for Steve!

Young Horton was edged out of his turn at batting practice three times that afternoon—a most unethical proceeding among ball players—and indignantly retired to a corner of the bench. From there he had a chance to size up the two clubs, and noticed with interest that Steve Welsh was hobnobbing with the visitors. The old fellow had a good word and a josh for every one who hailed him.

The manager of the Sea Gulls came over and sat down beside his new pitcher. Dick called his attention to the number of friends that Steve appeared to have.

"He used to play with Portsville," Miller explained. "All his old pals are over there."

"I don't think he likes me," Dick remarked.

"Oh, don't mind that," the manager advised. "He's that way with all new players, especially college men. He'll handle you all right. That fellow has developed more than ten pitchers who have gone from here to the big league."

That hit Dick in a tender spot. It brought him back to his ambition—getting in the big league. He would forgive the disdainful attitude of the grouchy old backstop, even though it hurt, if Steve could give him the right start.

"Well, I hope I make good for you," he finally said to the manager.

"You'll get by all right, kid," Ed declared. "Just remember not to get excited."

That was all right as it sounded, but Dick Horton had sense enough to know that if he fell down that first day he would get the tin can before the end of the week. It is a way of the minor

leagues. Dick also knew that Ed Miller had made a practice of trying out youngsters, who had asked for a chance, just to draw a crowd. There was always the chance of the Sea Gull manager picking up a good one who could be sold—if sold at all—for more than his season's salary.

A bunch of fans kept yelling to Miller to "trot out the new phenom," and Dick finally got up and walked in front of the grand stand.

A short distance from the Sea Gull bench was the little screened coop of the official scorer, the sporting editor of the town. He motioned for Horton to come over.

"You've got the chance of your life, kid," said the scribe as he stuck his fingers through the meshes of the screen for a half-portion handshake.

"Think so?" asked Dick.

"Yes, and if you don't trim these fellows, I'm going to write a story about your being a quitter and send it back to the old college town." The scribe meant this as a banter and laughed good-naturedly. "You see," he went on, "I've got the dope on you. But there's no quitting in you, kid, and I know it. I picked you out for Ed Miller when I went through the exchanges up at the office. And," he added impressively, "when I pick 'em they are usually the goods."

Right away Dick began to like that fellow. "I'll certainly try to keep from making you out a liar," he declared.

"But, say," and the sporting writer leaned close to the screen, "watch out for this fellow, Buck Fenton. He hits 'em a mile. I've been tipped off that he's going to the big league." The scribe looked cautiously over his shoulder. "There's a big-league scout up there now."

"Watching me?" Dick asked innocently.

"You? Why, that scout doesn't

know yet that you are alive. He's here to get a line on Fenton. Now, you——"

"Hey, there, Freshie!" Dick felt that it was meant for him and turned. It was. Steve Welsh was about to toss him a ball for warming up.

"What are you doin' over there?" yelled the old backstop. "Trying to hang around the reporters to get yourself in right?"

Dick caught the thrown ball, and turned red in the face. The fans within earshot began to snicker. Before the young fellow could reply, Steve had turned his back and was talking to Buck Fenton, of the Portsvilles, near the plate. As Steve and Buck talked they would occasionally nod their heads in the direction of the grand stand and look around. Dick took this to mean that they were discussing the scout in the grand stand. Later developments proved that he was right.

After letting the collegian wait long enough to feel that he was not very important, Steve came over and permitted the youngster to warm up. At that, he took up half of the remaining ten minutes in talking over his shoulder to friends in the front row of the grand stand.

When the battery announcement was finally made and Dick walked to the box he got the usual reception accorded a newcomer. He was old enough in the business not to consider this anything more than a matter of form; but, just the same, it upset him. He became suddenly conscious that he was being tried out for the first time, and that a big-league scout was watching him. After the blow-up at Taunton, it was the one good chance that he had longed for. To make good meant an important step nearer the big league. Dick also realized, as he stood there, that, no matter how small or insignificant a league may be, the player, so far as it concerns himself, is just as much in the limelight.

Luckily, the young fellow got by his

first inning without being scored upon, but Steve warned him, as they walked to the bench, that he was getting wild. Dick had crossed the old catcher twice, due to nervous anxiety, and expected a call-down for that, which he promptly got.

"Now, keep your head up next inning," he was advised, "and pitch exactly what I call for. If they get a man on you'll have to be careful. Buck'll be up."

"Who's Buck?" asked Dick, and gave the bench a good laugh. He had forgotten what the scribe had told him.

"There'll be a lot of 'em askin' that when he begins flailin' that ball around the big league," Steve said between chuckles. "Buck Fenton is the guy I'm talking about."

"What does he usually like to hit?" Horton inquired.

"Never mind about that," answered Steve. "I'll give the signs for him. Remember, I'm the deceiver as well as the receiver when bushers are in the box."

Young Horton promptly subsided, but made up his mind that if he got the sign for a fast one he would whistle one through at Buck that would make a bullet look tame. He knew he had the speed, and already had seen enough to know that these fellows could not hit it. His only concern was control. In trying to get that hop on his fast one, Dick was afraid of beaming somebody.

The first ball pitched by young Horton in the second inning was far to one side. The batter laughed, and Steve Welsh deliberately turned to the spectators and made a wry face. That was a tough way of showing a young fellow up, and it got Dick's goat. The youngster flared up, and began to see red and black spots. Before he realized what he was doing two batters had been given bases on balls, and Buck Fenton was coming to bat. The spectators had

stopped yelling now, intently watching the battle of wits between the great hitter and the kid.

Dick couldn't wait. Even before he got the sign he cut loose a fast one that went a foot over Fenton's head, crashing into the screen. As Steve scrambled for the ball, both runners advanced. Buck smiled.

When he finally recovered the ball, Steve threw down his mask and walked out to the pitcher's box to a chorus of "Write him a letter" from the fans.

"You cross me that way again." Steve said to Dick, "and you'll kill somebody. Either get my signs, or get out of the box."

Young Horton knew that Steve was right, and, swallowing a lump in his throat, he settled down. The bawl-out really had done him good. Again Dick was setting himself to get all the steam he had into a fast one when he saw Steve put two fingers in the mitt—the sign for a curve—and hold out his hands in a way to indicate that he wanted the ball low and inside. Horton was crazy to use his speed instead of a curve, but obeyed orders.

Dick took a healthy wind-up, and delivered the ball exactly as directed. But that ball never reached Steve's mitt. Buck Fenton took a swing that started somewhere near his shoe laces and belted it over the left-field fence. Three runs scored. A glance at the grand stand showed Horton the big-league scout smiling all over his face.

Before the disastrous inning was over, the Portsville club had made five runs, and young Mr. Horton went to the bench feeling as if he had collided with a street car. The bleacherites had begun to guy him, and Dick was miserable.

"I don't believe Buck Fenton can hit a high fast one," he said to Manager Miller and Steve.

"You're crazy," answered the old

catcher. "He'd kill it. Leave that boy to me."

Just the same the idea stuck in Horton's head, and when Fenton came up the next time he indicated to Steve that he'd like to try a high fast one. The old catcher allowed him to go ahead. But Fenton didn't swing at that ball, though it cut the heart of the plate. He merely smiled and waited. Then, to the amazement of Dick Horton, Steve called for another curve, low and inside.

It got no farther than the one pitched in the second inning. With a swing that appeared to be deliberately calculated, Fenton caught the curve on the nose, and slammed it against the left-field fence for two bases. Seemingly he had been waiting for just that kind of a ball.

The rest of the game was a nightmare for the former hero of the Taunton Terrors. The youngster had lost all interest and pitched just as Steve directed until the Sea Gulls had fluttered hopelessly to defeat.

Buck Fenton had made five clean hits. Every one that he cracked was a curve, low and inside!

In the clubhouse Dick Horton was packing up his things when Manager Miller came in and tapped him on the shoulder. That, Dick figured, was the Sea Gull way of letting a man down light—firing him without an accompaniment by a brass band. Old Ed Miller was pretty white in the face, though. Dick had not seen him in that kind of a mood before.

"Let those things alone and come out here," the manager ordered. "I want to see you." He led the way to the car tracks, about fifty yards away, and Dick followed.

"Now tell me the truth," demanded the leader of the Sea Gulls, when they were out of earshot of the other players. "Did you try Buck Fenton on a high fast one?"

"Three times, during the game," replied Dick truthfully, "but he didn't swing at one of them."

"Why didn't you keep on pitching it?"

"The catcher called for a curve, low and inside, every time after I had pitched a high, fast one."

"He waited for the low one inside, eh?"

The kid nodded.

"U-huh," the manager mumbled, and walked away. Suddenly he turned and came back. "Don't worry about packing your things, son," he said. "You are going to stick."

Dick Horton should have been a pretty smart fellow, but when he reached the hotel, where he had temporarily engaged a room, he was still groping in the mazes of this new mystery. He had been drubbed mercilessly by the Portsville club—and still had been ordered to stick!

After supper Dick wandered into the billiard room where some of the players were playing Kelley pool. He longed for company.

Without any warning, the young fellow felt some one seize him from behind, and he whirled around to look squarely into the angry face of Steve Welsh.

"What d'ye mean telling Ed 'bout me callin' for a low one inside on Buck Fenton?" Steve demanded.

Dick was so astounded he could not speak. His mouth opened and shut like the gills of a fish out of water.

"I'm a great mind to knock your block off," stormed the old catcher. "You'll get fat carryin' tales in this league."

"Why—er—why, what's wrong?" gasped the boy. "He asked me what Fenton hit and I told him. Why——"

"And I s'pose you ain't wise enough to know," Steve interrupted with what he meant for biting irony, "that when

you spilt that kind of talk, Ed'd know I was tryin' to make Buck hit?"

"You mean to say——" It was beginning to dawn on Dick. "You mean to say you purposely gave me the double cross?"

"Yes, and I'd cross you again. Buck's my pal. Scout was in the stand, and it was Buck's chance to get in the big league. I knowed the only thing he could hit was a low one inside, and—well, he got it."

Dick Horton felt sick. His chance of a lifetime, as he thought, had been thrown away by a crooked catcher—a man he thought was going to help him. And Steve was indignant at having been caught!

"You've put me out of business, that's all," Steve added; and then, in utter disgust: "That college stuff'll tell every time. You jinxed us from the jump."

Steve Welsh was fired that night. Buck Fenton left on the morning train.

Baseball, like politics, makes strange bedfellows.

Thus it is, after ten years, we find Dick Horton in the big league as crack pitcher of the Titans, and old Steve Welsh gumshoeing among the bushes as scout for the same club. In fact, old Steve had considered himself so thoroughly forgiven for his famous double cross at Clifton that he boasted of having discovered the famous Horton, telling it so often that he believed it himself.

After an extended tour through the Class D leagues, Steve joined the Titans at the end of their last Western trip, and, as is the way of scouts, took a seat on the bench during practice. The years had mellowed the old Sea Gull catcher, and he dearly loved to sit among the youngsters, smile benignly, and hint at how much he could tell them if he only had time.

On this particular afternoon, when

Steve seated himself, Horton was out warming up while a group of substitutes lounged on the grass near the water keg, perusing a newspaper that told in big headlines of Dick Horton's career and the prospects of his winning the championship of the world. The Titans had practically won the pennant, and there was little left to the baseball writers for the rest of the season but comparative dope on the ability of the two teams. In the opposition major league, the Blue Sox, long since, had cinched the flag.

"If there's anybody knows more'n that old guy," observed one of the subs, pointing to an action photograph, and nodding his head toward Horton, "I'd like to see him start."

"Yes, I guess he's rotten," agreed the other, with emphasis proper to the irony. "If anybody knows a pitcher that's got anything on him, they can start betting me."

"Fellers," spoke up Steve, and his face beamed with that mysterious smile of satisfaction, so typical of scouts in general, "when I first picked up that boy he didn't know the difference between a pitch-out and a strike." The subs settled themselves for a long story. "Why, when I——"

"Didn't know what?" A voice interrupted, and Dick Horton, perspiring profusely from his warm-up, edged himself on the bench. "I didn't get that last one, Steve—didn't know what?"

"Why, hello, Dick! How do things look?" But that didn't get the old scout out of his embarrassment.

"He was just sayin'," one of the recruits explained, "that when he first took charge of you down in Virginia you didn't know the difference between a pitch-out and a strike."

The young busher threw back his head, and let out a loud, derisive laugh. "No, I guess not! But I knew the difference between a high fast one and a

low curve inside. How about that, Steve?"

"That's all right," said the scout, with a strained effort to hide his discomfiture by appearing serious. "Stop this kiddin' for a minute, Dick. You know this world's series is comin' on, and them Blue Sox has got to be figured."

"You bet they have," agreed Horton. "I thought you had a line on them by this time. Didn't you drop in there on your way up north?"

"Sure, I did," said Steve. "I've got the dope on their three big hitters, but it ain't natural to suppose that I could get them all in one trip."

Manager McGill, coming in from the practice field, interrupted the conversation to borrow pencil and paper from Steve. He quickly wrote out his batting order, and walked out to hand it to the umpire.

"You'll work to-day, Dick," he said to the star, and, with a smile, added: "Want Steve to catch you?" That was a standing joke of McGill's.

"Well, you can't tell, Mac," laughed Dick. "He was just telling the gang here how he first showed me how to pitch."

"Say, Dick." The scout spoke in a low, confidential tone, when the laugh had subsided. "Who do you suppose I saw over there at the Blue Sox park?"

"How'd I know who you saw—the president?"

"You remember Buck Fenton?"

"Do I remember him?" Horton repeated. "Anybody who can talk to you ought to remember Buck. What about him?"

"He's over there," confided Steve. "And he's on the Blue Sox team."

"I thought he was all in long ago."

"Oh, he ain't playin' regular," the scout hastened to explain. "They've got him in there as a kind of utility man. Bats flies to the outfield in practice."

"Well, I should worry," declared Horton, with a slight show of impatience.

"Hey, boy," he called to the mascot. "Pitch me my glove."

It was game time, and Steve crawled from the dugout to start for the grand stand. Behind him was a general sigh of satisfaction, one youngster voicing the general sentiment with: "Well, we're rid of the jinx." But the old scout didn't hear well and missed it.

"Oh, Steve," Dick Horton called to him, and came over to be out of ear-shot of the other players. "I want you to cut out this stuff you're pumping into the newspapers about your having discovered me, and get me some real dope on what these Blue Sox can hit. And I want the *real thing*, too—get me?" Steve did get him, and the look accompanying the last sentence went straight to the mark. There was a world of recollection behind it.

"Now, listen, Dick, please don't hand me that old stuff any more," he pleaded.

"Am I handing you anything?" asked the younger man. There was a trace of sarcasm in his grin.

"I know you didn't say it, but you looked it," said Steve. "I haven't forgot about givin' you the double cross that day at Clifton, but I'll make up for it, or my name ain't Steve Welsh. Besides, I'm gettin' old, and have got to make good in this job, Dick."

"All right. Go to it." Dick Horton slipped on his glove, and walked to the box.

It was the last game that Horton would have to pitch, the pennant being practically won, and he was to be saved up for the world's series. Knowing this, the Titan star put everything he had on the ball and won in a canter. The next afternoon Red Haynes grabbed the game needed to cinch the flag, and for a week the veterans loafed.

The Titans arrived in the home town of the Blue Sox on the opening day of the big series, favorites in the betting. They were in great shape for the struggle, while the Blue Sox, according to newspaper reports, had two men on the hospital list, and one of their star pitchers with a sore arm.

"Don't fall for that stuff too strong," Manager McGill advised his players. "To trim that bunch you've got to give them everything you've got in the shop. Don't let that newspaper stuff fool you."

Just the same, the Titan players already were figuring on what they would do with their money. Benny Beck, the third baseman, had made all arrangements to pay off the last installment on his home out in Wichita, Kansas.

The hotel swarmed with newspaper men and fans who had come over to give their heroes encouragement. So numerous and industrious were the scribes, that even the recruits, who are always taken along, could get interviewed without having to horn into a group of veterans. Everything anybody said was printed and columns were devoted toward showing the psychological bearing of an optimistic spirit on the result. Which, after all, was another way of trying to discourage the jinx.

The busiest man in the whole United States about that time was Steve Welsh. Realizing that publicity helps to hold a job the old scout had himself interviewed every few minutes. During his other spare moments, he hovered around the manager, ate with him in his room, looked wise when anything pertaining to the Blue Sox was mentioned, and rapidly neared the stage of a pest. There was no getting rid of him.

"Steve, I know you mean well," Manager McGill said to him about noon on the day of the game, "but for the love of Pete, lay off me and give me a

chance to rest. The best place to play this game is out there in the Blue Sox park. Go down and talk to Dick Horton."

Even Horton tried to escape, but there was no ducking Steve. He had to be heard. One by one—for the tenth time—Dick went over the Blue Sox batters with Steve, and, when they were through, Horton had to admit that he didn't know what the old, self-satisfied scout was talking about. As they walked out the main entrance of the hotel, a photographer was set for a picture of the Titan star, and Steve stood arm in arm with Dick as he took it. He was irrepensible.

Into a taxicab Horton jumped, and Steve lit right beside him.

"Now, listen, Dick," the old fellow confided, as they rode out to the grounds, "I'm going to get a seat right back of the Titan bench, and if you get puzzled over anything, give me the high sign, and I'll tip you off. I've got these Blue Sox batters in my vest pocket when it comes to knowing their weakness."

The Titan star finally escaped by going through the players' entrance, Steve having to go to the grand-stand gate.

True to predictions, Ed McGill, manager of the Titans, had given Horton the honor of pitching the opening game of the series. McGill wasn't figuring so much on the honor of the thing as on getting the jump by grabbing the first one. At the same time, he let it go as a special tribute to Horton as long as the newspaper men wanted it that way.

Dick Horton was at his best, and it was a wonderful game—up to the seventh inning. Benny Beck, who, up to this time, had been counting the grand stand, with that Wichita payment in mind, let a grounder get by him, and the big blow started. Larry Jenkins then kicked one at second, and the Blue Sox had two on bases with one out.

How strangely like that blow of the Sea Gulls back in Clifton on the day of the double cross, thought Horton. Could the jinx be working again?

Steve Welsh's dope on the batters had been pretty accurate, to Horton's surprise, and the heavy hitters had done nothing with him at all. But here were two ordinary clouters on the bases and only one out! Dick afterward admitted that he was nervous—apprehensive. He glanced toward the bench for advice or encouragement, but got nothing—not even a look. He then understood, and smiled broadly. The Blue Sox pitcher was coming to bat.

The Titans still had a one-run lead, which didn't feel nearly so large as it did a few innings previous, but was somewhat of a comfort, nevertheless.

There was a hurried consultation on the Blue Sox bench, and the pitcher, who already had begun to knock the mud from his spikes with the big end of his bat, was called back. There followed another consultation, while Horton, to keep busy, played toss with the first baseman.

When the Blue Sox players finally resumed their seats, a big, ungainly fellow was ambling toward the plate with the heaviest stick of ash Horton had ever seen in the big league. The captain of the Blue Sox walked out, and said something to the umpire.

"Fenton batting in place of Harper!" The announcer shrieked through a megaphone. The immense crowd cut loose a roar of approval.

"Who did he say?" Dick asked of the first baseman.

"Fenton," he replied. "Buck Fenton."

One glance at the batter and Horton's mind again went back to the old Sea Gulls. Buck Fenton, the man he had unintentionally helped into the big league ten years before, stood facing him now. He could hit a low curve,

inside, a mile. At last the chance to get even had come. Horton chuckled.

"Hello, kid," yelled Buck, now a broken-down veteran, but still good as a pinch hitter. "Don't be skeered of me. Never expected to see us both up here."

This kind of taunting is supposed to get a pitcher's goat.

"We both won't be here long," Dick shot back savagely, and surprised himself by the lowbrow twist he gave to the words.

And then, as if in league with fate, Dick's catcher called for a curve, low and inside!

Horton shook his head vigorously. Not in a thousand years! There may have been some batters whose weakness was unfamiliar to him, but this one he knew.

Like a bullet, the Titan star cut loose a high, fast one. It was outside by a foot, and Fenton waited.

Those who sat back of the Titan bench saw, at this moment, an old fellow jump up and wave his arms wildly. His voice could be heard above the roar as Buck Fenton swung at a wide one, and fouled it into the stands. Not once did Horton look toward the old scout. Steve was frantic.

"Switch, Dick, switch!" he screamed, but this time his voice was muffled in a shower of paper balls thrown by Blue Sox rooters.

In desperation, Steve jerked a pencil from his next-door neighbor's hand, and sat down. Hurriedly he scribbled a note on the back of an envelope. It was the last hope. Throwing the pencil to the floor, the old scout leaped to the rail, and hurled his hat at the mascot below. The boy looked up.

"Here, boy," screamed Steve. "Take this note to Horton. Quick now!"

Having done all that he could, Steve got back to his seat, exhausted from excitement.

Knowing Welsh to be the Titan

scout, the boy, with the note in his hand, started boldly for the diamond, just as Dick was winding up. The chief umpire called time, and stopped him.

"It's a note for Horton," the official said to the catcher.

"I'll get it when I come to the bench," declared Dick, overhearing the remark. "Don't let 'em hold me up this way, ump." Horton had seen Steve Welsh throw his hat at the boy. Though ten years had elapsed, Dick was not to be crossed again.

The count now stood two balls and one strike on Fenton, and the catcher almost put Horton up in the air by again calling for a curve, low and inside. Dick, thoroughly irritated, shook his head violently. His time had come for revenge, and the Titan star wound up for a fast one. He would have this one so accurate that he could put it through a knot hole.

With a curving sweep of his arm, Dick brought the ball over and shot it straight to the mark—shoulder-high—with tremendous speed.

"Bang!"

Buck Fenton met that ball squarely on the nose, and, as far as the Titans or Blue Sox know, nobody has seen it since. Lining out like a long, white string, the ball struck the turf in deep

left field, and in one bound cleared the rail in front of the bleachers. It was lost in the scrambling crowd. Three runs scored.

The next two batters were easy outs, but the day was done for Dick Horton. The game was over when the fans back of the bench revived Steve Welsh.

"Mr. Horton, here's your note," said the unhappy little mascot, meeting the great pitcher as he came to the bench.

"To the devil with it!" And in utter disgust Horton threw his glove into the dirt. "I hope that old pest falls out of the stand and breaks his neck." He turned to Manager McGill. "He crossed me ten years ago, and here he is jinxing us all again." Dick was in a rage.

"Here, boy, give me that note." Horton almost took the kid's hand with it as he angrily snatched the bit of paper. And then he quieted. It read:

Forgot tell you. Pitcher found Buck's weakness first day in big league. Been hitting nothing but high fast ones ten years. Get it low and inside.

It so happened that when the series ended the Blue Sox had won by a single game.

And still there are people who will not yet believe in the jinx.



ONE WAY TO GET VOTES

WHEN Tom Shipp was running for Congress in Indianapolis, he received a visit one day from a colored man.

"Mr. Shipp," said the visitor, "you've got a bunch of negro voters in your district, and they probably want some money."

"Yes," agreed Shipp weakly.

"Now, Mr. Shipp," pursued the self-elected adviser, "don't you go paying those fellows individually. That's not the way to handle them. The right way is to find an influential negro, the most solid citizen among them, and give him the money and let him distribute it as he sees fit for the delivery of the votes."

Being opposed to the use of money in elections, and not having any money anyway, Shipp welcomed this advice with a long and well-developed silence.

"Mr. Shipp," said the visitor finally in an extremely confidential tone, "I've got a lot of influence among those niggers."

The Six Ages of Sandy Saunders

BEING THE LIFE STORY OF A MAN WHO HAD THE WILL TO SUCCEED

By George Randolph Chester

Author of "Get-Rich-Quick Wallingford," "Sledge's Way," Etc.

VI.—THE MALEFACTOR

THE little French wireless operator with the black pompadour stood over the backgammon board, a message in his hand.

"For Mr. Thomas," he said.

The guest of Sandy Saunders held up a warning left hand, and, with the other, threw his dice.

"Fives!" he exulted, in a voice singularly crisp for a man with hair so white. "Give up, Sandy?"

"Certainly not," immediately refused John Saunders, in a voice equally strong. His hair was that shade of white which betrays that it has once been red. It was almost pink, and there were left a few bright red ones which had positively refused to fade.

"You stubborn cuss!" and the voice was one of amused aggravation. "Look where these four fives and four deuces will take me," and he pointed out the places. "You're blocked."

"You can't hold it, Nelse," confidently returned his host, glancing out over the dancing blue water to where Monaco lay, crisp in white and red, against her green hills. "About two doubles in the finish, and I can beat you."

Laughing, Nelse Thomas took his message. It was a pleasure to let those fives lie, for a while, in the sight of Sandy Saunders. He was such a hard loser. Suddenly Nelse looked up with a frown.

"Sandy, you're shipping cheese over the A. & B."

"The dickens I am!" Sandy reached for the message—a wireless from First Vice President Thomas, of the Handeman railroad group, to President Thomas:

International shipping over A. & B.

JOHN.

Sandy Saunders' bushy eyebrows knotted down and his lower lip straightened. He was a strong-nosed old man with a fine pink in his face, and the eyes under his wrinkled lids had still a snap in their clear blue. "By Cæsar!" he exploded, "I'll see to this! Here!" He took from the operator a block of blanks and a pencil, and he wired to First Vice President Saunders, of the International Cheese Company:

Ship exclusively over Handeman line.

SAUNDERS.

"Now, Nelse," he said, "move your pieces, and I'll show you something."

Five hours later, when the *Lola* lay at anchor before the great gambling house of Prince Albert, the wireless operator came down again, and found, wrapped in rugs on the forward deck, the two backgammon players, and two silver-haired ladies, Mrs. Saunders, slight and vivacious and still fluffy, and Mrs. Thomas, plump and placid. The message this time was for the owner

of the yacht, and, as he read it, he turned to his old friend Nelse with a scowl of triumph.

"Why didn't you send us cars?" he demanded.

President Thomas gave an angry start, and he took the message with a jerk. It read:

Too late. Green Valley persistently slow in furnishing cars. Have contracted with A. & B. for five years. NELSON.

President Thomas laid down the message with a hand which trembled slightly. "It's too dog-goned bad, Sandy. We've carried your cheese for over thirty years."

"You always were slow with cars," snapped Sandy, while the two silver-haired women looked at each other and smiled in delight. "Here, Nelse, wire your son John to hustle cars down to Grazeville, and I'll wire my Nelse to ship by the Green Valley, contract or no contract."

"That's the way to fix it," agreed Nelse, with instant relief in his black eyes. "Thanks, Sandy. I'll make it strong," and he began writing in a hand which, while shaky, was swift. He finished his message, and chuckled. He had once been stout, and now his pouched cheeks shook, as he laughed. "This will throw your Nelse in a devil of a mess."

"Serves him right," grinned Sandy.

Four days later, in the shadow of Mount Vesuvius, with a thin thread of smoke stretching from its crater across the bay toward blue Capri, the wireless operator, his pompadour so stiff that it seemed, in some way, to account, for the three deep wrinkles in his young brow, came to the white-clad yachtsmen, as they were pacing the deck, Nelse limping slightly, and Sandy a little the taller, but both remarkably sturdy and stalwart for sixty-eight. There was a message for each this time.

"You're refusing our cars," and the voice of Nelse was reproachful, as if

Sandy himself had inspired that un-sportsmanlike action.

"We're bluffed, that's the reason," explained Sandy, in deep self-contempt. "Look at this!" He held out the message, and tapped it angrily with the back of a bony hand:

A. & B. has brought suit for nonfulfillment of contract. Have resumed shipping over their lines.

Nelse walked to the rail and looked up the slopes of Naples with regretful eyes.

"We never should have retired from the active management of our affairs." There was that in his voice which was a dirge for his youth.

"They'll know who's boss as long as I live!" Sandy's mouth squared and his jaw set. "Nelse," his voice broke shrill, "wire John Thomas to keep Grazeville supplied with cars, dog-gone him; and I'll wire my Nelse to let the A. & B. sue, and be danged."

Nelse spent a moment in troubled thought.

"Sandy," he worried, "I wonder if our sons know a blamed thing about this."

Away to Egypt, where the low, gray shores lay burning under the hot sun. Cairo. The city of restless streets, of submissive poverty, of gay chatter, of countless strangers. On the terrace of the big hotel sat Nelse and Sandy, with a small table between them, and glasses on the table. They were in dinner coats. Electric lights were blazing down on them. In front, a tangle of carriages, peddlers with gaudy scarfs, and persistent white-toothed Egyptian boys with post cards. In and out, a stream of brilliantly gowned women and suave men of travel; tourists in groups, with their queer hats and their vivid sun veils and their climbing sticks, and their intense determination to waste not a minute.

"Pretty gay, Sandy," said Nelse with satisfaction. He moved his foot tender-

ly. He had developed a touch of his old rheumatism. Sandy would call it gout!

"What's that?" Sandy's hearing was sometimes poor at night. By way of apology, he turned on Nelse the smile which was like a flash of sunshine.

"Pretty gay, I said," repeated Nelse, raising his voice. "We're mighty lucky, Sandy."

They clinked their glasses to each other, their eyes twinkled, and presently they laughed. They had played many a cute trick on the world, these two!

"Sixty-eight," boasted Sandy, "and not a trouble in our lives worth mentioning."

There came a gorgeous creature in red and gold, who smiled at them with many white teeth as he delivered two cablegrams, for he knew perfectly these two rich Americans. They were here every winter, and were worth ten piasters each, on any occasion.

Still chuckling, as they pondered the pranks they had played together, from the kindergarten to now, they opened their cablegrams. Nelse Thomas sank back in his chair, with his mouth drooping, and the pouches of his cheeks shaking curiously. Sandy stiffened bolt upright, his eyebrows knotted, his jaws set, the color rising in his cheeks, and his mouth squared in spite of its desire to quiver. His hands were trembling.

The cablegrams were both alike. They read:

Indicted for rebating. Don't come home.

II.

"But I don't understand!" gasped Mrs. Thomas, in a flutter of worry, and, though the *Lola* was speeding northward at a clip which made heavy wraps imperative, Mrs. Thomas involuntarily went through the motion of fanning herself.

"We might just as well be frank about it," observed Sandy Saunders,

with a reassuring smile at his wife. "We're caught in a scandal, Nelse and I."

"Oh!" gasped Mrs. Thomas, fanning again with an empty hand. "It can't be true, Nelse!"

"Very bad, Sandy?" inquired Lola Saunders, studying her husband's eyes seriously. There had always been absolute frankness between them. She was nervous, but controlling it.

"Rebating, Lo," explained Nelse, who had wheeled her in a baby carriage many times. Neighbors these three.

"I know," responded Lola soberly. "They all do it."

"But I don't understand!" again implored Mrs. Thomas.

"I'll make it perfectly plain to you, my dear," set forth her husband, with a reproachful glance for Sandy. It had not been Nelse's custom to explain. He had discovered that it only made matters worse. Lola hitched her chair forward. "When Sandy went into the cheese business, I was at the head of the rate department for the Handeman system. I made him a lower rate on the hauling of cheese than I did anybody else."

"Naturally," interrupted Mrs. Thomas, looking about her nervously. Where had she put that fan? The wind was cutting a fine color into her cheeks, but she did not notice it. Fanning was a habit. "Why shouldn't you? Sandy was your friend. But what is rebating?"

Nelse and Sandy grinned at each other.

"The mere system of bookkeeping by which I made him the lower rate. He sent me a check for the full price, and we returned him a check for the difference."

"But what's the scandal!" She was more agitated than ever.

"That's all."

"Yes, that's all," repeated Sandy, still grinning.

Lola Saunders gazed thoughtfully out ahead, where some gulls were circling.

"I wish Grace had come with us," she said.

Sandy folded his hand over hers. They had been together for more than thirty years.

"Well, if that's all, I don't see why we left Egypt in such a hurry," and Mrs. Thomas rose, her mind considerably relieved.

"Egypt is so far away," speculated Lola, with a glance at her husband. "Shall we walk, Betty?"

As soon as they had turned the corner of the shelter deck, the wireless operator popped around from the other corner. His black hair seemed to be vibrating with the electricity in which he dealt. His eyes sparkled, and the lines of his lips were parallel with those in his forehead. He at last had important messages!

They were long ones, those messages, and as soon as the retired business men had read their own, they exchanged. They looked at each other sadly and without comment. Their sons were good sons, but they were sons!

Another day. Waiting around the corner, the wireless operator delivered messages when the ladies were not there. His bearing had stiffened since Egypt. He was almost military. Again the retired business men exchanged messages. Sandy crumpled his. There was still a good grip in his hand. His bushy brows knotted.

"Why the dickens did they admit that!" he exploded. He rose, and stood at the prow, gazing wistfully ahead. He had always been proud of the speed of the *Lola*, but it seemed slow to-day. He appeared taller than he had used to be. He was becoming a trifle gaunt. Nelse hobbled up beside him. His foot was a nuisance.

"They're good boys, Sandy."

"The best in the world," agreed

Sandy heartily. He gazed wistfully ahead again, and presently his shoulders squared and his jaws set. He turned abruptly. "Nelse, let's go home."

"No!" vigorously objected Nelse. "We'd meet a summons at the head of the gangplank."

"We could slip in somewhere," figured Sandy, his brows still knotted.

"Now don't set your head on it!" half shouted Nelse, in a panic of concern. He was quite familiar with that look in Sandy's eyes. "We know too much to be present at that trial."

"That's why we should be there," promptly urged Sandy. "We'd know how to tell it. We could land at Norfolk——"

"You're a blamed fool!" interrupted Nelse. "Sandy, have a little sense! Do you want to be bullyragged by a lot of smart-Alec lawyers?"

"No!" Sandy was most emphatic in that denial. "But, by George, I'd stand that rather than have the courts skin me out of a few million dollars! Nelse," he doubled up his fist and shook it; "I fought human hyenas for that money, and I licked 'em!" His voice cracked, like a boy's at the turn of life. "It's my money; mine! I made it! I'm going back!"

Nelse was silent for a moment. He protruded his chest.

"How?"

"We can't land the *Lola* secretly on American shores," speculated Sandy. "They know the exact gallon of water she's cutting at this minute. We can't go in on a steamer. We'd be recognized as soon as we landed."

"As soon as we embarked," corrected Nelse. "Somebody on board would be sure to know us. We can't make it, Sandy."

"By George, we have to make it!" Sandy's cheeks had flushed, and his eyes glinted.

They were both silent for a few intent moments. Nelse laughed aloud.

"C. F. Hodson's yacht!" he exclaimed. "It's tied up at Cherbourg, and for sale. I thought of buying it when we came down." His black eyes glowed with enthusiasm. He smiled. Something pleased him. "It's about ten feet longer than this, and two knots faster. It's a better yacht all around, I think."

"The *Lola* can cut circles around her!" declared Sandy. "I wouldn't have the *Viking*. She's a tub!"

"Now you're jealous," chuckled Nelse, his cheek pouches shaking. "You thought it was a good yacht until I proposed buying it."

"I never said it."

"You did. You never in your life have wanted me to have anything better than yours. Take my new four-speed limousine, for instance."

"Where is it now?" This contemptuously.

"See! Didn't I tell you? You were glad the day it got smashed!"

"Here, here!" called Lola Saunders. "What are you boys quarreling about this time?"

"Nelse is going to buy the *Viking*," explained Sandy. "It's a tub! We're going home in her."

III.

When the *Viking* dropped anchor in Chesapeake Bay, carrying Samuel Dokes, owner, and James Smith, guest, both United States citizens, three lawyers boarded her almost as soon as the government boat.

"Why did you come here?" demanded the leading lawyer, who had a cold eye and a wagging forefinger. He was hard of cheek bone and deep of voice, and he had a way with him of frightening clients into submission.

"Because we're needed," John W. Saunders, otherwise Samuel Dokes, immediately informed him. "If there was a grain of sense in the legal profession we wouldn't be here."

The little lawyer pressed forward. He wore a mustache for fierceness, and a Prince Albert to lend him height.

"I suppose you know, gentlemen, that you will be summoned the moment you are recognized," he sternly reminded them.

The heavy-set lawyer slammed his hat on the rosewood piano in the little gold-brocaded salon. He was the hearty speaker, who was impressive with the plain men on a jury. He wore sack suits not too offensively pressed.

"Mr. Taber commissioned me to advise you to sail out of American waters at once, Mr. Thomas," he announced. "Public sentiment is very strongly aroused, and——"

"Public sentiment be damned!" interrupted Saunders. "The chief question is this: Can we secure a drawing-room on the next train?"

President Thomas sat with his foot on a chair.

"Where is Taber?" he wanted to know.

"He thought it better not to come," reported the heavy one. "He feared that he might be recognized in Norfolk, and traced to you."

"If you had carried this secrecy into the courtroom, we might not have needed to come," commented Nelse dryly. "You've held us away for a month, with orders not to come, and Sandy and I have been figuring that our absence will cost us about a million dollars a day."

"Save that for Taber, Nelse, but remember just how you said it," snapped Sandy. "Now, Lester, tell us the worst."

Thereupon, the hard-cheek-boned lawyer with the deep voice wagged his finger and told them the worst. The charge of rebating had been clearly proved. The agents of the Interstate Commerce Commission had been energetic on the case for a year, and they had done a beautiful piece of work;

beautiful! His professional admiration for this was most aggravating. The proceedings were before Judge Grine, who had assessed the famous fine of thirty-nine million dollars against the Standard Glue Company, and it was confidently predicted that he would do even better on this occasion, particularly since he was incensed that the Standard Glue fine had never been collected. Altogether the outlook was gloomy, very gloomy! He said this with almost a relish.

"Good Lord, and I pay you for this!" blurted Sandy Saunders. "Well, we have to get together and do something!"

Mr. Lester looked justly indignant, but it was the small lawyer who expressed it.

"Everything that legal talent could do has been done," he stated. "The best attorneys in the country have been retained; eleven of them. For the Handeman system there are eight, I believe, Mr. Wing."

The heavy man bowed.

"Eight," he corroborated.

Sandy looked at Nelse, and he snorted.

"If only old Timothy Tucker were alive," he sighed. "Timothy would have gone into this fight with one office boy to carry his books, and he'd have had the opposition experts proving my case for him. They've all left us, Nelse," and his voice cracked.

Nelse had been drooping. The prospect had not seemed encouraging, but now he sat up straighter in his chair and protruded his chest.

"We're not so very old, Sandy," he cheerily observed, and he stood up, in spite of his limp. "Buck up, Sandy." That moment of weakening in Sandy had made Nelse feel forlornly lonesome, but he was not going to show it. "How soon can we go ashore?"

"Gentlemen, I protest!" Mr. Lester was very severe. He confronted John Saunders with his stern eye. His fore-

finger wagged threateningly. "The case is already lost. The violation was so plain and easily proved, that a defense could scarcely be conducted with dignity." He included both gentlemen in the glare and in the wag. "At this juncture your presence can only embarrass your counsel. Therefore, I protest that you must not land; that you must immediately sail out of these waters."

Sandy Saunders' face suddenly flushed, and he doubled up his fists.

"Who's running this!" he shouted. "You go ashore and get us a drawing-room on that next train! Good Lord, how I wish Timothy Tucker hadn't died!"

The next treat the returned wanderers enjoyed was a glimpse at the enterprising newspapers of their beloved country. They had stacks of them in the drawing-room, reading matter enough to last them all the way to New York; and they devoured it with avidity, searching through every line for a clew which might help them out of their dilemma. No one else had seemed to have that idea.

My, but the cheese rebate trial was a boon to the consumers! It was interesting to know that the cheese monopolist and the railroad highwayman were thieves; rank thieves! They were scoundrels; they were swindlers; they were criminals of the most degraded type! Every dollar of their money represented a putrid violation of the moral code! Think of it! Ex-Governor John W. Saunders, once honored with an ambassadorship by the country he chose to dishonor, had shipped cheese over the Green Valley Railroad, and had received back-part of his freight money! What do you think of that! Had other cheese manufacturers enjoyed that foul privilege? They had not, and, in consequence, they could not wring so much profit out of the downtrodden poor who liked cheese, and they had either gone out of business or had been gobbled up

by the monster Saunders! Hah! Let him beware! His day of doom was approaching! The moral conscience of the public was awake, and nothing would put it back to sleep but vengeance!

Then again, Nelson Thomas! Like a thief in the night, he had gone into the offices of the atrocious Handeman railroad system, and had worked his way up from disgraceful obscurity to chief of the rate department! Then what had happened? Lying awake with his devilish mind, he had conceived the loathsome idea of handing back to John W. Saunders part of the money he paid for freight on cheese! With this iniquitous start, he had climbed up and up, until he had, at last, achieved his nefarious purpose of becoming president of the Handeman railroad group! Doubtless many a good man, after the same end, had been scornfully spurned out of his way in the upward climb! Hah! Let him also beware! His day of doom, too, was approaching! Now, at a period when these doddering old men—Jinks, that was the line which hurt!—should be preparing to meet the hereafter they were caught red-handed in their villainy! And could they ever have been happy with all these black loads upon their consciences? No, they could not; and let this be a warning to you! For years they had writhed in the consciousness of their own crimson guilt, and now Nemesis was upon them! Oh, joy!

This mental diversion had one excellent effect; it prevented fatigue; and both Nelse Thomas and Sandy Saunders left the train with heads erect and brisk footsteps; and there was no sleepiness in their eyes. They stalked into a closed car, with their crimson guilt and all, and whirled to Sandy Saunders' boarded-up house on Fifth Avenue, and shocked the caretaker into paresis by coming in through the basement entrance. In thirty minutes seventeen

lawyers were there. One of the nineteen was sick in bed, and one was out of town.

By the time the last of the lawyers had arrived the first of the reporters came, and, if all the chimneys had not been stopped up, these would have gotten in! Failing in that, they congregated outside the house, while inside the seventeen lawyers, violently and with much authority, tried to force the two stubborn white-haired criminals to go away. Not one of them made the least impression except in the direction of aggravation, until the great Taber came. He was a dark-skinned man with a piercing eye, and he was the most dramatic performer on the legal stage.

"Hush!" he said, with a downward wave of his hand. "You must escape immediately, both of you! Around the corner, in front of number seventeen, is a curtained limousine, which will take you to Ardsdale, where you will board a train for Canada!"

"Let him talk, Sandy," urged Nelse, staying a hasty movement.

"You cannot possibly leave by the front way," continued the impressive Taber. "You will pass out through your basement, and climb over the back fence into the yard of number seventeen, to which I have the keys."

The restraining hand of Nelse Thomas was no longer effective.

"Once and for all——" loudly proclaimed Sandy Saunders, jumping up.

"Just a moment," interrupted Mr. Taber, triumphant in having saved his real news for a climax. "There are personal indictments out against both of you gentlemen, and the degree of conspiracy with which you are charged has in it the possibility of the penitentiary!"

Well, that was different. Urged by the seventeen highly agitated members of the legal fraternity, the two vicious criminals permitted themselves to be hurried out through the basement door;

and then ensued the spectacle of the aged and somewhat stiff multimillionaire cheese monopolist and the aged and somewhat stiffer multimillionaire railroad monopolist being feverishly boosted over a high board fence at dead of night!

On top of the fence, and astride it, Sandy Saunders rebelled.

"Let go of me!" he yelled, and kicked a lawyer squarely in the Vandyke. "Not a danged step farther will I go! Nelse, come on!"

"All right, Sandy!" The voice was the voice of a boy. It rang out with much the same confident recklessness, much the same loyalty, much the same glee in defiance which had characterized him when Sandy and he had gone after watermelons. "Where are we going?" and he jumped amid the fraternity.

"To get our summonses!" yelled Sandy, and brushing restraining hands aside, he stalked to the front door and got his summons. It was waiting there.

"Now, gentlemen," said he suavely, as he locked out the press and returned to the big library, "we shall be pleased to confer with you at nine-thirty in the morning."

When they had all departed, Sandy ordered a fire in the furnace, and remarked to Nelse, who still stood with his summons in his hand:

"Let's open the vault in the cellar, and spend the night with the books of my original cheese company."

IV.

"You do solemnly swear mumble-mumble-mumble-jerk."

"I do." As nearly one grunt as possible.

The prosecuting attorney took him.

"Your name is John Whittier Saunders, I believe."

"It is."

"You are sixty-eight years old."

"Yes."

"Ah!" The prosecuting attorney was even triumphant, in effect, as he wrung these admissions from the culprit in the witness stand. He was a man with a ferocious eye and an upturned nose and a brutal jaw, and he was a terror to evildoers. "You are the president of the International Cheese Company, I believe." Always a touch of sarcasm in that "I believe," as if he constantly expected the hideous offender on the witness stand to lie about it.

"Well, nominally."

Quiet little speech that, nonchalant and even careless; but the effect was magical. The prosecuting attorney jerked and frowned. All Sandy Saunders' phalanx of lawyers settled into an astonishing calm, excepting the small one with the fierce mustache, who spread out his papers before him and pawed. Judge Grine, who was a lean-faced old man with a sarcastic nose, bent forward slightly and cast on Sandy Saunders, for a fleeting instant, an eye which lighted with pleasurable anticipation. He was a member of the Tric-Trac Club, and had often upset the board with Sandy; but here they did not know each other. The intelligent jurymen looked interested. The large and useful audience, which had violently inserted itself into the courtroom, to see if a cheese monopolist had eyes, ears, nose, and a mouth, rustled nervously. It had detected that the proper answer should have been "Yes." Every lady present asked what was the matter. Thirty-three reporters grinned with gratification. Thirty-two of them instantly decided on the startling and highly original phrase, "sprung a surprise on the prosecution." The thirty-third man put it, "tossed a bomb into the company of the enemy."

"Nominally!" Splendid scorn. "You will please answer me yes or no. Are you, or are you not, president of the International Cheese Company?"

"Nominally."

"Yes or no?"

"I object." This was from the fierce small lawyer. Objecting was his department.

"Objection sustained." Judge Grine spoke it like a phonograph.

The prosecuting attorney cast on his honor a look of withering contempt. Thirty-two reporters selected the phrase, "lively brush." The thirty-third one, who had a wider scope, decided on, "lively tilt."

"You say nominally. Does that mean that you are not, in actual fact, the president of the International Cheese Company? Now don't equivocate. Answer me yes or no!"

"Yes."

"Ah!" The prosecuting attorney was puzzled to his toes, but he acted triumphant. "Now remember, if you can, that you are on your oath. Who is president of the International Cheese Company?"

"The Handeman Railroad System."

Wow! Thirty-three reporters made each some violent demonstration of joy. Oh, this was too good! Oh, they hadn't expected anything like this to crop up! Oh, there'd only be room on the front page for the headlines! Oh, what a Nesselrode! Juicy, eh, boys? The intelligent juror folded his arms and smiled and smiled.

The prosecuting attorney wished he had known this the night before, but it would not have been possible, because Sandy and Nelse had not known it themselves until nearly daylight.

"Do you mean to tell this jury of well-balanced men that the Handeman Railroad System is the president of the International Cheese Company!" A laugh of brutal scorn. "Yes or no, and remember," a dramatically upraised hand, "remember that you are sworn to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth!"

John W. Saunders rose, tall and

gaunt and straight. The sun struck him on the round head, and danced on every red hair left amid the white. The sun had always liked John Saunders' head.

"Your honor."

"Mr. Saunders." Courteous formality in that tone. Mr. Saunders was a perfect stranger to him.

"May I have permission of the court to relate the connection I am about to set forth, in my own way, and without interruption?"

The barest twinkle in the eye of Judge Grine, as it flitted in the general direction of John Saunders.

"The witness may proceed."

"It was something like twenty-five years ago—my books will show the date—that the International Cheese Company, then newly formed on the foundation of my Superieur Fromage Company, found itself in need of capital." Quite a bit of dignity to old John Saunders, as he stood there carelessly toying with his eyeglasses. The newspaper men admired him immensely. They intended to make it as rotten for him as they could, but it was their duty. They owed it to the public. "In this extremity, two hundred and fifty thousand dollars was borrowed from the corporation popularly known as the Handeman Railroad System."

"Ah!" The prosecuting attorney was recovering his breath. "May I ask if——"

"I object!" The small attorney was there so quickly that his shrill voice hurt his palate.

"Objection sustained," droned out the phonograph.

"The loan was covered by an unrecorded mortgage." Perfectly calm and easy about this, twirling his eyeglasses and standing with the proud stiffness he had acquired when he was ambassador to France. Judge Grine carefully moved his small carnation vase over near the inkstand, concealing by that motion the twinkle in his eye. The in-

telligent juror gazed at John Saunders with admiration and respect. The newspaper gallery was one hissing mass. "Five years later, the International Cheese Company found itself unable to repay this loan; and, rather than injure the business of both companies by the publicity of a foreclosure, the International Cheese Company was taken over, in toto, by the Handeman Railroad System in private agreement, the company to run as before, retaining the same officers and paying its usual dividends to stockholders, the undivided surplus accruing to the benefit of the original loaners of the money, the present owners of the International Cheese Company. I wish to call the attention of the court to the fact that it would be impossible for a concern to rebate, in the legal sense, to a branch of its own business." He paused a moment and cleared his throat. He toyed easily with his eyeglasses. "I am not thoroughly conversant with the law, but I believe such ownerships have been recently held illegal. I am positive, however, that they were not held so at that time."

Ah-ha! The wily old reprobate was scarcely off his feet before the ferocious-eyed and brutal-jawed prosecuting attorney was upon him! The prosecuting attorney fairly gloated in his opportunities. He had the vile evildoer at his mercy now, and there would be no mercy! A cock-and-bull story like this was preposterous! It was a clumsy fabrication on the face of it. Would the prosecuting attorney rank in history with Napoleon Bonaparte, Oliver Cromwell, and Theodore Roosevelt? He would! Just watch him tear this conscienceless old prevaricator to shreds, and hold up the quivering tatters to the scorn and ridicule of all emotional voters!

"I suppose you can prove this absurd story." This with withering scorn.

"I object!" There was excellent reason for the small attorney's having

been made the official objector. He was so quick on the trigger.

"Have you produced in court the records of this peculiar transaction?" The prosecuting attorney had not even waited for the objection to be sustained. The jury had heard him say, in effect, that it was an absurd story which could not be proved; and he was satisfied.

"Such as there are."

"Ah!" Quivering triumph in that. "Such as there are. *Such—as—there—are!* Is that unrecorded mortgage still in existence?"

"No."

"Ah!" Oh, this was a pleasant occasion. "So the unrecorded mortgage is not in existence. *It—is—not—in existence!*" He smiled confidentially on the jury. "Is that agreement of transfer, by which the Handeman Railroad System took over the International Cheese Company, still in existence?"

"I have been unable to locate my copy."

"Ah!" The intelligent jurymen began to grow nervous under the repetition of that syllable of triumph. "So you cannot find it. I suspected as much."

"I object!"

His honor moved the carnation back to its original position.

"Has the Handeman Railroad System its copy of that agreement on file?"

"I cannot say." John Saunders, twirling his eyeglasses complacently, smiled. It was like a flash of sunshine. The women in the audience did hope that he would not be sent to jail, wicked as he might be. The intelligent jurymen grinned frankly at him. John Saunders had taken his first possible advantage of the prosecuting attorney. "That is the business of the Handeman Railroad System."

"Very well." The prosecuting attorney moistened his lips. Far be it from him to betray that he had made a mistake. "If you have no records of

this unique transaction, we shall be compelled to rely on sworn verbal proof, I presume. Who sanctioned that agreement?"

"'Ject!" The small attorney fairly screamed it.

"What proof do you offer?" The prosecuting attorney corrected himself, with that confidential smile at the jury.

"My books of that period. Your honor." Coldly formal. He was speaking to a stranger.

"Mr. Saunders." Quite clearly he had no personal acquaintance with the man.

"I ask the permission of the court to explain this matter in my own way and without interruption."

"The witness may proceed."

"You will find on my books, which are now in court in the possession of my various attorneys, an item of two hundred and fifty thousand dollars, entered under the head of 'Bills Payable' and credited to the Handeman Railroad System. You will find that this item continued as a liability for five years, at which time it was canceled under the heading of 'Agreement.' Under that heading a three-line account was opened in my ledger, and it was balanced by the 'Bill Payable' item. The bank book of the International Cheese Company of that period shows a credit at the time of the loan of two hundred and fifty thousand dollars. The books of the bank will show that this deposit was in the form of a check from the Handeman Railroad System. The books of that same bank will corroborate the fact that no corresponding amount was ever checked out to the Handeman System."

"Ah!" The prosecuting attorney's forelock was rumped. He had been doing it unconsciously all through this explanation. There were lines of distress in his brow, and a restless look in his ferocious eye. "Is *that* all the proof you have to offer!"

"That is all." Calm, confident, twirling his confounded eyeglasses! The prosecuting attorney was bitterly disappointed. He had been carefully advised that John Saunders had a whirlwind temper, and there is nothing so valuable in a cross-examination; but in the clear blue eye of old John Saunders there was only peace.

A thoughtful-eyed attorney leaned over and whispered something to the prosecuting examiner. The latter almost said "Ah!"

"You say that the Handeman Railroad System contented itself with the undivided surplus as its profit on the operations of the company."

"Yes."

"Have you any records to show that this undivided surplus was ever paid over to the Handeman Railroad System?"

"Yes."

"In what amount?"

"Twenty-eight million dollars."

Tremendous sensation! No one thought of going out to lunch! The reporters were in deep distress. The front page of an ordinary newspaper is only about eighteen by twenty-four inches!

The prosecuting attorney again had that hunted look. This was not a Nesselrode!

"At what periods?"

"This morning."

Oh, boys, did you hear it! Judge Grine, with a scathing glare at the newspaper gallery, seized his gavel and pounded for order.

"You will find the amount credited to the account of the Handeman Railroad System as soon as the check has been cleared. Probably by now," and John Saunders glanced indifferently at his watch. "You will also find that amount deducted from the account of the International Cheese Company, at its bank."

"Ah!" The eyes of the prosecuting

attorney lighted with ferocious joy. "Will you kindly explain to the court and to this jury why no portion of this undivided surplus was ever before paid to the astoundingly careless treasurer of the Handeman Railroad System: and why it is paid at this late date!"

The intelligent jurymen, grinning, leaned forward interestedly.

"Because of this trial." Beautiful shock that answer was. "So long as these funds were not in jeopardy, the Handeman System was content to permit them to accumulate, at their thoroughly satisfactory rate of increase. Moreover, this is in preparation for the dissolution of the two companies. I may add that the transactions between the Handeman Railroad System and the International Cheese Company, extending over a long period of years"—head erect, shoulders square, eyes clear, and level mouth firm—"have been conducted upon honor."

"Honor!" howled the prosecuting attorney. This was the last straw! "Honor!" He whirled to the jury and outspread his arms dramatically. "Honor!" Ah, this was the end of it! On that one word he would rest his case! He turned to the long, hard-check-boned Lester, captain of the Saunders forces, with a sarcastic bow. "You may take the witness."

"Waive examination," said Mr. Lester, with a smile. He was very well pleased with himself. He was conducting a case in which a brilliant defense had been grafted upon a forlorn hope. All the eleven attorneys for old John Saunders were tremendously pleased. They would get considerable credit for this; and enormous fees!

"I wish to call Nelson Thomas, if your honor please," begged the prosecuting attorney. "I shall be very brief."

"Call Nelson Thomas," granted the court, in the phonograph tone.

As the multimillionaire cheese monopolist moved out of the room,

with the aggravating case of a man who has well acquitted himself, he met the multimillionaire railroad monopolist coming in, with a slight limp. They did not exchange a word, but the white-haired Nelse looked anxiously into the eyes of the white-haired Sandy, and the white-haired Sandy grinned. Nelse Thomas immediately pushed out his chest and squared his elbows. The sun shone on the head of old John Saunders as he reached the door, and found a score of bright red threads to dance upon. The sun had always greeted John Saunders' head as a friend.

"You do solemnly swear mumble-mumble-mumble-jerk."

"I do." One grunt.

The prosecuting attorney took him.

"Your name is Nelson W. Thomas, I believe."

"Yes."

"Your age?"

"Sixty-eight."

"Ah!" Triumphant. The prosecuting attorney was himself again, relieved from the presence of old John Saunders. "You are president of the Handeman Railroad System, I believe."

"I am."

"Oh!" There was a deep, implied contempt in that syllable. The black eyes of old Nelse Thomas began to glow. He detested the prosecuting attorney from the jump!

"Is the International Cheese Company owned by the Handeman Railroad System? Now answer me yes or no!"

The right hand of old Nelse Thomas quivered. It clenched into a fist.

"Yes!"

"Oh!" Again profound contempt. The prosecuting attorney smiled confidently to the jury. "When did you, or rather the Handeman System, acquire possession?"

"About twenty years ago."

"Oh!" The prosecuting attorney had already discovered that this syllable aggravated Nelse Thomas; so he repeated

it in a slightly higher tone. "Oh!" Nelse Thomas shot an indignant glance at Judge Grine. Was Jerry going to permit this sort of thing in his court! Judge Grine did not even look at the witness. He shifted his carnation over to the inkstand. "I presume that you cannot find your record of that transaction either."

"Ject!" The small attorney's eyes bulged, he was so vehement.

"Objection sustained," observed Judge Grine, and suddenly leaned a little forward. His eyes narrowed until they were glittering brown points. "I wish to warn the examining attorney to be more careful in the form of his examination."

"Thank you," said Nelse Thomas with a bow. His pouchy cheeks were shaking, and his teeth were clenched.

"Can you produce in court your record of that agreement? Now answer me yes or no," and he was rewarded by a jerk in the witness.

"No!" Nelse roared it.

"Oh!" A pause. "Oh! I suppose you cannot find this record."

"Ject!"

"Can you find this record?" The prosecuting attorney cast a quick, confidential smile at the jury, and an inquiring glance at the judge. "Now answer me yes or no!"

"No!" He was just about jumping out of his skin, was Nelse Thomas. Old as he was, by jinks—

"Oh!" Nothing more accumulatively insulting than that one syllable could have been devised. "Oh! So you cannot find any record of that transaction." He whirled to the jury. He extended his arms dramatically. "He cannot find any record of that transaction! Neither could his lifelong friend!" He whirled to the hard-cheek-boned Lester. "You may take the witness." This with tremendous triumph. "I am through with him."

"Waive examination," announced

the captain of the Saunders forces. Mr. Lester was very well satisfied with himself. The entire outcome of this case would rest on the plea. A tremendous pleader can save an almost hopeless case. Mr. Lester foresaw for himself a great triumph of forensic oratory. It was lucky old John Saunders had him to manage this trial!

Nelse Thomas sat still in the witness box. There were yet a number of things he had come prepared to substantiate.

"The witness may go," announced Judge Grine automatically. Jerry was blamed little comfort to one of his old friends in distress!

Nelse slowly stepped down from the witness stand, and limped across to the prosecuting attorney.

"Young fellow!" and his voice cracked. He shook his bony old fist at the prosecuting attorney. "If you'll step outside, I'll whale you, old as I am! Why, you dog-goned insulting pup! Why, you——"

"Order!" shouted Judge Grine, with no time to conceal the twinkle in his eye. "The witness will leave the room."

"Confound it, Jerry——"

"Order!" and the gavel came down.

"All right," grumbled old Nelse, and started to turn, but as he did so, he caught the mocking eye of the prosecuting attorney. "You whelp!" he howled, and, with one of those sudden impulses which had made the affairs of Sandy Saunders and Nelse Thomas so interesting at school, his fist shot out, and caught the astonished prosecuting attorney plump on the nose; whereupon nine attorneys promptly wedged between.

Judge Grine's eyes danced, and, there being no living soul to watch him, since all eyes were focused elsewhere, he permitted himself a grin of youthful joy.

"Order!" he shouted, even above the hubbub of the quivering ecstatic newspaper men. "The bailiffs will re-

move the witness. He is under arrest and is admitted to bail."

For three days the opposing attorneys pleaded, and pounded vigorous forefingers on the misleading entries, or the convincing entries, as the case might be, of the old ledgers of the International Cheese Company. They tossed around the old bank books and the books of the railroad company. At the end of that period, Judge Grine summed up the case for three steady, monotonous hours, and in his address to the jury the words "reasonable doubt" occurred seventy-three times!

The wireless operator with the stiff little pompadour which had pulled creases in his brow, hurried down to the shelter deck of the *Viking*, plowing eastward under full steam! Nelse Thomas had just thrown a double six, but he did not wait to gloatingly point out to Sandy Saunders where this had blocked the game. Both old men grabbed for the messages. They got the wrong ones, but it did not matter. Both were alike.

The wireless operator had never before seen two white-haired men suddenly shake hands so hard, with both hands, and laugh until the tears came

into their eyes, and upset a backgammon board, and grab each other around the waists, and indulge in a boyish wrestling match; but the wireless operator was temperamental, and, having taken the messages, he understood.

"You old scoundrel!" choked Nelse Thomas, after they had bumped against all the furniture in their breathless efforts to throw each other catch-as-catch-can, and had sat down to regain their breath. Nelse had his foot on a chair. He was crazy to have forgotten that foot!

"You old reprobate!" complimented Sandy, and they both laughed again, holding their sides. "Well," Sandy finally remembered, "the first thing to do is to wire the girls. Then you may cable your John to return to my Nelse that twenty-eight million undivided surplus. Nelse!" he suddenly choked with his laughter, and fell into a fit of coughing with it, and could not continue for a few minutes. "Did the joke of the thing ever dawn on you? You collected that two hundred and fifty thousand dollars by monthly installments—in withheld rebates!"

The two old men walked back presently to the stern rail, and stood there, in silent peace, watching the sunset.

The Hill Billy, whose exploits have been chronicled by William H. Hamby in the POPULAR, will reappear in the first August number, on sale July 7th. The story is entitled "THE HILL BILLY TRIES FOR OFFICE."

SOME LETTER! SOME LETTER!

CHARLIE CONRAD, a business man in the national capital, employed a Turk as a servant in his house after having been discouraged by numerous experiments with the average run of servants. The Turk was exceedingly industrious, and devoted his spare time to the study of the English language.

One day Charlie received this letter from him:

DEAR SIR: In this little time at today i saw a good positions against me. I am very far of my country but i not felt that among your family. I can't forget this politeness. I am very grateful but my money weekly it is not sufficient for me because i pay my room and electric car and with rest i can't live.

I ask seven and one-half dollars per week of the next week. I believe you will find this same lines in my sincere sensation.

Discretionary Powers

By Frederick Niven

Author of "Lost Cabin Mine," Etc.

His clothes hung on him as clothes hang on a peg; he had a weary manner; even his mustache looked weary, drooping dismally on either side and half over his mouth; but let no man who hasn't seen Smith in action call him a slouch

IN the days of our youth, generally, do we love these narratives in which the quiet, unassuming, almost delicate-looking man, roughly handled by a bully, whips off his coat, disclosing the arms of an Apollo, and wades into his tormentor—routing him from the field before one could say "Jack Robinson." With gathering years there is a tendency to be skeptical of such stories. At least we hear them with some touch of skepticism.

But hearken to the tale of the measly-looking little person who arrested the shellback, the mufatto, and the two coons who raised Hades on Van Doren's Island off the coast of the Pacific province.

He was, indeed, measly looking. His clothes hung on him as clothes hang on a nail—for west of the Rockies there is no gay red tunic on the swelling torso of the policeman, no smart cavalry pants add grandeur to his stride. He is often so little in evidence that persons have been known suddenly to sit up in their chairs, in B. C.—after having passed across the plains and seen the red coat dotting them, exclaiming: "I say! You have no police here!"

Far be it from me to say that all the provincial police are out of the running when some one is wanted to pose as the Blacksmith in a tableau of Longfellow's celebrated poem; and yet—hearken to the tale of one of them, a

man not unique; nay, rather a mere unit of a type.

Of his clothes I have made mention. As to the man who wore these clothes—he had a weary manner. Even his mustache looked weary, drooping dismally on either side and half over his mouth. From each cheek bone, downward almost to the chin, was a sunken line. He had a slight stoop. His utterance was so drawling and careless that one was at a loss to know whether he were drunk or sober.

See him in conversation with a man not used to him, and they made a quaint twosome. Smith, the meager one—that was his meager name—would be mumbling and drawing, the other man constantly repeating: "What? What?" or "I beg your pardon?" or "How?" according to his manners.

Such people who did not look into Smith's gray eyes were sometimes apt to think they had been talking to a "no-account" person. That was their mistake. The average commercial traveler would have dismissed him at a glance as a hobo, or tried to patronize him and draw him out as a "character."

See him among his friends, talking, and you might well imagine that he was a hypochondriac giving full details of his tired feeling to the listening and sympathetic group. And in all probability he would really be trying to tell

them, seeing they were keenly anxious for details, how he arrested Larry, the holdup man, or how he took down to Victoria the Bughouse Remittance Man, who, after a final jamboree, ran nude in the woods. He had a funny little laugh in his chest in the midst of his narrations of such episodes, a laugh half apologetic, half relishing. But, indeed, he was no great talker. Often, when he had been got to begin a yarn, he would suddenly let it fizzle out, slip a tired oath into the preliminary and whetting sentences, and declare himself too tired to go on. He looked it. He generally looked it—bored stiff; that is, unless you heard his deep, chuckling laugh, or caught the twinkle of his eye.

He looked just as usual on the day that this yarn begins, sitting on a tree stump and cleaning his pipe as if he had all time to do it in—the tree stump in question being one of many in the unbuil't lots of Simpson Inlet. It was a day for lotus-eating; the kind of day when west-coast men feel that something is to be said for a land where food falls in the mouth out of trees instead of having to be worked for, hunted for, or even fished for. It was quite early in the morning, but it was already promising a stifling day up the inlet. Only when a sea breeze fanned would it be tolerable.

Suddenly Smith sat up, a little less humped on his tree stump, and said: "Say! They're paddlin' some. It's a wonder to me they don't skim *out!*"

Those who heard looked along the inlet, and noted a long dark streak, and a much longer white streak, in the midst of the reflections of timbered mountain. The canoe and its wake broke up the still reflections into a thousand—into thousands—of little pieces of wagging, wavering portions of mountain, agitated ripples. And in a minute or two the long canoe, that

had once been a cedar, was shooting for the beach, and the six squat effigies in it were putting on the brake with their paddles.

The effigy in the bow got out and shuffled up the beach. Other men had come out of the houses along shore and were in evidence, but the Indian—that is, if he was an Indian; some of the coast tribes seem half Mongolian—made straight for Smith. Smith blinked at him, and went on cleaning his pipe. He came close. The least interested-looking man on the beach was Smith. When the Siwash stopped beside him he looked up quizzically. The Siwash began to make a clicking and clucking sound, much like that sound produced when kneading dough—or mixing putty. One understands what is meant by guttural speech when one hearkens to this coast-Indian. One exonerates German then. Germany is nasal by comparison.

Every now and then Smith murmured a swear word, as one might say: "Quite so." That was what he meant. But the swear, in a gentle, astonished intonation, came easier. Then he clicked and clucked, and made a few noises as of suffocation and strangulation, looking up at the Siwash. The Indian's face cleared, and he replied. Smith gave a little elevation of his brows, a little nod, and rose, putting his pipe in his pocket, and keeping his hand in with it—a sort of labor-saving device, or so it seemed—and went easily up the shingle to a shack among the stumps.

He came out presently, hands still in jacket pockets, but under one arm was a rifle comfortably tucked, butt up, barrel pointing to the earth a foot ahead of him. He had put on a cartridge belt. He still looked shabby and seedy generally. He might have been going forth to commit suicide, leaving behind him a note: "Fed up—bored

stiff. "Tired of life!" or something like that.

The hotel keeper, looking at him wandering down the beach, shouted out: "You ain't changed your shoes, Smith. You ain't goin' in them——"

"Any old thing will do," Smith answered sadly. His response made the men smile. Up till then they had not smiled, for many of them understood, if not all of it, at least the gist of the clucking and strangling. And it was pretty tough: to wit—a whisky-smuggling boat had been wrecked, the owner and skipper drowned, the four-seamen—or toughs that had helped them—alone survived. And these four toughs were raising Hades on Van Doren's Island with the whole cargo of the wrecked sloop.

"Don't you want anybody along with you?" hailed the heavyweight champion of the place, a man who could lift trees, but was—alas!—a bully.

"What for?" asked Smith. "I ain't goin' out weight lifting!"

The bully determined to pick a quarrel with the men who smiled broadest over this response, but froze up temporarily. Just as he waded to the canoe, and was ready to step in, Smith suddenly called to the hotel keeper:

"Tom!"

"Yap?"

"Look after them pups of mine, will you?"

"Sure."

That was all. If Smith wanted a deputy he would ask for one. Nobody need offer himself.

Away they went, the canoe leaving a long-cut ripple like a white feather behind it. From the shore Smith could be espied tucking his head down, holding up his coat in front with his left hand, shielding a match in his right, lighting a fresh cigar. His head came up. A flutter of smoke whirled backward. The six effigies dug into the water with their paddles.

II.

There is, to-day, a sawmill on Van Doren's Island. But it was only put up this year. They are taking the "big sticks" out of the place, but even till a year ago it was as when Smith drew close to it on the late afternoon of the day on which he told the hotel proprietor to look after the pups. True—"any old thing would do." And the dried salmon of his canoe men was palatable and filled the purpose intended of food in the mind of such men as Smith. That the pangs of hunger be allayed was all he asked; and he had a pocketful of cigars.

There was no necessity to tell the Indians to make time. They were making it as only Indians could—six "progressives" from a village not very savory of reputation, but reputed rather for debauchery than for belligerence. They took advantage of every current that could be taken advantage of. Even Smith's eyes gave a jump of the adventurer's delight now and then.

They were on the inside—eastern shore—of the island; consequently, hugging the land, they were in gloom now, under the shadow of Van Doren—with not a sound but the occasional bark of a seal, or up in the thick woods that gloomed down on them the cawing of crows, or angry scream of bald-headed eagles, or falling of some old tree in the forest. It was too late, Smith considered, to see the sights of a rifle fairly. Mists began to creep across the water. One of the Indians took a fit of coughing and spat over the side. Smith looked at his back and considered: "Another consumptive!"—and ruminated over the pros and cons of civilization and savagery, on the curses and blessings of each.

Suddenly the Indians steadied all, and swept their cedar out of the current and farther in shore, where a gash of an

inlet ran away backward from the sound.

And as they did so there came over the water a shrieking and yelling. The paddlers turned and looked at the lone figure in the stern. For themselves they were scared. Was Smith scared? He was smoking, they noticed, smoking his cigar, the butt end—the chewed, the frayed final of it—and he was smoking it with difficulty, as if he was hard up, going shy on cigars. Every draw that he took illuminated the palm, and the reflected light from the hand smoldered and waned on his face. It was the face of a man disinterested. The paddlers were reassured. The shrieks had no effect on the man they had brought—they being civilized, and don't you forget it—to quell the trouble—just as the Eastern law-abiding citizen blows a whistle for the policeman when trouble visits his residential area.

In the inlet it was darker still. A hail came to them from the lugubrious, plashy shore.

"That you, Smith?"

Smith looked shoreward.

"That Clallidge," said one of the guttural paddlers.

"Hello, Claridge!" called Smith, and bade the canoe men pull inshore. They swept the canoe alongside Claridge's pathetic little jetty of lashed trees. From farther up the inlet the yells were fearsome and disgusting.

"They seem to be whooping it up here," said Smith, stretching up and taking Claridge's hand.

"By heck! You're wanted all right," Claridge answered.

The Indians lounged down listless on the instant. They looked like effigies for their own totem poles, but they had been at it for twelve hours, having started out this morning in the morning mist, at four a. m., and paddled till the mist of late afternoon.

"Couldn't have come quicker on a cruiser," Smith remarked as he clam-

bered up the seaweedy and slippery logs. "How is she stackin' up?"

"Search me! I'm keeping close. I've got a blame arsenal ready for them if they come around to rush me. I tried to stop it the day before yesterday. I tried again yesterday, and they told me they would plug me if I didn't pull out, and, by heck! they came over to try and rush my store. I stood them off all right. We're like that now—I got to keep out of the village and not butt into their slopping out the liquor; and they got to keep around the bend of the rocks there or I draw a bead on them."

"The Siwashes?"

"No; they ain't hunting for me—yet. They're all right. Even if they did, I got some friends. The whisky men. I mean. I guess you got to commend me for not going down and picking them off, anyhow, so as to make sure of them."

Smith laughed in his chest.

"Could you have done that?" he asked.

"Easy. They got fires a-going in the open. You can go around the bend there and rubberneck at the potlatch, and them never see you."

"Guess I'll hike over," said Smith.

"Well, just wait a minute till I get my argument, and I'm with you."

"I don't want you, Jim. You stay right here."

"You'll get no backing over at the village now," said Jim. "Guess these six are half regretting they didn't stay along and have a share," he added, in a lower voice, "instead of pulling out for you. Just wait till I get my pacifier."

"I told you already," grumbled Smith, "that I was going over myself. I am liable to want a reserve behind me. You come when you hear me holler"—he paused—"if you don't mind," he finished gently.

And away he went up the inlet side,

in the gathering darkness, to the bend—and there a radiance as of bonfires was ahead of him. He grunted to himself all the way, little grunts like a man aggrieved. This we know from Claridge, who followed him stealthily in the rear. But probably he was grunting only because he was aggrieved at Claridge following him, though Claridge never seemed to think that, and looked at me in indignation when I suggested that reason to him. Yet he admits that suddenly Smith wheeled, came directly in his back tracks, and said:

"Don't you do it, Jim. Don't you track me up. If anything went wrong we want you left behind to go ahead with them six fellers. You don't seem to understand, Jim, that, by heck! these whisky fellers—here have—just—got—to—be—taken!"

And, leaving Jim to make out the line of his argument, off he went again, and the shadow of his figure was wheeling away—after having shown a second or two against the radiance of the farther fires—in the black woods that in those days stretched down to the cape.

Not for quite some time did Claridge venture to follow, and then did so on his stomach till he could look down into the reveling village; and beside him crawled four of the six paddlers, the other two—after making fast—having curled down where they were to sleep. And, though he could see the village, and the scene of the orgy, it seemed ages before anything happened.

III.

Smith surveyed the scene, and then threw away his cigar. In the forests of Van Doren's Island things are different from what they are in the forests of the Rockies and Selkirks. You can throw away a cigar end here in midsummer, and nothing will happen. It dropped on moss and emitted a long, dying hiss.

Smith could join in a potlatch with anybody. He could, when occasion was pressing, "celebrate" himself. But never did he "celebrate" to such an extent that he could not be made an example of uprightness, failed to see the sight of his gun, or—if a call came—was unable to respond and go forth and hale home to incarceration and trial whoever, be he white man, or red man, or yellow man, had transgressed the laws. The sight he beheld now was disgusting. By heck, it was! He was a son of a gun if this here village shouldn't be photographed and put upon the lantern slide, and lantern screen, of every temperance agitator in America!

It offended his sense of the uprightness of humanity. As for them two coons—him leaning against the tree beside the other that was lolling the booze, looked as if he was imitating a Chicago cop. Six foot two, he guessed. The other fellow a good match. He suddenly chuckled to himself. He guessed that if he toted them down to Simpson Inlet he could start a side show and paint over the door "*The Alabama Giants, come in and have a look!*" He would have to raise the roof of his shack, by heck!

The Siwashes and Claridge said there were four of them—a white man, a half-caste, as well as the two niggers. Maybe the other two were dead. These Siwashes lying about drunk before their doors—were they dead for sure, or dead drunk? The fires flickered and flared, and the light ran up and down the tree stems. It was a wonder the Indians were not all scared of the hoodoos coming out of the woods and sucking their lifeblood while they lay around that way. Never hunted in their own woods, them Siwashes; scared of hoodoos; only fished in the creeks and in the inlets. Now—there was a waste of good liquor, Smith thought, as he saw one of the coons rush after an Indian who ran about crazed and screaming, and deluge

the retreating back with a pailful of whisky as if it had been water. He reckoned there couldn't be much left, or the sloop was sure loaded heavy.

Where were the other two fellows? He must locate them all before he started in to arrest—just in case of being taken in the rear by one of them. Away through the bush he went, from tree to tree, till he was at the end of the straggle of houses that constituted the village. They were not the old solid style, but poor imitations of the white man's shack. He looked through chinks in one after another, and retired from one after another thinking of the temperance lecturer. One screaming debauchee rushed round the gable of a house and almost collided with him, leaped aside, yelled again, and fled to the woods.

The next shack offered no peepholes. Smith stood and bit his ragged mustache in thought, then slouched round to the front, slouched on, slouched to the door, all huddled and imitating the uncertain steps of one far gone under the influence of whisky, or ammonia and bluestone water—the concoction of poison that is generally brought up in the smuggling boats. He came to the door. He lurched in, and, on the instant, in a hard and determined voice, he said: "Now you—don't you let a cough out of you, or your name is Dennis."

He had treed one of the men he wanted. And he thrust his lean, tired face close to the bloated cheeks of the half-caste of whom he had been told.

"Who are you?" said the half-breed.

"Me? I'm the man that will blow the top of your head off if you sneeze, by heck! You savvy? I'm the man you got to obey. I've got the skipper out of Nova Scotia skinned in the way of bustin' the *ego* out of you if you don't do just what I tell you."

"What you want?"

"What do *I* want? What do *you*

want, you mean. Do you want a long stretch or a short one? If you stand by me and do what I tell you I'll speak up for you. Savvy? I'll say to the commissioners: 'This man here seems to have been led away by the others. So far as I could see he wasn't taking part in the trouble.' Savvy?"

"You're a policeman?"

"I am. I'm the policeman that's going to take you shipwrecked mariners down to Simpson Inlet, write out my charge, and shove you down to the island in no time. And I'm giving you a chance. I'll speak for you if you'll do as I tell you. It will shorten your stretch a whole lot."

"I'll do what you say, boss."

"Good! Then you begin by telling me where the other man is. I see the two coons that I've been hearing about. But where's the white man?"

"I guess he's in the shack farther up on the other side."

"Just you give him a hail, and tell him to come along in here."

"Yes. What do I tell him I want him for?"

"You tell him to come in. You tell him you've got a surprise for him. Go on. Get busy and shout."

"Maybe if I shout de other two fellows over dere will come over, too?"

"All right—leave that to me. The door's narrow, ain't it? And they're big and stout. You start hollerin'."

The "hollerin'" was successful. A shouting answered, and, over the bent shoulders of his ally, who stuck out his head as he shouted, Smith could see a typical specimen of the water-front tough coming cakewalking along in response to the hail.

"What you want?" he asked as he came nearer.

The ally explained that he had something to show—a surprise. The water-front tough slipped his hand to his back, drew a razor from his pocket, and made it flash in the firelight as he said:

"If you're foolin' me you'll get this!"

The ally drew inside a little way.

"I tell you dis man is dangerous," he whispered to Smith hurriedly. "I don't know why de drink does not knock him over. He has been drinkin' t'ree days and he don't get knocked over."

The man outside was evidently not in the slightest degree afraid. He had enough belief in himself to come to the shack whither he was thus called. As he approached he said:

"I tell you, John Lincoln, if you got nothing in there to surprise me I'll cut off your head. Look out! I'm comin' in."

"This feller ain't open to reason," Smith grunted, and as the tough lowered his head and charged in, razor in hand, Smith, at the side, stuck out a foot. The fearsome and fearless one crashed on his face, hand still behind him clutching the razor. Smith put a foot on his arm and the cold end of his barrel on the man's neck, and said quietly: "Don't holler! You know the feel of that."

The man wriggled, turned his head, and saw what it was that he felt. He broke out in malediction on the ally; but he knew too much to move.

"Drop that razor," Smith advised. Slowly the recumbent man opened his great hand, and laid the weapon down. "Sit up!"

He sat up.

Smith tucked his rifle butt under his right arm. There would be a wild recoil if he had to fire in that position; but he needed his left hand for a second—to draw out one pair of handcuffs and throw them to the ally.

"Put them on him!" he ordered.

The prone man gave a yell for help, but did not risk rising.

"Put 'em on!" rasped Smith, and the ally snapped on the "come-alongs" as one who knew all about them of yore.

"Now then," said Smith, "you must

look after this fellow while I strolls over to them two others. If he hollers out you fix him."

"What can I fix him with?"

"Fix him with? Any old thing." He nodded at the razor. "What's the matter with that? I don't want to finish him. I got to take him in A-L-I-V-E, you see—alive. It's up to me to do that. But I leave him in your keeping."

He looked at his ally, and the half-breed's eyes showed a suspicion—and a doubt.

"You ain't so tough as that, eh?" Smith chuckled. "Well, I guess he would do it to you. I believe you are the best of the four. No, I don't want you to fix him unless it is absolutely necessary. And say," he looked down at the captive, "you needn't try to make a breakaway into the woods. Plenty of men, you know, have tried to get away into the woods—not on this island only, but all up and down the coast. It's no good. You got to come out of them woods some day, or die in them. I'd get you again, all right. Even if you got the handcuffs off—which you couldn't easily—you wouldn't do any good. Don't forget that. I wouldn't follow you. I'd just camp right here and wait for you to come back. You'd come back, all right, crazy. There's an asylum at Victoria."

So saying he strolled out of the shack and loafed across to where one of the coons sat across the last barrel, looking round on the scene of bacchanalian hideousness. His companion, some distance off, was trying to do something that looked like a cross between an Indian dance and a dance from the Bight of Guinea, with an old Indian woman—one of the last still afoot. It was not a pretty sight.

Smith walked over with the air of an inhabitant of the island out on a hunt to see what he could raise, rifle under his arm—and as though not at

all upset by the scenes around him. Thus, I believe, do doctors walk through the rooms in the bedlams over which they have dominion. He stood looking at the gruesome dance. The coon stared up at him, bleared, blood-shot, incapable.

"Who — who — what in thunder — where did you come from?" he stammered at last.

"Me?" said Smith, looking back from the bedlam shuffle to the nigger on the keg. Very quietly he spoke: "You fellows are covered from the bushes." He bent down and flicked a sheath knife from the man's belt. "No—don't grab for your gun." The dancing coon and the hag, intent on their primitive shuffle, did not see him. The other man looked like a fogged imbecile. Smith went on, more softly.

"I got to arrest you, you know," he said, and clicked the handcuffs on. The man almost offered his hands, like one stunned. In the midst of his debauched mind he felt he had met his master.

The click of the bracelets—or instinct—brought the dancing coon round with a jerk. He sprung his hand behind his back, gave a yell—and leaped. Smith shoved up his rifle; but, cool still, he did not touch the trigger. There was a rush through the bush, and Smith guessed that his ally, seeing hope of the turning of the tables, had become hostile. No; it couldn't be that. Thought is quick at such times. He whirled quickly to see if he was to be attacked on two sides—and Claridge crashed on the giant coon, downed him by weight of attack, and, on top of him, grabbed for his razor hand.

"Oh, thunder! Buttin' in!" said Smith, disgusted.

The fallen giant struggled. Smith took out his next pair of handcuffs, and crouched down on a knee, ready to slip them on when occasion offered. He and Claridge were like two men in a corral taking first action upon an un-

saddled colt. The giant's arm was bent back in the fall. Now, as he struggled, and Claridge suddenly levered at him, by some piece of unconscious jujutsu—for Claridge could shoot with the best of them; paddle without being ashamed before Indians; hit, if necessary, hard; but knew nothing of the gentle art from across the Pacific—there came a sharp, unpleasant "click," and the giant grunted in pain.

"Quit strugglin'! Quit strugglin'!" cried Smith in a rasping voice, using his teeth to bite the words over, his mumbling utterance all gone. "You better come quiet. This won't do you any good at the trial." The black giant, chin in the earth, spraddled out, right arm dislocated, moaned:

"Let up! Let up!"

Claridge, on the giant's back, looked at Smith, who half crouched over them.

"Let him up?" he asked.

"Yap. And say, if he makes any trouble over things—shoot him. I've got the others. I guess he's resisting arrest good and strong, all right."

Claridge stood up, but with alertness, ready for the giant to rise, and covered him with a Savage from his belt. The coon rose, and Smith looked him in the eye.

"Let me put your arm right," he said, leaned his rifle against a stump, took the black's right wrist in his right hand, the elbow in his left hand, fumbled at it for a second, then suddenly pulled back the wrist. There was a click, and the forearm was straight again, the elbow back in the socket.

Then Smith shouted to the other two to come along. They came, and the four prisoners eyed their captor strangely. He was back again in a shell, an unfathomable-looking man, a rather dangerously unfathomable-looking man, with his rifle tucked under his arm again.

"Let no man who ain't seen Smith in action call him a slouch," says Claridge.

As for the Indians—with the exception of the old crone who had been shuffling with the giant, there was not one erect in the immediate vicinity. The few who had not taken part in the orgy were either in the woods with their own kids and the kids of others, or else were camped around behind Claridge's store. Through the darkness the four prisoners "hiked" in the direction Smith ordered, leaving the village and its prone inhabitants. Suddenly he turned to Jim Claridge.

"Do you know who these fellows are skulking along beside us?" he asked, nodding into the woods.

"I hadn't noticed!" said Claridge. "They're some of the boys that have been down back of my store." He puckered his eyes. "And one or two of the ones that fetched you up," he added.

Smith stopped.

"I hate it like pizen," he grumbled. "If that's who they are you tell them to fetch a torch or two to light us along."

Claridge called this order to them, which they obeyed with alacrity. They had only been holding back because of the stern order of Smith—the amazing little man whose word was law.

"They've been around here ever since you went up, waiting for you to holler," Jim explained.

Smith turned his head.

"You mean to tell me," he said deliberately, "that they've been watching me out of the woods all the time I've been maneuvering for this here grip?" and he nodded at the prisoners.

"That's what."

"Gee!" said Smith. "That's why I felt so blame peculiar all the time, I guess. I believe in this yere telepathy, you know, Jim, and it stands to reason that all these there fellers peepin' and rubberneckin'—why I can't think of it! I don't like it now! Yes, sir, I guess

that's why I felt kind of shivers once or twice."

But the torchbearers were back now, and down the side of the inlet went the procession to Claridge's store; and in the trade room the four men sat—four of the ugliest figures that Smith had ever had through his hands, four bloated, swollen, bloodshot-eyed ruffians. Anon they went to sleep; they had less to fear there than had their captors. In a big chair sat Smith. On the high counter Jim was perched. Outside, noses against the glass, the relieved and sober section of villagers looked in.

"I suppose you don't need to pull out now?" asked Smith. "I suppose you stay with the store and your teetotal friends? You'll be able to hold your own end up when the jamboree bunch wakens in the morning with a bigger thirst than ever, and half of 'em with the blue devils, and pink lizards, or whatever kind of snakes they fancy?"

"Oh, I ain't scared of that!" said Claridge. "I'm only leavin' Van Doren so's to see you down with them fellers. You're liable to want some sleep."

"Pshaw! You lend me your boat," said Smith. "I'll bring her back and run in to see how they get on here with the fancy lizards and you. That's why I'm sorry you twisted that feller's arm. They're going to work their passage down."

"Oh, say—well—I can tell you a dozen of the Siwashes here that would come along with you for that matter—good fellows, too."

"That's all right. You give me your boat when morning comes along. I am going to have a nap now. Keep your eye on them," and he put his chin on his breast.

Immediately his face assumed a sad and broken expression. It affected Jim strangely—that face of the sleeper, inert, lined, pathetic. He slept so till

dawn, only moving once—to loosen his shoes, their slight constriction evidently affecting his sleep. When the gray dawn filled the room, and the scream of the gulls began again, he awakened. Then he stirred, stretched, yawned, said "Oh, hell!" three times, and sat up. He looked at Claridge, still on duty, took in the surroundings—the four snoring toughs who, shipwrecked on Van Doren's Island, had raised Hades there. Jim went off to get the boat ready, and when Smith heard the grating of its keel on the beach as it was run out, he rose and whooped: "Tumble up, you sons of guns!" and up staggered his prisoners.

He herded them before him from the store. They looked at Smith afresh in the morning light, at his tired face, his grim, weary expression, his draggled mustache, his dejected eyes, and they did as he bade them—waded, and got into the boat one after the other.

"Just you tie 'em by the legs to the thwarts, Jim—tight," said Smith. "I guess they might try to swim. There ain't goin' to be any tricks on the way down."

The man who had had his arm twisted asked if they were not to have any breakfast.

"Eh?" said Smith.

The man looked at him, and seemed scared to repeat.

"Breakfast?" said Smith.

"I've put some grub in," said Claridge, "and water."

The man plucked up courage. He asseverated, with many oaths, that he would not touch an oar till he ate some grub.

"Now, ain't that interesting?" mused Smith. "I was going to let you off rowing altogether—seeing your arm is like that. But now—now, by heck, you'll pull with the good arm. Sit here, you,

you'll pull stroke, too—and you'll set a pace worth talking about. I'm gettin' tired of you whisky-peddlin' stiffs!"

Claridge and one of his Siwash helpers—a good boy, in whose keeping he was wont to leave the store on occasions when he had to leave Van Doren's Island—tied the men's legs firmly. Smith, wading alongside, took their handcuffs off, then leaped in, sat down, and laid the rifle on his knees.

"Half a minute," he said, "wait till I light up." He produced a cigar and lit it. "All right—so long, Jim. I'll look you up again. Shove off! Let her go you, now, if you ain't huntin' trouble."

Away went the boat, and the last Claridge saw of it the four men were pulling hard. Stroke with one arm, and in the stern sheets was the wizened, vindictive-looking—for the time at least—Policeman Smith, chewing a new-lit cigar.

"Trouble at Van Doren's Island," said Smith to me when I asked him. "How did you know?"

"Claridge told me."

"Oh, Claridge! Sure! Where is he now?"

"In Victoria."

"Well, well. Made good, I hope?"

"He seemed pretty well fixed," I agreed. "He told me to ask you to tell me the story—and how long the men got."

"Seven years, if I remember right," said he. "The other feller—the man I got to be my ally, got off easiest. He only got a year. I put in a soft speech on behalf of his tenderness——" he chuckled in his chest. "He was a tough, all right, too. But that's what I call using discretionary powers."

RALPH D. PAINE comes back in the next issue with another fine serial. It is called "The Twisted Skein"—a story of Yale.

War—Personally Conducted

By Clarence L. Cullen

Author of "At the End of the Cruise," "The Story of the Sanguine Sleuth," Etc.

Despite the fact that the first offers of mediation in our quarrel with Huerta came from South America, the republics to the south of the Canal have been themselves in a more or less continuous state of civil war. These revolutions are often of the opera-bouffe type. Presidents are made and bounced with bewildering rapidity. Cullen's story antedates the Mexican imbroglio, when the job of Washington correspondent was a dull affair, and tells how an imaginative correspondent took hold of the Washington office of his paper and became the pivot of a war which, though not sanguinary, stirred the country

(In Two Parts—Part One.)

CHAPTER I.

IT was after midnight, and Raymond, bending over a dilapidated, rattle-tybang typewriter in his dingy, cloistered corner of the "city room," was hammering out his column of "Political Gossip," the wind-up stunt of his long day's work.

"The main grouch wants t' see yuh w'en yuh git troo wit' yer 'story.'" said a husky-voiced copy boy at the political reporter's elbow.

"All right—tell him I'll be through in ten minutes," said Raymond, without looking up from his work.

He condensed the remainder of his grist of local political notes into a scant "stickful," sped hastily through the copy with a correcting pencil, and turned the "stuff" in at the copy desk.

He was dog tired, physically and mentally, from the exertions of a crowded day that had begun at noon. Just then there were many things that, could he have chosen, he would have preferred to a session with the man-

aging editor. High among these preferences he would have placed the privilege of going to bed and forgetting "copy."

But a managing editor's mandate is at least as compulsory upon his subordinates as a modern king's command upon his subjects. Raymond pulled down his shirt sleeves, put on his coat, and lounged through the stuffy, dim-lit halls, to the managing editor's door.

Since Raymond had been "doing politics," a matter of about four months, the novelty of being summoned by the managing editor had had ample time to wear off. He was not long in discovering that his invitations to that ornate sanctum always carried with them the presage of a wiggling for something he had written, or had omitted to write, about the political situation.

Pasted on the ground glass of the door was a strip of paper on which was printed:

"Always Knock Before Entering."

Raymond smiled a bit sourly on reading this for the twentieth time.

"I suppose we're lucky to get in one knock before going in," he said grimly to himself, rapping with his knuckles on the glass.

"Come in!" came the strident command, and Raymond, unconsciously compressing his jaws for the anticipated clash, entered.

Managing Editor Marsden, a "new-style journalist"—as differentiated from the unornamental "newspaper man" of the gone time—was strutting up and down on the rug of his somewhat too elaborately furnished office. Having attended a banquet that night, he was in impeccable evening clothes, which became him well. He was tall and broad-shouldered. He kept the shoulders squared with a sort of conscious, intended arrogance. He was palpably of the type of men who pride themselves on the possession of what is described as an "iron jaw"; and once a man has been so described, he is likely to assume a domineering manner with the idea of "acting up to" the overpraised strength of his jaw. The managing editor wore a close-clipped deftly pointed Vandyke beard, the basic black of which was plentifully sprinkled with gray. The first impression he gave was of studied aggressiveness, the second "grooming"; in the latter respect he might easily have been picked at a first random guess, by one not knowing him, as the first secretary of an embassy or legation.

"Oh, it's you," he said in a tone without cordiality when Raymond entered. Mr. Marsden made it one of the points of his studied manner never, in any circumstances, to be cordial to anybody. "Sit down!"

Raymond, saying nothing, plumped into a chair beside the managing editor's huge, flat mahogany desk. Splitting the tails of his evening coat, Marsden wormed his way comfortably into the swivel chair before the desk. Then,

stroking the point of his beard, he gazed scowlingly at a bronze Buddha on the far side of the desk. Raymond yawned, without taking any pains to conceal the yawn. Inwardly he resented the gelid, patronizing manner of his chief. Nor did he see any reason for concealing the fact that he was weary and sleepy. He was not in a very good humor. If he was in for a "call-down," he wanted it over with. If the managing editor's "roast" should go beyond bounds, Raymond had his mind virtually made up to resign his job. There were other Chicago newspapers that liked his work and would take him on. He had been so informed, directly, time and again.

"Have you ever been in Washington, Raymond?" the managing editor finally asked him, not taking the trouble to remove his gaze from the bronze image.

"Not to work," replied Raymond. The question puzzled him. This was not the way the chief's wiggings usually began. "Of course, I've dawdled about the town a bit, generally between trains to New York; long enough to get a bird's-eye view of the Washington Monument and the dome of the capitol."

Marsden picked a steel eraser from his desk and began to tap with the end of it on his blotting pad.

"I'm thinking of sending you there as our correspondent," he said in the tone of a man not even vaguely interested in his subject.

Raymond stiffened in his chair in sheer surprise. "What have I done to deserve that?" he asked.

The managing editor glanced sharply at him. "Just what do you mean by that question, Raymond?" he asked the political reporter in a grating tone.

Raymond smiled forcedly, but his eyes were alight.

"In other words," he replied, "what

have I done to deserve having the skids put under me?"

"Explain that also, please," said Marsden, scowling and twiddling the point of his beard with nervous fingers.

"It makes easy explaining, chief," said Raymond, entirely at his ease. "I've been on the *News-Tribune* for nearly two years. In that time the *News-Tribune* has had just seven Washington correspondents. If my arithmetic is right, that figures about three and a half months' service for each of them. At the end of his three and a half months' Washington service—I'm using the average—each man was recalled or fired outright. At least five of them were pretty good men, too. Three of them were what I would call crackajacks. But they had the skids slid under them, all the same. They had to swallow the humiliation of being fired or of being recalled to the home office, charged with incompetence. There's a New York paper, the boss of which, when he wants to get rid of a man, makes that man Sunday editor. After the man marked for slaughter has served for a short time as Sunday editor, the steam roller, manipulated by the boss, who touches the button somewhere in Europe, passes over him. It looks to me as if the *News-Tribune's* system of hoisting a man is to make him Washington correspondent and then 'lift' him."

Bold, straight-from-the-shoulder talk from a member of the local staff to the managing editor. But, somehow, to use the colloquialism, it seemed to "get across." Marsden, for all his affected frigidity, liked a man who had something to say for himself; he was too used to the type of men who took their browbeatings timidly to have the least particle of use for them. Moreover, he knew how to appraise the ability of men on the staff, even if, at a later time, he "soured" on them, as he frequently did. He understood per-

fectly that a man of Raymond's all-around ability would only have to "walk across the street," as the saying goes in newspaperdom, to get a billet quite as good as the one he held down on the *News-Tribune*. And he had the managing editor's dread of permitting a first-rate man to get away from him.

"Never mind all that, Raymond," said he, turning now to look directly at the political reporter, his beard crinkling with the quizzical smile underneath it. "The point is, I want you to go to Washington; and so we needn't concern ourselves at present with the history of our Washington service."

"The history of seven Washington men being tossed into the discard after about a quarter of a year's service apiece is pretty liable to concern the man next slated to go to bat, chief," replied Raymond, smiling in his turn. "And, by the way, seeing that it's something I think I ought to know about if we're going to talk business, what's the matter with Findlay?"

Findlay was the Washington correspondent then on the job for the *News-Tribune*.

Marsden wagged his head deprecatingly, resumed tapping his blotter with the steel eraser, and gave other visible evidence that he was more than willing to pass the question up.

"Yes, I know there's a sort of silence that's meant to speak volumes, chief," Raymond persisted. "But then again there are moments when a few simple words have got all of the aforesaid volumes burned to a clinker on the campus. I don't presume to judge, and I'm not setting my judgment against yours; but, from where I sit, it looks to me as if Findlay is doing nice, even work in Washington for the *News-Tribune*."

"You save me the trouble of expressing the thing, Raymond," said Marsden. "You hit it exactly. That's precisely the trouble with Findlay, as

it was with a lot of the Washington men before him. He's doing 'nice, even work.' Any fairly competent man can do that kind of work. But that is not the kind of work that the *News-Tribune* wants from its men in Washington. The press associations can and do give us all of the 'nice, even' Washington work that we can handle, and a good deal more than we care to handle. It is precisely for the reason that I can't and won't tolerate 'nice, even work' that I am going to send you to Washington, Raymond."

Raymond wasn't fooled by the slight note of intentional flattery in his chief's tone. But, disregarding that, he concerned himself in wondering just what the managing editor was driving at.

"Am I to understand that the staid, not to say smug, *News-Tribune* is getting ready to chirk up and reach out for hot stuff?" inquired Raymond, obviously with the intent of smoking out Mr. Marsden. "And, if so, is the Washington end looked upon as the right spot to begin that sort of thing?"

Raymond, naturally a chance taker, had a knack of winning even when he gave himself the worst of the odds. He was not keen to go to Washington. His chief saw that he was not. Therefore the political reporter was easily "getting by" with remarks which, in other circumstances, might well have been regarded as presumptuous by his chief. Nevertheless, the managing editor's reply was pitched in a slightly irascible tone.

"I didn't call you in to confer with you about the *News-Tribune's* policy," he said. "I summoned you to offer you the Washington bureau."

"What's to be expected of me if I go to Washington?" asked Raymond.

Marsden swung round in his chair, and gazed square into Raymond's eyes from under bushing brows.

"I'll tell you," he said. "The Wash-

ington service has been snailing along on the rails of routine for years. I am going to vitalize that service, if the thing can be done—and it can be and it is going to be done! I am tired of filling our columns with Washington stuff about what this or that of our senators' wives wore at the last White House reception. I am sick of trivial, unintelligible little interviews with this or that of our congressmen about what Chicago or Illinois is liable to get out of the River and Harbor Bill. I don't want two-column accounts of how this or that débutante, the daughter of somebody in the Chicago delegation, carried herself at her coming-out party in Washington. Those things are all right in their place, boiled down and sifted out and tucked away in corners. But the *News-Tribune* is weary of a routine, commonplace, chicken-feed, small-beer Washington service. The *News-Tribune* isn't a parochial institution. It has a big following all through the Middle West and the Northwest. I want a Washington service that will be national! I want new Washington news! I want a man in Washington with a headpiece, a power of deduction, and a nose for news that will enable him to beat the best of the other correspondents there to the big news stories—a man who can *smell* the big stories before they break loose!"

Raymond was no longer sleepy. He sat very taut and very wide awake in his chair. The Washington proposition began to look like his chance! In the intensity of his interest he came very near to blurting out: "I get you, chief," but he caught himself in time.

"In short"—Marsden wheeled suddenly to face his desk again and refastened his gaze on the bronze Buddha—"I want a Washington man who can and will start something!"

Raymond was slightly thrilled.

"I am getting the angle, chief," he said. "But, while I am greatly obliged

to you for indicating it, what makes you think that all of this means *me*?"

"I am not saying that it *does* mean you. But I am willing to take a chance on you."

Here was a bit of a let-down! Raymond caught the words in mid-air, and quickly there returned to his mind the consideration of the seven men who had been sent to Washington by the *News-Tribune* during the past two years, only to be "hoisted," each and all of them, at the end of very short periods of service. He reflected that in all likelihood the managing editor had addressed every one of them in precisely the same way before conferring upon them the Washington billet. Well, even so? If the managing editor had so addressed them before their start for Washington, none of them really had made good along the lines the managing editor had laid down for them. And——

"Of course, it will be up to you to make good if you go to Washington," added Marsden, to fill in the slight pause while Raymond was turning it all over in his mind.

"If I go there, chief, I'll stay longer than three and a half months—the average of the sacked seven who have preceded me on the job," said Raymond.

Again the managing editor's beard crinkled over a grim smile.

"Meaning, of course," he said, "that, if you go to Washington, you go with the purpose of 'delivering' along the lines I have laid down?"

"I'd need medical treatment, Mr. Marsden, if I went to Washington with any other idea in mind. I've been in the newspaper game for quite a spell now, and I've never been let out of a job yet. I am not going to Washington with any purpose of being 'lifted' from that billet if there's any possible way I can stop this series of disasters to the *News-Tribune's* Washington correspondents; and, maybe,

after earnest self-wrestling, I'll find a way."

He paused as another thought darted into his mind.

"Oh, about Findlay," he went on. "I don't like to grab Findlay's job from him."

Findlay, the Washington correspondent, whom he was asked to supplant, was an old friend and Chicago newspaper associate of Raymond's. He was a highly competent man, if somewhat too conservative for what is termed "the modern newspaper game"; and, in addition, he was a first-rate fellow. Raymond liked him thoroughly. Moreover, Findlay had an agreeable and accomplished wife, with whom Raymond was well acquainted, and several children. Like most hard-working newspaper men, Findlay, Raymond knew, had had no chance to save anything. Raymond hated the idea of going to Washington to take the billet of his old friend.

"Findlay's of age," briefly replied Marsden. He added, after a pause: "You've been in this business long enough to know that in newspaper work, as in everything else, it's the survival of the fittest."

"Are you recalling Findlay to the home office?" asked Raymond.

"I offered him his old place here, but he wouldn't take it," replied the chief. "Wrote me a letter about being 'humiliated,' and all that sort of thing. Closed his letter by quitting the *News-Tribune* in a huff."

Raymond considered. Findlay, then, already was off the paper. If he, Raymond, did not take the Washington billet, there were plenty of other good men in Chicago who would be eager to take it out of hand.

"When do you want me to go, chief?" asked Raymond.

"You're going, then, eh?" inquired Marsden.

"Yes—and I'm going to stick," said

Raymond, with a slight compression of the jaws.

"Go to-morrow. The business manager will fix you out with transportation; see him right away; and drop in on me for a final word or so before you start."

The managing editor rose and stretched. The interview was over. Raymond left the room a little bewildered. Instead of the expected wiggling, here he was appointed Washington correspondent of the *News-Tribune*, with explicit instructions from his managing editor to "start something"!

"I'll 'start something,' all right," he said to himself as, avoiding the car which he usually took to his South Side lodging, he trudged home to think it over under the stars. "And it won't be anything that I can't finish, either," he added grimly when, at the end of his cogitations, he walked up the steps of his lodging.

CHAPTER II.

Raymond was at the business office of the *News-Tribune* by eleven o'clock on the following morning. The business manager gave him an order for his transportation to Washington.

On his way to the railroad office to get his ticket and sleeping-car reservation, he made a detour to stop in at the office of the John Wild Company, wholesale dealers in paints and varnishes. John Wild had been carefully selected by Raymond for his future father-in-law. Nor had the gruff, rough-hewn, wealthy John Wild ever given the slightest indication that he objected to having been so chosen by the clean, keen, young newspaper man.

"Out of bed and on the job pretty early to-day, ain't you, son?" asked John Wild, with bluff cordiality, when Raymond, easily getting by various cordons of blocking office boys and stenographers, finally made his way to the

inner office of the head of the firm. Mr. Wild was a hale, gray-bearded giant who had fought his way from a canal towpath to millions. He looked the young man over keenly from under shaggy brows.

"It's a new job that has caused me to get the move on," replied Raymond; and he told the man whom he had chosen for a father-in-law about his appointment to "cover the Washington end" for the *News-Tribune*.

The older man, pacing up and down his office with his hands thrust deep in his old-fashioned "front" trousers pockets, listened quietly enough; but it was easily deducible from his head waggings as he strode heavily back and forth from the door to his desk that the young man's announcement was not making much of a hit with him.

"Look here, son," he said, planting himself in front of Raymond when the young man had finished telling about what a "chance" had been thrown in his way, "when are you going to quit this fool newspaper business altogether and get down to some sensible work?"

John Wild often before had said that, or the essence of it, to Raymond; had said it perhaps a dozen times since it had become a perfectly self-evident fact that by marrying Edith, his only daughter, Raymond was going to become a member of the Wild family. John Wild knew and loved paint. Quitting the canal towpath at the age of thirteen, he had grown up with paint; had lived, breathed, slept, all but eaten paint. He had achieved wealth and luxury through paint. And he had the ingrained contempt of the forceful, unimaginative, prosperous business man for what he variously called "the scribbling trade" or "the fool newspaper business."

"The fool newspaper business is the only business I know anything about, governor," replied Raymond, smiling. "I've been grinding away at it for close

upon ten years, and I'm nearing thirty now. A man is liable to become pretty well set in his habits in the course of ten years. There is no business in me; not a nickel's worth."

"Humph! D'ye mean to tell me, Joe, that a man could conduct the financial department of the *Herald-Times*, as you did for a couple of years, without knowing anything about business?"

"I only bluffed my way through that job. I looked wise, and let the other fellows do the work."

"Rot!" pronounced John Wild. "The truth is, you're in love with this nonsensical scribbling business. That's the way with all of you fellows who once dabble in the silly, outlandish newspaper game—you fall in love with it, and that settles it; most of you stick to it until you're put in a box, and die without a dollar. I could name you, offhand, forty fellows in this town of Chicago, men with first-rate heads on their shoulders, who are dribbling their lives away at the newspaper business, when they could be making money in chunks and doing something for themselves and their families if they'd quite their fool trade and get down to doing something worth while. What in blazes they and you see in the idiotic newspaper business, I can't tell you. You all work your heads off for little or nothing, you're being bullied and batted around all the time, you never have a chance to take any solid comfort, you never even get a show to go to bed at a decent human-being hour of the night like other folks; and the grubbing and grinding of the crazy game make old men of most of you before you're fifty."

"All true," replied Raymond reflectively; he might easily have put more emphasis in the observation had emphasis been his cue. "Still, a fellow sort of feels like making good at the thing he has started, no matter what it is. I don't consider that I've made

good yet at the newspaper game. Oh, yes, I've got a kind of local reputation for reliability and that sort of thing. But that isn't making good. I haven't nabbed any of the prizes of the game. I haven't even come near pulling down anything big in the business; and there are big prizes in the newspaper game, the same as in any other. Like the rest of the gang, I've often thought that I made a mistake in going in for printer's ink; but, now that I'm in it, it looks to me as if the proper kink is to stick along with it until I do something worth while. And this Washington thing looks like a chance to make a sure-enough start."

The older man again paused in his stride to fasten his keen gaze upon his prospective son-in-law's face.

"Well, you've got grit, anyhow, son," he said, "and that's something; maybe you'll wake up later. Whenever you do come to, you know there's a place in this shop for you to learn paint from pot to pigment; and I reckon you know that you wouldn't starve to death while learning paint here with me, either. There are a couple of thousand men kicking around the shop, and over at the works now; and I'm getting pretty tired of handling a gang of that size. It would please me a lot, Joe, if you knew the difference between a can of red lead and a pot of Japanese driers. That'd be a starter, anyhow, and I'd see to it that you picked up the rest of it." He resumed his stride up and down the office. "But go ahead with your fool newspaper work, son, and see what you can make of it. I hope you win one of the big prizes, as you call 'em. Blame it all, I *know* you can win at anything!"

Raymond could not repress an amused laugh. He knew very well that, underneath the older man's outspoken scorn for "the fool newspaper business," he nevertheless entertained a mighty profound feeling of respect for

the kind of brains that go into the making of newspapers of the first class.

"Have you told Edith yet that you're off for Washington?" John Wild asked Raymond after his outburst of confidence in the young man's ability to win.

"I am going up to the house now to tell her, governor," replied Raymond.

The older man faced him again.

"What d'ye suppose she'll think about it, son?" he asked him with rather thoughtful eyes.

Raymond gave himself time to reply to that. The same question had been in his mind steadily from the moment he had awakened that morning.

"I imagine that she'll think as I do—that it's a chance that should not be overlooked," he replied finally, with deliberation. "Edith is as keen to have me make a ten-strike at the sort of work I've picked out for myself as I am to get ahead in 'the fool business'" —this with a relaxation of his serious expression.

"I mean, what d'ye suppose she'll think about this separation business?" persisted Wild.

"Oh!" said Raymond, his jaw falling a bit. "Well, I'm hoping, anyhow, that she'll feel as badly about that part of it as I already feel."

"Go on up to the house and tell her about it, Joe. She's game, you know that; and she's backing you to the limit, son; you know that, too. I won't be seeing you again before you start, eh? Well, so long, boy. You'll make good, all right. But if, by any run of bad luck, the game down there in Washington should go to pieces on your hands, why, just keep it in the back of your head, son, that there's always paint—and you can learn paint!"

With which kindly words in his ears, Raymond made his immediate way to the handsome Wild mansion, far over on one of the South Side boulevards, to

tell the girl he was going to marry about his "chance."

He found her in the conservatory. She had on gardening gloves, and was snipping away dead leaves and shoots from the blossoming plants. She wore the simplest imaginable one-piece dress of blue gingham, with a sunbonnet of the same material—for the rays of the early-spring sun pierced hotly through the arched glass roof of the conservatory.

Edith Wild was a tall, well-rounded girl of twenty-three, with a sort of winsome, appealing beauty about her. She was "the living image," as the women say, of her father. Her nose was not so "turned up" as his, but it was just enough so to be agreeably noticeable. Her complexion was an excellent match for the lilies and carnations blossoming in the conservatory. She had an astonishingly fine pair of kindling gray-blue, wide-apart eyes, and the sunbonnet, hanging by its strings on the back of her head, permitted it to be seen that her hair was of a very dark, glossy chestnut. She had "been through" an Eastern finishing school, but she was accustomed to remark to Raymond and others that she was "trying to forget" everything that she had learned at the finishing school.

"Why, Joe, what's the trouble?" she asked Raymond, with rather a startled look when he walked into the conservatory shortly before noon. Noon was his hour for reporting for duty on the *News-Tribune*.

"Nothing alarming has happened, Edith," he replied, smiling reassuringly. "But I know somebody—a person who shaves—who is going to feel pretty lonesome by this time to-morrow morning."

Then he told her about his Washington billet.

"I am delighted, Joe," she said when he had finished. "It is a chance—*your* chance! They may be very clever and

brilliant, some of those Washington correspondents, but I *know* you will make them all——” She paused abruptly and laughed. “I *will* say it—make them all sit up and take notice!”

“Please don’t imagine that I’m figuring on anything so absurd as that,” said Raymond. “It’s a swell lot, that gang of Washington correspondents; the cream of the business, most of those fellows. But I do figure on making good. I’ve *got* to make good! There’s nothing else for it. I’ve been dawdling along at this local work on Chicago newspapers long enough. And I haven’t the least intention that you shall marry a man who hasn’t made good at his own game. You know that.”

“Don’t talk that way, Joe,” said the girl quietly. “You already have made good, as you call it. And you know that I know what you are capable of.”

“That’s sweet and fine of you, Edith, and just like you,” replied Raymond seriously, “but, if you’re right in your appraisal, why, it’s up to me to show others—the people in my own business—whether I’ve got it in me to make good. Marsden told me he wanted me to ‘start something.’ Well, watch me! ‘Starting something’ is one of those little bits of things wherein I shine. I haven’t the vaguest idea now what it’s going to be—but not very long after I get to Washington I sure am going to ‘start something,’ and, what is more to the point, I am going to go through with it!”

He had been gazing out on the lawn as he spoke. Now, when he turned his face to hers, he found her looking very pensive.

“I know somebody else who is going to feel mighty lonesome long before this time to-morrow, Joe,” she said, tugging with her pretty, even teeth at one of the loose ends of her sunbonnet.

There was silent for a little while.

“Joe,” she said then.

He looked at her inquiringly.

“Joe, I have an idea. Let’s get married at once. Now. Immediately. Within the hour. And I’ll go to Washington with you and be with you while you are making your fight.”

He took her in his arms and kissed her.

“Don’t you ever think I don’t appreciate your saying that, little woman,” he said, holding her tight. “It’s magnificent, which is only another way of saying that it’s like you. But it wouldn’t be square to your father and mother, much less to you. They need you. It makes me dizzy to think about it—but it must not be; the time hasn’t come. I’ve always told you that I wanted to do something better than I have been doing before fastening my name to you for life. And I want to go through with that purpose.”

“You are right, Joe,” she said, releasing herself and brushing at her eyes. “It was an impulsive thought; but I can see now that it was unreasonable. It occurred to me, I suppose, because I had a foreboding of how lonesome I am going to be. But that is childish. I want you to win. You are going to win! Maybe”—this a bit timidly—“now that you know just how I feel, it will help you a little.”

“‘A little!’”

A few moments later he left her in the conservatory, found her mother and bade her good-by; and, after a brief talk with the managing editor at the office, took the four-o’clock train for Washington.

“Start something!” the clatter of the wheels over the rails seemed to say to him. “Don’t—forget—that—you’re—going—to—Washington—to—start—something!”

CHAPTER III.

“I won’t be beginning to demolish the capitol on the day after I get to Washington,” Raymond had said to

Marsden at their final short talk, by way of indicating that he entertained no fatuous, raw-recruit idea of reorganizing or revolutionizing the *News-Tribune's* Washington service immediately upon stepping off the train at the national capital.

"I'm not asking for demolition, but for building up," had been the managing editor's tart reply. "Take your time, and get used to the feel of the harness. Then show me results. I'll be watching for them."

Raymond was not long in discovering the fact that in Washington, as elsewhere, mere assertiveness and sometimes outright pomposity often made up for a deficiency of brains and journalistic initiative on the part of a good many of the men who habitually were referred to by those whom they had succeeded in "bluffing" as "leading correspondents" at the nation's capital.

This sort of thing formed no part of Raymond's working system. He abhorred the pompous, patronizing newspaper man with a profound, thoroughly justified abhorrence. He smiled with frank amusement at the attempts of "big guns" among widely known Washington correspondents of this type to treat him "with a certain condescension" when he met them soon after his arrival in Washington; and when, perceiving that Raymond belonged to the "sulphide" brand of newspaper men, and therefore, according to their view, required suppression, they started to haze him, he laughed openly in their teeth. He was perfectly acquainted with the fact that, not alone in Washington, but everywhere in these modern days, the self-appraised man is accepted generally at the valuation which he places upon himself. But he was very prompt in making up his mind, after reaching Washington, that he would rather lose than "play the system" of the men who had forced their way to the front by sheer effrontery.

He came upon Findlay, the old friend whom he had displaced, on the day after his arrival in Washington. Findlay, looking rather blue, said that he was "hanging around Washington" with the idea of "getting up a little syndicate of his own," the final and the rarely successful resource of the Washington correspondent who through any cause loses his billet.

"How long do you expect you're going to last here, Raymond?" Findlay asked his successor with a somewhat wan grin.

"Twenty minutes, or two years, or something like that," replied Raymond. "If I equal your stay here—you hung on for all of three months before Marsden 'hoisted' you, didn't you?—I'll count myself lucky."

"Did Marsden stake you to that line of conversation about 'livening up' the Washington service—about 'starting something' here?" inquired Findlay.

Raymond's sudden flush was quickly noticed by Findlay, who smiled grimly.

"I can see by your face that he did," went on the superseded correspondent. "He handed out that talk to all of us—the whole seven who've tried to hold down the job here ever since he's been in charge of the *News-Trib*. We've all compared notes on that talk of Marsden's when we've met up, and it was the identical spiel in each and every instance."

Raymond had surmised as much. But the actual knowledge that the managing editor had bestowed identically the same sort of a talk upon all seven of his predecessors in Washington, and that none of them had been able to measure up to the chief's idea of what the Washington service of the *News-Tribune* should be could not but be at least momentarily disconcerting. He contrived to hide his chagrin from Findlay, and later, seized by an acute perception of the humor of the thing, he mentally laughed it off.

"I'm not here to concern myself with the failure of the seven who've held the job down here ahead of me for Marsden," he said to himself, "but to get busy and try and dig up some start-something scheme to at least detain Marsden for quite a little period from handing out that line of conversation to my own successor."

Raymond "took hold" at once. He had two young men under him who "covered the departments" and scoured the capitol—for Congress was in session—for scraps of news appertaining exclusively to Chicago and Illinois and not gathered by the press associations. Raymond himself got into immediate touch with the members of the Illinois delegation in Congress, all of whom he knew; but he did not "lean upon them" in the least, and in fact rarely even referred to them in writing his brittle three-thousand-word daily review of Washington affairs for the *News-Tribune*. He carefully refrained from touching upon any of the trivial matters of mere near news for which his chief, in their talk, had expressed such a dislike. In brief, he started in cautiously to feel his way.

He succeeded immediately in "brisking up the Washington service," as any new man of average ability might easily have done. But he knew very well that that alone would not hold him in Washington. The "other seven" had each in his turn done a bit of initial "brisking up" upon assuming the Washington billet, but it had availed them nothing. Nor was Raymond reassured by the fact that his chief was maintaining a sort of deadly silence with respect to the new Washington service. Rather, he was disposed to accept that fact as a somewhat bad augury for the permanency of his Washington incumbency.

"Getting any warm wires from Marsden?" Findlay asked Raymond about

a fortnight after the latter had taken hold.

"Not yet," Raymond replied. "Haven't had a word of any sort from him."

"Well, give him time," said Findlay, with a grin. "He has this hibernating-bear trick down pretty pat. He figures that you're suffering acute anguish because he is letting you entirely alone. His next move will be to heave about a dozen of those sizzling 'Wake-up-there-you' wires at you a day. He won't apprise you of just what you're expected to do when you 'wake up' as per orders. He'll just hand you the goad, and you'll be supposed to do the rest."

Raymond's eyes gleamed.

"Maybe I'll beat him to it at that 'wake-up' thing," he replied.

"I hope so, old man," said Findlay earnestly. "I'm for you. I want to see you make a go of it here. Don't you ever imagine I'm a sorehead because you were given my job. Nothing like that in the Findlay family. I always did like you, old horse, and I'm rooting for you. And, say, Raymond, look here: when you dope out your 'start-something' scheme, invite me in on it to help you plug it along, will you? I'll do it for nothing for you, just for the fun of showing Marsden that it can be done."

CHAPTER IV.

Raymond was staying at the Hotel Willard, not having had time to look about for a permanent lodging. It was past his dinner hour when he left Findlay. As it was his custom to write and file his daily grist of comment after arranging the order of precedence of the items of his news letter in his mind over the evening meal, he hurried, after leaving Findlay, through the F Street entrance of the hotel the quicker to reach the dining room. He

walked rapidly through the long, softly lit "alley" extending almost to the Pennsylvania Avenue entrance to the hotel. Gay parties of women and men dawdled over their after-dinner coffee on settees placed along the length of the famous "Peacock Parade."

Raymond was just turning into the dining room when he heard a man in evening clothes, sitting alone beside a small coffee table on the palm-room side, break into the low but easily audible exclamation:

"It's old Raymond, for a million!"

Raymond stopped and wheeled. The voice had for his ears a sort of forgotten familiarity. He stared, with puckered brows, at the tall, bronzed, heavily mustached man, who now rose with a broad, cordial smile on his singularly keen, good-looking face. The face, too, was bafflingly familiar to Raymond.

"Think it over, old boy," went on the smiling "stranger" in his agreeable, low-pitched baritone, returning Raymond's puzzled gaze with eyes that plainly kindled with pleasure. "I won't thrust out my paw at you until——"

"Jim Hazelhurst, by all the icons of Ithaca!" Raymond broke out in a tone in which wonderment and delight were equally mingled; and four hands came swiftly together for a lingering grip of steel.

"Good eye, Joe," said the man thus enthusiastically recognized. "With that kind of an eye, you must still be batting around .450, as I remember you did the year you made the ball team at old Cornell."

"Good memory, Jim, to get right back at you," replied Raymond, drawing his old Cornell classmate to one of the deep leather davenport. "But I needed a .450 batting eye to recognize you with that pirate's brush on your upper lip. Who'd ever imagine you could raise a spread-eagle hank of hirsute like that? When you were at

Cornell, one of those Saturday-night shaves would hold you for the rest of the week."

"Had to raise it, Joe, to keep up with the push," said the possessor of the sweeping mustache, stroking it with fingers that somehow indicated humorous disparagement of the facial "ornament." "I'd a good deal rather go clean-faced; but everybody's doing it—I mean, everybody wears 'em down in the country where I live, and of course I've got to keep up with the parade."

"Down in the country where you live?" Raymond repeated after him. "It can't be that I'm talking to the oldest inhabitant of Terra del Fuego? Down? How far down? Down where?"

"Why, didn't you know that I went straight from Cornell to the cute little republic of Costador?" inquired Hazelhurst.

"No, I didn't know that," said Raymond. "You vanished from the map of the United States, and I heard various vague rumors that you'd been seen prowling, with white clothes and wide pampas hat and all the rest of the tropical scenery, down in the baked lands somewhere. But I didn't know where you hiked for when you pulled down your Cornell parchment. Costador, eh? Seems to me I've heard Costador mentioned occasionally. Isn't Costador the lively little land that elects, inaugurates, and ejects a new president every twenty minutes?"

"Sh-sh-sh, Joseph!" said Hazelhurst, a twinkle in his eye. "You are now conversing with a Costadorian; a Costadorian who hasn't a right in the world to make any complaint about Costador. I'm for Costador! Incidentally, I might tack on the remark that Costador is for me. 'A new president every twenty minutes' in Costador, eh? Well, I reckon not! The present incumbent in the Costadorian presidential chair has held the job down for seven con-

secutive years, although his envious rivals have tried to hurl him about five hundred times since he nailed the job. And with the help of Heaven, the con-ning of J. Hazelhurst, and an occasional little grand-stand defiance of the United States, the present incumbent has about an even-money chance of presidenting it in Costador for seven years more. Great pal of mine, the president of Costador. Old college chum of yours, too."

Raymond gazed mystifiedly at his classmate.

"Of mine?" he said. "How the——"

"Uh-huh—of yours," interrupted Hazelhurst, smiling blandly. "Great little man, Bovita. Best friend I ever had. Fact is, he's been the making of me. He remembers you well; we've often talked about you."

"Bovita!" exclaimed Raymond. "Why, the president of Costador isn't *our* Bovita, is he? Not that little, sawed-off, hammered-down, black-eyed, fire-eating son of the jungle whom Fatty Welch called 'Joze' Bovita and got prodded in the bread basket by Bovita for mispronouncing his Christian name? This President Bovita that I've been reading so much about *our* hot-headed little old buddy, José?"

"The same, just as sure as you're knee-high to a dwarf cactus, Joseph," replied Hazelhurst. "None other on earth; just the same old José Jesus Santa Maria Ramon Bovita that he always was, with enough brains—yes, and the 'sand' to back the brains up, too—for a dozen ordinary men. One of the great little men of the age, Bovita, if you're asking me. I hate to think of how, when our class left Cornell, I might have been dubbing fatuously around for years, doing nothing and getting nothing, if it hadn't been for Bovita. As it is——"

He paused, smiled, and made a sweeping gesture with a tanned hand that indicated, as plainly as words, that he

was pretty well satisfied with the way the world had dealt with him.

"Well, don't stop at the exciting part of it, Jim," put in Raymond interestedly. "I always knew that José Bovita was a dandy little sport. What did he do to boost you along?"

"Oh, just about everything," replied Hazelhurst. "When we were graduated, he insisted upon my going down to Costador with him. All I had was my health and a parchment; you know how I chored around to get through school. Bovita's folks were the richest people in Costador. They took me in and made me one of the family. José began immediately to scheme for the presidency. He's ten years older than we are, you remember, and he took the course at Cornell to hand himself the finishing touches so that he'd be ready when his hour struck. Moreover, the presidential bug ran in his family; two of his uncles had held the job in Costador before him. It took José three years to grab the big chair; of course, I did what little I could to help him along.

"He was hardly inaugurated the first time before he began to hand me concessions—mines and rubber and tobacco and coffee lands—so fast that I almost had to catch some of them in my teeth. They weren't empty little souvenir gifts, either; they were money propositions, all of them. All I had to do was to dig around for the capital to work the concessions. That was easy. The propositions were hundred-per-centers right on their face. Some rich old Philadelphia cave dwellers that I had a line on through my people came through with the money quick enough, and now all of the concessions are working like dollar watches. I've got more than three thousand chirpy little Costadorian workers chattering around the concessions Bovita staked me to, piling up the dollars for the company and myself. I reckon I could

clean up for about ten millions to-morrow morning if I wanted to, Joe. But I don't want to. Costador's good enough for me. I like it, and I'm going to stick. Well, that's what Bovita's done for me."

"Outside of which, he hasn't done a single, solitary thing for you, has he, Jim?" said Raymond, who had listened with an absorbed expression. "Well, little old José sure must be the brick you say he is, and you certainly must be aces with him."

"Oh, we're great pals, all right. But tell me about yourself. You've been piling up the millions, too?"

"Not so you'd notice it," said Raymond with a rueful grin. "I'm a newspaper man. Having said which, suppose we don't talk any more at present about money. It's a subject I am not familiar with. You know how few newspaper men are."

"But," put in Hazellhurst, the twinkle showing in his eye, "look at the deathless fame that comes from getting your scribblings into print, the glory, the—er—uh—well, whatever it is, *look* at it!"

"Ye-eh," replied Raymond, laughing with his old friend. He glanced at his watch and leaped from the settee. "Whee! It's nearly seven o'clock, and I've got to bolt something to eat and get three thousand words of rot on the wire for the *News-Trib* between now and ten."

"I always felt, when we were at old Cornell together, that you'd pick out something soft like this for yourself," said Hazellhurst; but there was a certain sympathy in his tone and manner.

"Listen, Jim," said Raymond. "It's as good as getting back to the old farm to meet up with you. And there are a thousand things I want to talk over with you. How long are you going to be in Washington? And what are you going to do to-night?"

"Be in town a few days longer, I reckon. As for to-night—why, the big talk with you after you get through slaving for your wire; I'm for that, bigger than a timber wolf, if you are."

"Good!" said Raymond. "Go to a show, eh, and meet me down below in the hotel grill here at half past ten, will you? I'll have nothing to do until to-morrow then, and we'll have the fanning bee and the knock fest of our lives. Is it a go? You won't run out on me, will you?"

"No chance of that—I'll be there with my hair in a braid and with this mustache that you're so jealous of in curl papers."

The two men shook hands and parted for a few hours, Hazellhurst to look over the theater list at the hotel desk, and Raymond to rush through his dinner before getting on the job of uncoiling copy for his newspaper.

CHAPTER V.

Raymond's work for his wire that night was what copy readers call "spotty." His meeting up with his old college friend, Hazellhurst, kept recurring to him as he wrote. "Costador" and "Bovita" thrust themselves upon him, and forced him to a real effort of concentration in order that there might be cohesiveness and continuity to his grist of Washington comment. The germ of a "start-something" idea already had been implanted in his mind, but he was obliged to suspend its incubation until he had struggled through with his daily routine of work. But when he had finished the grind and found Hazellhurst waiting for him at a table in the basement grill of the Willard, he lost no time in releasing his idea in order to get his friend's verdict on it.

"Jim," he said to Hazellhurst, immediately after settling himself at the table, "I wonder if you could start a

nice little war for me down yonder where you live?"

Hazellhurst was one of the type of men whom it is impossible to surprise. But he gazed inquiringly at Raymond, and blinked slightly before he smilingly replied:

"Why, certainly, Joe. Anything you like. But I'd rather have you ask me to do something more difficult for you. Starting a war in Costador is about as easy as starting a bonfire on a vacant lot up here—easier, in fact, for I believe there are police regulations against vacant-lot bonfires up here since we grew up."

"Good for you, James. One nice little personally conducted, non-sanguinary war, to be started by you for me, for my own increment, accretion, and aggrandizement, and what you can get out of it on the side."

"Grand little scheme, if you want it that way," replied Hazellhurst, calmly flicking the ashes from his cigar. "Of course, you haven't exactly let me in on the idea yet, but that doesn't make any difference. If you want red war and internecine strife in Costador, for any purpose whatsoever, why you can have the same, Joseph, just as soon as I get back there. Modesty forbids my adding that, for obtaining the accomplishment of the purpose hereinbefore described, you certainly have applied at headquarters. Internecine strife and more or less cerise revolution are specialties of mine, the solace of many hours that might otherwise be tedious. But give me the angle, old man, if there's no objection. Just why do you want the dogs of war unleashed down in Costador?"

Raymond succinctly explained to his friend the nature of his relationship to his Chicago newspaper and the managing editor thereof, dwelling upon what was expected of him as the eighth Washington correspondent of the paper within the space of two years.

"I came here with the idea and intention of sticking," he summed up. "I haven't the least purpose of being called back if there's any way on earth to prevent it. The only way to prevent it, of course, is for me to get hold of some bulky and exclusive news feature, with a Washington end, for the *News-Tribune*—something large and limelightish enough to take even a managing editor off his feet. Well, I don't see why a nice, carefully framed-up near war between Costador and the United States, the details of which I alone, of the whole crew of Washington correspondents, could get hold of through you, wouldn't be about the ticket. That would put the *News-Tribune* sufficiently in the calcium even to suit Marsden."

Hazellhurst's eyes began to glow with a new interest and enthusiasm as Raymond revealed himself.

"Oh, it's an imitation scrap between Costador and the United States, and not merely a fight of factions down in Costador that you want, is it?" he asked Raymond. "Why, that would be a good thing all around! It's a dandy proposition. It would suit Bovita right down to the ground, because it would help him to keep the presidential job as long as he wants it; and anything that helps Bovita helps me, because he's my friend and I'm for him first, last, and all the time. And, as you say, it would be the ticket for you, because I could fix it so that you'd have a copper-riveted, copyrighted clutch on all the news of the proceedings, which would make you so strong with your paper that you couldn't be hoisted from your billet here with a Krupp derrick."

Raymond's face took on an expression of pondering doubt.

"It sounds almost too easy and cut-and-dried to be feasible, Jim. You say that a thing of this sort would appeal to Bovita. I don't quite gather why it

would suit his book. What would Bovita get out of it?"

Hazellhurst laughed contemplatively. "Bovita would get out of it a chance to shake his fist at the United States government, which is the finest kind of medicine for the political health of a president of a Central American republic."

"You mean——"

"I mean that the rank and file of Central Americans dread and loathe us gringos," replied Hazellhurst. "They look upon us as a greedy, uncouth, unmannerly, eat-'em-alive nation; and if the oily Bureau of American Republics here in Washington worked in three shifts a day it would never be able to convince the Central American 'man on the street' that the United States government isn't lying awake of nights devising schemes to gobble up all of Central and South America in one large bite. So that the main grand-stand play of any present incumbent, or would-be incumbent, in the presidential chair down there is to cook up a little mess of trouble with 'the bulldozing, rapacious republic of the gringos,' put a chip on his shoulder, and, from a balcony of the palace or the band stand on the plaza, hurl eternal defiance at 'the shopkeepers of the North' and double-dog-dare them to mortal combat for money, marbles, chalk, or kite string. That's what we call 'inside ball' down there, and it wins ninety-nine times out of a hundred."

"Does our little schoolmate Bovita have to work that play in order to hang on to his present incumbency?" inquired Raymond.

"He does when the situation seems to require him to get under the spotlight and revive the flagging or wandering interest of his beloved fellow Costadorians," said Hazellhurst. "Already, during his seven years of the presidency, he has twice played the repel-the-gringo card with first-rate re-

sults; and right now the time is ripe for him to produce another ace of the same sort from his sleeve. According to a careful underground census that I've made, there are now only three hundred and twenty-seven Costadorians who secretly or openly aspire to Bovita's boots. Of these, only two are what you might call dangerous. Bovita, of course, is in no actual danger of losing out. But he would welcome, right now, a little diversion, such as another opportunity to hoarsely defy all of the might and majesty of the United States government."

"A dangerous defy, I should say!"

"Not at all. Defying the United States is one of the safest and at the same time most effectual little things a Central American president can do. He knows very well before he starts to unwind the deft that, at the very worst, the United States will merely send a third-rate gunboat down to the main port of the defiant little land for the purpose of seeing to it that the American consul, while the excitement lasts, doesn't get the perfectly good polish on his tan shoes dimmed through the malice of the defiant driver of some passing sprinkling cart. That's about as far as the United States government goes, or is required to go, after one of these carefully rigged, throaty little defiances of 'the gringo swine' has been uttered by a president who has the perpetuity of his incumbency in view. But it works out as joyously as a problem in common fractions for the defier. His fellow patriots become delirious in their enthusiasm over him, all of the fellows who have been camping on his trail, waiting to slip into his job, go off and gunny sack their abashed heads, and the defier can lean back and take life lollfully until the next crop of aspirants for his job take up the swart man's burden."

Raymond listened meditatively, and his eyes sparkled.

"All of this sounds so much like a well-rehearsed symphony that I'm beginning to wonder whether I'm not in a trance, Jim," he said. "It appears that I've not only applied at headquarters, as you say, for the inception and carrying through of my little self-boosting war, but that I've put in my application at just about the psychological moment. The additional beauty of it seems to be that everybody mainly concerned—Bovita, yourself, and yours truly—stands to get some good out of it; whereas, on the other hand, nobody stands to get hurt or even mussed up in the bloodless conflict. Am I right?"

"Perfectly," replied Hazelhurst. "'Blood' need never be mentioned, much less spilt, from the start to the finish of the thing. Suppose we start right by calling it a beneficent imbroglia?"

"For private purposes, that's as good a phrase as any," said Raymond. "But of course the publicity end of this little war of ours has got to be sanguinary."

"Make it Waterloo plus Gettysburg, old man, as your fancy directs and your pencil flies," said Hazelhurst, smiling. "Of course, there wouldn't be anything in it for you by way of fame and journalistic aggrandizement if you undertook to act as press agent and publicity promoter of a war consisting chiefly of superheated steam."

"Getting down to cases, then, Jim," Raymond went on, his tone of persiflage clearly belied by the light of intense interest which shone in his eyes, "you undertake and guarantee to precipitate the scrap—the 'almost' scrap, that is to say—between Costador and the United States, which will give Bovita a bit of a lift over one of the rough spots incident to the presidential environment, thereby also helping yourself because it enables you to do your Central American friend a favor; and I, on my part, undertake and guarantee to handle the publicity end of it in Washington, mak-

ing a large-headline mêlée of it, for the sole and selfish purpose of showing the managing editor of my newspaper that his 'start-something' proposition, which he cynically made to seven other men ahead of me here, isn't such a wild and impossible rabbit dream as he no doubt imagines it to be."

"That's about the journalese of it, Joe," replied Hazelhurst. "And the plan appeals to me as a Thanksgiving turkey appeals to a kid. I'm mighty glad I met up with you and that you sprung the scheme. When will I start the show?"

"I've got two important things to do before the curtain goes up. One of them is to arrange to get the exclusive news from the seat of war, and the other is to attend to it that the whole thing remains my exclusive news story until the treaty of peace is signed, as it were."

"The first part of that is easier than fishing for sun perch with a hand line from a flat-bottomed skiff," said Hazelhurst. "Send a man, who is for you and whom you can trust absolutely, down to Costador with me—I'll foot his bills, don't worry about that—to write the 'scenes and incidents' of the harrowing affair. He can wire his stuff to you here in Washington in code, and you can transmit the exclusive stuff to your newspaper in brittle, rampageous English—and there you are."

Raymond glanced at his friend with frank admiration.

"A pretty fairish kind of a newspaper man was lost from some paper's pay roll when Bovita turned you into such an inconsequent thing as a millionaire, Jim," he said to his friend. "Or else there's more in telepathy than most of us acknowledge. You beat me to the expression of the very plan I was about to suggest. Not only that, but I've got exactly the man for the job. Man by the name of Findlay, my predecessor here for the *News-Tribune*.

Fellow as square as a die, stanch as teakwood, and consumed with a sleepless ambition to put one over on Marsden, even if he has to do it by proxy; that is, by helping me to do it."

"We'll count Findlay in on it, then," said Hazellhurst. "Can you get him on the phone and fetch him down here?"

Raymond nodded, had the waiter fetch a portable telephone, called up Findlay at the latter's home, and within twenty minutes Findlay, blinking wonderingly, joined the two complacent-looking conspirators at the table.

"We're starting a little war here, Findlay," said Raymond to his predecessor, after introducing him to Hazellhurst. "Do you want to get in on the ground floor?"

"I hate peace," quickly replied Findlay with a grin. "'Findlay' isn't exactly what you'd call a Provencal name, you'll remember. I think it's Conne-mara. As for the ground floor, that's as good a place as any in which to participate in a war—unless it's the cellar."

"Do you think you could endure the rigors and hardships incident to living in Mr. Hazellhurst's palatial hacienda in Costador for two or three months, Findlay?" Raymond asked his old associate.

"After a Washington boarding house—anything," Findlay laughed.

Whereupon, Raymond, with occasional side-light interpolations by Hazellhurst, unfolded the whole plan to Findlay. The latter's eyes were ablaze with interest and anticipation throughout Raymond's succinct but picturesque development of the scheme, and when Raymond finished by asking him, "What do you think of it, viewing it, so to speak, as the sort of medicine to fill Doctor Marsden's 'start-something' prescription?" Findlay, in his excitement, pushed back his chair, stood up, and grasped Raymond by both shoulders.

"It's an unbeatable hand, Raymond

—that's what I think of it!" he exclaimed enthusiastically. "It will take any trick that's been played on the newspaper board for a generation in this town of hefty newspaper hands. It is both ingenious and simple, and that combination always is a sure winner. It's the chance of your life to put a sure-enough big thing across, not only on Marsden, but upon the newspaper world in general. Thanks a thousand times for inviting me in on it. Don't worry about my covering my end. It will be a picnic to help out on such an assignment."

The three men adjourned from the grill to Raymond's office to have a good-night smoke over details of the plan. Raymond opened a telegram lying on his desk, read it with a grim smile, and passed it to the others to read. The telegram read:

I find no noticeable change in our Washington service since your assumption of the work, except that it is perhaps a little more barren than before. It is, however, "nice and even." Consider this carefully.

MARSDEN.

"It looks as if it is about time for me to 'start something,' doesn't it?" said Raymond.

"That's only Marsden's opening gun," said Findlay. "Now you're in for a bombardment that won't let up until——" He hesitated.

"Until," Raymond put in to help him out, "you get down to Costador with Hazellhurst and we get our personally conducted war a going. When are you going to start for Costador, old man?" turning to Hazellhurst. "I'd hate to get the mitten from Marsden before I have a chance to pose as 'the peripatetic news pivot of Washington.'"

"I'm ready to go any time," promptly replied Hazellhurst. "There's nothing to keep me here. Could you go by day after to-morrow?" turning to Findlay. "We'll travel in company."

Findlay explained to Hazellhurst that

four or five minutes was a considerable space of time for a newspaper man to get himself ready for a trip to any destination, including Bangkok, Benares, or beyond.

The three men spent the following day in going over the "plot," item by item, in deciding upon a wire code of their own, and in talking over intimate details of the scheme with Señor Podrido, the Costadorian minister in Washington, who, a close friend of Hazelhurst's, rapturously heard of the plan which was so much in the interest of his patron and chief, Bovita, and promised to do everything within his power to forward it, diplomatically and otherwise, when the time came for him to act.

Within forty-eight hours after Raymond's meeting with Hazelhurst and his germination of the naïve idea of engaging Costador and the United States in a sort of hypothetical or tentative war, Hazelhurst was on his way back to the land of Bovita with Findlay.

CHAPTER VI.

José Jesus Santa Maria Ramon Bovita, president of the republic of Costador, appeared to be in high and even rippling spirits, as, standing under a softly flapping marquee illumined by tiny vari-hued electric bulbs skillfully hidden behind tropical plants and blossoms, he received his guests.

His manner was one of stateliness and graciousness, proportionately mingled. If it be doubted that a man whose stature barely approximates five feet four, even with the aid of military heels, can be stately, it is only necessary to recall Napoleon, for a single instance of undersized grandeur. Moreover, the office has a good deal to do with the making of the manner. Bovita had been a president for seven years. On this night he was giving a fête on the palm-screened lawn of his palace—

he preferred to call it the executive mansion—in his capital of Esparta to celebrate the anniversary of his accession to the presidency.

He was clad in the unimaginative evening dress of the men of northern lands, a dress which always seems fatuous if not actually grotesque when worn in a tropical country. A diamond-studded Turkish decoration, suspended by a wide ribbon of red silk, dangled glitteringly on the bosom of his shirt. Other decorations, none of them less ornate, and all of them gem-studded, were attached in a neat and impressive double row on both sides of his coat. In his hand he held a crush hat, which he used gallantly and grandiloquently.

Bovita, responding to the floridly phrased congratulations of his guests, spoke quietly, modestly, of his humble efforts, during the seven years of his incumbency, to place Costador upon a permanent basis of peace and prosperity; often his tone was pitched so low that it barely could be heard above the hum of the string orchestra which, embowered amid twinkling lights some distance away, played industriously, but never boisterously.

It was close upon ten o'clock at night, and the fête was at the height of its brilliancy, when Hazelhurst, who had returned to Costador but a week before, after his annual visit to the United States, stepped from his motor car at the gate to the palace grounds, and lounged through the long frond-arched vista of twinkling lights in the direction of the president's marquee. A certain swagger with which Hazelhurst carried himself was as natural to him as the habit of brushing his teeth; but he was watched out of a good many eyes fixed aslant as he strode along; and the shrugs of the men—mostly undersized—who thus regarded him might easily have been translated into sneers by a dragoman versed in the jealousies of little men. Hazelhurst, who was six

feet three, towered a good head over most of the men with whom he brushed elbows as he passed along; there was not a wrinkle in his evening dress—and the men of tropical lands rarely acquire the art of wearing unrumpled evening clothes. Hazellhurst looked to be very much at home and very confident of himself as he drew near to Bovita's marquee.

"The gringo grenadier," sneered one in a group of the little men, in Spanish, as Hazellhurst passed; and there was a little unpleasant laugh, followed by shrugs and twirlings of mustaches.

A party of three highly decorative officers of the Costadorian army were in the act of making a backward, bowing retreat from the president's marquee, when Hazellhurst, who had halted to await his opportunity to approach Bovita alone, strode toward the president with extended hand.

The squat, stocky figure of Bovita suddenly became taut, rigid. The beard-creaking smile vanished from his face as suddenly as the grimace is erased from the countenance of a danseuse when she reaches the "wings." A heavy scowl took its place. The Bovita brow was drawn into tight folds of visible wrath where it had been as smooth as the surface of a park lake but an instant before; and the wide, bright, beaming Bovita eyes suddenly became slitted, wary, watchful.

But it was not until Bovita, with his hands behind his back, stood glowering up at him that the careless, unobservant Hazellhurst paused abruptly permitted his extended hand to drop at his side, and gazed with seeming mystification back into the slitted eyes of the president.

Hazellhurst, very erect, but with his chin necessarily depressed in order that he might gaze down at a man fully a foot beneath him in stature, made some brief remark in a low tone. Bovita, never moving, but preserving the taut-

ness that made him, for the moment, look oddly like a figure in a waxworks exhibition, replied briefly and brittily, but also in the low tone that was habitual with him. But the little black sparks of light between his half-closed, heavy-lidded eyes seemed to glow and gleam with anger as he spoke.

A number of watchful officials of the Costadorian government and officers of the Costadorian army, who had witnessed the beginning of the extraordinary scene, made as if to press closer to the marquee that they might overhear what passed between their president and the man who, up to that moment, they had supposed to be their president's closest "gringo" friend, companion, and beneficiary. Bovita, ever alert, noticed this; saw how the would-be eavesdroppers obviously were making the pretense that their pressing-forward movements were unavoidable as the result of the pressure of crowds behind them.

Bovita, for an instant removing his upward gaze at Hazellhurst, darted a quick, circling, comprehensive scowl at the curious ones who thought to catch him unawares and to partake of the aural as well as the visual joys of the scene. They all caught the president's scowl before it was fairly launched, so to speak; and they fell back with such ludicrous haste and confusion that several of them tripped upon their backward-propelled heels and spurs and fell thumpingly and rearwardly upon the lawn. These hastily picked themselves up and hastened after those who had escaped from the radius of their president's scowl without accident. Within considerably less than a minute after the beginning of the scene, Bovita and Hazellhurst were alone under the marquee, with no would-be listener nearer than twenty-five feet of them.

"The favorite now stands upon the king's rug," smilingly murmured a number of the pleased little Costadorian

officials and officers, repeating an old phrase of Spanish courtiers. Some of them added: "The grenadier appears to be preparing for a march!"

The conversation between Bovita and Hazelhurst lasted exactly three and one-half minutes, according to an historian obsessed with the mania for accuracy who was present and who took the trouble to time it. Then, of a sudden, the president brought his crush hat so violently down upon the outstretched palm of his left hand as unexpectedly to open the hat—which, according to the same historian, seemed to occasion the president considerable surprise. A violent remark, probably one of dismissal, no doubt, accompanied the involuntary opening of the collapsible hat; at any rate, Bovita at that moment turned his back upon Hazelhurst, and the latter, still very erect, but with a good deal more than the usual amount of color in his cheeks, bowed ever so slightly, wheeled, and strode rapidly through the shrugging, smiling crowd toward the palace gate.

Hazelhurst was stepping across the walk to enter his waiting motor car when a short, smooth-shaven, somewhat fussy, and worried-looking man in evening dress hailed him from the step of the automobile which he was on the point of entering.

"That you, Hazelhurst?" said the voice in a very easily recognizable "down-East" twang. "Wait a minute, will you? I want to have a little talk with you."

"Oh, hello, Rockland," said Hazelhurst, stepping back from his car, and holding out his hand to the American minister to Costador. "Anything particular you want to talk about? I'm in a bit of a hurry."

"Well, it's rather particular," replied Minister Rockland. "I don't know whether you'll want to talk about it or not; hut, if you do, I'm here to listen. I noticed that little affair between you

and the president. It amazed me, of course. I don't want to pry, understand, Hazelhurst. But if there's anything you want to say to me, or that I can do——"

"Just send your car home, then, and take a bit of a ride about with me in mine," suggested Hazelhurst. "I want to get out to my place as soon as possible—it's necessary that I should—but perhaps it will be just as well for me to tell you what this thing is all about."

The American minister directed his chauffeur to take his car to the garage, and took a seat beside Hazelhurst in the latter's car. They drove slowly in the direction of the American minister's residence. Nothing was said between the two men for some time, Hazelhurst leaning back and thoughtfully twirling his mustache, and the minister apparently waiting for him to break the silence. Finally, after some fidgeting, Mr. Rockland was the first to speak.

"You understand, I hope, Hazelhurst, that I haven't the least desire to appear intrusive," he said nervously. "But it was such an odd-looking business, and Bovita seemed to be so deliberately intent upon showing you up, as the saying is, that——"

"Oh, I don't mind the 'showing-up' part of it." Hazelhurst interrupted him with a laugh that sounded slightly forced. "It's my two men, Haven and Parker, that I'm worrying about."

"Two of your employees, you mean, Hazelhurst?" asked Mr. Rockland.

"Yes; and mighty good friends of mine, too, as well as employees," replied Hazelhurst. "I'd forgotten that you hadn't met them; this is the first time they've come into Esparta since you took your post here. They're my two chiefs, in charge of my interests down in the province of Truxillo. Fred Haven is my head mining engineer, and George Parker is my plantation superintendent; first-class, splendid fel-

lows, both of them. I'd swear to the integrity of the pair of them in any court in the world."

"Well, who seems to be doubting their integrity?" inquired the American minister. "Bovita?"

Hazellhurst hesitated and took several long whiffs on his cigar before replying.

"There's nothing 'official,' as you might call it, about this little talk we're having, is there, Rockland?" he asked then.

"Certainly not," replied the American minister, puffing out his cheeks with a certain harmless air of pomposity. "Not, of course, unless you desire me so to consider it. Of course, if you wish to lodge a complaint with me, then——"

"Oh, nothing whatever like that—not yet, at any rate," put in Hazellhurst hastily, with another rather mirthless laugh. "I don't believe in setting up a whimper before the lash falls. And yet ——" He broke off and began to pull very busily on his cigar.

"Well, we'll consider the talk confidential, then," said Mr. Rockland, a slight note of irritation in his tone when he perceived that Hazellhurst had no apparent inclination to proceed. "You haven't yet told me what sort of a scrape your friends and employees are in, or what danger, if any, threatens them. Was it about them that you had the rather unfortunate-looking tiff with the president?"

"Why unfortunate? Was the little passage between Bovita and myself observed?" quickly inquired Hazellhurst.

"Observed?" said the American minister, strongly emphasizing the word. "Why, it was the sensation of the night! Everybody saw it. Esparta no doubt is buzzing like a thousand beehives over it at this present moment. You could have heard a pin drop on the lawn while you were talking with Bovita. And, of course, the gringo haters are delighted. It must have been a pretty serious con-

versation, or Bovita wouldn't have taken such elaborate pains to indicate to all hands your sudden and seemingly complete fall from his favor and good graces."

"True enough," said Hazellhurst. "There's no reason why you shouldn't know about it, although, as I say, I don't want you to take it that I am registering any complaint. There isn't, of course, anything to complain about yet. And even if anything should happen as to which you might regard it your duty to take diplomatic action, I'd like to have an understanding that you'll confer with me before you make any official move. For, after all, although it doesn't appear, just yet, that I myself am under suspicion, I certainly am considerably involved and concerned in the affair owing to my relationship to the two men who are suspected."

"Suspected?" broke out the American minister, now distinctly impatient. "What is the suspicion all about? What are your men suspected of doing? And by what right does Bovita suspect American citizens of——"

"A little more of the soft pedal, if you don't mind, Rockland," interrupted Hazellhurst, speaking in a low tone. "My chauffeur is a Costadorian, and maybe you've heard the saying that a Costadorian can hear an ant roll over in his sleep. As to Bovita's suspicions, he has a right to them, as any man has who considers that his security is jeopardized. You know how obstreperous Trompero, Bovita's old rival and enemy, has become down in the province of Truxillo lately. During the past month he has put his rag-tag-and-bobtail army down there on a genuine fighting basis. It is said that he is now four thousand strong and well equipped, and that he has succeeded in so disaffecting the government troops down there that they are ready to go over to him whenever he says the word. Trompero is openly threatening to march on Esparta. He

knows that if he does that he'll find a lot of friends here, for Bovita has had to carry things here with a high hand in order to retain his hold. Aldama, whom Bovita thrust out of his cabinet two years ago when he suspected him of plotting the overthrow of the government, is as busy as a bird dog here in Esparta, intriguing with the enemies of Bovita, and there is talk that if Trompero forced his way here to the capital, Aldama would join standards with him; and it is more than whispered that Aldama could turn over a sizable element of the government troops in and around Esparta to Trompero. Bovita, of course, isn't asleep. He knows a good deal more about all of these things than anybody else, and he is perfectly aware of the fact that if Trompero and Aldama succeed in joining forces here against him he is done for as president of Costador, if, indeed, his life would not be in danger. So that there isn't a reasonable chance on earth to blame Bovita for entertaining suspicions."

"I've heard all of this gossip, as a matter of course, Hazelhurst," said the American minister, who, several times in the progress of Hazelhurst's presentation of the situation, had attempted to break in with questions. "But what I am trying to find out is this: What has all of this to do with your two employees? What has brought them under suspicion?"

"That last question is one that I can't answer," replied Hazelhurst. "But Bovita declared to me to-night that Haven and Parker, my most trusted employees and personal friends, are in league with Trompero down in Truxillo, where, as you know, all of my interests are; that he knows positively that Haven and Parker not only are for Trompero as president or dictator of Costador, but that both of them already have secretly allied themselves with Trompero, and helped to finance

him in the organization and equipment of his army. That's what the conversation between Bovita and myself was about to-night."

"But it is absolute nonsense, of course, isn't it?" asked Mr. Rockland. "It must be pure imagination on Bovita's part?"

"Well, that's the part of it that's puzzling me," said Hazelhurst thoughtfully. "It seems incredible. Haven and Parker are not the sort of men to care a finger snap for Costadorian politics or any other kind of politics. Moreover, they are probably the busiest two men in Central America. They've worked night and day for the past five years developing and working my concessions down in Truxillo, and they rarely get away from their work long enough even to visit Esparta. They only came up here this time at my urgent solicitation to talk over some matters with me."

"But if they're the sort of men you say they are, how can it be humanly possible that they'd do anything so idiotic as to get themselves mixed up with the revolutionary politics of Costador?" inquired the American minister. "Isn't it certain that the whole thing is a dream on Bovita's part?"

"That, as I say," promptly replied Hazelhurst, "is what has got me to guessing. Bovita isn't a man to dream things. A dreamer would last about as long as president of Costador as an aigret in a blast furnace. I've known Bovita for a good many years—you're aware, I presume, that he was a classmate of mine at Cornell?—and I know that, whatever imagination he may possess, he doesn't permit it to gum up his mental processes during office hours—and Bovita's office hours last about twenty-five hours a day, three hundred and sixty-seven days a year. If any man in all Central America acts solely upon facts, that man is José Bovita."

"Then," put in the American minis-

ter in an amazed tone, "you are of the opinion that Bovita's suspicions as to your two men are correct, and that they are really guilty of conspiring with Trompero?"

"Not so fast, if you please, good friend," said Hazellhurst. "I've said nothing of the sort. The most I've said as to that is that it mystifies me. I'll have to have a talk with Haven and Parker before I reach my conclusion, one way or the other. They're snug in their beds out at my hacienda now, but I'll rout them out as soon as I get there and put them on the carpet as to what Bovita says of them. No matter how the case stands, they'll tell me the truth about it. That's the sort of fellows they are."

"Well," said the diplomat as the automobile slowed up at the curb in front of his residence, "it is a disagreeable, nasty business at the best. What I dislike most about it, Hazellhurst, is that you, the most prominent American citizen in Costador—er-umph! next to myself, of course—I speak in an official sense, you understand—that you should be mixed up in it."

Hazellhurst again showed his inclination to "laugh off" that part of it.

"That's the least of my troubles," he said. "I'm not exactly in love with what you call being 'shown up,' especially before an assemblage of people among whom there were many who would deem it a delight to bestrew my casket with tacks and other bijoutry. But, even though I made allowance for Bovita—it was only decent to do that, considering the difficult position he now is in down here—I didn't take his wig-

ging precisely in the turn-the-other-cheek spirit, perhaps you noticed. In fact, I gave him back as good as he sent; lost my temper a bit, in truth, and I'm sorry now that I did."

"You had occasion to lose it, in my opinion," said Mr. Rockland, an American of the sternly uncompromising, right-or-wrong species. "Am I to understand that the friendship which has existed so long between you and Bovita now is off?"

"I hope not," replied Hazellhurst, with an attempt at cheerfulness. "If I understood the situation that way, I'd be mighty sorry at this moment that I hadn't sold out my interests here to a syndicate that made a big offer for them while I was up in the United States last month."

"Do you anticipate that anything will happen to your two employees?" inquired Mr. Rockland, getting out of the automobile.

"Something may have happened to them already while we've been riding around Esparta in the middle of the night, talking their case over," said Hazellhurst, rising in his seat to bid the American minister good night. "The immediate outlook for them doesn't look very cheerful, judging from what Bovita said to me. But I'll let you know if anything befalls them. Don't lose any sleep over them. It wouldn't do any good. If Bovita's friendship for me won't keep them out of a dungeon, I imagine that nothing else will. Good night," and he directed his chauffeur to put on speed and make for the Hazellhurst hacienda, about two miles beyond the outskirts of Esparta.

TO BE CONTINUED.

The second and concluding part of this novel will appear in the first August POPULAR, on sale two weeks hence, July 7th.

The Man Who Disappeared

By Richard Washburn Child

Author of "The Blue Wall," "Jim Hands," Etc.

VI.—THE GAP

THE return of Henry Horn from the West, coincident with John Perriton's recovery from the attack of a detective who had been engaged by Carter, the building contractor, brought rejoicing to Jenny. She now had her husband with her again and could congratulate herself that in nursing Perriton back to health, she had paid in part the debt she owed him on account of his taking her out of her old life of association with crooks and helping her to marry the young farmer whom she had at first intended to make the victim of her trickery.

Jenny having asked John to allow her to tell her husband the truth about his career, recited to Horn the whole story of the young society idler who for the sake of Mary Wales had taken the blame for the crime of her brother Nelson, and had now succeeded, after his escape, first from the police and then from a gang of criminals, in obliterating his old personality and had taken up the life of a laborer under the name of John Pottle.

The morning sun on an early summer day was streaming into Perriton's boarding-house bedroom when Henry Horn and his young wife came to talk with John about his plans for the future.

"I can't help but be amused," Perriton said, shifting the bandage in which his injured arm was bound. "Here are three of us—Jenny, a shrewd little pal,

who graduated from a traveling circus to the confidence game—poor youngster! And you, a young farmer with a legacy which you don't know what to do with. And me, a former butterfly of fashion, clubs, and cocktails, out of a name, and out of a job. When three such are partners—why worry? The world is before us!"

Horn saw the response of cheer on the face of his wife which could be at her will a sensitive mirror of her thoughts, the face of an accomplished actress, or a countenance of stone. But he also saw that it was followed by a shadow of sadness, and he knew that she was thinking that in spite of all her plans, Mary Wales, the girl whom Perriton loved, although she was the only one of all his old friends who knew that he was alive, still believed him guilty, and was trying to wipe his memory from her mind.

"I would be ready to give up the idea of an apple orchard in Oregon if there was any way in which my small capital could be used to start us all out in life again here," Henry said, putting his great hand over the little hand of his wife. "It is foolish for you, John, to be going back to this structural iron-work. That isn't your size."

Perriton laughed. "A man who has to dodge the police in order to keep out of an uncomfortable electric chair must not complain if he has to begin at the bottom," he said. "And besides, doesn't

it occur to you that a man who had the training I had and lived like an ornament the way I did isn't just the kind of a fellow to become a captain of industry while you wait."

"There's a chance somewhere," exclaimed Jenny. "Somewhere somebody has got a big chance waiting which needs the money Henry has got, and the brains you've got."

"Brains!" said Perriton. "My brains!"

"Yes," replied Jenny. "Don't forget that I have worked with men who lived on their wits, but you were smarter than any of 'em, weren't you? And remember what you've as often said to me—that a little resource would get anybody out of any scrape. Now, if it has gotten us out of scrapes—why, let's use it to get us all into business."

Her husband and John looked at the floor.

"What business?" asked Horn.

"Yes, that's it—what business?" repeated Perriton dismally.

"Here's what I have done," said Jenny, producing a scrap of newspaper.

It was an advertisement clipped from a daily.

WANTED: Two men are seeking an opportunity for a new legitimate business. One has a small sum to invest. No triflers need apply. Answer J—Care *Morning Telegram*.

"I suppose J stands for Jenny," laughed Perriton. "Oh, this is rich! Every shark in the city will be answering you."

"They have already, I guess," the girl replied, showing a pile of letters. "Out of all of them there is only one that amounts to anything, and that one may amount to a great deal. It is from an old friend of ours, John."

"An old friend?" asked Horn.

"Yes, an old friend. It is from the superintendent of the construction job on which you were working, John. I guess the association with Carter has got too strong for him."

"You mean the letter is from Earle?" exclaimed John.

"Here it is."

Perriton unfolded the note and read:

The writer knows of an opportunity to bid on a contract for the municipal buildings of a city within the State. He seeks a partner with fifteen thousand dollars to complete a sum almost raised for the launching of a construction company. If the bid is successful the venture will prove profitable. Telephone immediately 3,469 Farragut.

"It is Earle's private telephone line!" said Perriton. "And he told me several times that if he ever went into business for himself, he would like to have me help him. He has the notion that I am a good judge of men, and that I am able to think out plans of action."

"Is he honest?" asked Horn.

"Honest as the day is long," replied John. "He never liked to work for Carter, anyway. Has been trying to find a way out. I believe if he has a scheme it is a good one—something you can put money into safely, Henry. Jenny, go out and telephone him. Any minute may be too late."

The girl reached for her hat, and with one or two final instructions as to what to say to Earle about a meeting place and other details, she ran down the stairs and toward the corner grocery where the nearest public telephone was located.

"Give me three-four-six-nine Farragut," she panted into the mouthpiece. "Hello—yes—thank you. Hello—Mr. Earle. What? Gone? Can you tell me where? Leaving for the West for good—to-day? Can't you tell me——"

But the gruff voice at the other end had said a brusque good-by. She recognized it as Carter's voice, and knew she could get from him no further information without a personal interview.

"Shall I go back to the house?" she asked herself, biting her lip in impatience. "No. The thing to do is to save every minute. I'll go to Carter's office. I'll take the elevated."

Pictures of Earle, disappointed in his plans, unable to finance his venture, severed from his connections with Carter, and perhaps at this very time boarding a limited train for a long journey to an unknown place, out of reach, came to her mind as she rode.

"The two men will wonder what has become of me," she told herself as she hurried down from her station toward the half-built structure being erected by Carter's contracting company.

The construction office was familiar to her; she had worked there for a few short weeks. Now nodding quickly to the bookkeepers, she made her way without knocking into the office of the superintendent where old Carter sat behind the desk, running his thin, claw fingers through the fringe of gray hair above his ears.

"Who are you?" snapped the president of the company, looking up with a scowl, and then as he saw that Jenny was young and pretty, he smiled indulgently and took her hand in both his own. "I think I remember you," he said. "You used to work for Mr. Earle, didn't you? Your name is Jenny. Sit down, Jenny. What can we do for you?"

"Tell me please where Mr. Earle is and when he is going to leave for the West."

"Yes, yes," said Carter, leaning forward with an evil smile. "But not so fast. It is not often that so good looking a young woman comes to sit in my office. How would you like to have a job as my own particular stenographer now——"

"Don't want a job," Jenny answered, drawing her hand out of his reach. "I want to find Mr. Earle—at once!"

The president laughed.

"Didn't he treat you all right?" he asked.

Jenny did not answer because at that moment her searching eyes caught sight of a letter on Carter's desk in which

she saw the name "Earle" written twice, and her instinct told her that unless she could obtain the information from that letter she would get it in no other way. She knew Carter's character well enough to believe that he would keep her there to amuse himself, and thrust his silly old attentions upon her without an idea of giving her any help in her search.

She leaned forward cautiously, endeavoring to read the words.

"Not so fast!" exclaimed Carter, snatching the sheet of paper from under her gaze. "My, my! you are a curious little girl, aren't you? Now I tell you what you do. You come out and have luncheon with me, and we will talk this matter over. It is evident that Mr. Earle's whereabouts are of some importance to you—well, so am I—because I am the only person here that knows exactly where he is, and exactly what he is going to do."

For a moment Jenny thought of what tactics she could best use to obtain the letter that Carter was so anxious she should not see. Her inclination was to tell the man who had been John's enemy, and who, aside from that, was an odious and unprincipled, grasping taskmaster, what contempt she had for him.

"You are too old," she said, finally taking out the hatpins from her hat. "I could not enjoy a meal with you. And more than that, you are not attentive enough."

"You seem to be willing to stay," Carter said with a leer, as he watched her put her hat on the table and arrange her hair with the tips of her fingers. "Why do you say I am not attentive?"

"Well, for instance, why don't you offer to hang up my hat for me?"

"I will," the president said. "I hardly dare touch it—it is so dainty. Where shall I hang it? No place seems fit——"

"Hang it in the coat closet, of course," Jenny said.

Carter shuffled toward the closet—opened it and stepped inside. At that moment Jenny sprang forward, slammed the door, turned the key, and made a wry face at the sounds of protest which issued from within.

"Let me out," Carter's voice said indignantly.

"In a minute," said Jenny, snatching up the letter he had dropped. This letter she put into the letter press, made a copy on the tissue, and returned the original to its place.

"Just a little fun," said she, unlocking the door.

"It is enough!" Carter replied angrily. "I can't waste my time any more. You are rather too queer acting to suit me. Here's your hat. You can go."

He glanced at the desk where he had dropped the letter to see if she had taken it, but it was still there—apparently untouched. Jenny left him folding it for its envelope.

Outside she opened the crumbled copy she had made and thrust into her dress. It read:

DEAR MASON: Nothing now prevents our landing the contract for the municipal buildings. Earle, my superintendent, had intended to bid on this work, and was trying to raise money to a responsible construction company. He fell a little short, and, as I have fired him, he leaves for his home in the West at twelve-thirty to-day. No other competitor has a chance. Even if Earle bid, the trick I spoke of could be worked. You, as mayor of the city, would have no trouble. Remember The Lighted End. Very truly yours,
CARTER.

Again Jenny crumpled the note in her tense hand.

"Twelve-thirty!" she repeated to herself. "Twelve-thirty. And I do not know the train. Not even the destination. Not even the station!"

For a moment she hesitated, and then, hearing the blast of the noon whistle and the solemn strokes of a

bell tolling the noon, she ran across the street to a taxicab standing outside a dairy-lunch restaurant.

"If Carter fears that Earle will bid on the contract, then that is the very thing that he must do," she said to herself, as she opened the door of the café and beckoned to the chauffeur who, perched on a stool, had just bitten into the circle of a brown doughnut.

"Listen!" she whispered to the driver, "I have no money with me, and I must find a man who is going to leave the city on a train that goes at twelve-thirty. If I don't catch him I will see you are paid the regular rates; if I do there is twenty-five dollars in it for you. I'm a woman and a stranger to you. Will you take a chance or not?"

The man blinked his eyes. He was one of those individuals who ever appears to be half asleep, but of whom it may well be guessed that nothing escapes his observation. Occasionally it is such a man who carries a true sporting instinct.

"You can't reach either downtown station in thirty minutes," he drawled. "There's just one chance for you. If you don't know which station it is, you better take the one from which the trains cross the river. We can reach the Colfax drawbridge in twenty minutes. That's twelve-twenty-five. If a twelve-thirty train starts out of the right station we will beat it to the draw by somethin' over fifteen minutes."

He had illustrated the course of train and the action of the drawbridge with his hands as he talked, and now he seemed to be falling back into slumber again as he blinked at the watch in his hand.

"What good will that do me? The train don't stop. I can't get on." Mary exclaimed.

He blinked again.

"Just a matter of luck," said he. "If the draw is open the train *has* to stop. Do you get me? It's a chance." He

added with the glimmer of a smile, her own words: "Will you take a chance with me?"

"Yes," cried Jenny, jumping into the cab. "Drive through Morley Street. I'll tell you where to stop. We're going to take another passenger. If you're pinched for speeding the treat will be on me."

"Much obliged," the driver said, as they whirled around the corner and increased their speed down the avenue.

Jenny feared, even if she caught Mr. Earle, that he might not listen to her if she were alone. She believed that the time for entering bids on the municipal-building contract had nearly expired; she had firm faith in her intuitive conviction that John and her husband would find an opportunity with Earle such as they might not find again in years. She did not intend to let this chance go by lack of wits.

"Besides, John thinks so fast!" she said to herself as she sprang out before the door of the boarding house, where she had directed the sleepy-eyed chauffeur to stop. Up the steps she ran, and burst into the room where John and Henry were sitting, looking at their watches.

"You go out to telephone," said her husband reproachfully, "and you stay two hours. We sit here and wonder what hospital the ambulance took you to."

"There ain't a second!" cried the girl, grasping John's arm. "Come!"

"My hat! My coat!" said Perriton. "And the doctor forbade it."

"Leave 'em," said she. "Now, listen. You both know me. I'm not a fool, am I? Take my word for it, do you hear? Don't ask questions. I'll explain later."

Perriton knew enough not to hesitate after this appeal. He motioned to Horn to make no further protest. Jenny had already run down the stairs, and he

followed her through the open door of the cab.

"A' right," drawled the chauffeur, opening his engine. "Now we're off again."

"Did you bring any money?" gasped Jenny.

"No," said John. "About all I brought was my damaged and bandaged person."

"Never mind."

A serious expression came over Perriton's face. The old hunted feeling had returned. "What is it?" he asked. "Perhaps it may seem funny for an innocent man to be acting so guilty—but is it the police, Jenny? Have they got my trail?"

"No, no," she said. "Listen! Short story. Telephoned Carter—Earle had gone. Now, listen!" She told him of the situation.

"Then our last chance lies in the next twenty-five minutes," John said. "By George! there's some way for us to win—it isn't for ourselves alone, Jenny; it's for Earle. He's a fine fellow. I don't want to see him lose if there's a chance of doing this for him, and I don't want to see Carter successful. What's the matter?"

"Oh, s'nothin' but a tire," the chauffeur said with a yawn as he put on the brakes.

"Does that spoil everything?" cried Jenny.

The driver shook his head. "Guess not," he replied, jumping down. "Can't your friend lend me a hand? I'm gettin' kinder interested in this meself."

"No, he can't help; he's been hurt. Don't you see the bandage?" exclaimed Jenny, alighting. "But look at me. I'm the original little mechanician."

"Hold that," commanded the chauffeur. Jenny saw that his jaw had grown square and that there was a flash of angry determination in his eyes.

"I like you," she said, dropping back into the frank expression of the old

days. "I like you because you're *game*."

"Much obliged," grunted the other, banging away with his hammer on the rims.

"You might have followed Earle with telegrams," suggested John, standing beside Jenny as she assisted in the change of tires.

"He wouldn't know what our information was," she said, without looking up. "A telegram wouldn't convince him. The thing that will convince him is Carter's letter to the mayor of the place, wherever it is, that the buildings are to be put up."

"Carter's letter?" asked John. "Have you his letter?"

Jenny reached into the opening in her shirt waist, and without a word held the crumpled copy over her shoulder for John to take. He smoothed it out, and read it hastily.

"Wonderful!" he said. "You didn't tell me how you got this copy."

"What's the use?" snapped Jenny. "I had it, didn't I?"

"Don't quarrel," said the chauffeur. "Come on—'s a' right now. Let's go!"

He produced his unfinished doughnut from a pocket, hit it while Perriton and the girl were piling into the cab, and then once more the motor rolled up its pulsations into an even pur.

They had reached the upper end of the city. Spaces between the blocks of houses grew wider. Occasionally an old broken-down wooden farmhouse remained among the fresh, new, brick structures, many of which were surrounded by carpenters' shavings that told the story of the newness of the section. About some of these old houses trees were maintaining an apprehensive existence, but bravely thrusting forth, for a new year, their fresh green of new leaves.

And now there appeared a little center of population—an ancient town

which the city, reaching out greedily, had gobbled up. In exchange for old-fashioned lamp-posts it had erected modern arc lights! in exchange for quiet, uneven footpaths, under trees that leaned over picket fences, the metropolis had brought concrete sidewalks. On both sides of the road the street was torn up to lay new water mains, and the space between was narrow.

"The jig is up!" said the chauffeur suddenly as the cab, rocking along at top speed, neared this place.

"Why?" shouted John.

The chauffeur had taken the last bite of his doughnut as he slowed down.

"See the bull?" he asked.

"The what?"

"The bull, the bluecoat, the copper, the policeman. He's waiting there where the digging has been going on. We can't pass him—it's too narrow. Most likely they telephoned out to him that we were coming and had been granulating the speed laws all the way. He's got us!"

The driver yawned as if he were overcome with drowsiness.

"And yet I ain't sure," he said. "I just heard the lady telling you that there was an idea to settle any fix if you could only think of it. I've got one now. How far will you go to stand back of me?"

"The limit," answered Jenny. "You've got to believe me. You're all right, and we will pay the bills—all of 'em. Take any chance you want. Here! Here is my name and address."

"Much obliged," drawled the chauffeur. "Then there's a good risk in this. Can you drive this machine, mister? Do you know the road?"

"Yes," said John.

"Well, then, watch for the chance and—drive it! Drive as if there weren't ladies present!"

"I don't understand."

"Do what I told you," said the other. "When I give you the chance, take it."

The policeman had come out into the middle of the road, and held up both arms with his palms turned toward the slowing taxicab.

"Stop!" he roared. "You're under arrest."

"Who's under arrest?" asked the driver, yawning as he pressed the emergency brake.

"You are."

"Am I? Is that so. Not to-day!"

The sleepy chauffeur had climbed down on the other side of the cab and had run toward the open ditch in the street, had leaped over it, and began flight in an awkward dogtrot.

For a moment the policeman hesitate. He, too, was fat, and the day was warm; but, after he had taken a glance at John and Jenny, and then one at the fugitive, he started in pursuit.

"Your chance, John!" the girl cried. "Crawl through this front window. Good! We're off again. That driver is a peach."

"He looks a bit more like a potato to me," Perriton said dryly as he steered the machine toward smoking chimneys which marked the factories that lined up along the river and the canal.

The road ran across a marsh toward the industrial spur which the city had thrust out along the water ways. Far away the line of an embankment appeared, and a freight train crept along its top. It was the railroad track!

"It's half past twelve," said Jenny. "The train is just leaving the city."

"These ruts——" growled John.

"Never mind the ruts! I'm all right. Open her wide. We've got one chance. The draw may open in time!"

John nodded. He had his eyes fixed upon the way ahead as he drove. The taxicab bounced about in the ruts, and, like a personality, gave a sigh of relief when they had reached the rise of

ground that took them on to the cartage road that ran along the canal.

"The drawbridge!" Jenny exclaimed. "There's the Colfax drawbridge. It isn't open!"

"I know it," answered Perriton. "But that's lucky. It wouldn't stay open fifteen minutes, anyhow."

The breeze was blowing in their faces, bringing the odor of the sea, but also carrying clouds of fine dust which brought water into their eyes and sometimes shut out their view of the embankment on which the railroad track stretched from the dim, distant city over the ship canal and into the rolling, green, wooded country beyond. Near the Colfax draw, a blast furnace belched its intermittent shaft of fire toward the blue and cotton white of the clouds and sky, and, like idle draft animals, freight cars stood about on the network of raised spur tracks.

Toward this point the car sped on, and at the bottom of the incline Jenny spied a freight switchman walking toward the switch tower.

"Stop here!" she shouted almost in Perriton's ear. "We will ask that man about the train."

The car slowed down as John steered it toward the side of the road and stopped it among the coarse weeds, which, when no other vegetation cares to undertake the task, spring up upon the ruffraff of cinders, coarse sand, and slag. Then for the first time Jenny noticed that Perriton's face was white, and that, as he worked the wheel, he scowled and bit his lip as if in pain.

"Oh, John!" she cried. "I forgot your injured arm—I forgot you had been ill. I forgot everything."

"Don't you worry," he replied, setting his jaw. "I am game for it. My legs are all right, anyway."

The two clambered up the bank toward the track, where the freight switchman stood outlined against the bright sky, looking down curiously at

the coatless, hatless man and a girl with rolled-up sleeves, both of whom appeared to be trying to attract his attention.

"Look here!" John shouted to him as they reached the track level. "Is there an express due to pass here soon?"

"Incoming or outgoing?" asked the other.

"Outgoing."

"Yes; number thirty-one for the West passes here at twelve-forty-five."

"What time does it leave the city?"

Jenny panted.

"Twelve-thirty, and makes one stop uptown."

"No chance of its stopping here?" John inquired.

The railroad man laughed.

"You seem to be in a hurry to get out of town," he said, with a note of suspicion in his voice. "No, it don't stop here, unless the draw is open or the block is closed.

"The block is open to-day," he went on, looking down the track at the signals, and then, as he turned toward the bridge, he added: "And the draw is closed. I guess you'll see number thirty-one pile along through here without leaving much but the smoke and the sound of her whistle."

"No chance of some vessel coming up?" asked John.

The man shook his head and walked away, turning once to look again at the strange pair who had shown so much interest in the stopping of the express.

"It's plain he doesn't know anything about the operation of the drawbridge," said Jenny. "We must talk to the man who operates. Fourteen minutes more!"

Together they started into a run over the railroad ties toward the bridge and the operator's shelter halfway across it. The shriek of a locomotive whistle behind them caused them both to look

around, fearful that they had miscalculated and that the Western express was already approaching the river canal. It was only a freight engine, however, and the long perspective of the main track, with its two glistening rails converging into a point in the distance, was empty.

Now they were on the bridge itself, picking a nervous-footed way in their haste with the alternate flashes of the bridge ties and open spaces under their down-looking gaze. Once John stopped and pointed out to Jenny that, though along the factory-lined shores and beside coal wharves and lumber yards, they could see the heavy hulls of freight ships, the red and black clumsy harbor tugs, and at least one tramp steamer with her rusty steel siding plates reflected in the oily water, yet neither up nor down the stream was any craft in motion.

Jenny shook her head sadly; then the two ran forward again.

In the draw tender's house an old man sat whittling a piece of soft pine and humming to himself. He wore an official cap of some kind made of blue cloth, with a patent-leather visor, and his face had been bronzed and weather-beaten by exposure to the elements.

"No chance of the drawbridge open in the next ten minutes?" asked John.

"Don't see any," came the reply from under the grizzled mustache. "Haven't heard any vessel whistle for me."

"Who operates the draw?"

"I do."

"Who for?"

"The government."

"Does it make any difference what train is coming as to whether you open the draw or not?" said Jenny.

The sound of a woman's voice made the old man look up.

"No, ma'am," he replied. "I open the draw for any vessel that needs a passage and whistles for it. When it opens that sets a signal down the track,

and the train stops. Of course, if the train has got by that signal, I can't open the draw for any vessel. In fact, the draw is locked automatically. But the vessels have the right of way over any train, ma'am. What did you ask for?"

"She wants to get on the Western express," John explained. "Don't you see, she can't unless you'll open the draw? It's the only way the train can be stopped."

The old man shut his eyes, and wagged his head from side to side like some old Buddha.

"I can promise you a big piece of coin," said Jenny.

"What do you mean, ma'am?"

"To open the draw just ten minutes from now."

The old man flushed with anger; then he concluded that Jenny had been joking with him, and laughed uproariously.

"Ho, ho, ho!" he shouted. "Open the draw for you, eh? Ma'am, that's a whale! Open the draw to stop the train. I'm entertained, ma'am. What would my boys here that help me say if I was to give orders like them, ma'am? Ho, ho!"

"Well, we've lost," said John dismally as they returned toward the end of the bridge. "It is as the freight switchman said—number thirty-one will go through so fast you can't see much but the dust."

"There must be some way out!" the girl insisted. "If you could only think of some way! Use your head! Think of something!"

She reached for his shoulder, and turned him toward her until they were looking squarely into each other's eyes.

"Do you know what it means?" she asked. "If the draw was open the train would stop. If it stopped I would show this letter to Earle and get him to stay. If he stayed, you and Henry would get a chance to start something.

The train must be stopped. So think! Do you hear? Aren't you any good? Think!"

Perriton scowled.

"Luck is against us," he said.

"There ain't any such thing!" asserted Jenny. "It ain't luck, but a *plan* that wins."

Suddenly John laughed.

"You'd be amused if you knew what was in my mind," said he.

"What?"

"The way out. Walk down the track to the green signal tower there. If the train stops, get on it, because I may not be able to get back in time to get on myself."

"What are you going to do?"

"Do what I say. Show Earle that letter, and drag, push, pull, or kick him off the car. Watch me now!"

John, leaving her, ran pellmell down the embankment, through the woods toward a coal and lumber wharf which perched on the edge of the canal several hundred yards down stream. A three-masted schooner leaned against the piles there, her white sides stained by the dirty traffic in which she had been chartered. Swinging out by her stern, a harbor tug with a high superstructure and stack rolled back and forth on a cable like a pug dog pulling at its leash. An exhalation of hot, smoke-laden, copper-colored air came from her funnel.

As John ran out along the wharf, stumbling over the coal piles and coils of cable, he could see that a man was in her pilot house. There was blue shirt showing in one of the windows, and the sunlight fell upon two white things resting on the window sill, and disclosed the fact that these two spots were a man's two idle hands.

"Whose tug is this?" said John from the wharf.

"Mine," shouted the other.

"Come ashore!" shouted Perriton, as if he were the man's master. "Hurry!"

The other grunted his disapproval; nevertheless, he climbed down from the pilot house, and, on the deck rail of the tug, stood face to face with John, who had half descended the landing ladder.

"Want to make an easy twenty-five dollars?" asked Perriton.

"I won't commit murder," the other said, adding more machine grease by brushing the end of his nose with his finger tips. "What have I got to do?"

"Nothing much—cast loose. Shoot upstream here beyond the bridge and back. Can you get under the draw?"

"No, but that ain't anything. I'll whistle to have it opened. What then?"

"Then turn around and come back," said John. "That's all you've got to do."

"How do I get paid?"

"I pay you."

"You might make a fool of me. When I come back you might be gone. If I make this fool trip you'll go along, too!"

Perriton looked back toward the embankment, where he could see the speck which he believed to be the figure of Jenny. He thought he heard at that moment the far-away whistle of a train.

"All right!" he shouted, jumping down to the deck of the tug. "Cast her off."

"Yes. Cast her off!" the captain roared to one of his men. "Send Bill to the engine room."

The tug slid off in the tide; a moment later the screw churned the water at her stern. Her nose slowly turned toward the drawbridge.

"Whistle for him to open it," John shouted at the pilot house.

The captain's head came out.

"What's the hurry?"

"A train's coming."

"It's the express," said the other. "We better let it go by."

"Then the deal is off," replied John firmly.

The captain growled his disapproval, but reached for the whistle rope. The brass and steam voice of the tug shrieked out into the clear air.

John could see the draw tender come out of his shanty on the bridge and stand looking at the approaching craft with his hand shading his eyes.

"Thinks we've come just the wrong time," said the pilot of the tug.

"Hope we have," John shouted. "Maybe we're too late."

"He'll show a red flag, then. No! He's going to let us through. See the men?"

The draw tender's helpers were running toward the machinery of the draw. Even at that distance John could hear the squeak of metal and the rattle of a running chain. A space the width of a hair appeared in the span of the bridge; it widened; it stretched wider.

"The gap!" John shouted triumphantly.

"This man is batty," the engineer at the door of the engine room said to the deckman.

"Slow down!" John called to the captain. "Let's take our time. I chartered the boat for this trip. Go easy and slow."

The tug's bow was already cutting the water under the shadow of the Colfax bridge. John sat on the deck rail, wiping his wet forehead. It was of no consequence to him that the draw tender, looking down from above, was hurling abuse on the pilot of the tug-boat; it was no disappointment to him that the brakes of number thirty-one were grinding along the embankment track above to make the stop where the signal tower showed that the draw had been opened.

"Resource!" he said softly to himself. "Resource!"

He could not see with his eyes, but something told him, none the less, that Jenny—active, alert, efficient Jenny—had already climbed aboard the Western

express, and some implicit faith in success assured him that Jenny had found Earle. He could see her arguing with him, showing him the letter Carter had written. He could see the two gathering Earle's belongings up in their arms and running toward the door of the car. He could see them standing on the track.

"Turn back," he called out to the captain. "Let 'em close the draw now—you've earned your money!"

"It ain't Confederate money, is it?" asked the pilot. "There's something funny about this. Hanks, the draw tender, already thinks I've been taking strong drinks. He called me a lily pad, and that's somethin' awful, I guess. Better pay me before we land."

John smiled confidently. He could see two figures hurrying toward the end of the coal wharf from which he had started out. One figure was that of a woman. He imagined that she

walked with the spring of victory in her step.

The tug nosed up to the wharf once more, and, under the stern of the fat-sided, three-masted schooner, Earle grasped John's hand as he climbed the ladder. In the other hand he held the copy of Carter's letter.

"We ran, and haven't got much breath left," said Earle. "But I've got enough wind to say this: The game has just begun. You and I are going to play it. We're going to get that contract, share and share alike!"

"Don't my husband come in on this?" asked Jenny, with mischief in her eyes.

"Who? Sure he does," said Earle. "Anybody *you* say!"

John smiled grimly.

"Come on," said he. "There's a taxicab chauffeur somewhere that needs to see us mighty bad. And, by the way, Earle, you owe this tug captain twenty-five dollars!"

The further adventures of "The Man Who Disappeared" will be told in the next POPULAR.



THE ULTIMATE TRIUMPH

THE most dramatic day of the sixty-third Congress was when Champ Clark, the speaker of the House, took the floor for his famous speech explaining why he opposed President Wilson's policy of repealing the Panama Canal tolls-exemption law. Clark was on the losing side, and everybody knew that the vote would certainly uphold the president.

While the speaker was delivering his remarks in his vibrant, booming voice, Representative Tom Heflin, of Alabama, walked through the Democratic cloak-room. Even there the thunder of Clark's voice was audible.

Heflin stopped, laughed, and said:

"That reminds me of an old darky down in my State. He was working out in the middle of a field on a hot summer day. It was so hot that the heat seemed to be simmering visibly wherever you looked. After a while, the midday train rushed by about half a mile away, whistling for a crossing and roaring and thundering as it went.

"The old man watched it go by, took hold of his hoe, and stooped over his work once more. Then he said, talking to himself:

"'Boom! Bing! Boom! Hum! But I'se gwine ride you nex' Sadday night!'"

The Phantom Car

By Edward Lyell Fox

What happened at the dreaded Hairpin curve on the Vanderbilt Cup course one memorable day when the supernatural and the natural fought a fight to a finish

THE landscape was becoming familiar now. Although the moon had gone down and the few visible stars seemed withdrawn to the very limits of the firmament, Burchard saw something white come out of the vague shadows of the night—the white fence that turned with the road over toward Hicksville. He had been walking since midnight. More than an hour before he had jumped down from one of the excursion trains. His fellow passengers had plodded away toward the well-known points on the cup course, yet he had sought a back road, untraveled by the racers, miles back into the country, where he knew there was an old barn. On this barn all his hopes were centered.

Through the night, carried by the off-sea wind, came the distant confusion of the crowds; from over toward Westbury drifted the faint moaning of motors, the screeching of horns. Over there he knew they were massing around a twelve-mile oblong of country road, two hundred thousand of them, waiting like an army for dawn to bring on the battle, the sixth battle for the Vanderbilt Cup.

Once Burchard had been an important part of that spectacle. He had been borne shoulder-high from the course, and thousands had shouted his name. Now he was the under dog—friendless, forgotten.

A sigh escaped him—the heavy sigh of despair. But he set his lips.

At last he reached the old slate-col-

ored barn that stood back from the road. A long canvas sign hung out in front: "Headquarters of the Dunn Racing Team."

It seemed to fill him instantly with the fire of hope, a fierce desire to recoup something lost. Standing motionless, he listened; but there was no sound, only the drowsy crowing of a rooster. He peered in at a tiny window. In the dim light of a smoky farm lantern he made out the outlines of a green-painted shape of steel—a monster of power asleep.

"The *Dragon!*"

There was in his murmur a savage exultation. His heart beat faster. He ran to the door and tried the latch; to his surprise the door fell back at his touch. He hesitated, for the ease of his entrance angered him.

"To think of leaving this car unguarded the night before the races!" he exclaimed.

He turned up the light and glanced at his watch. In three hours Dunn's racing crew would come! For just three hours he would be alone with the big green car! Turning up his coat collar, for the cool air was penetrating cracks in the wall, he hung the lantern from a rafter. He fixed it so that its reflection revealed every part of the *Dragon*, a half light that just enabled him to distinguish the general shapes of things. And now the moment had come, longed for incessantly night and day since the specter had driven him from the polished steering post.

There came over him a wistful tenderness. He swung himself into a "bucket" seat. He touched different levers like a boy whose play is real. He imagined himself roaring over the course again. The lines of his giant face drew tensely, his brooding eyes flashed.

He climbed out of the car and unscrewed the radiator cap, his fingers more caressing, tender. He patted the hard tires as he would the head of a child. He ran his hand over steel flanks, a soothing, sensitive hand, quick to feel scratches or imperfections. Almost as in a dream he scrambled back into the seat. He gripped the wheel, he stared straight ahead, and from out of the past it bore in upon him, the thrill of the race.

But as he sat there waiting for the first changing colors of the east that would warn him to leave, the scenes that had haunted him for the past year took shape again. Coming and going, phantasmagoric shapes on memory's stage, they left him thinking how on this very course where the cup races would roar away at dawn, he had been "broken." They called up that moment at the finish line—his big, white-clothed body black with dirt and oil, his iron-gray hair spattered with mud, the slow, slinking tread of the *Dragon* before the grand stand, as if humiliated that another car drew the cheering, a slower car, and driven by a boy. He thought bitterly how he, the favorite, had lost, lost driving the *Dragon*, the fastest thing on four wheels, lost so hopelessly that Dunn, with a snarl, had ordered him out of the car. He remembered the faces that had looked up at him from the pits, the uncouth, unrestrained disgust of the tireman.

"He quit!"

The words came back to him, the crack of a lash across memory. How they stung him! How he had longed to explain! But they wouldn't have

understood. No one would have understood, not even the drivers, who regarded him with more of disgust than pity.

Now he was obsessed with a desire to defy them, to give them the lie. Again there came to him that desire to speak, to shout aloud so that all might hear. Even now as he sat alone with the *Dragon* in the barn, he wanted to explain, just as he had a year ago when he passed the grand stands. Then, silence had fallen, a growing silence, cold, ever thickening, like freezing ice. And it had struck to his heart, weakened him, brought a moistening to his eyes, a sagging to his carriage, made of him a broken man—and now a year had passed and he was the same, weak, helpless.

He felt as though he must rush out and tell all; how on the Hairpin turn the phantom had appeared, the vivid, frightful fantasy that always shaped from out the air, harassing, breaking his nerve. He could tell how a great specialist had told him that the phantom was caused by an accident he had had on that very turn. He could tell, but who would believe? In all eyes he would only appear more pitiful, more cowardly. Yet that phantom alone had cost him the race, had driven him from the courses, and made of him an outcast of the racing camps. And now he had slunk back like a thief through the night, just to see and to feel a sense of possessing that which had once been his—the *Dragon*.

The sounds of morning were coming through the open doorway. He realized what an empty life his had been since that last day on the course. The best years of him had been given to race driving. Not until he had passed thirty had success come; and now he was thirty-four and out of it. All he had to show for it was hair prematurely gray, a face old too soon. He knew, as he had known then, that there

wasn't a company that would trust him with a car. He had quit in a big race! But like the man who sneaks back to the scene of his crime, Burchard had returned. He wanted again to feel the race, to breathe its odors, the rank stench of its gasoline; he wanted to feel his face and hands smudgy with dirt and oil; he wanted to live, if only for a day, in an atmosphere that was charged with the clash of life and death, to hear again the screech of gears, the roar of engines, the rumble of wheels. It was inevitable.

But now streaks of purple and pink were fighting their way through the mists of morning, and over beyond the scraggly fringe of trees Burchard saw that the east was afire. The day of the sixth race for the cup had come.

Crashing in upon his thoughts came the onrush of a motor. He was sitting with his hands in their habitual pose on the wheel when through the door he saw a car come to a stop. Out of it jumped a big man in a linen duster and a slender, wiry-looking fellow. As they walked slowly toward the barn, Burchard slipped out of the driver's seat and stole to a rear door.

"Well, Mahler, how did she go on the last work-out?" he heard one of the men ask.

It was Dunn's voice—hard as ever. Burchard wondered who Mahler could be—Mahler—oh, yes, the man from California. Mahler to drive the *Dragon*—absurd! The boy was daring, but—

"I made seventy-five miles an hour last night," Mahler replied. "It's her best."

"That's a lie," muttered Burchard, and disgustfully stole out into the morning.

He knew he had put the *Dragon* up to eighty, and that was before the new engine had been installed. This boy to drive *his Dragon*!

Dawn found Burchard in the pits.

The broken man had followed the green monster as a whipped dog crouches back to its master. Above him loomed the *Dragon*, its engine shut off, waiting serenely. He saw Mahler and his mechanic cross to the French camp and exchange greetings with Marceau, their most dangerous rival. Scrambling up out of the pit he saw that a mist was rising from the land, a drifting, dissolving mist, golden-tinted in the effulgence of the new day. Ever thinning, it lifted slowly, and Burchard gazed far across the barren Hempstead Plains, a lonely waste of land through which the cup course ran. Already the roads would be rimmed with the crowds, thousands and thousands, massed round the twelve miles of track, sleepy-eyed crowds, who breakfasted from lunch boxes, glanced impatiently at their watches, and waited for the race to start.

It was almost time now, he thought, as he watched Marceau spring into the blue-painted French car and proceed slowly toward the starting line. Burchard knew of Marceau. He had heard of the Frenchman's work in the Grand Prix, how the diminutive, mustached man had driven half the race with a broken arm. A dare-devil, this pleasant-looking Marceau. Burchard doubted if Mahler could keep pace with him. Mahler had mounted the *Dragon* now, and Dunn, chewing nervously on an unlighted cigar, stood beside the car. As Burchard heard Dunn's exhortations, he grinned wistfully. He was thinking how owners had always spoken to him that way before the start of a race, and how he had paid not the slightest attention. He understood how Mahler must be wishing for the signal that would bring him to the line. Word would come any minute now. He saw Dunn glance at his watch for the sixth time in these last five minutes.

There was confusion in the judges' stand, and a tall man in norfolk and

puttees walked out across the track. Burchard recognized him instantly as an official of the American Automobile Association, a man whose word was law on the course. He saw the official break into a run and near the *Dragon*.

He was shouting something. Burchard strained his ears to catch it.

"Mahler," he heard him yell, "you can't drive. You're barred by the Contest Board!"

Dunn flushed with rage and bit into his cigar. Burchard saw Mahler lean over the wheel. He took a step nearer as he heard Mahler cry:

"Don't stand for it, boss! It's a frame-up!"

Somehow he resented Mahler saying that; he hoped the official would show his authority.

"Mr. Dunn, the board has just been informed that Mahler drove in an out-law meet in California." Burchard was hanging on his every word. "Pending his disqualifications as a licensed driver, he is suspended indefinitely. I'm sorry, Mr. Dunn, but he can't drive."

Strangely happy, he watched Dunn as the enraged owner faced his driver.

"Is that true, Mahler?"

He saw Mahler nod.

"Get out!"

Mahler climbed down from the wheel.

"The race will start in five minutes, Mr. Dunn," said the official. "If you cannot find another driver you'll have to withdraw. I'm terribly sorry, but you know the rules," and he hurried away.

Dunn jammed another cigar between his teeth, and began to pace up and down. As the owner's jaws worked savagely, Burchard knew he must be trying to think of a loophole. Not another driver could be had at this late hour, not for unlimited money. They were all engaged. That the *Dragon* should stand inert while another car won the Vanderbilt was intolerable. He knew, too, that Dunn had rebuilt

the car for this one race. It had been fitted with a new and more powerful motor. A high-priced mechanical engineer had so changed the *Dragon's* lines that all wind resistance was minimized. He knew the car was faster than ever before. He knew of Dunn's expensive racing campaign; how the *Dragon* had come through all the minor contests triumphantly. Motorists the country over were watching the cup course to-day; every owner of a Dunn car was waiting for the chance to boast that his machine was the same as the cup winner. For Dunn to withdraw now would be a tremendous loss of prestige; it would be a blow to the business.

Burchard knew his chance had come. He drew near the car, and, raising a hand to the wheel, gazed toward the starting line. His eyes were motionless and blank. His movements were mechanical. He seemed like a man in a dream. In his heart was a yearning seemingly impossible of fulfillment.

Dunn stared at him in astonishment.

"Well! Look who's here!" he shouted, and broke into hysterical laughter.

But Burchard was looking him steadily in the eye, and Dunn, who knew men, stopped, instead of brushing him out of the way. A born gambler Dunn—willing always to take a chance, however desperate. He came now to a sudden determination as he glanced appraisingly over Burchard's well-knit figure, then nodded toward the car.

From the pit a helper looked up, his mouth agape.

"Great snakes!" he screamed. "He's not going to let that quitter drive!"

Dunn heard, and hesitated, but only for an instant. In Burchard's face was an appeal, a piteous, unspoken appeal; and in the tired eyes, a gleam, a flash, perhaps of hope, perhaps of determination. Dunn twisted his cigar, twisted it again.

"Get in!"

Already Burchard had vaulted into the driver's seat. He heard Dunn bawling orders; he saw the long-legged mechanic leap out of the pit, clap on a pair of racing goggles, and scramble up beside him. He felt himself trembling—trembling with a joy that he had never believed possible, as he guided the car down to the starting line. He felt the *Dragon's* flanks moving to the pulsing of the big motor.

In that moment when Dunn, with his back to the wall, had chosen the only alternative, a new spirit had been born in Burchard, a deep-rooted spirit long growing, a spirit of confidence, born with his overwhelming yearning to be at the wheel, to ride the *Dragon* as never before. To him the car had become a living thing. All the way down to the starting line he spoke to it softly, whispered to each lever and brake handle; and as he listened to the engine it was like listening to a voice, a voice that called him on, on—the soul of the *Dragon* speaking.

Quick to recognize an old favorite the grand stand rippled with surprise as Burchard gained his position in the line. A shout of welcome broke on his ears, an uproar that swept the long stand from end to end, receded and broke again. He glanced at the car on his right. It was the big French machine, and Marceau was smiling! The smile angered Burchard. It seemed sympathetic, almost pitying. To be pitied with the *Dragon* underfoot! Burchard gripped the wheel tighter.

He saw the starter's flag dipped in a signal. Thirty engines began their clamor, a thundering, growing clamor, the power of more than two thousand horses suddenly loosened as exploding gasoline. Bluish smoke belched from the exhausts, thickened, wreathed itself wraithlike, enveloping each machine. The din was terrific. Came the screeching of brakes, the rattling of

gears; somewhere out of the smoke Burchard heard the starter's voice. The man was trying to make himself heard above the uproar. Then there rose a sound louder than any of the rest, a metallic snort, and car number one shot away. Brief pauses, intoned seconds, signals, and other cars followed. And always as a departure brought Burchard nearer the line, he clutched the wheel a little tighter, whispered a little softer to the *Dragon's* throbbing head. All the years of his experience, his yearnings, his virility, seemed gathered for this one effort.

Then Marceau's car went crackling out through the smoke, and at the cheer that followed, Burchard bit his lip. It was the way a crowd cheers the favorite—a crowd cheering Marceau when the *Dragon* was in the race! Burchard laughed unmusically.

Finally he, too, was given the word, sent crashing down the cement parkway, down toward Massapequa, where the course breaks into a right angle extending westward. Round the first turn the *Dragon* tore, kicking up the dust in great clouds, righting, and rumbling off toward Hicksville. To Hicksville the course was almost a straight-away. Not a turn of any difficulty impeded the way. The "S," the Hairpin, and the pitfall of Snake Bridge all lay beyond. On the smooth, straight road Burchard let the *Dragon* run free. Opening its engine to the limit, the speed rushed ahead in jerks, from sixty to sixty-five, to seventy, eighty miles an hour. Two miles from Hicksville he got it up to ninety—faster than the *Dragon* had ever done before.

Crouched low on the wheel, he peered over the top of the quivering, dancing hood, peered down the road, waiting. Just past Massapequa, he had sighted Marceau—Marceau whom the crowd thought the winner, whom the *Dragon* must beat. Burchard gained steadily, and a mile from Hicksville the *Dragon*

passed the French car in a cloud of dust. Simultaneously, Dunn's single station there telephoned back to the pits that Burchard had caught and passed Marceau in the first six miles of the race!

Into Hicksville he threw the *Dragon*, taking the turn at a speed that thrilled the crowd, driving them to places of safety, lest this dare-devil shoot off the course. Toward Westbury he raced, faster, faster; always more than eighty, sometimes ninety miles to the hour as the road wound and bent. Round the treacherous "S" he slammed and skidded, almost lurched from the road, righted, and thundered on toward Snake Hill. He was passing cars now as if they were standing still—the Italians, the Germans, the Belgian, the American machines—all seemed to jump out of the distance, loom large, and vanish behind. He climbed the hill to the Snake with his eyes ablaze. The man and the *Dragon* had become one.

Already the race had cast over him its strange spell, made him throw caution to the winds, gripped him insidiously with one tremendous desire—to ride first, with all others dropping behind, farther, farther. For him all proportion, all sense of judgment and selection was gone. Danger and safety had ceased to exist. The *Dragon* must go faster, even faster. That was all. From Hicksville to Westbury, Burchard had broken a world's record.

Now he was nearing the Hairpin, the turn that had been his undoing. He laughed fiercely as he thought of it; he opened his engine a little wider. Up the grade beyond which the road dips into the turn, roared the *Dragon*. Topping the crest the road formed a runaway of a quarter mile and then bent back in an acute angle, making the Hairpin.

But as the turn opened up, and Burchard began to distinguish landmarks,

his confidence vanished. The laugh died hollowly on his lips. Smitten with doubt, uncertain, unsure of himself, believing weakly that he might be able to rush the turn, yet not daring unless he be wrong, Burchard threw on the brakes, almost bringing the car to a stop. Proceeding cautiously, he entered the turn no faster than fifteen miles an hour, and picked his way around, like a man shuffling through the night, while Marceau and some of the others swept past. So slowly did he progress that there was no fear to conjure up the red phantom, no necromancy to trick his mind. Coming out of the turn safely, he drew a long breath and took up the chase.

The danger of the Hairpin over, he began to drive as before. Opening up the engine, he raised the speed from twenty to seventy miles an hour. By the time he had swept across the last leg of the course and swung back into the cement stretch of the Parkway, the *Dragon* was doing eighty-seven miles an hour. Here the old confidence returned; the man was master of himself again. Again the great motor seemed as a voice that called him on, on. Again he began to overhaul the cars that had passed him because of his delay at the Hairpin. He drew abreast of the Italians and the Germans, then forged ahead. Soon only Marceau was in front—Marceau once more in the lead.

Burchard crouched lower over the wheel; the wind sang in his ears. The song became shriller, then a prolonged scream. The engine boomed like a siege gun. Its explosions shook the car; the steering wheel trembled in his hands. He drove faster. The landscape seemed a blur, the grand stands two dark blocks that took sudden shape and jumped by. One thought only was in his mind—he was overtaking Marceau! Near Hicksville he passed the Frenchman; and again the signal was

flashed back to the pits that Burchard led. Marceau dropped behind. The *Dragon* was too fast; the devil at its wheel too reckless, too mad!

But as Burchard rushed toward the Hairpin, it came again—the hesitation, the fear. And terror struck into his heart. Again he slowed and lost all he had gained; again, again, for five, ten, fifteen laps just keeping up with the leaders, gaining, losing, regaining, as steadily as the clock ticked, and always a little behind, a little behind. Only at the Hairpin did he surrender to the fear that another day had conceived; only there was he rendered impotent, a weakling, cringing and pitiful. Beneath him was the *Dragon*, fleetest of all; yet Marceau led, held the lead by a trifle, yet always held it. And all because Burchard dared not give the *Dragon* its head.

At the pits he stopped, and men bearing huge cans swarmed round the *Dragon*, while gasoline splashed down its thirsty throat. Burchard darted from one man to the other, watching every move. Across the road he saw that Marceau, too, had been forced to pull up for repairs. The Frenchman's radiator was hissing steam like a geyser. Figuring that the loss of time would be balanced, Burchard knew he had a chance of overtaking Marceau again. He knew, too, almost with a sense of fatalism, how his faltering on the Hairpin would subsequently rob him of the lead. Lowering his eyes he prayed that something would overcome this fear before it was too late.

Looking up, he glanced at Dunn covertly. He saw him chewing a cigar while he paced up and down. He thought he saw resignation in the hard, ruddy face, and it cut deep. There was the one man who had trusted him, who had brought the *Dragon* to him, yet the trust had been built on sand. Burchard slipped away.

A heavy step sounded behind him.

"Burchard!" called Dunn.

Gathering his frayed nerves, Burchard turned to face him.

"Burchard, you've done well—better than I thought you would. You've managed to trail Marceau, and we'll finish second. I'd like to win, and I think it's in the *Dragon* to do it. But we couldn't win unless we had a man behind that wheel capable of ninety an hour, some dare-devil who would be supreme." Then suddenly, with his eyes burning into Burchard's: "*Are you that man?* You flunked once, but I'm taking a chance on you again. Burchard, old son, it's up to you."

Abruptly, Dunn walked away. There were tears in Burchard's eyes as he started for the *Dragon*. A moment of blank introspection, and a thunderous cheer smote his ears.

Marceau had gotten away! Already the Frenchman's car had left the pits and was booming down the Parkway. With a bound Burchard was in his seat. A man was still pouring gasoline. Burchard knocked the can from his arm. Of what use was a gallon of "gas" with Marceau increasing his lead? Or a mechanic, either? thought Burchard, as he threw open the engine, forcing the man to jump aboard with the *Dragon* already under way.

Passing the grand stand he thought he heard hoots that were not drowned out by the cheering. He knew that unless Marceau was beaten there would be worse than hoots. There would be silence, the same icy, heartbreaking silence that had met him at the finish of that Vanderbilt a year ago.

The *Dragon* roared away. Round the oblong of countryside it flashed like a meteor. One turn after another jumped into sight, jumped by, with the *Dragon* streaking on, with a cloud of dust trembling behind. In jerks the speedometer shot up to eighty-two,

eighty-four, eighty-seven, ninety! Presently he made out the Hairpin. Grimly he urged the car forward. Dunn's words ran through his head: "Burchard, old son, it's up to you."

He squeezed the steering wheel.

Now he could distinguish familiar landmarks near the bend. He made out a thin gray line—the wall. And then he felt another presence on the road, something on his right. Uneasily he wondered what it was. Something told him not to look. The Hairpin grew more distinct. Burchard felt the presence more tangibly. It seemed to be drawing nearer. With a sudden start of fear he glanced to the right. There, gliding up beside the *Dragon*, veering in, closer, closer, seeming about to lock wheels, slid the red car, the phantom—the phantom that had broken him! In fancy he heard the crunch of its hubs against his, the grinding collision, the cannoning across the road; and then from behind the wall rose the awful vision of his old accident—the overturning, the bolt through the air, the rocks!

With a shriek he threw on the brakes. The dirt flew in a screen. He felt himself thrown forward against the wheel. Seeming to emerge from a doze he blinked stupidly and gazed about him. Slowly he realized what had happened. As he thought how fate had only been playing with him, how in his yearning to win for the *Dragon*, he had ignored the Hairpin and its vision; how until now, by slowing down, he had been able to shut out the vision, yet now no longer daring to slow—as he thought of these things, a great sob filled his throat.

"Do we wait here much longer?"

The mechanic was staring at him. Burchard cringed at his voice. It seemed to be the voices of the thousands watching him in this race—voices now raised to condemn. Mechanically he withdrew the brakes; listlessly he reopened the throttle and drove slowly

round the turn. He dared not go faster—speed would bring back the vision, the frightful fantasy that could not be shaken off until the Hairpin had been put behind. And as the *Dragon* crawled round the turn, its engine moaned like a living thing—a human moan that found its answer in Burchard's heart. Not only had his fear betrayed Dunn, but it seemed as though he had wronged the *Dragon*, wronged this inanimate mass of steel that had seemed to live and give him a confidence that nothing else could have done.

Down the straight stretch of the Parkway he regained his old speed. Yet another lap was wasted; yet Marceau held the lead, and the race was growing old. Another swing round the course and he faced the Hairpin again, only this time he knew better than to speed, knew enough to slacken and fool the phantom that lurked behind the wall. And so he flashed by the grand stand on his nineteenth lap, the last save one, flashed by glimpsing Dunn, a lonely, rugged figure by the pitside. A cheer for Marceau was still thundering from the throats of the crowd.

To the spectators at Massapequa the *Dragon* seemed to pass like a bullet. Burchard was taking chances with his engine, forcing the speed beyond ninety miles an hour! On toward Hicksville he came, plunging, skidding, the car rocking from side to side, swaying on the turns, shaking, pounding, and thundering, the fury of its gigantic motor unleashed and dreadful. The man beside him was gripping the seat. Any moment the careening car might shoot off the road. Its speed spelled destruction.

Hicksville passed like a smudge on the landscape. Still Marceau was ahead. The delay at the pits had been costly. Other machines, tiny specks, took form on the road and were lost in a whirl of dust. Only Marceau led, only Marceau! Burchard wondered if

praying would help. It was the mechanic, though, who prayed, for Burchard opened the throttle to its utmost, and the *Dragon* shot ahead, a hundred miles an hour!

Burchard could just see the roofs of Westbury as Marceau's gray car was sighted suddenly, rounding a bend in the road. Almost instantly, it seemed, he had whirled past it. And now the road was clear. Those last five miles to the finish line opened up like a boulevard. Up the grade toward the Hairpin he was borne as on the wings of a hurricane. As he saw the turn open up he drew his muscles taut. He tried to concentrate his entire will power on overcoming the fear that would soon creep over him. Insidiously it would creep, come upon him with all the stealth of intangible things. He gathered all his forces, physical and mental, to meet it.

He could see the turn now, the awful acute angle, the line of gray, the wall. He could feel the *Dragon*, rocked by the fury of its engine, swaying beneath him, an inchoate raging thing. The steering wheel leaped and quivered in his hands. The floor board shook as though the earth were shaking. He distinguished in the roaring of the motor a foreign sound, a voice, a thunderous voice, commanding, overpowering—the soul of the *Dragon* speaking.

Onward it called him, onward! Sonorous in its very harshness, it crashed in his ears with the fury of a rolling mill. It terrified, it overwhelmed him. There was but to obey. Still, there was the apparition. Any moment now it might creep up beside him, creep up and strike terror to his heart. Trembling, he thrust a hand on the brakes, but the voice of Dunn came to him again: "Burchard, it's up to you." Abashed, he drew back the hand.

To rush the Hairpin at this speed was appalling—was suicide. The

mechanician's gaze became piteous in its hopelessness. He was transfixed with fear.

"You're no man!" he screamed in Burchard's ear. "You're a fiend!"

But Burchard did not hear. Cannonading through the dust, he shot the *Dragon* across the road. Flashes of flame, slender and tenuous, leaped from the exhaust, seeming to reach out like fingers. Blown back by the wind, they licked at the dash; a gust and they singed Burchard's legs. With a cry he loosened his grip on the wheel. He felt the terror-stricken mechanic clutch him round the body. Lurching free, the big green car careened toward the wall. It tore up the road, flinging the dirt in great brown masses, and, plowing on, spun crazily on its front wheels. Caught in a rut it seemed to be overturning slowly, when Burchard, twisting the wheel sharply, tore loose the car from the grip of the road. Down crashed the tilted wheel; a quiver ran the length of the steel back, an awful swaying; and, bursting into a terrific roar, the *Dragon* righted itself and plunged on down the leg of the turn toward the jagged vertex—a quaking, smoking shape that might have been spewed up through a crack in the earth's back.

Like a man tearing through space and seeing the end, Burchard watched the Hairpin rush to meet him. There at the bend he knew the phantom would appear, would rush out of vagueness, rush any moment now. Beneath him, breathing flame and thunder, the *Dragon* tore on. The turn loomed vividly.

He felt something gliding in toward him; something that clung persistently to his front wheels; something that as the ugly Hairpin opened up swung in closer and closer; and then, in a swift, awful flash, came the narrow angle of the road, the massive stone wall at one side, the sheer drop of land beyond, the

rocks below. But as Burchard steeled himself to rush the turn, that other misty picture of the dread day rose—the picture of the red car locked with his, cannonading across the road, tearing up the dirt, capsizing, smashing over the wall, and plunging to the rocks. And as Burchard saw it again he knew he should have tugged at the *Dragon's* brakes. Instead, he sat bolt upright and stared stupidly.

Then, unconsciously closing his eyes against the one thing that loomed as a wall of terror, he was borne on through a chaotic moment with the *Dragon*, raging masterless, a wild, careening car, in whose roar rustled the wings of death. And the specter was blinded from his vision.

He jerked open his eyes, and made out the turn—the turn where the red phantom lurked. Yet no phantom had come. It had been wiped out forever. Yet as he heard the booming of the

exhausts, as he felt the fierce rush of the wind, as he realized that he was rushing through the Hairpin, swifter than the typhoon sweeps, he weakened—a trembling man who realized at what risk his rejuvenation had been bought. how close death had been in that moment of awful sightlessness.

Twisting the wheel he whirled round the Hairpin, spun through a wall of flying dirt, skidded and righted, and thundered away. Past the grand stand he roared, past rows of shrieking klaxons, past the black, vague surging of the crowds, past a dim landscape that rushed by with the miles sweeping under his wheels, roared past Massapequa, Hicksville, Westbury, the Hairpin again, again, a boy-man, lusty with long-lost power now regained, a giant of a man, full blown and virile, who, crossing the finish line, smiled as a child smiles on Christmas morning—smiles yet sobs with joy.



ANOTHER MENACE TO CRIMINALS

THE detective game is in danger of being overdone. The general public has no idea of how many keen-witted young men stand ready to spring forward and do things that will make Sherlock Holmes look slow-witted and idiotic.

Not long ago the chief of a bureau in the Federal government which employs detectives and secret agents received conclusive proof of this.

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A Chat With You

JUST one hundred and thirty-eight years ago this week a committee of five men were deliberating in Philadelphia over a declaration which has since become famous beyond all expectation at the time, and, indeed, beyond its merits as a document. These five were for the most part well-off, educated gentlemen—Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson are the best remembered of the group. Making all due allowances for the keen insight and practical intelligence possessed by all it is beyond the bounds of possibility that any of them knew the great importance and far-reaching consequences of the work they had undertaken. They were clearing the ground for the foundations of the biggest, most successful, and most stable of all the modern commonwealths.

ROME alone can compare with the United States in the enduring quality of the institutions its builders raised. Beside other modern governments, the United States is as a rock to a sandhill. No less than seven changes of government have shaken France since ours began. Forty odd years is the age of the present French republic. Early in the last century, Napoleon smashed Germany into fragments never welded together again till 1871. The present dual monarchy of Austro-Hungary dates from 1867. The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland came into being in 1801, but while they have a habit over there of making their revolutions slow and ponderous, rather than swift and bloody, such a revolution took place, nevertheless, in 1823, and now Britain, instead of being the oligarchy that Napoleon

saw it, is in an advanced state of democracy, and changing much more rapidly in the direction of socialism than ever this nation has moved. It is hardly necessary to mention the Latin American peoples, for their governments for the most part are affairs of yesterday; and with Mexico, at the present writing, it seems to be a good deal of an affair of to-morrow.

WERE this a small island kingdom, like old Japan, where purity of race and blood insured permanence of thought and custom, the result might not be so remarkable, but no country has ever received and assimilated more aliens of more alien races. Not Hengist and his Saxons, nor William with his Normans, nor Attila nor Genghis Khan, with all their hordes, ever led such an army of foreign folk as has been pouring into our boundaries from all the four quarters of the earth. It is idle to say that the blood of Anglo-Saxons or Huguenots or Dutch has been so potent as to fertilize all this stock and imbue it with ideals of organization, stability, and restraint. Doubtless race plays its part in the building of the nations, but we are apt to give it more credit than its due. The real spirit that quickeneth is the tradition of thought and standards of conduct that a race or organization calls into being. We hear frequently of the Yale spirit, or the Harvard spirit, or the spirit of the American navy or of the British army or the French foreign legion, and the phrase is in no case a meaningless one. That we use it shows that we all believe that a boy, by joining an organized society, and becoming a part of it, builds for himself a new

A CHAT WITH YOU - Continued.

character of a new type, and, to a certain extent, a new manner and new individuality. Talk to any boy before and after a term at West Point, at any good university, in the American army or navy, and the change is evident enough. It is the intangible spirit of the organization that is mysteriously passed from man to man, from the group to the individual, unspoken for the most part, and, when uttered, conveyed in the most laconic of phrases, that builds the standard of thought, the way of looking at things and the character. Example is so much better than precept, that a year in a good school often helps a boy more than all the sermons he might listen to in a lifetime.

THIS government, which really came into being as an organism separate from England on July 4th one hundred and thirty-eight years ago, is the biggest school in self-government and the biggest social organization in history. It has its one definite spirit. To transmit this spirit, to feel it, is easier than to put it into words. In four documents at least you will find something of it—in the Declaration of Independence, which was the final result of the deliberations of the five gentlemen that hot June week in Philadelphia one hundred and thirty-eight years ago, in the Constitution, and in Abraham Lincoln's second inaugural and Gettysburg speeches. To us it seems that a lucid and vital way to be patriotic is to consider that a man as a citizen of the United States belongs to the biggest and solidest club in the world. It is well to bear in mind that the club and its purposes are to be judged by the principles laid down by its founders and conservators, and not by the vaporings of its noisiest members. Doubtless there are members who don't pay all their dues in the form of taxes, there

are other members who appropriate the property of others, and still other members who are muckrakers, and disturb our serenity by denunciations of innocent and guilty as well. The club is in a sound and healthy condition, it is not in the way of any disaster, it may have its faults, but the best way to rectify them is for the individual to see that one member at least behaves himself, pays his dues, and votes intelligently at all the elections.

THE permanence and stability of the United States is well worth the pride of any people. The peace and protection that its government has given to the richest and greatest part of a great continent has brought it wealth and an unrivaled leadership in the material machinery of life. It is no boasting to say that, as a whole, the ninety or a hundred million inhabitants of the United States are infinitely better off and happier than those of any other country, and that the free and generous spirit of that people is, at its best, a nearer approach to true Christianity than we are likely to find elsewhere. Some things they do better in France, and some in England, and some in China for all we know, but in the United States there is less special privilege, less idleness, less war, more stability, and a better chance for a poor man who is willing to work, to rise out of poverty and get a liberal education while he does it, than any place else on earth. Better this freedom than all the pomp of armaments, than all "the glory that was Greece and the grandeur that was Rome." And in honest thankfulness for the past, and trust not so much in ourselves as in the Divinity or Providence, or whatever we choose to call it, that has guided the commonwealth in the past, and still guides it, is the soundest patriotism.





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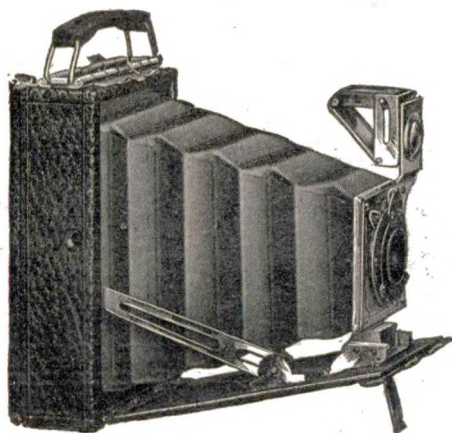
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