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Pop. Mag. 3-15-11.

THE POPULAR MAGAZINE

VOL. XIX. MARCH 15, 1911. No. 5.

The Make-Believe Man

By Henry C. Rowland

Author of "The Moon Dancers," "The Place," Etc.

Some time ago we published a sea story by Dr. Rowland that you liked very much. Here is another story of his with a touch of the sea in it, quite as unusual, quite as remarkable as the other one. It is the amazing story of a man who, going about his daily tasks, suddenly wakes up and finds a year of his life gone! Where? Well, that's the story.

CHAPTER I.

RICHARD ARCHIBALD GORDON, half drunk and his whisky-driven brain lashed into artificial activity, sat in his stuffy little study, and his pen fairly flew over the paper. He was making one of the intermittent spurts by which his sea story, "Adam Whittemore," was nearing its completion.

The writer's environment was not such as might have been expected to lend itself to inspiration. True, the sea was not far away, for he could hear the low rumble of the surf and catch the aroma of rotting kelp mingled with the less invigorating odors of other decomposing matter. But so far as vision was concerned, that of the author brought up short on a line of foolish little cottages similar to his own and differing only in their details of shoddiness. All had their tiny yards; all were so crowded together that the wail of a babe, the rattle of a piano, or the clash of household utensils could be shared by the community.

Most of the inhabitants were newly married people, and the finger of reproach could not be pointed at the colony so far as race suicide was concerned. Babies swarmed and there was seldom an hour, day, or night, when the air was free of wails. Also there were many small dogs, usually chasing sticks, digging in the sandy yards, or flinging themselves into short but furious fights which tended toward strained relations between neighbors and sometimes, usually upon the Sabbath when the husbands were at home, to sly bets on canine prowess.

Week days these husbands departed early and in haste to the depot, usually afoot. A little later the wives sat on the beach under parasols, and sewed and watched the babes filling tiny pails with sand. When the shadows lengthened, everybody knew what his neighbor was going to have for dinner; these odors mingled with the smell of petroleum from the flanking marsh. The nights were rather hotter than they are in Panama, but the Land Improvement Company had pretty well discouraged

the mosquitoes. Not so the flies, of which there were many interesting varieties and species. Early in the summer they teased; later in the season they buzzed, and in the autumn they grew lethargic in all but their sting, which was quick and piquant.

Dick Gordon, although he had been married three years, could carry no baby down to play upon the beach. "Wait until we can afford it," said his wife sharply. Mrs. Gordon had three thousand dollars a year of her own, this from her father who was very rich. Dick had nothing but a magnificent physique and a sanguine temperament. He had managed to contribute about three hundred dollars in the time they had been married, but cheerfully hoped to do better. This lack of achievement was bitterly resented by his wife, though how bitterly Dick in his easy good nature never suspected.

You are to picture a blue-eyed, tawny-haired Apollo, healthy to the very core of him in mind and body, with a deep, Anglo-Saxon imagination which fostered a soundly seated love of adventure. After the death of his father, which occurred when Dick was ten years old, his mother had taken her three children, Dick and two younger sisters, and gone to live in Paris, finding Europe better adapted to her small though comfortable income.

The girls had taken kindly to the change, but Dick had speedily outgrown the limitations of Parisian life and had been sent back to America to school. There he had excelled in three branches —athletics, geography, and history, all subjects to send one a-roving. They had sent Dick a-roving immediately on his leaving school.

His mother had felt that she could not afford her son a college course without giving up her coupé, so she had got him a position in a New York bank. Everybody agreed that it was a splendid opening, but at the end of his first week Dick had found that the opening most to his taste was the one offered by the front door, whither he emerged free and joyous, leaving in his wake a head clerk wallowing in the wreck of a desk stool, an outraged cashier, his mother's friend, and the hum of the scandalized personnel.

The wide world beamed upon him full of promise for adventure, and Dick started after it in the forecastle of a full-rigged ship. He arrived in Hongkong hale and hard and the richer for many facts, then stayed with the vessel which raced home to London with the first of the tea crop. More facts and lots of fun for a hard-headed, hard-fisted boy of eighteen with the body of a bos'n and the mind of a romancer.

Without bothering to call upon his family, he departed for Australia in another tall ship. More fights and facts, but at the end of the voyage he felt that he had licked the cream from the joys of the forecastle and yearned for the quarter-deck. He got it in an antediluvian punk basket with rotten sails and a combustible cargo, but life was still sweet, and he left her for an island schooner.

Later he felt a desire to learn something of the mysteries of steam, and took a course with a slicing bar in the fireroom of a tramp. This branch developed mind and body, especially body, and Dick pranced up out of the coal at Havre with the intellectual and physical attainments of Vulcan.

He was by this time twenty-two years of age, having spent nearly five years on the sea trail, and he decided that it was time to pay his mother a visit, so he took the train to Paris, where he romped in upon his family all unannounced and found them less rejoiced at his coming than they should have been. His blazing blue eyes made the tapestries look more than usually jaded, and the first chair he sat in, a precious Louis XVI bergère, screamed in anguish, then collapsed beneath the weight of his modernity.

Idle matrons of the "Colony" found him strongly to their taste, but Maxim's closed her doors to him merely because while flushed with wine he had exercised the waiters beyond their strength. His mother then intimated that since Paris had been too cramped to hold him at the tender age of twelve, it was hard-

ly fair to ask her to contain him at twenty-two, and suggested that America might be more adapted to his strength. So back to America he went, and America was glad to get him, and he was glad to get there, too.

Dick felt that he had had about enough of the sea, and it was then that he became interested in the internal-combustion engine and allied himself to the factory of a big motor-car business. Here he rose rapidly, and in two years' time had attained the rank of expert mechanician and demonstrator of the car. Tearing over the road at the wheel of a big flyer filled his soul with peace, and he felt that at last he had found his proper calling. The superintendent thought so, too, and, quick to appreciate his ability and the attractiveness of his personality, turned over to him much of the work of demonstration. Few clients could resist his flashing smile and skillful exposition. Dick was not an ordinary chaffeur; he was an expert. He knew motors from the casting room to the police traps on the road.

It was while occupying this pleasant occupation that he met and married Agatha Perkins, the only daughter of a retired soap manufacturer of large wealth.

Agatha from the start had strongly objected to a husband who occupied the questionable social position of one who "showed cars." Also, she was jealous. One of Dick's duties was to instruct recent clients in driving their cars, and sometimes these patrons were ladies, and required a great many lessons, which was odd, considering the brilliant abilities of their teacher. Agatha was an imperious beauty, accustomed always to having her own way. Her father was a fine old snob, and her mother a very gracious snobbess. Agatha herself was too pretty to be called a snob, but she belonged to a family of snobs which found much to dislike in Dick's easy-going and democratic ways. At his daughter's suggestion, Mr. Perkins persuaded Dick to give up his position, to accept one in the less lucrative but more aristocratic employment of shipping large quantities of soap.

It was at this discontented period of his career, for Dick's interest in soap was limited to one cake at a time, that talking one night with a guest of the Perkinses who was on the editorial staff of one of the monthly magazines, his listener suddenly exclaimed:

"My word, man! With your power of description and the material that you have to draw on, it's a positive crime for you not to write."

This remark was a cake of yeast thrown into Dick's seething malt. It was a steel-jacketed suggestion shot into the very marrow of his mind. "Why not?" Dick asked of himself. "I can stoke a fire, reef a topsail, run a car, play a tune or two on the fiddle and accordion, speak a few words of Kanaka—*of course* I can write. Wonder I never thought of it before—and Agatha would be so pleased."

So he resigned his soapy job and set himself to write with the vigor that characterized all of his efforts. His first attempt, duly corrected by the office boy or some person connected with the staff, met with success. It was the story of his race to London on the tea ship. Two other stories were also accepted—and Dick's doom was sealed. And Agatha was pleased.

It is two years from the sale of his last story that we come upon Dick, still writing. Something had gone wrong; perhaps the office boy who corrected the early efforts had lost his job. Editors were interested in his work, but not in his finances. They told him that his stories had "red blood," "seminal force," "dynamic power," "guts," and advised him to keep at it.

Dick, having under his Anglo-Saxon force the proper amount of Anglo-Saxon stubbornness when interested, kept at it. But Agatha was no longer pleased. She had told her father when she married that with what Dick earned, her three thousand dollars a year would be quite enough. And it was very far from being enough. But Agatha, while lacking patience, had pride, and would not ask for more, though she well knew that all she had to do was to say the word. Mr. Per-

kins had bitterly resented Dick's infidelity to soap, and doubted that his son-in-law would ever amount to anything, but he loved his daughter dearly.

First, Agatha had goaded Dick to greater effort, for he was a slow worker; later she nagged him to drop writing entirely and go back to soap. Dick gave her his flashing smile and told her to wait, which was the very last thing both by training and temperament that Agatha was able to do. Her nagging grew bitter, then gradually gave way to a cold and sullen resentment. Dick realized that his wife's scant patience had passed its limits. He was confident in his ultimate success, but realized that his work was slow and laborious, and it was in the hope of infusing it with some acceleration that he bought a bottle of whisky and proceeded deliberately to try the effect of forced draft.

Steady drinking was a new experience which brought revelations of its own. He discovered that the whisky supplied what his brain had seemed to lack—a sort of feverish impulse. Heretofore his sound mind had been slowly learning and would soon have begun to produce. But the whisky acted as oil poured upon a steadily burning fire. Ideas, phrases, and vivid expressions of his thought blazed out with an intensity that almost startled him; this blaze, however, soon burning out to leave cold inertia. Nevertheless, by employing his hours of stimulation, he wrote a story which he knew to be strong and unusual; then, on reading it over, he decided to elaborate the idea into a long and powerful tale.

It was at this whisky-driven story that his pen was flying upon that sultry day in June. Dick's face was flushed and blotchy, eyes bright but strained, and his yellow hair curled from the moisture on forehead and temples. His shirt was open at the throat, showing the neck of a wrestler; the sleeves were rolled back from his brawny, big-boned forearms, fantastically tattooed. His duck trousers were stained with the dried blue mud from the creek where he kept his skiff, and his bare feet thrust into rubber-soled sandals. About his head buzzed an unclean halo of flies, attracted no doubt by the reek of whisky.

Outside the tiny cottage the scorching, sandy street fried in a smother of humid heat. A few houses away a baby too hot to cry wailed with dismal monotony. Opposite, a large dog, clipped and mangy, scuffled and thumped on the narrow porch. In the next house a slatternly negress clattered her pans and threw an occasional dishful of slops to smack upon the sand. Somewhere else two other servants were wrangling in shrill, vulgar voices.

Odors from the marsh suggested a mutinous oil stove, and the mingled perfumes from the beach dissipated themselves unpleasantly over the "ideal summer homes." Dick ran his inky fingers through his hair, and reached for the glass of whisky and water in front of him. He drank slowly and without thirst. His body was like a soaked sponge, while his brain was on fire.

For an hour he wrote rapidly, then leaned back in his chair and flung down the pen. It rolled unheeded to the floor and left a stain where it fell. Dick pushed back his manuscript.

"That'll have to do for now," he muttered thickly. "I'm overstimulated—like a motor with a flooded carburetor."

He rose heavily, and with the hint of a lurch sank into a rocking-chair by the window. His ears were humming, his vision clouded, and the pulses hammered against the muscles on the sides of his neck.

"Guess I've had too much," he muttered. "Hope Agatha doesn't notice it."

He hooked his strong hands on the back of his chair, and closed his eyes. The flies buzzed cheerfully.

Sound asleep in this attractive condition, his wife found him when, hot and angry, she returned to the house. Her light step failed to awaken Dick, and for a moment or two she stood in the doorway and regarded him, her lids narrowed and her lips curling in disgust. Her gaze took in the moist, congested face, the flies, the muscular arms and slovenly costume, then the disor-

derly desk, the fallen pen, and the empty glass. Her features, usually of a petulant prettiness, hardened, and a cold glint came into her eyes.

"Beast!" she muttered, and turned to go.

But Dick had felt her presence. His heavy arms dropped to his sides, his eyelids raised, and he stared at her for a moment stupidly. Something in Agatha's expression brought him quickly to himself.

"Hello!" said he, "what's the matter, Agatha?"

His wife turned slowly, and looked at him. She was tall and gracefully made, broad of shoulder, straight of back, with long limbs and a somewhat boyish figure. Her face, perfect of feature and of an almost classic purity, held a hardness not pleasant to see.

For a moment she stared at him in stony silence. Then:

"Do you really want to know?" she asked in an even voice.

Dick, glancing at her face, decided that he did not want to know. He had all of the natural-born vagabond's good nature, and the two had never actually quarreled. When he saw that Agatha was displeased with him, he either held his peace or took himself off. He knew that underneath her cold exterior there were some boiling springs of temper. He was really very fond of his wife, and took it for granted that she was equally fond of him, though rather given at times to criticism. But now, as he studied her face, he found it full of startling revelations. There was none of the customary heat, but in its place a cool and relentless decision.

"You ask me what is the matter," said Agatha slowly, "and I suppose that I might as well tell you now as at any time. *You* are the matter, Dick—and it is a matter that I have had quite enough of."

Dick stared at her in dismay.

"What do you mean?" he asked.

"I mean," said Agatha slowly, "that I have got to the end of my patience. I have had enough of you—and I am going home."

"Going home?"

"Yes. Why not? What is there for me here?"

Dick opened his mouth, then shut it again. "You mean that you are going to leave me?" he exclaimed.

"Yes."

"But—but don't you love me?"

"Do you expect me to love a big, hulking good-for-nothing that does nothing but loaf about and scribble and lets his wife support him? It was bad enough before."

"Before what?"

"Before you started to drink. I'd already had about enough of you, Dick—and a lot more than most women in my position would put up with. When I married you I thought that you had something in you. I left a lovely home and a mother and father who worshiped me, and I gave up all of the comforts and luxuries that I've always been accustomed to because of my faith in you. What have you given me in return? I tell you, Dick, I've had enough of it, and I'm going back."

Dick mopped his dripping face.

"But, Agatha—can't you wait——"

"Wait, wait, wait!" she sneered. "No, I can't wait. I've waited already three years, and what have I got for it? This——"

"But I never realized——"

"And you never will. It was bad enough before you took to drink."

"But I haven't taken to drink. You don't understand, dear; I have been trying a sort of experiment——"

"So have I, and the result does not please me. No, Dick; I've been thinking it over for a long time, and my mind is made up."

"Are you going to leave me for always?" asked Dick miserably.

"That depends. If you can manage to brace up and really accomplish something, I may consent to live with you again. I've urged and begged and pleaded with you, but all in vain. Now I am going back to my family and stay with them until you prove yourself worthy of me."

Dick's face stiffened.

"Very well," he said in an altered tone.

Agatha knit her smooth forehead.

"I don't want you to think that I am leaving you in anger, Dick, because I am not. But I feel that it is not fair to myself to go on in this way. There is too much in life. You are utterly without ambition, and are not unhappy here. But I am. Oh, if you only knew how I hate it all——"

She stopped, her face quite pale, and her bosom rising and falling rapidly. She walked to the window, and took a survey of the stifling street, the slovenly little cottages. She sniffed the malodorous air, and her white teeth came together with a click.

"When I married you," she said, "papa asked me if my present allowance would be enough, and I said yes, that with what you made we would be able to live as I have always lived, barring some of the luxuries that I was quite willing to do without until you were able to give them to me. Papa smiled, and now I know why he did."

Dick said nothing.

"I don't wish to be unkind," Agatha went on. "The rent of this cottage shall be paid up to the first of October, and we have about eight hundred dollars here in the bank. That I shall leave for you, and it ought to last you for the rest of the summer. If you want to finish your book, then stay here and do it; and, if you are really able to do anything with it, nobody will be more glad than I. Or, if you decide to go in business again, I might come back to you. But you must stop drinking. I will not live with a sot."

Still, Dick made no reply.

"Why don't you say something?" demanded Agatha petulantly.

"So far as I can see," answered Dick, "there doesn't seem much for me to say. Since you feel the way you do about it, I don't think that I ought to try to keep you here. It's very kind of you, I'm sure, to leave me provided for."

"What do you think you'll do?"

"I'll take you at your word and try to accomplish something. For the present I'll stick to my writing. Later on, if that fails, I may go to work again. I don't blame you, dear. The trouble is, as you say, I've taken too much for granted."

Agatha's face softened slightly. "I'm glad that you look at it so sensibly, Dick," she said, with a certain tone of relief. "You have always been kind enough. It's only that you are so lazy and unambitious. Now we must get ready for lunch. Do change, Dick; you get on my nerves when you are so untidy."

Dick flushed. Agatha, in spite of the heat, was as freshly and carefully dressed as if going to a lawn party Her hair was snugly coiffed, and her white serge spotless. Dick was suddenly aware that this wife of his, whom he had come to take as a part of himself, did not share in this emotion, but considered herself quite a separate and individual personality. The idea struck him with sudden chilling force.

"I'm sorry, Agatha," he said, and went to his own room.

Agatha left the following morning. Dick had secretly hoped that at the last moment she might weaken. But her resolution remained firm.

"It is not that I am leaving, Dick," she said at the station, "but that you are driving me away. I have seen this coming for a long time, but I did not wish to nag continuously. Now, it all depends on you to bring me back again. So brace up, old boy, and see what you can do."

When she had gone, Dick walked slowly back to the little cottage. Its loneliness struck into him with a sharp pang. In the kitchen the single servant, a negress, was preparing his luncheon, and the thought that he must eat it alone gripped at Dick's heart and gave him a strangling sensation. He went to his study upstairs, and on the way there he passed the open door of Agatha's room. Dick caught his breath, and looked inside. Its disorder and bareness struck at his heart. No dainty feminine things, no pretty silver toilet trinkets, on the glass-topped dressing table. No little shoes peeping from under the wardrobe. Even the walls

were bare, for she had taken with her all of her pictures and photographs. The room, usually so fresh and tidy, was littered with crumpled papers, and here and there was thrown aside some discarded personal effect; a tiny parasol, a shell comb——

Dick rushed out, closed the door after him, and locked it. He was astonished at the depth of the bitterness within him, and wondered how long this horrid sense of desolation would last. Going into his own room, the first thing to catch his eye was the half-filled bottle of whisky on his desk. He reached for it eagerly, hesitated for an instant, then pulled the cork, and poured the liquor slowly out of the window onto the sand beneath.

He dropped into his desk chair, and stared through the window at the marsh beyond. The tide was out, and the spectacle presented was that of a dreary waste of unlovely mud.

"It *is* a hole," thought Dick. "I was a fool to bring her here."

But it was not in his nature to give himself up to melancholy, and before long his mind began to work on the problem of how best to remedy the situation. He wanted Agatha back, but he wanted her to come of her own wish, and because she felt convinced that he was worthy of her. The heap of manuscript lying on the desk caught his eye and held it.

"That's my best chance," thought Dick. "I've got a good story there. If I can only get 'Adam Whittemore' published and fairly well received, it might bring her back, whether it proves a financial success or not. It would show her that at least I am trying hard—but there's an awful lot of work still to do. Never mind; I'll get at it day and night and not a drop of 'accelerator.' No, not if I have to chisel it out word by word. This is for Agatha."

CHAPTER II.

For the six weeks that followed, Dick worked steadily at his book. His hours were regular as though run by clockwork. Rising at about four in the morning, he made himself a cup of coffee, then worked until eight, when he breakfasted, then to work again until luncheon at half-past twelve. After luncheon he usually slept for about two hours, after which he went down to bathe. From five until seven-thirty he worked again, then dined and wrote until about eleven, when he went to bed to rise again at four. His meals were so simple as to arouse the protest of his servant, but he did not seem to feel the need of food, and he was determined to spend as little as possible of his wife's money.

At the end of the month the negress left to look for a situation more cheerful in its surroundings. Dick advertised in the local paper for a servant, and engaged the first applicant who presented herself, never so much as asking for a reference. This was a hard-faced young woman of a somewhat garish personality, pretty in a vulgar way, who was first inclined to ogle him somewhat boldly; but, finding him abstracted to the point of unconsciousness, soon settled down to work, serving him rather better than her predecessor. Her work finished, Dick never knew whether she was in the house or out of it, and cared less.

At first his work came very hard and haltingly; but, as he grew more absorbed in the story, he was surprised at the increasing ease in the telling of it. At the end of six weeks it was finished, when, on reading it over, he was amazed at the weakness of the first half as compared with the later writing. So he set himself to do over the early part, which was the whisky-inspired portion, and alternated vivid writing with a sort of tiresome incoherence that told its own tale of fire burning out.

When he had accomplished this, the balance was again destroyed, the first half being far stronger and more convincing than the last, so he kept straight on, and the first of August saw the completion of the whole. Dick then carefully read through what he had done and found it good.

From time to time Dick had received letters from Agatha, these missives

filled with kindly wishes for his welfare, but expressing no desire on her part to return. She had been for a yachting cruise and later on a motoring tour of New England. In October she was going to her father's camp in the north woods.

Dick wrote to her once a week, his letters affectionate, but brief, and merely stating that he was working steadily at his book. He made no mention of his habits, nor did Agatha ask for any reports of personal conduct.

His book finished, Dick wrote to the friend whose suggestion had started him on the thorny path of literature, asking him to come down for the week's end and saying that he was alone, his wife having gone to visit her family. The invitation was accepted, and after dinner, as the two were sitting on the little porch, Dick told his guest quite frankly of his position in regard to Agatha and of how he had been working to remedy it.

Mr. Masterson was deeply interested. "You've got the right grit, Gordon," said he. "Let me read the story."

"On one condition," Dick answered. "That is, that you tell me precisely what you think of it without trying to save my feelings. It means a lot to me, and if it's not up to the mark I don't want to waste any more time."

So Masterson promised, and set himself to read the manuscript at once. Dick, watching him with covert anxiety while pretending to read an evening paper, was troubled at the speed with which the other tore through his story, which was neatly written in a small, regular hand. When Masterson had finished, he laid the manuscript aside and sat for several moments, plunged in thought.

"Well?" asked Dick lightly, but with much inward emotion. "What's the verdict?"

Masterson knit his intelligent brows. "You've got a rattling good tale," said he. "The best of it is the characterization. But your hero, Adam Whittemore, is not as convincing as he might be."

"He is to me," said Dick.

"Naturally—because he is yourself. That's just the trouble. You, as the author, take for granted a lot that you don't tell the reader. Adam is strong and vital and all right so far as he goes, but you have not gone far enough with him. Now, see here; what you must do is to cut out a lot of that descriptive stuff and concentrate on Adam Whittemore. Put him on every page. Then the writing itself might be better in places. You know your subject, and you have a fine way of making your reader feel the atmosphere of the sea, but your technique is faulty. However, you can do it. I'm not so sure but what you have done it, as a whole, but nothing is good enough that you can make better. Tackle it over again, and try to do it all as you've done that part where Adam stands in the waist of the *Kaiulahni* and plays the fiddle while the schooner goes down. That's the real thing—and so is the part where Billy Smith is killed on the *Firth of Clyde*, just at the last."

"How about the way the story ends?" asked Dick.

"The way the story *doesn't* end, you mean. That's all right, because the book is not exactly a novel, and you leave Adam Whittemore in such shape that you can use him again in a later book. You have done all that you set out to do, which was to spin a darn good yarn of hairy men and hard adventure. Do it over again, Gordon; the tale is too good to waste."

Dick thanked Masterson, and said that he would take his advice. The very next day he got to work again, starting from the beginning. For a month he worked steadily, and at the end of that time he laid aside the manuscript, very tired, but with a sense of triumph. He felt that he had won and that victory was assured. Again Masterson came down for the week's end. When he had read the book, he reached over and shook Dick by the hand.

"Well done," said he. "That's bully. Let me take it to town and get it typed and try to place it for you."

But this time it was Dick who was not entirely satisfied.

"There are still one or two parts that I can do better," said he. "Give me another week or two."

"All right," said Masterson. "As long as you feel like that, keep at it."

Once more Dick plunged into his work, but this time he confined himself to certain passages, only to find himself baffled. Try as he would, he could not seem to get the effect which he wanted, and he began to realize that he was very tired and stale.

For nearly three months he had been doing the most concentrated work and living an unwholesome, solitary sort of life quite foreign to his nature, all with the stubborn purpose of winning back that which his careless negligence had lost. He had developed insomnia, and the sudden wail of a babe or bark of a dog sounded the death knell of his sleep for the rest of the night. At such times he got up and worked.

But that which troubled him the most was the fact that he could not seem to improve on what he had done, though obsessed by the story. At night he dreamed that he was Adam Whittemore, and tossed through wild and fantastic adventures with head-hunting Dyaks and brutal ship's officers. But daytimes he sat and stared at his blank paper, knowing what he wanted to express, but denied the power of this expression. At last in despair, he bundled off the manuscript to Masterson without having changed a word of it.

Even then his creation still absorbed him, and after three days of mooning about the beach he developed the idea of a short story which should be an episode in the life of Adam Whittemore, told in the first person. This was to be a tale of craft, fashioned somewhat after the type of the salvage of the steamer in Victor Hugo's "Toilers of the Sea," and in which the *motif* should be the Yankee resource of his hero. It was a modern story, and required for the telling a sound knowledge of the gasoline motor.

Dick wandered the beach at night until he had fully elaborated the idea in his mind. Then he set himself to his task.

By this time his neighbors had come to regard him rather askance. Since the departure of Agatha he had scarcely spoken to a soul, while his personal appearance had suffered sadly from indifference and neglect. His uncut yellow hair curled heavily about his ears, he shaved seldom, his cheeks were slightly hollow from improper food and lack of sleep, and his eyes red-rimmed from too long application to the written page. His costume had resolved itself into a collarless flannel shirt, dingy duck trousers, and beach sandals, although when he went abroad he added collar and necktie and a somewhat battered blue serge coat, also one of the white duck hats worn by sailors. At the time of Agatha's departure they had become acquainted with three or four families, but these Dick avoided.

Once his new story was fairly started, Dick found himself infused with new power, and his tale was strongly unfolding itself when one morning the postman handed him a letter addressed in Agatha's handwriting. Dick's heart gave a bound, for he lived in the constant hope of learning that she wished to return to him. He ripped open the envelope, and read as follows:

MY DEAR DICK: It is now over three months since we parted, and so far I have received no news of you which would indicate any advantage to be gained in renewing our relations as husband and wife. On the contrary, such tidings as I have of you only go to confirm the wisdom of the course I have taken.

Although I felt naturally a strong dislike in taking a third person into my confidence, before leaving Whitesands I called on Mrs. Reed and told her of my proposed step and asked her to let me know from time to time how you were getting on. She was the only woman in the colony whom I liked and with whom I was at all intimate, and I found her very sympathetic. I *did* wish to be assured that you were well and leading a proper sort of life.

Mrs. Reed's reports are not encouraging. I learn that you have become morose and solitary, which is a pretty fair indication of bad habits in a man of your temperament. I also learn that your personal appearance is scarcely presentable. But what hurts me most of all and seems to put me the farthest from you is what I am told in regard to the character of the person whom you have seen fit to engage as housekeeper, and who, it

appears, is a woman of bad reputation in the locality.

All of this, I am sorry to say, is precisely what I had feared, even while hoping that your wish to have me with you again might lead to some sincere effort at improvement on your part. I am deeply sorry for you. In fact, we all are, as I have told everything to my mother and father.

Now, Dick, do not think me heartless, but do you not think that it would be only fair if you were to let me have my freedom? Mother and father, especially father, wish for a permanent separation between us; in other words, a divorce. At first I would not hear of it, feeling that in spite of what you have made me suffer I was still your wife and bound to stand by you. But my parents have finally persuaded me to look at the matter sensibly, and, after all, there is no reason why both of our lives should be wrecked simply because we were unfortunately mated. As for yourself, it is now plain enough that my influence is of no value. If you had ever really cared for me you would never have subjected me to what you did, or at least you would have made some effort after I had left.

Papa's lawyer says that there should be no great difficulty about getting the divorce, provided you do not contest it. Your habits, your failure to support, and the fact of your having taken into the house a person of known bad character would be quite enough.

Please write and tell me how you feel about it all, and don't think of me as hard or unfeeling. Always your friend, AGATHA.

Dick dropped the letter, and sat for a moment staring blankly in front of him. He felt suddenly lax and nerveless, and all of his new-found strength seemed to have oozed away. For several minutes he sat thus; then his force returned in a sudden gust of anger, which, however, was not directed toward Agatha.

"A nice, neighborly person, this Mrs. Reed," he said aloud. "I'll wait until her husband gets home and then go over and tell her what I think."

The cruel injustice of it made him writhe. Since Agatha's departure not a drop of alcohol had crossed his lips, and, as for his servant, he had never given her a thought; had scarcely realized her presence in the house. It was true that he had been solitary, but merely because of his unceasing work.

Then a great fatigue spread over him. He decided to say nothing to Mrs. Reed. He would write to Agatha a simple statement of what his life had been and let her believe it or not as she chose. Or, better yet, he would go to her the very next day and tell her, face to face. He felt a great need of seeing her and hearing from her own lips that she did not really feel toward him as the letter indicated.

But later in the day he came to still another decision, which was to take no action whatever. After all, Mrs. Reed had no doubt simply written what were facts, and Agatha had put her own conclusions to them. Dick decided that he owed it to his own self-respect to take no recognition of such charges. If Agatha chose to think of him in that way, let her go ahead and get her divorce. As for himself, he would try to put her from his mind and heart, lead his own life, and do his own work in his own way. If Agatha wished for an explanation, then she would have to come to him to get it. Meantime, he would finish the work in hand.

He could not taste his dinner that night. As soon as it was dark, he threw on his coat, and went for a walk upon the beach. Fortunately for him, his mind was full of his new story which he was writing in the first person, as told by Adam Whittemore himself, and so real had this creation of his mind become that it seemed to him as though he were describing some actual adventure of his own. The very leaven of his brain seemed to be saturated with the personality of Adam Whittemore.

The wind was in the east, and there was a cold drizzle of rain driving in from the sea. He started to walk up the beach, and before he had gone far the sting of Agatha's letter was cooled in the rush of salt air. His mind went back to his story, and he soon became so intent that before he realized it he had passed the life-saving station and was walking down a wind-swept stretch of sand that was wild and desolate as that of a desert island.

Snipe and plover whistled shrill as they darted past, borne on the rush of the strong wind. The night was not very dark, for there was a moon behind the low scud, and far into the murky

distance the white breakers marked the line of the beach.

The tide was out, and Dick walked rapidly on the hard-packed sand near the water's edge. Sometimes the ripple ran over his canvas-shod feet, while the thin but driving rain had already commenced to soak through his thin clothes, but he seemed unconscious of physical discomfort.

The solitude of the eerie, mist-flung night had begun to stir his imagination, and his brain was full of his new story, which told of the salving of a big ship by Adam Whittemore. It was such a story of craftsmanship as could only have been told by one whose talents combined the knowledge of a sailor, a skilled mechanic, and a strong inventiveness. Dick, his brain full of his creation, suddenly pulled up short.

"Hang it!" he muttered, "what did I want to pike way up here for? If I was only in my study now, I could get this on paper while the impression lasts."

He looked about him in vexation, and realized that he must be nearly five miles from home. He also realized that he was very wet and rather tired, though he felt neither cold nor hunger. He had eaten nothing since his meager luncheon, nor did he want to eat. But he was thirsty, and this need suggested to him that a little farther on there was on the side of the beach which bordered the Great South Bay a ramshackle combination of store and saloon which was patronized by the clammers and fishermen who happened to be in the neighborhood.

"Some strong waters for me," thought Dick. "All pledges are off now, and, since I've got the name, I'll have the game, too."

Nearly a mile farther on he left the hard beach, and struck across through the heavy sand between the dunes. Presently he saw the sparkle of lights ahead and the glint of water on the edge of the bay. The air held the reek of rotting fish, and here and there he saw big reels for nets and the shacks where the fishermen sometimes bivouacked.

On the water's edge stood a square, drab building, from which ran a jetty, and off the end of this were anchored a couple of sloops, their dingy white hulls spectral and shrouded in a gloom unbroken by so much as the sparkle of a riding light. But a glare blazed from the windows of the store, and the night was turning cold.

Dick strode to the door, threw it open, and entered.

CHAPTER III.

The store, like all places of its sort, combined the functions of junk shop, ship chandler, and drinking saloon. A big, swinging lamp furnished ample light, and, glancing about as he entered, Dick saw the storekeeper—a tall, powerfully built man, with a villainous face whereof the forehead was crossed by a livid scar—leaning across the counter listening to a garrulous and half-drunken fisherman. Across the room three hard-looking baymen were throwing dice at a table.

There was a sudden silence as Dick entered, and all eyes turned to him curiously. He was drenched to the skin, his canvas hat pulled down over his eyes, and his damp yellow hair clustered about his ears. His duck trousers clung to his muscular thighs, and were spattered with wet sand.

"Good evening," said Dick, and crossed the room to the bar.

"Evenin'," growled the storekeeper, studying him narrowly. The men who were dicing went on with their game.

"A glass o' rum," said Dick to the storekeeper.

The man reached for a bottle and a glass, which he set on the counter. Dick took both and walked across the room to a table.

The barkeeper eyed him suspiciously.

"Who's a-payin' for it?" he growled.

Dick flung half a dollar on the table, and poured out a stiff drink. The storekeeper, in a surly manner, took the money and gave him his change.

Dick drank slowly, looking about him with an odd sense of pleasure. Such places as this and such people were like

old friends. The half-drunk bayman at the bar was staring at him with curiosity.

"Offen a boat?" he asked.

"No," answered Dick.

The man gave him another stare, and took up his interrupted narrative.

Dick swallowed his rum and called for more. Presently the hot Matanzas, taken thus on an empty stomach, began to fire his brain. His thoughts went back to his story, and he began unconsciously to adjust his surroundings to the tale. It was in just such a dive as this that Adam Whittemore waited for Red Walters, who with the bedridden captain of the tramp had swindled him out of his hard-earned salvage money. Just such a man as this deep-chested, big-fisted brute of a storekeeper was Red Walters, and just such a gang of hangers-on did Adam fight that first night after coming ashore from the tea ship.

Then suddenly the idea seized Dick to take down these vivid impressions while they were so strong in his mind.

"Got any writing paper?" he asked of the storekeeper.

"Sure."

"Give me a few sheets of the biggest size," said Dick. "Blank foolscap, if you've got it."

The storekeeper went to a shelf and found the paper. Dick poured himself out another glass of rum, then took a pencil from his pocket, and went to work.

For an hour he wrote steadily, then called for more paper. His face was congested, and his blue eyes bright and hard. The storekeeper had been staring at him with the sullen curiosity of a low mind which resents the incomprehensible.

"Writin' a book?" he sneered, as he brought the paper.

"Yes," Dick answered absently, and went on with his work.

An hour later found him in a state of intellectual debauch. The bottle beside him was empty. His pencil no longer flew across the paper, but crept sluggishly and in almost illegible scrawls. His mind was active enough; but, realizing the futility of further writing, he pocketed his pencil, and began to read what he had written.

It was Adam Whittemore's own vivid history, told in his own words, and so real it was that as Dick read it his now thoroughly intoxicated brain began to grow confused. His own personality began to merge with that of Adam Whittemore, then gradually became obsessed. He thought that this thing which he had been telling had actually happened him—or was about to happen—here and now.

He laid down the paper, and his bloodshot eyes traveled about the room with such lurid menace as to bring an answering gleam in the eyes of the storekeeper, who was watching him intently. Dick saw it, and the muscles of his jaw tightened.

"I'm onto you, Red," he muttered thickly.

The dicing stopped. The drunkard nodding over the bar straightened up and stared about stupidly. The big storekeeper dropped his bare, brawny elbows on the counter, and leaned across, eying Dick dangerously.

"What's that, young feller?" he asked softly.

Dick shoved his hand through his hair, and looked vacantly about him. The storekeeper came out from behind the bar, and walked toward the table where Dick was sitting. Dick rose to his feet, taking a backward step. His brain was confused, but his muscles were hard and tense as wire shrouds.

"Keep away fr'm me, Red," he growled, "or so help me, I'll slaughter ye."

"You pay fer them last three drinks 'n git out," snarled the storekeeper. "I had enough o' you."

"You have, have ye!" roared Dick. "Well, then, I hain't had my fill o' you, but I'm a-goin' to." And before his antagonist had realized what was going to happen, Dick had sprung forward, and struck heavily and straight from the shoulder.

The heavy blow took the storekeeper squarely in the forehead, hurling him

across the room against a pile of stores, which came down with a crash. Dick, his eyes flaming, leaped out into the middle of the room.

"Come on, you skulkin', scurvy lot o' beach combers!" he roared. "Come on, the whole lot o' you. I'm Adam Whittemore, able seaman, and, if I can't clean up a passel o' lumpers like you, *I'll* go to hell."

The three baymen had sprung to their feet. Startled at the sudden violence, and half awed at the savagery which flamed from Dick's lurid, bloodshot eyes, they hung back. But the storekeeper had scrambled up, and, roaring with rage, he rushed at Dick.

Pandemonium followed. The storekeeper had the advantage of perhaps fifteen pounds of weight, and was the veteran of many a barroom fight. Moreover, he was sober, while Dick was insanely drunk. But this drunkenness was of the brain, rather than the body, and seemed to imbue him with the strength and activity of some creature not of this world. The shock of the heavy blows was unfelt, or seemed only to stimulate his unnatural strength and activity. He was like a dozen men, in and out, striking cunningly and quick, dodging, parrying, until suddenly with a fearful drive he sent the storekeeper to the planks again.

But the spectacle had inflamed the blood of the others, and as the storekeeper fell they flung themselves into the fight. The place was by this time a sickening wreck. Bottles had come crashing from the shelves, broken glass and scattered provisions strewed the floor, the whole rendered greasy and pasty by an overturned molasses tub. The fight surged here and there, and for several moments there was nothing but the thud and smack of blows, hoarse breathings, and panting curses as a fist went home.

Several times Dick might have gained the door, but he had no wish to escape. His crazy brain was intent on "cleaning out the place," and he might yet have succeeded had not the storekeeper, who throughout the latter half of the fracas had been lying stunned where he fell, presently come to his senses.

Sick and giddy and breathing murderous oaths, he hauled himself up and behind the bar, where his hand fell on a long, pewter bung starter. Then, as an eddy of the fight brought Dick's back against the bar, up flew the heavy implement. For a moment it flashed in the yellow light of the lamp; then down it came on the tawny head.

There was the sickening crunch of metal on bone; Dick's arms jerked spasmodically upward; then down he went in a red haze of oblivion.

Adam Whittemore opened his eyes, and looked about the clean, fresh ward —Adam Whittemore, second mate of the British bark, *Firth of Clyde*.

Adam looked about him dreamily. His head was bandaged from crown to chin; there was another bandage over his shoulder and around one of his hands.

"Wonder how I got smashed up," he thought, and was about to turn over and try to work it out when he was noticed by the nurse.

"So," said she pleasantly, stepping to his bedside, "you've come around at last."

"Yes, ma'am. How long have I been here?"

"Two weeks."

"Two weeks? My——"

"Yes—but you mustn't try to talk."

"No, ma'am. What place is this?"

"Bayshore. Now try to sleep."

"Yes, ma'am." He closed his eyes as one accustomed to obey orders.

"Bayshore," he thought. "Wonder where that is." The name told him nothing. Dick Gordon had several times sailed Agatha across to Bayshore, but Adam Whittemore had never heard of the place.

When he awoke some hours later from a refreshing sleep, a young doctor with a pleasant, intelligent face was standing by his cot.

"Good!" said he. "You're all right now. How do you feel?"

"First rate," answered Adam sleepily. "How'd I come here, sir?"

"You'll have to dope that out yourself. It will come back to you as you get stronger. All we know is that a shipbuilder of this town found you on his wharf when he went down to his yard in the morning. What is your name?"

"Adam Whittemore, sir."

"Where do you live?"

"I come from Bath, Maine, first off," Adam replied, "but I ain't been home for six year."

"Sailorman?"

"Yes, sir. I was paid off from the bark *Firth o' Clyde* in New York, last I remember."

"Well," said the doctor, "you must have fallen into bad hands afterward. You had a fracture of the skull and a broken arm, and were generally broken up. Besides that, you hadn't a cent of money on you. Don't you remember anything that happened after you were paid off?"

"No, sir. Some crimp must ha' doped my drink and got my wad. But I ain't no idea of how I got here, nor anythin'."

True to the character of Adam Whittemore, the brain child of Richard Archibald Gordon, all recollection stopped with the story's end, which had come upon his leaving the sailing ship *Firth of Clyde*. His conscious entity was all contained in the personality of this Adam Whittemore, assumed by some mysterious freak of the injured brain as its proper individuality. Adam Whittemore was able to remember many facts about himself, these not alone such as were contained in the written book, but others, less vague, which had passed through the author's brain in connection with the personality of his hero. He remembered the trading schooner *Kaiulahui*, and the salvage of the steamer, and the fight with Red Walters. But in point of time this last event had long antedated his leaving the *Firth of Clyde*, just as it had in the author's writing, and Adam thought of it as something vague and elusive which had happened months or maybe years before.

"Don't tax your brain to remember yet a while," said the doctor. "It will all come back."

So Adam lay dreamily and thought of his voyage home and of how Billy Smith had died, and wondered, since all of his money had been stolen, what he was going to do on getting out of the hospital.

His splendid vitality soon restored him to physical strength, but it was plain to the surgeon that the terrible blow had either paralyzed or destroyed many little cells with their contained memories, or in some way ruined the interruption of these recollections. He told as much to Adam, who received the information with a sailor philosophy.

"There's lots of things in a man's life it doesn't do him any hurt to forget," said Adam, "and so long as I'm all right for the future there prob'ly ain't much harm done."

At last one day the doctor said to him:

"You'll soon be able to leave us, Whittemore. What do you think you will do?" Doctor Brookes had come to have a very kindly feeling for his patient. There was a cheerful gentleness to Adam which had made him a favorite in the ward.

Adam looked at him with his dreamy smile.

"I cal'late to go to sea again, sir," said he.

The doctor shook his head.

"I don't think that I would go to sea just yet if I were you, Whittemore," he said. "You had better start in on work not so hard. Look here, you must know something about boat building, don't you?"

Adam knit his broad forehead. "I was raised about a shipyard, sir," said he, "but somehow I don't seem to remember a lot about the work."

"Well," said the doctor, "the man who found you on his wharf, a Captain Miller, has stopped in a couple of times to ask how you were getting on. He is an acquaintance of mine; I often hire a boat from him. I think that if I asked him he might give you a job in his yard. If you get that, we'd be able

to have a look at you from time to time."

Adam thanked the doctor and told him that he would be very glad of the chance. A few days later he was discharged from the hospital, when the doctor gave him a note to the shipbuilder.

Adam went down to the yard, where he found Captain Miller superintending the laying down of a forty-foot, power oyster boat.

Adam presented his letter, which Captain Miller read. The shipbuilder was a man of middle age with a kindly, intelligent face. When he had finished the note, he turned upon Adam a keen, assaying scrutiny.

"Well," said he, "sailormen are certainly tough. How did you come to get smashed up like that?"

"I don't remember, sir," said Adam. "Last I recollec' is getting paid off the *Firth o' Clyde*."

"Got your papers?"

"No, sir. They must have been stole with my money."

"H'mph! Know anything about boat buildin'?"

"No, sir." Adam's slow gaze traveled about the shop, then rested on some odds and ends of machinery. "I understand motors, though."

"You do, hey? Well, that's even better, because nobody here seems to. Could you handle the installin' of a gas engyne?"

"I reckon so, sir."

The captain crossed the shop, and picked up a piece of machinery.

"What's that?" he asked.

"That's a slidin' bearin' for the cam shaft."

"And this?"

"That's a cam for the exhaust valve —or mebbe for the inlet valve."

Captain Miller glanced at him in surprise. The workmen had stopped to listen.

"What's this?" asked the shipbuilder, tapping another part with his foot.

"Looks like a oil-pump gear, sir," said Adam.

"Well, and so it does, when you come to think of it," said the captain dryly, and the workmen grinned. "And this?"

Adam's slow gaze barely rested on the part in question.

"Connectin'-rod end, sir—but it needn't ha' been dismounted."

Again the workmen grinned. The captain had himself dismounted the piece with considerable effort.

"I b'lieve you're right," said the shipbuilder. "I reckoned to work this blame thing out, but it seems as if I was goin' at it tail end to. So much for the oral examination, young man. Now come down here and tell me why this critter won't start——"

He led the way to a staging where a motor skiff was lying.

"This fella got some water in his magneto last night, and she quit on him. I've cleaned the platinum ignition, and she sparks all right, and that's all."

Adam got aboard the boat.

"Does she turn over left or right?" he asked; then tried for himself. "Mebbe you shipped your ignition so she sparks when the piston ain't in the right position," said he, "so you didn't get any compression."

He dismounted the ignition, and made an alteration in its position.

"Now turn on the juice," said he, "and we'll try her."

Captain Miller opened the fuel cock, and snapped on the current. Adam cranked the motor vigorously, and off it went with a whir.

"She's all right now," he said, and turned off the current.

"Well, by darn," said Captain Miller. "You can consider yourself engaged. We'll fix about wages later. Look here, what do you want to go to sea for when you understand motors?"

Adam looked dazed. This question had not been provided for in the brain of Dick Gordon. Adam raised his hand to rub the top of his head. Captain Miller, watching him keenly, saw the baffled expression of the clear, blue eyes.

"Never mind, Whittemore," said he kindly, "I reckon that top piece of yours ain't quite cleared up yet from that jolt. You know your work, and that's

enough. You've done in two minutes what I failed at in three hours' work. My specialty is buildin' 'em, and I need somebody that understands gas engynes. There's a-plenty for you to do right now. I got orders for two oyster dredgers with fifty-horse and seventy-five-horse engynes, and we're all workin' overtime. Can you start right in? There's motor work a-comin' in every day. A lot o' these fellas have got motors in their boats, and haven't the least idea what makes 'em go."

Adam entered at once upon his duties. When there was no engine work to be done, he lent a hand at anything to which he was put. There was a small room in the building where the shipbuilder had his little office, and this he gave to Adam, glad to have somebody always on the premises. Adam boarded with the foreman, who lived in a little cottage not far from the yard.

The work, though long in hours, was not hard, and Adam's wages, while small, were quite adequate for his simple needs. Captain Miller's prices were low, and his employees were not highly paid in consequence, but they were a contented lot, steady and efficient, and held a high regard for their employer, who was a kindly man with a solid reputation for absolute honesty and fair dealing.

Adam was liked from the start by all of his coworkers. He was gentle, obliging, and very quiet, speaking but little, and then in a flat, abstracted voice, while the dreamy look never left his clear, blue eyes. Everybody appreciated the fact that his terrible injury had left something not exactly lacking, but deeply buried in his brain, and whether or not this hidden quality would ever find its way to the surface was a problem. At first some of the younger men tried to chaff him a little, but there was something pathetic in the dazed look of the handsome face and the vague but flashing smile, and he was not annoyed.

But if Adam's mind seemed partly in a cloud, then his body showed small space for improvement. The wholesome work, the simple, nourishing food and regular hours and the lack of unhealthy habits, for he neither smoked nor drank, all went to perfect a physique which was superb. His muscular strength was phenomenal, although of a slow and deliberate character quite different from the swift force of Dick Gordon. Often the men would nudge each other as Adam took unconsciously in one hand some part, such as a heavy flywheel, which two men had struggled to pass up to him, and lifted it steadily to the place where it belonged. His grip was that of a hand vise, and there was an almost inhuman endurance to the protracted strain which his muscles could unfalteringly take.

Dick Gordon had been a strikingly handsome man, but the face of Adam Whittemore possessed a quality which might almost have been described as beautiful. The skin, fine as satin and clear as Sèvres porcelain, showed the bloom of perfect health under its slight ruddy tan; the wavy, golden yellow hair clustered over his small ears and about a brow that was strong and intelligent and utterly unruffled. His blue eyes were clear and steadfast, but never lost their dreamy, abstracted gaze, with its faint hint of melancholy. The short, straight nose and firm, kindly mouth held a powerful masculinity which seemed utterly removed from earthly passion or desires.

It was this quality of a strong but unconscious purity which gave to the whole a quality of almost celestial beauty; such a virile beauty as one might fancy to be contained in the visage of an archangel.

In the creation of Richard Archibald Gordon there had been no thought of the usual masculine frailties, if they can be called such, to be naturally expected in an individual of such type as he had portrayed. For one thing, there had been no room for such in his book, but more than that he had in the mind quite idealized the character of Adam Whittemore, painting him rather a creature of fiction than one of fact. There had been no "love interest" of any sort, nor any vicious indulgences. His tale had not needed them, and he had given all

of his space to the delineation of a character which was constantly active in the performance of splendid, manly, self-sacrificing acts.

Adam Whittemore had fought, but in righteous anger and against oppression. His creator had thought of him always as a strong, unsullied soul, simple, kindly, generous, and obedient. Like most young writers, and many older ones, he had overidealized his hero, placing him on a pinnacle which might do for fiction, but never to be found in fact. In a different sort of story such a character would not have rung true, but in the tale of Adam Whittemore, rough surroundings and vigorous action had modified an extreme of moral perfection, and thus given to the leading character a realism which it could not otherwise have claimed.

And therefore the personality of Adam Whittemore, the fact, must needs be true to that of Adam Whittemore, the fancy, the creation of his other, buried self, and which, by some mysterious freak of a brain deranged, that other self had permanently assumed. Like a person hypnotized, he was bound to act according to a powerful insisted suggestion. What the fictional Adam Whittemore had been created, so in accordance must the actual Adam Whittemore perform. Dick Gordon was dead—or sleeping, buried deep in the injured brain—and Adam Whittemore had become a creature of conscious and responsive impulse.

CHAPTER IV.

Miss Kitty Miller, that lavish beauty, the daughter of Captain David Miller, had been from the first tremendously interested in her father's description of the new hand, Adam Whittemore. With many other adorable qualities, Miss Kitty possessed her full share of feminine curiosity, and Adam had not been long in the yard when Kitty, one day, found it necessary to pay her father a visit during working hours.

She came upon Adam as he was dressing down a piece of solid oak timber for a bedplate, for he had shown himself to be no poor joiner and often turned his hand to carpentry as well as to motor work. He was following a curved line with a drawknife, and, intent upon his work, did not see the girl as she walked over toward his bench. Adam, be it said, was the only one in the shop who had not seen her. Few men had eyes for their work when Miss Kitty was about.

Kitty glanced at him, looked quickly away, then glanced again. Adam's yellow head was bent over his beam. His loose shirt was open at the throat, and the clear skin of his bare forearms bulged over the powerful muscles as the knife bit deep into the tough wood.

Suddenly he looked up and saw her standing in front of him. His dreamy, blue eyes looked questioningly into the dark-fringed gray ones of the girl. Kitty thought that she had never seen so splendid-looking a man.

Captain Miller was standing near his daughter, a twinkle of amusement at the corner of his kindly eyes.

"Kitty," he said, "this is a new member of our force, Adam Whittemore. Adam"—the captain called all but his foreman, who rated a "Mister" by their first names—"this lady is my daughter."

Adam straightened up. His hand went to his forehead in salute. He gave his slow, brilliant smile.

"Your servant, ma'am," he said quaintly, but with quiet naturalness. Kitty felt herself in the grip of a strange embarrassment. Under ordinary circumstances she would have smiled, said: "How do you do," and passed on. But something in Adam's face held her; some quality which a man could see, but which it needed a woman to feel. This was the baffled, vaguely expectant look; such an expression as one sees in the eyes of a person at sea who looks for the land, still invisible.

"My father told me of how you were hurt," said Kitty, in her low-pitched voice. "So did Doctor Brookes. He is a friend of ours. Do you feel quite well again?"

"Yes, ma'am, thank you," answered Adam, and Kitty was struck by the odd lack of resonance in the even voice. "I reckon I'm all right now."

"I am very glad," said Kitty, and with a pleasant little nod she passed on.

Adam's hand went to his forehead, and he turned to his work again.

As they left the shop, Captain Miller turned to Kitty with a smile.

"Well, daughter," said he, "what do you think of Adam?"

"He makes me want to cry," said the girl. "He is like a little lost boy."

"His head isn't all that it might be," admitted the shipbuilder, "but he's strong and healthy-lookin', and there's nothing the matter with his work. Adam's been a mighty smart young chap, and there's nobody can teach him anything about gas engynes. He knows all about autymobiles, too. Wonder where in the nation he learned? My opinion is that he's lost out on a lot that happened between the time he quit the sea and his coming here. He's been a sailorman, all right; there's no doubt about that. But what he told me about gettin' paid off from the bark *Firth o' Clyde* ain't so. Just out o' curiosity, I looked her up in the 'Nautical Register,' and there's no such ship. There's a tramp steamer of that name and a trawler and a little passenger steamer out in Australia. Adam may have got mixed up on the name, though. Did you notice his hands?"

"Yes. They are beautiful."

"Too beautiful for the hands of a man just off a sailin' ship," said her father. "They're not hands that have hauled wet ropes for all of his life. What I think is that Adam quit the sea some time ago and went into the motor business, but don't remember it. Funny thing, a man's brain."

Kitty went home in a deeply thoughtful state of mind. The strange personality of Adam Whittemore had moved her deeply. His pure, abstracted face was constantly before her eyes. She found herself wondering what manner of man he might have been before his injury, for instinct told her that the present individuality was not his real one. Kitty was inclined to doubt that he could have been a common sailor. There were too many evidences of the thoroughbred. Yet his speech was cultureless in phrase and expression. The "Your servant, ma'am," and the instinctive salute were those of the sailor. She decided that she must know more of this enigmatical young man.

The opportunity was not long in coming. A few nights later Captain Miller remarked at dinner:

"Mr. MacKenzie, the foreman, is going to leave us. He's going over to Staten Island to start a little place of his own."

His wife and Kitty expressed their regret.

"I was just thinking," continued the shipbuilder hesitatingly, "that after he goes Adam won't have any place handy where he can get his meals. What if we were to let him come here?"

Mrs. Miller, a pretty, red-cheeked woman, considerably younger than her husband, raised her eyebrows. Even Kitty looked rather startled. Miss Kathleen held herself rather high. Her father came of good old New England stock, and had been for many years a sea captain before putting his savings into the yard. Her mother was descended from a good branch of the O'Connor family, and was related to Sir Michael O'Connor, M. P. The Millers were comfortably off, and Kitty herself was well educated and had ambitions for a musical career. She was studying for the voice in New York, whither she went for lessons three times a week, and her father had promised that as soon as he could afford it she should study in Europe.

The idea of taking as a boarder a workman from the yard seemed to her a trifle extreme, for with all of his kindliness Captain Miller preserved a seagoing system of relations between himself and his employees.

"Adam ain't like the ordinary hand," said the shipbuilder. "There's good blood there somewhere. He's steady as a church, never speaks except when he's spoken to, and is neat as a pin. Be-

sides, there's something sorta pitiful about him—though he's always cheerful enough. But somehow I don't like to think of him driftin' around loose and getting cheap, boarding-house rations. Adam needs a mite of looking after, *I* think."

Kitty thought so, too. Her warm heart went out to this strange wanderer whose providence had cast him into her father's hands. So she put aside any personal vanity about taking to the family board a "hand from the yard," and Mrs. Miller, seeing that husband and daughter were agreed, consented with her customary sweet-temperedness.

Adam accepted Captain Miller's suggestion with thanks given in his habitual, expressionless voice, and a few days later presented himself at the family table, where he partook of the good cheer with the delicacy which had been a source of surprise and gratification to Mrs. Mackenzie, who was a thrifty soul.

He was polite, unembarrassed, and his table manners were a source of secret surprise to Kitty and her mother, who had rather dreaded the etiquette of the forecastle.

When Kitty addressed him, his dreamy, blue eyes rested upon her with an impersonal gaze that seemed to take no heed of her vivid attractiveness, and his answers were simple and direct, voiced always in a distant monotone. Yet he was not uncommunicative, and at times, as though his memory were roused by some comment of Captain Miller on far-off places, he would break into reminiscence, telling a tale of stirring adventure or perhaps some humorous anecdote of his seafaring life. At these moments the blue eyes would brighten, his voice would gain a rich expression, often almost startling, and he would tell his story with a sort of quiet, burning intensity which held his listeners spellbound.

Most of these tales were the unwritten anecdotes which had crossed the mind of Richard Gordon; and Captain Miller, listening closely, could find no flaw in scene or incident. As for Kitty, she would drop her elbows on the table, rest her pretty chin in her hands, and her gray eyes would grow misty, while the color came and went in her lovely face.

In the long winter evenings, Adam formed the habit of lingering after dinner to play checkers with the captain. Sundays he often went to church with the family. Kitty sang in the choir, and, while listening to her, Adam's eyes seemed to grow more than ever dreamy.

A number of young men came often to the Millers' home. These were at first inclined to regard Adam with jealous suspicion, this sentiment soon giving way to friendliness, especially on observation of the dreamy indifference to the charms which gave them sleepless nights and seriously interfered with their vocations. Doctor Brookes called often, and during these visits Kitty observed that the surgeon watched Adam narrowly. One night the doctor said:

"Do you find things beginning to come back to you, Whittemore?"

"Not such an awful lot, sir," Adam answered. "Some things are right clear, but others are confused like."

"Such as——"

"Well, the time when they happened is the hardest to rec'lec'. I can't seem to get straightened out as to what happened before another. Then there's speakin' Portuguese, for example. I used to be able to chin right smart in that lingo, but the other day I ran acrost a Portugee off a fishing schooner, and I couldn't seem to remember a word. Couldn't understand it, neither."

The doctor nodded. "The brain is a very wonderful piece of mechanism," he said. "No doubt it will all come back to you at once, some day."

"How?" asked Kitty, listening intently.

"It's hard to say. Sometimes lost memory returns after an illness, or a fever. Sometimes from a shock or a blow on the head. Certain cells which go to furnish memory might be shut off from the rest of the brain, like telegraph stations when the wires are down from a storm. Then others take their

places, sending other messages of their own. Then something may happen to put these isolated cells back on the circuit, and they get busy again. Old age has been known to do this."

Adam laughed. "I've got a long time to wait," he said.

One night the doctor came to call, in a state of great excitement. He carried a package which he unwrapped, revealing a book, bound in red, with the design of a schooner on the cover.

"Here's something odd," he said. "I was in New York yesterday, and in looking at the window of a book shop I saw this. It's a sea story called 'Adam Whittemore,' and it's all about Adam himself."

Kitty almost snatched the book from his hand.

"They told me that the book was just out," said the doctor. "It is written by a man named Richard Archibald Gordon. Do you know the man, Adam?"

Adam's hand went to the top of his head. For a moment his eyes were almost wild. Doctor Brookes, watching him closely, saw the terrific struggle at memory.

"Richard Archibald Gordon," he repeated slowly. "Think, Adam."

The baffled look returned to Adam's eyes.

"Seems sorta familiar," he muttered, "but I can't just seem to locate him. Mebbe 'twas some writin' fella I might have spun the yarn to, and he's put it in his book."

Kitty, with trembling hands, had opened the volume at the colored frontispiece. Adam, looking over her shoulder, saw a picture of a strongly built, yellow-haired young sailor playing the violin in the waist of a vessel. In the background were some men tumbling over the side into a boat, and a big, brimming sea was hurtling off, abeam.

"That's meant for me," said Adam. "'Twas aboard the tradin' schooner *Kaiulahni*, of Tahiti. She opened up after a gale, and they left her. There was more of us than the boat could carry, so we drew lots. I give my place to a fella that lost his sand."

Kitty was looking at him with burning eyes.

"And did you play the violin while the schooner was sinking?" she asked.

"Yes, ma'am. I didn't seem to mind it so much, that way. Red Walters was left, too. Afterward we was picked up by some Kanakas."

"Then you can play the violin?" the doctor asked.

"Yes, sir."

"I've got a fiddle at the hospital," said the doctor. "I'll bring it down some night, and we'll get you to play."

That night Kitty read the book through. She found it a stirring tale, much of which she had already heard from the lips of its hero. The girl was amazed at the faithfulness with which the author had confined himself to the literal truth of such passages as she already knew, and decided that he must have taken the story down in shorthand from the lips of the narrator.

The book finished, Kitty wrote a letter to Mr. Richard Archibald Gordon, sending the letter in care of the publishers. This done she crept into bed to reread certain passages of the story.

It was three o'clock in the morning when she put out her light. For a while she lay thinking, and her thoughts were all of the splendid character of which she had just read.

"What a man—what a man!" she repeated softly to herself.

Suddenly she turned and buried her burning face in the pillow.

"And—oh, the pity of it!" she cried, and the tears gushed from her eyes.

A week brought no response to Kitty's letter. She wrote directly to the publishers for news of Richard Archibald Gordon, and received a brief reply, stating that the author had disappeared some months before, leaving no trace. In the letter was inclosed a newspaper clipping, relative to the case. It stated that the unfortunate writer had, shortly before his disappearance, become solitary and morose, owing to dissipated habits and unhappy family relations. It was feared that he had committed suicide.

But Kitty was less interested in the fate of Richard Archibald Gordon than in that of Adam Whittemore, who continued his dreamy, automatic life all unconscious of the emotion he had awakened. But he was destined soon to awaken other and far deeper ones.

There came a still winter's night with a big, full moon hanging in the clear but frosty sky. The ice crackled on the little path leading to the front door. Doctor Brookes entered, a violin case under his arm. As soon as the blood had returned to his numb fingers, he opened the case and drew out a handsome violin.

"Here's the fiddle, Adam," said he. "Now let's have the tune you scraped off while your schooner was sinking."

Adam took the instrument, with a faint, far-away smile. Kitty had just finished singing, and his thoughts had woven the melody into the incidents of his early life. Of these, by far the most vivid was that of the sinking of the *Kaiulahni,* because on this scene had Richard Gordon expended his greatest and most concentrated effort.

Dick Gordon had been but an indifferent performer on the violin, but dearly loved the music of this instrument, and heard it whenever opportunity offered, and he had invested his hero, Adam Whittemore, with a rich fund of natural music.

Wherefore it was with no glimmer of doubt as to his ability that Adam raised his bow. Not since the sinking of the schooner could he remember having played the violin, and the sight of the instrument seemed to crystallize in his mind much that had been vague.

He heard again the rattling of heavy gears, the complaining whine of the boom jaws, the slatting of the slack sails, and the clash and thud of the sheet blocks on their travelers, for the wind had dropped by the time the water began to gain on the exhausted crew.

As vividly as Richard Gordon had pictured the scene, just so distinctly did Adam Whittemore feel himself to recall it, nor need this strike us as strange when we come to reflect on such pseudo-memories as seem to be our own, even while reason tells us that they are those which we have heard in youth from another.

Adam's fancy could hear the swash of water below, the curses of Red Walters, and the panting adjurations of the crew. He heard the hoarse cackle of the parrot as it sidled along the gunwale of the whaleboat where he himself had placed it.

In depicting the playing of Adam Whittemore as the vessel sank, there had run through the musical but technically untrained mind of Dick Gordon a vague, ill-formed *motif* suggested by such surrounding noises as the situation would produce, and with which, from long association, he was familiar. And Adam Whittemore, who believed himself to be a natural musician of conscious power, sought merely to interpret the scene as he remembered it; to paint musically the picture of the foundering *Kaiulahni.*

He drew the bow across the strings. The dreamy expression of his eyes deepened. Then, as the first sobbing chord welled out from under the bow, he began to talk, in his flat, timbreless voice, reciting even as he played:

"She didn't open up until the wind dropped light—the strain on her canvas held her taut like." The music swelled and swung in long and rhythmic cadence. "But when the wind died out she begun to roll and waller about—and everything got adrift." The music grew confused, chaotic, incoherent with clashing discords. "There wa'n't wind enough to stiddy her, and there come a great, long sea heavin' in from the nor'-east—heavin' in—heavin' in—lumpy at first, but gettin' more reg'lar like through the day." The music described the long, swinging undulations. "We see the water was a-gainin' fast—and we was all wore out from fightin' the pumps. *Clankety-clank! Clankety-clank! Clankety-clank!* went them everlastin' pumps"—the violin mimicked them—"and some of the fellers went to sleep acrost the brakes, still heavin' up and down." Inexpressible fatigue was told of by the bow. "So when we see that she was a-goin' down,

we drew lots for who should go in the boat, there bein' two more of us than she could carry. There was a feller named Tony that drew the first lot to stop aboard, and he took on awful, ravin' and cussin' and the like."

The monotonous voice was unchanged, but the violin shrieked like a hysterical woman.

"I didn't care much about goin' in the boat, bein' that tired 'twas all the same to me, so I give him my place and stopped along with Red Walters. Off they went, the parrot laughin' and siddlin' along the gunwale and a-whackin' his beak agin' the cook's oar." Crazy laughter sprang from under the jerking bow. "She kep' gettin' deeper and deeper—and I kep' gettin' sleepier—and—sleepier." The music began to ebb thinly away. "Then me and Red put off on a sorter raft we'd whacked together—and I went to sleep."

He struck a soft, finishing chord, then dropped the arm which held the bow, and turned his dreamy eyes toward his listeners.

Kitty was leaning forward, her face white, staring at him intently. Captain Miller's head was sunk, and he was tugging at his beard with one brown hand. Mrs. Miller, an emotional soul, had tears in her violet eyes, but Doctor Brookes was tilted back in his chair, his finger tips together, studying Adam thoughtfully.

The doctor was the first to speak.

"That is a remarkable performance, Adam—a sort of oratorio I never heard before. But it is very interesting."

Kitty recovered herself with a gasp.

"It's wonderful!" she cried, "absolutely wonderful!"

"It makes you see the thing," assented Captain Miller, "but I can't say that I'm crazy about it. Play us a cheerful tune, Adam."

And Adam, with his slow smile, played a rollicking sailor's hornpipe.

CHAPTER V.

The winter passed, and the air was pungent with the spring odors of the waterside; odors of pitch and oakum and paint.

Captain Miller's yard wintered a number of yachts, and was very active. Besides the small boats built and the usual repair work, he had two stanch oyster dredgers to show for his winter's work. These were power boats of about fifty feet on the water line, seagoing craft designed for deep-water dredging in the lower Chesapeake and built to work in heavy weather.

The time for the delivery at Norfolk of one of these boats was very near, and Captain Miller had decided to run her down himself.

"You and I can take her down there, I guess," he said to Adam, as they were testing the motor one day, off Fire Island. "She runs as smooth as a clock, and, except for oiling once in a while, there's no need to touch the engyne. We'll make a straight run to the Capes; it's only about three hundred miles."

Auxiliary to her engine, the boat was equipped with a big lug mainsail and forestaysail, set from her heavy derrick mast. Like most vessels of her type, she had high, bluff bows and decks clear to abaft the beam, where she carried her deck house with a couple of staterooms, the motor being controlled by levers operated from the wheelhouse.

It was the middle of April when they sailed from Bayshore at about one o'clock of the afternoon. The weather prospects were good, but the season was still unsettled, and late in the afternoon they ran into a damp, muggy breeze from the southeast. Captain Miller shook his head.

"Looks like thick weather," said he to Adam, who had just come up from the engine room. "The glass has dropped a tenth since morning, and the wind's in a bad quarter for this time o' year. I've a good notion to run into Barnegat and wait for it to clear." He glanced uneasily at the swell which was beginning to heave in on the port bow. "How's your engyne actin'?" he asked.

"She's a-runnin' like a watch, sir," Adam replied. "Cool as a cowcumber."

"Well," said the captain, "we'll hold on a mite longer and see what's goin' to

happen. There's always New Inlet and Atlantic City if it gets nasty."

By six o'clock the wind had freshened, and the sea was getting an ugly look, with a short, angry sling, and beginning to comb. But the heavy, able *Opossum,* with her full underbody, high bows, and bilge keels, made such good weather of it that Captain Miller decided to run on.

"She don't mind it any more than the *Deutschland,*" he said exultantly, "and it ain't slowin' us to speak of, bein' almost abeam. We'll keep right on. Slow her down a mite, Adam."

By ten o'clock, however, he felt less cheerful. The weather had thickened, and the wind was backing into the east and blowing a fresh gale. The sea was combing nastily, and Captain Miller heartily wished that he had put into Barnegat. But the glass was no longer dropping, and, deciding that the blow would not be of long duration, he decided to hold on for the Chesapeake, putting into the Delaware if it got really bad and then going down through the Delaware and Chesapeake Canal and the Bay.

At midnight, conditions went from bad to worse, and with an abruptness that made Captain Miller, who was a deep-water sailor, pine for open sea. The tide had turned, and was running against the swell, and, as the wave length of the *Opossum* was about that of the sea, she began, as the captain said, "to cut up didos." Heavy sprays broke over her bows, flooding the spar deck to swash against the house. A fine, misty rain, more opaque than fog, was driving in with the hard, gusty wind.

All idea of running for shelter was abandoned. The engine was slowed until the vessel was barely holding her own, for the wind was now blowing a gale. Captain Miller was not sure of his position.

"If I'd only taken a little trouble and made me a deviation card for the compass, I'd feel more like tryin' to run in som'ers," he complained to Adam, "but you couldn't see Absecom Light a mile in this muck, and we don't hanker to get blown upon the beach. Open her up a mite, Adam, and we'll shove out into deeper water before she gets worse."

So Adam "opened her up," and the *Opossum* responded valiantly, churning into the ugly chop. She was now awash from stem to stern, but it was for such weather that she had been designed, and there was nothing to hurt.

At two o'clock they plunged into so wild a stretch of water that the captain judged them to be getting the effect of the ebb tide from the mouth of the Delaware, and slowed the engine again. By this time the motion of the boat had become so wild that even Captain Miller, old salt that he was, began to feel unpleasantly affected. He gave the wheel to Adam, and stretched himself out on the transom in the wheelhouse.

"You look like you enjoyed it," he said, almost resentfully, "but I'm blessed if I do. Been too long ashore to fancy a rumpus like this."

Adam *was* enjoying it. He had enjoyed it from the start, in his vague, dreamy way, and now, in the fierce turmoil of crashing seas and rush of wind, he enjoyed it even more. It brought him back to the stirring atmosphere of his old life; that life created for him in the imagination of Richard Gordon. His recollections grew vivid and convincing. He seemed to feel himself once more aboard the *Kaiulahui* in the thick of an equatorial squall. He shook off his habitual apathy, and became a live creature of strength and action. The giddying motion of the vessel soothed while it stimulated him.

He leaned against the wheel, and his bright eyes stared out into the murk, which presently began to lighten with the first promise of the dawn. Lighter it grew, of a pale, elusive gray. The sea was quieting with the deeper water and the turn of the tide, but the wind was if anything harder, and, glancing at the glass, Adam saw that it had risen a trifle. The driving mist was thinner, and overhead the scud was flying off in broken wisps.

As the day grew, Adam saw that the

short gale was breaking, and he was about to waken Captain Miller to ask if he might not raise the speed again, when his eye was caught by a dark opacity on the sea directly ahead.

"Jerusalem!" he cried, "thar's a vessel."

He twisted over the wheel, and reached for the accelerating lever. The motor responded with a whir, and the propeller lashed the water under the stern, racing as the bows plunged deep.

Captain Miller awakened with a start, and his booted feet crashed upon the deck.

"What's up?" he cried.

"Steamer dead ahead, sir," answered Adam. "Look there."

Captain Miller lurched to his feet. The *Opossum* was swinging and forging slowly ahead. Close over the starboard bow loomed a long black hull, wallowing and rolling heavily in the sea.

"A big barge," said the captain. "A tow, hove to, most likely. Give him a wide berth, Adam. Lucky for us we didn't run onto him in the dark."

But the *Opossum* was swinging in, dangerously close to the hulk, and as she forged slowly past Captain Miller gave a shout.

"Look-a-that, Adam—she's a steamer been in c'lision. There's her mainmast over the side and her stack carried away. She's got a hole punched into her. Look!"

But Adam had already seen. The steamer, whatever she was, had been rammed a little abaft the run on the port side. She was lying helpless, the sea coming in on her starboard bow. Just forward of the fore chains was a ragged hole, which ran from the sheer strake almost to the water line, of a triangular shape and perhaps four or five feet in width, above. Every following sea washed into it, and one could see that the vessel was dangerously near to the moment when the point of the tear would come below the mean level of the sea, when she would speedily fill, and founder.

Aside from this, much havoc had been wrought her above decks. Both masts were down, and her funnel, torn abaft, was lying over the crushed and splintered deck house, while thin eddies of steam were whirling from the exhaust pipe. All of her port boats had been ripped away, the davits bent and twisted, and most of the port rail was missing. As the *Opossum* drew past and ahead, they saw that her port light was burning dimly. Not a soul was in sight about her decks.

Captain Miller turned a wild face to Adam.

"She's been rammed!" he cried. "Rammed in the night and left for sinkin'! Some big square-rigger charged into her, and her yards and bowsprit made a clean sweep. Abandoned for sinkin'! S'help me, Adam, here's a fortune goin' beggin'. You understand? A fortune! I'll bet there ain't a soul aboard her. Cross her bows and go round her—never mind the sea."

It was extraordinary how the sight of this rich prize, such as all shipmasters dream of, had stripped Captain Miller of his previous anxiety concerning the welfare of his own vessel. So, no doubt, may the early sailing privateers have felt as they singled out their prey, regardless of mere weather conditions, at other moments to be reckoned with, but sinking into insignificance beside the greed of gain.

Before sighting the derelict, the captain would have much redoubted laying the stanch *Opossum* abeam to the angry sling of the sea. Now he feverishly took the wheel from Adam's hands and spun it over, with never a thought to the heavy rolling of the tug. They crossed the bows of the hulk, then turned to leeward and slipped past her long, black side.

"You see!" cried the captain triumphantly. "There's a sea ladder down on the starboard side. She was on a course for the Delaware when this fella bumped her. Two of her starboard boats gone and the falls a-hangin'. Let's see who she is."

They rounded the stern of the derelict and read:

CONCEPCION DE PASAJES, Barcelona.

"A Spaniard!" almost shouted Cap-

tain Miller. "Might have known it. That's the kind of a bunch to leave a ship at the first crack. Adam, my son, here's a fortune for the two of us—and we can't grab it!" he groaned.

"Why not?" asked Adam.

Captain Miller turned on him almost fiercely.

"What can *we* do? How we goin' to get aboard her? That cussed boat of ourn wouldn't last ten seconds in this. We couldn't even get her over without stavin' or sinkin' her. And if we wait for it to moderate that derelict is sure to be sighted and snapped up, if she don't fill and go down. This place is like the corner o' Broadway and Twenty-third Street. There's a steady stream o' vessels goin' in and out o' the Delaware, and others pikin' up and down the coast." He almost wept.

But Adam was looking dreamily at the sea.

"I might swim aboard her and pass you a line," said he.

"Swim? *You swim?*" Captain Miller snorted. "How long d'ye reckon you'd swim—in *that?*" He jerked his thumb over the side.

Adam gave him his slow smile.

"I reckon I could manage," he said. "I can swim like a Kanaka. Then onct I got aboard, I could rig some sort of a c'lision mat to keep the water out while you towed her into the Breakwater. We got a fair wind and sea, and the tide 'u'd be turned by the time we was ready to start in. Besides, the weather's goin' to clear afore long."

Beads of sweat stood on Captain Miller's brow. He stared for a moment at Adam, then glanced at the sea.

"Better lose your fortune than your life," said he bitterly. "No man livin' could swim aboard that vessel, white man nor Kanaka. The water's a-breakin' all around us. Supposin' you did manage to keep afloat a few minutes? The chances are about fifty to one against your bein' able to grab that ladder in the sea that's a-runnin'. You'd git swept past, and then where'd you be? No, Adam, you're game all right—but it ain't to be thought of."

Adam smiled. "'Tain't so hard as it looks," said he. "I done the same thing onct in a lot worse water'n this. You get her up to windward a mite, and the sea'll carry me right down to that there ladder. I can watch my chance and make a grab when a wave boosts me."

Had he not, in the imagination of Richard Gordon, and therefore in his own memory, performed a far more difficult feat?

"What if you was to miss it?" demanded Captain Miller. He had rounded to under the stern of the derelict, then slowed the engine, and the *Opossum* was nosing her way slowly against the breaking surges.

"If I miss the ladder," Adam said, "you drop down and tow a buoyed line acrost under the starn of the steamer. But I don't cal'late to miss it. I can swim like a duck."

Captain Miller hesitated, though knowing well that he ought never for a moment to consider the proposition. But some quality in Adam's tone of conviction inspired him with confidence, and the prize was very great.

"S'posin' you did make it," he demurred. "What if she foundered while I was towin' you?"

"That there vessel will float a long time yet," Adam replied, "and, besides, I figger on rigging somethin' to keep the water out. But if I should see that she was a-goin', I'd cast off the hawser and swim to you. It ain't so hard as what it looks."

Captain Miller sighed. "Well," said he finally, "try it then, if you must. I feel like I was lettin' you go to your death, but mebbe you know what you can do better than I. One thing, Adam. If you *do* manage it and the Lord in His mercy lets us get her in, we divvy up even on the salvage. Where do you want to go overboard?"

"Put her about two cable len'ths ahead, on the starboard bow," said Adam cheerfully. "I'll take a light line to bend a hawser onto. Onct I get aboard, I'll send you the hawser, but don't start ahead with her till I give you three waves of a hat, or somethin'."

As unconcernedly as though he were

going about some work in the yard, he broke out from the lazaret of the *Opossum* a reel of stuff about the size of a lead line. This he coiled down carefully in the wheelhouse. Then, stripping to his drawers, he caught a bowline around his waist with the free end.

"You keep payin' it out as I go," he said, in his slow, gentle voice to Captain Miller. "Don't git too far away, and as soon as you see me climbin' aboard, hang as close under the starn as you dare. I'll send you a hawser, and you can hang on by the starn while I'm tryin' to do somethin' to that there hole. As soon as she's ready, I'll lead the hawser to the for'ard bitts, cast her off astern, and you can start in with her. Don't be impatient like; I got to work single-handed, and as long as we got a line to her she's ourn."

Despite the chill of the damp wind, Captain Miller's face was dripping perspiration as he reached for the accelerating lever to start the tug ahead.

Adam himself showed no sign of emotion, nor did his beautifully muscled body appear conscious of the sting in the biting wind. With the measured movements of a sleepwalker, he went down the ladder and crossed the pitching deck to the foot of the stout derrick mast, where he stood in the swirling water, steadying himself with one hand as he waited for the moment to plunge. A coil of line hung from one arm; his heavy clasp knife was slung on a lanyard about his neck. His bare feet gripped the slippery deck, and at times he stepped back abaft the mast as a heavy spray came over the bows and swept the *Opossum* to the house.

Busy as he was manipulating wheel and levers, Captain Miller's strained eyes fell on Adam with wonder and a sort of awe. The tremendous physical strength of the young man was of course well known to him, and as he looked down at the superb, lightly poised body, he could see wherein it lay.

The deep, arching chest with its smooth but heavy muscles of front and back, the powerful shoulders, small, strong waist, and round, compact thighs seemed to fit a man for almost any sort of terrific physical struggle, either with man or beast or primordial elements.

As Adam sought to retain his balance, thew and sinew tightened and bulged and relaxed under the smooth satin of his skin, rosy pink from the lash of wind-driven spray.

He shook back his wet, yellow hair, looked up at Captain Miller, and smiled. The blue eyes had lost much of their dreaminess, and had become almost intent. He seemed to guess at the struggle going on in the bosom of his employer, for he called cheerfully, albeit in his flat, expressionless voice:

"All right—don't you worry none. Light out your line fast after I jump."

In Adam's new-created mind there was no trace of fear nor doubt. Like a man who performs some hazardous feat in a dream, half conscious that, after all, it is but a dream, so Adam felt himself vaguely to be urged by some dominant but protective force to which he was blindly obedient. His dreamy eyes regarded with a sort of abstract interest the foaming seas as they rushed snarling past. He realized, but unmoved, that his struggle would be a hard one, and he thoughtfully studied the way in which each succeeding wave flung itself high against the side of the wallowing hulk.

"I must time it so's to ride up a-top o' one of them fellers," he said to himself. "Then I must get over the side afore the next one gets thar. 'Tain't so hard as when I swum to that there sailin' ship and had to ketch her martingale stays when she come down——"

Captain Miller passed to windward of the derelict, then turned and bore slowly down. A cable's length was as near as he dared go, when he swung slowly away from her.

"That's well," called Adam, and leaped for the lee rail and flung the loose coil on his arm far out into the sea. The next instant he sprang upon the rail, and plunged after it.

He struck in a combing crest, and was flung away to leeward with the heavy spray. The sea hove itself off, leaving him in the trough, when he caught his breath before the next

should overtake him. The *Opossum* forged past, and as he rose on the slant of the next big comber Adam caught a glimpse of the captain's pale face looking back at him. Then, over his head reared the breaking rim of the next comber, to fall with the roar of an avalanche, driving him deep under tons of water.

None but a strong and indomitable swimmer could have risen from that heavy mauling with his breath still in his body, but Adam struggled to the surface and got in half a dozen powerful strokes before being overtaken by the next sea.

"'Twon't do to get caught like that again, or I might get carried past her," he thought.

The well-worn simile of wave motion to the undulations in a field of standing grain is in some measure exact, but it does not apply to breaking water. Adam knew that high on the crest of a toppling sea he was in danger of being flung away to leeward like a bucket of spray; and so, as the next breaker overtook him, he turned and dived through it like a gull.

He was by this time close aboard the derelict, sucked away from her black side by the trough, and flung forward again on the slant of the next sea.

Warily he watched his chance, and timed it so nicely that as he was borne ahead by a mounting wave he felt the scrape of iron under his feet as the hulk rolled away from him.

Back she came, and with three strong overhanded strokes Adam flung himself like an otter through the water and gripped the sea ladder as it swung out to him.

His hands closed in a viselike grip on the tarred hemp, and none too soon, for the swash of the sea flung him slantingly against the ship's side, burying him in a smother of spray. But he clung fast, and as the derelict rolled away he found himself hauled well above the water. A quick scramble and he was up and over the rail before the next deep roll.

The blood was trickling from a number of vicious scratches, but Adam scarcely noticed it. Slipping out of his bowline, he ran aft with the line. The *Opossum* had dropped astern, and he saw Captain Miller frantically waving his hat from the wheelhouse.

Adam made fast the end of his line, then hunted up the steamer's lazaret, where he found a coil of hawser not too heavy to handle, but sufficient for the strain. The end of this he carried aft, bent to his line, and signaled to Captain Miller to haul in, he himself lighting the cable through the stern chock.

The work was slow and tedious, especially for the captain, who was occasionally forced to catch a turn while he dashed to the wheelhouse, but before long he secured the end of the hawser and made fast to the windlass, when the little *Opossum* was moored to her big prize.

Adam looked about him. The pole masts of the steamer had been swept away by the big iron yards of the ship which had rammed her. The foremast had crashed down to wedge between the crumpled port davits, while the mainmast had broken off short in two places, both at the hounds and close to the deck, when the big spar had been carried over the side and floated away. The funnel was smashed flat, but was not adrift.

There was a good deal of minor damage about the decks, but Adam had no time to investigate. First of all, if he had hopes of salving the *Concepcion*, he must stop the water from pouring into her with every passing wave.

"I got to rig a c'lision mat, somehow," he told himself, and in his dreamy, automatic way he set about to do it.

He went to the lazaret, and got out a new, heavy trysail, a coil of hemp rope, and several heavy shackles such as are used for the chain cable. Screwing the bolts into the shackles, he rove them onto his light line, leaving them to run freely. Then, carrying the bight of the line forward, he dropped it over the stem of the ship.

Making one part of the line fast on the anchor davit, he was able to so manipulate the free end as to sink the

line under the steamer's keel, when, by gradually working his line aft alternately on either side, he got it around the underbody of the ship and up over the ragged hole.

This done, he bent his heavy hemp rope to the line, first reeving it through the shackles to keep it well sunk, and managed to haul it down under the keel and up the other side. The end over the hole he then bent to the tack of the trysail, after which he rigged a sheet rope to the sail and made it fast forward, that the canvas might go down well spread.

Thus far the work had been laborious, but within his single-handed possibilities. But his nautical knowledge told Adam that, considering the weight of material and the friction against the vessel's hull, he could not hope to rig any tackle or purchase which would give him the strength to haul the heavy sail down over the hole.

"I got to have power, now," he said to himself, and he went about the getting of this power in a most ingenious way.

Going aft, he carried to the forward bitts the hawser by which the *Opossum* was hanging to her prize, and when all was fast he slipped the turns from the after bitts, so that the hawser led in through the stern chock and ran the length of the deck to the bow. Then, going to the lazaret, Adam found a heavy snatch block, which he rigged just inside of the chock through which he had led his keelhauling line, and, throwing the snatch block, he caught a hitch on the taut hawser.

"Thar!" thought Adam. "We'll let the *'Possum* rig her own c'lision mat."

Going forward, he slacked a fathom or two of the hawser, then caught a turn, and went to see that his trysail was clear and well placed. This done, he returned and slacked a few more feet, then returned to the sail again. Continuing this process, the drift of the *Opossum,* which was naturally much faster than that of the deep and heavy steamer, hauled in the hemp rope, thus dragging the trysail down over the hole.

When he judged that the hole was sufficiently covered, Adam made fast the head of the sail, then cautiously slacked the *Opossum's* hawser from the bitts until he had the trysail stretched tight as a drum. This effected, he rigged a stopper on the hemp rope, outside the snatch block, and made fast. His collision mat was rigged. Practically no water could now wash in through the tear in the ship's side.

Not until his work was finished did Adam so much as think of his own body. He had been working nearly naked for almost four hours, and his fires were burning very low. Realizing that he still had much to do and that he would need abundant strength for the doing of it, he hunted up the pantry, where he found bread and cheese and some strong Spanish wine.

He ate and drank, then went to the captain's room, where, in a locker, he found some clothes, which he proceeded to put on. His strength returned to him, he went down into the fireroom. The water was awash with the iron flooring, and the fires were very low. Glancing at the pressure gauge, he saw that there was not steam enough to run either the bilge pumps or the steam steering gear.

"I'll have to take her in by hand," he thought. "I can't steer and fire too. Hope it ain't very far."

But there was still the work of getting the towing hawser over the bow, no slight task, single-handed. Adam went aft, and signaled to Captain Miller to come ahead, and the captain, waiting anxiously for the summons, came creeping up under the derelict's stern.

The wind had backed around and was blowing hard from a little north of east, and the sea was still a nasty chop. The scud had mostly blown off, but the sky was gray and threatening, and it was hard to tell what to expect in the way of weather. But Adam did not bother himself about this. He felt that the rest of the work was Captain Miller's lookout.

As soon as the hawser was slack enough, he slipped it out of the stern

chocks and carried to a bow one, this with great effort, for the cable was wet and heavy. Then, to further ease the towing, he broke out another hawser, and bent it to the end of the first, when he signaled to the captain to go ahead, slacking out slowly from the bitts as the strain came. This task completed, he shifted to the hand steering gear and waited for the captain to turn the ship inshore.

Adam felt no conscious fatigue. Short as it had been, his terrific struggle in the sea to reach the derelict without being overwhelmed by the combing waves had been of a sort which would have left most athletes utterly exhausted and unfit for further effort. But although the water was like ice, and the wind, as he worked, biting with the cold sting of rain, Adam had effected single-handed a piece of work to which a dozen hands might usefully have been set. A man more conscious of himself could never have achieved what Adam had done without a pause for respite. His body would have cried out for an interval of repose.

But Adam had gone steadily ahead like some automaton, obeying the dictates of a separate, controlling mind. And therein lay, perhaps, the secret of his personal unconsciousness of cold and hunger and fatigue. He was merely a machine, responding mechanically to the touch of the controlling agency. Adam had accomplished what could not reasonably have been expected of fact, but which lay within the possibilities of fiction. He was himself, so far as his consciousness of himself was concerned, a creature of fiction. His limitations were those of fiction; the exaggerated fulfillment of the written page.

If Adam's body had been less perfect in its physical power, the work could not, of course, have been done. He would have faded under the continued strain; passed without conscious thought into the numb inertia of helpless fatigue, or even possibly have died in that terrific effort of the body to obey the ruthless dictates of the mind.

But because that body was sound to the core, each separate organ taking its due share of the work obediently and unquestioningly like the parts of some splendid machine, the work had been successfully accomplished. Richard Gordon, in writing such an achievement, had done so from sound, personal knowledge of facts and conditions, but with the exaggeration of the romancer. And Adam Whittemore, his brain-child, had made this exaggeration a physical fact.

But Adam was no blind subject of a limited suggestion. Free volition was vouchsafed him, its confines being merely the obligation to act consistently within, and as far as, the possibilities of the personality with which he was endowed. So far as the powers of Adam Whittemore reached, he was his own free agent, to depend upon his own judgment and resource. Wherefore, his work done, he ate and drank and clothed himself and speculated as to what might happen next. The strength returned to his overtaxed muscles, and he even dozed a little, leaning against the wheel.

The sturdy *Opossum* slowly turned her big prize, though twice it looked to Adam as though she was about to turn turtle herself in the attempt. Nevertheless she got the *Concepcion* twisted about and headed in for the shore. A tiny object the *Opossum* looked at the end of her long drift of hawser, but wind and sea were in her favor, and soon she had also the tide.

The afternoon wore away. Adam left the wheel long enough to get some food, and munched as he steered. The *Concepcion* trimmed considerably by the head, and was a nasty tow, but he managed to keep her in line, anticipating her stubborn borings off to port or starboard with a skill to be gained only by long practice. Several times he sighted schooners reaching up and down the coast under short canvas, and once a steamer passed on the horizon.

When it began to get dark, Adam left the wheel long enough to find the lamp room and fill his side lights, also placing a lantern on the after deck house. The water was getting quieter. Ahead, the

Opossum showed a light at her masthead.

Soon Adam found himself fighting sleep. Perhaps this may have been the hardest test of all, for he had not closed his eyes the night before. The sky was lightening, and he saw the stars directly overhead. Then, as he peered out into the murk, there came a flicker on the dark horizon.

"Thar's the Breakwater," said Adam, "and I'm glad."

CHAPTER VI.

When Adam, in the rush of his high endeavor, had leaped from the rail of the *Opossum*, he failed to hear Captain Miller's sudden and frantic: "Hold on, Adam!"

For the captain's resolution had failed him at the last moment, and as Adam plunged the honest shipbuilder would have given the *Concepcion* and her cargo, and even the *Opossum* thrown in, to have had the young man safe and sound aboard again. He realized suddenly that, blinded by his avarice, he stood to sacrifice a human life, and one that had grown very dear to him. For the instant he saw himself little better than a criminal to have consented to such an undertaking on the part of one who was, for all of his unusual ability, scarcely to be considered as mentally complete.

The captain had caught the flash of the white body rolling over in the crest of a sea, then had lost it again. His straining eyes did not get another glimpse of Adam until he saw him clambering up the sea ladder of the derelict.

Nearly four hours of weary waiting followed. Captain Miller was unable to follow Adam's labors aboard the steamer, and, to make matters worse, his sea knowledge was unable to explain to him how Adam, single-handed, could hope to rig a collision mat. There had been no time to discuss this before Adam had gone overboard, but the technical experience of the shipbuilder told him how difficult would be the handling of heavy gears without power.

Hanging to the stern of the derelict, he could not perceive how Adam had drawn his power from the drag of the buoyant *Opossum*. When the captain discovered that the oyster tug was drifting slowly astern, he tried desperately to get Adam's attention, thinking that the hawser was slipping on the bitts. But the feeble squeak of the *Opossum's* whistle brought merely a wave of the hand from the deck of the *Concepcion*, and the drifting astern continued intermittently for an hour or more, when the hawser sprang taut with a rather dangerous suddenness.

On getting Adam's signal to go ahead and take the strain off the cable, Captain Miller worked up on the starboard side of the prize, and then, for the first time, saw what Adam had succeeded in accomplishing. The reason for the slipping hawser became immediately clear to his practical mind.

"Well, I'll be darned!" he said aloud. "If that feller didn't just go and turn the *'Possum* to on the job without my knowing a thing about it! He certainly is a caution to cats."

But the good captain now had his own work cut out for him in turning his prize and towing her into port. Twice, as he was tugging away to turn the heavy hulk, it seemed as though the *Opossum* was going to be rolled over and over, while the heavy sprays threatened to clean her decks of deck house, wheelhouse, and all, the smother flying clear over her truck.

The towline was almost heavy enough to swing the *Opossum* up by her tail. Captain Miller had no fear of snapping it; indeed, there were two or three seconds when he would have felt glad enough had it parted. But the sound stuff and honest work which had gone into the little boat saved her life that day as well as the life and fortune of her builder, and once the tow was straightened out, there was no longer any great danger.

Nevertheless, as the *Opossum* headed in for where the captain hoped to find the Delaware Breakwater, there was probably no man on all the broad Atlantic in a higher state of tension

than was he. He was dragging into port a fortune, for he figured that in such a case as this his salvage claims would amount to an even half of the value of ship and cargo. This amount was to be shared equally with Adam, but even then it would be enough to enable him to carry out his long-cherished plan of selling out his yard at Bayshore and building up a new and bigger plant across the island on Long Island Sound.

Thanks to his growing reputation for honest work and reasonable prices, the captain's business had outgrown his establishment, and he had been obliged to decline good orders for big vessels.

He felt that his whole future was at the end of that long hawser. Adam would, no doubt, be willing and eager to put his share into a new yard, and with what he, Miller, already possessed, they could start a big and profitable business.

And all of this owing to the strength and courage and resource of that strange dreamer, Adam Whittemore, whom he had found one night lying in a pool of his blood upon his wharf!

Captain Miller could think of no man he had ever known who would have had the courage to attempt and the ability to fulfill what Adam had so marvelously performed. It struck into him with a sort of awe. He found himself thinking of Adam as of some cosmic stranger, hurled to this planet by some deep, mysterious design.

"And the calm, easy way he went at it!" thought the captain. "Like as if he saw it all beforehand and knew just how it was bound to come out! Maybe he did. Adam don't belong to us folks down here; he comes from way up yonder."

With one hand on the wheel of the *Opossum,* he reached for his chart of the coast, and studied it attentively. He had taken a sounding while lying astern of the *Concepcion,* and as closely as he could figure out their position they must be not many miles north of the mouth of the Delaware.

"Pray the Lord it'll be clear enough to see the lights," he muttered devoutly. "To lose her now would make me want to hop over the side myself."

Wherefore when an hour after dark he caught the flash of the Breakwater Light on his port bow, the good skipper let out a yell that startled the storm gulls circling overhead. The tide had turned flood, and three hours later the valiant *Opossum* was chugging along in sheltered waters, her Spanish prize looming somberly astern. In a good berth, the captain slowed his engine, then dropped down alongside. Adam, with the step of a sleepwalker, took his line, and the next minute Captain Miller was aboard the prize, and had seized Adam in a hug that made his strong ribs crack.

"My boy—my boy!" he said, and his voice was almost a sob, "you're an A-one at Lloyd's seagoin' wonder. This day's work has made the fortunes of us both." And with that he dropped Adam and made a rush forward, where he cleared and let go the starboard anchor. Then, with Adam's help, he got the *Opossum's* dinghy over, and they pulled around for a look at the injured side. The lower edge of the hole cleared the water's edge by about six inches.

Safely moored and with a riding light set, Captain Miller, with Adam lurching drunkenly at his heels, made for the former captain's room. A little rummaging among the ship's papers, and Miller let out another yell.

"Steamship *Concepcion de Pasajes,* of Barcelona!" he shouted, "Barcelona to Philadelphia with wine and olive oil! Glory be! Nothin' perishable, Adam. That cargo's as good as the day it was put aboard."

But Adam did not answer. Sprawled across the untidy bunk, he was sleeping the sleep of utter exhaustion. As gently as though he had been tending a sick child, Captain Miller loosed the neck of his shirt, drew a blanket over him, and stole quietly out.

Fifteen hours without a break slept Adam. When he went on deck the next day, he found Captain Miller in an exultant but calmer mood.

"How d'you feel, Adam?" he asked.

"Fine," said Adam. "Everything all right?"

"Right as whales. I've telegraphed to the agents in Philadelphia and to the port authorities and also to Washington. It's a case for the Court of Arbitration now, but there's nothing to fear. Our claim is solid as the Rock of Gibraltar. Ship abandoned and sinkin' slowly, meantime bein' a danger to navigation. As soon as we've turned her over to the agents, we'll run on down to Norfolk." He looked at the *Opossum.* "Ain't she a daisy?"

The following day a crew was sent down to take the *Concepcion* up to Philadelphia, so Captain Miller and Adam continued their voyage and arrived without further incident at Norfolk, where they turned the *Opossum* over to her new owners, who heard with the deepest interest the tale of the run south.

"Well," drawled the oysterman, "looks like she was a lucky one, and that alone is wuth a whole lot." He glanced quizzically at Captain Miller. "Must seem like y'all might knock a little off the price."

And Captain Miller, with a smile, told him to hold back a five-hundred-dollar bill.

"You're shore to be an all-right Yank," said the grizzled old fellow, "but you won't lose nothin' by it. If we have a good season, you kin build me two more like her next year. I'm fixin' to buy all the bottom off the Wolf Trap."

The story of their achievement had got into the newspapers, and on their return to Bayshore they found themselves heroes. Captain Miller gave all of the credit to Adam, who received the felicitations of admiring friends with his dreamy, abstracted smile.

" 'Twa'n't so hard as it sounds," said he, and apparently put the matter from his mind.

From the press accounts they learned that the big iron sailing ship *Gettysburg,* homeward bound from Seattle to New York, had early in the night been in collision off Delaware Bay with an unknown steamer, during a fresh gale. The night was very thick, and the *Gettysburg* had been reaching offshore at the time under a big press of canvas.

Though badly dismantled and with her bowsprit and fore yard carried away and her main yard badly damaged, she had slid clear of the steamer, and as soon as she was able had hove to and stood by for an hour, firing guns and rockets and dropping two of her boats.

From the damage done to the bows of the *Gettysburg,* it was feared by her captain that the steamer must have been sunk in her tracks. The steamer's lights he reported as scarcely visible, to which statement Adam and Captain Miller were able to vouch for the truth. Nobody aboard the sailing ship had been injured.

A couple of days later a coasting schooner reported hving picked up one boat of the *Concepcion,* containing the mate and seven of the crew. The other boat, containing the captain and others, had been lost, the boat itself and three or four bodies being found later on the beach near Cape Hatteras.

"And all for a few *pesetas'* worth of oil and a wipe of a rag," said Captain Miller solemnly. "Some seafarin' men never seem to learn anything. They act like they thought they were the only folks afloat."

The night of their arrival home, Kitty Miller questioned Adam closely as to his achievement. Adam looked at her dreamily, and his eyes grew vague with reminiscence. In a few brief words he told her of how he had gone about his task, then reached up to rub the scar on the top of his head.

"I done something like it onct before," he said, in a slow, uncertain voice, and looked at Doctor Brookes, who had been calling and had accepted an invitation to stop for supper. "It was that time when me and Red Walters was left on the *Kaiulahui.*"

"I thought you told us that you were picked up by some Kanakas after the schooner sank," said Doctor Brookes.

"No—I reckon that was another time. I sorta got mixed like." His eyes grew baffled, and he rubbed the scar.

"This time we was on our raft when there come a squall that settled down into a gale o' wind. Tag end of a typhoon, *I* reckon. We was nearly gone when we sighted this here sailin' ship which had been dismasted. Me and Red swum to her and managed to get aboard by catchin' the martingale stays when she come down. Red was weak, and wouldn't have made it only for me.

"We found that all hands had left her, there bein' yaller fever or cholery aboard, I disremember which 'twas. There was five corpses down below, and the skipper, who was gittin' over it; and that's how she come to be dismasted, the crew not strong enough to shorten sail. Red and me managed to get a jury rig onto her and work her into Honolulu. The skipper was well by that time, and he and Red persuaded me to sign over my claims for a hundred dollars, statin' that there wouldn't be no salvage, as the skipper was aboard all the time. I was darn glad to get the hundred, but later, when I learned that Red had buncoed me, I was right mad."

"Should thought you would have been," said Captain Miller hotly. "The d—— ungrateful scoundrel!"

"Father!" said Mrs. Miller reprovingly.

Kitty, her elbow on the table and her pretty chin in the hollow of her hand, was staring at Adam with flushed cheeks and glowing eyes.

"What would you have done if you had met him?" she asked.

Adam smiled vaguely.

"Couldn't say, 'xactly. I'd have asked him to divvy up, I reckon, and if he hadn't done it I guess I might ha' taken it outen his hide."

"And serve him good and right," said the captain.

"Did you ever see him again?" asked Doctor Brookes, who was watching Adam with his usual keen scrutiny.

Adam's face brightened. The rest of the reminiscence was much more clear in his mind, being the last story at which Richard Gordon was at work when he lost his individuality.

"Yes," he said. "I cut his wake mighty clost three or four times. Then, one night, I got athwart his hawse in Limeh'us. Red, he'd taken his salvage money and put it into a sort of general store and gin mill over near the docks. I went in there one night, just off a ship from Australy. Red was a big, husky feller, with a sorta purple scar acrost his forehead." He rubbed his head more vigorously, and the dreamy eyes looked strained. "I knew him right off, and he knew me. We fit, and I laid him out, but somebody—one of his heelers, I reckon 'twas—hit me a lick over the head, and when I come to I was shanghaied aboard the *Firth o' Clyde*. Another feller that was on the ship told me as how I'd killed Red——"

"Adam!" cried the horrified Mrs. Miller.

"Mebbe it wa'ant so," said Adam slowly. "I took only my hands to him."

Doctor Brookes and the captain exchanged quick glances. Both knew that Adam had never sailed on such a ship as the *Firth of Clyde*.

"What would you do if you were to meet him now, Adam?" Kitty asked.

Adam smiled. "Oh, nothin', I reckon. I don't bear no malice."

"That's right," said Captain Miller heartily. "Let bygones be bygones. I don't believe you killed him. It takes more than your fist to kill a man like that." And he turned the talk to other topics.

As for Adam, as was usual with him after telling some story of his former life, he remained for several minutes in a state which was less that of apathy than one of dreamy expectance, as of one who waits for a summons or the receipt of an impulse from beyond.

The spring slipped imperceptibly into summer, which in turn ripened to the harvest time. The salvage claims on the *Concepcion* had been settled for a sum beyond the most sanguine expectations of Captain Miller, for the ship was new and the cargo a rich one, containing many wines of valuable vintage.

When he had suggested to Adam that he might put his half into the new

yard, Adam had cheerfully acquiesced, then appeared to forget all about the matter. He had become by this time a regular inmate of the Miller home, living in the cottage and regarded as one of the family.

It was Kitty who had brought this about. To her watchful eyes it had become terribly apparent that Adam was slowly but steadily losing ground. There was no doubt but that his personal recollections were growing more vague. Always quiet, he began to give himself to long silences, and when spoken to he roused himself with a visible sense of effort. To Doctor Brookes Kitty one day expressed her fears, and the surgeon's face grew very grave as he answered:

"So you have noticed it, too! Yes, there is little doubt that Adam is sliding to leeward. His dreaminess is giving way to abstraction. Your father has been watching him closely, and he tells me that Adam no longer seems to take an interest in his work. There is another significant fact; these old memories of his are growing dim and confused, while at the same time he does not seem to be able to clear up the more recent events of his life as I had hoped he might. There is no use in deceiving ourselves. Adam is going —downhill."

Kitty clasped her hands, and leaned toward him.

"Do you mean that he is——" Her lips were unable to frame the word.

"Dying?" asked the doctor gently. "I am afraid so."

"Ah, no!" cried Kitty. "He is so strong, doctor; so magnificently strong."

The tears streamed from her eyes. Doctor Brookes glanced at her, and his fine face softened. He had long ago guessed her secret. But if Kitty loved Adam, then did the surgeon also love Kitty, sweetly and generously and with no thought of self. He loved her for her warm heart and her sympathy and the vigor of her young mind, and, last of all, he loved her rich, vital beauty, now chastened by suffering.

Something had come to soften and mature the rich profusion of her girlish charm, and this was her hopeless passion and the tragedy of Adam Whittemore. Loving her as he did, the surgeon felt that there was no kindness nor mercy in the offering of what he felt to be vain hopes. There was no doubt in his mind but that Adam was a man doomed to die. The subtle change had become apparent to the doctor from the first.

"Kitty," he said, "I am horribly afraid that Adam is not long for this world. There is death in his face, and his splendid body is beginning to droop. Even a magnificent physique cannot survive the gradual death of the mind. When I saw him after coming back from my vacation, I gave up hope. He has lost at least twenty pounds, and his face is drawn and tired. There is an old housewife's expression which applies to Adam: 'sickening for death.'"

Kitty buried her face in the cushions, and burst into tears.

"But why *should* he die?" she demanded presently, raising herself upright and dashing away the tears.

"A man's consciousness of himself as an individual is necessary to keep him alive," said the doctor. "A man could not continue to live in a state of hypnotic trance, and that is practically Adam's condition. It is my belief that on recovering consciousness after his injury he had lost out a big span of his more recent life and taken up the thread of it years ago. Adam is older than we think, and from watching him closely I have come to believe that his later life was very different from this earlier one which he sometimes speaks of. More than that, I think that much of his reminiscence is not accurate, and that he mixes up his own early adventures with others that he has either read or heard of. Sometimes he impresses me as a man who recites from memory something which he has been told. Adam, just before his being brought to the hospital, was no common sailor."

"He was never a common anything," Kitty moaned.

"True, and a very significant fact of his having once occupied a higher sphere in life is that recently his speech is quite different. Sometimes he talks like a well-educated man, only to relapse into his crude sailor talk. Have you not noticed that?"

Kitty nodded.

"At first," said the doctor, "certain old memories which had become fresh and vigorous furnished him with the 'life desire,' as you might describe that personal consciousness which is necessary to keep the man alive. Now these are fading, and the more recent ones do not come, at least consciously, to take their place."

Kitty wrung her hands.

"But is there no way to awaken these?" she cried.

"I don't know. Sometimes there seems to be a sort of periodicity to surgical cases; a yearly cycle when a period of crisis is reached. Old wounds sometimes break out on the anniversary of their being received. We are now approaching the time when Adam received his injury, and perhaps the date may bring him some change—possibly for the better. If we could only arouse him in some way—but how are we to go about it?" These last words partly to himself. "I have thought of applying a faradic electric current to his head—but this would be dangerous."

Kitty's eyes flashed through her tears. "Better to risk his life than to let it slip through our fingers," she cried. "Why don't you take him to some specialist of the brain?"

"I have already done so," replied the doctor quietly.

"What? And you never told me?"

"No. I knew how much you—cared, and the prognosis was bad. I took Adam to see the greatest brain man in the country. After hearing the history of the case and examining Adam three times at intervals of a month, he said: 'There is nothing we can do. The case is hopeless. The man will die.'"

Kitty clenched her fists. Her face for the moment had an expression of almost maternal passion.

"He shall not die. I will not let him die." She burst into a storm of weeping, then suddenly controlled herself, and brushed the masses of heavy hair back from her forehead.

"It is a terrible thing to see a man's life slipping through your fingers——" Doctor Brookes began.

"Especially when you happen to love him," cried Kitty bitterly.

"Or if your business is to save life, and you long to save his for the woman you happen to love," said the doctor.

Kitty reached her hand to him impulsively.

"You are a dear," she said chokingly. "I know that if he could be cured you would save him."

For several minutes they sat in silence, then the doctor rose.

"I must be getting back to the hospital," he said in a weary voice. "Take Adam off by himself some day, Kitty, and talk to him. See if you can't whip up his mind to grasp something that may serve for what the French call a *point d'appui;* what your father might describe as a place to hook on a purchase. And if anything unusual happens, let me know. Good-by." And he left the girl sobbing on the sofa.

Kitty determined to follow his advice. The following day would be Sunday, and that night she asked Adam if he would take her on the bay for a sail. To ask of Adam was always to receive, and the next afternoon found them beating across to the inlet with a light, southwesterly breeze. Out in the bay Adam turned to the girl with his faint smile.

"Like to sail, Miss Kitty?" he asked.

She shook her head. "No, I would rather that you did."

Adam trimmed the sheet, and the boat glided onward. Kitty, leaning back against the coaming, let her eyes wander across the expanse of water toward the low, broken outline of Fire Island. She wore a white sailor blouse, open at the throat, and a white, short skirt. Her dark, heavy hair was covered by a tam of navy blue, and a few escaping tendrils blew across her face. There was a warm mist in her gray

eyes, and her lips were red as poppies. As she looked at Adam, a faint flush came and went on either cheek, like the color in a live coal as the draft strikes it.

Adam was in his Sunday costume of blue serge, with a yachting cap set aslant on his thick, wavy yellow hair. His collar was low, and his loose, silk tie fluttered over one shoulder. In spite of his sailor simplicity, Adam had shown from the first a natural instinct as to his clothes.

Unlike Dick Gordon, he was scrupulously neat about his costume, and now as he leaned back with one strong hand upon the tiller and his dreamy blue eyes cast automatically aloft to see how the sail was drawing, certainly no stranger could have been persuaded to regard him as a dying man. His full chest arched beneath his loose Madras shirt, and the big deltoids bulged under the sleeve of his coat as he drew the tiller toward him. But Kitty had seen him in his strength, and the embers in her cheeks paled as she noted the hollows in his face and the dark shadows under the suffering eyes.

Adam looked at Kitty, and the embers were fanned to a brighter flame. It seemed to her that she had never seen so splendid a type of man, nor one so pathetic. The tears rose, to be winked away on the double fringe of her long, black lashes.

"Adam," she said presently, with a slight catch of her breath, "do you ever find yourself wishing for the old life?"

For a moment his eyes rested upon her vaguely.

"No, Miss Kitty," he said. "It wasn't much of a life, I guess—and, besides, it seems so long ago."

"Do you ever feel," asked Kitty very gently, "that you would like to see far-off lands again or have more of the wild adventures you sometimes tell us about?"

Adam's hand went up to his scar, and there came to his face the baffled expression so often to be seen when required to originate some idea not previously generated in the mind of Richard Gordon.

"Can't say as I do," he answered. "The truth is, Miss Kitty, I don't seem to remember as much about all o' that as I used to. Sometimes it seems like the little I did remember was a-fadin' away, like. Now, there's Red Walters. Do you know, I can't really think what he looks like. And there's lots of others, too."

Kitty caught her breath. "Doctor Brookes told me the other day," she said, "that Red Walters and your life before the mast and many of the things which you remember all happened years and years ago. He believes that there is a great deal which has happened since which you are unable to bring back. Where did you learn so much about motors, Adam?"

His face cleared. All of this had been provided for in the imagination of Richard Gordon, and was therefore within the limits of his artificial recollection. Besides, others had asked the same question.

"I stopped ashore for a couple of years and worked in a gas-engyne factory," he said.

"Where was that, Adam?"

His face clouded. Richard Gordon had never specified the exact locality of Adam Whittemore's motor apprenticeship.

"I don't jes' seem to rec'lect," he said. "Somewhere in New York, I think."

Kitty could not endure the tortured look in the blue eyes as the sick brain struggled for memory.

"Now that you are to be part owner in the new business," she said, "you will be quite independent, Adam. Wouldn't you like to have a home of your own—and a—wife?" The embers flamed a ruddy heat. "How old are you, Adam?"

"Twenty-two," Adam answered quite truthfully, though Richard Gordon had been twenty-eight when he had ceased his conscious existence.

Kitty saw plainly enough that he was much older than that. There was even a glint of silver in the golden clusters about his small, thoroughbred ears. Kitty decided that he must be thirty at

the very least. Doctor Brookes, she thought, was undeniably right. There were at least five years, and probably more, lost from Adam's calendar, and there was but little doubt that these were the last and most valued ones and those which had gone to make the real man. She returned to her previous question.

"Have you never thought that it might be nice to have a home and wife of your own, Adam?" she asked.

His face slightly paled. Again the hand went to the scar to rub it helplessly.

"I—I don't know, Miss Kitty. I might have liked it once—but not now. I know that I'm not right. There's something lackin' about me. Do you know, Miss Kitty"—he leaned forward, and his voice came breathlessly, while his eyes grew strained and held a deep, imploring terror—"sometimes I feel like as if I *wasn't here;* as if there was *nothin'*—no sech a person as Adam Whittemore. I feel like I was clean *fadin' away.*"

The terror in his eyes became almost frenzied. Kitty, glancing at him, guessed with a swelling heart a little of his terrible suffering. She was possessed of a sudden and almost overpowering impulse to rush to him; to fling her arms about the strong neck and draw the tired, haunted, groping head against her bosom and soothe it with caresses and whispered words of strength and help and sympathy. For the instant she was the militant maternal, ready to do battle with those dark, deep, lurking depths and the terrors they contained.

"You poor Adam!" she cried, and moved closer to him, laying her hand on his as it gripped the tiller. "You are very, *very* real and very much *here.* It is that awful blow that gives you these fancies. What if you have lost a few years, Adam? There are much better ones ahead of you."

A tinge of color crept into Adam's sunken cheeks and a little brightness to his eyes.

"You are an angel, Miss Kitty," he said, and his voice held a trace of almost real emotion. "But you mustn't bother about me. Sometimes I think that I'm a sinkin' ship."

He did not tell her what the captain knew; that the consciousness of creeping decay had cast its shadow so darkly across his Adam Whittemore mentality that he had in their joint contract made the Miller family his heritors.

"But you are not sinking, Adam," cried Kitty. "I won't let you sink. You must not let your mind dwell on it. Promise me."

Adam's smile came near to bringing to the surface the tears which welled in her rich, low voice.

"I'll try," he answered. "Now don't you worry about it. Perhaps I'm only a little off my feed. But you see, a man in my condition who's no surer of himself than what I am hasn't any right to think of marryin' and the like."

"A wife would keep the bugaboos away," sighed Kitty.

Adam smiled. "A wife like you would make the angels jealous," he said, and Kitty's embers kindled into a living flame.

CHAPTER VII.

As Doctor Brookes truthfully remarked, it is a terrible thing to see a strong man fading away before one's eyes of a subtle inner malady which offers no point of attack from without, but steady and remorseless as a fire in the hold of a collier gnaws its treacherous way until the strong enveloping fabric, no longer able to sustain itself, sinks slowly to the depths beneath.

Adam to the casual eyes presented no tangible symptom of ill. He went about his work silently but steadily, a little slower than before and perhaps less quick to seize and master the problems presented when this work was of a complicated, mechanical nature. But it was evident to all that the splendid physique was losing its bloom. His body was growing thinner, and, although the strong muscles had lost none of their power, the bony prominences were becoming more marked.

On hot days Adam was wont to work in a sleeveless shirt, and more than one

pair of eyes observed that the long, powerful arms which at first had been round and smooth were now become ribbed and knotted and corrugated; each muscle as it took a strain rising hard and tense above its fellows, clearly outlined as shown in an anatomical design.

But in his face the change was most apparent. His forehead seemed to have broadened, and the blue eyes looked larger and brighter and less dreamy, holding in their depths at times a sort of brooding terror instead of the former peaceful melancholy. The cheekbones appeared to have raised, and the straight, firm lips were held tight and rigid like the lips of a person in pain. The cords of his neck, too, were more prominent, and the angle of the square jaw more pronounced. But the face as a whole had lost no trace of its pure beauty.

Men feel the shadow of death in their midst, and Adam's fellow craftsmen were quick to understand that this mysterious stranger who had come among them, no man knew whence, was soon to depart again, no man knew whither.

All had learned to love him for his invariable sweetness of nature and free generosity. From the first his wages had more than filled his simple wants. Aside from the mere expenses of living, he had nothing for which to spend his money, and often, learning that some comrade was in need, he offered such assistance as he was able with his slow, dreamy smile, then seemed to forget that any obligation existed.

Moreover, he was always ready to drop his own work and lend a helping hand, remaining often after working hours to finish that upon which he had been engaged.

Such an unselfish character had Richard Gordon created him, and he was ever true to this personality. There was a quality about him which was scarcely human, almost divine, while yet his rugged manhood and splendid strength held him far apart from the taint of weakness associated with a feeble mind. For Adam's mind, so far as it went, was strong and robust, even while gradually withdrawing from his inner self.

He vaguely felt that it was this withdrawal which was responsible for that deep, gnawing fear to which his inner consciousness was prey. Many a brave man has suffered from the fear of death, which is, after all, but a natural change and an inheritance of mankind. Far more terrible was this sense of utter dissolution; the withdrawal of the conscious self; the threatened destruction of the ego; an annihilation final and absolute, even while the strong body continued to perform its intelligent functions.

For the Adam Whittemore individuality, from the first a phantom thing, was slowly but surely fading away, leaving nothing to take its place.

The suggestion, powerful as it had been, was, after all, but one of many million pictures which had sprung to life in the brain of Richard Gordon, and its impress was bound to fade, as all pictures fade. It had stood alone and unaided by the many correlations which go to make a fact, and because it had been forceful of its kind it had lingered for a long time. But at best it was fiction, dream stuff, and now it was beginning to vanish away, dying for lack of fresh impulse, and leaving nothing to fill its place.

In the long hours of the night, Adam's tortured soul writhed beneath the weight of its doom. He knew that he was not going mad; he felt that which was menacing his entity. Mere madness would have seemed a slight thing in comparison, for here is merely a mind derailed. Adam's mind was not derailed. He felt that it was slipping out into nothingness; a wisp of steam vanishing in the blue of the sky; a thought, absorbed by the Infinite.

For the first time he knew fear. He lived and moved and had his being in an atmosphere of devitalizing fear; such a fear as few men ever know, except vaguely in nightmares. It was the soul-consuming fear of the unknown, the unknowable, the unthought, and the unmentioned.

Men can assemble and discuss death, the immortality of the soul, the hidden mysteries beyond the change of the material life. Inspired prophets and ancient lore hold forth hopes and expectations to which one may nail a blind faith or confidence inspired of God. But to Adam were denied such consolations. It was not change which seemed to be in front of him, but *nothingness.*

What he suffered in these awful days and nights, one may never know. Last of all to leave him, he felt, would be his conscious Adam Whittemore will, and he set his bony jaws and told himself that as long as that lasted he would never disgrace the paling personality that was left him. All such strength as remained went into this struggle, and, although at times he would find himself in the grip of a wild impulse to shriek and rave and cling to the little entity that was left, he moved with set lips and forced smiles, while the dew stood damp upon his forehead and his dissipating soul quaked within him.

There were moments when the wild terror underneath glared from his eyes so that one might see, and he who saw drew back startled and shuddering. The men with whom he worked were very gentle, very kind, but the specter in their midst made its cold presence felt, and a shadow hung over the yard. No longer did one hear snatches of song or light, reckless badinage. Two hands threw up their job, not knowing exactly why they did so.

Captain Miller felt it like the rest, and deep furrows lined his face. Adam was dying; he saw that plainly, and, much as he loved him, he almost wished that the end might hasten.

Next to Adam, it was Kitty who suffered the most in these awful weeks. Her love for Adam was now all maternal. He was her little sick boy, and she almost hungered for the time, now evidently not long distant, when the great physique would falter and he would have to take to his bed, where she might hover close and ease the passing of the brave spirit.

One day, when Doctor Brookes was at the house, Kitty quite broke down.

"It can't last much longer," she sobbed. "He is going fast now. The other day he happened to see that book, 'Adam Whittemore.' He said to me: 'Adam Whittemore—where have I heard of that chap?' And he began to rub the top of his head. Then suddenly he realized that it was himself—and the look in his eyes was terrible. 'Thought for the moment I was Gordon,' he said, with a smile that nearly killed me. Then he seemed to pull himself together with an awful effort, and remarked: 'The cobwebs are getting awful thick, Kitty,' and smiled again and went out. And do you know, doctor, his voice was like the voice of another person, and his manner of speaking. It was the first time that he called me 'Kitty,' without the 'Miss.'"

The doctor leaned forward, and stroked his closely trimmed Vandyke beard.

"It's baffling," he said, and added, as if to himself: "Why should he think that he was Gordon?"

For several minutes he remained plunged in deepest thought. Then, rising abruptly, he said:

"Put on your hat, Kitty, and let's go down to the yard. I'd like to watch him at his work."

Kitty arose wearily and got her hat. The doctor, watching the girl as she went out, told himself that he would soon have another patient. Kitty's face was usually pale during these days, and her strong young figure drooped. Her parents had tried to persuade her to go away for a visit, but she would not leave.

The yard was not far distant, and they had almost reached it when from ahead there arose suddenly a wild clamor of cries. So sudden was the uproar that both stopped, turning to each other startled faces. Kitty's knees swayed under her. The tumult broke out afresh.

"What is it?" she cried, "an accident——"

Doctor Brookes seized her arm.

"No—a fire. Ah—look——"

A great billow of white smoke puffed suddenly into the still air, and rolled

heavily aloft. A dark swirl followed it, and there came the sound of small wood crackling fiercely. People were running from neighboring houses. A small boy on a bicycle rushed past, pedaling furiously.

Taking Kitty's hand, Doctor Brookes flew down the sandy path, and turned into the side gate of the yard. The plant consisted of two large sheds, roomy enough for the building of good-sized vessels, several small outbuildings, and a "shop." This edifice was a combination of storehouse and carpenter shop, and in the rear was partitioned off to serve as Captain Miller's business office. A short distance from the shop, on the edge of the creek, was a large gasoline tank, for Captain Miller was a local agent and sold fuel to the power boats of the place.

It was from the door and windows of this shop that the smoke was pouring, and, as Kitty and the doctor turned into the yard, they saw the men running a big fire hose off the reel in one of the sheds. The flames had not yet broken out, but the smoke was of that lurid quality which threatened a momentary blaze.

Doctor Brookes left the girl to lend a hand with the hose, and, as Kitty's terrified eyes were turned to the shop, she saw her father stagger out, a tin of some inflammable stuff in either hand. Close at his heels came Adam, similarly burdened.

Captain Miller, blinded by the acrid smoke, did not see Kitty. Flinging the cans at a distance, he turned, hesitated for an instant, then dashed back into the shop. Adam deposited his cans near Kitty, and was about to follow the captain, when the girl sprang forward and grabbed him by the arm.

"No—no, Adam—it's not worth it. Stay here——"

Adam turned his reddened eyes to her face.

"There's a lot o' tins of naphtha in there," he said. "We must get 'em out before the blaze."

He tried to release himself, but Kitty clung to him like a drowning child.

"It's not worth the risk," she cried. "The place is well insured. Oh, where is father?"

For Captain Miller had not reappeared, and it now looked as though the flames would burst forth at any second. The men were running up with the hose, but, before they had arrived at where Kitty was struggling with Adam, he had brushed her off with an unconscious violence that sent her reeling against the bilge of a boat, hauled up on the ways.

"I'll get him," cried Adam, and plunged into the mouth of the little inferno. Almost as he disappeared, out lurched the captain, empty-handed, the two, blinded by the smoke, having passed each other unobserved.

"Adam—Adam!" screamed the girl.

The interior of the shop was now filled with an inflammable gas which it needed but a spark of living flame to ignite. Just as a wood fire on the hearth will smolder to the point of ignition to burst suddenly into flame at the contact of a lighted match, so did the inside of the shop, charged with methane from the heated inflammable woods and oils, appear to be at the very point of combustion.

"Adam—Adam!" shrieked Kitty. "Father is here—he is here, Adam."

The words had scarcely left her lips when the explosion occurred. There was a sudden flash, a dull detonation, puffs of smoke and flame burst from door and windows. The pulse of air threw Kitty and the captain back against the boat, and as the girl fell she saw Doctor Brookes rush forward, as it looked, directly into the blaze. Then back he lurched, and Kitty saw that he was dragging by one arm a sprawling, blazing object.

She heard his voice cry harshly: "Not water, sand—sand," and saw him throw himself upon the prostrate figure, smothering out the little flames with scooped-up handfuls of loose sand. Then two of the men plunged into the zone of intense heat, gathered up the limp, smoking figure, and bore it away. As they passed her, a round, blackened head fell limply back, and Kitty shrieked. For she saw that what

they carried was the unconscious body of Adam Whittemore. And then a darkness settled down upon her.

The girl's next perception was of her father's voice, saying brokenly: "There, there, dearie—it's all right—it's all right," and she felt a trickle of cold water on her face. She opened her eyes and looked around. The shop was blazing fiercely and in apparent defiance of the stream from the fire hose, and the big gasoline tank was steaming as a bucket line sluiced its iron sides.

"Is he dead?" were Kitty's first feeble words.

"No, dear—leastwise, I don't think so," answered her father, in a shaking voice.

Doctor Brookes, his face blackened and his beard singed, came over to where she lay.

"How is he, doctor?" Kitty moaned.

"Rather badly burned, Kitty, and still unconscious, but his pulse and breathing are good. I think we got the fire out before it burned the skin under his clothes. He's suffering more from the shock of the explosion. I've telephoned for an ambulance."

Captain Miller broke into bitter self-reproach.

"It was all my fault—tryin' like a fool to get out that naphtha. You think he'll pull through, doc?"

"I think so," said the doctor quietly. "See, they are getting the fire under control."

CHAPTER VIII.

In the same ward whither Adam Whittemore had been carried twelve months before, Dick Gordon opened his eyes and stared up at the white ceiling.

Only the eyes themselves were exposed in a narrow slit between the dressings which enveloped his entire head, this aperture having been left to reach them with sedative solutions. Fortunately the sting of the acrid smoke had forced him to close his eyes at the instant of the explosion, so that the damage done to his organ of sight was confined to the lids and conjunctivæ.

For a while he lay silent, motionless and thoughtful, his brain, awakened after a long year's sleep, slowly and laboriously reconstructing its memories of his last consciousness.

Little by little, it all came back to him. He remembered how Agatha had left him and his dreary summer of unceasing toil at his book, "Adam Whittemore." He remembered his feeling of jaded triumph at the completion of the work, then Agatha's cruel letter, and how in his bitterness and discouragement he had turned again to his writing.

He remembered the wild night's tramp upon the beach, the rough establishment on the shore of the bay, the repeated drafts of rum as he had written and drunk.

Of the fight and its results he remembered nothing, nor did he recall how he had assumed in his intoxication the character of Adam Whittemore, only to have it literally beaten into his fevered brain with the bung starter.

But a recollection of the dive and its occupants, and his own insane and deliberate debauch, was enough to enable him to reconstruct the rest. He recalled the scowling storekeeper and how he had roughly demanded immediate payment for the first drink ordered. Thinking of this, Dick remembered that he had only had fifty cents when he went into the place.

"That's it," he thought. "The brute wanted his pay, and when he found that I had no more money and was tanked at his expense he turned to and laid me out. Wish I could remember what *I* had to say about it. Something seems to tell me that, tanked or crazy, he may have found it no such cinch."

He tried to ease his position, but every nerve and fiber of his body seemed to shout in protest.

"Lord o' love," thought Dick, "but I must have got the father and mother of all seagoin' whalings. And serves me good and right, too. What a chump! What a low-down beast of a drunken idiot!"

Another effort to move brought to his awakening faculties the information that his head was completely swathed in bandages and dressings. Also, he discovered that the skin of his face was scorched and raw in sensation, and that there was a scalding pain at the side of his neck.

"Burns," he told himself. "I put up a fight, and during the Donnybrook some joker fetched the lamp with a bottle, while I was cavorting underneath. Well, well—I 'most wish they'd finished me up entirely. No doubt my fatal beauty is gone forever—though the lanterns of my pure soul are still alight." He closed first one eye, then the other, by way of a test. "They feel hot and angry, too. I'm not only pounded into a pulp, but b'iled, into the bargain. Wonder where I am at. I didn't know there was a hospital anywhere in that interestin' neighborhood."

With a pang of bitterness, his mind went back to Agatha's letter. He realized that this had been the direct cause of sending him on his solitary debauch, but Dick was not the man to make excuses, even to himself. What hurt him was the injustice that had been dealt him, and the unworthy expedient of having his personal movements spied upon by a neighbor. Thoroughbred that he was, by birth and inherited instincts, this act of Agatha's infused him with a sort of sickening disgust.

"I'm afraid my wife is not a young woman of very classy instincts," he thought. "That is the sort of method that is brought to light in the domestic infelicities of vulgar and common people which we are sometimes inflicted with in the press. However, I am glad. It takes away the sting. She may have her divorce and welcome. Very likely the account of last night's exploit in the dive has got into the papers, and she will feel that she was right."

He squirmed uneasily, and this time a pain through his back brought to his lips a stifled curse. There was a rustle at his side, and he looked up to see a nurse leaning over him. Dick was almost startled at the tenderness and eager interest he saw in her face.

"So you have waked up at last, Adam," she said gently. "How do you feel?"

Dick stared. Then, like a flash, it crossed his mind that when brought there he must have had sense enough to give a "fake" name, and that the first one to occur to him had probably been that of Adam Whittemore.

He answered somewhat dryly:

"Very comfortable, thank you. How long have I been here, if you please?"

"About forty-eight hours," answered the nurse. "Are you in any pain?"

"A little stiff and sore, but no more than one might expect. Is there much damage?"

"Let me call the doctor," said the nurse. "He might not wish you to talk."

A few moments later a young man with his face and one hand in bandages came to the side of Dick's cot, and, leaning over, looked searchingly into his eyes.

"So you've come around, Adam," he said. "Does your head pain you?"

"A little, on top," Dick answered shortly. He was feeling very sore in body and mind, and it irritated him to be "Adam-ed" in this familiar way. Even supposing that he had given his name as Adam Whittemore, he did not see why they should assume so patronizing a manner. He decided that they must take him for a "bum."

Something in the expression of the reddened eyes caught the attention of the doctor and held it.

"Do you remember how you were hurt?" he asked.

"No. Am I badly smashed up?"

The doctor pricked up his ears, and gave Dick a swift look. Voice, accent, and intonation were all quite different from those of Adam Whittemore.

"Your face and hands and arms are burned," said Doctor Brookes; "also one of your ribs is broken, and you are generally bruised. Don't you remember anything about the fire?"

"No," Dick answered, "but I hope the darn place burned up."

The doctor gave him a startled look. Dick's apparently insane words puzzled

him less than their tone and manner of utterance. The flat, timbreless voice and drawling inflection of Adam Whittemore was supplanted by a curt, crisp accent that was new to Doctor Brookes. The nurse, also, observed it, and a quick glance passed between the two.

"The shop burned to the ground," said the doctor.

"Glad of it," snapped Dick. "How about the gang?"

"You were the only one to be hurt."

"That's a pity. I must have been good and drunk."

So irritable was the curt voice that Doctor Brookes decided to say no more for the present. It seemed apparent that, owing to the shock, his patient's condition had passed from a state of mental blankness to one of active, and what might prove violent, insanity.

"I want you to try to sleep, now," he said, in a tone of authority. "You have talked enough."

"All right," answered Dick, "but do you mind just telling me how I came to be here?"

"We will discuss all of that when you have had a nap and are feeling a little more rested," said the doctor firmly, and added to the nurse: "Give him some milk and let him sleep."

Accustomed to the recognition of authority, Dick took his nourishment, and fell into a restful doze, which lasted until late in the afternoon. He awakened much refreshed, and found the doctor making his rounds of the ward. Dick raised his bandaged hand, and the surgeon came over to his cot.

"I've obeyed orders and calked off about five hours," said Dick, "and now I feel as strong as the mainmast. Would you mind telling me a few things?"

Again the puzzled look came into the face of Doctor Brookes. The crisp voice, so different from the flat monotone of Adam Whittemore, seemed to endow his patient with a different personality. It fell unpleasingly upon the surgeon's ear; not that the voice itself was disagreeable, nor was there anything at which he could object in tone or words. But Doctor Brookes, like all others with whom Adam Whittemore had come in contact for any length of time, had conceived a deep affection for the sweet-natured dreamer, and now it struck him with a sense of chill that here was a stranger masquerading in the body of the man whom he had loved as one might love a high-souled dog of noble nature and absolute generosity.

For Dick Gordon from much rough contact with a rough world had acquired a curt, almost peremptory manner of addressing strangers, this bluffness of speech usually disarmed by the pleasing expression of his face and the flashing smile. But the change from the address of Adam Whittemore was so pronounced that Doctor Brookes was almost repelled, the more so as the voice was fairly vibrant with sanity and the assertion of a potential ego. The eyes of the surgeon grew intent, and his forehead knit. It flashed suddenly across his brain that perhaps, instead of being hopelessly mad, Adam Whittemore might have come into his own again.

"What would you like to know?" asked the surgeon pleasantly.

"In the first place," said Dick, "did this racket get into the New York papers?"

"Yes. I have just been talking to a local reporter. There was also a long account in yesterday's Bayshore paper. You are the hero of the hour, Adam."

"Adam," thought Dick to himself. "If they get my name as 'Adam Whittemore,' it would be all right—only, if Agatha happened to see the account, she'd know quick enough who it was. But why the *hero* of the hour? Hanged if I see anything especially heroic in a gin-mill rough-house. I must have performed some noble stunt that I don't remember."

It occurred to him that the quickest way to clear up the mystery would be to read the press account, and accordingly he asked the doctor if he might hear what the paper had to say. There was a local daily in the ward, and, securing this, the doctor read an accurate account of the fire in the shipyard, in

which description the conduct of Adam Whittemore was painted in the usual florid terms, while that of the surgeon, in plunging into the flames to rescue in turn the prostrate hero, was also most warmly dwelt upon.

"My part of it is very much exaggerated——" began the doctor, then glanced quickly at his patient.

For Dick, unmindful of the pain it cost him, had raised himself upon one elbow, and the eyes staring out between the gap in the bandages were so wild that the surgeon was startled.

"Here—lie down!" he said sharply.

But Dick's gaze was riveted upon the journal.

"Why—for the love o' Mike," he stammered, "what in thunder is all that stuff about? That's not the way I got hurt—and—and, so help me"—his voice raised a pitch in tone—"look at the date. *It's a year ahead of time.*"

The doctor's jaw dropped. For an instant he turned to Dick a look as wild as his own. And then the mind of the surgeon was flooded with a great light. He gasped, unable for the moment to speak.

"Don't you see?" cried Dick harshly. "The crazy paper is a year ahead. And I was never in any shipyard fire. I got smashed over across the bay—in a fisherman's store and gin-mill place. Am I batty, or what? Besides, there's no such actual person as Adam Whittemore."

Doctor Brookes had recovered his self-command. Before Dick had stopped speaking, he had grappled with and mastered the situation. He realized that the newly awakened mind of his patient had taken up the thread of his existence where it had been snapped by the fearful injury from which he was unconscious when brought to the hospital twelve long months before.

He pushed Dick gently back upon his pillows, then leaned over, and looked steadily into the bewildered eyes.

"Tell me, my friend," said the surgeon. "What is your name?"

"Richard Archibald Gordon," answered Dick.

"Richard Archibald Gordon," repeated the surgeon slowly. "Then you are the man who wrote a book called 'Adam Whittemore'?"

"Yes. It was the last thing that I did before I got smashed. That night, when they did me up, I was working at a short story about the same person.' Dick's voice was quick and strained. "Now, tell me quick, doctor, if you don't want me to go off my chump—what is all this rot about Adam Whittemore—and why is that paper dated a year ahead? Does it mean that I've been balmy for a whole year—masquerading around as Adam Whittemore?"

Doctor Brookes nodded. "Yes," he said. "That is exactly what it means."

Doctor Brookes finished his amazing story, and his intelligent eyes rested thoughtfully upon his listeners.

Kitty, her face very pale and her eyes almost black, was staring through the open window at the gray monotone of sedge and the sparkling water beyond. Captain Miller's face was drawn and tense, his breath coming loudly through his nose. Mrs. Miller was anxiously watching her daughter's face.

"So it appears," said the doctor, "that we have to deal with an absolute stranger. Richard Archibald Gordon has not the slightest recollection of a thing that has occurred since he was knocked senseless in that dive across the bay."

Captain Miller took a deep breath. "That must ha' been Jim Hawkins' place," he said. "I remember hearin' some rumor of a rumpus over there. When they saw that he was likely to die, they loaded him aboard a boat, and sailed over here and left him on the wharf. Well, well—wonderful are the ways of the Lord."

"At any rate," said his wife, glancing at Kitty, "we should all be thankful that he has come to himself again. Anybody could see that poor Adam Whittemore was not long for this world."

Kitty roused herself with an effort and turned her dazed eyes to the surgeon.

"What is he like—as Richard Gordon?" she asked.

"It's hard to say," replied the doctor. "You see, he's quite a different person. There is nothing of Adam about him at all. Adam Whittemore was a strong, simple-hearted, big-souled sailorman; one of Nature's gentlemen, but uneducated and with a great deal lacking from his mentality. Gordon, on the contrary, is a man of good birth and connections and education, who has been at times a pretty hard sort of a citizen, I imagine, having spent a great deal of his life in rough adventure knocking about the world on different sorts of vessels and finally marrying a rich wife and settling down to write stories."

"You say his—wife had left him?" asked Mrs. Miller, with a quick glance at Kitty's pale face.

"Yes. From what he tells me, I fancy that she was a spoiled, selfish, pampered sort of woman——"

"Did he say that?" Kitty interrupted.

"No. He merely gave me the facts of his case, and I drew my own conclusions. He appears to have been very fond of her. She grew discontented with their circumstances, and returned to her family three months or so before he met with his injury. After she had gone, Gordon worked very hard with his story, and the character of his hero was so strongly rooted in his head that by some freak of the brain he assumed it as his own on recovering consciousness. It is a remarkable case, and, now that we know the history of it from the beginning, everything that puzzled us becomes clear."

"I must say," said Captain Miller, "that it's a mite too much for me to wrastle. You mean to say that Adam don't remember the first thing about salvin' the *Concepcion?*"

"Not the faintest glimmer."

"Adam Whittemore," said Kitty softly, "is dead."

Doctor Brookes gave her a quick, compassionate look. But the mind of the shipbuilder was dwelling on a less sentimental aspect of the case.

"That may be," he remarked, "but if so, this man Gordon is his heir. I suppose"—he looked anxiously at the doctor—"that he may feel different now about investin' his share of the salvage money in the yard?"

A flush came into Kitty's face, but Doctor Brookes smiled.

"On the contrary," he said, "Gordon is delighted at the idea. More than that, he said that he had had enough of writing, and, with your consent, he would like to keep right on with you in the yard. To tell the truth, he seems quite happy about his lost year, which he well might, considering the results it has brought him."

"How about his wife?" asked Mrs. Miller.

"Gordon seems to think that she has divorced him by this time, and I gather that any affection which he may have felt for her is quite finished after the way in which she treated him. I dropped a line to a friend of his in New York, this morning, asking him to come down and put him in touch with his former life. Gordon takes it all very philosophically. You will like him, I think, although there is not the slightest suggestion of Adam. He is brisk and decided, and even his voice seems pitched in another key. As soon as he is able to get about, I'll bring him down to call."

The surgeon left soon after. Kitty followed him out, and at the gate she laid her hand detainingly upon his sleeve.

"Tell me," she said, "have you said anything to him about—me?"

He looked down at her tenderly.

"No, Kitty, except to mention the fact that his late employer had a daughter."

"You've not given him the slightest hint of how much I—I cared?"

"Not the slightest."

"Thank you, doctor. Don't, please. You see, from what you tell me, I understand that Mr. Gordon is another person—an absolute stranger to us all. Adam—my Adam, is dead."

The tears gushed from her eyes. She turned and walked slowly back to the cottage.

CHAPTER IX.

Two days later, as Dick, still swathed in bandages, was lying peacefully in the ward, he heard a quick step, and turned his head to see his friend Masterson.

"Well, well, Gordon," said the editor. "I'm mighty glad to see you, if you do look like a mummy. Doctor Brookes has been telling me all about your case, to save you the strain. Upon my word, but you're a wonder—and some tough. By George, old chap, there's a bully story in all this."

"You may write it," answered Dick. "If I can't keep from getting shunted in between the covers of my books to stop there for a year or two, I think I'd better quit. This time, however, I must say I've got no kick. I emerge gracefully at the end of a year to find myself a capitalist and a he-e-ro with a gaudy reputation for heavenly virtue and noble rectitude. But the next time I get lammed over the head, I might turn holdup or pirate or New York alderman. Tell me quick; am I divorced, or amn't I?"

"You am! For the last six months. I was up at the Perkins' about a month ago and found your late wife the most divorced young woman I ever saw."

The eyes between the bandages hardened, and the brows drew down. Masterson's light tone jarred upon Dick, the more so that his own flippant manner had provoked it.

"What were the grounds?" he asked shortly.

"The usual ones, I fancy. The thing was done before a referee and kept quiet. Agatha told me, however, that the decree was granted for incompatibility and failure to support and desertion and intemperate habits, and the usual rot. You can't get a divorce for a cold in the head, you know."

"Anything about brutality and assault with intent to kill?" asked Dick harshly.

"There may have been. Once a woman goes gunning for a divorce, it gets into her blood and drives her crazy. Everybody knows that. Divorces are all the mode these days. Women prefer them to babies. Don't let it bother you. Agatha is an old friend of mine, and I find her charming and esteem her highly, but——"

"Hold on, old chap——"

"I wasn't going to say anything impolite; merely that she belongs to a large class of American women not fashioned for the wives of poor literary folk. She turned me down, you know, before she took you; that is one reason why I have felt so kindly toward you."

"I hate to think that she would treat me like that," said Dick. "But I suppose she thought that I had hit the trail again."

"That's what we all thought. There was some silly talk of your having suicided yourself, but nobody who had known you ever believed that rubbish. There was too much life in you."

Dick was silent for a moment; then he asked:

"How has the book gone?"

"Nothing to brag about. I have about eight hundred dollars for you, and that's pretty nearly all you'll get. It appears that your long suit is not writing, but drama. To think that you should have been the johnny to salve that steamer."

"All things are possible in dodo land. I also built up a reputation for a heavenly virtue that made strong men weep. The doctor's definition for my character was 'lovable.' Nobody ever called me that before, barring one or two misguided fee-males. But it also appears that the pace was too swift. I was petering out when another strenuous whirl woke me up again."

"What are you going to do now?"

"Turn shipbuilder. It appears that I invested my heaven-sent capital accruing from the Spaniel, in a shipyard. But, first, I am going away to rest and recuperate. I'll get my partner to fit me out with some sort of a tub and go South for the winter. The achievements of the past year have left me parlous weak."

They talked for a while longer, when Masterson said that he must be getting

back to town. He departed, telling Dick that he would send him a check for the earnings of "Adam Whittemore" the following day.

Dick's burns healed kindly, thanks to his splendid vigor, restored to him under the tonic of his right mind, and before long he was up and about. His hair had been singed to the scalp, and was short and stubbly; one hand was badly burned across the dorsum, and would always show a disfiguring scar; also the skin on one side of his neck drew uncomfortably tense when he turned his head to the left, and he found himself physically weak and relaxed. But his eyes were clear and blazed with their ancient fire, which had been quite lacking in the dreamy regard of Adam Whittemore.

He had been moved into a private room, and one day the doctor asked if he would like to go that night to call upon the Miller family. Dick cheerfully said that he would. Late in the evening they went down to the cozy cottage which had been for several months the home of Adam Whittemore. Purposely Doctor Brookes held his pace on reaching the gate, curious to see if Dick would show any glimmer of recollection. Seeing that he did not, the doctor stopped, and they retraced their steps to the gate and entered.

Captain Miller himself opened the door, and then stood for a moment, looking searchingly at Dick.

"I can't believe it," he sighed; then added somewhat inconsistently as he shook Dick's hand, "but it's the truth, plain enough. You show it in your eyes. They're not the same." He turned to the surgeon. "The man's awake," said he.

As for Dick, not the faintest memory of the kindly face was he able to muster. He shook the captain's hand warmly, and gave his quick, flashing smile.

"I am the loser, Captain Miller," he said. "Doctor Brookes has told me of the kindness of you and your family while I was wandering in dreamland. You may be sure that I appreciate it."

His strong, crisp voice, so different from the dreamy monotone of Adam Whittemore, was plainly audible in the parlor, where Kitty and her mother were waiting. The girl clasped her hands, and turned so pale that Mrs. Miller was alarmed. But as Dick appeared in the doorway, her rich color returned, and her eyes turned to him with almost passionate eagerness.

As for Dick, he was quite unprepared for the sight of so charming a vision. Even Doctor Brookes, loving her hopelessly as he did, and finding her more beautiful each time, as a lover should, was startled. For Kitty's heart told her that Adam Whittemore was dead. That mysterious personality, so strong and pure and sweet of soul, had passed away, following the mysterious trail of all dream creatures; and, although because she was rich in youth and perfect health, the roses still lingered in her cheeks, there was mourning in her heart. Richard Gordon was a stranger who knew her not, and whom she did not know, and, as her dark-gray eyes rested in that first glance on this stranger, she saw that he was not the Adam whom she had loved with a tenderness that was almost maternal.

But to Mrs. Miller, the change, though evident enough, was less convincing. Practical, warm-hearted matron that she was, Dick was still the Adam whom they had all loved, though he himself might not be conscious of it. His changed appearance she ascribed to the close-cropped hair and the recovery from a mental illness. Her imagination could not accept the fact of his being a different person. They might all be strangers to him perhaps, but he was no stranger to them, and she went to meet him as she would have greeted Adam himself.

"This is a happy day that brings you to us well and strong again, Adam—I mean Mr. Gordon," said she, in her rich, Irish voice. "The ways of Providence are wonderful and terrible, now are they not, Doctor Brookes? To think that Adam—I mean Mr. Gordon—should be right here in this very sittin' room, where he has spent so many evenings, and all of us strangers, like.

It's askin' too much of a body's belief, now is it not? Adam—I don't care, he will always be Adam to me—may not remember us, but we remember him, and he'll always be dear, gentle Adam Whittemore to us, and, if Mr. Richard Gordon is half as fine a man, he will lose nothing by the change," and the warm-hearted Irishwoman gave him a hearty kiss.

Dick rose to the occasion with his characteristic gallantry, then looked at Kitty with his flashing smile, as though by no means unwilling that she should take her cue from her mother. But there was a suggestion of amusement in his eyes which brought a resentful gleam to her own. Naturally he could not appreciate the tragedy of the past weeks, but the girl fiercely resented the usurpation of Adam's earthly tenement by this smiling stranger. She gave him her hand, unable to speak; then drew back in a wild confusion of emotions.

"You've got an awful lot to live up to, Gordon," said Doctor Brookes.

"'Fraid I have," said Dick, taking the chair which Captain Miller offered him. "There's a lot of difference between a book hero and the ordinary commonplace person. However, Adam Whittemore has hit a higher place and accomplished more and served his Maker a lot better than Dick Gordon ever did, and I'll try not to disgrace him."

Kitty took no part in the conversation which followed, and which soon resolved itself into a business talk between her father and Dick.

Captain Miller was delighted at Dick's enthusiasm about the plans for the new yard, and, if the truth is to be told, was more than content with the change of personality. He was quick to discover that where actual ability was concerned that of Adam Whittemore was merely a pale reflection of that possessed by his creator. Dick highly approved of the plans for starting a big plant over on the north shore of the island, and was strongly in favor of going in for the building of yachts.

"People are getting tired of these newfangled racing machines," he said decidedly. "There's a big business ahead in buildin' 'em stanch and able, equipped with motors and light-drafted, for shoal-water work in the South. Let me handle the motor part and hustle around for orders. I'll join the New York and Larchmont and Indian Harbor Yacht Clubs, and, if we can't manage to build up a good business before long, it will be mighty funny."

All this was so different from dreamy Adam Whittemore that the Miller family could scarcely believe their ears.

Dick abandoned his idea of going away, and decided to start right in with his work. He took a strong and immediate liking to the shipbuilder, whom he recognized for a man of ability and experience, and he laid hold of the new project with the enthusiasm which came of a high vitality and the satisfaction of getting back into an active career again after three years of plodding dullness. He realized that Agatha had held him back, and now that she had left him, cruelly and of her own wish, he felt that he could draw a long breath and begin his life anew.

After that first shock of surprise and admiration, he scarcely noticed Kitty, who was talking with Doctor Brookes. Mrs. Miller was listening to the talk between Dick and her husband, and soon came to realize that there was nothing akin between Adam Whittemore and this brisk, decided young man clothed in the semblance of their departed friend. Even physically the difference was wonderfully and widely marked. The short, crisp hair, the curt speech and quick smile, the authoritative expression were as far removed from anything suggesting Adam as night from morning. When finally they said good night, Dick remarked to the captain:

"We will go across some day next week and look around for a good site for the yard. The best way is to go to New York, and I'll get a little runabout car from the garage where I used to work. The chances are the supe will lend me his own. That way we can get over a lot of ground and hunt

out just what we want. Maybe we can find some plant that's already started and make some sort of a dicker to swap off for the one you've got now. Well, good night. I'll be down to the yard to-morrow."

When they had gone, Captain Miller looked at Kitty and his wife. The shipbuilder's face was shining with pleasure.

"Who ever could have possibly believed it!" he exclaimed. "Ain't he a corker? He's got the ability and the push, and seems to know just how to go about it. Adam Whittemore was all right, but this man Gordon is a hummer."

But Kitty sobbed herself to sleep.

As for Dick, he was even more enthusiastic than the shipbuilder. On the way back to the hospital, he expanded joyfully on his new prospects to Doctor Brookes, who was very silent. Finally the surgeon asked in an odd voice:

"And what did you think of Miss Kitty?"

"She's a peach," said Dick heartily. "Don't know as I ever saw a prettier girl. But she struck me as being rather sad and silent. Maybe she's in love," he added reflectively.

"Maybe she is," answered Doctor Brookes.

The following day Dick left the hospital and found quarters in a cottage near the yard. He attempted to start in immediately with his work, only to find that he was not yet physically up to much active effort. This was a new experience, and one that bothered him mightily, but no human body, even so strong a one as his own, could undergo the terrific strains of the past year without severe protest, and Dick was not long in discovering that it took but very little to fatigue him overpoweringly.

He was more than thirty pounds beneath his normal weight. His face was thin and haggard, though the blue eyes shone with their old brightness, and his nervous force often carried him dangerously beyond his strength. At times he felt actually old, and his hair, as it grew out, was silvered over the temples. Doctor Brookes frequently warned him that unless he was careful not to overexert he might expect a dangerous collapse, and, his own feelings proving the truth of this, he made it a point to spare himself.

His former comrades at the yard received him with a demonstration that touched while it embarrassed him. But they quickly discovered that, however well known he might be to them, they were strangers to him, and, much marveling at the change, the relations soon adapted themselves.

Naturally he was often at the Millers' house, but at these times Kitty was usually absent. The girl could not endure this new personality who was wont to make such flippant references to Adam Whittemore. She found herself almost hating him.

Dick started several times to write to Agatha, but the letter was difficult, and he finally decided that, since she had voluntary broken off their relations, he would make no effort to get in touch with her.

Then, one day when he was in New York on the business of the yard, while crossing Twenty-third Street, he came suddenly upon her—face to face.

Agatha was about to enter a shop and had just stepped from an electric brougham, her father's. She was stylishly dressed in a blue, tailor-made suit, with a hat trimmed with ostrich feathers and a boa of Siberian sables. Dick, at his first glance, thought that he had never seen her look more lovely. She appeared to have gained in weight, and her color showed the rich glow of perfect health.

Agatha saw him, and stopped short in the middle of the sidewalk. Her eyes opened very wide, and the color faded in her cheeks.

"Dick!" she gasped.

Dick's heart gave one tremendous leap, then composed itself.

"How do you do, Agatha," he said, and bowed.

Agatha hesitated, then offered him her gloved hand. Her eyes hardened a trifle as they gave him a quick, assaying glance. She noted the thin cheeks

and trim, straight figure, which had lost all of the superabundant flesh that the inactive life at Whitesands had begun to accumulate. Also she observed the clear complexion and eyes of bright, flashing blue. Her glance passed to his costume, as if to judge of his estate.

Dick's clothes were new and well-fitting, but he was always a trifle negligent in their care, and, while quite good enough to knock about in, they lacked the elegance to which she was accustomed in her men associates. Nevertheless at sight of her former husband, Agatha was conscious of a sudden stab of the early emotions which she had felt before what she was pleased to regard as her "disillusionment."

"Dick," she said, "where have you been all of this time?"

There was reproach in her voice and a note of pain. Dick was conscious of a sudden tenderness. He had steeled himself against just such a chance encounter; but, like a flash, his mind went back to their early and deliriously happy days. These had been short, but nevertheless they had existed. He knew that he no longer loved her, but he was unable to forget.

"I have been away," he answered. "I am very glad to see you looking so well, Agatha."

The color returned to her face in a deep flush. Agatha, too, had decided on her line of conduct toward Dick, should chance ever fling them together, either alone or in the presence of other people. In the former instance, she had determined to bow and pass him by. But the old emotions awakened at the sight of him were stronger than she; also, there was much curiosity.

"Oh, Dick," she said, "do you think that it was kind to disappear in that mysterious way? I did not know whether you were living or dead."

"What difference did it make?" Dick replied. "And it simplified the divorce."

Agatha started to speak, then checked herself.

"We mustn't stand here and talk," she said. "There is a great deal I want to say to you. Are you free for an hour? I have the brougham. Can you drive with me for an hour?"

"Yes, if you like. But it's not very discreet, is it?"

"I'll risk it for this once. The driver and footman are new men. Come!" She led the way to the brougham.

"Drive around the park," Agatha directed the footman at the door. "Go slowly."

She stepped into the brougham, and Dick got in beside her.

"Oh, Dick!" said Agatha, as they started. "You have made me so unhappy."

"I am very sorry," said Dick.

"Was it necessary to subject me to this cruel anxiety?" she asked. "We did not know what had become of you. Could you not have sent me at least a line to say that you were still alive?"

"When I got your letter saying that you wanted a divorce," Dick answered, "I was going to write, at first. But, on thinking it over, it seemed to me that you had severed all diplomatic relations in setting that woman to spy on me. I had been working pretty hard to make good, and thought that I had managed it. Masterson thought so, too. I had pushed my pen nine or ten hours a day for about three months, and hadn't touched a drop of liquor. Then I got your letter. After that, I considered all obligations off."

"And what did you do then?"

"That same night I took a walk down the beach. It was a bad night, and I stopped for a drink in a fisherman's joint over on the bay shore. There I had too much to drink and got into a fight. The next thing I knew was when I came to in a hospital ward."

Agatha's trim body stiffened.

"I was afraid that there might have been something of that sort," she said. "And what did you do after that?"

"When I was well enough to go out, I got a job managing the installation of motors in a shipyard. I have been working there ever since."

For a moment Agatha was silent. Then she said slowly:

"I am very glad to know this. It quite justifies my own behavior. There

have been moments when I have felt that perhaps I acted too hastily, and that I might not have entirely fulfilled my duty as your wife, for, after all, marriage is a very sacred thing."

"You need not have any such scruples," said Dick. "You were quite justified in acting as you did."

"I am glad you look at it so reasonably, Dick. You see, Mrs. Reed told me——"

"Mrs. Reed is a liar."

"Your shipyard has not improved your manners, Dick."

"It is to swear. The idea of your setting a spy on me! After you went away, she kept pestering me to go to see her, and when I declined, being too busy, she got cross and lied about me to you. And you asked nothing better than to believe her."

Agatha's face hardened.

"Do try to be a gentleman, Dick. You have never spoken to me like this before."

"Perhaps if I had, we might have got on better."

"You are very bitter, Dick." She stole a sidelong glance at him. Dick's lean face had a certain rigidity which was new to her. Agatha found it more attractive than his old expression of easy-going good nature. She was one of those women who enjoy, while they resist, being ruled. Dick's curt tone stirred her deeply.

"At any rate," she said, "you will not deny that you had a disreputable woman as housekeeper."

"I never knew it at the time. Diana left, and I had to have somebody, and it seemed to me that some local woman would be more apt to stay. I was too busy to go servant hunting, so I put an ad. in the Whitesands paper, and took the first person that asked for the billet. Don't believe I'd know her if I saw her on the street. Don't be a fool, Agatha; you know well enough that there was nothing of that sort. I was trying with all my might to get you back."

Agatha stole a look at him. Dick's physical attractiveness had always made a powerful appeal to her, and she found him at this moment more fascinating than ever before. His stern mood became him, and so did his leanness, while his clear skin and eyes told their own tale of clean living. He looked much older, she thought, and noticed with a little pang that the crisp, wavy hair over his ears was no longer tawny, but a silvery white.

"What are you doing now?" she asked.

"I'm still at the shipyard. Came in to-day to look at a new marine motor."

"Are you well paid?"

"Not so well as I hope to be a little later.'

"But why don't you stick to your writing? I read 'Adam Whittemore,' and thought it very good. That's just the trouble with you, Dick; no sooner do you begin to accomplish something than off you go at an angle."

"Like chucking a good job with the motor-car concern to pack soap," said Dick curtly.

"That was my fault, I know——"

"No, it wasn't. It was my own. I was the one to blame from the very start. Instead of asserting myself from the beginning, I let you have your own way, not only about yourself, but about me. I should have fetched you up with a round turn, my dear, when you started in to run the whole show. I realize the mistake I made, and you bet I won't make it the next time."

Agatha shot him a startled look.

"The next time," she said a little faintly. "Dick, are you thinking of marrying again?"

"I may. My sort isn't made to live alone, and there's not much of the libertine about me."

"Dick! Don't be indelicate." Agatha's heart was beating wildly. For some reason the thought of Dick's remarrying had never entered her head. He was a rover, she thought; a natural-born adventurer, and, once free, she had accepted it as a matter of course that he would return to his old, vagabond life. The idea of Dick's marrying again was startling and repellent. She had quite accepted the idea that, although free herself to reconstruct

her life as seemed good to her, Dick must always remain to a large measure her own, though rejected, property.

"Then you never really cared for me," she said half questioningly.

Dick turned to her a stony face.

"When you left me," he said, "I felt as if the bottom had dropped out of my universe. I locked the door of your room, and put away the key. The sight of anything associated with you sent a pain through me that was almost physical. The little that I managed to eat was served on the porch, or in my study. If it hadn't been for my work, I would not have stopped a moment in the house. But I would not let myself feel that you had gone for good, and managed to persuade myself that the separation was only temporary. Then, when you wrote me to say that you wanted a divorce, something inside me seemed to freeze up. I understood then the sort of cruel, selfish woman that you were."

Agatha leaned back against the cushions, her heart beating wildly. Dick's nearness had stirred old memories, awakened emotions sweet and demoralizing. No other man had ever stirred her as he had done, and more than once she had felt despairingly that no other man ever could. For some months her "grass widowhood" had palled upon her, for, although selfish and fond of luxury, she was not a superficial woman.

Also, she found a new and different Dick in the terse, masterful person at her side. He was more like the man to whom she had lost her heart while learning to drive the new, high-powered car which her father had bought. Then he had been terse and authoritative, rebuking errors and bestowing short words of praise in a manner which had thrilled her. He thrilled her now, and she realized how different all might have been had he been permitted to follow his own career instead of being interfered with, to be ultimately reduced to the not overglorious position of "Agatha Perkins' husband." The thought that he might soon belong to another woman was intolerable.

"I hate to think of a man of your abilities working in a shipyard, Dick," she said a little faintly.

"Do you?" His tone was almost brutal. "What difference does it make? I am no longer your husband."

Agatha leaned toward him. Her face was flushed and her eyes misty.

"Do you wish that you were?" she asked.

Dick turned to her slowly. His face was slightly pale.

"Before I answer that," he said, "tell me something. Where did you get your divorce? In what State?"

"In New York."

"In New York? A divorce is given in New York, I believe, only on one ground——"

Agatha lost her head. She had never, in her married life, struck against the steel which underlay her husband's easy good nature. It was a new quality, and it excited her strangely.

"But, Dick, I never really believed it, of course——"

"Indeed! And, although you never really believed it, you did not object to attacking my character for your own selfish benefit. In that case, I can truthfully answer, 'No, I do not wish that I were your husband?' Do you?"

Agatha drew back as though she had been struck.

"Not unless you do," she murmured.

Dick had expected anger, bitterness, resentment. Something in her subdued tone struck a tender chord. He hesitated for a moment, then said slowly:

"After all, it was my own fault. If you are sorry for what you have done, Agatha, I am quite willing to go back to the old life. But listen to me! Would you be willing to remarry me and live with me where I am now living, in a little cottage near the shipyard, at Bayshore, Long Island, and have me come in to lunch with my hands grimy and nails black——"

"Oh, Dick——"

"——and help with the cooking and housework—for I tell you plainly I would insist upon your being entirely dependent on me for all that you had. Not a cent from your father, after the

turn he has played me. You would have to give up your motors and yachts and liveried servants for some time, and your neighbors would be hard-working folk——"

"Dick!" Agatha's voice was faint.

"You might even have to make your own clothes for a while. But, for my part, I would promise to work hard to get on and never to touch a drop of liquor. But I *would* love, in time, to see a tow-headed youngster swinging on the front gate——"

"Dick! Please don't be indelicate again——"

"Well, what do you think? It is only for you to say the word."

Agatha bit her lips. She had edged away a trifle. Presently she said, in a hard voice:

"I am afraid that it is better as it is. I was never intended for such a life."

They were both silent. Presently Agatha said:

"Where shall I leave you, Dick?"

CHAPTER X.

Dick returned to Bayshore in a deeply thoughtful frame of mind.

"The Agathas of this world are not intended for the Dicks thereof," he said to himself. "I wonder if they are intended for any other men?"

And he felt inclined to doubt it, deciding that they were meant only for themselves.

On arriving, he went to the Millers' cottage, judging from the hour that the captain would have left the yard. He surprised Kitty, who was on the porch, regaling two shock-headed youngsters with bread and jam.

She colored vividly as he came up the steps; then, in answer to his question, told him that her father had not come home.

"You might meet him if you were to walk down toward the yard," she suggested.

"If you don't mind," said Dick, "I will wait for him here. I have been on my feet all day and am tired."

Kitty, glancing at his face, saw that his words were true. Dick was pale and haggard. She offered him a chair, into which he sank heavily.

"Who belongs to the kiddies?" he asked.

"They live down the street. Their mother is a typewriter, and her husband a machinist. I sometimes look after them when their servant has to go out."

Dick eyed the children with interest. He was fond of babies, otherwise he could never have endured the atmosphere of Whitesands.

"How old are they?" he asked.

"Guess."

"Oh—how do you tell? Here, matey." He reached a long arm for the elder, a solemn-eyed infant, whose sole and interesting object in life appeared to be the absorption of bread and jam. The baby gave Dick a critical look, and, judging that he had no designs upon his provender, suffered himself to be hauled upon the man's knee.

"Show me your toofs," said Dick. The youngster opened his mouth, revealing a pink interior and much bread and jam, also a row of even little pearls.

"About five, I reckon," said Dick.

"Five!" said Kitty, with contempt. "How old are you, Bobby?"

Mouth too full for utterance. A big swallow that made him blink. Then:

"Free," said Bobby, and took another bite.

"He's a good specimen for three," said Dick. He set the baby down, absently wiping his sticky fingers on the shock head. "He's got a whole lot of teeth."

The younger babe sat down, not carefully, but with an abruptness which took no account of the necessity of bending at the knees. The bread and jam flew from the chubby fist and landed face downward. Dick wondered why it always landed that way. Kitty rescued the delicacy, dispensed with it, and provided fresh.

Kitty wished fervently that her father would come. Dick's very presence distressed her. As she glanced at him covertly, she saw that his eyes were

fastened upon the children, and the girl's heart raced off furiously, for Dick's face held at this moment the dreamy, abstracted look of Adam Whittemore. It was almost more than she could endure.

Dick's slow gaze turned to Kitty. It occurred to him that she was unusually lovely, with a charm that was sweetly comforting and maternal. Kitty felt his eyes upon her. Their slow scrutiny became unendurable.

"Will you watch the children for a moment?" she asked in a breathless voice. "I want to see about something in the kitchen."

"Certainly," said Dick, "but don't stop long. They might start to howl, or something."

Kitty slipped through the door, and Dick's eyes followed the sweetly rounded figure.

"If ever I marry again," he thought, "it will be a girl like that."

The winter came. Dick and Captain Miller had entered into negotiations for the purchase of a piece of ground on the north shore of Long Island, which in time they secured, when the work of establishing the new plant went steadily ahead. The spring found them fairly well established, but Captain Miller's Yankee foresight emphasized the old sailor maxim: "Never let go one hand until you get a good grip with t'other." So he decided to continue his business at the old place while building up a new one across the island.

Fortune favored him, as she is apt to favor those who combine their worship with honest industry. The winter was an unusually cold one, freezing the water over the oyster beds of Long Island Sound so as to make dredging impossible during the theatrical season, whereby the Chesapeake oystermen reaped a golden harvest. The owners of the faithful *Opossum* ordered not two new boats, built on similar plans, but three.

Then a rich admirer of Dick, with whom he had talked in the model room of the New York Yacht Club, gave him an order for an auxiliary yawl, designed for hunting and fishing cruises in the South. This vessel was the first to be laid down in the new yard. Dick bought for a song the ruin of a motor car, rebuilt the engine, and he and Captain Miller were constantly back and forth across the island.

The summer also brought its harvest. Building and repair work came in beyond their fondest expectations. "Low prices, sound work, and straight dealing," was their motto. When some yachting skipper turned orders their way, he got his due commission, but with the understanding that it was to come out of the yard, not from the owner in the form of falsified bills. And Dick, who knew all of the ins and outs of motor graft, was amazed to find how little of this obtained in the yachting world.

Altering Rousseau's epigram, he one day remarked to Captain Miller: "The more I see of landlubbers, the more I admire seafaring men."

"Fly" skippers of the chauffeur class sometimes took themselves, disgruntled, and their work, to other yards. Captains with thick accents and no small talk, who would have been insulted at being regarded as other than good Americans and able mariners, asked only to serve the best interests of their owners, and, if there was anything coming from the yard in the shape of a gratuity, they took it gratefully and with no loss of self-respect.

And Kitty? She had learned to like and admire Dick, and no longer felt ill at ease in his company. She and her mother agreed that he was a fine fellow, although possessing good traits of his own which were quite apart from those of Adam Whittemore.

As for Captain Miller, he soon came to regard Dick almost as a son, admiring his talents, but exercising over him the same restraining influence as might an old hound on a promising pup given to darting off on hot cross trails, only to return to the true one, impressed by the steadiness of the old dog. The two made an admirable team for effective results. Dick brought in much new business, and the captain held fast to it.

Dick, for his part, understood thor-

oughly that at last he had found his proper trade. But as the months passed, he was learning also something else, and that was the truth of the apostle's statement when he said that it is not good for man to live alone. And every time that he found himself in the propinquity of Kitty, the force of this conviction became augmented.

He had never been much of a woman's man; his life had been too crowded with other interests. Women had smiled at him in passing, and often he had smiled back, but he had never lent himself to the pursuit of petticoats.

No hint of Kitty's love for Adam Whittemore had ever been vouchsafed him. Quite on the contrary, Kitty's early avoidance of his society had not escaped him, and he had come to the conclusion that in his other personality he must have displeased her in some way. Or, if he had not actually displeased her, he thought it probable that Adam's presence as a member of the household had been distasteful. He had learned that Miss Kitty held herself very high, as indeed she might, inheriting as she did good blood from both sides of the family, for her mother was closely related to Irish nobility, and her father came of good old New England stock.

Agatha he had put entirely from his mind and heart. But as the months passed he was first surprised, then startled, to find that Kitty was fast gaining ascendency of both.

"Why not?" he said to himself one night, after an evening spent in the Millers' home, when Kitty had sung some sweet old love songs. "She is a lovely girl, warm-hearted, and true as steel. Her father is my business partner, and all of our interests lie together. I want a hearthstone of my own and a family, and all of those sweet, simple things which every man is entitled to. And I believe that I could make her happy. True, I am not head over heels in love, as I was with Agatha, but no doubt that only comes once in a man's life, and certainly it did not bring much happiness to either, in our case. Kitty has a sweet nature, a bright, well-equipped mind, and she is the loveliest girl in her rich, lavish way that I ever saw. Why not?"

And so it befell that one summer's day when the two were out on the Sound trying a new little racing knockabout, a product of the new yard, Dick told her what was in his heart.

The breeze had dropped light, and the boat was drifting gently on a breeze from the southwest, sweet with the mingled odors of kelp and the soft aroma from the pine woods which grew to the brink of the high sand cliffs.

Dick, in ducks and shirt waist, held the tiller. Wholesome work in the open air had returned to him his splendid strength in full measure, and his clear, tanned skin and flashing blue eyes told of perfect health. Kitty, in white serge and a little Panama hat, was leaning back against some cushions watching a distant regatta on the Connecticut shore. Although her eyes were following the evolutions of the snowy little sails, her thoughts were far away.

It was her first sail with Dick alone, for the Millers had only that week changed their residence from Bayshore to the vicinity of the new yard. Kitty, her eyes now on Dick, now on the distant land, had been thinking of her last sail with Adam Whittemore, and there was an ache deep within her heart. She was thinking also of Doctor Brookes, who only two nights before had renewed his fervent plea that she should make him the happiest man in all the world by becoming his wife, and this time Kitty had not refused. She had asked for a week in which to give her answer.

Dick could scarcely have chosen a more unpropitious time in which to advance his own appeal. He felt a sense of distance between them, but he was not a subtle suitor, and his methods had always been simple and direct. Moreover, Kitty was very close in body, if not in spirit, and her girlish loveliness in that hour had stirred him more deeply than he could have believed possible. She had no slightest hint of what was in the mind of her companion, for Dick's manner toward

her had been always one of gentle courtesy and removed from personalities.

Once having separated him, in her thoughts, from all association with Adam Whittemore, she had come to be fond of him for his own charming individuality, though often, it must be admitted, she had been deeply moved at some transient suggestion of the sweet, pure, lofty character of the one whom she had so hopelessly adored. For the girl's nature was lifted far above the possibility of an attraction fundamentally physical. She had gloried in Adam's almost godlike beauty, but it had been the pure, suffering soul which she had loved.

She was thinking of him now, though quite apart from her companion, when Dick's resonant voice brought her back to the present.

"Kitty," said he, "there is something which I want to tell you. May I speak?"

Kitty turned swiftly, and her eyes went questioningly to his. Something which she saw there startled her. The rich color flooded her face, then faded, leaving it pale.

"What, Mr. Gordon? Oh, no—no—not *that!*"

Dick smiled.

"Yes, Kitty," he said very gently. "Don't be startled. I only want to tell you a little story, and the story ends with a question. You need not answer it now, if you find that you would rather not."

Kitty clasped her hands, and looked at him wildly. She could not speak. There seemed something terrible, something almost profane in the idea that this simulacrum of the one she had so loved now meant to tell her of a love of his own—for there was no mistaking the glow in the blue eyes looking so steadily into hers.

She could not speak, nor was there the opportunity, for, after the slight pause, Dick's steady voice continued gently:

"Kitty, I don't know how much you have ever heard about my life before you knew me while in that strange, hypnotized, sleep-walking state when I thought that I was Adam Whittemore, the Yankee sailor. Before that I was much as I am now, though many years younger, as it seems to me. I had always been a rover and adventurer, but my life was clean, and there are no old scores to be still paid off. I was a sailor for a good many years. Then I worked up to a good position in a motor-car concern, and while there I met and married a Miss Agatha Perkins.

"It was a quick, impetuous affair; the sort of violent attraction that very young people might have for each other and not backed by any real depth of feeling, I am afraid. Looking back, I can see that it was foredoomed to failure. The actual break came in three years, due to my own fault in taking too much for granted and selfishly living my own life without any reference to her ambitions. I'm ashamed to say that for three years we lived entirely on my wife's small income. I can't see how I ever could have permitted it, but I did."

He paused, looking at Kitty with a faint smile.

"Did you love her?" asked Kitty, in a low voice.

"I can hardly say. I know that I was terribly broken up when she left me, and I worked very hard to bring back her lost faith in me. But when I realized how little she cared for me, all of the old affection died a violent death. She divorced me without knowing whether I was living or dead and on charges which she knew were false. Then I met with my accident, and wandered about for a year as poor, ignorant, half-witted Adam Whittemore——"

"Don't speak of him like that!" Kitty interrupted, almost fiercely. "Adam Whittemore was pure gold."

Dick looked at her in puzzled surprise, unable to understand the passion in her voice.

"Was he? I'm glad of it—but he wasn't *real.*"

Kitty turned away her head.

"No," she answered, in so faint a

voice that Dick could scarcely hear. "He wasn't real."

"Whatever he may have been, or done," said Dick, "I am, of course, responsible for him. But I hope that you will not think of me, Kitty, as being limited to the capabilities of this ignorant and brutal—— Why, what's the matter?"

His voice rose in a quick note of startled inquiry. For Kitty had turned upon him suddenly with a pale, furious face and gray eyes almost black with passion.

"How dare you!" she cried, in a low, gurgling voice. "You, of all people, to cast a slur at Adam! Do you realize what Adam has done for you? Did you ever, in the whole of the useless life that you have sometimes told us about, accomplish as much, altogether, as Adam did in his one short year? Are you able to draw to you by a sweet and beautiful soul every single person with whom you come in contact? Did you ever give free-handedly and with utter unselfishness your whole substance to any one who needed it, without thought of gain or profit or reward? Were people ever better and nobler from the mere contact with your spotless soul?"

"Kitty!" Dick stared at her, aghast.

The girl's face was white, and her eyes like coals. Her hands were tightly clasped, and she swayed toward him as she spoke.

"Who gave you the right to call me Kitty? Adam never called me that, though he was a dearly loved member of our family. And to think that you, in your self-satisfied conceit, should dare to apologize for Adam!"

"But, Kitty, such as Adam was, was he not *myself?* Conscious or unconscious, real or ideal, he was Richard Gordon, when all is said."

"He was never Richard Gordon. He was a stray soul, caught up in your body in some mysterious way, and, when you came to yourself again, Adam went back to heaven, where no doubt he came from."

"But he was my own thought—my hero——"

"He was more *mine,*" cried Kitty, with a choking sob, and suddenly Dick understood.

He leaned toward her, his eyes aglow. He had never dreamed that this sweet, quiet girl could contain such a passion as that of which he had just received the evidence. Heretofore he had found her almost shy, as he thought, retiring, and, when with him, self-obliterative. The glimpse he had just received of her inner nature stirred and excited him. It was as though the gates of a convent had opened to show a Court of Love holding session within its peaceful, ivy-covered walls. The treasures of her deeper nature amazed and startled him, for with all of his materialism Dick had a powerful imagination, and he could not help but see the wealth of love which the girl before him had held and cherished for his creature, Adam Whittemore.

"Ah!" said Dick softly. "You loved him. I never thought of that. You loved him, Kitty?"

"I adored him," she answered, and burst into tears.

Dick leaned back against the tiller, strangely moved; stirred to the depths of his nature. Kitty wept silently, but with heartbreaking abandon. Dick held his peace. He could not adjust the situation, could not determine any line of behavior. Not having known Adam Whittemore, the Real, he was unable to reconcile this hopeless passion with her treatment of himself. For, after all, was not Adam Whittemore but a part of himself, the creature of his brain? He was at least Adam's heritor, and he could not understand why this rich heritage should not fall to his portion as the other material one.

Her passionate grief roused him to action. For the first time he felt the real and actual want of her, as he thought, the love of her. If he, as Adam Whittemore, was the cause of this broken heart, then would he, as Dick Gordon, repair it. He leaned toward her.

"Kitty," he said, "will you not listen to me, dear? There is a lot more which I wanted to tell you, but that can wait. I love you, Kitty. *I love you.*"

Kitty rose suddenly and dashed away her tears.

"*You* love me?" she cried. "What do *you* know about love? How do you dare talk to me of love when you see that my heart is broken for Adam—who is dead?"

"But *I* am Adam!"

"You are not. Adam was only Adam, and no one else. What if the thought of him *did* come into your brain, so that you were able to write him down, and afterward act his part? Did that pure soul have its beginning and end in your little brain? Never. It came from far beyond, and you were no more than the instrument, like a violin which voices the soul of the player. Adam was a god. You are nothing but a man, and none too marvelous a man, from your own account. You say that you love me. Could you ever love as I have loved Adam? Loved until your very heart felt as though it had melted into flame and was pouring out in a great glorious flood and drawing your life in the current after it? Could you love so that you must fling yourself down on the cold stones before the Virgin and pray that your very soul might fade out into the same Nothingness into which the one you loved was vanishing? Could you love like that, Mr. Richard Gordon? It was wicked. It was blasphemous. I am a Catholic, and I know that such love should be offered only to God. But Adam was a god to me—— Oh, *Adam! Adam! Adam!*"

Dick drew back, awed before the immensity of her grief. Vaguely he felt that here was something far beyond him; something which he could not hope to comprehend.

Kitty sobbed on. Presently Dick leaned over and touched her lightly on the shoulder. She shrank away.

"Kitty," he said, "I am sorry. I did not understand."

CHAPTER XI.

For three days Dick had been at sea, trying out the big auxiliary yawl *Purple Heather,* the latest achievement of the yard. He arrived home at midnight, dropped anchor in the basin, and remained aboard to sleep.

The steward brought him the morning paper with his coffee. It was the first newspaper that Dick had seen since he left, and he opened it carelessly and glanced at the headlines, then sat up suddenly in his chair, staring with all his eyes.

DEATH OF MILLIONAIRE DISCLOSES THEFT.

Ezekiel P. Perkins, Retired Soap Manufacturer, an Embezzler of Company's Funds.

With knit brows and a pale face, Dick read the article. Agatha's father, it appeared, had died the day of Dick's starting on his cruise. His sudden demise from heart disease had brought to light the fact that he had feloniously embezzled the funds of the company to a point which placed it on the verge of bankruptcy.

It was the old story. Perkins had retained his administration of the concern after retiring from active business, and had misappropriated funds for the purposes of stock gambling. A sharp financial crisis and his untimely death had resulted in the disclosure of his dishonesty. Had he lived, he might have avoided the lee shore. As it was, he had left ruin in his wake.

Dick read the account twice through, then hastily swallowed his coffee, and went ashore. He found the Miller family at breakfast, and, after exchanging greetings, told of what he had just learned.

"He died at his country place, which is over on the Connecticut side. I am going to take the launch and go over to see if there is anything that I can do."

Captain Miller regarded him thoughtfully.

"Of course you must act accordin' to your own lights, Dick," he said, "but, after all, you've no more to do with it than if you was some stranger."

Dick shook his head. "This man's daughter was my wife," he answered slowly. "Since I have no other ties to prevent, I think that I should do what I

can to help. There are only the two women, and Mrs. Perkins is an invalid."

He went down to the yard, and, detailing one of the men to accompany him, set out across the Sound. The Perkins country home was a large estate, which ran down to the shore. A small steam yacht, the property of the deceased, was lying to her moorings off the beach. Dick landed in the little cove where there was a snug boathouse. Nobody was about when he stepped ashore, and hurried up the winding path to the house.

An atmosphere of calamity hung heavy on the place. Some gardeners were pottering aimlessly about, but Dick saw nobody familiar to him until he reached the house, where the door was opened by the butler, an old friend. The man's troubled face cleared at sight of Dick.

"Mrs. Gordon saw you crossing the lawn, sir," he said. "She is in her boudoir, and wishes you to go right up, sir."

Dick nodded and walked to the stairs. At the top of the staircase he passed down the darkened corridor, where he found a maidservant.

"Mrs. Gordon," said Dick, for Agatha had not resumed her maiden name.

The maid opened the door and Dick entered. Agatha was standing by the window. She was in black; not mourning, but a simple tailor suit.

The maid closed the door softly. Dick stepped across the room and took the two hands which Agatha extended to him. He did not kiss her, but the pressure of his grasp was warm and comforting.

"I knew that you would come, Dick," she said.

"I would have come sooner, my dear," he answered, "but I have been at sea for the last three days, trying out a new vessel. I only got back last night, and I first learned of your sorrow this morning."

"The funeral was yesterday," said Agatha.

"How is your mother?"

"She is prostrated. I doubt if she will survive it, Dick. You know she was not strong. Perhaps it would be better for her if she did not."

Agatha dropped into a chair and pressed her hands to her temples. Dick saw that her face was very pale and her eyes dark-ringed. But her mouth was firm, and her manner quiet and composed.

"I am so sorry for you, dear," said Dick.

"I know it, Dick. So far, I have been rather stunned—and there has been so much to do."

"Who has helped you?"

"Uncle John is here. He has been splendid." She gave him a steady look. "Kindness has come from the least expected sources—and the ones from whom we might have looked for it have—written."

Dick vaguely felt himself to be in the presence of a strange, new Agatha. He had expected to find frantic grief and despair; wild and passionate lamentation; crushed and helpless bewilderment. He knew that she had been devoted to her father, who had always been a kind and devoted parent. Yet her face, though showing traces of the deepest grief, contained a strength and resolution that amazed him. He leaned over and laid his hand on hers, himself too moved to speak.

"So far," said Agatha, "I have been scarcely able to realize what has happened. Beside our grief at father's death, we are finished, Dick; crushed, annihilated, blotted out under the hand of Fate. And yet I do not feel any personal shame or disgrace. Father was not a dishonest man. He was kind and indulgent and generous. I can't understand what led him to take this money. The only explanation to my mind is that he had come to believe that the business and everything connected with it was his, to do with as he saw fit. He used the money as he wished, and then Death tricked him."

Dick's wonder increased. He realized that he had never known Agatha; never guessed at the bigger qualities of soul which lay beneath the selfish, petulant exterior.

"It is a comfort to have you here, Dick," she said. "I have had such a lot to plan and arrange, and I do not know much about business. A great deal of father's property was in mother's name and mine, and I have been arranging for the transfer of all of this to the creditors."

"Agatha—do you mean that you are going to beggar yourself absolutely?"

She gave him a steady look.

"Absolutely, Dick. Mother is very strict where money is concerned. So was father, but it sometimes seems as though finance actually turns a man's brain. I must inherit a good bit of Yankee scruple myself. I love money, Dick, and all that it can do. I love luxury and power and all of that, and I have a horror of poverty that is almost a physical fear. But I am not altogether a coward, and I have pride and a good old New England conscience. Mother never had a cent of her own. Everything came from father, and everything is going back to the source from which it came. Our lawyers were just here. They implored us to hold back enough for our actual, physical wants, but when they found me determined"—she smiled faintly—"well, it was almost worth it, Dick. You see, there is no half measure; either one is honest, or one is not. Mother and I are honest."

"But—it will leave you destitute!"

"We realize that."

"But what can you do, Agatha?"

"I don't know. I will have to think of that later. I am no coward, Dick."

He looked at her with shining eyes. There was no trace of the heroic in her quiet manner; no exaltation nor attempt to pose. There was merely a quiet determination such as Dick had never dreamed that she possessed. It stirred him to the depths.

He drew up a chair, and seated himself beside her. Agatha's clear eyes turned to him inquiringly, and at something which she saw in his face a sudden flush rose to her cheeks.

"Agatha," he said gently, "I want to tell you something. Do you remember our talk that day when we last met?"

"Yes, Dick."

"You thought that I was a poor mechanic in a shipyard——"

"No, I didn't, Dick," she interrupted. "Masterson had already told me your whole wonderful story. I knew of how you had reeceived that injury to your brain and taken the character of Adam Whittemore, and of your change of fortune, and all the rest. Masterson came out here the day after he went to see you in the hospital, and told me everything."

Dick's jaw dropped. He stared at her wildly.

"But if you knew that," he cried, "why did you——"

"Why did I not go back to you? Marry you over again? Simply because I saw that you were putting me to a test, Dick. I knew what was in your mind, and I would not lend myself to playing a part; to pretending that I would return to you as a poor shipyard laborer, when I knew all the time that you were a part owner in a splendid business."

"But why didn't you tell me that you knew?"

"Pride, Dick. I did not care to have you think that I would leave you in poverty only to come running back again in plenty."

"But that was practically what you said when you left me."

"I hadn't divorced you, then. Afterward I was ashamed of what I had done. Besides, I saw that you no longer loved me."

For several moments Dick was silent. Presently he said, in a low voice:

"Agatha, will you come back to me now? Will you marry me again?"

Her face grew white.

"No, Dick."

"Why not? Pride again?"

Agatha rose to her feet and walked to the window. For several minutes she stood looking out, her back turned to Dick and her graceful figure silhouetted against the light.

Dick stepped to her side.

"Then, why, Agatha?" he repeated.

Agatha turned and looked deeply into his eyes.

"There is no longer any pride, Dick. What right have I to pride? I have never loved any man but you, and never will. But love is no longer for me. That day in New York I saw plainly that you had ceased to love me. Some of the old tenderness was left, but if you had really loved me you would not have tried to put me to a test. Besides, you drew away when my shoulder touched yours. If you had really wanted me, I would have felt it, and flung myself into your arms, wild with joy. But now it is too late, Dick. You can't 'rekindle the ashes of a dead love.'"

Dick lifted her hand to his lips.

"Perhaps so, my dear," he said softly, "but it is always possible to light the fires of a new one."

"On the same altar? No, Dick. It is very dear and sweet of you to come here now, and to offer your sympathy and help. You were always kind. But I know the spirit which prompted you——"

"Yes, dear," Dick interrupted. "The spirit that prompted me was the old tenderness. But the spirit which prompts me now is something else. Until a few minutes ago, dear, I never knew the real Agatha. But now I have seen her—and I love her dearly and want her for my wife."

His arm encircled her, drawing her close to him.

"Perhaps, too, you never knew the real Dick, sweetheart," he said. "Will you trust yourself in his keeping again?"

Agatha's lithe body turned in his clasp. The rich color flamed into her cheeks, and the tears gushed from her eyes.

"Dick—Dick, my own, darling husband. Do you really love me still?"

She dropped her hands on his chest, pushed herself slightly back, and looked earnestly into his eyes.

"Ah—you do, you *do!*" she cried, and her arms slipped up to encircle his neck as she drew his face to hers.

It was with a joyous heart that Dick recrossed the Sound; a singing heart to which the throb of the motor beat joyous accompaniment.

On landing, he went directly to the Millers' house, where the only person whom he found was Doctor Brookes, who told him that he was waiting for a few words with Captain Miller. To the surgeon who had so befriended him, Dick told all that had occurred.

"Life," said Dick, with no very striking originality, "is full of wonder. A couple of months ago I asked Kitty to marry me. She refused, almost in anger, finding me so far below the level of Adam Whittemore. Now, I understand why this was so ordained."

The doctor smiled.

"This morning," he said, "I held distinctly different views on the same subject. But no doubt we were both right. An all-wise Providence does not need to limit itself to a single reason."

Dick stared. "What do you mean?" he asked.

"Kitty has just promised to marry me," said Doctor Brookes. "I am now waiting to speak to her father. And the best of all is that she tells me that in time she thinks that she may learn to love me almost as dearly as she did our poor, departed friend, Adam Whittemore."

ABSOLUTELY IMPARTIAL

THOMAS JACKSON STONE is the colored janitor of a small office building in Chicago. One evening, just before the baseball series for the world's championship began, he saw two white men in the building have a fierce fist fight as the result of an argument over which team would win.

The next morning somebody asked him his opinion on the two teams.

"I ain' got no 'pinion," he said emphatically. "On dat queshun I'se neuter."

Mrs. Sweeny: Cheer Leader

By Charles R. Barnes

Author of "Mrs. Sweeny's Speech," "Mr. Weiner, Honest Man," Etc.

Baseball games, according to Mrs. Sweeny, are liable to give you "ragtime breath." You will believe it when you read this alarming episode in the good lady's career. No wonder she says: "Never again!"

ONE Saturday afternoon the Boarder announced that he was going to the ball game. Mrs. Sweeny, who was sewing, sat bolt upright and exclaimed:

"Gosh! them ball games!"

The Boarder smiled and continued:

"I'd like to have you go with me. Lots of women go these days; it's quite fashionable."

But Mrs. Sweeny was not impressed. She put aside her work, and seriously regarded her roomer for a moment. Then she asked:

"Do you have to go right now? Ain't you got a half hour that ain't workin'?"

"I have plenty of time," he replied.

"Then you sit down, and I'll tear off a yard and a half of prattle that meby you'd like to hear. Yes?" She looked at him expectantly.

"All right," he laughed, dropping into a chair.

Mrs. Sweeny rocked vigorously back and forth while a reminiscent expression spread over her features. As the lines about her mouth softened, the Boarder knew that she was thinking of her departed gambler husband, Dan Sweeny, the race-track bookmaker; and he was certain that Dan was to figure prominently in what was coming. Presently the rocking-chair went into easier action, and its occupant began:

"Oh, them ball games!"

"Don't you like them?" inquired the Boarder.

"Yes," she answered, "but the last one I seen give me such a limp in my breath that I ain't been hardly a well woman since. There we was, me and my poor Danny, with ruin starin' us in the face. Why, in the last innin' I died of heart disease six times, and Danny yelled so hard that his voice got cold feet and quit. Gee! them ball games! Believe me, never again for Little Bright Eyes."

"They are exciting," admitted the Boarder.

"You can call it that if you want to," Mrs. Sweeny said, "but, as for me, I'd use some other word that means war and riot and words with the janitor, all rolled into one. I wouldn't go to a baseball game now, on a bet. But I usta go and raved the same as the other inmates of the grand stand. I was a stunnin' doll in them days, with more clothes than you could hang on a roof line; and I s'pect that more'n once I was criticized for bein' a elegant lady and yellin' my head off over a close play. I didn't care, though. I was with my Danny, and, if he could holler himself into a crool case of epilepsy, I was the party that could do it, too. I tell you, mister, them was lovely days."

She spoke feelingly, as if to impress him with the sweetness of her married life, but as she proceeded with the details leading up to her final appearance at a baseball park, her voice took on its usual vibrancy, and her features lost the tinge of sadness that lurked there.

"Our crowd was alwus strong for parties," she continued, "and they kept happenin' so often that Danny's life didn't have many real sober minutes in it. Sometimes them parties was pulled

in restaurants and sometimes in the folkses' flats. And, mister, always they was some parties. The race-track bunch ain't given to moderate doin's. There's more hoorays in six turf people than you could get out of a national convention. And we never kept 'em in a safe-deposit vault, neither. We let 'em loose, and told 'em to go as far as they liked—and they alwus done it. There wasn't no limit."

Mrs. Sweeny smiled dreamily as the past came back to her.

"One evenin'," she continued, "our telephone rings, and it's Mrs. Mosey Feinberg on the wire. Mosey was one of them bet-you-a-million fellers that thinks a argument is settled if the other guy won't bet his shirt on some fool proposition. He made a good livin' with his book, but he bet it all away again on the ponies. Well, Mrs. Mosey, she says:

"'What you-all doin' this evenin', Mrs. Sweeny?'

"'Just dopin' round, dearie,' I says.

"'Things is awful slow here, too,' she says.

"'Me and Danny is willin' to start somethin',' I says.

"'Come over to our house,' she says, 'and start it here,' she says.

"'You're on, dearie,' I says; and it's me and Danny puttin' on our bonnets and shawls right away and beatin' it to Mrs. Mosey's house.

"When we gets there, a bunch is arrivin'. Mrs. Yellow Money Einstein was there and One-Eyed Kelly, and more come in later. We got to playin' cards, and some one is rippin' rags out of the piano and Mosey is tendin' bar. Oh, my gee! Danny didn't have no show in that crowd. Mosey was too conscientious about his job, and my husban' just sticks around and lets whatever comes drip down his throat. That's what was the cause of it all. Drink is a ruinin' thing, mister, and you can tell 'em that I said so. Don't never take to drink—not that I'm a narrow-minded pusson, but, if you did, you'd be comin' round and standin' me off for the rent."

"There's no danger," assured the Boarder.

"I'm glad to hear it," she said. Then she resumed:

"I guess it must of been about one in the mornin' when Mosey Feinberg says somethin' about the Chicago ball team, I think it was. Danny heard it, and kicks in with:

"'Them fellers couldn't play tag, Mose. They're a set of wooden men, slower than a bunch of discouraged truck horses, they are,' he says.

"'Believe me,' says Mosey, 'they ain't. They're playin' in pennant-winnin' form,' he says, 'and what they'll do to the Giants to-morruh, Dan Sweeny,' he says, 'will be a worse shame as it is to take the bettin' public's money like you and me do,' he says.

"'Write that out,' says Danny, 'and look at it after the game,' he says. 'There ain't no better way to convince you that you're a mutt, Mose,' he says.

"Mosey is sittin' up and takin' notice by this time. He looks hard at Danny, and then reaches into his pocket.

"'I got a hundred here,' he says, 'that is out of employment and lookin' for work,' he says.

"'Even money that Chicago wins?' says Danny.

"'That's my way of lookin' at it,' Mosey says. And right away my husban' digs down in his uniform and covers that hundred. Of course no lady could kick on a little thing like that, and I didn't, because the bet looked good to me—and what was a hundred, anyway?

"But that there Mosey had the bettin' bug in him like a I-talian with the spaghetti habit. When he got started, he kept a-goin', and, believe me, mister, he went fast. In about fifteen minutes him and Danny was at it again.

"'You might as well pay that bet now, Sweeny,' Mose says, 'for the Giants ain't got a chance.'

"'I don't toss away my money, Mose,' says Danny, 'my wife does it for me. I ain't makin' foolish bets.'

"'Well,' Mose comes back, 'you wouldn't put five hundred more on them Giants then, I guess?'

"'That ain't no foolish bet, Mose,' says Danny; 'it's a good bet. I guess my check's good with you?'

"'Sure,' says Mose. And that bet went. Now, I didn't like to see my husban' so careless, but it wouldn't look good for a wife to holler because six hundred is took out of the treasury, and I didn't. Later I wished that I had, though, for Mosey wasn't any quitter. He couldn't quit—he hadn't even learned the word. In a little while he had bet another five hundred, and then, after Danny had hooked hisself around a few more gills of acid, they went to a thousand. I knew that we only had about twenty-five hundred in the bank, and you can take it from me I was worried. Before we left, Danny had put up every cent of it and five hundred that he didn't have. On the way home he says to me:

"'Belle, don't let it trouble you. If I lose on them Giants, we can get enough to pay them bets on your jew'lry or the furniture,' he says. 'Don't you worry none, Belle.'

"Wasn't that the limit! There he was, tryin' to comfort me with promises of losin' my rings and household goods. As if I cared more for his fool bets than I did for them lovely jew'ls and our elegant piano and the rest of the things! He was a awful strange man at times, mister. What with all his drinkin' and crazy doin's, I alwus suspected he was a genius."

The Boarder laughed.

"I quite agree with you," he said.

"Well," continued Mrs. Sweeny, "he may have been one, but I liked him in spite of it. He was alwus lovely to me. Take that night, for instance. There he was, all charged full of rum and still thinkin' of my comfort—tryin' to make me not worry. Wasn't it beautiful of him? I couldn't help noticin' it and likin' it; and for the life of me I wasn't able to nag him none for bettin' all we had.

"That night he felt sure of winnin' all them bets, but the next mornin' he wasn't so certain. His confidence was oozin', and, though he was a bettin' man, he wished he hadn't gone into that ball game so heavy with Mosey. You see, at that time, the Giants wasn't playin' none too well, and Chicago was hittin' up a pretty stiff pace. Of course Danny had a chance to win, but not a very good one. When he come to think it over, he reasoned out that he had bet just to make that there Mosey shut up—he was villainous loud when he talked bettin'—and that he hadn't done as usual and bet on form.

"That worried him, bein' a unprofessional thing to do, and he wasn't so sure that the drink wasn't makin' him bad in his head. But I tried to cheer him up, sayin' that him and me'd got away with ticklier things than what we was up against now, and that our foolish bets would get by, all right.

"That's the way I talked, but you can gamble anything you want to on the fact that I didn't feel that way. Why, every time I looked around the flat that mornin', it seemed as if the move men was takin' somethin' out of it. The piano was a-goin' and our ninety-five-dollar davenport and Danny's lovely poker table—gee! All the satisfaction I had was in thinkin' of the work them move men would have gettin' the piano out; and I couldn't help wishin' that it would fall on one of them and choke him."

The Boarder grinned. Mrs. Sweeny carefully scrutinized his face for a moment before she saw the reason.

"Oh," she exclaimed, "I'm so used to sayin' 'I hope he chokes,' that I guess I got mixed up. Anyway, that was how I felt. That there home was so dear to me that I'd fight for it. Just think how you'd feel if you seen everything you had slippin' away from you, all on a crazy bet. It don't listen good, does it? Well, it sure didn't to me; and, as for Danny, he didn't think there was no class to it, either. He said so, and called hisself a terrible rummy for fallin' for Mosey's stuff. But he didn't feel sorry for the same reason I did. He looked at the thing as a gambler, and it made him gulpy in the neck to think how he'd been made a come-on by a lot of loud talk and a bottle of dye.

"'No more shots in the arm in Mosey's house for me, Belle,' he says. 'I'm locked up inside the water cart every time we go there. And if he ever comes here, you explain that I've sprained my leg and can't swallow,' he says."

"Did he keep his resolution?" asked the Boarder.

"Well, yes," she hesitated, "in a way. Danny was a awful strong-willed man, and he kept it for two weeks. We didn't see Mosey for that long after that day, and Danny was so dreadful good-natured. He kept his resolution—to hisself, fearin' that Mosey would look at it as a knock at the kind of rum he kept in his house. Danny couldn't bear to offend anybody."

Again the soft look came into her face, as she remembered the kindly nature of her big fellow.

"You wouldn't know that there was anything at all on his chest," she went on, "when we started out for the ball park that afternoon. He laughed and joked, and promised me the blazin'est dress in Levy and Company's place when Mosey paid up. He was talkin' like that, makin' me believe he was dead sure of winnin'; and I guess he was bankin' on it hisself by the time we got to the park. A feller can make himself look at a proposition from the win side or the lose side by kiddin' his mind along. It don't make no difference which side it is, as long as you kid hard enough. And Danny was doin' that very thing.

"Once I said, heartless like: "'Hang on to the bunk, Danny; it's a good place to dream in.'"

"But he only laughs, and says: "'Them Giants is goin' to win, Belle. They got to win.'

"And so it went along, me seein' the move men bust up our flat and Danny seein' the Giants knock out twenty-six home runs and set the fans crazy.

"Baseball was a reg'lar fad with our set them days. It was almost as good a proposition as to bet on the ponies, though you'd never get a horse bug to admit it. Racin', they say, is the sport of kings; but it's been my experience that mostly two spots go to the track. The kings save their money for to pay the hired help, instead of handin' it to the bookies.

"Well, that afternoon I seen all the prom'nent race-track people and shook mits with 'em, but never a word about them fool bets of Danny's. I was that 'shamed of 'em! I couldn't bear to think of the disgrace that would happen, if them folks found out that my Danny, the smoothest bookmaker at the track, had gambled everything he had on a bum bet. I was proud, them days, and things that hurt my husban's distinguished standin' hurt me, too. So I kept quiet and waited for the game to start."

"You must have been very nervous," said the Boarder.

"Nervous!" Mrs. Sweeny cried. "Why, mister, at the end of the third innin' my teeth was chatterin' like two village gossips. The Giants was sure not in form, and the Chicago bunch had two runs on 'em. And right then I took off my rings, intendin' to hide 'em; but I figgered that it wouldn't be square by Danny. What's a wife for if it ain't to help her husban' in a squeeze? If Danny welched out of them bets, it would be spread all over and his career would be ruined.

"So I just ends up by puttin' them rings to my lips a minute and sayin' real soft: 'You to the hock store, dearies,' and lettin' it go at that. And after I'd got 'em on my fingers again, I yells at the Giant batter that was up: 'Hit it on the nose, you!' And believe me, mister, if he didn't do just that there thing, and a man on third came rompin' home.

"Danny had heard me yell, and of course he seen what happened, so he turns to me with a wonderin' look in his eyes, and says:

"'Belle, darn me if I don't think you're them fellers' luck. Root hard, old doll, and you get two dresses.'

"I knowed what he meant, mister. Them gamblers is awful superstitious—the ball players is, too—and they connect happenin's with buckeyes and rabbits' feets and folks. I ain't that way,

so much, but I am a little; and it sure did seem as if my hollerin' to the feller had made him hit the ball. So I gets in the game, so to speak, and began to warm up.

"When the next feller came to bat, I waits for a sort of quiet moment. Then I hollers:

" 'Oh, you black-haired stiff, kill it—kill it!'

"People round me looked to see who it was, and a player that was coachin' singled me out. The man with the bat swung on the ball like he was beatin' his wife, and it went pretty near to the centre-field fence. But a feller caught it and spoiled everything. Of course I felt real rotten about my failure, and was goin' to shut up, till I heard Danny talkin'.

" 'Keep it up, Belle; you're a mascot, all right. Them fellers is findin' that pitcher. Encourage 'em, Belle.'

" 'Sure I will,' I says, and lets out another whoop of hope at the next man. The feller that was coachin' smiled, and nodded to me, and the batter whanged away for one base. By this time the empire was takin' notice, for he glanced back over his shoulder at me; and the players seemed to be gettin' wise to me bein' there. The next batter looked up my way and grins.

" 'They're tellin' you to win the game for 'em, Belle,' says Danny, 'and you got to make good.'

" 'I'll do my darndest, Danny,' I says. 'I'll yell the figgers off the score board.'

"And I done as near that as I could. It didn't seem quite ladylike, somehow, to be unharnessin' screams, but I took a chance on bein' considered a little unfeminine, and egged on the next feller with:

" 'Make a bum of that ball, you!'

"And didn't he do it, though! It sailed about a inch above the shortstop's hands, and just kept on a-goin'. A run come in, and the score was two and two; and I looked down at my rings with a whole hat full of hope in my heart.

"Danny was gazin' at me awful fond.

" 'There's some class to you,' he says. And wasn't I proud to hear them beautiful words from my husban's lips! It was just like he was pettin' me. There wasn't nothin' more doin' that innin'; but when them players on the bench went to the field, every one of 'em looked my way and smiled, and I knew they had my number. I said before that they're superstitious. Well, the whole gang of 'em blamed them runs on me for bein' their mascot, and they went to work with a whole lot more spirit than they'd had b'fore. They kept Chicago from scorin' up to the eighth; and, though they didn't make no more runs theirselfs, they hit the ball. It seemed like every time I hollered some one would smash it out. The Chicago fellers was such awful good fielders, though, that the score kept tied——"

"To the ninth inning?" interrupted the Boarder.

"Yes," Mrs. Sweeny confirmed, "and you can just bet on it that me and Danny was excited. Everybody in the stand was yellin', but they'd give me first chance at the batter. And here's a funny thing; I found out that I couldn't cheat and use the same holler twice. I had to be original and think up new ones. For instance, I told another feller to make a bum of the ball, and he struck out. So, when the next man took hold of the club, I whoops:

" 'Uppercut it, angel face!'

"Everybody laughed, and I guess the pitcher must of had a giggle in him as he let go the ball, for it hit my party and he got a base. Things kept on a-goin' like that, our men whackin' the ball and havin' it scooped right up on 'em, and another man was hit and all such a line of stuff. Then come the ninth innin', and the move men still knockin' at the door.

" 'Belle,' says Danny to me real solemn, 'Belle, think of our home and what's in it,' he says. 'Chicago's just went out, one-two-three, and them brave Giants can either make us now, or make a twelve-innin' game. And my heart's a little weak, Belle. I couldn't stand the strain of more innin's. Belle'—he took my hand into

hisn and patted it—'Belle, he says, 'holler your head off!'

"'Believe me, Dan Sweeny, I will,' I says. And for a minute I puts my handkerchief to my eyes and cried a little. Wasn't it a touchin' thing in that man trustin' me so? Wasn't it? Oh, you poor dead Danny!"

Her eyes were moist; a quiver that came into her lower lip gradually disappeared as she proceeded.

"Mister," she said, "his touchin' ways almost busted me up then, and I fell down on my job. The first man at the plate had to get along all by hisself, for I was so worked up I couldn't talk. First come one strike, then another, and me still as grandfather's clock. Danny, not understandin' it, thought I was throwin' him and yells in my ear:

"'Belle, save the piano—save the dinin'-room set—unbelt that voice—*holler!*'

"I couldn't, though, and the man struck out. Another took his place, and I got back some of my ability. I sings out:

"'Oh, you with the bat, make the home folks proud—sting it!'

"Well, sir, he did. He hit for two bases, and you'd ought to of saw that crowd get to its feet. Oh, such howlin'! There was one man out and one on second. I looked at my rings again and thought: 'Can I do it, can I do it?' You see, mister, maybe you'll think it foolish, but I believed that I was winnin' that game for the Giants, and nobody could of made me think different. I was dead sure of it, and I never felt such a awful responsibility in my life. Danny was watchin' me, and pretty near all the people in the stand knew by this time that a woman had braced up the Giant's battin'. You see how I was placed?"

"Yes," said the Boarder.

"I did, too," she went on; "and when another batter come up I went calm and serious on the job. My head got real clear, and I thought up somethin' to say in a jiffy.

"'Put your mark on it, son!' I screamed, 'and give it the pip!'

"And I'd just about got the words out of my mouth when he made good. The ball went out to left field, and the man on second got to third. Then come up—what's his name? I forget; but he sure was one bully hitter. I knew that here was my chance. He could win the game if he got a fair wallop at the ball. I seen the men in the field changin' position so's to cover a long drive, for this feller had a reputation for such work. He come to bat, and stood there waitin'. The crowd was as quiet as the audience at a frost show. It seemed like the end of things had come.

"All of a sudden I felt Danny nudgin' me. I knew what that meant. So, not carin' what anybody said, I jumps to my feet and threw my hands above my head and shrieked with all my might:

"'Mister, for the love of Mike, *murder it!*'"

Mrs. Sweeny had become so excited during her narrative that she was a bit overcome and sank back in her chair, breathing heavily. In a little while, though, she again spoke. Waving her hand about the room, she said:

"You see, mister, I still have the furniture. And"—holding up her hands—"here's my rings. If you'll wait here a minute, I'll go and get them two lovely dresses that Danny bought me. I don't wear 'em these days, but I keep 'em to remind me of one of the real sweet times I had with that lovely man. And I hope you won't get mad because I won't go to the ball game with you. As I said b'fore, them things is liable to give you ragtime breath."

Mrs. Sweeny tells in the next issue how Greek met Greek. First April number; on sale March 10th.

Cowboy Philosophy

EDUCATION.

J HUMPHREY JONES he went to school,
An' throwed his rope on ev'ry rule
Of outlaw words; J. Humphrey took
The insides of a Latin book
An' ate 'em raw, but now he is
Purveyor to the human phiz;
He waits on folks, an' I, who spell
Words as they sound, an' cannot tell
A comma from a quart o' rye,
Sit down with J. H. standin' nigh,
An' eat my grub, an' lastly slip
The educated one a tip;
Fer, while a-learnin' things he be,
I went an' did 'em, don't you see?

WORRY.

TO worry is to show your hand
To ev'ry feller in the land;
To worry is to let folks know,
You think you hain't a fightin' show.
You can't win fame or even pelf,
Unless you sort o' bluffs yourself
Into believin' that you be
Plum' failure proof, an 'then, by gee,
You want to size things up kerrect,
Jes' as they be, an' don't select
A pile o' dirt where gophers sit,
An' make a mountain out o' it.
An' don't fergit this sayin' true,
There's millions more worse off than you.

SALVATION.

SALVATION never roped me yet,
B'cause my mind is sort o' set
Agin' the idee that some jay
Thro' paradise has right o' way;
Or, bein' pure, he'll git St. Pete
To give poor me harp, wings, an' seat.
I plays my own game as I please—
To win or lose; I never sees
No man so good but what he could
Improve hisself, if he jes' would
Devote his spare time to his own
Pertic'ler faults, an' leave mine 'lone.
I need no one to help me guess
I pays fer all my orn'ryness.

SNOBBERY.

THE snobbish gobbler has his day,
He struts an' paws in his fool way;
He's great on front, ace-high on looks,
But weak on common sense; he crooks
A limber back to them he thinks
Lead on the herd, an' then he blinks
A chilly eye at common scrubs,
An' names 'em coarse, ill-mannered dubs.
He does not know the scrubs have got
His brand an' range, an', like as not,
They pities him, an' lets him be,
This trailer of society.
Fer common silver pure will git
More things than gold that's counterfit.

YESTERDAY.

OLD yesterday hain't no more use,
Than rubber boots is to a goose;
So saddle up an' ride away
From that there worthless yesterday.
Hook your spurs in the bronk o' hope,
An' hit a high an' swingin' lope
Across the Range-o'-things-that-are,
An' leave that old past so blamed far
Behind that you can't even view
It thro' a glass, if you wants to.
Your failures—shucks! fergit 'em all,
Don't let 'em know you hear 'em call;
Look up an' see the rainbow smile.
To-day's the only time worth while.

ROBERT V. CARR.

Initials Only

By Anna Katharine Green

Author of "The House of the Whispering Pines," "The Leavenworth Case," Etc.

Few stories that we have published in the POPULAR have been more enthusiastically commended than "The House of the Whispering Pines." That novel demonstrated, beyond any doubt, Anna Katharine Green's ability as a weaver of mysteries. Here is another story by the same author, just as absorbing, presenting just as dense a mystery, and told with the same charm. We won't say anything about the plot; but if you can guess the riddle of "Initials Only" before the final installment you are qualified to join the detective force.

I.

POINSETTIAS.

"A REMARKABLE man!"

It was not my husband speaking, but some passer-by. However, I looked up at George with a smile, and found him looking down at me with much the same humor. We had often spoken of the odd phrases one hears in the street, and how interesting it would sometimes be to hear a little more of the conversation.

"That's a case in point," he laughed, as he steered me through the crowd of theatregoers which invariably block this portion of Broadway at the hour of eight. "We shall never know whose eulogy we have just heard. 'A remarkable man!' They are not so common."

"No," was my somewhat indifferent reply. It was a keen winter night, and snow lay packed upon the walks in a way to throw into high relief the figures of such pedestrians as happened to be walking alone. "But it seems to me that, so far as general appearance goes, the one right before us answers your description most admirably."

I pointed to a gentleman hurrying around the corner just ahead of us.

"Yes, he's more than usually well set up. I noticed him when he came out of the Clermont." This was a hotel we had just passed.

"Yes, he's well enough groomed," I allowed. "But it's not that. It's his height, his very striking features, his expression——" I stopped short, gripping George's arm convulsively in a surprise he appeared to share. We had turned the same corner as the man of whom we were speaking, and so had him still in full view.

"What's he doing?" I asked in a suppressed whisper. We were only a few feet behind. "Look! Look! Don't you call that curious?"

My husband stared, then uttered a low "Rather." The man before us, dressed to the nines and in every respect presenting the appearance of a highly polished gentleman, had suddenly stooped to the curb and was washing his hands in the snow furtively, but with a vigor and purpose which could not fail to arouse the strangest conjectures in any chance onlooker.

"Herod!" escaped my lips, in a sort of nervous chuckle. But George shook his head at me.

"I don't like it," he muttered, with unusual gravity. "Did you see his face?" Then, as the man before us rose and sped away from us down the

street, "I should like to follow him. I do believe——"

But here we became aware of a quick rush and sudden clamor around the corner we had just left, and, turning quickly, saw that something had occurred on Broadway which was fast creating a tumult.

"What's the matter?" I cried out. "What could have happened? Let's go see, George. Perhaps it has something to do with this man."

My husband, with a final glance down the street at the fast-disappearing figure of the person I had mentioned, yielded to my importunity, and possibly to some new curiosity of his own.

"I'd like to stop that man first," said he. "But what excuse have I? He may be nothing but a crank. We'll soon know; for there's certainly something wrong there on Broadway."

"*He* came out of the Clermont," I suggested.

"I know. If the excitement isn't there, what we've just seen is simply a coincidence." Then, as we retraced our steps to the corner: "Whatever we hear or see, don't say anything about this man. It's after eight, remember, and we promised Adela that we would be at the house before nine."

"I'll be quiet."

"Remember."

It was the last word he had time to speak before we found ourselves in the midst of a crowd of men and women, jostling each other in curiosity or in the consternation following a quick alarm. All were looking one way, and, as this was toward the entrance of the Clermont, it was evident enough to us that this alarm had indeed had its origin in the very place we had anticipated. I felt my husband's arm press me closer to his side as we worked our way toward the entrance. Presently I caught a warning ejaculation from his lips as the oaths and confused cries everywhere surrounding us were broken here and there by articulate words, and we heard:

"Is it murder?" "The beautiful Miss Challoner!" "A millionairess in her own right!" "Killed, they say." "No, no! Suddenly dead; that's all."

"George, what shall we do?" I managed to cry into my husband's quick ear.

"Get out of this. There is no chance of our reaching that door, and I can't have you standing round any longer in this icy slush."

"But—but is it right?" I urged, in an importunate whisper. "Should we go home while he——"

"Hush! My first duty is to you. We will go make our visit; but to-morrow——"

"I can't wait till to-morrow," I pleaded, wild to satisfy my curiosity in regard to an event in which I might certainly be pardoned for feeling something like a personal interest.

He drew me as near to the edge of the crowd as he could. Fresh murmurs sprang up about us.

"If it's a case of heart failure, why send for the police?" queried one.

"We should do well with an officer or two here," grumbled another.

"Here comes a cop."

"Well, I'm going to vamose."

"I'll tell you what I'll do," whispered George, who, for all his bluster, was probably as curious as myself. "We will try the rear door where there is less passing. Possibly we can make our way in there, and, if we can, Slater will tell us all we want to know."

Slater was the assistant manager of the Clermont, and one of George's oldest friends.

"Then hurry," said I. "I am getting squeezed here."

George did hurry, and in a few minutes we were before the rear entrance of this great hotel. There was a mob collected here also, but it was neither so large nor so unruly as the one on Broadway. Yet I doubt if we should have been able to work our way through it if Slater had not, at that very instant, shown himself in the doorway, in company with an officer to whom he was giving some final instructions.

George caught his eye as soon as he

was through with the man, and ventured on what I thought a rather uncalled-for plea.

"Let us in, Slater," he begged; "my wife feels a little faint; she has been knocked about so by the crowd."

The manager glanced at my face, and shouted to the people around us to give way. I felt myself lifted up, and that is all I remember of this precise portion of our adventure. For, affected more than I realized by the excitement of the event, I no sooner saw the way cleared for our entrance than I made good my husband's words by fainting dead away in good earnest.

When I came to, it was suddenly and with perfect recognition of my surroundings. The small reception room to which I had been taken was one I had often visited, and its familiar features did not hold my attention for a moment. What I did see and welcome was my husband's face bending close over me, and to him I addressed my first word. It must have sounded oddly to those about.

"Have they told you anything about it?" I asked. "Did he——"

A quick pressure on my arm silenced me, and then I noticed that we were not alone. Two or three ladies stood near, watching me, and one had evidently been using some restorative, for she held a small vinaigrette in her hand. To this lady George made haste to introduce me, and from her I presently learned the cause of the disturbance in the hotel.

It was of a somewhat different nature from what I expected, and during the recital I could not prevent myself from casting furtive and inquiring glances at George.

Miss Challoner, the well-known daughter of Moses B., had fallen suddenly dead on the floor of the mezzanine. She was not known to have been delicate or in any danger of a fatal attack, and the shock was consequently great to her friends, several of whom were in the building. Indeed, it was likely to be a shock to the whole community, for she had great claims to universal admiration, and her death must be regarded as a calamity, both to high and low.

I realized this myself, for I had heard much of this young lady's benefactions, as well as of her commanding beauty and distinguished manner. A heavy loss, indeed, but——

"Was she alone when she fell?" I asked.

"Virtually so. Some people sat on the other side of the room, reading at the big round table which is there. They did not even hear her fall. They say that the band was playing unusually loud in the musicians' gallery."

"Are you feeling quite well now?"

"Quite myself," I gratefully replied, as I rose slowly from the sofa. Then, as my kind informer stepped aside, I turned to George with the proposal that we should now go.

He seemed as anxious as myself to leave, and together we moved toward the door, while the hum of excited comment which the intrusion of a fainting woman into their midst had undoubtedly interrupted, closed in behind us till the whole room buzzed.

In the hall we encountered Mr. Slater, whom I have before mentioned. He was trying to keep order while in a state of great agitation himself. Seeing us, he could not refrain from whispering a few words into my husband's ear.

"The doctor has just gone up—her doctor, I mean. He's simply dumfounded. Says that she was the healthiest woman in New York yesterday. I think—don't mention it, that he suspects something not altogether right."

"What do you mean?" asked George, insensibly following the assistant manager down the broad flight of steps leading to the office. Then, as I pressed up close on Mr. Slater's other side: "She was by herself, wasn't she, in the half floor above?"

"Yes, and had been writing a letter. She fell with it still in her hand."

"Have they carried her to her room?" I eagerly inquired, glancing fearfully up at the large semicircular openings overlooking us from the place where she had fallen.

"Not yet. Mr. Hammond insists upon waiting for the coroner." Mr. Hammond was the proprietor of the hotel. "She is lying on one of the big couches near which she fell. If you like, I can give you a glimpse of her. She looks beautiful. It's just awful to think that she is dead."

I don't know why we consented. We were under a spell, I think; happily so, possibly, or so we came to think later. At all events, we accepted his offer and followed him up a narrow stair open to very few that night. At the top he turned upon us with a warning gesture which I hardly think we needed, and led us down a narrow hall flanked by openings corresponding to those we had noted from below. At the farthest one he paused, and, beckoning us to his side, pointed across the lobby into the large writing room which occupied the better part of the mezzanine floor.

A group of persons met our eye, standing in various attitudes of grief and dismay about a couch, only one end of which was visible to us at this moment. The doctor had just joined them, and every head was turned his way, and everybody bent forward in anxious expectation. I remember the face of one gray-haired old man. I shall never forget it. He was probably her father. Later, I knew him to be such.

Her face, even her form, was entirely hidden from us, but as we watched—I have often thought with what heartless curiosity—a sudden movement took place in the whole group, and for one instant a startling picture presented itself to our gaze.

Outstretched upon the couch we saw the exquisite form, clad as she had come from dinner, in a gown of ivory-tinted satin, relieved at the breast with a large bouquet of scarlet Poinsettia. I mention this adornment because it was what first met and drew our eyes and the eyes of every one about her; though the face, now quite revealed, would seem to have the greater attraction. But the cause was evident and one not to be resisted.

The doctor was pointing at these Poinsettias in horror and with awful meaning, and, though we could not hear his words, we knew almost instinctively, both from his attitude and the cries which burst from the lips of those about him, that something more than broken petals and disordered laces had met his eyes; that blood was there, slowly oozing drops from the heart, which for some reason had escaped all eyes till now.

Miss Challoner was dead, not from unsuspected disease, but from the violent attack of some murderous weapon. As the realization woke fresh panic and bowed the old father's head with emotions even more bitter than those of grief, I turned a questioning look up at George's face.

It was fixed with a purpose I had no trouble in understanding.

II.

"I KNOW THE MAN."

Yet he made no effort to detain Mr. Slater, when that gentleman, under this fresh excitement, hastily left our side. He was not the man to rush into anything impulsively, and not even the presence of murder could change his ways.

"I want to feel sure of myself," he explained, as I met his eye. "Can you bear the strain of waiting around a little longer, Laura? I mustn't forget that you fainted just now."

"Yes, I can bear it; much better than I could bear going to Adela's in my present state of mind. Don't you think the man we saw had something to do with this? Don't you believe——"

"Hush! Let us listen rather than talk. What are they saying over there? Can you hear?"

"No. And I cannot bear to look. Yet I don't want to go away. It's all so dreadful sad."

"It's devilish. Such a beautiful girl! Laura, I must leave you for a moment. Do you mind?"

"No, no; yet——"

I did mind; but he was gone before I could take back my word. Alone, I felt the occurrence much more than

when he was with me. Instead of watching, as I had hitherto done, every movement in the room opposite, I drew back against the wall and hid my eyes, waiting feverishly for George's return.

When he came it was in some haste and with certain marks of increased agitation.

"Laura," said he, "Slater proposes that we stay here all night. I shall be wanted, and so may you. I have telephoned Adela and have made it all right at home. Will you come to your room? This is no place for you."

Nothing could have pleased me better—to be near and yet not the direct observer of proceedings in which we took so secret an interest. I showed my gratitude by following George immediately. But I could not go without one final parting glance at the tragic scene I was leaving. A stir was taking place there, and I was just in time to see its cause.

A tall, angular gentleman was approaching from the direction of the musicians' gallery, and from the manner of all present, as well as from the whispered comment of my husband, I recognized in him the special official for whom all were waiting.

"Are you going to tell *him?*" was my question to George as we made our way down to the lobby.

"That depends. First, I am going to see you settled in a room quite remote from this whole thing."

"I shall not like that."

"I know, my dear, but it is best."

I could not gainsay this.

Nevertheless, after the first few minutes of relief, I found it very lonesome upstairs, beautiful as the room was and odd as the experience was to me. The pictures which crowded upon me of the various groups of excited and wildly gesticulating men and women, through which we had passed on our way up, mingled themselves with the solemn horror of the scene in the writing room, with its fleeting vision of youth and beauty lying pulseless in sudden death.

I could not escape the one without feeling the immediate impress of the other, and if by chance they both yielded for an instant to that earlier scene of a desolate street, with its solitary lamp shining down on the crouched figure of a man washing his shaking hands in a drift of freshly fallen snow, they immediately rushed back with a force and clearness all the greater for the momentary lapse.

I was still struggling with these fancies when the door opened and George came in. There was news in his face as I rushed to meet him.

"Tell me—tell," I begged.

He tried to smile at my eagerness, but the attempt was ghastly.

"I've been listening and looking," said he, "and this is all I have learned. Miss Challoner died, not from a stroke or from disease of any kind, but from a wound extending directly to the heart. No one saw the attack, or even the approach or departure of the person inflicting this wound. If she was killed by a pistol shot, it was at a distance, and almost over the heads of the persons sitting at the table we saw there. But the doctors shake their heads at the words '*pistol shot,*' though they will not explain themselves and will give no direct opinion till the wound has been probed. This they are going to do at once, and when that question is decided, I may feel it my duty to speak and may ask you to support my story."

"I will tell what I saw," said I.

"Very good. That is all that's required. We are strangers to the parties concerned, and only speak from a sense of justice. It may be that our story will make no impression, and that we shall be dismissed with but few thanks. But that is nothing to us. If the woman has been murdered, he is the murderer. With such a conviction in my mind, there can be no doubt as to my duty."

"We can never make them understand how he looked."

"No. I don't expect to."

"Or his manner as he fled away."

"Nor that either."

"We can only describe what we saw him do."

"That's all."

"Oh, what an adventure for simple folk like us! George, I don't believe he shot her."

"He must have."

"But they would have seen—have heard—the people around, I mean."

"So they say; but I have a theory—but no matter about that now. I'm going down again to see how things have progressed. I'll be back for you later. Only be ready."

Be ready! I almost laughed—a hysterical laugh, of course, when I recalled this injunction. Be ready! This lonely sitting by myself, with nothing to do but think was a fine preparation for a sudden appearance before those men—some of them police officers, no doubt. Be ready! Well, well, George was a man—a very good and kind one, of course—but a man for all that. How could he be expected to know just how I felt?

But I'll say no more about myself. I'm not the heroine of this story. In a half hour or an hour—I never knew how long—George reappeared, this time with real news. No bullet had been found. The young woman had been killed by a stab from some instrument as yet undecided upon. An element of great mystery involved the whole affair, and the most astute detectives on the force had been sent for.

Her father, who had been her constant companion all winter, had not the least suggestion to offer in way of its solution. So far as he knew—and he believed himself to have been in perfect accord with his daughter—she had given no cause of offense to any one. She had just lived the even, happy, and useful life of a young woman of means, who sees duties beyond those of her own household and immediate surroundings. If, in the fulfillment of those duties, she had encountered any obstacle to content, he did not know it; nor could he mention a friend of hers—he would even say lover, since that was what he meant—who to his knowledge could be accused of harboring any such passion of revenge as was evinced in this secret and heartless attack. They were all gentlemen, and respected her as heartily as they appeared to admire her.

To no living being, man or woman, could he point as possessing any motive for such a deed. She had been the victim of some mistake, his lovely and ever kindly disposed daughter, and while the loss was irreparable he would never make it unendurable by thinking otherwise.

Such was the father's way of looking at the matter, and I own that it made our duty a trifle hard. But George's mind, when once made up, was persistent to the point of obstinacy, and while he was yet talking he led me out of the room and down the hall to the elevator.

"Mr. Slater knows we have something to say, and will manage the interview before us in the very best manner," he confided to me now with an encouraging air. "We are to go to the blue reception room on the parlor floor."

I nodded, and nothing more was said till we entered the place mentioned. Here we came upon several gentlemen, standing about, of a more or less professional appearance. This was not very agreeable to one of my retiring disposition, but a look from George restored me my courage, and I found myself waiting rather anxiously for the questions I expected to hear put.

Mr. Slater was there according to his promise, and, after introducing us, briefly stated that he had been given to understand that we had some evidence to give regarding the terrible occurrence which had just taken place in the house.

George bowed, and the chief spokesman—I am sure he was a police officer of some kind—asked him to tell what it was.

George drew himself up—George is not one of your tall men, but he makes a very good appearance at times. Then he seemed suddenly to collapse. The sight of their expectation made him feel how flat and childish his story would sound. I, who had shared his adventure, understood his embarrassment, but the others were evidently at a

loss to do so, for they glanced askance at each other as he hesitated, and only looked back when I ventured to say:

"It's the peculiarity of the occurrence which affects my husband. The thing we saw may mean nothing."

"Let us hear what it was, and we will judge."

Then my husband spoke up, and related our little experience. If it did not create a sensation, it was because these men were well accustomed to surprises of all kinds.

"Washed his hands—a gentleman—out there in the snow—just after the alarm was raised here?" repeated one.

"And you saw him come out of this house?" another put in.

"Yes, sir; we noticed him particularly."

"Can you describe him?"

It was Mr. Slater who put this question; he had less control over himself, and considerable eagerness could be heard in his voice.

"He was a very fine-looking man; unusually tall and unusually striking both in his dress and appearance. What I could see of his face was bare of beard, and very expressive. He walked with the swing of an athlete, and only looked mean and small when he was stooping and dabbling in the snow."

"His clothes—describe his clothes!" There was an odd sound in Mr. Slater's voice.

"He wore a high hat, and there was fur on his overcoat. I think this fur was black; the overcoat itself was of light gray."

Mr. Slater stepped back, then moved forward again with a determined air.

"I know the man," said he.

III.

THE MAN.

"You know the man?"

"I do; or, rather, I know a man who answers to this description. He comes here once in a while. I do not know whether or not he was in the building to-night, but Clausen can tell you; no one escapes Clausen's eye."

"His name?"

"Brotherson. A very uncommon person in many respects; quite capable of such an eccentricity, but incapable, I should say, of crime or any sort of disrespect to a lady. He's a notable conversationalist, and so well read that he can hold one's attention for hours. Of his tastes, I can only say that they appear to be mainly scientific. But he is not averse to society, and is always exceptionally well clothed."

"A taste for science and for fine clothing do not often go together."

"This man is an exception to all rules. The one I'm speaking of, I mean. I don't say that he's the fellow seen pottering in the snow."

"Call up Clausen!"

The manager stepped to the telephone.

Meanwhile George had advanced to speak to a man who had beckoned to him from the other side of the room, and with whom in another moment I saw him step out.

Thus deserted, I sank into a chair near one of the windows. Never since I could remember had I felt more uncomfortable. To attribute guilt to a totally unknown person—a person who was little more to you than a shadowy silhouette against a background of snow—well, that could be done without suffering. But to hear that person named—given positive attributes—lifted from the indefinite into a living, breathing actuality, with a man's hopes, purposes, responsibilities, and—— Well, that was a different matter. This Brotherson might be the most innocent person alive; and, if so, what had we done? Nothing to be thankful for, I felt sure. And George was not present to comfort and encourage me. He was——

Where was he? The man who had carried him off was the youngest in the group. What had he wanted of George? Those who remained showed no interest in the matter. They had enough to say among themselves. But I was interested—naturally so, and, in my uneasiness, glanced restlessly from the window, the shade of which was up.

The outlook was a very peaceful one. This room faced a side street, and, as my eyes fell upon the whitened pavements, I received an answer to the most anxious of my queries.

This was the street into which we had turned, in the wake of the handsome stranger they were trying at this very moment to identify with the man Brotherson. George had evidently been asked to point out the exact spot where the gentleman had stopped, for I could see from my vantage point two figures bending near the curb, and even pawing at the snow which lay there.

It gave me a slight turn when one of them—I do not think it was George—began to rub his hands together in much the way the unknown gentleman had done, and in my excitement I probably uttered some sort of an ejaculation, for I was suddenly conscious of a silence in the room, and when I turned saw all the men looking at me.

I attempted to smile, but, instead, shuddered painfully, as I raised my hand and pointed down at the street.

"They are imitating the man," I cried; "my husband and—and the person he went out with. It looked dreadful to me; that is all."

One of the gentlemen immediately said some kind words to me, and another smiled in a very encouraging way. But their attention was soon diverted, and so was mine, by the entrance of a man in semiuniform, who was immediately addressed as Clausen.

I knew his face. He was one of the doorkeepers; the oldest employee about the hotel, and the one best liked. I had often exchanged words with him myself.

Mr. Slater at once put his question: Had Mr. Brotherson passed his door at any time to-night?

"Mr. Brotherson! I don't remember, really I don't," was the unexpected reply. "It's not often I forget. But so many people came rushing in during those few minutes, and all so excited——"

"Before the excitement, Clausen. A little while before, possibly just before."

"Oh, now I recall him. Yes, Mr. Brotherson went out of my door not many minutes previous to that shrill cry upstairs. I forgot because I had stepped back from the door to hand a lady the muff she had dropped, and it was at that minute he went out. I just got a glimpse of his back as he slid into the street."

"But you are sure of that back?"

"I don't know another like it, when he wears that big gray coat of his. But Jim can tell you, sir. He was in the café up to that minute, and that's where Mr. Brotherson usually goes first."

"Very well; send up Jim. Tell him I have some orders to give him."

The old man bowed and went out. If he had any curiosity of his own, or connected these questions with the very serious affair under discussion all over the hotel, he didn't betray it. He was not a man, but a servant when on duty, and I followed his departing figure with admiring eyes.

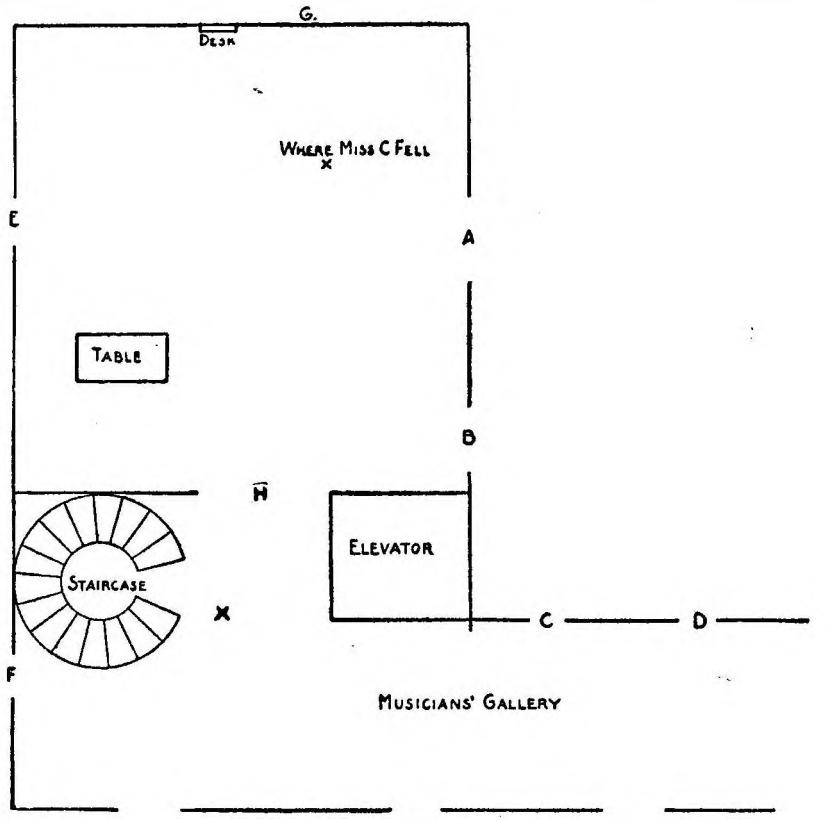
Meanwhile Mr. Slater had exchanged some words with the two officials, and now approached me with an expression of extreme consideration. They were about to excuse me from further participation in this informal inquiry. This I saw before he spoke. Of course they were right. But I should greatly have preferred to stay where I was till George came back.

However, I met him for an instant in the hall before I took the elevator, and later I heard in a roundabout way what Jim and some others about the house had to say of Mr. Brotherson.

He was not exactly a habitué of the hotel, but he supped quite often in the café, an indulgence that he invariably capped with two cigars which he smoked in the public lobby. When he was in the mood for talk, he would draw an ever-enlarging group about him, but at other times he would be seen sitting quite alone and morosely indifferent to all who approached him.

There was no mystery about his business. He was an inventor, with one or two valuable patents already on the market. But this was not his only interest. He was an all-round sort of man, moody but brilliant in many ways

—a character which at once attracted and repelled; odd in that he seemed to set little store by his good looks, yet was most careful to dress himself in a way to show them off to advantage. If he had means beyond the ordinary no one knew it, nor could any man say that he had not. On all personal matters he was very close-mouthed, though he would talk about other men's riches in a way to show that he cherished some very extreme views.



This was all which could be learned about him offhand, and at so late an hour. I was greatly interested, of course, and had plenty to think of till I saw George again and learned the result of the latest investigations.

Miss Challoner had been shot, not stabbed. No other deduction was possible from such facts as were now known, though the physicians had not yet handed in their report, or even intimated what that report would be. No assailant could have approached or left her, without attracting the notice of some, if not all, of the persons seated at a table in the same room. She could only have been reached by a bullet sent from a point near the head of a small winding staircase connecting the mezzanine floor with a cloakroom adjacent to the front door. This has already been insisted on, as you will remember, and, if you will glance at the diagram which George hastily scrawled for me, you will see why.

A. B., as well as C. D., are half-circular openings into the office lobby. E. F. are windows giving upon Broadway, and G. the party wall, necessarily unbroken by window, door, or any other opening. It follows then that the only possible means of approach to this room lies through the archway H., or from the elevator door. But the elevator made no stop at the mezzanine on or near the time of the attack upon Miss Challoner; nor did any one leave the table or pass by it in either direc-

tion till after the alarm given by her fall.

But a bullet calls for no approach. A man at X. might raise and fire his pistol without attracting any attention to himself. The music, which all acknowledge was at its full climax at this moment, would drown the noise of the explosion, and the staircase, out of view of all but the victim, afford the same means of immediate escape which it must have given of secret and unseen approach. The coatroom into which it descended communicated with the lobby very near the main entrance, and, if Mr. Brotherson were the man, his sudden appearance there would thus be accounted for.

To be sure, this gentleman had not been noticed in the coatroom by the man then in charge, but if the latter had been engaged at that instant, as he often was, in hanging up or taking down a coat from the rack, a person might easily pass by him and disappear into the lobby without attracting his attention. So many people passed that way, from the dining room beyond, and so many of these were tall, fine-looking, and well-dressed.

It began to look bad for this man, if indeed he were the one we had seen under the street lamp; and, as George and I reviewed the situation before finally settling for the night, we felt our position to be serious enough for us to set down severally our impressions of this man before we lost our first vivid idea.

I do not know what George wrote, for he sealed his words up as soon as he had finished writing, but this is what I put on paper while my memory was still fresh and my excitement unabated.

He had the look of a man of powerful intellect and determined will, who shudders while he triumphs, who outwardly washes his hands of a deed over which he inwardly gloats. This was when he first rose from the snow. Afterward he had a moment of fear; plain, human, everyday fear. But this was evanescent. Before he had turned to go, he showed the self-possession of one who feels himself so secure, or is so well satisfied with himself, that he is no longer conscious of other emotions.

"Poor fellow!" I commented aloud, as I folded up these words; "he reckoned without you, George. By to-morrow he will be in the hands of the police."

"'Poor fellow?'" he repeated. "Better say 'Poor Miss Challoner!' They tell me she was one of those perfect women who reconcile even the pessimist to humanity and the age we live in. Why any one should want to kill her is a mystery; but why this man should —— There! No one professes to explain it. They simply go by the facts. To-morrow surely must bring strange revelations."

And with this sentence ringing in my mind, I lay down and endeavored to sleep. But it was not till very late that rest came. The noise of passing feet, though muffled beyond their wont, roused me in spite of myself. These footsteps might be those of some late arrival, or they might be those of some wary detective intent on business far removed from the usual routine of life in this great hotel.

I recalled the glimpse I had had of the writing room in the early evening, and imagined it as it was now, with Miss Challoner's body removed and the incongruous flitting of strange and busy figures across its fatal floor, measuring distances and peering into corners, while thousands slept above and about them in undisturbed slumber and easy content.

Then I thought of *him*, the suspected and possibly guilty one. In visions over which I had little if any control, I saw him in all the restlessness of a slowly dying-down excitement—the surroundings strange and unknown to me, the figure not—seeking for quiet; facing the past; facing the future; knowing, perhaps, for the first time in his life, what it was for crime and remorse to murder sleep. I could not think of him as lying still—resting like the rest of mankind, in the hope and expectation of a working to-morrow. Crime perpetrated looms so large in the soul, and this man had a soul as big as his body, of that I was assured. That its instincts were cruel

and inherently evil did not lessen its capacity for suffering. And he was suffering now; I could not doubt it, remembering the lovely face and fragrant memory of the noble woman he had, under some unknown impulse, sent to an unmerited doom.

At last I slept, but it was only to rouse again with the same quick remembrance of my surroundings and the reason of my presence in these unaccustomed quarters, which I had experienced on my recovery from my fainting fit of hours before. Some one had stopped at our door before hurrying by down the hall. Who was that some one? I rose on my elbow and endeavored to peer through the dark. Of course I could see nothing. But when I woke a second time there was enough light in the room, early as it undoubtedly was, for me to detect a letter lying on the carpet just inside the door.

Instantly I was on my feet. Catching the letter up, I carried it to the window. Our two names were on it—Mr. and Mrs. George Anderson—the writing, Mr. Slater's.

I glanced over at George. He was sleeping peacefully. It was too early to wake him, but I could not lay that letter down unread. Was not my name on it? Tearing it open, I devoured its contents—the exclamation I made, on reading it, waking George.

The writing was in Mr. Slater's hand, and the words were:

> I must request, at the instance of Coroner Heath and such of the police as listened to your adventure, that you make no further mention of what you saw in the street under our windows last night. The doctors find no bullet in the wound. This clears Mr. Brotherson.

IV.

SWEET LITTLE MISS CLARKE.

When we took our seats at the breakfast table, it was with the feeling of being no longer looked upon as connected in any way with this case. Yet our interest in it was, if anything, increased, and when I saw George casting short glances at a certain table behind me, I leaned over and asked him the reason, being sure that the people whose faces I saw reflected in the mirror directly before me had something to do with the great matter then engrossing us.

His answer conveyed the somewhat exciting information that the four persons seated in my rear were the same four who had been reading at the round table in the mezzanine at the time of Miss Challoner's death.

Instantly they absorbed all my attention, though I dared not give them a direct look, and continued to observe them only in the glass.

"Is it one family?" I asked.

"Yes, and a very respectable one. Transients, of course, but very well known in Denver. The lady is not the mother of the boys, but their aunt. The boys belong to the gentleman, who is a widower."

"Their word ought to be good."

George nodded.

"The boys look wide awake enough if the father does not. As for the aunt, she is sweetness itself. Do they still insist that no one else was in the room with them but Miss Challoner?"

"They did last night. I don't know how they will meet this statement of the doctor's."

"George!"

He leaned nearer.

"Have you ever thought that she might have been a suicide? That she stabbed herself?"

"No. In that case a weapon would have been found."

"Are you sure that none has been found?"

"Positive. They couldn't have kept such a fact quiet. If a weapon had been picked up there would be no mystery, and no necessity for further police investigation."

"And the detectives are still here?"

"I just saw one."

"George?"

Again his head drew nearer.

"Have they searched the lobby? I believe she had a weapon."

"Laura!"

"I know it sounds foolish, but the alternative is so improbable. A family

like that cannot be leagued together in a conspiracy to hide the truth concerning a matter so serious. To be sure, they may all be shortsighted, or so little given to observation that they didn't see what passed before their eyes. The boys look wide awake enough, but who can tell? I would sooner believe that——"

I stopped short so suddenly that George looked startled. My attention had been caught by something new I saw in the mirror upon which my attention was fixed. A man was looking in from the corridor behind, at the four persons we were just discussing. He was surveying them intently, and I thought I knew his face.

"What kind of a person was the man who took you outside last night?" I inquired of George, with my eyes still on this furtive watcher.

"A fellow to make you laugh. A perfect character, Laura; hideously homely, but agreeable enough. I took quite a fancy to him. Why?"

"I am looking at him now."

"Very likely. He's deep in this affair. Just an everyday detective, but ambitious, I suppose, and quite alive to the importance of being thorough."

"He is watching those people. No, he isn't. How quickly he disappeared!"

"Yes, he's mercurial in all his movements. Laura, we must get out of this. There happens to be something else in the world for me to do than to sit around and follow up murder clues."

But we began to doubt if others agreed with him, when on passing out we were stopped in the lobby by this same detective, who had something to say to George, and drew him quickly aside.

"What does he want?" I asked, as soon as George returned to my side.

"He wants me to stand ready to obey any summons the police may send me."

"Then they still suspect Brotherson?"

"They must."

My head rose a trifle as I glanced up at George.

"Then we are *not* altogether out of it?" I emphasized complacently.

He smiled—which hardly seemed apropos. Why does George sometimes smile when I am in my most serious moods?

As we stepped out of the hotel, George gave my arm a quiet pinch, which served to direct my attention to an elderly gentleman who was just alighting from a taxicab at the curb. He moved heavily and with some appearance of pain, but from the crowd collected on the sidewalk, many of whom nudged each other as he passed, he was evidently a person of some importance, and, as he disappeared within the hotel entrance, I asked George who this kind-faced, bright-eyed old gentleman could be.

He appeared to know, for he told me at once that he was Detective Gryce; a man who had grown old in solving just such contradictory problems as this.

"He gave up work some time ago, I have been told," my husband went on; "but evidently a great case still has its allurement for him. The trail here must be a very blind one to cause them to call him in. I wish we had not left so soon. It would have been quite an experience to see him at work."

"I doubt if you would have been given the opportunity. I noticed that we were slightly *de trop* toward the last."

"I wouldn't have minded that; not on my own account, that is. It might not have been pleasant for you. However, the office is waiting. Come, let me put you on the car."

That night I bided his coming with an impatience I could not control. He was late, of course, but when he did appear I almost forgot our usual greeting in my hurry to ask him if he had seen the evening papers.

"No," he grumbled, as he hung up his overcoat. "Been pushed about all day. No time for anything."

"Then, let me tell you——"

But he would have dinner first.

However, a little later, we had a comfortable chat. Mr. Gryce had made a discovery, and the papers were full of it. It was one which gave me

a small triumph over George. The suggestion he had laughed at was not so entirely foolish as he had been pleased to consider it. But let me tell the story of that day, without any further reference to myself. I have a horror of egotists, and have no desire to thrust myself too much before you just because I was mixed up, for a few minutes, with an important police affair.

The opinion had become quite general with those best acquainted with the details of this affair, that the mystery was one of those abnormal ones for which no solution would ever be found, when the aged detective showed himself in the building and was taken to the room, where an inspector of police awaited him. Their greeting was cordial, and the lines on the latter's face relaxed a little as he met the still-bright eye of the man upon whose instinct and judgment so much reliance had always been placed.

"This is very good of you," he began, glancing down at the aged detective's bundled-up legs, and gently pushing a chair his way. "I knew that it was a great deal to ask, but we're at our wits' end, and so I telephoned. It's the most inexplicable—— There! You have heard that phrase before. But clues —there are absolutely none. That is, we have not been able to find any. Perhaps you can. At least that is what we hope. I've known you more than once to succeed where others have failed."

The elderly man thus addressed glanced down at his legs, now propped up on a stool which some one had brought him, and smiled, with the pathos of the old who sees the interests of a lifetime slipping gradually away.

"I am not what I was. I can no longer get down on my hands and knees to pick up threads from the nap of a rug, or spy out a spot of blood in the crimson woof of a carpet."

"You shall have Sweetwater here to do the active work for you. What we want of you is the directing mind—the infallible instinct. It's a case in a thousand, Gryce. We've never had anything just like it. *You've* never had anything at all like it. It will make you young again."

The old man's eyes shot fire, and unconsciously one foot slipped to the floor. Then he bethought himself, and painfully lifted it back again.

"What are the points? What's the difficulty?" he asked. "A woman has been shot——"

"No, not shot, stabbed. We thought she had been shot, for that was intelligible and involved no impossibilities. But Doctors Heath and Webster, under the eye of the Challoners' own physician, have made an examination of the wound—an official one, thorough and quite final so far as they are concerned, and they declare that no bullet is to be found in the body. As the wound extends no farther than the heart, this settles one great point, at least."

"Doctor Heath is an honest man, and one of our ablest coroners."

"Yes. There can be no question as to the truth of his report. You know the victim? Her name, I mean, and the character she bore?"

"Yes; so much was told me on my way down."

"A fine girl unspoiled by riches and seeming independence. Happy, too, to all appearance, or we should be more ready to consider the possibility of suicide."

"Suicide by stabbing necessitates a weapon. Yet none has been found, I hear."

"None."

"Yet she was killed that way?"

"Undoubtedly, and by a long and very narrow blade, larger than a needle, but not so large as the ordinary stiletto."

"Stabbed while by herself, or what you may call by herself? She had no companion near her?"

"None, if we can believe the four members of the Parrish family who were seated at the other end of the room."

"And you do believe them?"

"Would a whole family lie?—and needlessly, they never knew the woman —father, maiden aunt, and two boys, clear-eyed, jolly young chaps which

even the horror of this tragedy, perpetrated as it were under their very noses, cannot make serious for more than a passing moment."

"It wouldn't seem so."

"Yet they swear up and down that nobody crossed the room toward Miss Challoner."

"So they tell me."

"She fell just a few feet from the desk where she had been writing. No word, no cry, just a collapse and sudden fall. In olden days they would have said, struck by a bolt from heaven. But it was a bolt which drew blood; not much blood, I hear, but sufficient to end life almost instantly. She never looked up or spoke again. What do you make of it, Gryce?"

"It's a tough one, and I'm not ready to venture an opinion yet. I should like to see the desk you speak of, and the spot where she fell."

A young fellow who had been hovering in the background at once stepped forward. He was the plain-faced detective who had spoken to George.

"Will you take my arm, sir?"

Mr. Gryce's whole face brightened. This Sweetwater, as they called him, was, I have since understood, one of his protégés, and more or less of a favorite.

"Have you had a chance at this thing?" he asked. "Been over the ground—studied the affair carefully?"

"Yes, sir; they were good enough to allow it."

"Very well, then, you're in a position to pioneer *me*. You've seen it all and won't be in a hurry."

"No; I'm at the end of my rope. I haven't an idea, sir."

"Well, well, that's honest, at all events." Then, as he slowly rose with the other's careful assistance: "There's no crime without its clue. The thing is to recognize that clue where seen. But I'm in no position to make promises. Old days don't return for the asking."

Nevertheless, he looked ten years younger than when he came in, or so thought those who knew him.

The mezzanine was guarded from all visitors save such as had official sanction. Consequently the two remained quite uninterrupted while they moved about the place in quiet consultation. Others had preceded them; had examined the plain little desk and found nothing; had paced off the distances; had looked with longing and inquiring eyes at the elevator cage and the open archway leading to the little staircase and the musicians' gallery.

But this was nothing to the old detective. The locale was what he wanted, and he got it. Whether he got anything else it would be impossible to say from his manner as he finally sank into a chair by one of the openings and looked down on the lobby below. It was full of people coming and going on all sorts of business, and presently he drew back, and, leaning on Sweetwater's arm, asked him a few questions.

"Who were the first to rush in here after the Parrish boys gave the alarm?"

"One or two of the musicians from the end of the hall. They had just finished their program and were preparing to leave the gallery. Naturally they reached her first."

"Good! Their names?"

"Mark Sowerby and Claus Hennerberg. Honest Germans—men who have played here for years."

"And who followed them? Who came next on the scene?"

"Some people from the lobby. They heard the disturbance and rushed up pell-mell. But not one of these touched her. Later, her father came."

"Who did touch her? Anybody before the father came in?"

"Yes; Miss Clarke, the middle-aged lady with the Parrishes. She had run toward Miss Challoner as soon as she heard her fall, and was sitting there with the dead girl's head in her lap when the musicians showed themselves."

"I suppose she has been carefully interrogated?"

"Very, I should say."

"And she speaks of no weapon?"

"No. She and no one at that moment suspected murder or even a violent death. All thought it a natural one

—sudden, but the result of some secret disease."

"Father and all?"

"Yes."

"But the blood? Surely there must have been some show of blood?"

"They say not. No one noticed any. Not till the doctor came—her doctor who was happily in his office in this very building. He saw the drops, and uttered the first suggestion of murder."

"How long after was this? Is there any one who has ventured to make an estimate of the number of minutes which elapsed from the time she fell to the moment when the doctor first raised the hue and cry of murder?"

"Yes. Mr. Slater, the assistant manager, who was in the lobby at the time, says that ten minutes at least must have elapsed."

"Ten minutes and no blood! The weapon must still have been there. Some weapon with a short and inconspicuous handle. I think they said there were flowers over and around the place where it struck?"

"Yes, great big scarlet ones. Nobody noticed—nobody looked. A panic like that seems to paralyze people."

"Ten minutes! I must see every one who approached her during that ten minutes. Every one, Sweetwater, and I must myself talk with Miss Clarke."

"You will like her. You will believe every word she says."

"No doubt. All the more reason why I must see her. Sweetwater, some one drew that weapon out. Effects still have their causes, notwithstanding the new cult. The question is who? We must leave no stone unturned to find out who."

"The stones have all been turned over once."

"By you?"

"Not altogether by me."

"Then they will bear being turned over again. I want to be witness of the operation."

"Where will you see Miss Clarke?"

"Wherever she pleases—only I can't walk far."

"I think I know the place. You shall have the use of this elevator. It has not been running since last night, or it would be full all the time of curious people, hustling to get a glimpse of this place. But they'll put a man on for you."

"Very good; manage it as you will. I'll wait here till you're ready. Explain yourself to the lady. Tell her I'm an old and rheumatic invalid who has been used to asking his own questions. I'll not trouble her much. But there is one point she must make clear to me."

Sweetwater did not presume to question which this was, but he hoped that he would be allowed to hear when the time came.

And he was. Mr. Gryce had undertaken to educate him for this work, and never missed the opportunity of giving him his lessons. The three met in a private sitting room on an upper floor, the detectives entering first and the lady coming in soon after.

As her quiet figure appeared in the doorway, Sweetwater stole a glance at Mr. Gryce. He was not looking her way, of course; he never looked directly at anybody; but he formed his impressions for all that, and Sweetwater was anxious to make sure of these impressions. There was no misdoubting them in this instance. Miss Clarke was not a woman to rouse an unfavorable opinion in any man's mind. Of slight, almost frail build, she had that peculiar animation which goes with a speaking eye and a widely sympathetic nature. Without any substantial claims to beauty, her expression was so womanly and so sweet that she was invariably called lovely.

Mr. Gryce was engaged at the moment in shifting his cane from the right hand to the left, but his manner was never more encouraging or his smile more benevolent.

"Pardon me," he apologized, with one of his old-fashioned bows, "I'm sorry to trouble you after all the distress you must have been under this morning. But there is something I wish especially to ask you in regard to the dreadful occurrence in which you played so kind a part. You were the first to reach the prostrate woman, I believe?"

"Yes. The boys jumped up and ran toward her, but they were frightened at her looks and left it for me to put my hands under her and try to lift her up."

"Did you manage it?"

"I succeeded in getting her head into my lap, nothing more."

"And sat so?"

"For some little time. That is, it seemed long, though I believe it was not more than a minute before two men came running from the musicians' gallery. One thinks so fast at such a time—and feels so much."

"You knew she was dead, then?"

"I felt her to be so."

"How felt?"

"I was sure—I never questioned it."

"You have seen women in a faint?"

"Yes, many times."

"What made the difference? Why should you believe Miss Challoner dead simply because she lay still and apparently lifeless?"

"I cannot tell you. Possibly death tells its own story. I only know how I felt."

"Perhaps there was another reason? Perhaps that, consciously or unconsciously, you laid your palm upon her heart?"

Miss Clarke started, and her sweet face showed a moment's perplexity.

"Did I?" she queried musingly. Then, with a sudden access of feeling: "I may have done so; indeed, I believe I did. My arms were around her; it would not have been an unnatural action."

"No; a very natural one, I should say. Cannot you tell me positively whether you did this or not?"

"Yes, I did. I had forgotten it, but I remember now." And the glance she cast him while not meeting his eye showed that she understood the importance of the admission. "I know," she said, "what you are going to ask me now. Did I feel anything there but the flowers and the tulle? No, Mr. Gryce, I did not. There was no poniard in the wound."

Mr. Gryce felt around, found a chair, and sank into it.

"You are a truthful woman," said he. "And," he added more slowly, "composed enough in character I should judge not to have made any mistake on this very vital point."

"I think so, Mr. Gryce. I was in a state of excitement, of course; but the woman was a stranger to me, and my feelings were not unduly agitated."

"Sweetwater, we can let my suggestion go in regard to those ten minutes I spoke of. The time is narrowed down to one, and in that one Miss Clarke was the only person to touch her."

"The only one," echoed the lady, catching perhaps the slight rising sound of query in his voice.

"I will trouble you no further," said the old detective thoughtfully. "Sweetwater, help me out of this." His eye was dull and his manner betrayed exhaustion. But vigor returned to him before he had well reached the door, and he showed some of his old spirit as he thanked Miss Clarke and turned to take the elevator.

"But one possibility remains," he confided to Sweetwater, as they stood waiting at the elevator door. "Miss Challoner died from a stab. The next minute she was in this lady's arms. No weapon protruded from the wound, nor was any found on or near her in the mezzanine. What follows? She struck the blow herself, and the strength of purpose which led her to do this gave her the additional force to draw the weapon out and fling it from her. It did not fall upon the floor around her; therefore, it flew through one of those openings into the lobby, and there it either will be, or has been, found."

It was this statement, otherwise worded, which gave me my triumph over George.

V.

THE RED CLOAK.

"What results? Speak up, Sweetwater."

"None. Every man, woman, and boy connected with the hotel has been questioned; many of them routed out of their beds for the purpose, but not one of them picked up anything from

the floor of the lobby, or knows of any one who did."

"There now remain the guests."

"And after them—pardon me, Mr. Gryce—the general public which rushed in rather promiscuously last night."

"I know it; it's a task, but it must be carried through. Put up bulletins, publish your wants in the papers—do anything, only gain your end."

A bulletin was put up.

Some hours later Sweetwater reentered the room, and, approaching Mr. Gryce with a smile, blurted out:

"The bulletin is a great go. I think—of course I cannot be sure—that it's going to do the business. I've watched every one who stopped to read it. It was easy enough to spot out interest—plain, natural, inquisitive interest—and not hard to detect emotion. There were many who showed both; she seems to have had a troop of friends. But embarrassment! Only one showed that. I thought you would like to know."

"Embarrassment? Humph! A man?"

"No, a woman; a lady, sir; one of the transients. I found out in a jiffy all they could tell me about her."

"A woman! We didn't expect that. Where is she? Still in the lobby?"

"No, sir. She took the elevator while I was talking with the clerk."

"There's nothing in it. You mistook her expression."

"I don't think so. I had noticed her when she first came into the lobby. She was talking to her daughter who was with her, and looked natural and happy. But no sooner had she seen and read that bulletin than the blood shot up into her face and her manner became furtive and hasty. There was no mistaking the difference, sir. Almost before I could point her out, she had seized her daughter by the arm and hurried her toward the elevator. I wanted to follow her, but you may prefer to make your own inquiries. Her room is on the seventh floor, number seven hundred and twelve, and her name is Watkins. Mrs. Horace Watkins, of Nashville."

Mr. Gryce nodded thoughtfully, but made no immediate effort to rise.

"Is that all you know about her?" he asked.

"Yes; this is the first time she has stopped at this hotel. She came yesterday. Took a room indefinitely. Seems all right; but she did blush, sir. I never saw its beat in a young girl."

"Call the desk. Say that I'm to be told if Mrs. Watkins, of Nashville, rings up during the next ten minutes. We'll give her that long to take some action. If she fails to make any move, I'll make my own approaches."

Sweetwater did as he was bid, then went back to his place in the lobby.

But he returned almost instantly.

"Mrs. Watkins has just telephoned down that she is going to—to leave, sir."

"To leave?"

The old man struggled to his feet. "Number seven hundred and twelve, do you say? Seven stories!" He sighed. As he turned with a hobble, he stopped. "There are difficulties in the way of this interview," he remarked. "A blush is not much to go upon. I'm afraid we shall have to resort to the shadow business, and that is your work, not mine."

But here the door opened, and a boy brought in a line which had been left at the desk. It related to the very matter then engaging them, and ran thus:

I see that information is desired as to whether any person was seen to stoop to the lobby floor last night at or shortly after the critical moment of Miss Challoner's fall in the half story above. I can give such information. I was in the lobby at the time, and I remember distinctly, in the height of the confusion following this alarming incident, seeing a lady, one of the new arrivals—there were several coming in at the time—stoop quickly down and pick up something from the floor. I thought nothing of it at the time, and so paid little attention to her appearance. I can only recall the suddenness with which she stooped and the color of the cloak she wore. It was red, and the whole garment was voluminous. If you wish further particulars—though in truth, I have no more to give, you can find me in room 356.

HENRY A. MCELROY.

"Humph! This should simplify our task," was Mr. Gryce's comment, as he handed the note over to Sweetwater. "You can easily find out if the lady, now on the point of departure, can be

identified with the one described by Mr. McElroy. If she can, I am ready to meet her anywhere."

"Here goes, then!" cried Sweetwater, and quickly left the room.

When he returned, it was not with his most hopeful air.

"The cloak doesn't help," he declared. "No one remembers the cloak. But the time of Mrs. Watkins' arrival was all right. She came in directly on the heels of this catastrophe."

"She did! Sweetwater, I will see her. Manage it for me at once."

"The clerk says that it had better be upstairs. She is a very sensitive woman. There might be a scene, if she were intercepted on her way out."

"Very well." But the look which the old detective threw at his bandaged legs was not without its pathos.

And so it happened that just as the porters were wheeling out Mrs. Watkins' trunk, that lady was surprised by the appearance in the open doorway of an elderly gentleman whose expression, always benevolent save at moments when benevolence would be quite out of keeping with the situation, exerted such a magnetism over her even in the hurry and confusion of departure that she instinctively met him with a look which did not need the flush which accompanied it to assure him that his intrusion was not altogether unwarranted, however disagreeable it might prove.

"I beg your pardon, madam," said he. "I am speaking to Mrs. Watkins, of Nashville?"

"You are," she faltered, with another rapid change of color. "I—I am just leaving. I hope you will excuse me. I——"

"I wish I could," he smiled, hobbling in and confronting her quietly in her own room. "But circumstances make it quite imperative that I should have a few words with you on a topic which need not be disagreeable to you, and probably will not be. My name is Gryce. This will probably convey nothing to you, but I am not unknown to the management below, and my years must certainly give you confidence in the propriety of my errand. A beautiful and charming young woman died here last night. May I ask if you knew her?"

"I?" She was trembling violently now, but whether with indignation or some other more subtle emotion, it would be difficult to say. "No, I'm from the South. I never saw the young lady. Why do you ask? I do not recognize your right. I—I——"

Certainly her emotion must be that of simple indignation. Mr. Gryce made one of his low bows, and, propping himself against the table he stood before, remarked civilly:

"I had rather not obtrude my rights; the matter is so very ordinary. I did not suppose you knew Miss Challoner, but one must begin somehow, and, as you came in at the very moment when the alarm was raised in the lobby, I thought perhaps you could tell me something which would aid me in my endeavor to elicit the real facts of the case. You were crossing the lobby at the time——"

"Yes." Her head rose. "So were a dozen others——"

"Madam"—the interruption was made in his kindliest tones, but in a way which nevertheless suggested authority—"something was picked up from the floor at that moment. If the dozen you mention were witnesses to this act, we do not know it. But we do know that it did not pass unobserved by you. Am I not correct? Didn't you see a certain person—I will mention no names—stoop and pick up something from the lobby floor?"

"No." The word came out with startling violence. "I noticed nothing but the hubbub." She was facing him with determination, and her eyes were fixed boldly on his face. But her lips quivered, and her cheeks were white, too white now for simple indignation.

"Then I have made a big mistake," apologized the ever-courteous detective. "Will you pardon me? It would have settled a very serious question if it could be found that the object thus picked up was the weapon which killed Miss Challoner. That is my excuse for the trouble I have given you."

He was not looking at her; he was looking at her hand which rested on the table before which he himself stood. Did the fingers tighten a little and dig into the palm they concealed? He thought so, and was very slow in turning limpingly about toward the door. Meanwhile, would she speak? No. The silence was so marked, he felt it an excuse for stealing another look back. She was not looking his way, but at a door in the partition wall on her right; and the look was one very akin to anxious fear. The next moment he understood it. The door burst open, and a young girl bounded into the room, with the merry cry:

"All ready, mother. I'm glad we are going to the Clarendon. I hate hotels where people die almost before your eyes."

What the mother said at this outburst is immaterial. What the detective did is not. Keeping on his way, he reached the door, but not to open it wider; rather to close it softly but with unmistakable decision. The cloak which enveloped the girl was red, and full enough to be called voluminous.

"Who is this?" demanded the girl, her indignant glances flashing from one to the other.

"I don't know," faltered the mother in very evident distress. "He says he has a right to ask us questions, and he has been asking questions about—about——"

"Not about me," laughed the girl, with a toss of her head Mr. Gryce would have corrected in one of his grandchildren. "He can have nothing to say about me." And she began to move about the room in an aimless, half-insolent way.

Mr. Gryce stared hard at the few remaining belongings of the two women lying in a heap on the table, and half musingly, half deprecatingly remarked:

"The person who stooped wore a long red cloak. Probably you preceded your daughter, Mrs. Watkins."

The lady thus brought to the point made a quick gesture toward the girl, who suddenly stood still, and, with the rising color freely dyeing her cheeks, answered, with some show of resolution on her own part:

"You say your name is Gryce and that you have a right to talk with me in this manner on a subject which you evidently regard as serious. That is not exact enough for me. Who are you, sir? What is your business?"

"I think you have guessed it. I am a detective from headquarters. What I want of you I have already stated. Perhaps this young lady can tell me what you cannot. I shall be pleased if this is so."

"Caroline." Then the mother broke down. "Show the gentleman what you picked up from the lobby floor last night."

The girl laughed again, loudly and with evident bravado, before she threw the cloak back, and showed what she had evidently been holding in her hand from the first, a sharp-pointed, gold-dipped paper cutter.

"It was lying there, and I picked it up. I don't see any harm in that."

"You probably meant none. You couldn't have known the part it had just played in this tragic drama," the old detective observed, looking carefully at the cutter which he had taken in his hand, but not so carefully that he failed to note that the look of distress was not lifted from the mother's face either by her daughter's words or manner.

"You have washed this?" he asked.

"No. Why should I wash it? It was clean enough. I was just going down to give it in at the desk. I wasn't going to carry it away." And she turned aside to the window and began to hum, as though done with the whole matter.

The old detective rubbed his chin, glanced again at the paper cutter, then at the girl in the window, and lastly at the mother, who had lifted her head again and was facing him bravely.

"It is very important," he observed to the latter, "that your daughter should be correct in her statement as to the condition of this article when she picked it up. Are you sure she did not wash it?"

"I don't think she did. But I'm sure

she will tell you the truth about that. Caroline, this is a police matter. Any mistake about it may involve us in a world of trouble and keep you from getting back home in time for your coming-out party. Did you—did you wash this cutter when you got upstairs, or—or"—she added, with a propitiatory glance at Mr. Gryce—"wipe it off at any time between then and now? Don't answer hastily. Be sure. No one can blame you for that act. Any girl, as thoughtless as you, might do that."

"Mother, how can I tell what I did?" flashed out the girl, wheeling round on her heel till she faced them both. "I don't remember doing a thing to it. I just brought it up. A thing found like that belongs to the finder. You needn't hold it out toward me like that. I don't want it now; I'm sick of it. Such a lot of talk about a paltry thing which couldn't have cost ten dollars." And she wheeled back.

"It isn't the value." Mr. Gryce could be very patient. "It's the fact that we believe it to have been answerable for Miss Challoner's death—that is, if there was any blood on it when you picked it up."

"Blood!" The girl was facing them again, astonishment struggling with disgust on her plain but mobile features. "Blood! Is that what you mean? No wonder I hate it. Take it away," she cried. "Oh, mother, I'll never pick up anything again which doesn't belong to me. Blood!" she repeated in horror, flinging herself into her mother's arms.

Mr. Gryce thought he understood the situation. Here was a little kleptomaniac whose weakness the mother was struggling to hide. Light was pouring in. He felt the weight of his body less on that miserable foot of his.

"Does that frighten you?" he asked, with a display of indulgence he possibly felt in some degree in his fatherly heart. "Is blood so horrible to you?"

"Don't ask me. And I put the thing under my pillow! I thought it was so —so pretty."

"Mrs. Watkins," Mr. Gryce from henceforth ignored the daughter, "did you see it there?"

"Yes; but I didn't know where it came from. I had not seen my daughter stoop. I didn't know where she got it till I read that bulletin."

"Never mind that. The question agitating me is whether any stain was left under that pillow. We want to be sure of the connection between this possible weapon and the death by stabbing which we all deplore—if there is a connection."

"I didn't see any stain, but you can look for yourself. The bed has been made up, but there was no change of linen. We expected to remain here; I see no good to be gained by hiding any of the facts now."

"None whatever, madam."

"Come, then. Caroline, sit down and stop crying. Mr. Gryce believes that your only fault was in not taking this object at once to the desk."

"Yes, that's all," acquiesced the detective after a short study of the shaking figure and distorted features of the girl. "You had no idea, I'm sure, where this weapon came from or for what it had been used. That's evident."

Her shudder, as she seated herself, was very convincing. She was too young to simulate so successfully emotions of this character.

"I'm glad of that," she responded half fretfully, half gratefully, as Mr. Gryce followed her mother into the adjoining room. "I've had a bad enough time of it without being blamed for what I didn't know and didn't do."

Mr. Gryce laid little stress upon these words, but much upon the lack of curiosity she showed in the minute and careful examination he now made of her room. There was no stain on the pillow cover and none on the bureau spread where she might very naturally have laid the cutter down on first coming into her room. The blade was so polished that it must have been rubbed off somewhere, either purposely or by accident. Where, then, since not here? He asked to see her gloves—the ones she had worn the previous night.

"They are the same she is wearing now," said the anxious mother. "Wait, and I will get them for you."

"No need. Let her hold out her hands in token of amity. I shall soon see."

They returned to where the girl still sat, wrapped in her cloak, sobbing still, but not so violently.

"Caroline, you may take off your things," said the mother, drawing the pins from her own hat. "We shall not go to-day."

The child shot her mother one disappointed look, then proceeded to follow suit. When her hat was off, she began to take off her gloves. As soon as they were on the table, the mother pushed them over to Mr. Gryce. As he looked at them, the girl lifted off her cloak.

"Will—will he tell?" she whispered behind its ample folds into her mother's ear.

The answer came quickly, but not in the mother's tones. Mr. Gryce's ears had lost none of their ancient acuteness.

"I do not see that I should gain much by doing so. The one discovery which would link this find of yours indissolubly with Miss Challoner's death I have failed to make. If I am equally unsuccessful below—if I can establish no closer connection there than here, between this cutter and the weapon which destroyed Miss Challoner, I shall have no cause to mention the matter. It will be too extraneous to the case. Do you remember the exact spot where you stooped, Miss Watkins?"

"No, no. Somewhere near those big chairs, I didn't have to step out of my way; I really didn't."

Mr. Gryce's answering smile was a study. It seemed to convey a twofold message, one for the mother and one for the child, and both were comforting. But he went away, disappointed. The clue which promised so much was, to all appearance, a false one.

VI.

INTEGRITY.

Mr. Gryce's fears were only too well founded. Though Mr. McElroy was kind enough to point out the exact spot where he saw Miss Watkins stoop, no trace of blood was found upon the rug which had lain there, nor had anything of the kind been washed up by the very careful man who scrubbed the lobby floor in the early morning. This was disappointing, as its presence would have settled the whole question. When, these efforts all exhausted, the two detectives faced each other again in the small room given up to their use, Mr. Gryce showed his discouragement. To be certain of a fact you cannot prove has not that same alluring quality for the old that it has for the young. Sweetwater watched him in some concern; then, with the persistence which was one of his strong points, ventured finally to remark:

"I have but one idea left on the subject."

"And what is that?" Old as he was, Mr. Gryce was alert in a moment.

"The girl wore a red cloak. If I mistake not, the lining was also red. A spot on it might not show to the casual observer. Yet it would mean much to us."

"Sweetwater!"

A faint blush rose to the old man's cheek.

"Shall I request the privilege of looking that garment over?"

"Yes."

The young fellow ducked and left the room. When he returned, it was with a downcast air.

"Nothing doing," said he.

And then there was silence.

"We only need to find out now that this cutter was not even Miss Challoner's property," remarked Mr. Gryce at last, with a gesture toward the object named lying openly on the table before him.

"That should be easy. Shall I take it to their rooms and show it to her maid?"

"If you can do so without disturbing the old gentleman."

But here they were themselves disturbed. A knock at the door was followed by the immediate entrance of the very person just mentioned. Mr. Challoner had come in search of the in-

spector, and showed some surprise to find his place occupied by an unknown old man.

But Mr. Gryce, who discerned tidings in the bereaved father's face, was all alacrity in an instant. Greeting his visitor with a smile which few could see without trusting the man, he explained the inspector's absence and introduced himself in his own capacity.

Mr. Challoner had heard of him. Nevertheless, he did not seem inclined to speak.

Mr. Gryce motioned Sweetwater from the room. With a woeful look, the young detective withdrew, his last glance cast at the cutter still lying in full view on the table.

Mr. Gryce, not unmindful himself of this object, took it up, then laid it down again, with an air of seeming abstraction.

The father's attention was caught.

"What is that?" he cried, advancing a step and bestowing more than an ordinary glance at the object thus brought casually, as it were, to his notice. "I surely recognize this cutter. Does it belong here or——"

Mr. Gryce, observing the other's emotion, motioned him to a chair. As his visitor sank into it, he remarked, with all the consideration exacted by the situation:

"It is unknown property, Mr. Challoner. But we have some reason to think it belonged to your daughter. Are we correct in our surmise?"

"I have seen it, or one like it, often in her hand." Here his eyes suddenly dilated, and the hand stretched forth to grasp it quickly drew back. "Where—where was it found?" he hoarsely demanded. "Oh, Heaven! Am I to be crushed to the very earth with sorrow!"

Mr. Gryce hastened to give him such relief as was consistent with the truth.

"It was picked up—last night—from the lobby floor. There is seemingly nothing to connect it with her death. Yet——"

The pause was eloquent. Mr. Challoner gave the detective an agonized look and turned white to the lips. Then gradually, as the silence continued, his head fell forward, and he muttered almost unintelligibly:

"I honestly believed her the victim of some heartless stranger. I do now; but—but I cannot mislead the police. At any cost I must retract a statement I made under false impressions and with no desire to deceive. I said that I knew all of the gentlemen who admired her and aspired to her hand, and that they were all reputable men and above committing a crime of this or any other kind. But it seems that I did not know her secret heart as thoroughly as I had supposed. Among her effects I have just come upon a batch of letters—love letters I am forced to acknowledge—signed by initials totally strange to me. The letters are good—most of them—but one——"

"What about the one?"

"Shows that the writer was displeased. It may mean nothing, but I could not let the matter go without setting myself right with the authorities. If it might be allowed to rest here; if those letters can remain sacred, it would save me the additional pang of seeing her inmost concerns; the secret and holiest recesses of a woman's heart, laid open to the public. For, from the tenor of most of these letters, she—she was not averse to the writer."

Mr. Gryce moved a little restlessly in his chair and stared hard at the cutter so conveniently placed under his eye. Then his manner softened, and he remarked:

"We will do what we can. But you must understand that the matter is not a simple one—that, in fact, it contains mysteries which demand police investigation. We do not dare to trifle with any of the facts. The inspector, and, if not he, the coroner, will have to be told about these letters and will probably ask to see them."

"They are a gentleman's letters."

"With the one exception."

"Yes, that is understood." Then in sudden heat and with an almost sublime trust in his daughter notwithstanding the duplicity he had just discovered: "Nothing—not the story told by these letters, or the sight of that sturdy pa-

per cutter with its long and very slender blade, will make me believe that she willingly took her own life. You do not know, cannot know, the rare delicacy of her nature. She was a lady through and through. If she had meditated death—if the breach suggested by the one letter I have mentioned should have so preyed upon her spirits as to lead her to break her old father's heart and outrage the feelings of all who knew her, she could not, being the woman she was, choose a public place for such an act—a hotel writing room—in face of a lobby full of hurrying men. It was out of nature. Every one who knows her will tell you so. The deed was an accident—incredible—but still an accident."

Mr. Gryce had respect for this outburst. Making no attempt to answer it, he suggested, with some hesitation, that Miss Challoner had been seen writing a letter previous to taking those fatal steps from the desk which ended so tragically. Was this letter to one of her lady friends, as reported, and was it as far from suggesting the awful tragedy which followed, as he had been told?

"It was a cheerful letter. Such a one as she often wrote to her little protégées here and there. I judge that this was written to some girl like that, for the person addressed is not known to my daughter's maid any more than she is to me. It expressed an affectionate interest, and it breathed encouragement —*encouragement! And she meditating her own death at the moment!* Impossible! That letter should exonerate her if nothing else does."

Mr. Gryce recalled the incongruities, the inconsistencies, and even the surprising contradictions which had often marked the conduct of men and women in his lengthy experience of the strange, the sudden, and the tragic things of life, and slightly shook his head. He pitied Mr. Challoner, and admired even more his courage in face of the appalling grief which had overwhelmed him, but he dared not encourage a false hope. The girl had killed herself and with this weapon. They might not be able to prove it absolutely, but it was nevertheless true, and this broken old man would some day be obliged to acknowledge it. But the detective said nothing of this, and was very patient with the further arguments the other advanced to prove his point and the lofty character of the girl to whom, misled by appearances, the police seemed inclined to attribute the awful sin of self-destruction.

But when, this topic exhausted, Mr. Challoner rose to leave the room, Mr. Gryce showed where his own thoughts still centred, by asking him the date of the correspondence discovered between his daughter and her unknown admirer.

"Some of the letters were dated last summer, some this fall. The one you are most anxious to hear only a month back," he added, with unconquerable devotion to what he considered his duty.

Mr. Gryce would have liked to carry his inquiries further, but desisted. His heart was full of compassion for this childless old man, doomed to have his choicest memories disturbed by cruel doubts which possibly would never be removed to his own complete satisfaction.

But when he was gone, and Sweetwater had returned, Mr. Gryce made it his first duty to communicate to his superiors the hitherto unsuspected facts of a secret romance in Miss Challoner's seemingly calm and well-guarded life. She had loved and been loved by one of whom her family knew nothing. And the two had quarreled, as certain letters lately found could be made to show.

VII.

THE LETTERS.

Before a table strewn with papers, in the room we have already mentioned as devoted to the use of the police, sat Doctor Heath in a mood too thoughtful to notice the entrance of Mr. Gryce and Sweetwater from the dining room where they had been having dinner.

As the former's tread was somewhat lumbering, however, the coroner's attention was caught before they had

quite crossed the room, and Sweetwater, with his quick eye, noted how his arm and hand immediately fell so as to cover up a portion of the papers lying nearest to him.

"Well, Gryce, this is a dark case," he observed, as at his bidding the two detectives took their seats.

Mr. Gryce nodded; so did Sweetwater.

"The darkest that has ever come to my knowledge," pursued the coroner.

Mr. Gryce again nodded; but not so Sweetwater. For some reason this simple expression of opinion seemed to have given him a mental start.

"She was not shot. She was not struck by any other hand; yet she lies dead from a mortal wound in the breast. Though there is no tangible proof of her having inflicted this wound upon herself, the jury will have no alternative, I fear, than to pronounce the case one of suicide."

"I'm sorry that I've been able to do so little," remarked Mr. Gryce.

The coroner darted him a quick look.

"You are not satisfied? You have some different idea?" he asked.

The detective frowned at his hands crossed over the top of his cane; then, shaking his head, replied:

"The verdict you mention is the only natural one, of course. I see that you have been talking with Miss Challoner's former maid?"

"Yes, and she has settled an important point for us. There was a possibility, of course, that the paper cutter which you brought to my notice had never gone with her into the mezzanine. That she, or some other person, had dropped it in passing through the lobby. But this girl assures me that her mistress did not enter the lobby that night; that she accompanied her down in the elevator, and saw her step off at the mezzanine. She can also swear that the cutter was in a book she carried—the book we found lying on the desk. The girl remembers distinctly seeing its peculiarly carved handle protrude from its pages. Could anything be more satisfactory if—I was going to say, if the young lady had been of the impulsive type and the provocation greater. But Miss Challoner's nature was calm, and were it not for these letters"—here his arm shifted a little—"I should not be so sure of my jury's future verdict. Love," he went on, after a moment of silent consideration of a letter he had chosen from those before him, "disturbs the most equable natures incalculably. When it enters as a factor, we can expect anything—as you know. And Miss Challoner evidently was much attached to her correspondent, and naturally felt the reproach conveyed in these lines." And Doctor Heath read:

"DEAR MISS CHALLONER: Only a man of small spirit could endure what I endured from you the other day. Love such as mine would be respectable in a clodhopper, and I think that even you will acknowledge that I stand somewhat higher than that. Though I was silent under your disapprobation, you shall yet have your answer. It will not lack point because of this necessary delay."

"A threat!"

The words sprang from Sweetwater, and were evidently involuntary. Doctor Heath paid no notice, but Mr. Gryce, in shifting his hands on his cane top, gave them a sidelong look which was not without a hint of fresh interest in a case concerning which he believed he had said his last word.

"It is the only letter of them all which conveys anything like a reproach," proceeded the coroner. "The rest are ardent enough, and I must acknowledge that, so far as I have allowed myself to look into them, sufficiently respectful. Her surprise must consequently have been great at receiving these lines, and her resentment equally so. If the two met afterward—— But I have not shown you the signature. To the poor father it conveyed nothing—some facts have been kept from him—but to us"—here he whirled the letter about so that Sweetwater, at least, could see the name—"it conveys a hope that we may yet understand Miss Challoner."

"Brotherson!" exclaimed the young detective in loud surprise. "Brotherson! The man who——"

"The man who left this building just before or simultaneously with the alarm

caused by Miss Challoner's fall. It clears away some of the clouds befogging us. She probably caught sight of him in the lobby, and in the passion of the moment forgot her usual instincts and drove the sharp-pointed weapon into her heart."

"Brotherson!" The word came softly now, and with a thoughtful intonation. "He saw her die."

"Why do you say that?"

"Would he have washed his hands in the snow if he had been in ignorance of the occurrence? He was the real, if not active, cause of her death, and he knew it. Either he—— Pardon me, Doctor Heath, and Mr. Gryce, it is not for me to obtrude my opinion. I beg your pardon."

"Have you settled it beyond dispute that Brotherson is the man who was seen performing this act of penitence?"

"No, sir. I have not had a minute for that job, but I'm ready for the business any time you see fit to spare me."

"Let it be to-morrow, or, if you can manage it, to-night. We want the man even if he is not the hero of that romantic episode. He wrote these letters, and he must explain the last one. His initials, as you see, are not ordinary ones, and you will find them at the bottom of all these sheets. He was brave enough or arrogant enough to sign the questionable one with his full name. This may speak well for him, and it may not. I leave that to your decision. Where will you look for him, Sweetwater? No one here knows his address."

"Not Miss Challoner's maid?"

"No; the name is a new one to her. But she made it very evident that she was not surprised to hear that her mistress was in secret correspondence with a member of the male sex. Much can be hidden from servants, but not that."

"I'll find the man; I have a double reason for finding the man; he shall not escape me."

Doctor Heath expressed his satisfaction, and gave some orders. Meanwhile Mr. Gryce had not uttered a word.

VIII.

STRANGE DOINGS FOR GEORGE.

That evening George sat so long over the newspapers that in spite of myself and my own interest in the all-engrossing topic, I fell asleep in my cozy little rocking-chair. I was awakened with what seemed like a kiss falling very softly on my forehead, though, to be sure, it may have been only the flap of George's coat sleeve as he stooped over me.

"Wake up, little woman," I heard, "and trot away to bed. I'm going out and may not be in till daybreak."

"You! Going out! At ten o'clock at night, tired as you are—as we both are! What has happened—— Oh!"

This broken exclamation escaped me as I perceived in the dim background by the sitting-room door the figure of a man who called up recent but very thrilling experiences.

"Mr. Sweetwater," explained George. "We are going out together. It is necessary, or you may be sure I should not leave you."

I was quite wide awake enough by now to understand. "Oh, I know. You are going to hunt up the man. How can I ever wait for you to get back to hear about it? I wish——"

But George did not wait for me to express my wishes. He gave me a little good advice as to the way I might best employ my time in his absence, and was off before I could find words to answer.

This ends all I have to say about myself; but the events of that night carefully related to me by George are important enough for me to describe them, with all the detail which is their rightful due. I shall tell the story as I have already been led to do in other portions of this narrative, as though I were present and shared the adventure.

As soon as the two were in the street, the detective turned toward George, and said:

"Mr. Anderson, I have a great deal to ask of you. The business before us is not a simple one, and I fear that I shall have to subject you to more in-

convenience than is customary in matters like this. Mr. Brotherson has vanished; that is, in his own proper person, but I have an idea that I am on the track of one who will lead us very directly to him if we manage the affair carefully. What I want of you, of course, is mere identification. You saw the face of the man who washed his hands in the snow, and would know it again, you say. Do you think you could be quite sure of yourself, if the man were differently dressed and differently engaged?"

"I think so. There's his height and a certain strong look in his face. I cannot describe it."

"You don't need to. Come! We're all right. You don't mind making a night of it?"

"Not if it is necessary."

"That we can't tell *yet*." And with a characteristic shrug and smile, the detective led the way to a taxicab which stood in waiting at the corner.

A quarter of an hour of rather fast riding brought them into a tangle of streets on the East Side. As George noticed the swarming sidewalks and listened to the noises incident to an overpopulated quarter, he could not forbear, despite the injunction he had received, to express his surprise at the direction of their search.

"Surely," said he, "the gentleman I have described can have no friends here." Then, bethinking himself, he added: "But if he has reasons to fear the law, naturally he would seek to lose himself in a place as different as possible from his usual haunts."

"Yes, that would be some men's way," was the curt, almost indifferent, answer he received. Sweetwater was looking this way and that from the window beside him, and now, leaning out, gave some directions to the driver which altered their course.

When they stopped, which was in a few minutes, he said to George:

"We shall have to walk now for a block or two. I'm anxious to attract no attention, nor is it desirable for you to do so. If you can manage to act as if you were accustomed to the place and just leave all the talking to me, we ought to get along first rate. Don't be astonished at anything you see, and trust me for the rest; that's all."

They alighted, and he dismissed the taxicab. Some clock in the neighborhood struck the hour of ten.

"Good! We shall be in time," muttered the detective, and led the way down the street and round a corner or so, till they came to a block darker than the rest, and infinitely less noisy.

It had a sinister look, and George, who is brave enough under all ordinary circumstances, was glad that his companion wore a badge and carried a whistle. He was also relieved when he caught sight of the burly form of a policeman in the shadow of one of the doorways. Yet the houses he saw before him were not so very different from those they had already passed. His uneasiness could not have sprung from them. They had even an air of positive respectability, as though inhabited by industrious workmen.

Then, what was it which made the close companionship of a member of the police so uncommonly welcome? Was it a certain aspect of solitariness which clung to the block, or was it the sudden appearance here and there of strangely gliding figures, which no sooner loomed up against the snowy perspective than they disappeared again in some unseen doorway?

"There's a meeting on to-night, of the Associated Brotherhood of the Awl, the Plane, and the Trowel, whatever that means, and it is the speaker we want to see; the man who is to address them promptly at ten o'clock. Do you object to meetings?"

"Is this a secret one?"

"It wasn't advertised."

"Are we carpenters or masons that we can count on admittance?"

"I am a carpenter. Don't you think you can be a mason for the nonce?"

"I doubt it, but——"

"Hush! I must speak to this man."

George stood back, and a few words passed between Sweetwater and a shadowy figure which seemed to have sprung up out of the sidewalk.

"Balked at the outset," were the encouraging words with which the detective rejoined George. "It seems that a password is necessary, and my friend has been unable to get it. Will the speaker pass out this way?" he inquired of the shadowy figure still lingering in their rear?

"He didn't go in by it; yet I believe he's safe enough inside," was the muttered answer.

Sweetwater had no relish for disappointments of this character, but it was not long before he straightened up and allowed himself to exchange a few more words with this mysterious person. These appeared to be of a more encouraging nature than the last, for it was not long before the detective returned with renewed alacrity to George, and, wheeling him about, began to retrace his steps to the corner.

"Are we going back? Are you going to give up the job?" George asked.

"No; we're going to take him from the rear. There's a gap in the fence —— Oh, we'll do very well. Trust me."

George laughed. He was growing excited, but not altogether agreeably so. He says that he has seen moments of more pleasant anticipation. Evidently my good husband is not cut out for detective work.

Where they went under this officer's guidance, he cannot tell. The tortuous angle of alleys through which he now felt himself piloted was dark as the nether regions to his unaccustomed eyes. There was snow under his feet, and now and then he brushed against some obtruding object, or stumbled against a fence. Beyond these slight miscalculations on his own part, he was a mere automaton in the hands of his eager guide, and only became his own man again when they suddenly stepped into an open yard and he could discern plainly before him the dark walls of a building pointed out by Sweetwater as their probable destination.

Yet even here they encountered some impediment which prohibited a close approach. A wall or shed cut off their view of the building's lower story; and, though somewhat startled at being left unceremoniously alone after just a whispered word of encouragement from the ever-ready detective, George could quite understand the necessity which that person must feel for a quiet reconnoitering of the surroundings before the two of them ventured farther forward in their possibly hazardous undertaking.

The experience was none too pleasing to George, and he was very glad to hear Sweetwater's whisper again at his ear, and to feel himself rescued from the pool of slush in which he had been left to stand.

"The approach is not all that can be desired," remarked the detective as they entered what appeared to be a low shed. "The broken board has been put back and securely nailed in place, and if I am not very much mistaken there is a fellow stationed in the yard who will want the password, too. Looks shady to me. I'll have something to tell the chief when I get back."

"But we! What are we going to do if we cannot get in, front or rear?"

"We're going to wait right here in the hopes of catching a glimpse of our man as he comes out," returned the detective, drawing George toward a low window overlooking the yard he had described as sentineled. "He will have to pass directly under this window on his way to the alley," Sweetwater went on to explain; "and if I can only raise it—but the noise would give us away. I can't do that."

"Perhaps it swings on hinges," suggested George. "It looks like that sort of a window."

"If it should—— Well! It does. It's just as it should be. But before I pull it open, remember that as soon as I have done this, our least word or slightest movement can be heard in the yard there. So don't even attempt to whisper. When you hear him coming, as sooner or later you certainly will, fall carefully to your knees and lean out just far enough to catch a glimpse of him before he steps down from the porch onto the walk running directly under this window. If he stops to light

his cigar or to pass a few words with some of the men he will leave behind, you may get a plain enough view of his face or figure to identify him. The light is burning low in that rear hall, but it may serve. If it does not—if you can't see him, or if you do, don't hang out of the window more than a second. Duck after your first look. I don't want to be caught at this job with no better opportunity for escape than we have here. Can you remember all that?"

George pinched his arm encouragingly, and Sweetwater, with an amused grunt, swiftly unlatched the window and pulled it wide open.

A fine sleet flew in, imperceptible save for the sensation of damp it gave and the slight haze it diffused through the air. Enlarged by this haze, the building they were set to watch rose in magnified proportions at their left. The yard between, piled high in the centre with snow heaps or other heaps covered with snow, could not have been more than forty feet square. The window from which they peered was halfway down this yard, so that very few feet separated them from the porch where George had been told to look for the man he was expected to identify. All was dark there at present, but he could hear from time to time some sounds of restless movement, as the guard who was posted within shifted in his narrow quarters, or stamped his benumbed feet softly on the floor.

But what came to them from above was more interesting than anything to be heard or seen below. A man's voice, raised to a wonderful pitch by the passion of oratory, had burst the barriers of the closed hall in that towering third story and was carrying its tale to other ears than those within.

Had it been summer and the windows open, both George and Sweetwater might have heard every word; for the tones were exceptionally rich and penetrating, and the speaker intent only on the impression he was endeavoring to make upon his audience. That he had not mistaken his power in this direction was evinced by the applause which rose from time to time from innumerable hands and feet. But this uproar would be speedily silenced, and the mellow voice ring out again, clear and commanding.

What could the subject be to rouse such enthusiasm in the Associated Brotherhood of the Awl, the Plane, and the Trowel? There was a moment when our listening friends expected to be enlightened. A shutter was thrown back in one of those upper windows, and the window hurriedly raised, during which words took the place of sounds, and they heard enough to whet their appetite for more. But only that. The shutter was speedily restored to place, and the window again closed. Wisely, George thought, if they wished to keep their doubtful proceedings secret.

A tirade against the rich and a loud call to battle could be gleaned from the few sentences they had heard. But its virulence and pointed attack was not that of the second-rate demagogue, or walking delegate, but of a man whose intellect and culture rang in every tone, and informed each sentence.

Sweetwater, in whom satisfaction was fast taking the place of impatience and regret, pushed the window to before asking George this question:

"Did you hear the voice of the man whose action attracted your attention outside the Clermont?"

"No."

"Did you note just now the large shadow dancing on the ceiling over the speaker's head?"

"Yes, but I could judge nothing from that."

"Well, he's a rum one. I shan't open this window again till he gives signs of reaching the end of his speech. It's cold."

But almost immediately he gave a start, and, pressing George's arm, appeared to listen, not to the speech which was no longer audible, but to something much nearer—a step or movement in the adjoining yard.

At least so George interpreted the quick turn which this impetuous detective made, and the pains he took to direct George's attention to the walk

running under the window beneath which they crouched.

Some one was stealing down upon the house at their left, from the alley beyond—a big man, whose shoulder brushed the window as he went by. George felt his hand seized again and pressed as this happened, and before he had recovered from this excitement experienced another quick pressure, and still another as one, two, three additional figures went slipping by. Then his hand was suddenly dropped, for a cry had shot up from the door where the sentinel stood guard, followed by a sudden loud slam, and the noise of a shooting bolt, which, proclaiming as it did that the invaders were not friends, but enemies to the cause which was being vaunted above, so excited Sweetwater that he pulled the window wide open and took a bold look out. George followed his example, and this was what they saw:

Three men were standing flat against the fence leading from the shed directly to the porch. The fourth was crouching within the latter, and in another moment they heard his fist descend upon the door inside in a way to rouse the echoes. Meantime the voice in the audience hall above had ceased, and there was heard instead the scramble of hurrying feet and the noise of overturning benches. Then a window flew up, and a voice called down:

"Who's that? What do you want down there?"

But before an answer could be shouted back, this man was drawn fiercely inside, and the scramble was renewed, amid which George heard Sweetwater's whisper at his ear:

"It's the police. The chief has got ahead of me. Was that the man we're after—the one who shouted down?"

"No. Neither was he the speaker. The voices are very different."

"We want the speaker. If the boys get him, we're all right; but if they don't—— Wait, I must make the matter sure."

And with a bound he vaulted through the window, whistling in a peculiar way. George, thus left quite alone, had the pleasure of seeing his sole protector mix with the boys, as he called them, and ultimately crowd in with them through the door which had finally been opened for their admittance. Then came a wait, and then the quiet reappearance of the detective alone and in no very amiable mood.

"Well?" inquired George, somewhat breathlessly. "Do you want me? They don't seem to be coming out."

"No; they've gone the other way. It was a red-hot anarchist meeting, and no mistake. They have arrested one of the speakers, but the other escaped. How, we have not yet found out; but I think there's a secret passageway somewhere by which he got the start of us. He was the man I wanted you to see. Bad luck, Mr. Anderson, but I'm not at the end of my resources. If you'll have patience with me and accompany me a little farther, I promise you that I'll only risk one more failure. Will you be so good, sir?"

IX.

THE INCIDENT OF THE PARTLY LIFTED SHADE.

The fellow had a way with him, hard to resist. Cold as George was and exhausted by an excitement of a kind to which he was wholly unaccustomed, he found himself acceding to the detective's request; and after a quick lunch and a huge cup of coffee in a restaurant, which I wish I had time to describe, the two took a car which eventually brought them into one of the oldest quarters of the Borough of Brooklyn.

The sleet which had stung their faces in the streets of New York had been left behind them somewhere on the bridge, but the chill was not gone from the air, and George felt greatly relieved when Sweetwater paused in the middle of a long block before a lofty tenement house of mean appearance, and signified that here they were to stop, and that from now on "mum" was to be their watchword.

George was relieved, I say, but he was also more astonished than ever. What kind of haunts were these for the

cultured gentleman who spent his evenings at the Clermont? It was easy enough to understand, in these days of extravagant sympathies, such a man being led into speechifying before the uneasy spirits of lower New York—he had been called an enthusiast, and an enthusiast is very often a political agitator—but to trace him afterward to a place like this was certainly a surprise.

A tenement—such a tenement as this—meant home—home for himself or for those he counted his friends, and such a supposition seemed inconceivable to my poor husband, with the memory of the gorgeous parlors of the Clermont in his mind. Indeed, he hinted something of the kind to his affable but strangely reticent companion, but all the answer he got was a peculiar smile, whose humorous twist he could barely discern in the semidarkness of the open doorway into which they had just plunged.

"An adventure! Certainly an adventure!" flashed through poor George's mind, as he peered in great curiosity down the long hall before him, into a dismal rear, opening into a still more dismal court. It was truly a novel experience for a business man whose philanthropy was carried on entirely by proxy—that is, by his wife. Should he be expected to penetrate into those dark, ill-smelling recesses, or would he be led up these long flights of naked stairs, so feebly illuminated that they gave the impression of extending indefinitely into dimmer and dimmer heights of decay and desolation?

Sweetwater seemed to decide for the rear, for, leaving George, he stepped down the hall into the court beyond, where George could see him casting inquiring glances up at the walls above him. Another tenement, similar to the one whose rear end he was contemplating, towered behind, but he paid no attention to that. He was satisfied with the look he had given and came quickly back, joining George at the foot of the staircase, up which he silently led the way.

It was a rude, none-too-well-cared-for building, but it seemed respectable enough and very quiet, considering the mass of people it accommodated. There were marks of poverty everywhere, but no squalor. One flight—two flights—three—and then George's guide stopped, and, looking back at him, made a gesture. It appeared to be one of caution; but, when the two came together at the top of the staircase, Sweetwater spoke quite naturally as he pointed out a door in their rear.

"That's the room. We'll keep a sharp watch here, and when any man, no matter how he looks or what his appearance, comes up these stairs and turns that way, give him a sharp look. You understand?"

"Yes; but——"

"Oh, he hasn't come in yet. I took pains to find that out. You saw me go into the court and look up. That was to see if his window was lighted. Well, it wasn't."

George felt nonplused. "But surely," said he, "the gentleman named Brotherson doesn't live here?"

"The *inventor* does."

"Oh!"

"And—— But I will explain later."

The suppressed excitement contained in these words made George stare. Indeed, he had been wondering for some time at the manner of the detective which showed a curious mixture of several opposing emotions. Now, the fellow was actually in a tremble of hope or impatience; and, not content with listening, he peered every few minutes down the well of the staircase, and, when he was not doing that, tramped from end to end of the narrow passageway separating the head of the stairs from the door he had pointed out, like one to whom minutes were hours.

All this time he seemed to forget George, who certainly had as much reason as himself for finding the time long. But when, after half an hour of this tedium and suspense, there rose from below the faint clatter of ascending footsteps, he remembered his meek companion, and, beckoning him to one side, began a studied conversation with him, showing him a notebook in which he had written such phrases as these:

Don't look up till he is fairly in range with the light.

There's nothing to fear; he doesn't know either of us.

If it is a face you have seen before—if it is the one we are expecting to see, pull your necktie straight. It's a little on one side.

These rather startling injunctions were read by George, with no very perceptible diminution of the uneasiness which it was only natural for him to feel at the oddity of his position. But only the demand last made produced any impression on him. The man they were waiting for was no farther up than the second floor, but instinctively George's hand had flown to his necktie, and he was only stopped from its premature rearrangement by the warning look of Sweetwater.

"Not unless you know him," whispered the detective; and immediately launched out into an easy talk about some totally different business which George neither understood, nor was expected to, I dare say.

Suddenly the steps below paused, and George heard Sweetwater draw in his breath in irrepressible dismay. But they were immediately resumed, and presently the head and shoulders of a workingman of uncommon proportions appeared in sight on the stairway.

George cast him a keen look, and his hand rose doubtfully to his neck, and then fell back again. The approaching man was tall, very well proportioned, and easy of carriage; but the face—such of it as could be seen between his cap and the high collar he had pulled up about his ears, conveyed no exact impression to George's mind, and he did not dare to give the signal Sweetwater expected from him. Yet as the man went by with a dark and sidelong glance at them both, he felt his hand rise again, though he did not complete the action, much to his own disgust, and to the evident disappointment of the watchful detective.

"You're not sure?" he now heard, oddly interpolated in the stream of half-whispered talk with which the other endeavored to carry off the situation.

George shook his head. He could not rid himself of the old impression he had formed of the man in the snow.

"Mr. Dunn, a word with you," suddenly spoke up Sweetwater to the man who had just passed them. "That's your name, isn't it?"

"Yes, that is my name," was the quiet response, in a voice which was at once rich and resonant; a voice which George knew—the voice of the impassioned speaker he had heard resounding through the sleet as he cowered within hearing in the shed behind Avenue A. "Who are you who wish to speak to me at so late an hour?"

He was returning to them from the door he had unlocked and left slightly ajar.

"Well, we are—— You know what," smiled the ready detective, advancing halfway to greet him. "We're not members of the Associated Brotherhood, but possibly have hopes of being so. At all events, we should like to talk the matter over, if, as you say, it's not too late."

"I have nothing to do with the club——"

"But you spoke before it."

"Yes."

"Then you can give us some sort of an idea how we are to apply for membership."

Mr. Dunn met the concentrated gaze of his two evidently unwelcome visitors with a frankness which dashed George's confidence in himself, but made little visible impression upon his daring companion.

"I would rather see you at another time," said he. "But"—his hesitation was inappreciable—"if you will allow me to be brief, I will tell you what I know—which is very little."

Sweetwater was greatly taken aback. All he had looked for, as he was careful to tell my husband later, was a sufficiently prolonged conversation to enable George to mark and study the working of the face he was not yet sure of. Nor did the detective feel quite easy at the readiness of his reception; nor any too well pleased to accept the invitation which this man now gave them to enter his room.

But he suffered no betrayal of his misgivings to escape him, though he was careful to intimate to George, as they waited in the doorway for the other to light up, that he should not be displeased at his refusal to accompany him farther in this adventure, and even advised him to remain in the hall till he received his summons to enter.

But George had not come thus far to back out now, and, as soon as he saw Sweetwater advance into the now well-lighted interior, he advanced, too, and began to look around him.

The room, like many others in these old-fashioned tenements, had a jog just where the door was, so that on entering they had to take several steps before they could get a full glimpse of its four walls. When they did, both showed surprise. Comfort, if not elegance, confronted them, which impression, however, was immediately lost in the evidences of work, manual as well as intellectual, which were everywhere scattered about.

The man who lived here was not only a student, as was evinced by a long wall full of books, but he was an art lover, a musician, an inventor, and an athlete. So much could be learned from the most cursory glance. A more careful one picked up other facts fully as startling and impressive. The books were choice; the invention to all appearances a practical one; the art of a high order, and the music, such as was in view, of a character of which the nicest taste need not be ashamed.

George began to feel quite conscious of the intrusion of which they had been guilty, and was amazed at the ease with which the detective carried himself in the presence of such manifestations of culture and good, hard work. Then he recalled, quickly and without conscious association of ideas, the strip of lonely street he had seen only two nights ago, with a figure stooping to the snow, and washing—washing—— Here he found himself staring at the occupant of the room, who had taken up his stand before them and was regarding them while they were regarding the room.

He had thrown aside his hat and rid himself of his overcoat, and the fearlessness of his aspect seemed to daunt the hitherto dauntless Sweetwater, who, for the first time in his life perhaps, hunted in vain for words with which to open the conversation.

Had he made an awful mistake? Was this Mr. Dunn what he seemed, an unknown and careful genius, battling with great odds in his honest struggle to give the world something of value in return for what it had given him? The quick, almost deprecatory glance he darted at George betrayed his dismay; a dismay which George had begun to share, notwithstanding his growing belief that the man's face was not wholly unknown to him even if he could not recognize it as the one he had seen outside the Clermont.

"You seem to have forgotten your errand," came in quiet, if not good-natured, sarcasm from their patiently waiting host.

"It's the room," muttered Sweetwater, with an attempt at his old-time ease, which was not as fully successful as usual. "What an all-fired genius you must be! I never saw the like. And in a tenement house, too! You ought to be in one of those big new studio buildings in New York, where artists be and everything you see is beautiful. You'd appreciate it, you would."

The detective started, George started, at the gleam which answered him from a very uncommon eye. It was a temporary flash, however, and quickly veiled, and the tone in which this Dunn now spoke was anything but an encouraging one.

"I thought you were desirous of joining a Socialistic fraternity," said he; "a true aspirant for such honors doesn't care for beautiful things unless all can have them. I prefer my tenement. How is it with you, friends?"

Sweetwater found some sort of a reply, though the thing which this man now did must have startled him, as it certainly did George. They were so grouped that a table quite full of anomalous objects stood at the back of their host, and consequently quite beyond their own reach. As Sweetwater

began to speak, he whom he had addressed by the name of Dunn drew a pistol from his breast pocket and laid it down, barrel toward them on this table top. Then he looked up courteously enough, and listened till Sweetwater was done. A very handsome man, but one not to be trifled with in the slightest degree. Both recognized this fact, and George, for one, began to edge toward the door.

"Now I feel easier," remarked the giant, swelling out his chest. He was unusually tall, as well as unusually proportioned. "I never like to carry arms; but sometimes it is unavoidable. Damn it, what hands!" He was looking at his own, which certainly showed soil. "Will you pardon me?" he pleasantly apologized, stepping toward a washstand and plunging his hands into the basin. "I cannot think with dirt on me like that. Humph! Hey, did you speak?"

He turned quickly on George, who had certainly uttered an ejaculation; but, receiving no reply, went on with his task, completing it with a care and a disregard of their presence which showed him up in still another light.

"Now, I am ready to talk," he said, as he wheeled himself again about. But for one fleeting instant even his hardihood showed shock, for a very different man confronted him in the person of Sweetwater from him upon whom he had just turned his back, with so little ceremony. For in that space of time George had seen again the picture photographed in his memory by that scene in the snow, and his hand had flown, surcharged with meaning, to his throat, and the necktie had been pulled straight.

"Mr. Brotherson," fell in quite clear and purposeful accents from the now confident detective's lips, "if you feel quite clean, and if you have sufficiently warmed yourself, I would suggest that we start out at once, unless you prefer to have me share this room with you till the morning."

There was silence. Mr. Dunn, thus addressed, attempted no answer; not for a full minute. The two men were measuring each other—George felt that he did not count at all—and *they* were quite too much occupied with this task to heed the passage of time.

To George, who knew little, if anything, of what this silent struggle meant to either, it seemed that the detective stood no show before this Samson of physical strength and intellectual power, backed by a pistol just within reach of his hand. But as George continued to look and saw the figure of the smaller man gradually dilate, while that of the larger, the more potent and the better guarded, gave unmistakable signs of secret wavering, he slowly changed his mind, and, ranging himself with the detective, waited for the word or words which would explain this situation and render intelligible the triumph gradually becoming visible in the young detective's eyes.

But he was not destined to have his curiosity satisfied so far. He might witness and hear, but it was long before he understood.

"'Brotherson?'" repeated their host, after the silence had lasted to the breaking point. "Why do you call me that?"

"Because it is your name."

"You called me Dunn a minute ago."

"That is true."

"Why Dunn if Brotherson is my name?"

"Because you spoke under the name of Dunn at the meeting to-night, and, if I don't mistake, that is the name by which you are known here."

"And you? By what name are you known?"

"It is late to ask, isn't it? But I'm willing to speak it now, and I might not have been so a little earlier in our conversation. I am Detective Sweetwater, of the New York Department of Police, and my errand here is a very simple one. Some letters signed by you have been found among the papers of the lady whose mysterious death at the Hotel Clermont is just now occupying the attention of the New York authorities. If you have any information to give which will in any way explain that death, your presence will be welcome

at Coroner Heath's office in New York. If you have not, your presence will still be welcome. At all events, I was told to bring you. You will be on hand to accompany me in the morning, I am quite sure, pardoning the unconventional means I have taken to make sure of my man?"

The humor with which this was said seemed to rob it of anything like attack, and Mr. Brotherson, as we shall hereafter call him, smiled with an odd acceptance of the same, as he responded:

"I will go before the police certainly. I haven't much to tell, but what I have is at their service. It will not help you, but I have no secrets. What are you doing?"

He bounded toward Sweetwater, who had simply stepped to the window, lifted the shade, and looked across at the opposing tenement.

"I wanted to see if it was still snowing," explained the detective, with a smile, which seemed to strike the other like a blow. "If it was a liberty, please pardon it."

Mr. Brotherson drew back. The cold air of self-possession which he now assumed presented a contrast to the unwarranted heat of the moment before that George wondered greatly over it, and later, when he recapitulated to me the whole story of this night, it was this incident of the lifted shade, together with the emotion it had caused, which he acknowledged as being for him the most inexplicable event of the evening and the one he was most anxious to hear explained.

As this ends all connection on our part with this affair, I will bid you my personal farewell. I have often wished that we might have been circumstanced so that it would have been proper for us to have followed it to the end.

TO BE CONTINUED.

The second installment of this story will be published two weeks hence in the first April POPULAR, on sale March 10th.

DOCTOR HILL—THE EXILE

DOCTOR JOHN WESLEY HILL, the New York divine, is almost as much interested in politics as he is in religion, and he is a great friend of President Taft. On last election day, when Mr. Taft went to Cincinnati to vote, he met Doctor Hill in the railroad station.

"How do things look politically in Ohio, doctor?" asked the President.

"Fine!" said the doctor, with great enthusiasm.

"I doubt that," commented Gus Karger, a newspaper correspondent who knows all about Ohio politics.

"No reason to doubt," objected the divine. "Why, I've made ninety-four speeches in this State myself, and, if it goes Democratic, I'll be ashamed to stay in the United States."

That night, when it became known that Ohio had gone over to the Democrats by a tremendous majority, Karger was still in Cincinnati, and the President and Doctor Hill were on a train speeding eastward.

This is the telegram Karger sent the President:

Ohio has gone Democratic. Sorry. Put Hill off the train.

WITH A FIFTY DOLLAR START

Frank A. Munsey, who is reputed to be many times a millionaire, and who owns a lot of magazines and newspapers, began life in New York City with fifty dollars in his pocket. He was a telegraph operator.

The "Mary Jane"

A TALE OF THE COMPETENTS

By Roy Norton

Author of "The Toll of the Sea," "The Willow Creek Stories," Etc.

THE homely name clings to me as a relic of those far-off days, relinquished to time, when the whole Northland had the allurement of fortune and adventure, hardihood and glamour. And yet, she was but a steamboat with a personality, a fabric of wood and steel, which became an idol! But she was part of life, and the time when life was brave and young.

Shipwrecked in my first venture, homesick and helpless, I had been accepted as a "pardner" by The Competents, four grave and gray giants from the Sierras, who were frankly seeking adventure rather than wealth, of which they had more than they could ever squander. Sometimes I wonder that they sought even adventure, for of that, too, they had in Memory's chambers a store beyond the need of any four men; but, then, with youth and romance by my side, neither they nor their quest seemed incongruous.

There was no *Mary Jane* then; she was to come into being, and become a part of our hopes and dreams, for adventure or gold, many weeks after that day we, the shipwrecked argonauts of the steam schooner *West Coast,* were landed on St. Michael's Island to fend with fate as best our arms permitted. I saw but little of that strangely assorted crowd that had accompanied me on my first voyage.

They pass in review now, sometimes, ghostlike in their silence as they pace through the pictures of the mind; some of them lean and gaunt, with marks of desert suns on their tanned faces, others grim, and gray, and taciturn, and yet others who ruffled it in their mackinaws as veritable swashbucklers of the time as were those fabled heroes who cut and slashed through the pages of a Dumas.

Some of them turned back, broken-pursed; some of them went on, to turn back in later years, broken in health and heart, and others never turned; but, fighting, perhaps, to the end more or less incontinently, relinquished their lives to that pallid, insatiable North.

It was from one of them that we, The Competents and I, learned of the *Mary Jane* to be, at a time when it seemed impossible for any of us to ever get up the Yukon River and thus reach the fabulous Klondike beyond. She was the outgrowth of that season's madness, when men fought, stole, murdered, to reach that new El Dorado. Down on Puget Sound a little band of moneyed incompetents, daring adventurers, and others, had conceived her. She was to be a steamboat built in sections, assembled on St. Michael's, and to carry her owners up that splendid waterway that cuts the magnificent domain of Alaska in two.

We heard of her at our tent on the beach, where we sat one night after another day's fruitless inquiry at the plethoric commercial company's office, and had been told for the twentieth day that it could not assure us passage up the river, no matter how much money we offered in payment. The Competents had fortified themselves with a most liberal collection of letters of credit and drafts, as well as actual coin, and were too long accustomed to overcoming obstacles and having their own way, to quietly resign themselves to such obstructions. So they were in a receptive mood on this night when one of our

former shipmates told us of the new venture, and that the *Mary Jane* to be was expected to arrive almost any day.

"There are some of the men here now, stopping up at the A. C.," our informant said, "who are already sick of the country—the kind of men that don't belong here, anyway. They own several shares out of the twenty-five, and they'd sell 'em for a song."

"Why don't you buy them if you want to get up the river?" old Tom Evans curiously inquired.

"Because," the man answered, "I've got a job over at the new military reservation, and ten a day is good enough for me."

Nothing more was said at the time; but after he had gone, and we were left alone, lounging around our fire and hearing the soft croon of the Bering Sea in calm mood as it lapped against the beach near by, The Competents referred to it again, and I foresaw that it was almost certain they would buy four shares in the new enterprise if they could be obtained at a reasonable figure.

Sitting there and staring into the flames, my heart sank, for I understood that the shares were originally worth a thousand dollars each—and that, or an approximate sum, was beyond my reach. Beyond reach? Yes, almost beyond the dreams of a boy of twenty who had not ten dollars to his name, and was living on the kindness of other men.

Something of my despair must have been mirrored in my face, for I heard Bill Davis, who had been talking, suddenly stop, and felt his keen eyes upon me. After an instant he went on with what he had been saying, but coupled into it words of hope.

"Of course," he said, "there are five of us to be taken in, and no less. If we can't buy five shares, we don't buy any."

I looked my gratitude at him across the camp fire, and caught the kindly, reassuring smile.

"Certainly," George added, "that goes without saying, because there's five of us now. I think what we ought to do is to go and see the fellers that are weak-kneed the first thing in the morning, before they change their minds, find out all about it, and buy, if it sounds good."

My anxiety of the next day may be surmised; but I was to hear nothing until we were again assembled at the camp fire, the four Competents sitting around imperturbably, and rolling cigarettes. They acted as if there was nothing to talk about, until at last Tom leaned over on his elbow and, as if the thought had just come to him, said:

"By the way, George, what about the steamboat?"

"Bought five shares," was the laconic response. "Schooner bringin' it up is due now."

The sublime faith of these men in one another was one of their most noticeable characteristics; but on that night, with boyish eagerness, I wished it were less, and that Tom and Tim would ask more questions. I could not understand their lack of curiosity. There were a thousand questions quivering on the end of my tongue. Davis again appeared to fathom my mind, for he smiled his slow, friendly smile, and reached into his pocket, from which he drew a worn wallet.

"Maybe it's best for each fellow to keep his deed," he said, and selected a paper and handed it to me. It was made out in my name, and showed that I had paid one thousand dollars for a share in the enterprise. I was a capitalist! A part owner of a steamboat to be built! I stammered in endeavoring to express my gratitude, and then went dumb. The Competents looked across at me and laughed, and I felt my throat restrict, and was confused.

"Mister Davis," I blurted out desperately, "I'll pay you some day."

"You don't owe it to me," came his instant rejoinder.

"Nor to me, that's a cinch," George added.

I looked at the other Competents.

"Well, I must owe it to some one," I insisted.

Gray-headed old Tom Evans lifted his black, serious eyes from the fire, and studied my face.

"Boy," he said at last, "you don't owe it to anybody. All you owe us is to just

keep on being yourself. We four have known each other 'most all our lives, and we never yet have reckoned our friendships in dollars. We are beginning to take you on as a friend."

Time has hardened me, and now I am a man; but I am not ashamed of the emotion that mastered me that night and drove me from the camp fire into the tent for its concealment. The unostentatious simplicity of their friendship, the delicate, wordless way in which they put their strong hands beneath me and lifted me up in those days of my darkness, I am sure, had more effect on my character than all that ever happened before I met them, or can ever happen, now that they are gone.

"Boy, the schooner's here!" a voice awoke me in the morning, and I hurried out to see this argosy, and that day was the beginning of my acquaintance with the *Mary Jane*.

Endless masses of structure, some of it partially joined, other portions of it marked, were heaped and piled upon the beach, and gradually we came to know our new partners. Some of them were fitted for the enterprise, but others there were who had neither spirits nor bodies for such a venture. Some of them, whom at first one would consider worthless, proved worthy; and others, gods at first sight, developed feet of clay, as we united our forces and began assembling our boat. Her hull was joined together, and then she was christened by Jess, an ex-cook, ex-sawmill engineer, and ex-farmer, who was an immense fat man of the most astonishing strength and agility. He made us a speech on the night when we discussed her name.

"Boys," he said, in his high, thin voice, "there's some of you here wants to call her the *Lotus*. Others stick for *Birdie*, and Boston has dug up *Clara Vere De Vere;* but I'm for one of them good, old homely names, the kind that sound as if they meant something. Think of that girl Mary Jane De Ark! Wasn't she some girl? Good, sensible name that—except the French part of it. Think of all that the Mary Janes has done in this world! I'm for *Mary Jane!*"

And *Mary Jane* she was named. I have often wondered since where Jess, the ex-cook, who read but slowly, ever thumbed the pages telling of Joan of Arc; but, in his fat, sentimental soul she had clung until now he did his part to honor her memory. We had no wine, and I doubt if Jess, being avowedly a temperance advocate, would have sanctioned its use; but he overcame all difficulties by breaking a bottle of catsup over the boat's snub bows and squeaked, in his absurd tenor: "Here's to you, *Mary Jane!*"

We found that it was not so easy to build a steamboat as some of the party had believed, and then, at the last moment, the engines failed to arrive. I am not sure but that the organizers of the enterprise had forgotten them. There was much grumbling at this oversight, many members of the company insisting that a steamboat without a steam engine could scarcely carry us anywhere, let alone up four hundred miles of river with winter fast approaching.

Men from the upper country began to arrive, having traveled the length of the Yukon in open boats, or by one lone steamer, and among them were many who were discouraged.

They assured us that every foot of ground in the Klondike that had gold in it had been staked, and then some. Some of them declared there was no gold in the country, outside of Stick George's claim. Four more of our party decided they preferred the United States of America, and auctioned off their shares. The Competents, more out of pity for the discouraged than through desire for ownership, promptly purchased these.

The engines came at last, and were the wrong size. Our promoters, we learned, had consulted a steamboat man who once ran a pleasure craft on bayous, and he had confidently given them a horse power sufficient to run a boat on still water, forgetting that the Yukon River has a current. It was too late in the season to send out for others, and the last of the timorous ones declared against attempting anything further until the next season.

We had a great political campaign, in

which those who did not want to make the endeavor tried to gain a majority to vote their way, hoping thereby to defer the trip. In that ten days' time The Competents held themselves aloof.

It came the night of the meeting, and Jess was made chairman. Ponderously he called the meeting to order in the form, evidently, of opening some lodge of which he had been a member, and where he had gained his sole knowledge of parliamentary proceedings. He immediately usurped the rights of office by beginning a speech in which he exorted his hearers to vote for going up the river and taking chances on getting through. His ideas of steamboating were as vague as those of the men who had bought the engines. He aroused a storm of protest in our divided camp, and men passed from warm arguments to vituperation. They began to review the mistakes of the company, and accusations of various misdoings were made. There were so many objections that as I sat there and heard them, much of the gilding on this great dream of mine began to tarnish.

"The lodge will come to order!" Jess kept shouting ineffectually, as more men became involved, until only The Competents sat quietly without taking part. One man had volunteered to "thump" another's head as soon as the session was over, and appearances indicated that the meeting of the *Mary Jane* company would end in a grand free-for-all fight. Jess, in his efforts to restore order, was now dancing his two hundred and fifty pounds up and down like a marionette, and the consultation threatened an abrupt and unseemly end.

I heard, almost behind me, a stentorian shout of "Shut up! All of you!"

Tom Evans had arisen to his feet, and, with a heavy frown, was striding toward the box on which Joss tiptoed up and down like a great fighting cock.

"I'll take a hand in this," Tom went on, in the silence that he had occasioned, and which was, perhaps, obtained through fear. "Me and my pardners are for going up the river; but we're not fools enough to be certain the *Mary Jane* can make it. We came up here to try. If we can't get through, we'll go as far as we can. We're not the kind that turn back. If there's anybody here that wants to quit, now is his chance. We don't care to own a steamboat, but we'll buy out anybody whose toes have got frosted; because we've dawdled along here too much already."

It was surprising the way the *Mary Jane's* stock began to go up. The man who had been the loudest in his assertions that the enterprise was a failure, was the one who wanted the most money.

"I wouldn't take a cent less than fifteen hundred for my share," he shouted.

"Then you're one man who won't sell," Tom calmly answered, turning to another, as if dismissing that part of the transaction. In less than five minutes stock had fallen to five hundred dollars, as if under the influence of a harsh bear raid, and The Competents found themselves possessed of twenty shares out of the twenty-five, and with but five partners, not including myself. And that they were the five best men of the original company is my steadfast belief.

There followed a time of hopeful activity, free from strife, for all of us worked early and late while the former members of the company sat around on the bank above, tendered free advice, smiled behind their hands, and watched for a steamer to carry them away to the States, or hopefully speculated on the chances of another steamboat with unfilled lists going to Dawson before the winter shut down.

My hopes were again gilded. Every blow of a hammer, every swash of a paint brush, every turn of a screw as we set our puny engine, brought a heart throb, and I fell in love with the *Mary Jane*, the first and only steamboat in which I had an ownership. I used to work in her until some of The Competents would drag me away. I exulted in foolish decorations. I striped her salons and cabins and painted the name plate that was to flash up and down the river. I traded all my small possessions for a splendid set of antlers to go over her pilot house, and spent my last

small change for part of a can of paint to gild them.

I longed expectantly, eagerly, for the first blast from her huge whistle, wondering how it would sound, and if its bellow could be as heavy as that of the unfortunate *West Coast,* that had brought me so disastrously into the Bering Sea. It seems unboundedly silly now, but I was not twenty-one; and, after all, who of us would change anything in life for some of the brave, unaccomplished dreams of youth?

Fate sent us a captain in the last minute, otherwise I know not what we, all of whom were ignorant of steamboat navigation, would have done. And Fate was kind, for Captain Holt was a gentleman and a navigator.

He was a diminutive man in stature, made of whipcord and steel, snow-white, soft-spoken, reticent, and calm-eyed. We hired two natives who claimed to be pilots, short, stocky, wooden-faced, ill-favored, and dirty they were, concealing a great stupidity under their inability to speak English. And so, at last, provisioned, equipped, and shining from stack to guard rail, the *Mary Jane* prepared to start.

Long before this our former companions in proprietorship had departed, and the beach was almost deserted. The natives, stolid but excited, their squaws, their papooses, and their yelping dogs, assembled to bid us farewell. Blatchford, the fine little Englishman from the trading post, came to interpret our last directions to the pilots. Father Barnum, the missionary, who stood for all things good, came to the edge of the bluff above us and stretched out his hands in benediction. Captain Holt jangled the bells, and Jess, jack of all trades and "chief engineer," whirled the steam valve. The paddle wheels revolved promptly, and we swung away from the lee shore of the bluff which had guarded the birth of the *Mary Jane,* and turned toward the open water that we must cross to reach the treacherous bars at the mouth of the immense Yukon. The whistle bellowed fiercely and to my great delight, while Jess plunged for the speaking tube.

"Don't blow too much," he piped up shrilly. "For the Lord's sake, don't blow unless you have to! It takes all the steam in the boilers."

My first disappointment had come. I was not to hear that melodious whistle which had the assumption of an ocean liner. I stoked more madly, heaving the wood into the fire, hoping that Jess would reconsider as the steam gauges began again to send the wavering needles up around their dials. We were in the open sea that from the shore had looked smooth and unbroken, but now developed terrifying power. The *Mary Jane* reeled, and swung wildly. Her timbers shrieked and squealed with the strain. She threatened to broach to under the buffetings of that unkind sea which, with a twenty-eight-inch draft and top-heavy works, would have meant instantaneous destruction. The bells rang insistently for more power, and I glanced over my shoulder to see that Jess had opened her throttles to their full extent.

"Steam! Steam!" he shrieked, in his high voice. "Give her more steam!"

We who were stoking leaped more rapidly. Beside me a man made a frantic wrench, and tore off shirt and undershirt in one sweep, exposing a great, bared torso that dripped and glistened in the light of an open furnace door. I realized that it stood open nearly all the time, and that the *Mary Jane* was roaring under forced draft, and that the soft pine timber fed into her insatiable bowels flashed but an instant and seemed to go belching up her stack in a cloud of sparks that sputtered as they flew.

The sweat dripped into my eyes, and my hands were filled with splinters; but the paddles seemed to bite the water more relentlessly, and the dancing deck beneath our feet took on a steadier motion.

The little captain had thrust his native pilots from the wheel, and was holding her head into the seas in a life-and-death struggle. It lasted for hours. I no longer had time to glance at the dancing dial. Sometimes she seemed to be making headway, and settled down to

a steady, forward surge, and again she seemed to stand still. Sometimes Jess had to almost stop his engines to keep them from tearing the wheel from its stanchions, and sometimes he stood for minutes at a time, motionless and alert, appearing to feel every revolution. Once, near the end, she broached into a trough, and there was a series of clattering, snapping noises.

"She's broken a hog chain! She's hogged!" the man beside me yelled. "If another one goes we're done for. She'll break in two!"

But never for an instant did his brawny arms rest from seizing the wood carried by our companions from the piles forward, and thrusting it into the open furnace door. And then, at last, with startling abruptness, there was a complete cessation of the wrenching motion, the *Mary Jane* cut placidly into the water, forged ahead, and crept up over the river bar like some tired, battered fighter that had won despite his wounds. At the first possible place in those dreary flats we moored her to the bank, and, too tired to take stock of our damage, threw ourselves down by the boilers and went fast asleep.

She was a gallant little boat—was the *Mary Jane!* Her hull was stout, as I am convinced was her heart. Pitifully under-engined, she fought her slow way, day by day, up that relentless river that in places could swallow a Mississippi without flooding its banks, and each day the struggle became more difficult as the river became more confined and its braided currents more swift.

Our valiant pilots, who never displayed more than sufficient ability to turn a wheel, and who could see a sand bar almost as far as a blind man, indifferently deserted us at an Indian village, where we tied up one night. They came back to demand their pay, which our incisive captain peremptorily refused to give unless they continued the voyage, hoping against hope that there would be some stretch of the river with which they were acquainted.

They became belligerent, and he astonished us by his muscular prowess. He hustled them both down the gangplank by the most convenient holds obtainable, which, in his opinion, seemed to be with the right hand firmly clutched through their long hair and the left hand firmly grasping the most voluminous parts of their trading-post trousers.

George, who had taken no part, relented at the last moment, and paid them their wages in full, whereupon Captain Holt retired to the pilot house in somber dudgeon, and said nothing for a whole day. But the defection of the pilots worked to my advantage, for, on account of my keen young eyes, I was promoted to the wheel.

The wild fowl began to fly southward in long, screaming strings. Some of the trees took on a dying brightness of foliage, and the flowers were gone from the hills. The fish camps of the summer were being deserted by the Indians, leaving skeleton rows of naked poles. The bears that waddled away from the water's edge as we approached were fat and indolent. The season was shutting down upon us, and yet we struggled in the fight against relentless time and the invincible river.

There were days when we made scarcely any progress; times when we could find no place where the currents stopped their fierce rush to the sea, and we would be carried slowly downstream with our wheel savagely remonstrating as the *Mary Jane* did her best. Times when we would seek a still cove, force our steam till the overweighted safety valves gave way and the boilers perilously shuddered, and then try again to buck some wild streak of water.

Resolute and unyielding as they were, the company of the *Mary Jane* began to show the strain, and even the rotundity of Jess gave way to sagging wrinkles, and his eyes had exchanged their reckless, careless good humor for a hopeless despondency. The lines around our sturdy captain's mouth had settled into grim channels, drooping away in the borders of his square-cut chin. There were days when we could buy no wood and had to tie up to propitious banks and fell trees for our fuel. And yet The Competents, through it all, strove to be cheerful.

It was just at dusk one evening, after a fruitless day's struggle in which we had made but a few miles, that we ran into a broad lagoon of backwater and tied up for the night. The packing was gone from the *Mary Jane's* cylinders, and her straining engines screamed and hissed with escaping steam as she came to a groaning halt. One of her boiler cradles had sprung loose, and the main steam pipe, where it had sprung, needed new tinkering.

We were discouraged. We were finishing a silent meal, and one of the men had just lighted our lights, when the soft, palpitant exhaust, rhythmic and solid, of another river steamer came to us, and we hurried out.

The light of the newcomer's jackstaff, and the flash of her search lamp, like a big eye, came in sight.

She veered, the exhaust became slower, and she rippled, like some monster paying a curious, visiting halt, into the lagoon where we had moored. She tied to the bank not more than a hundred feet below us, and in the dim light we recognized her as the freighter *Sarah,* upward bound.

We went over and fraternized with the few passengers who were crowded aboard her in every conceivable spot or space—for she was not a passenger boat—and learned the news. She intended to winter near Fort Yukon, and was the last boat that would come up the river, Dawson bound, that year. But one other steamer was on the lower waters, the mate said jocularly, and that was the *Northern Light,* a little boat that housed a missionary and his wife and carried a crew of about three men.

I left George and Bill talking quietly with the captain and went back to the *Mary Jane,* whose glory seemed dimmed in the shadow of her big sister. I had never before appreciated how small and homemade she appeared, how weak a fabric for such a fight. Jess had been working at his engines, and the engine-room floor was littered with pieces of our worn-out machinery, screws, bolts, and nuts.

"I've done about all I can for to-night," he said plaintively, looking up, when I asked if I could help him. "I'll have to wait for daylight."

I left him swabbing his hands with a piece of waste and went above.

"It isn't as if we were the only ones," Shakespeare George was saying to the other Competents as I joined them on the upper deck. "It doesn't mean so much to us from Willow Creek. We didn't come so much to make a stake as all those others did, but it's like life and death to the other boys. Most of them have got every dollar they have in the world tied up on this chance. Playing it all on one bet and without a coppered stack."

I was to learn later the meaning of "coppered stack." It is where a man resourcefully wagers that something will lose. We sat quietly until we heard some one approaching. It was Captain Holt.

George turned to him. "Cap," he said softly, "can she ever pull through?"

"Never!" was the laconic response, and I comprehended for the first time the depths of human obstinacy. The little captain had fought his way, silently and doggedly, day after day, when hope was dead.

"She can never make the Ramparts," he said after a time. "I've known it since the first two days we started. She hasn't the power, if her engines were prime. They tell me the river narrows up there from eight hundred yards to a hundred, in less than two miles. The *Mary Jane* can steam eight miles an hour in smooth water. The current there, they say, is ten, and with no beach by which we can line her through."

Irrevocably a sentence of fact had been pronounced against our enterprise, nullifying our hopes of gaining the fair beyond, dooming us to failure before the pregnant attempt. There was a long silence as the dusk settled deeper in swift obliteration and the lights of pipes and cigarettes shone more brightly from the darkness. No one spoke for a long time. Buoyant as is the hope of youth, mine had suffered the chill breath of disaster. Beyond us, reflected in the still backwater of the lagoon, the lights

of the *Sarah* shone dimly as if blurred by commiserating tears.

"Boy," a gentle voice at my side broke the silence, "you want to stay with us, don't you?"

Shakespeare George's heavy hand slipped over and patted me on the shoulder, in a fatherly, affectionate way.

"I'm askin' you," he went on, "because it's late. Because the winter's almost here. Because it ain't fair to rob you and the other boys of a chance to leave at the first show and make a stab for fortune. We've got to buy 'em out and give 'em money for another chance. It means so much to them. The *Mary Jane's* a goner! She's worth less than junk in this country, where everything that's useless is left behind."

From the darkness came a soft chorus from the others: "That's right!"

I protested, through a choking throat, that I would stay. Again I felt that reassuring pat and a broken chorus of, "Good for you! That's right, boy! We'll see you through!"

Slowly they sauntered below. I shall not forget that last meeting when, in the little dining saloon, George called all together and made his announcement of defeat. Nor shall I forget their loyalty.

"What you say is true," the voice of Jess broke in. "It means a lot to me, gettin' up to where the diggin's are. I've got a wife and three kids waitin' and hopin' and bankin' their all on my makin' good up here. I've done my best. No one can say I ain't. And if there's any hope, I'll stick with the last man. Somehow"—and the thin, bell-like voice quavered—"I've got so I love her, the *Mary Jane*. You see I was one of the first ones that knew about her. I knew about every dollar that was raised for her makin's. I mortgaged my home to get money to build her. I borrowed from my friends, twenty here and twenty there, when it wasn't enough. Men said I was a fool, at my age, to make the try and to come off up here. But I wanted somethin' for the wife and boys. I helped build her, stick by stick; helped plant her engines, bolt by bolt! And now she's done her best and has failed."

May Heaven spare me the sorrow of another such tragic tale! He sat down weakly, all his great form sagging and despondent, in this surrender to despair. The fat of him was not ludicrous. He had been ennobled by his recital of self-sacrifice.

The man at his side lifted his elbows to the table, rested his head in his hands, with the outspread fingers shading his eyes, and groaned. It was the man who had stood by me at the furnace doors, with bared torso, and valiantly fought the sea. In the silence the rustle of his mackinaw as he lifted his arms, the rustle of his hair as he ran his fingers through it, sounded loud and harsh. His groan was like a knell.

The uncomplaining captain, with the drawn lines creeping from the corners of his mouth, sat relaxed, immobile. Another man, with whom I had never become closely acquainted, got up, leaned his clenched knuckles on the oil-cloth covering the table, and staggered through the door from the room and out to the light guard rail, as if too despairful for words.

For a long time no one moved, and from the *Sarah* the sounds of voices in which hope was alive were wafted to us across the waters of the lagoon; from those merry ones, upward bound to the land of gold.

They sounded harsh and mocking, coming from those who had all before them, to us who had nothing, sitting there with the specter of failure cynically leering at us from the outer shadows.

The Competents sat unmoved until, with an impatient, impulsive rapidity, Bill stood upon his feet. He rested his great shoulders forward upon his bent hands, as if seeking the support of the table to restrain some petty trembling.

"I want," he said slowly, as though doubting his voice, "to buy out every man of you fellows for what you paid."

There was a start of surprise, and old Tom Evans, Shakespeare George, and Tim Bryant all lifted suddenly to a waiting attitude.

"I've got money and this is my chance to do some good with it. I want the

Mary Jane. Never mind what I want her for; that's my affair. The captain of the *Sarah* says he can take every one willing to sleep in their blankets on the boiler deck, up the river. You know that he'll go through!"

"We're in on that buying," growled Evans, hoarse and unheeded.

"You boys had better go ahead on her," the rising voice of Bill went on. "She's the last boat this year, and, as it is, the captain expects to buck ice before she reaches winter quarters. George and I had to talk hard to get him to take six men aboard with a hundred pounds of outfit each. You'd better get the rest of your stuff off the *Mary Jane* and cached up on the bank to-night, because he won't wait for you when dawn comes. Says every hour counts at this time of the year."

They arose as one man and declined to desert us and the *Mary Jane,* unless we, too, could be carried on the *Sarah.*

"That," said George, "is impossible. The rest of us will take a chance on the *Northern Light,* which is due here in a day or two. We'll get along all right. I'll pay you now."

He pulled his wallet from the inside of his shirt, and the other Competents did likewise, and then and there became sole owners of the *Mary Jane.* Up to the last payment that loyal little crew remained steadfast. There was not a man who, despite his dire necessity and last opportunity, did not volunteer to remain; but The Competents had their way. They made seven piles of bills and indorsed drafts on the table, and finally there was but one left.

"Cap," said George, "that is your share."

The white head, which had been bent forward, lifted.

"No," he said, "I never put a dollar in her. Moreover, you can fool these others, after a fashion, into believing that possibly you've got some idea of doing something with her, but I know! Know that she's junk and that you know it."

And he got to his feet and walked out of the saloon, as self-sacrificing and true a man as ever stood for what he believed was right. He would not so much as accept a dollar for his services. He had taken his chance, lost, and was now ready to start on, bravely and unbeaten.

For hours, in the light of the ship's lanterns and lamps, they carried their outfits to a cache they had built in the trees on the bordering bank, and then, deep below, I heard the ring of hammer on steel. George and I went down to find Jess, faithful to the end, trying to repair the engines that he never again expected to drive.

"Never mind, Jess," said George sadly, "you needn't bother with them. They are no good any more. The *Mary Jane* couldn't go up with them, and we'll have to strip them out after you leave."

It was as if prescience told him that within two or three years that river was to be lined with abandoned engines, not worth the trouble of removing.

We stood on the upper deck of the *Mary Jane* and watched them leave us. There were no glad cheers. There was scarcely the waving of a hand. They were like men bidding farewell to the dying, and the last two men I saw were Jess and the little captain, side by side. The *Sarah* disappeared around a point of land cutting us off from the river.

They were gone, faring forth into the northern lights, chasing the rainbow's end, and some of them I never saw again.

The five of us slept until the sun was high, and then we, too, sadly built a cache, high up beyond the reach of pilfering bear, or raiding wolf, and stripped her of nearly all her movable stuff. We were chancing everything on being able to proceed on the *Northern Light,* and the chance was well taken; for she came in at dusk on that night, in answer to our signals, and her kindly owner, Doctor Prevost, said he would carry us as far as Tyook Creek, where there was a trading post being built, and we were grateful. He had no time to wait. He must hurry onward, for he, too, dreaded the ice and wanted to get to Circle City. He laughed at the idea of tying up when in haste, and later proved that he and his crew could find their way through the river's windings

in the darkest night. So we carried our blankets aboard his boat.

It was in a deep dusk, with the stars twinkling in the water of the lagoon, like sapphires cast on a field of velvet, when I bade the *Mary Jane* good-by. My heart rose rebelliously in my throat. She had become a personality to me—my first love. To leave her there was like deserting a faithful friend who had come to the end of the tether—like leaving a dog that had pulled himself to death, lying mute and spent beside a long and desolate winter trail. She appeared to writhe in despair where the current caught and twisted her idle wheel, now relieved from the weight of her engines. She seemed protesting, pleading, for one more opportunity to fight the waters that had conquered her.

Sadly I climbed the narrow plank to the *Northern Light;* the native crew stood holding the lines to cast her off. I wondered at the delay. Suddenly I saw that the *Mary Jane's* lights were all aglow, from jackstaff to stern. And, while I wondered, a dark form ran along the bank, and hurried over the plank, which was quickly pulled in. All The Competents were at my elbow. The *Mary Jane* swung away from the bank and began a stately progress out into the stream. Doctor Prevost came running and shouting; but George silenced him.

"It's all right, doctor," he said softly. "I turned her loose. We couldn't bear to leave her there to rot at the water's edge. There's no one near here to make use of her wreckage. Perhaps, somewhere, she'll come to rest and still give some one shelter."

And thus it was he covered the fact that The Competents, too, had loved her, did not want her desecrated, and were sending her gallantly out to her end. She swung farther out into the broad reaches of the river, seemed to pick her course for her last run, and swept slowly away, more stately in dying than she had ever appeared in life, a tiny row of yellow lights casting long rays on the waters over which she floated as if her glance still lingered upon us in affectionate farewell.

The first story in this new series about the Willow Creekers began two weeks ago in the first March number. You will get another in a fortnight.

THE HOODOO AND THE COLONEL

CUNO H. RUDOLPH, one of the commissioners of the District of Columbia, is a successful business man, full of common sense and acumen. But he also has his superstitions.

When Colonel Theodore Roosevelt went to Washington last November to make an address about Africa, Mr. Rudolph, who had been in New York for several days, bought a chair car ticket on the colonel's train. He noticed that the seat assigned him was number thirteen, and he immediately let out a roar, saying that nothing could induce him to ride in a chair numbered thirteen.

"You'd better keep that seat," said the ticket agent. "Roosevelt is going on the same train and in your car, and his seat is number fifteen, right next to yours."

"Can't help it," answered Rudolph, with great emphasis. "I like the colonel, but I can't take that thirteen."

And the agent had to give him another number.

NOT ONLY THE PRESIDENT

Now and then Captain Archibald Willingham Butt, military aide to the President, thinks he is getting too fat. At such times he breakfasts on one soft-boiled egg.

The Breaking of Chamberlain

By George Randolph Chester

Author of "Get-Rich-Quick Wallingford," Etc.

George Randolph Chester has written many great stories; but we question if he has ever done anything that will make a stronger appeal to men than "The Breaking of Chamberlain." It is a business story, told with businesslike straightforwardness, but full of dramatic action and lightened by irresistible humor. It will give you a pretty clear view of the insurance world, and will certainly arouse your sympathy for the man the political clique sets out to "break."

(*A Complete Novel*)

SHUFFLE and dip and the right foot over, rat-a-tat, rat-a-tat, rat-a-tat, rat-a-tat; shuffle and dip and the left foot over, rat-a-tat, rat-a-tat, rat-a-tat, rat-a-tat.

Small Splinter Ragan, stealing a moment from the phone and from his ingenious but sometimes embarrassing electrical experiments upon the switchboard, was practicing at his beloved art in the hallway of the Middle West Mutual Life Insurance Company, and now he smiled with ineffable content and did it all over again. One foot was just as good as the other, and it was a difficult "stunt," too. Blubber Bloocher would be mad with envy when he saw that step.

"Well," demanded an impatient voice behind him, "is that what we pay you for?"

Splinter made a pivot of one heel, and swung swiftly about-face, confronting the secretary of the Middle West with a grin.

"No, I just throw that in, Mr. Stollings," he cheerfully stated. "On the level, though, it keeps me limbered up fine for m' work; and I don't take as much time at it as some kids does sneakin' off smokin' cigarettes." He smiled, with an engaging willingness to be friends with anybody in the world, straight up into the unresponsive eyes of Stollings.

"I guess you're limbered up enough by this time," said the secretary. "Who's tending your switchboard?"

"Blubber," answered Splinter, still willing to be friends.

For the first time, Stollings smiled.

"Blubber," he repeated. "He smokes cigarettes."

"Well, you see, he has to," explained Splinter seriously. "If Blubber and me's ever goan'a do a brother clog act, he's got to train down about twenty pounds, and I got to fat up about ten. Cigarettes helps you cut down, but the worst of it is that I like 'em and Blubber don't. Gee, that kid's slow on his hoofs! Say—did you see that new fancy step I just got?"

He shuffled and dipped, crossed over the right foot, and started to rat-a-tat-tat; but Stollings was gone. Splinter looked after him, disappointed.

"That lollop'll pay two bucks to see me dance some day," he confidently predicted, and, executing one more grand double shuffle, he followed the secretary into the big main office.

Stollings walked back between the rows of desks with his hands in his pockets, his hat on the back of his head, a cigar in his mouth, and a frown

upon his brow. There was something particularly insolent this morning in the bearing of Stollings, who carried his forty-five years with the debonairness of thirty, and dressed with the nattiness of twenty. He paused at the desk of young Corliss, who arose before his approach as if about to walk away.

"Ready with that statement?" demanded Stollings.

For just an instant the eyes of the young man and the secretary met, and the glance which flickered between them was not at all inspired by affection.

"To-morrow, I think," replied Corliss.

Perhaps the younger man had unconsciously stood up to gain the advantage of his superior height, for he was nearly a six-footer, and slim and lithe and athletic, with clean-cut face and clear eyes; and he gained greatly by the contrast.

"You're three days late now," charged Stollings, with no attempt at concealing his dislike, and passed on to the far corner of the room, where, at a desk near the entrance to his own private office, he bent over a black-haired young woman, who looked up at him with an expression in her eyes which a woman saves for her master alone. Upon Stollings' brow, however, there was only a slight softening.

"Well, what's the news this morning?" he asked, and then in a lower tone: "Is J. C. in?"

She gave a little nod with a glance at the farther door marked "President."

"Since eight o'clock," she informed him, talking barely above a whisper, and looking furtively about the room. "He discharged Runk this morning, and countermanded the order for the printing of that new policy of yours."

She slid her hand over so that for an instant it touched his where it lay upon the desk. He drew his hand away as if by accident, after permitting just a second of contact, and turned toward the door of the president with a black frown.

"I'm going to smash him," he declared.

"Don't!" she begged, frightened.

"I don't mean with my fist," he explained, "but in a business way. I'm going to strip him. He has humiliated me more than I can stand from any man."

Her own black eyes kindled with indignation, and she cast a glance of partisan hatred at the president's door.

Splinter Ragan, much refreshed and returning to his telephone switchboard to resume his duties, bent over the plump and oily-looking youngster who sat half asleep in Splinter's place, and punched him under the armpit.

In hurt surprise, Blubber Bloocher looked up to find his partner in the prospective "brother act," pointing a finger at some telltale golden brown crumbs.

"You fat slob, you snuck in a doughnut ag'in an' ett it!" hissed Splinter. "Is a doughnut on your trainin' list? Look at this turn. Can you do this if you eat doughnuts?" and, with a foot touch as light as air, he executed the new fancy step.

"Ragan, cut that or quit!" snapped Stollings savagely, with a sudden flare of anger which betrayed a certain nerve-depleted condition. Noiseless as Splinter had been, Stollings' ear had caught the rhythm, and, already annoyed, the trifle made him furious, so that when he walked into the office of President Chamberlain, his hat still on and his cigar tilted aggressively upward, he slammed the door after him.

"I understand you fired Runk!" said he hotly.

Chamberlain, a portly, silver-haired man of nearly sixty, in whose strong face were the unmistakable lines of energy and keen executive ability, looked up with an unwonted frown.

"Of course I discharged Runk," he retorted. "I will not have insolent people about me."

"No?" queried Stollings, a little taken aback by the unexpected remark. "Well, Runk has to come back."

"What I said concerning not having insolent people about me," went on Chamberlain quietly, "extends even to yourself, Mr. Stollings. I hold you

directly responsible for the attitude of Runk and of Miss Colby, and even of the office boy whom I let out last week. The office boy and Runk are gone. They are not coming back. Miss Colby may remain as long as you do, but you will go at the next stockholders' meeting."

"You don't dare!" threatened Stollings, putting his face down to Chamberlain's the more to emphasize his defiance. He held his face so close that his cigar almost touched Chamberlain's mustache, but he only held it there for an instant, for Chamberlain, with no premonitory motions or words whatsoever, swung his big right hand around and gave Stollings a resounding slap upon the cheek, knocking his cigar across the room and considerably disarranging the gentleman's self-esteem.

For so heavy a man it was astounding how quickly he got out of his chair and put himself in the attitude of defense. Stollings, however, astonished beyond measure, only put his hand to his cheek and stood glaring at his assailant in most ugly fashion. It was Chamberlain's turn to be direct. He stepped across to Stollings, and shook his forefinger under the secretary's nose.

"You forget that I made you," the older man reminded him. "When I started this company, twenty-five years ago, I took you with me as a clerk. In place of salary increases in the early days, I gave you stock, worth then, I will admit, but a few cents on the dollar. To-day you own thirty-five per cent. of a million-dollar company which has a seven-million-dollar reserve. I made this company myself. Don't ever fool yourself that I could not have done it without you. I could have done it with any other man as capable as you had to be in order to hold your position. I have overpaid you, and it has spoiled you. For the past six months you've been mistaken about your position here. At the next stockholders' meeting I'm going to vote you out of your secretaryship."

"If you do, I'll break you," declared Stollings, still holding his cheek. Chamberlain's thumb nail had cut it so that it bled slightly.

"Get out of my office!" ordered Chamberlain, and he threw open the door.

Stollings stood up a trifle undecided, and Chamberlain, pale with anger, suddenly pushed the palm of his hand against the intruder's shoulder, and forced him through the door.

Stollings turned to him, shaking with rage.

"I'll break you!" he shouted.

A tall figure loomed beside him, and young Corliss tapped him on the shoulder. The eyes of a dozen clerks were glued upon them. Splinter Ragan, in sheer joy, was dancing fancy circles around himself.

"This is no place for an exhibition of that sort," said Corliss quietly to Stollings, and now the glare that he cast down upon the secretary was quite unveiled.

"What's it your business!" snarled Stollings. "I'll get you, too!"

Hostilities were suddenly suspended by the arrival of two ladies. All three men bent instant attention upon them, as Mrs. Chamberlain, a handsome, red-cheeked woman of forty-five, followed by her daughter, an active, dancing-eyed girl with a wealth of waving light-brown hair, came swiftly down the aisle.

"Why, what has happened to Howard!" exclaimed Mrs. Chamberlain, much concerned.

"I struck him," replied her husband.

"He was your friend," she charged.

"He is neither my friend nor yours, Honoria," said Chamberlain sternly. "Come into my office."

Reluctantly, and with a backward glance at Stollings, she followed him, while her daughter turned to Corliss with a half-formed question upon her lips. Ignoring Stollings, who hurried into his own office, Corliss led the way to his desk, while Mr. Chamberlain very firmly closed the door after his wife.

"Sit down," he ordered, in a tone so peremptory that she looked up at him, startled. For more than twenty years

her word had been law with him, her slightest wish a command. He had humored her every whim. "Sit down!" he repeated suddenly, and so sharply that in spite of herself she sat upon the chair he indicated. "Now, Honoria," he began, standing before her, "we might as well have an understanding. For a long time I have resented the familiarity of Stollings with you. When you came upon us just now, you showed concern for him rather than for myself—and I don't like it."

An angry gleam came into her eyes, and she half arose from her chair.

"Sit down!" he thundered at her. "I have a nasty temper, Honoria, but in all our married life it has never been directed toward you. Now it will be, unless you are careful. Up to last summer, when you insisted upon having Stollings join us on our European trip, though he should have been in the office conducting the business in my absence, he was perfectly respectful to me. Since that time he has grown more insolent every day, and I ascribe that fact to the familiarity you encouraged; a course which no married woman can afford with a one-time suitor."

"Do you know that I hate you?" she told him, with pale lips.

"I shouldn't wonder," he admitted wearily. "That is the usual reward of overindulgence. But whether you hate me or not, I shall not permit you to humiliate me nor disgrace me."

"You are going too far!" she warned him.

"I have never gone far enough," he returned. "I am quite competent to be the master of circumstances, and from now on I shall be."

She suddenly stiffened in her chair.

"I don't know of anything, a creature or a circumstance, which has ever mastered me," she asserted, "and I don't believe that it can be done."

"I intend to change your belief," said he quietly, and turned to his desk, where he began signing some letters. "Where are you going?" he demanded, as she arose.

She hesitated a moment.

"Into Mr. Stollings' office."

He went to the door, and looked out. The corner desk, usually occupied by the black-haired girl, was vacant. Smiling, he returned to the room, and politely held open the door for his wife to pass out.

Mrs. Chamberlain gained the threshold of Stollings' office, and stopped transfixed. The black-haired young lady of the corner desk was tearfully bathing Mr. Stollings' cheek with her handkerchief.

"Very pretty and very effective," observed Mr. Chamberlain over her shoulder, and with a laugh he went into his own office, while Mrs. Chamberlain, pallid and faint, hurried out, brushing aside, without seeing him, the prancing Splinter.

"I'm coming up to-night," said Corliss to Anna.

"Please do," she urged. "I want you to tell me all you know about father's business affairs, and about Mr. Stollings. It is time, I think, to tell me frankly about these things. I am old enough to know, and it is vital."

II.

The political boss of the city, and, it was commonly believed, of the State, had several offices, upon the doors of none of which was his name to be found. Mr. Stollings did not go to the First National Bank, of which James B. Sledge was president, nor to any of the other banks of which Sledge had made himself director. Instead, he went to the Occident Saloon, more popularly known as the City Hall Annex. Here was a little rear room, cut off from the balance of the saloon by a thin board partition, and furnished with cheap chairs and tables. A smudgy window looked out upon a narrow little court where one lonely sunflower fought for existence among garbage pails and ash cans and other unattractive refuse.

In this room Boss Sledge sat enthroned. He was a big lump of a man with heavily pouched, dead eyes and a close-cropped, sandy-gray mustache, and with no expression except sullen-

ness upon his vast features. Moreover, he was the only man who came into that room who could sit motionless for hours, except for the occasional lifting of the flagon of beer at his right hand.

Stollings found him in company with three of his lesser satellites, a rough-looking man with a ragged mustache and a black patch over one eye, a spruce-looking young fat man, and a scrawny fellow with sunken eyes and a face the color of ashes; all silent! Still silently they sat until Sledge gave a grunt of greeting to Stollings, and then they arose without a word and filed out, one of them, the natty-looking fat young man, nodding avertedly to the newcomer as he passed.

"Have something?" rumbled Sledge, reaching for the electric button at his elbow, but looking curiously out of his dull eyes at the swollen red streak upon Stollings' cheek.

"Brandy," replied Stollings. "I'm all upset. I've just had a fight with Chamberlain."

"Chamberlain? Has he woke up?"

"Yes. Sledge, you're overlooking a bet there. Do you know that the Middle West has a reserve fund of seven million, and that its net earnings are enormous?"

"Sure," said Sledge.

"Of course you knew," apologized Stollings. "It gives you a big rake-off in the State Insurance Department. Well, you can have absolute possession of the company without its costing you a cent."

"Show me," invited Sledge. "I didn't think it was ripe yet."

"It's as simple as A B C," declared Stollings. "Chamberlain has always regarded this company as his private property. He built it up and owns it, and it's nobody's business how he handles it, he thinks. Whenever the company needs money he puts it in out of his own pocket, and when he needs money he takes it out of the company. He has his personal account so mixed up with the Middle West's that he don't know where he stands. But I do. I've had charge of the books for twenty-five years, and at any minute I can make out a statement that will tangle him all up. Any other man would have been worth a couple of million, besides his stock, by this time."

"You're spillin' a lot of talk," protested Sledge. "Come down to cases. You say this is a fat company and that I can get it. Now, how? Remember we've got an election in six weeks."

"This will help pay campaign expenses," laughed Stollings. "First of all, he's going to buy my stock, and he's going to give me a good figure for it. That's going to cramp him. He has six thousand shares that are worth nine hundred thousand dollars if they are worth a cent, and I can make him hypothecate every dollar of it."

"Wait just a minute," ordered Sledge. "Adolph, bring a stein of beer and a glass of brandy, and tell Tom to hunt up Billy Sothern."

"He's out at the bar now, Mr. Sledge," replied Adolph of the smirking mustache.

"Send him in," said Sledge, and then to Stollings again: "Tell this game to Billy. He eats figures and gets fat on 'em, but they give me the belly-ache."

He relapsed into a silence, which, in his heavy motionlessness, seemed not so much a determination to keep his mouth shut for the present, as an absolute suspension of thought. Stollings glanced at him two or three times, as if to while the time away with minor subjects of conversation, but upon each occasion changed his mind, and finally walked across to the window, gazing out of it, depressed, waiting, like Sledge, for Billy Sothern.

There was not much to look at besides the disreputable sunflower and the débris and the moldy brick pavement, except a high gate of rotted and blackened boards at the end of the walk, and a rickety wooden stairway leading up to a rickety wooden porch without a straight line in floor or rail or roof, where dripping and dingy linen seemed forever trying hopelessly to dry. It was a cheerless enough view, but beyond the gate lay a still more dismal

prospect, a maze of narrow, black alleys, the only clean and passable section of which led directly to the side street.

Through the hole in the gate, as Stollings gloomily stared at it, there suddenly appeared a slender white hand with a diamond upon one finger. The hand unhooked the latch; the gate swung open, and Stollings was startled to recognize, in the woman who came through, Miss Colby! As she neared the window she recognized Stollings, hesitated an instant, then smiled at him, blew him a kiss, and hurried on up the stairs.

"Who lives up there?" asked Stollings, abruptly turning from the window.

"Old Granny Hassen," grunted Sledge. "She takes in washing and does plain sewing, and counts money. She owns that building. Why?"

"Oh, nothing," returned Stollings, and sat down with his back to the window, just as Billy Sothern came in, followed by the drinks on the tray of the solemn waiter whose mustache grinned.

Billy Sothern was a whisky-faced man with watery eyes, who wore, winter and summer, a dusty derby upon one side of his head, and was a lawyer without any practice or even an office. He needed none, having no large ambitions, and being content to be legal adviser, and a conscienceless one, to the "boss" and the heads of his allied interests, and "getting his" by devious and divers and dingy routes. True to Sledge's prediction, he "ate up" the figures Stollings gave him and asked for more. Sledge listened in apparent dull incomprehension, and when they had finished, he asked:

"Is it any good, Billy?"

"It's a cinch," declared Sothern; "that is, if Stollings is giving us the right dope."

"I have more dope than I am giving you," returned Stollings, smiling grimly. "There's another end that I intend to work on myself."

Sledge sat in massive silence for a time, with his pudgy hand upon the handle of his stein.

"What do you get out of this?" he wanted to know.

"I want to vote your stock and be president of the company at a fat salary; and, more than that, I want you to break Chamberlain!"

Sledge took one fleeting glance at him, and read in his eyes a hatred that was almost murderous.

"All right," he agreed. "It's a bet. Go to it."

Stollings was following Sothern out of the door, when Sledge called him back.

"Why did you let Runk get fired?" he asked, with a frown.

"Chamberlain did it early this morning. That's what I had the scrap with him about."

"You get Runk back," ordered Sledge. "He has a whole precinct in his pocket, but it spoils him to give him a political job."

There was a swiftly fleeting contraction of Stollings' eyelids, which Sledge did not note.

"I'll take care of Runk," he said. The scratch upon his cheek annoyed him, and he put his hand up to it and rubbed it. A pink stain came away upon his finger tips. He looked at it silently and expressionlessly for a moment. "I'm going to get me a gun," he stated, as one with an idle afterthought. "The town's getting tough."

"I've one I'll give you," offered Sledge, and he drew one of the new-model, blue-steel repeating pistols from his pocket. "If you put it to work, though, don't leave it on the scene of the holdup," he laughed, "for it's got my name engraved on the handle. I guess it was a wise committee, not! that made me that present. I'd look well, wouldn't I, telling a jury how that smoke wagon come to be found under the carcass of some late deceased?"

III.

Mrs. Chamberlain came down to the table, quite obviously dressed for an elaborate function. Her husband looked at her with pleasure. He had always admired her inordinately, and

this evening, after the disquieting events of the day, she seemed unusually handsome.

"Are you going out?" he asked.

"I must," she replied, suppressing a slight yawn in a very neat bit of acting. "It's that always-tiresome Haverman affair."

She glanced across the table, and thought that her daughter was regarding her with unusual intentness.

"You should have told me sooner," said her husband quietly. "I would have had more time to dress."

"You never care for these affairs," she returned. "They bore you frightfully."

"They always have bored me, truly enough," confessed Mr. Chamberlain; "but I've come to the conclusion that I've been neglecting my social duties too much."

The gaze of Anna had shifted from the mother to the father, but turned back again upon the reply of the former.

"That's very commendable of you," assented Mrs. Chamberlain lightly; "but you certainly don't want to start with such a dreadful ordeal as this one will be."

"If you can stand it, I can," he asserted. "The fact of the matter is, Honoria, that I've been allowing you to go about by yourself entirely too often. It does not look well."

"Then you really mean to go?"

"Yes, I really mean to go," he returned, still very quietly.

She had but little appetite, watching her husband almost in fascination as he disposed of a hearty dinner, and she waited very patiently, apparently, while he dressed. He was a portly man, but a fine-appearing one, with his virile face and his neatly kept gray beard and mustache, and something in his repressed strength to-night made his wife look at him with a new appraisement—with a note almost of admiration—as he came into the parlor, the cape of his Inverness thrown back from his shoulder and his silk hat in his hand. If he had only done more of this, she thought.

"Are you going to be alone all evening, Anna?" he asked his daughter, as they went out.

"No," she replied. "Mr. Corliss is to call."

"We're rather unconventional about here," he remarked. "Corliss is a fine young man, but I think I shall have to draw the lines of conventionality all the way around. I wish you would gently intimate to Mr. Corliss, Anna, that we prefer his calling upon evenings when we are all at home."

"I'll do nothing of the sort, daddy," the daughter laughed. "Your idea is perfectly correct, but your way of carrying it out is very, very crude indeed. I'll simply send him away on such evenings, but I certainly shall not tell him that the reason he can't call is because I am to be alone. You're a handsome gallant, daddy, and I wish I were going with you. Really, I'm jealous of mother to-night."

She kissed him, and looked after him fondly as he handed her mother into the big limousine. The car had no sooner moved away, however, than she turned to frowning thoughtfully, and sat before the big fireplace, gazing into it with her chin in her hand, until Corliss arrived. He came into the parlor eagerly to greet her, and she took his hand, with just an instant's warmth, which thrilled him through and through; but she released the clasp immediately and sat in her old seat, motioning him to draw up his chair. They spent a few minutes in conventional chat, and then, after a silence, she turned to him gravely.

"What do they say in the office about mother?" she inquired.

He frowned and shook his head, but did not answer.

"You must tell me," she insisted. "This is too serious for trifling. What do they say?"

"Just about what you intimate by your question," he replied with sudden bluntness.

"How could they help it?" she asked bitterly. "I don't understand mother, nor do I understand how Stollings could have so much influence over her. Ed, I have a curious idea that he is not

only disrupting our home, but that he means harm to father in a business way."

"I'm sure of it," he agreed. "I'm finding out things every day. You know, I haven't lunched at noon for three years. I have been putting in that hour studying insurance law under Judge Grey, who was made an ex-judge by Sledge because he was above corruption, and who is the hopeless anti-Sledge candidate for governor. I study, too, at night and in the morning, and I've been making a special study of our office. I am convinced that Stollings has been doing some crooked work. Before long I hope to prove it. In the meantime, I think I shall have Stollings watched."

She gazed silently into the fire for a long time after that.

"I wish I could do the watching," she suddenly said.

Corliss nodded. He knew that she was thinking of her mother.

There came a ring at the door, and the maid, being slow, Anna answered the bell herself. As she neared the door she heard a shuffling and patting of feet outside, and, opening, discovered Splinter Ragan and Blubber Bloocher, keeping themselves warm by a vigorous rehearsal upon the broad stone doorstep.

"Is Chamberlain at home?" inquired Splinter.

"Chamberlain won't be home for two or three hours, I'm afraid," replied Anna, smiling.

"Oh!" said Splinter. "Well, Stollings sent these proofs out to him. You're sure the governor ain't at home?" He seemed anxious about this, as if he had been particularly instructed to find out.

"I am very, very sure," insisted the girl. "He went with mother to a musicale. I saw him leave with my own eyes."

"Oh!" said Splinter. "Thanks." He looked wistfully into the warm hall, and Miss Chamberlain, with a quick interpretation of the look and a downward glance of sympathy at the thinly clad boys, whose littleness she seemed just suddenly to discover, invited them in.

"You must warm yourselves before you go," she invited. "I'll put this envelope on father's desk, and see if I can't find you something." She went upstairs, leaving them alone in the hall. They were silent for perhaps a whole minute. Then Splinter said authoritatively:

"Come on, you clubfoot, and stand up here! This carpet don't make no noise. You gotta get that step this week or you can't belong to the team."

"I don't want to be a brother, anyhow," grumbled Blubber.

There was the sound of a thump, and then Splinter's voice again:

"Now, then, you sausage, right foot first; one, two, three!" He started a low whistling, and there was a sound of gently rasping feet upon the tufted carpet; then once more Splinter's voice:

"Aw, rats, Blubber, I'm sorry I ever tried to edjacate you! Set down an' go to sleep!"

His wearied disgust was quickly modified to lively satisfaction upon the arrival of Miss Chamberlain with an invitation to walk into the dining room. His eyes sparkled as he saw the feast, but he gently led Blubber away from the plate opposite his own.

"Blubber ain't eatin' extra meals, mum," he explained to Miss Chamberlain. "He's trainin' off twenty pounds, so as to join my brother-clog act, but I'll eat his share because I gotta put on ten pounds."

Blubber, no longer dull of expression, but gazing upon the tempting food with eyes so ravenous they were positively ferocious, hesitated a moment only, and then advanced determinedly upon the table.

"I ain't goan'a be no actor," he cried. "I quit!" and he made a dive for his well-filled plate.

Splinter met him with equal determination, and they went to the floor together, knocked over three chairs, and were tangled up in the table legs before Corliss arrived to separate them.

"Of course this is none of my affair,

except in the interest of peace," announced Corliss gravely, after he had seated them, panting, in widely separated chairs, "but, as a friend of both parties, I would not only suggest, but strongly urge, that Blubber be allowed to break training for this one occasion."

"Well," said Splinter thoughtfully, "of course I'd do anything to please you, Corliss, but, bust him, he's always a-breakin' trainin'," and he glared savagely at the other member of the team; a glare which was as savagely returned.

"Very well, then," decided Corliss, "in the interest of peace, there is only one way out of the dilemma," and he lifted both plates from the table, and promptly started in the direction of the kitchen.

"Aw, wait, Corliss," wailed the agonized Splinter; "he kin have it; only, Corliss——" His voice was pleading now.

"Yes?" queried Corliss, pausing with the plates poised.

"He has to have all the pickles, and me all the cakes. He jus' *dassn't* have sweet things!"

"We'll compromise with him, Blubber. You get one cake, and Splinter gets one pickle. Now vote on this quickly! Are you both agreed?" and he turned again toward the kitchen.

The vote was unanimous, and, Corliss, picking out the largest cake for Blubber and the largest pickle for Splinter, saw them seated amicably, happily, and hungrily before the generous supply of viands. He and Miss Chamberlain were happy to stay and serve as waiters for such appreciative guests, and enjoyed the meal almost as much as did the boys; but, as the latter left, Splinter looked at the clock and clutched Blubber suddenly by the arm.

"Come on, you!" he ordered. "You gotta lay down an' roll so we kin make time. Thank you for the spread, mum. It was out o' sight! Say! you're sure the boss ain't at home?"

"Cross my heart, Splinter," she laughed.

"Aw, I knowed you was tellin' the truth," he assured her, and then to Blubber, as they hurried down the steps: "Gee, Tub, Stollings'll get my goat if he don't hear from me in about a minute from now."

Corliss and Miss Chamberlain looked at each other thoughtfully.

"I wish you were having him watched to-night," said the girl.

IV.

Chamberlain quite agreed with his wife that the Haverman affair made a bad start for his reëntry into social life, for it was worse than dull; it was almost tearfully depressing. He wandered about among people whom, for the most part, he did not know, and whom, for all the part, he did not want to know. Even the frivolous set he could have endured better than this new-rich crowd, all of whom were afraid at any moment to do anything natural whatsoever, lest they should make a mistake in the sacred mysteries. Moreover, at about ten o'clock he missed his wife, and could not find her anywhere. With a sudden idea, bareheaded as he was, he went down through the grounds to the court, where more than a score of cars were clustered. He could not find his own. A vacant space in the long row at the side of the drive caught his eye, and he questioned the chauffeur next to it.

"My wife has not yet returned from her errand, has she?" he inquired.

"No, sir," replied the chauffeur. "She only went away about a half an hour ago."

"Thank you," said Chamberlain, and walked back to the house with a seething in his breast which it took all his will power to crush down.

He had cause for agitation, for in that moment his wife had stopped before a quaintly ornate little house in one of the once aristocratic downtown streets, hoarily shaded by rheumatic-looking elms. Here Stollings held his bachelor luxury, and here Mrs. Chamberlain's chauffeur rang the bell.

Stollings, already hatted and gloved and clad in a heavy topcoat, hurried out at once.

"I thought you'd never come," he said, as he stepped in beside his visitor.

"I had difficulty in getting away," she explained. "He insisted upon going to the musicale with me."

"Yes, I knew that," he returned. "I sent an office boy up to the house to find out."

"You think of everything, I believe," she observed uninterestedly, looking out upon the swiftly moving panorama of snowclad dooryards.

"I think of everything connected with you," he declared, taking her hand.

She drew it coldly away from him.

"Mr. Stollings, I can give you just twenty minutes," she said, facing him squarely for the first time. "I have run a dreadful risk in coming here, a risk that I do not intend to repeat. You must say quickly what you wanted to tell me, for this is likely to be our last interview alone."

The man hesitated a moment.

"Don't hold that silly tableau in the office against me," he pleaded.

"I don't," she told him quietly. "I hold it against myself. I don't care to talk of that at all."

"But we must!" insisted Stollings. "You are not fair to me. Can I help it that the girl is a soft-hearted creature who weeps at the sight of blood? Why, she puts arnica on every bruise, and binds up every pin-pricked finger in the office."

"The sympathy trick," she said scornfully. "It's as old as Eve, and as effective as the accidental brushing of fluffy hair against a man's face. I knew she was that kind!"

Stollings drew an almost imperceptible breath of relief. He had succeeded in the first step; that of shifting the woman's anger from himself to Miss Colby.

"She does try to be rather appealing, I guess," he admitted. "I think I shall get rid of her."

"By no means. Keep her," returned Mrs. Chamberlain hastily. "She must be a great comfort to you."

"Please, Honoria!" he said, resorting to pleading again. "Don't let such trifles as this come between us now. I could not forget the incident because I saw that it hurt you; but what hurt me far more was the public humiliation he put upon you again this morning."

That was adroitly done. The woman's breast heaved, and her eyes flashed.

"It was shameful!" she exclaimed. "Shameful!"

"I cannot understand it," the man returned, "except that he is that sort. He has always treated you with as little consideration as if you had been one of his clerks. Why, even in the early days I wondered at him! A man with a beautiful wife has no right to be too busy to entertain her, nor to send her to the theatre with another man, especially if that man loved her before her marriage."

"We were not to talk of that," she quietly reminded him. And she added, with an instinct for defense of the absent: "Besides, he thought that you were his friend, and that he could trust us both."

"It is wrong to trust men beyond their strength!" he fervently declared. "Who could look upon you and not be moved by your beauty? Who could be with you and not succumb to your charm?"

She had averted her face, looking out of the window upon the snow with unseeing eyes.

Suddenly she caught up the speaking tube.

"Drive back to Mr. Stollings' house," she directed.

"Why so soon?" asked Stollings, as the car turned, but she made no reply.

"Perhaps I have been too impetuous," he said contritely. "I am a plain-spoken man, and I cannot dissemble my feelings. I love you—have loved you always. You should have married *me*, not Chamberlain. You know that. Honoria, give me the right to love you—divorces are easy these days. Let us leave here and create a new world of our own. Let me take you away into a brighter and happier life. Do you remember that pretty villa we saw in southern France? Let me house you in a place like that, and surround

you with life, and color, and gayety, and love!"

The man's voice was flexible and resonant, and he played upon its rich tones as one might upon a musical instrument.

Still the woman was silent; he was not sure that she had even heard him.

Failing in his effort to make her speak, he fell to musing and said nothing more till they drew up at his own door.

"You'll let me take you away," he whispered.

But she only shook her head and smiled a little sadly.

Without a word, he opened the door of the limousine, stepped out, and silently took her hand and kissed it.

As the car gathered speed again, she held that hand a little away from her. The print of his lips was still warm upon it. After a long time she sighed, and taking her kerchief rubbed the back of her hand slowly.

V.

Chamberlain, fully dressed, was pacing up and down the sidewalk when his wife returned to the Havermans'.

"Home," he said to the chauffeur. "Where have you been?" he demanded as he sat down beside his wife.

She slipped her arm within his, and nestled toward him. He held his arm stiffly, and did not respond to her quite unusual warmth.

"I slipped out for a little drive," she told him. "It is so close in there it made me dizzy."

"Why did you not hunt me up?"

"I couldn't find you," she replied. "I think if I had stayed five minutes longer I should have fainted. I had a butler take me out to the car. Where are we going?"

"Home," he stated curtly.

"But, John, the Havermans will think it queer my slipping away so informally."

"I made your adieus," he assured her. "I judged that you were slightly ill."

She leaned against his shoulder and brought her other hand over to rest upon his arm.

"I drove past the Altman place," she said. "The gates were open, and I drove through the grounds. It looked very lonesome with all the windows boarded up and everything dark, but I remember it as such a cheerful place, and the grounds are so beautiful. John, I want it."

He hesitated before replying.

"Isn't our present house good enough?" he asked.

"It's so cramped," she complained. "It seems stuffy. I don't seem to like to stay in it any more."

Her voice had grown wistful. She could not have used a more powerful appeal.

"Real estate is so hard to dispose of when you want to," he protested, worried; "and I don't see how I can afford, with the business deals I have in contemplation, to take on a burden of the size of the Altman place."

He felt a relaxing of the pressure upon his arm, and, though he had seemed unresponsive to her advances, now, in his hunger, he edged over and drew her arm more tightly within his own.

"I'll see what I can do," he promised. "If I can make some sort of a deal whereby I can trade in our present place, I might make up the difference."

"Thank you," she said, and nestled closer to him. "I know that if you want it you will get it."

He was troubled and silent for the balance of the drive, but he held closely to her and patted the gloved hand which lay upon his arm, and at home he lifted her out with more than his usual gallantry. Nevertheless, he rode back to the garage with the chauffeur and discharged him, remembering that Stollings had recommended him.

The next day he figured over his check book, and over his standing with the company, for a long time. His personal account was so intricate that he could not fathom it, but he knew that the treasury of the company was in good funds, and, waiting for a better

season to sell his house, went out and bought the Altman place, drawing heavily upon the company to pay for it. What did it matter? The company's earnings were his earnings, and its deficit was his deficit. He was a shrewd, keen organizer, but not a good business man. Nevertheless, it was with a great deal of satisfaction that he was able by the end of the week to lay a clear deed and title to the Altman place, made out in her name, into the hands of his wife.

V.

Chamberlain, on Monday morning, walked into his offices, to find Runk reinstalled at his desk.

"What are you doing here?" added Chamberlain, going straight across to him.

Runk, a broad-shouldered, heavy-set man with the neck and arms of a prize fighter and the face of a bulldog, looked up at him surlily.

"Working," he snapped.

"I thought I discharged you," returned Chamberlain, puzzled.

"Mr. Stollings hired me again," stated Runk, with ill-concealed contempt.

"You're discharged again," Chamberlain informed him. "Take your hat and go."

"I'll take two years' salary first," declared Runk, resuming his work. "Stollings signed a contract with me for that length of time."

"You'll both go, if it bankrupts the company," announced Chamberlain, suppressing his anger as best he could. "Is Stollings in?"

"I don't know," replied Runk shortly. He arose immediately, however, as Chamberlain passed on, and followed him into Stollings' office.

Chamberlain turned and saw him as he closed the door.

"Why did you hire this fellow?" he demanded of Stollings.

"He's the best man I can find for the place."

"Do you remember that I told you I would not have him about?"

"Perfectly," replied Stollings calmly. Having Runk there to protect him was a great aid to his courage.

"You don't think you're going to get away with this sort of thing, do you?" demanded Chamberlain.

"Why not? I have authorized charge of employees; I can hire and discharge them, and make contracts with them."

"We'll clip the wings of that authority," stated Chamberlain, and went back into his own office, where he looked over his memoranda of engagements to make sure that this was the date of the monthly meeting of directors.

Reassured, he interrupted Splinter Ragan in the studious occupation of working out a new clog step with his fingers upon the shelf of his switchboard, with instructions to call up each of the directors in turn.

Splinter immediately secured audience with Vice President Gainor, of the Market and Produce Bank, and connected him with Chamberlain; then he lowered the receiver from his ear, laid it down, and rested.

"This is Chamberlain, Gainor," said the president of the Middle West. "Be sure you attend the directors' meeting this afternoon. Stollings has become unmanageable."

"Is that so?" inquired Gainor. "I'm very busy this afternoon, but I'll get over. What time is it to be; four o'clock?"

"Yes, the usual hour. Stollings is exceeding his authority, and is defiant about it, and I'll need your help to clip his wings."

"I'll be there," said Gainor.

Miss Colby happened to be watching Splinter at that moment. His receiver was still down, his elbow was on the shelf, and his head was resting upon his hand, and yet he suddenly turned and looked toward Stollings' door with rounding eyes and a whistling expression upon his mouth; then he grinned, turned back to his board, and called up the Manufacturers' National Bank. Runk came through from Stollings' office and heard Splinter give the number.

It had been part of Chamberlain's

policy to give a few shares of stock to an officer in each of the five leading banks when he started his company, in order to have upon the board of directors the concerns with which he needed to do business. Runk waited until he heard the numbers of two of these banks called for by Splinter, and then he went back into Stollings' office, remaining there for about five minutes. In the meantime, Chamberlain, feeling more triumphant with every conversation with his directors, received cordial assurances from each of them that they would be on hand to help him put Stollings in his place. Chisman, of the Provident Trust, was particularly emphatic.

"I'm glad you've come to that conclusion," said he. "I've always suspected Stollings, and I'm glad you're going to take him in hand."

Chisman was the last of the directors with whom he communicated, and Chamberlain set aside his phone with considerable complacency.

Within five minutes a call came from Stollings' room, and, strange to say, Splinter Ragan, in the interval, had not even once tried any terpsichorean diversion. He answered this call with so much alacrity that he might even have seemed to have been waiting for it. It was the Occident Saloon for which Stollings first called, and then a rapid succession of numbers with which Stollings' conversation consisted of but one question and answer, the answer being: "Not here." He finally located his man in the county auditor's office.

"Well, Sledge, it's popped open," said Stollings. "Runk started in this morning, and Chamberlain has been raising merry Hades all over the place. There's a directors' meeting this afternoon at four o'clock, and Chamberlain has been telephoning the directors. It's time now to get busy. Shall I see you at the First National in about half an hour?"

Miss Colby, noting the lively satisfaction on Splinter Ragan's face, had crossed over and slipped behind him. She stopped, puzzled.

If ever a boy seemed to be listening intently, Splinter Ragan was that boy, and yet the receiver was lying neglected before him; his elbow was on the shelf, and his palm was resting over his ear.

As she watched, Splinter reached up with the left hand for the plug connecting Stollings' room with the county auditor's office, while upon his face there spread a grin. He held his hand poised a moment, and then suddenly pulled out the plug.

Looking up, he caught Miss Colby's eye, and kept on grinning in a confiding sort of way, as if he were about to tell her a good joke; then suddenly his face straightened and assumed an air of bland and angelic innocence.

Miss Colby hurried immediately into Stollings' office. He looked up from some neatly filed memoranda with a frown.

"Well?" he inquired ungraciously.

"You're dreadfully cross with me," she panted.

"I'm busy," he told her. "What do you want?"

"I'm sure that young Ragan is listening at the phone," she said.

"Was he listening just now?" he asked quickly.

"I think so. He didn't have the receiver to his ear or anywhere near it, but——"

"Well, then he couldn't hear! You are filled with a lot of fool fancies of late, May!"

"I am rather nervous, I'm afraid," she admitted.

He turned again to his memoranda, and paid no more attention to her. She stood still, looking down at him wistfully for a time, then walked slowly away. At the door, she turned.

"Howard." She repeated the name before he answered:

"Well?"

"When are you coming up to see me?"

"I don't know. To-night, maybe," he answered impatiently. "You'll be home, I suppose."

She smiled wanly.

"I'm home every night, waiting and hoping; but you never come. It's been two weeks now since you were up." She approached him swiftly and put

her hands upon his shoulders. "Tell me you still love me," she begged.

The frown deepened, and he started to make an angry retort, but thought better of it, and forced a smile.

"Of course I do," he said, and, bending, kissed her, and left the office.

VI.

Chamberlain looked about him upon his board of directors in smiling ease, and even smiled at Stollings, who sat opposite to him at the foot of the big mahogany board table. The routine had been dispatched in the bored nonchalance with which such matters are disposed of, and they had come to the head of "New Business."

"Will you kindly take the chair, Mr. Borden?" asked Chamberlain. "I have a measure under this heading which I would like to propose myself," and, still smiling, he glanced at Stollings.

Borden, of the First National, a pompous man of much fish-white fat and with round-cut white mutton-chop whiskers, remained in his own seat, but tapped his knuckles upon the table in token of his assumption of office.

"I recognize Mr. Chamberlain," he said in a tone about three notes lower than his ordinary speaking voice. He glanced about him to see if any one else than himself was admiring the sonorous roundness of his delivery.

Nobody noticed the oratory. Every man there realized that the moment of the actual purpose of the meeting had arrived, and most of them, veterans in the warfare of commercial advantage, either stirred uneasily in their seats or sat stolidly awaiting the moment to speak their predetermined wills.

Chamberlain's motion was, upon the surface, quite innocent enough.

"I desire an interpretation of the constitution, by-laws, and minutes," he stated; "and I move that it be inscribed as the will and meaning of this board, that no authority was ever given or will be given to any officer of this company to sign and issue any contract, of any nature whatsoever, without the countersignature of another officer."

It was a blow direct at the Runk contract, and at any other action binding upon the company, which Stollings might take. The latter recognized it, but did not move or look up. He was quietly thrumming his finger tips upon the table. There was a brief silence.

Borden cleared his throat, and squared his shoulders. He most dramatically intoned the motion and inquired if he heard a second. No royal ukase was ever promulgated more grandly.

There was another silence. Gainor, of the Market and Produce Bank, leaned forward. He was a sallow, leather-skinned little man, with three deep, vertical creases in each cheek and three more between his eyebrows, and his clothing looked as if it had been ironed upon him.

"For the purpose of getting the measure before the board," he rasped in his quick, snappy voice, "I second Mr. Chamberlain's motion."

Chamberlain looked at him in surprise. Gainor had been one of those who had been quick to promise his help in "clipping Stollings' wings." Possibly he did not recognize the import of this motion.

"I might explain this a little further," offered Chamberlain, rising.

"I beg your pardon," interrupted Borden, rapping upon the table with his knuckles. "You are out of order, Mr. Chamberlain. It has been moved and seconded——" and he repeated the full motion again with painstaking exactness, ending with: "Are there any remarks? I recognize Mr. Chamberlain."

"Thank you," said Chamberlain dryly. "I merely wish to explain that this company is too large and too important to intrust even its minor contracts to the possible errors of any one man. As a matter of fact, no formal authority has ever been given an officer of this company to sign such documents singly; but one of them has just issued a contract of this nature directly against my will. As I am the majority stockholder, as well as the founder of the company and the one man responsi-

ble for its success, I wish not only to prevent repetitions of this mistake but to protect the company against the one which has been made."

Stollings, still without looking up, continued to beat a tattoo upon the table.

Chisman, of the Provident Trust, a hard-featured man without a curve in his countenance or his anatomy, opened an angular mouth to speak a few square-cornered words.

"Can't see the necessity, John," said he. "The company is booming; same officers in charge as ever; no other insurance concern in the United States has made such rapid strides; I say, let well enough alone!"

Chamberlain looked at Chisman, dazed. Chisman, only that morning, had expressed himself as being anxious to have Stollings "taken in hand."

"You don't seem to understand," protested Chamberlain. "I want this measure passed! Consider it a personal matter if you like!"

Davidson, the paying teller of the German National, a long, cadaverous gentleman who looked and dressed like a minister, and had as suave and oily a voice as a ladies' tailor, fixed Chamberlain with a disapproving eye.

"Personal differences are the rocks upon which most businesses are wrecked," he said soothingly. "If this is a personal matter, Chamberlain, that is the strongest reason I know for voting it down."

Chamberlain could scarcely believe his ears. He looked about the board slowly. A subtle something, like an icy breath, seemed to have settled down upon them. Everywhere he saw either averted eyes or stolid determination.

"Gntlemen, this is my company!" he declared, springing to his feet. "I made it out of my own blood! I've toiled over it by day and by night for over twenty-five years! I've paid my life for it, and it's mine; every bit of it, mine! You are stockholders and directors by courtesy only, and both the most and the least you can do is to carry out my wishes!"

"Question," said Stollings softly.

Chamberlain turned suddenly to him, but was silent. He seemed stunned by the unexpected developments of the meeting.

Borden cleared his throat.

"Gentlemen, you have all heard the motion," he declaimed, his second chin quivering jerkily upon his third for emphasis upon each accented syllable. "All those in favor will please signify by saying 'Aye.' "

Chamberlain's voice was alone.

"Opposing, 'No.' "

Five voices answered.

"The motion is lost," declared Borden, knocking sharply upon the table with his knuckles.

"I demand a roll-call vote!" cried Chamberlain.

Nothing could exceed the quiet insolence with which Stollings drew toward him a pad of paper, in a bored sort of way, and wrote down the names and the votes as he called them.

"Chamberlain?"

"Aye."

"Borden?"

"No."

"Chisman?"

"No."

"Davidson?"

"No."

"Gainor?"

"No."

"Strong?"

Strong, a particularly weak-looking nonentity with sketchy features, who was second vice president of the Commercial Savings Bank because he had an uncle, wiped a watery eye and tugged a fragmentary mustache.

"Well," he said, in an uncertain voice, "the affiliations of our establishment with Mr. Chamberlain have always been of the most pleasant nature."

He stopped, appalled. The eyes of the entire board of directors, from Chamberlain to Stollings, were fixed upon him in stern disapproval.

"Yes or no?" demanded Stollings wearily.

"Well," wavered the uncertain Strong, "of course there's nothing personal about a man's judgment on a purely business question, and, as I was

saying, the relations of the Commercial Savings Bank with Mr. Chamberlain have been very pleasant."

"Yes or no!" thundered Chamberlain. "Stollings, put him down either way! It don't make any difference. Gentlemen, I have lost this motion, and I don't understand it. There's something at the bottom of this, and I don't know what it is, but, by thunder, I'll find out, and when I do I'll make the fur fly! Do you suppose I've fought my way up through twenty-five years of cutthroat opposition, to allow a board of dummy directors to tie my hands? I hereby order the secretary to call a special stockholders' meeting within ten days to impeach this board, and I know who'll do the most voting at *that* meeting! I declare this session adjourned. As for you," he turned to Stollings, "you infernal ingrate——"

He clutched his left wrist with his right hand, and hurried from the room to control his fury. Stollings looked slowly around at the members of the board and grinned. Only one man answered his grin—Strong. The others, scarcely noticing Stollings at all, filed, almost too quietly, from the room.

VII.

Chamberlain sat within his office with bowed head. He was tired, and he knew it. He was too old in the game of fighting unexpected odds to be entirely stricken by this latest unlooked-for blow; but he was tired, desperately tired! He had earned the right to competence, and peace, and rest, and he resented the thought that he must begin to fight again, and with unknown enemies.

His head sank so low in his weariness that it jerked, and, recognizing his weakness, he straightened up angrily. There was at least one known enemy with whom to cope—Stollings! He called back his vigor with all his will, and walked from his office, all his forces concentrated upon his determined errand. In the main office his wife, followed by his daughter, swept toward him with a beaming countenance.

"I'm so glad you are in," she said. "I just found the dearest carpet for the music room. It's a velours in the most beautiful blending of pastelle blues. I want you to come and look at it."

"Good Lord!" he exclaimed, swept from his accustomed courteous poise by this absurdly incongruous request, and passed on toward Stollings' office. In spite of his absorption in what he was about to do, and his concentration upon how he meant to do it, it dawned upon him that he had been unprecedently rude, at the very time when his wife was promising to make life sweeter for him than it had been for years. He came back to her contritely, though at the same time inwardly fretting that her very presence there was confusing him at so vital a moment.

"Forgive me, Honoria," he lamely apologized, as Stollings came to the door and hesitated, "but I'm really very, very busy. I'll talk with you at dinner about the carpet," and he hurried on into Stollings' room after the secretary, still in deeply frowning absorption. His wife looked after him a moment with flushed face and bit her lips, then hurried out, uncomfortably embarrassed, joined by Anna, who had stopped at Corliss' desk for a brief greeting.

Splinter Ragan walked across to Blubber Bloocher's corner with a double-toe shuffle, looking after Anna Chamberlain in huge admiration.

"Gee, fat, but she's the peachy party!" he declared. "I could die for her."

"That certainly was some swell grub she give us," agreed Blubber with a sigh for past joys. "I wisht I was rich enough to board out there."

"You don't think of nothin' but eatin'," charged Splinter in vast contempt. "I b'lieve you git fatter on what you think, too. Say—listen to that, will you? There's sumpin doin' around this dump. That's what I like about it," and he jigged for joy.

More eyes and ears than his own were turned toward Stollings' office door, behind which a stormy scene was being enacted.

"You don't need Runk here to pro-

tect you!" Chamberlain was shouting. "I'm past the point of wanting to thrash you, if I can get you out of my sight for good; but you'll have to leave the company, and that settles it. Sell your stock and get out!"

"Will you buy it?" asked Stollings. His voice was cool enough, but his face was pale, and he kept looking constantly toward Runk, who sat silently and stolidly between him and Chamberlain.

"Yes, I'll buy it!" flared Chamberlain. "What will you take for it?"

"A hundred and fifty," offered Stollings promptly.

"Wouldn't two hundred suit you better?" sarcastically inquired Chamberlain. "Why, at a hundred and fifty your stock would be worth five hundred and twenty-five thousand dollars. That's over half a million that I've given you, besides your salary, in the past twenty-five years."

"Well, I've been worth it," declared Stollings. "I've put my life into this business as well as you have. I'm willing to retire and rest and let you try doing without me. Make it the even half million and I'll get out."

"I'll not do it. The stock is not worth that." It hurt his pride to make that statement. "Make it a hundred and twenty-five, and I'll close with you at once, if you'll give me three or four days to raise the amount."

Stollings did not even stop to figure; the figuring had already been done.

"Make it four hundred and fifty thousand cash, and I'll go you," he offered. "That's my last and only price."

"That is for your entire thirty-five hundred shares of stock?" inquired Chamberlain.

"My entire thirty-five hundred; every share I own."

"It's a bargain," agreed Chamberlain with a sigh of relief. "You are no longer secretary of this company."

"I haven't my check yet," Stollings reminded him.

"You'll have that very shortly," he promised, though he was already figuring anxiously upon his sources of revenue.

As he walked out, Runk and Stollings exchanged grins; and Stollings, this time with perfect confidence that he would find his man, called up the Occident Saloon and asked for Sledge.

"Hold the phone a minute," he said to Runk, while he waited, and, opening his door, looked out at the switchboard. Splinter Ragan, his receiver lying before him, was sitting slouchily in his chair, with his elbow resting upon the shelf, and his ear pillowed in his palm. Satisfied, he partly closed the door and came back to the phone.

"Just watch through the crack there, and see if that kid's listening," he instructed Runk. "Hello, Sledge. This is Stollings."

"Uh-huh," commented Sledge.

"Well, Chamberlain has agreed to buy my stock at four hundred and fifty thousand, cash. He wants three days to raise the money."

"Uh-huh,' commented Sledge.

"Your five trained bankers walked right up and quacked as per instructions, like a procession of ducks going to water."

"Uh-huh," observed Sledge.

"Will you see Strong, or phone him, and fix that other matter in the morning?"

"Uh-huh," commented Sledge.

"Fine," said Stollings. "It's all coming out just the way we want it, Sledge. There's nothing to stop you from seeing Jerry Leech to-morrow and start the ball rolling. It won't take us two weeks to put a crimp in Chamberlain the size of the Panama Canal."

"Look here, young feller," rumbled the voice of Sledge; "whoever you are, I don't understand a word you're sayin'. I think you got the wrong party." And Sledge hung up his receiver.

Stollings looked up in perplexity.

"Now, why did Sledge say that?" he anxiously inquired. "Said he didn't know who I was, or what I was talking about, and rang off."

"Can you blame him?" demanded Runk, as rough a speaker as he looked. "Did you need to tell him all that junk

before you saw him? You blat out things just as if a telephone didn't have a million ears. That's one reason the big boy never has let you on the strong inside. You know how Sledge got his, don't you, and for keeps? By only gruntin' where another guy would talk till his tongue raveled out at the end."

"That kid wasn't listening, was he?" asked Stollings.

"Naw, he's too wise for that," returned Runk, closing the door. "Now, then, what about this building inspectorship? Do I get it if I deliver my precinct?"

"I can tell you about that in a day or two," replied Stollings uneasily. "I must be a lot under cover about it, for, if Sledge gets wise that I'm having any talk with the other party, he'll about get my goozle."

Unconsciously Stollings dropped into slang and slipshod English when he talked with this man.

"I'll make him a present of mine," declared Runk viciously. "I've been handing him my precinct for years. He always uses his pull to keep me in a good job, but never one with any graft in it, and I'm getting old. The building inspectorship in this town is worth ten thousand a year, beside the salary, and I want it."

"I think I can secure it for you," declared Stollings, passing his hand nervously across his brow; "that is, if Judge Grey's party wins in the city. The only trouble is, that any work the judge's managers do has to be done without his knowledge. He's an innocent old fluff, and he's on the level in thinking that an election can be won on a strong platform, a square campaign, and a ticket headed by honest men!"

Both experienced gentlemen paused to laugh at this verdant view.

"Anyhow, he's got the right bunch of managers," admitted Runk. "They'll pull it across if anybody can, and if I help 'em they got a chance. My precinct carries my ward, and my ward swings the election. But say, Stollings, I can see why *I* want to break away from Sledge, but I don't see why *you* want to slip him the double cross."

"I want to go to the legislature, and from there to Washington, after I come back from a little pleasure trip in Europe," said Stollings, "and I want to go as a gentleman. Sledge's party don't send any there. Moreover, whether it happens this time or not, by the next election the Sledge machine is going to break up. They're getting too strong."

Runk, as phlegmatic as a pail of oysters, looked down on the more nervous man with something of contempt. His thick lips were perpetually down-drooping, and his nose was so small, his cheeks so round, and his eyes so protruding, that from certain angles he seemed to have almost no features at all. He was a dull, unimaginative, unemotional clod, without wit, intellect, or sensibilities, and yet by experience he had learned the political wisdom of all the ages.

"They can't get too strong," he said. "It's like some people with their game birds; the public don't cozy right up to a political machine till it's so strong it smells; and the rawer the better."

VIII.

The raising of nearly half a million dollars in three days is not always the easiest task in the world, even to men of large resources, and Chamberlain found himself in possession of a set of anxieties which he had fancied that he had laid aside forever; but he raised the money.

First of all, he inquired of Miss Colby the balance in the various local banks to the credit of the company. This proving to aggregate in the neighborhood of two hundred and fifty thousand dollars; after some hesitation he drew a voucher to himself for two hundred thousand, which Stollings, receiving it through Miss Colby, promptly signed, charging the amount to the president's now colossal personal account.

Next, Chamberlain went to his wife. It was not until after dinner, and after he had sat for a long hour alone in his

study, figuring and dreading the ordeal, that he ventured the subject with her. He found her in her sewing room with Anna, admiring the canopy hangings for the new Louis Quinze bedchamber.

Called upon to express his own admiration, he did it so inadequately, and yet with so evident a desire to be appreciative, that his daughter laughed at him.

"Really, daddy, you ought to be more enthusiastic," she chided him, "for we spent days in finding these, and they're dreadfully expensive; worth at least five times the polite approval you're giving them."

"I'm glad you found something that suited you," he said, looking around the room abstractedly. "They're really very pretty. This makes a cheerful room, Honoria."

"The entire house is delightful," she returned. "I don't believe I ever enjoyed anything so much as the fitting and furnishing of it."

Chamberlain looked guilty, and felt so.

"Anna, I wish you'd mix me one of your famous toddies," he requested. "There's no one in the world can make them like you can."

"I'm glad of that," she laughed. "Perhaps, if ever anything happens to us all, I can secure a position somewhere as a toddy mixer," and she hurried away.

Chamberlain fumbled nervously with his watch fob for a moment.

"Honoria, I must raise a lot of money," he said suddenly.

She looked up at him, startled. He wore the worried look she had not seen upon his face for years.

"Perhaps I am spending too much on the decorations here," she hesitated. "I am very extravagant, I'm afraid."

"Go right ahead," encouraged Chamberlain heartily, although secretly he winced at the thought of the enormous bills he would be compelled to face on the first of the month; "but I'm afraid I'll have to ask you to come into the city with me to-morrow and sign some papers."

"Have you sold the old place?" she inquired.

"Haven't even an offer on it," he returned. "This is a miserable real-estate year. I've arranged to borrow some money on the place, though."

"Oh," she said indifferently, lifting a fold of the creamy hangings and admiring the simple beauty of the pattern.

"Also," he slowly went on, "I am compelled to borrow some money on this place."

She tried to conceal the disagreeable effect of this announcement upon herself, but, slight as it was, he caught and correctly interpreted the fleeting expression of regret, almost of humiliation.

"I'm sorry," he said contritely. "I've just bought out Stollings' interest in the Middle West."

Quite a new concern and a more painful one expressed itself upon her countenance.

"Have you quarreled with him again?" she asked, dreading the answer.

His brow darkened.

"I wouldn't call it that, quite," he said. "The matter is far too serious to be termed a quarrel."

"What was it about?" she ventured, awaiting the answer breathlessly.

"Oh, business entirely," he reassured her, recognizing her fear that her name might have been mentioned, and feeling hurt that she should even suspect him of such crassness.

There came an impulse upon the woman to throw herself into his arms and confess that she had been wrong in the whole Stollings affair. But the quick thought came to her that then, in justice to herself, she would be compelled to lay part of the blame upon her husband for his neglect of her social needs and his persistent throwing of Stollings in her way in the first place. She feared the outcome of such a discussion, after the stand he had taken in that still-unforgiven scene in the office.

She could not know that had she obeyed her first impulse, her husband would have acknowledged gladly his

own remissness. The moment of explanation past, the mere reference, even so remotely, to her relations with Stollings had plunged them both into painful uncertainty, which was relieved by the return of Anna.

"Then you'll drop in at the office about eleven o'clock for me, will you?" he asked rather stiffly.

"Certainly," she replied listlessly; and unconsciously she pushed away the box of hangings, in plain token that she had lost all interest in them.

Chamberlain thanked her, and thanked Anna for his toddy, and returned to his study, where he sat quite late, no longer puzzling over his business tangles, but brooding over Stollings.

When his wife called for him in the morning, Chamberlain was in a perturbed frame of mind. Another annoyance from Stollings had upset him. The annual printing contract, for many years turned over by Chamberlain to a personal friend, had been placed in the hands of another man by Stollings, without consulting him.

In consequence, Chamberlain was anything but his usual urbane self. He was curt to his wife when she came, and, to add to her discomfiture, Stollings met them, and smiled sardonically as they were passing out through the main office.

With heightened sensitiveness, Mrs. Chamberlain sat in the office of the Provident Trust, waiting for papers to be presented for her signing, and realizing how hollow was her importance in this transaction which required her signature. She was so uncomfortable that as soon as she had signed the mortgages she begged to be excused, on the plea of having to see her dressmaker.

With regret, Chamberlain saw her go, in her quite evident dissatisfaction; but the business in hand was urgent, and he bent his energies toward it.

On the old place he had secured forty thousand dollars; it had cost him, with improvements, over seventy-five. On the Altman place he secured eighty-five thousand; it had cost him a hundred and twenty-five. There remained yet a hundred and twenty-five thousand to raise, and for this he went to the First National with his stock.

Borden received him with fat courtesy, and listened to his proposition, smiling most amicably, stroking his fish-white second chin with his puffy fingers, his round gray mutton-chop whiskers drawing curiously downward with each stroke.

"Money," he observed, in his best chest tones, "is a little tight just now, but we can certainly accommodate an old customer like you, Mr. Chamberlain. We can loan you, say, the full par value on your stock in the amount you wish."

"Par!" exclaimed Chamberlain. "Why, the stock hasn't been quoted as low as a hundred and twenty-five in five years, and I'm just paying over a hundred and twenty-eight for some of it. You've loaned me a hundred and twenty-five yourself a dozen times."

"I know," returned Borden, still stroking his chin and leaving little red marks in the puffiness; "but the examiners are very strict about our securities these days, and a hundred is the best I can do."

He was obdurate about it, and Chamberlain left him rather stiffly, going straight to the German National. It was curious how much in fear of the examiners all the banks had suddenly become, for the best offer he could get anywhere was a hundred; and sallow little Gainor, of the Market and Produce, putting two extra furrows in his brow, would only offer him ninety.

In despair, Chamberlain finally arranged for his additional hundred and twenty-five thousand dollars with Chisman, of the Provident Trust, jeopardizing twelve hundred and fifty shares of his stock as collateral.

He could not get back quickly enough to the office to write Stollings his check for four hundred and fifty thousand dollars, sending in word, as soon as he arrived, to have the stock ready for him. As he crossed to Stollings' room with the check, he met Stollings coming over with his stock, and they made

the exchange of documents in the open office, just as Mrs. Chamberlain came in at the front door.

"And now," said Chamberlain, "you may take your hat and get out. According to the constitution of this company, no man who is not a stockholder can hold office. You are no longer secretary."

"Sorry to have to correct your mistake," said Stollings with maddeningly cool insolence, "but I am still secretary until I am removed by the board. I just yesterday bought Strong's five shares of stock."

For a moment Chamberlain gazed at him, speechless. Then, with an inarticulate cry of rage, he sprang at Stollings.

Runk, who had moved quite near to them as soon as they met, jumped in between them with his ponderous weight, and grabbed Chamberlain around the chest, under the armpits.

The fury of Chamberlain was frightful. His face was livid with anger, and had it not been for Corliss, who came running to Runk's assistance, he would have lunged away from the embrace of the manager of agencies, and have throttled Stollings to death; for he was murderous!

He poured out a fearful stream of imprecations upon the frightened secretary; and little flecks of froth came upon his lips.

Mrs. Chamberlain hurried forward.

"Loosen his cravat and collar, please," she begged of Corliss. "He is choking!"

He was not. Turning his bloodshot eyes upon her, he regarded her for a moment in glaring silence, and his confused mind connected her at once with the similar scene of a few days before.

"I don't need your sympathy!" he shouted in his anguish. "Give it where you gave it the other time!"

She shrank as if he had struck her a physical blow. He saw the action, and realized his hideous mistake. The knowledge of it cooled his anger and turned him sick and faint. He wheeled toward his own office, and, holding his hand over his heart, almost staggered to his door.

Stollings, who through it all had crouched against the desk behind him with blanched face and ashen lips, though he knew himself sufficiently protected by Runk and Corliss, watched Chamberlain narrowly to see that he did not turn, and then hurried after Mrs. Chamberlain.

The change in the man was a marvelous example of his skill as an actor, for, though his breath was fluttering and his knees weak, his voice had nearly all its accustomed flexibility.

"I am sorry," he said; "very, very sorry; but, believe me, such violent scenes are by no means of my making."

"Get me away from here," she said faintly. "Quickly, please."

He said no more, but led her out to her car, and, by the time he had reached it, he had recovered his poise enough to hand her as gracefully as ever into her runabout, though his hand trembled.

"Where?" he asked.

"Anywhere," she replied.

"The First National Bank," he told the chauffeur. "You don't mind my stopping there a moment to make a transfer?" he asked, as he stepped in beside her.

She shook her head.

He took a handkerchief from his pocket as they started, and wiped his lips. They were so dry that they brushed roughly upon each other, and he moistened them two or three times before he spoke again.

"Do you intend to subject yourself to such brutality for the rest of your lifetime?" he demanded.

"No," she declared with tense quietness, looking straight ahead.

He caught her hand in his. Her clasp did not respond to his in the slightest degree, but neither did she withdraw it.

IX.

Jerry Leech sat in his handsome suite of offices in the State capitol, with his feet resting comfortably upon the top of his mahogany desk, and his derby shoved forward over his eyes. Jerry seldom took off his hat in the office,

because he seldom stayed in the place long enough to make it worth while, the office of State Insurance Control being one of the pleasantest gifts in the cornucopia of a grateful party.

Between his thin but muscular fingers Jerry held an expensive imported cigarette, from which a sapphire stream of incense curled gracefully upward. The secretary of the Great Lakes Insurance Company knew that Jerry liked that brand, and kept him supplied with them.

In Jerry's rich carmine and vert changeable silk cravat, brought over for him from Paris, with eleven others equally exclusive, by the president of the Mississippi Valley Life Association, glowed a rare jade, a loving remembrance from the western manager of the Manhattan Mutual. He was a thin-lipped and thin-nosed man, this Jerry, whose smile, in some odd way, suggested the cruel, set grin of a snake; and his intensely black eyes and flat forehead heightened the reptilian effect.

"What are they jawing about in the senate?" he asked, brushing a fleck of ashes from his violent waistcoat.

The State commissioner of labor, a mottled-faced man with a bulging mustache, who had his feet elevated on the opposite side of Jerry's desk, reached over a mottled thick hand for one of the imported cigarettes.

"Traction Privilege Bill, I think," he said, yawning.

"Anything in it for anybody?"

"No," returned the commissioner of labor in disgust. "There's nothing in anything for anybody any more."

The smooth-faced and clean-featured young man of immaculate clothing, who sat at the end of Jerry's desk with his folded gloves cushioning his hands from the cane upon which they rested, laughed quietly. He was the legislative representative of the State Association of Factories, and was great friends with the commissioner of labor.

"We could get up quite an argument on that," he observed; "but what's the use? Things are worth what you have to pay for them. If you don't want 'em, don't pay. I hear that Judge Grey has his eye on your office, Jerry, and intends to clean it out if he's elected."

Jerry laughed contemptuously.

"Judge Grey's got about as much chance as a tallow dog chasing an asbestos cat through a furnace," he asserted. "I quit worrying about reform administrations as long as Sledge is on the job."

As if in answer to his name, Sledge at that moment came through the door, huge, somber, oppressive, his eyes as dull, above their flabby pouches, as those of a fish, his mouth almost mournful in its inflexibility beneath his close-cropped mustache.

The change in the group about the table was so instantaneous as to be almost absurd. The feet of Jerry and the labor commissioner came to the floor with an almost simultaneous thump, and all three men arose.

Jerry took off his hat and laid it upon the desk, and the labor commissioner, who also owed his job to Sledge, picked his up and put it on. From all three men there was a deferential chorus of: "Good morning, Mr. Sledge."

"G' morn'," grunted Sledge, and deposited his huge bulk heavily in the chair which the man with the bulging mustache had just vacated.

"I'll see you later, Jerry," said the representative of the State Association of Factories, smiling easily, and strolled from the room, followed by his particular friend and business associate, the commissioner of labor.

The two men exchanged glances as they passed into the hall. The "Big Boss" never paid any merely social calls.

"Jerry, you're conductin' your department too loose," charged Sledge, turning his dull eyes accusingly upon the man he had put in office.

Jerry, questioning that immobile face in vain, waited quietly.

"You're lettin' Class C companies off with too light a reserve, an' it's dangerous. You gotta protect the people's money."

"Class C," repeated Jerry musingly, reaching his hand toward the open top drawer of his desk for a little red book, but taking out a cigarette and closing the drawer instead. "Oh, yes, Class C."

The classification of insurance companies in Jerry's office was ingenious and minute. It was like grouping all the men with a mole on the right ear, a gash over the left eye, a split nose, and a blue birthmark under the chin. About one man in the State would be found in that grouping; similarly Class C embraced but one insurance company, the Middle West.

"About how much do you think the reserve ought to be increased?" inquired Jerry, drawing toward him a memorandum pad.

"How do I know!" grunted Sledge. "How much would it take to make a half a million dollars?"

"About two per cent.," replied Jerry, figuring roughly. "Shall we call it that?"

"How do I know!" again grunted Sledge, rising. "It's up to you, Jerry. I'd play safe if I was you," and with no further remarks whatsoever, without even a "good day," or a nod of the head, Sledge, who had come all the way up to the State capitol that morning to say these few words, stalked out and took the next train home.

X.

Blubber Boocher rang the bell of the Chamberlain residence, and leaned against the door jamb while he waited. Closing his eyes and pretending to be asleep being one way to increase his imaginary bodily heat, he protected himself against the cold by that course, and consequently rolled into the arms of the butler when the door opened.

"Look here, young Butterball," protested the butler good-naturedly, setting him upon his feet, "if you'll give us fair warning next time you come, we'll put a pillow outside for you."

"Can I see Miss Chamberlain?" asked Blubber, rubbing his eyes until they were perfectly round.

"Do you mean the madame or the young lady?" inquired the butler.

"I said Miss Chamberlain, didn't I?"

"I beg your pardon. Your card, please."

"You tell her it's Harold P. Bloocher," said Blubber, not seeing the butler's joke, but rising to the dignity of the occasion.

"Will you be seated, sir?" inquired the butler with great gravity, and waved toward a chair.

When he came back, he found Blubber curled up against the soft leather cushions, sound asleep, and awakened him, strangling and gasping, by the simple expedient of holding the youngster's nose shut; then he pushed Blubber up the broad stairway and back through the hall to Anna's cozy little personal music room, where that young lady sat, rather sadly improvising, at a white-and-gold baby grand. She turned, smiling, to find Blubber ravenously eying an open box of candy.

"Help yourself, Mr. Bloocher," she invited him; "that is, unless you are still in training."

"Naw, I ain't," Blubber informed her, diving into the candy with both hands. "I kin eat anything I want to now. I ain't goan'a be any actor. I've left the Ragan Brothers Clog Team."

"That's too bad," she sympathized. "What was the matter? Incompatibility of appetites?"

Blubber, his mouth full of chocolate fig, grunted a negative. Presently he explained: "We had an amateur tryout last night at the Criterion Moving Picture Theatre, and Splinter insulted me! He said all my brains was in my feet, and they was plumb idiots!"

He looked down critically at the members in question, and tried to gain a correct estimate of them, but they were his own, and he was prejudiced. "Do you think there's anything the matter with them?"

"Well, I'm not much of a connoisseur in—feet," returned Anna judicially, "but I should say, speaking merely as a dilettante, that they were almost in perfect proportion to the balance of you."

"That's what I say," declared Blubber, aggrieved; "but Splinter ain't no

gentleman. Say! I come out to tell you about that kid. He's rubbering in at the telephone down at the office, and he'd ought to be looked into."

"Mr. Bloocher," said Anna reprovingly, "I believe you are—what do they call it?—snitching!"

"Yessum," admitted Blubber, unabashed. "He's got a brass plate on the switchboard that he leans his elbow on, and a wire inside his sleeve, and a dinky little telephone receiver about the size of a half a dollar that he made hisself, and that he holds up to his ear in his hand. There's a rubber band on it that jerks it back in his sleeve when he lets go. He never would let me try it. He jes' sets there all day, when he ain't tryin' out his crazy dancin', and jes' listens."

"Listens!" repeated Anna, with the proper intonation of shocked surprise.

"Yessum, listens; just listens to everything that goes on!"

"But why do you come out here to tell me this?" asked Anna, perplexed.

"Well, somebody'd oughter put a stop to it, an' nen maybe I'd dast to go back to the office," declared Blubber calculatingly, "and I ain't strong enough with anybody down there to tell 'em, an' nen you treated us so swell the night Splinter and me was out. That was the best grub I ever ett. I can taste it yet," and he smacked his lips expectantly.

"I see," said Anna, laughing, and she crossed to the bell to ring for the butler, just as that individual appeared.

"I beg your pardon, miss," said the butler, with a glance of carefully concealed humor at Blubber, "but there's another one downstairs wants to see you. A very thin one, miss, and the only name he would give me was Splinter. 'Just tell her it's Splinter,' he said, miss; just like that"—and the butler waved his hand grandly—"just as if he was a regular silk-hat caller." And in spite of his professional gravity, the butler was compelled to echo Anna's laugh, although in a most respectfully repressed manner, to be sure.

"Let him come up," said Anna, smiling.

Blubber turned paper pale.

"Say, Buttons!" he quaked after the departing butler, "f'r th' love o' Mike, don't tell that grasshopper I'm here! Honest, miss, he'll kill me dead," he groaned, and suddenly plumped to the floor under the piano.

Reflecting that he had a little more time, however, he rolled out again, laid a pudgy hand upon the box of candy, and once more toilfully disappeared under the baby grand, retiring to the very corner of the wall.

Splinter wore a troubled look as he came in, nor was there any dance whatsoever in his footstep.

"I got a lot o' nerve comin' here," he said, with quite unSplinterlike diffidence. "I ain't easy in my mind."

"Well, the first thing we must do is to make you easy," decided Anna. "Won't you have some candy?" and she looked about the table in groping perplexity.

"No, thanks," refused Splinter. "I don't have to fat up none, and I don't need no candy. I got a new Ragan Brother as thin as I am, though he never will make as good an artist. Say, Miss Chamberlain, I never thought I'd do it in all m' life, but I've come out here to snitch."

Anna elevated her eyebrows. She had, somehow, not expected this of Splinter.

"Keepin' professional secrets is part of my job," Splinter went on, with so troubled a countenance that one could see the very struggle of his soul, "but I guess I ain't got no right to have a job of trust an' confidence, especially where everything ain't on the level. When I see the right guy gettin' the hooks, I gotta holler."

Anna listened, somewhat perplexed by his form of speech. There was something in Splinter's earnestness, more than in his words, which inspired serious consideration.

"I don't quite understand," she said.

"Well, it's like this. Stollings goan'a dish Chamberlain—I mean your old man. I got no right to say this, because it's professional secrets, but I got to. Stollings has it all framed up with

Sledge to pass your dad a quince. Do you get me? Say! I feel rotten, blowin' the works like this, but your old man's an on-the-level prop, and I'm with him. Now, here's the play.

"Stollings hammers it all into shape with Sledge to make all these here banker stiffs give the boss the chilly toes in the board of directors' meeting, an' make him so sore he'll buy Stolling out; then Sledge is to go up to the statehouse and fix it up with the insurance bosses to make a call on your old man for so much coin it'll break him. Now I ain't decent; I've snitched! But that's up to me. I gotta feel cheap all by myself. But you're next. You tell the governor to wise himself up and git busy, because they're goan'a slide it to him strong!"

She regarded him very seriously. In spite of her extreme difficulty in translation, she had gathered a grave portion of what he meant.

"I think I had better have you tell father yourself," she said, rising. "Wait a minute, please."

"Don't do that," he pleaded. "He'll think I'm fresh. He'll think I ain't to be trusted. He'll think that if I snitch on somebody else, I would on him. I'd ruther you just told him you got the tip from a personal friend."

"If you really feel that way about it, Splinter," she said, pausing to consider his side of the case, "I'll try to tell it to father the best way I can; but I do think that he can understand all you mean better than I do, and that you'll be much more valuable to him if you tell him in person. I am quite sure that he will not think you untrustworthy."

Splinter gave a sigh of resignation.

"All right, Miss Anna, I'm with you, wherever the flag falls. Go to it!"

"Thank you," returned Anna, laughing, in spite of her desire to treat Splinter and his serious errand quite seriously, and she hurried away.

Splinter, left to himself, sat in the nearest chair, and locked his hands. There was a little ivory Chinese figure perched airily upon the corner of the mantel, and he craved earnestly to inspect it; there was a curiosity-compelling, shot-dropping clock which positively insisted upon being examined; there was a tiny electrical switchboard, apparently controlling the tinted concealed lights behind the cornice, within a glass case, and it fairly made his ingenious fingers ache, and yet Splinter, firm in the proprieties, kept rigidly to his seat.

There was no bar upon his eyes, however, and they roved at will from wall to wall, and from ceiling to floor, until they came to startled rest, under the piano, upon a foot which there could be no mistaking.

Splinter dropped immediately to the floor upon his hands and knees, and found himself gazing into the widely distended eyes of Blubber Bloocher.

He crawled a threatening space forward. Blubber, his mouth full of deliciously oozing chocolate maraschino, drew all of his limbs into a round ball like a caterpillar.

Splinter jerked forward another menacing length. Blubber emitted a faint howl.

One minute later Anna Chamberlain, coming back through the hall, suddenly, with a belated remembrance of Blubber, quickened her footsteps to a run. There were chunks of chocolate-coated confections strewn from the piano to the opposite corner of the room, in which, upon the floor, Splinter Ragan was deliberately butting Blubber in the stomach with his head.

"I declare I'm shocked!" she announced, relieved to find that there was no real damage done. "I have never before found any gentlemen who call upon me engaged in a fight."

"I'm ashamed of myself," declared Splinter, rising apologetically; "but this slob just gets my goat till I have to bleat. Why, do you know what he done last night? We come out on the stage in our try-out and begin to dance, and he stumbled over his own feet; then I nudged him with my elbow, just like this—real light, you know, when I wanted to break a rib——

"Do you know what he done? He stopped dancin'. And then do you know what he done? He stood there

an' cried. Blubbered! An' then what? He run! They rung down the curtain on us an' I run after him, and I've been tryin' to ketch 'im ever sincet. He didn't even show up at the office, an' this is the first time I seen him. He's fired, he is!"

"Stage fright attacks the most self-possessed of us," declared Anna soberly. "Mr. Bloocher may come out with shining colors on the second attempt. I think I'd try him again, Splinter. In the meantime, I suppose he is no longer on a diet?"

"He kin eat any blame thing he pleases," declared Splinter, with a gesture of being absolutely through with Blubber forever. "He kin get so fat his eyes swell shut on 'im, for all o' me."

"I'll do the best I can at it," returned Anna, smiling. "I've ordered a nice lunch for him down in the dining room, and I've saved back your share, so that he won't eat it until you are through with father."

When Splinter had come back from the study and the boys had gone, Anna returned to her father's study. Three times she knocked upon the door, and waited. After the third time, she gently turned the knob and walked in. Mr. Chamberlain was sitting at his desk with his head bowed in his hands, and he did not move until she touched him upon the shoulder, when he looked up at her with haggard eyes.

"I beg your pardon," she said, frightened by his appearance. "I thought at first that you were asleep."

"No," he said with a tired smile. "I wish that I could have been."

She fell instinctively to smoothing his gray hair.

"Was Splinter of any value to you?" she asked, in as soothingly even tones as she could command.

"Not much," he answered. "He only made me sure of what I was bound to suspect. I've incurred the enmity of Sledge in some way, and I suppose I'm doomed. This morning I received this," and he showed her a printed communication from the State Control of Insurance, so important that he had brought it home with him.

It was a notice to the insurance organizations in the State that all companies of Class C would be required, within ten days of the date of the notice, to invest, under State supervision, an additional reserve of two per cent. upon the face value of their total outstanding policies.

"That means nearly a half million dollars," he told his daughter.

She sat down beside him, looking at him with such understanding as she could muster. Already she felt herself lost in the maze of figures he suggested, but she held his hand, patting it so gently that he scarcely knew she was doing it.

"Here's the queer thing," he went on, talking to her as if she were a man. Perhaps, in his present need, she was better, for, in telling her, he could make his dilemma clearer to himself. "Since the time when I made the Middle West strong enough to inspire respect, I have never had any banking difficulties until the other day, when I held a board meeting where the directors of the five banks with which I do business refused, for the first time in twenty-five years, to carry out my policy; after that, I tried to borrow money on my stock, and they cut me down to a lower valuation than I have ever had to accept.

"To-day, I went to all five banks and tried to borrow money for the Middle West on its own credit, which, a score of times, has been worth the amount I needed. Not one bank would advance it. Sledge is president of one of these banks, treasurer of another, vice president of a third, and a director in the two others."

"Then," his daughter said hopefully, as if she had solved his entire difficulty, "why not go to see Sledge?"

He looked up at her and laughed.

"It does seem a happy idea, doesn't it?" he admitted, with a sarcasm which was lost upon her.

"Yes, it seems just the natural thing to do," she agreed happily, reaching up to curl his gray forelock.

He laughed again, kissed her, and

patted her cheek, glad to forget his problem for the moment.

"Have you—have you told mother about it?" she inquired, trying to appear careless. "She has some splendid ideas."

"No, I haven't told her," returned her father quietly.

She gazed rather sadly out of the window into the blackness of the early night, still twirling the curl over her two forefingers.

For nearly a week her father and mother had breakfasted separately, and he had not come home until after dinner, shutting himself immediately in his study. Why, they had probably not even met in all that time, she reflected, appalled. Something was wrong, but until she knew what it was she was afraid to interfere, lest she might only make matters worse.

"I know," she said, suddenly brightening. "You must see Judge Grey. He knows all about insurance and such things."

"A clever thought," he smiled. "The judge is a very able man, upright and fearless; but he and I have not spoken for years."

"Why, I don't see how he could quarrel with you, daddy; they say he's such a fine man."

"He is," agreed Chamberlain most heartily. "I am sorry that we find ourselves in this absurd situation. It's been so long ago we quarreled that I've really forgotten what it was about, and I suppose he has."

"He doesn't dislike you, anyhow, daddy," she urged. "I know that, for, Ed—Mr. Corliss—introduced me to him just the other day, and he spoke in the most enthusiastic terms of you; said you were a wonderful man, and the most remarkable organizer he had ever known."

"I'm glad of that," said Chamberlain with a flush of pleasure, rubbing his hands softly together. "I'm very glad to know that."

"I think you'd better meet him, daddy—and right away." She looked up at the clock and seated herself at the end of his desk.

"What are you going to do?" her father asked.

"Telephone Ed. He's in his room right now, studying insurance law."

"Wait a minute," he implored; but she already had the phone and was calling for a number, waving a peremptory hand at him for silence.

"Mr. Corliss, please," she said into the phone, and bent knitted brows upon the transmitter while she waited, as if, somehow, she could see through it. Suddenly her brow cleared, and she smiled most bewitchingly into the mouthpiece.

"Is this you, Mr. Corliss?" she asked. "Well, I'm in an awful hurry, Ed, and I want you to bring Judge Grey right straight out to the house. Father wants to consult him."

A moment's pause, and another delighted smile, an inarticulate sound between a coo and a protest, then: "Ah-h-h-h! Well, thank you, anyhow." She was dimpling and blushing as she hung up the receiver.

"Well, of all the inconsiderate demands I ever heard, that one deserves its medal!" her father protested, astounded. "Why, Anna, dear, Judge Grey is perhaps the busiest man in the city! He has a large law practice, is candidate for governor, and has an election coming off within a few weeks!"

"Suppose he has?" she wanted to know. "Don't you want to see him?"

"Well, yes, if he wants to see me," he returned, trying to maintain a dignified reserve, but all the while feeling an irresistible impulse to chuckle like a schoolboy. "I'm very curious to know what Ed—Mr. Corliss—said to an absurd order like that."

She opened her eyes wide at such a question.

"Why, that he didn't know exactly where he'd find Judge Grey, but that he'd bring him out. What else would he say?"

"Yes," mused Chamberlain, smiling; "what else *would* he say?"

Three-quarters of an hour later, Judge Grey, a tall, quiet, austere man with square shoulders, rugged features,

and a silvery beard, was ushered into Chamberlain's study. He stood for a moment upon the threshold, and the two old-time friends looked silently at each other.

"I heard you wanted to see me, John," said the judge presently.

"I did, Asa," replied Chamberlain. "I've been wanting to see you for years," and suddenly they clasped hands, and pumped and pumped and pumped; and Chamberlain, patting his friend Asa upon the back, led him to the easiest chair in the room, and took another one just in front of him, and asked Anna to bring them a couple of her famous toddies!

"I told you he would bring him," declared Anna triumphantly, as she left the room upon the arm of Corliss.

Until late in the morning the reunited cronies talked eagerly, for they had a score of years to account for, and it was not until Chamberlain explained his dilemma that the conversation took a serious turn.

"It's an utterly impossible situation, John," said the judge; "but it exists. Here you sit, the founder and builder and ninety-five-per-cent. owner of a business which controls over seven million dollars of invested capital. A man who, as you say, up to a month ago had unincumbered stock in the company up to the value of nearly a million dollars, and did not owe a cent in the world; yet political chicanery can reduce you to pauperism; can rob you of your entire fortune; can take your stock and property and control of your own company away from you, and leave you in debt into the bargain!

"It is impossible, utterly impossible—and yet it can happen! Mark my word, it will, too, if they have started upon you; for I know the methods of Sledge entirely too well. The Middle West Company is too prosperous, and he wants it. Ten years ago, the man had not a share of bank stock; to-day he is the most colossal banking power in the city; and he did not earn it; he took it!

"That, too, is an impossible thing—but it has occurred, and the banking interests of this city jump when he snaps his fingers. The bankers would laugh at you or grow indignant if you said this to them, but it would be a nervous laugh and a hollow indignation; for it is true, and they know it!

"It is true not only here, but in a score of cities throughout the United States. It is all the fault of our loose political system, which makes self-interest the only attractive feature of political life, and so permits the man of the largest selfishness, and consequently the least sense of moral obligation—a man like Sledge, for instance—to become the dominating figure in public affairs. It is this false system which permits the absurdity of a Jerry Leech, to whose ignorant judgment is intrusted the absolute dictatorship of the insurance companies of this fool State!"

Chamberlain sighed.

"You seem to be our only hope, Asa," he said. "If you are elected you may alter some of these conditions."

"If I am your only hope, there is no hope," declared the judge, smiling sadly. "I have, I believe, a ticket of known honest men, and yet the ticket of known rogues against me will be elected. Do you know what they say of Sledge in this city, and of Sledges all over the United States? Bear in mind that the man has either committed, instigated, or condoned every crime in the calendar, and yet the honest working blockhead, who is no more honest than anybody else if the truth must be told, says that Sledge is of vast benefit to the city because he spends the public funds with a lavish hand, and keeps labor employed and very much in evidence in tearing up the principal streets and putting them down again.

"So the honest laboring animal shouts for the Sledge ticket, and marches for it, and takes a day off to vote for it, and elects it, and gets drunk to celebrate it, and because of it goes home and pays double taxes on his installment cottage. Some day we shall devise a political system which shall protect ignorance against itself; until then, we shall have Sledges, and they will thrive and grow fat, and take from Chamberlains the fruits of their genius

and their energy. And you cannot help yourself. This insurance order which you have just shown me is the most flagrant case of unjust discrimination that I have ever seen; and yet what can you do when the courts themselves are positively owned by the highwayman who rifles your pockets?"

"One might kill the highwayman," suggested Chamberlain, laughing.

"It would be a good and a Christian act," agreed the judge soberly. "Only in such a case could this order be rescinded, and that absurd surplus reserve restored to the coffers of the company and to your pocket. A great many things would be righted, and a vast deal of justice follow, if some poor, misguided, harebrained crank were to kill Sledge. And I hope to Heaven that some one does it!"

XI.

To raise his approximate half million dollars, Chamberlain, failing to secure loans upon the company's credit for the company's use in any of the local banks, even those outside of the ones with which he had been doing business, made a hasty round of other cities within the State, but came home empty-handed, feeling certain that the influence of Sledge had been against him even there; for in the foreign banks which he had visited he had often had accommodation without question.

On all the millions of property held by the company he could not raise a cent, for its reserve holdings must be unincumbered; and he had himself depleted the treasury of the company!

Much concerned, he now called for a statement of his personal account. Miss Colby, a little frightened, gave it to him. It showed him to owe the company enough to clear the demands of the State Office of Insurance Control. There was but one recourse. He took his stock and went to the banks, only to meet a new annoyance. Davidson, of the German National, explained the situation to him in the neatest possible manner.

"We'd be glad to lend you money on your stock, Mr. Chamberlain," he stated in his suavest and most oily voice, as if he were purring over the fit of a princesse back; "but we can scarcely let you have par upon it. No doubt the stock is worth as much as ever, but we understand that the company is in temporary financial straits, and, of course, its stock is temporarily depreciated in value," and he smoothed down his ministerial black frock coat with his cat-clean hands.

Though acting as paying teller, Davidson was the majority stockholder in the German National, and beyond him there was no appeal. Since he was the last man of the list, and the others had offered him no more, Chamberlain arranged to hypothecate his stock to secure the amount he needed; and Davidson divided the loan with the four other banks upon which Chamberlain had called!

The day the Middle West placed in the State-controlled reserve the amount which had been demanded of it, Sledge took another trip to the capitol, and walked in upon Jerry Leech just as that hard-worked official was about to depart for an important game of billiards.

"Jerry, you're conductin' your department too loose," complained Sledge. "I thought I passed you the tip to raise the ante on Class C insurance companies?"

Jerry looked at him steadily, but with no amazement whatsoever.

"I did," he said. "I called for an additional two per cent., and they've paid it in."

"It ain't strong enough," declared Sledge.

"I didn't know they had anything left," returned Jerry apologetically. "Will an additional one per cent. do?"

"How much does it figure out?" asked Sledge.

"Oh, nearly a quarter of a million."

"That'd ought to make you safe," commented Sledge thoughtfully; "just about safe."

Jerry made a memorandum of it very slowly.

"Holy mackerel!" he said, with a shrug of his shoulders; "if Judge Grey

should happen to be elected he'd find scandal enough in this office to keep him happy for his whole first term."

Sledge arose ponderously.

"Do you like your job?" he barked.

"I love it!" declared Jerry fervently.

"That's all," said Sledge, and departed.

The notification to the luckless Class C insurance companies that they would be compelled to place an additional one per cent. in the reserve came upon the morning after Chamberlain had passed his wife in the hall of their home and had tried to speak to her, and had found that her ears were deaf to his voice.

He was surprised to find how coolly he took this latest blow. As a matter of fact, he was mistaken in his own self-analysis. His attitude was not one of coolness, but of numbness. He wasted no thought this time. He went to the banks and borrowed money on his stock to meet the emergency.

If the company did not pay this amount, the State would take the receivership of it; so, if the company did not have the funds, the stockholders must produce the money from their own pockets. Since Chamberlain was now practically the only stockholder, this meant him, and he "played the game out, to the end of the string."

The Middle West, being in even more serious financial straits than before, the banks offered him still less accommodation; but, finding that he had brought them every last shred of his holdings, they stretched a point in his favor and let him have the full amount he needed to keep the company from a State-forced insolvency.

He went back to his office with every dollar's worth of real estate that he owned, and every share of stock in the prosperous big company he had spent a lifetime in building up, in pawn to the banks; and he had put every cent of the money into the company in such a way that he could never recall it, unless some miracle should set aside the action of the State Department of Insurance Control; and the age of miracles was past!

Somehow or other, he felt strangely free and light-hearted after he had parted with that last drop of his blood, and he could not understand this attitude for one long, care-free day, in which he actually found himself whistling as he worked. Finally it dawned upon him that his queer sense of elation was due to the fact that he had nothing more to fear. They had stripped him, and now they would let him alone!

XII.

Corliss called upon Anna Chamberlain with a smile upon his lips.

"Where are your father and mother?" was his first question.

"Father is in his study, and mother in her own apartments. Why?"

"Come into the library," he said. "It is the farthest removed from any possible eavesdropping. I have something queer to tell you."

She led the way silently into the library, turned up the lights, and sat with him upon the cozy-corner divan in breathless interest.

"It sounds like the beginning of a play," she said. "Don't let me talk or interrupt you for a minute. Why don't you go on and tell me?"

"Very well, I shall," said he, but he could not follow her tone of light banter any farther. "You know nothing has come of my having had Stollings watched," he said, relapsing into earnestness.

"Oh, I beg your pardon," she hastened to say, with a vague idea of apology to herself for her own flippancy.

"What he has done through Sledge, we already know fairly well," he went on. "We know, too, that he has not met your mother, except a few times in daylight in public places. Aside from that, his actions have been quite commonplace, though he has been an occasional visitor to a suite of apartments on Maple Avenue. I did not tell you before, but these apartments are occupied by Miss Colby of our office. The man I had looking up Stollings made investigations about this, and finds that Stollings and Miss Colby were married in Kentucky three years ago.

"Why he kept it secret I do not know, except that she is of rather common origin, and of small education and refinement, while Stollings is artistic, to give him his due—if to be artistic is a credit—and has achieved a very definite social position, even if it is not of the very highest. Moreover, he is probably reluctant to give up his bachelor freedom; and if Miss Colby, or rather, Mrs. Stollings, is weak enough to allow him that liberty, that is her own look-out.

"I rather think, however"—and Corliss smiled with ingenious pleasure to be the bearer of happy tidings—"that the discovery disposes of any foolish anxiety you might have concerning Stollings and your mother."

"Why?" she asked, turning to him quietly.

The butler came in just then, suppressing a smile.

"Beg pardon, miss; the two young gentlemen who were here the other night, Mr. Harold P. Bloocher and Mr. —er—Splinter—wish to see you. I told 'em you was busy, miss," he hastened to add, with an apologetic look at Corliss.

"Just have them come in," she said with a smile, and then turned to Corliss. "I'd have to be very busy indeed, to deny those callers. Outside of my new black horse, they're the most fun I have."

Even while the butler had been talking they had heard the sound of counting and of whistling and of shuffling feet in the hall, and of laughter; the laughter of positive glee—from Blubber!

The team came in, radiant with satisfaction.

"Well!" inquired Anna. "Are you brothers once more?"

"Sure," said Splinter happily. "I fired my other brother. He could dance pretty good, but he was so hard to manage. I got this bum lamp from him," and he pointed with great cheerfulness to a black eye. "Why, the mutt actually tried to boss me around; honest he did! So I had one finish scrap wit' 'im, an' bounced a brick off'n his cabbage, an' let 'im go. I wanted my old pal here, anyhow, an' I worried about a week how to pare 'im down so he'd do. Then I gits the happy thought, and I giggles myself black in the face about it ever sincet. Don't pare 'im down! Let 'im be fat, an' do the comedy end! He's a comedy-footed slob, anyhow, an', if he tries to play it straight, they laugh us out o' the way o' the next turn; but, if he's awkward o' purpose, they laugh after we quit till we come back on ag'in. Show 'em how we do it, Blubber. That right-an'-left step. Now, one, two, three," and he began whistling.

Both Anna and Corliss laughed heartily and sincerely at the ludicrous spectacle of Blubber caricaturing the neat and perfect steps of Splinter. It was funny, and it would be funny anywhere, and they applauded, when the boys were through, sufficiently to satisfy even the exacting Splinter.

"Ain't he the awkward lollop, though?" he said admiringly, and Blubber beamed, too, with gratified vanity as the audience acknowledged that he was. "Y'see, this lump o' tallow's cross-eyed in 'is feet, an' I never saw what good comedy it was till now; an' the best of it is, neither one of us has to train up or down, an' I kin smoke an' Tub don't have to, an' we kin both eat anything we want to; the fatter Lump gets, the better."

Blubber smacked his fat lips.

"I kin even eat pie," he delightfully announced.

"Do you know, I believe we have some pie in the house," declared Anna. "I'm going to see about it, and then you may tell me your errand; that is, if you didn't just come to let me know that you were friends and partners once more."

"Nothin' like that, miss," declared Splinter, instantly grave. "Kin I see you alone a minute?"

"Why, certainly," agreed Anna instantly, detecting something of unusually grave import in the boy. "Mr. Corliss, would you mind taking Mr. Bloocher out to the pantry, and let him look over the supplies and order his own lunch?"

Even the lethargic Blubber was stirred to emotion by this unbelievable phenomena.

"Kin I!" he cried, jumping to the so-often-maligned feet. "Honest to Gawd, miss, kin I?"

"Look here, you damn slob," said Splinter sternly, walking across and shaking his finger under his Brother's round knob of a nose; "remember where you're at, an' be careful how y' talk. They's a lady present."

"I apologize; on the level, I do!" declared Blubber earnestly, and passed out with Corliss.

"Now, Splinter," invited Anna, drawing him on the divan with her, "you may tell me all about it."

Splinter, however, was not very quick to begin. He twiddled uncomfortably with the charm of a fancy brass watch chain; he looked very hard at a gilt nymph attempting hopelessly to climb a piano lamp, and gulped violently three times.

"This is a tough job," he confided to Anna, looking up at her with the frank smile of courageous determination; "but it's goan'a be worse for you than it is for me. Now you want to brace your heels against somethin' an' grip a hold o' my hand. Y' kin squeeze as hard as y' want to, an' I won't holler; but don't faint or you'll have me buffaloed for fair."

Unconsciously she found herself gripping the hand of the boy, which had caught her own, and relying upon it.

"Now, here y' git it. Your maw's goan'a elope."

In spite of Splinter's elaborate preparation, Anna spasmodically gripped his hand until it took all his stoicism to keep from crying out with the pain.

"Gee, I'm glad I give you my hand!" he observed, with a fluttering sigh. "It steadied you down some, didn't it?"

"Do you know what you are saying, Splinter?" she demanded, hoping against intuition, and fear, and logic, that he had made some hideous mistake.

"Sure, Mike!" he said, speaking very slowly and emphatically to make it quite clear to her. "Your maw is a-going to e-lope wit' this damn—beg your pardon, miss—Stollings to-morrow night at half-a-past seven. I got it all from my little old elbow telephone. They're a-goan'a meet in the garage o' your old house at half-a-past seven, an' auto up to Ironville, an' take the Limited for Noo York, an' ketch the steamer for Paris, France, an' live a life o' music, an' gayety, an' love! Now, you got it!"

She was silent for so long that Splinter grew quite uneasy.

"I know y' think I'm a mean, low-down snitch," he said mournfully; "but I done the only way I feel easy; an' I don't care. Yes, I do!"

The appeal in him roused her from her stupor, and she patted the hand that held hers.

"Do you know, Splinter, I think you are very much of a gentleman. You are quite, quite sure of everything you've said to me, are you?"

"I'd rather took a lickin' than said a word of it," he assured her.

"I believe that," she replied. "Splinter, I'm going to ask you to leave me alone for a little bit. I must think this over. Suppose you go out in the dining room and see what they have to eat. You know the way, don't you?"

"I'll never fergit it as long as I live," he feelingly asserted, and started to go.

She looked after him with a sudden renewed realization of how little he was.

"Oh, Splinter," she called. "I forgot to thank you for all this. I do thank you from the very bottom of my heart."

"Fergit it," said Splinter carelessly, and strolled quite nonchalantly out to the dining room.

Corliss, acting as master of ceremonies for the appalling disharmony of food which Blubber had ordered in his riot of opportunity, started to leave when Splinter came in, but Splinter, standing in the archway, drew him down by the lapel of his coat.

"Nix, Corliss," he whispered. "The lady wants to be alone a minute."

"Thank you," returned Corliss, a trifle ashamed of his impulse of amusement, and concealing it under the courtesy due one gentleman to another.

When Miss Chamberlain came in, a few minutes later, she found Corliss enjoying a fragrant cigar, calmly delighted in the prospect of Splinter Ragan solicitously helping Blubber to the fattest and sweetest morsels in front of them.

She called the butler and gave him very positive instructions to feed the young gentlemen until they could hold no more; then to give them some money, and let them go, treating them with forgiving kindness whatever they did; then she motioned Corliss back into the library with her.

"I want you to take me to that place on Maple Avenue," she said.

He winced a little at that.

"I don't like the neighborhood nor the place—for you," he objected.

"Can't you protect me?" she demanded.

With an outward smile and an inward forgiveness of the unjust ignorance which prompted that retort, he told her he would order the car for her while she got ready.

Something in his quiet kindness, after they were started, made her pause to think, and she realized that, maybe, he had been clumsy enough to be hurt by the manner in which she had expressed herself.

"Don't be cross, Ed," she protested, startling him with another sense of injustice, which he, once more, promptly forgave.

"This is an errand that you could not do for me. I must see Mrs. Stollings myself, and you must go in first and find out if Mr. Stollings is there. If he is, get him out."

"All right," said Corliss cheerfully, relieved that he had something to occupy his mind, and possibly his body.

Stollings was not there, as he knew from the wondering face of the black-haired young woman as she came to the door, perplexed and frightened, and by her evident relief when she saw that it was only Corliss.

"I beg your pardon for disturbing you, Miss Colby," he said. "Are you alone?"

"Yes. Why?"

"Quite alone?" he insisted, Stollings still in his mind.

"Very much alone," she said bitterly, and then with an afterthought of resentment: "Will you please explain your errand, Mr. Corliss?"

"Anna Chamberlain wants to call upon you," he explained; "that is, if you are entirely alone."

This time she smiled, understanding, at last, him and his masculine clumsiness.

"You might bring her up," she invited, still smiling forgivingly.

Suddenly Corliss felt himself a schoolboy before an experienced lady teacher, and hurried downstairs.

He brought Anna up, and in the instant of the meeting of the two young women he felt himself so entirely useless that he apologized to the janitor for getting in his way as he went out.

He had walked up and down before the door a thousand times, he was sure, before Anna reappeared again, and then she was so totally unresponsive to him that he wondered what he had done.

All the way home she was so intensely preoccupied that he dwelt in dumb misery upon his misdeeds from childhood up. When she had actually turned back from the door—after giving the chauffeur instructions to take him home—and thanked him perfunctorily for his guardianship, he was so savage that he had an impulse to call her back and ask her peremptorily, then and there, if she intended to marry him, or if he was a mere convenience.

Heaven sent him grace to resist that means of certain suicide, but he rode home in so angry a mood that he recklessly tipped the chauffeur a dollar, and let his bathtub overflow while he cut himself with a safety razor.

Meanwhile, Anna Chamberlain stood for long moments before her mother's door. There had been tears upon her eyes in the apartments on Maple Avenue, but now she was startled to find that there were none; her eyes were so dry that they burned.

Presently she knocked, very gently, the gentle knock to which she had been

used in childhood, and to which her mother had always answered, if she were awake, or even if she were sleeping lightly; but there was no answer. Again. No answer. A sudden fear oppressed the girl, and she turned and almost ran from the spot.

Upon her father's door she knocked quite differently, a sharp, decisive knock which would evoke a cheery or a warning response if he were awake, or, if he were asleep, would not disturb him if it were ten times louder. Here, too, there was no response, and, after a moment, she turned the knob gently and looked in.

Her father was asleep. She wanted to awaken him, but there were such tired lines upon his face, which seemed suddenly so old and so weary of life, that she shrank from it, as one shrinks from the mystery and majesty of the dead! She bore her weighty secret to her own room then, where she tossed and fretted and worried and planned until daybreak, and fell asleep; and when she awoke, in the late morning, both her father and her mother were gone.

XIII.

That morning, Chamberlain, who thought himself immune from further commercial disaster, received a thrust which made him laugh like the tortured who welcome, on the way, the final stroke.

The banks, which had always been recklessly considerate of him, had now unanimously called his call loans. The action was so unexpectedly sudden upon the heels of his borrowing that, for a while, he was stunned, and then, realizing that this was only the logical conclusion of the game, he checked his resentment and considered the whole matter calmly.

He had made hosts of friends in these later, prosperous years, had Chamberlain, and he had never called upon them for favors of any sort; instead, he had rendered favors without number, moral, social, and financial. Now, with a hopelessness born of painful observation, he called them up one by one, grimly persisting until he had exhausted the list, knowing that in all the number he would not find one who would come to his aid with actual currency, yet trying to believe, like Timon of Athens, that one at least would be found faithful.

When he hung up his receiver he was convinced and resigned.

The entire plan was as clear to him now as it was inevitable. The banks would sell his stock to cover their loans; the sale would be a mockery; Sledge would buy it in at practically the absurd valuation upon which Chamberlain had secured the loans, and the banks would carry the deal for Sledge indefinitely, at a rate of interest less than half the dividends.

Sledge, without the expenditure of a cent, would purchase the entire Middle West Mutual Life Insurance Company at an average of forty dollars per share less than its actual worth, with the public's money; while Chamberlain would be stripped as clean as a whistle. It was highway robbery, nothing less. Sledge would steal a cool four hundred thousand dollars, besides securing actual possession of the most prosperous insurance company in the Middle West.

Splinter Ragan meanwhile had broken his elbow phone and was evolving desperate teeth-gritting plans for revenge upon all the Chamberlain enemies. After the last name, Chamberlain arose wearily from the phone, and, for the first time in many years, started for home at the close of a working day, a wearied and broken old man, tottering upon his cane.

Splinter, seeing him go, would have fallen upon Harold P. Bloocher with fists and knees to avenge some long-forgotten score, had not there come, to divert his anguished mind, a sudden peremptory call for Stollings. Then Splinter, wasting no time in regret for his elbow phone, held the regular receiver to his ear, and boldly listened; and this is what he heard:

"This you, Stollings?"

"Yes. Hello, Sledge."

"I want to see you. Seven o'clock. Occident."

"Seven o'clock?" repeated Stollings. "Why, Sledge——"

"Are you comin'?" demanded the Big Boss.

"Couldn't you make it a little earlier?" Stollings protested, and then he stopped. Sledge had broken the connection.

XIV.

Chamberlain, arriving at home, sought his study as a haven of refuge and spent some time in clumsily fixing his morris chair at the proper angle; then he lit one of his best cigars, selected his favorite paper, settled himself back for a solid rest, and suddenly got up and hunted out his own personal life insurance papers.

These were the sole forgotten fragments of his personal estate, and he wondered if, by hypothecating them, he could support his family for a little space, while he had time to turn around and hunt a clerkship; for he knew now that he was a "has-been," and there is no sadder realization for a man in all this world.

Upon this mood came Anna breathlessly.

"Where's mother?" she asked. "I have not seen her to-day."

"I don't know," he answered. "Probably shopping, or something."

"Shopping!" she repeated excitedly. "I don't know what she has done today, but I know her program for tonight. At seven-thirty she is to meet Stollings in the garage of our old place, and elope with him to France!" Her breast was heaving and her breath was spasmodic.

"Hush!" said Chamberlain gently. His shoulders squared back, and his centuries-old palsy fell from him like a cloak. "I hear your mother downstairs."

She listened, and a look of scorn came upon her face. He put his hand tenderly upon her shoulders.

"You are very sure about this?" he asked.

"Perfectly sure. There can be no mistake," she replied. "Let me call her."

"Not yet," insisted Chamberlain. "Anna, dear, she suffered for you more than you can ever know until you, too, suffer, and whatever debt she owed to you she has paid a thousandfold; whatever debt she owes to me, or I to her, is between us two. I guess you haven't heard my latest disaster. The banks have called my loans, and I haven't a cent in the world. Even this property and the old home, too, which I'm sure we all love much better, must go. Now, isn't that enough to bother us?" he asked, with a wan smile. "As for this other matter, child—my faith in my wife is greater than your faith in your mother. I thank you for telling me what you have learned, but I can't believe it. I'm going to wait, and you're going to wait and say nothing, and we'll see."

He led her gently to the door, and Anna, perplexed, worried, almost frantic, went in silence to her own bedroom —and waited!

Nearing seven, she heard her mother's door open, and her mother's footsteps pass down the hall to the study. Then, somehow, a feeling that there were emotions too remote for her to comprehend, she turned swiftly to her bedside and knelt beside it; but she could not pray, she only waited.

Mrs. Chamberlain stood upon the study threshold and looked at her husband with distressed eyes. He rose from his chair, pale, but with shoulders squared.

"John, I—I want to tell you something," she faltered.

"Come here, please," he said, smiling, sitting upon the arm of his chair and opening his arms.

Perplexed and confused and uncertain, she came into his embrace and stood there, faint and trembling.

"I know all about it," he went on—"about the seven-thirty engagement with Stollings, and the trip to France, and all the rest of it; and even after knowing that, dear wife, I waited here, making my last bet against life and faith and love that you would come to me, just as you have done."

She drew back from him for an instant, then fell into his arms, sobbing. He set her in his own chair and kissed her.

"I am myself to blame," he said. "I believed in you, and believed in you rightly; but I put you to more of a test than any man should ask of any woman. And now"—he paused to open the desk and slip something into his pocket—"I must go to meet your engagement."

"Don't!" she cried in an agony of fear for him.

"It is my right," asserted Chamberlain quietly, and, once more stooping to kiss her where she cowered in his chair, he walked from the study as firmly and as determinedly as upon the day in which he had married her and had strode forward to conquer the world for her.

As he paused at the head of the staircase he noted that his daughter's door was ajar, and, remembering, he called softly:

"Anna!"

Her door opened.

"Anna," he calmly directed; "go to your mother, please. She is in my study."

XV.

Stollings walked into the little rear room of the Occident Saloon with something more than trepidation. A deathly fear gripped him, but he braced himself and assumed an air of nonchalance that amounted to gayety.

"Hello, Sledge," he said cordially.

"Sure," said Sledge, "and many of 'em. Say, Stollings, I just heard all about you, you——" and he followed with a loud-voiced string of epithets so foul that even Stollings, hardened as he was to choice political invective, blanched with indignation.

The face of a dark-haired woman, pressed closely outside the broken windowpane, bore a smile of contempt as Stollings accepted these fearful insults.

"I don't see why you jump me like this," protested Stollings feebly.

"You don't, hey!" roared Sledge, in one of those rare fits of ungovernable temper which had made him the terror of all political weaklings. "I guess you don't know that Runk's gone over to Grey, and that Grey's come out in the evening papers and says he won't have Runk or any other man that's been promised a job, if his party wins. I guess you an' me don't know who snitched Runk, you louse!"

They heard, up forward in the Occident, and turned to each other and smiled, and observed, with due caution, that the Big Boss was in a sweet temper to-night. Unfortunately, the campaign was so tense and the election so near, that there were an equal number of anti-Sledge men with Sledge adherents about the bar, and the former exchanged glances of glee.

"You have some wrong information, somehow or other," half whined Stollings, sidling toward the door and fearing for his life; for he had never seen Sledge in so furious a temper.

"The hell I have!" roared Sledge so loudly that he could be heard almost into the street. "Look here, you —— —— —— ——; there's no use in our wasting any words. You've slipped me the double cross, and I'm going to break you! See? Break you!" His voice had risen to a shriek.

"I've no time to talk with a madman," declared Stollings, more defiant in his frantic fear than he would have believed possible of himself. "I have an engagement at seven-thirty," and, looking at his watch, he grabbed at the doorknob.

It was at the end of this speech that the shot came through the opening in the windowpane, and Stollings, with a ludicrous gasp of surprise, bumped back against the wall and slid to the floor, dead!

Immediately after, Sledge's own pistol, thrown through the broken windowpane, fell at his feet, and the dark figure in the little court slipped back through the maze of black alleys, never to be heard of again.

The irony of it all was that Sledge, guilty of every crime on the calendar, was to be sent up for ten years, on circumstantial evidence, for the only mis-

deed he never committed—and this on the very eve of election! It was tough luck!

XVI.

The telephone bell in the Chamberlain residence rang with the same amount of insistence with which it would have introduced a message from the grocer.

Anna Chamberlain, withdrawing her arms from about her mother, hurried to the phone and thrilled with relief to hear the voice of Corliss.

"Stollings is dead," he announced; "and Sledge shot him! Anna, that solves all our problems at once. The Sledge machine is broken. Judge Grey is as good as elected. A new régime sets in. The money your father scraped together to meet an unjustly discriminating assessment will be paid back to him, and he still has time to redeem his stock. Stollings' estate is good for the amount that I can now prove he stole from your father. I'm coming up to see you right away."

Mrs. Chamberlain was looking into her daughter's face in an agony of anxiety and suspense.

"What is it?" she cried. As Anna turned to her she sobbed in joy. "It isn't your father that's dead; it's Stollings!" she cried. "Who's at the phone? Mr. Corliss? Tell him to wait."

"Wait a minute, Ed," called Anna, and turned, putting her arm around her mother's waist to support her, as she told her what had happened.

Mrs. Chamberlain's lips were trembling as she gasped:

"Tell him, Anna—to hurry—to the garage of our old house—and let your father know that Stollings—is—dead!"

Chamberlain, erect, stern, and his mind fixed upon one grim duty, had paced the garage of his former home for almost an hour, waiting for Stollings; but no Stollings came. He had about given up his man in despair, as not only a cad but a coward, when there came a quick step down the drive.

He plunged his hand into his overcoat pocket where his revolver lay, but it was Corliss, instead of Stollings, who threw open the doors and rushed in.

"Hello, Mr. Chamberlain," he said. "I've been hunting for you everywhere."

"Indeed," replied Chamberlain, meaning to be equally nonchalant, but nervously looking out of the doors and listening.

"Great doings down the street. Boss Sledge just killed a man."

"Did he?" remarked Chamberlain, peering into the darkness, and wondering when he had last loaded his revolver.

"Dead as a mackerel," said Corliss cheerfully. "I guess that fixes Judge Grey's election all right. He'll go through with fifty thousand majority."

"He deserves it," commented Chamberlain. "I say, Corliss, would you mind going out to find whom Sledge killed?" he added, anxious to get rid of him before Stollings came.

"Why, didn't I tell you?" cried Corliss, astounded at his own confused negligence. "It was Stollings!"

Upon this Corliss had the shock of seeing Chamberlain stagger across to a workbench, lean against it, and bury his head in his arms.

While Corliss was still trying to figure out some way to render Chamberlain a normal and conventional member of society again, there came the whir of an auto upon the drive, and Mrs. Chamberlain and Anna were with them.

Seeing Mrs. Chamberlain comforting her husband and bringing him back to life and strength and hope again, Corliss, in his confusion, tried the same course with Anna, and found her clinging to him quite comfortably.

It was while the four were in the midst of this diversion that a small, thin figure appeared in the doorway, followed by a small, round one.

"Gee!" complained Splinter Ragan. "We been waitin' here twenty hours for Stollings! Ain't there goan'a be nothin' doin'?"

"An' we're awful hungry!" declared Blubber Bloocher.

The Crimson Rambler

By Louis Joseph Vance

Author of "O'Rourke, Gentleman Adventurer," "No Man's Land," Etc.

Fancy calling a man "The Crimson Rambler!" Nobody but Madam Savaran would have done it; but she had already christened him "The Red Man." Mr. Rhode modestly styles himself "an inventor of occupations;" and in this novel Louis Joseph Vance describes the gentleman at work—and he does it with so deft a pen that the remarkable Rhode takes shape with all his redness and the peculiar and distinguishing characteristics that make him easily unique. It is a story of a strange cruise, begun in mystery, continuing amid the crash of arms, and ending in the crackle of the wireless. A great story.

(In Two Parts—Part One)

I.

DRIFTING.

FROM the harsh hot glare of midsummer noon on Broadway to the perennially shadowed southerly sidewalk of the cross-town street—ordinarily the transition would have proved a grateful one. To-day, however, Cynthia was numb to the contrast: the heat was everywhere so great that the difference between phase and phase seemed negligible. If she sighed softly as she slipped out of the main channel through which the roaring tides of life surge without end or rest, it was a sigh more of fatigue than of relief.

Beneath the broad brim of her simply trimmed straw, her pretty, young face shone with a pallor more than normal, a trifle drawn and jaded, a thought thin—but not yet thin enough to mar the graciousness residing in those salient curves of cheek and chin and brow. In her brown eyes dwelt fathomless abstraction, wistful and wondering.

To-day she surrendered; her strength had gone out from her so utterly that she could no longer either fight or hope. She had come to the end of her resources; everything had failed her; it was almost over; after a day or two would come—what? The end? What else?

What end she neither knew nor tried to name, not greatly caring—if only it might be swift and sure and shameless.

Absorbed, she held steadily on her way, beneath the gaunt, drab skeleton of the Elevated, past a corner saloon, heedless alike of the indifference or the interest she excited—and on until, about midway in the block, she came to and entered Madame's.

There had been a time when the shabby, four-story brick building with the English basement and brownstone stoop had posed as the home of wealth and respectability. Now it was—with little loss of good repute—simply Madame's. There was another name for it, a name bitten deep into the doorplate whose brass was peering guiltily through its vanishing coat of silver; but few, if any, of the patrons knew it as anything but Madame's, a middle-class French restaurant and boarding house, where it was possible to lunch

sufficiently for forty cents and to dine with surprising relish and satisfaction for the equally modest sum of fifty-five.

To lunch at Madame's had become a settled habit with Cynthia. Rarely did she miss a day. Lunch there was as much a matter of diurnal routine as was her morning egg and coffee cooked over the single gas jet in her hall bedroom in another quarter of the city or her supper of a handful of crackers and a bowl of milk at a cheap restaurant on Twenty-third Street. That lunch was the mainstay of her daily life, her dinner. The evening meal she could no longer afford, even at Madame's unassuming price.

And after to-morrow she would have to forego lunch.

To-day the guests were fewer than usual. Madame herself, sitting at the little table by the door to which Jean flew for change and where one stopped for a trite but cheerful word on entering or departing—Madame herself, fat and rosy and perspiring generously, dozed fitfully, or, rousing anon, surveyed the tables with lackluster eyes.

It was Jean, as always, who showed Cynthia to her table by the window in the rear of the room—Jean, that extraordinarily animated phenomenon of thinness, suavity, and dexterity.

But Cynthia could not eat. The food which she was accustomed to anticipate with a desire almost painful, to-day was flat and tasteless to her palate, ashes in her mouth. She sent away her consommé barely tasted, refused the fish, choked down a mouthful of chicken, and played with her salad. Only the finger-wide slice of parti-colored ice cream she consumed slowly—and was sorry when it was gone.

And now what? Which way to turn, what to do to fill the empty, aching hours until bedtime? She lingered on in purposeless indecision, thoughts far astray in a dull, dim void, forgetful of her surroundings, forgetful of the flight of time.

Gradually the room emptied. Presently there remained only herself, Jean idling near the entrance, the Red Man, and one other, for whom she had no nickname, unless it were "that boy"—as she always thought of him when it occurred to her to think of him at all.

He was, of the three of them, the senior patron of Madame's; he had been there, at his table in the opposite corner of the room, the first time Cynthia entered the restaurant; doubtless, she thought wearily, he would be there long after she had passed out of its hospitable door for the final time—to-morrow. Meanwhile she would be forgotten while he sat on, smoking his interminable cigarettes between the courses of his luncheon which she guessed he induced Jean purposely to delay, that he might have the more excuse for dawdling.

To begin with, surmising intuitively that their lots were not dissimilar, that he likewise was unfortunate, out of employment, she had vaguely wondered about him and tried to reason why the world had no need for the keen intelligence that sometimes she saw gleaming from the dark eyes set in his dark, thin, finely featured face. He was not dissipated, she believed—though he did smoke much too many cigarettes; but his wine more often than not was taken from the table untouched. And there was something too fine and open in his expression, something too steady and straightforward in his eyes and too human in his smile, to leave room for a belief that he was addicted to any degrading habit, the victim of a drug, for instance; as she had heard men sometimes were. No—she had concluded—he was merely another like herself, an incompetent, turned out to fight for a living with no weapons aside from honesty and a good intent.

As for the Red Man, he was comparatively a newcomer. He had first appeared in Madame's within the last ten days, but since that début had become what Jean would have termed a "regular."

At sight Cynthia had dubbed him the Red Man, because he was red. He was the reddest human being she had ever seen. His broad, bluntly modeled face was red with the burnt redness of a brick, and so were his thick, strong

neck and his big, outstanding ears. In that sanguine expanse his eyes were like blue stones, hard and cold and penetrating—a blue almost turquoise in tint and quite as opaque. And his hair was outrageously aflame, a hot reddish brown matching nearly exactly the color of the baggy and wrinkled ready-made coat and trousers he affected. His shirts were always—or else it was always the same shirt—barred with vivid pink stripes; just as always a small "batwing" tie of crimson satin nestled cozily up under the incarnadined folds of his fat chin. Even his shoes were of that deadly russet-red leather that is as a general thing only to be seen upon the feet of the "swellest-dressed feller" in a small inland town. And finally one of his huge but chubby red hands was adorned with a garnet ring, and he wore cuff links set with carbuncles. Oh, decidedly the Red Man of all red men!

Another thing that made him memorable, if anything were needed aside from his sanguinary make-up, was his seriousness. Large, fat, red-faced men are in the popular conception good-humored and jolly. But the Red Man of Madame's never smiled—so far as Cynthia knew at least; she never saw him save when his features were set and hard and his eyes cold and calculating. Sometimes she thought his expression one of anxiety, as if he, too, had grave troubles to contend with; but this impression was modified by the fact that he seemed to have plenty of money. Several times she had noticed, when he paid his reckoning, that he drew from his trousers pocket a great, fat wad of bills with yellow backs, all rolled up tight and bound together with a twisted rubber band.

After he had finished luncheon, the Red Man always smoked a very large and thick and dark cigar with a very large red and gold band round its middle—meanwhile staring impertinently round the room, fastening his chilly blue stare on one patron or another, and prolonging it until, Cynthia sometimes thought, it must be unendurable. She was relieved that he never seemed to think her worth more than a fugitive glance.

Thrice she had seen him rise and go over to the table occupied by some one he had been staring out of countenance, pull out a chair, sit down, and begin talking, apparently without preface or apology—talking in a thick, dull rumbling voice that filled the room like the growl of some caged animal—no more intelligible at a distance of a few feet. Two of the persons so addressed—they had all been men—had listened, at first with interest, then with diminishing attention. The third—he had been a short, burly man who somehow reminded Cynthia of a sailor out of work—had heard him out to the end, and then, evidently in an assenting humor, gone away with the Red Man. That had been two days ago, and, now that she thought of it, the man with the seafaring air had not come back to Madame's, although previously he had been a very regular attendant.

So she was interested distantly, but not in any way surprised when the Red Man, after glaring at "that boy" for a period of fully five minutes, suddenly got up, lumbered heavily over to the other's table, and sat down—first, as in the other instances she had remarked, pushing before his victim a large piece of pasteboard shaped like a calling card, but considerably larger.

A moment later his heavy voice was reverberating between the walls, more than ever reminiscent of the purring of a huge cat.

She noticed that the "boy," who was probably three or four years older than herself, started slightly, and then smiled as his gaze fell on the Red Man's card. Thereafter he listened somewhat eagerly, nodding at times or interjecting a quick word.

But her interest in this episode was at the time too remote to hold her regard more than a moment or two, and presently the Red Man's accents had merged into the roaring of the city that insinuated itself even into this quiet retreat. And, in considering what she could do to deaden the pain of the hopeless hours that must elapse before

sleep would bring her forgetfulness, she forgot what she was doing, and sat on, staring vacantly out of the window on the dismal scenery of the back yard of Madame's, with its bare, unlovely fence, its network of clothesline, its parched patch of dejected grass, and its array of ash and refuse cans.

When at length she aroused herself, she was alone—save for Jean. She guessed that the "boy" had gone away with the Red Man, just as the sailor-man had; and wondered if, like the latter, he would never return. Not that it mattered.

She paid Jean, adding shamefacedly a gratuity of five cents, which he received with the air of one who has been presented with a modest competence. Then, as he flapped off to hand over the forty cents to Madame, she started to go.

As a matter of fact, she did leave Madame's within the next few moments, but first she paused in the outer hall to satisfy a whim of curiosity.

At her feet, just within the threshold of the street door, she saw a large white card, conspicuous against the soiled and frayed oilcloth. She stooped and picked it up, and stood knitting her delicately lined brows over it.

It was the card the Red Man had handed "that boy"; she knew as much from its size and shape. It had been printed on a press from common type, and the left edge showed the marks of perforations, as though it had been bound with several others in a book, to be torn off at convenience. Its face bore this legend:

Inventor of Occupations

GEORGE O. RHODE

250 Broadway

New York

Hours: 1 to 4 P. M.

Cynthia turned the card over, and her eyes widened. Of course it was simply coincidence; but, after all, coincidences are interesting, however commonplace they may be outside of book covers. And to find her own first name staring up at her was at first more than a little astonishing.

On the back of the card a heavy, unformed hand—the Red Man's, at an easy guess—had scrawled in pencil the memorandum:

Cynthia (Cydonia)
pr Y Eric 9 p 8|10

II.

CRITTENDEN.

A moment longer the card held Cynthia lingering irresolute there in the dingy hallway of Madame's, wondering what she ought to do with it. She could trace no intelligent connection between the words "Cynthia" and "Cydonia," and the rest of it seemed quite meaningless—merely a purposeless scribble such as one is apt to make if playing with a pencil while conversing.

She was on the point of dropping the card, leaving it where she had found it, when she heard the sound of quick footsteps ascending the brownstone stoop, and before she bethought herself to move out of the way the entrance was again darkened by the tall, slender, well-poised figure of "that boy."

At sight of Cynthia, pausing there with the card in her hand, he halted short, momentarily confused. He said, "I beg your pardon," between breaths, and removed his hat with a sudden graceful gesture.

Cynthia's confusion, however, was greater than any he betrayed. For a moment she was assailed by a wholly unreasonable sense of mortification, as if she had been caught at something unworthy of her—something almost as contemptible as eavesdropping.

"This is yours?" she said. "I happened to see it here on the floor."

He took it with a little bow of thanks that reminded her of the small courtesies she was accustomed to expect of men abroad, rather than of the nervous and self-conscious civility of the average American man of affairs.

"Thank you," he said. "I missed it

just a minute ago, and hurried back. I'm greatly obliged—wouldn't have lost that for a good deal."

She heard herself say "No?" with the inquiring inflection; and caught her breath with surprise that she should have forgotten herself so far. It wasn't like her to offer encouragement to young men unknown to her; whereas her monosyllabic reply had been distinctly an invitation to him to explain, if he wished, why he valued the card so highly.

"It means a lot to me," he said, with engaging candor; "you see, I struck a bit of good luck to-day, and this"—indicating the card—"is the token thereof."

"You've found work?" she said; and the query came as impulsively, as naturally as had its predecessor. "I am glad," she added, feeling that since she had gone so far she might venture a step farther without loss of dignity.

"Yes," he said, gravity shadowing his smile, while his glance was keenly inquisitive upon her. "Yes, I seem to have stumbled on something which I think I can do. It's promising, anyway, and I'm going to have a try at it."

Cynthia repeated a shade vaguely, beginning to remember that she must find an excuse to terminate the incident: "I am glad——"

He was quick to divine her thought, and at once stood aside, leaving the doorway clear; but at the same time he pursued the subject with a question that had every excuse: "But how did you guess——"

"Why, the card of course," she said, with a smile shyly extenuating her conjecture. "'Inventor of occupations,'" she quoted. "You see, I noticed him go over and speak to you. Apparently he doesn't wait in his den for clients; he goes boldly forth and hunts them down and forces his inventions upon them."

"It does look like that," admitted the other.

Somehow it seemed quite natural that he should follow her out and down to the sidewalk. But at the foot of the steps he hesitated, awakened to what he had done. Cynthia had naturally turned to the east. He took a couple of steps by her side, then paused.

"Would it annoy you," he said, "to have me go with you as far as Fifth Avenue—if you go that far? It didn't occur to me, at first, that it might seem presumptuous. You see, having seen you so often at Madame's——" He broke off with a short, embarrassed laugh.

"No," returned Cynthia quietly. "I quite understand."

He thanked her in a curious tone, as if he had not yet quite recovered from the realization of his effrontery; and for a minute or two neither spoke as they walked soberly toward Sixth Avenue. Then he said abruptly: "I beg your pardon. My name is Bruce Crittenden. I don't know why you should be interested to know that, but perhaps it will help excuse—somehow——"

"I quite understand," she said again, not understanding in the least; the name, Bruce Crittenden, conveyed nothing to her intelligence, nor did she comprehend that he thought it would. "I am Cynthia Grayce," she added, with a kindly if hazy notion of setting him more at his ease.

Crittenden looked at her sharply. "Cynthia!" he repeated. "That's odd!"

"Isn't it?" she agreed. "I noticed the name on the card, and was wondering who she might be when you surprised me."

"Oh, *that* Cynthia?" he laughed. "She's not a woman, she's—— But I mustn't say; that's one of the stipulations laid down by the Inventor of Occupations. He swore me to secrecy before he'd open up——"

"Open up?" Cynthia iterated, perplexed.

"Disclose," Crittenden interpreted promptly. "You haven't been long in this country, have you?" he pursued.

"How did you know that?"

"For one thing, you're not acclimatized enough to speak our slang. Then you've the Parisian touch about your clothes and the ghost of an accent—just enough to show you're more accustomed to speaking French. I don't

mind risking an impertinent guess; you've been over not more than three months."

"Five," she corrected, smiling. "And I don't consider you impertinent."

"That's good of you. If I weren't bound by awful oaths," Crittenden laughed, "I'd reward you by a full account with all the hideous details of the occupation Mr. Rhode thinks he has invented for me."

"But you've accepted, haven't you?"

"I have, with much joy, but I'm not at all sure I'll make good, of course."

"I'm sure you will," she said softly; "I do hope you will. It must be terrible——"

"What must be terrible?" he asked gently, as she paused.

Temporarily she had forgotten the tenuousness of their acquaintance and was thinking only of the mid-world of misery in which they both had existed for so long, and from which he was now to escape, while she must remain, to suffer and endure until the coming of that end which she foresaw for herself.

"It must be terrible," she said, "to wait and wait so long and patiently, and then to have your chance and fail; more terrible even than never to have your chance at all."

He was silent for a little time. Cynthia was looking another way, seeing nothing, lost in her thoughts, quite unconscious of his eyes.

Crittenden missed nothing, raking her from her inconspicuous but becoming hat to the tips of her small shoes that were just beginning to exhibit ineffaceable signs of wear. He saw that her neatness, which had impressed him long before he had spoken to her, was the neatness of extreme poverty making the best of souvenirs of days of affluence. The materials of her skirt and shirt waist were of the best, but worn threadbare—almost. He could reconstruct mentally the particulars of the daily struggle that alone served to keep her presentable—the constant wielding of the brush, the darning and mending, the scrubbings with naphtha, the pressings with an iron surreptitiously heated over a gas jet when the landlady was absent.

He took thought hurriedly, covering his abstraction with a steady flow of talk of the coherence of which he was dimly dubious.

"Well, yes—— But I'm not going to fail. In fact, I don't see how I can, with the opportunity I'm offered. We'll both win—you with your chance, and I with mine. Confidence is half the battle."

She said nothing. He added a banality or two. Something certainly must be contrived for her, and that quickly. The corner of Broadway where, he suspected their ways would part, was altogether too near to leave him time to consider ways and means. He must manage somehow to stick beside her for a little longer. There was one way. Once conceived, the notion took shape and color rapidly, and began to seem most desirable in his understanding. If only he could induce her to consent.

In his pocket he had nearly fifteen dollars, the balance of fifty realized by the hypothecation of his watch ten days ago. And there remained his cigarette case—it would bring in enough to tide him over at a pinch. Or, failing that—over on Fifth Avenue he could see a corner of the façade of the only club that now maintained his name on its membership roster; his credit would be good there, he need not want for food for a day or two—though he would rather starve than face the eyes of some of those who once had made him welcome there. But, if needs be, he could stand it, for a little while at least.

"I say," he broke off suddenly with all the elation in his voice that becomes one who has chanced happily upon an idea, "I wonder if you'd do me a favor."

His change of tone brought the thoughts of the girl back to him. Surprised, she turned to look at him steadily.

"Why——" she began doubtful.

"Wait till you hear," he interrupted. "I've got a scheme—a sure-enough scheme. It isn't every day one strikes a streak of pay luck as I have to-day.

Honestly, it looks good to me—there really isn't any doubt about my ability to get away with it. And naturally I want to celebrate a bit. Now you know a fellow can't celebrate properly all by his lonesome. Can he?"

His open, friendly, and frank smile left her little foothold for resentment. Cynthia could but smile faintly in return. But she shook her head.

"Really——"

"Oh, now!" he protested, with a very winning, boyish impatience. "Don't say no till you think it over. Remember we're in much the same boat—at least, you've said enough to lead me to believe we are; and we both would be the better for a little change. We need to get out of this—this heat and misery and all that—and play like sane people and—forget. But there's no forgetting, and no good playing, when you've no one to talk to and play with. It's no fun at all. Why not come with me, just for this afternoon—some place where one can see the sky, where there's clean sand under foot instead of dusty pavements, where there are waves to watch and listen to and clean air to breathe? Please don't shake your head like that. It isn't as if we were utter strangers; people who lunch at the same restaurant every day for a couple of months ought to know one another, even if they don't. Come on! Let's pretend we're old friends with nothing to discuss, no memories to dissect, nothing to do but take a day off from the fret and worry of things. Do say yes—it'll be awfully good of you!"

She withheld her decision only a minute, while she regarded him openly with clear, thoughtful eyes. She wanted to accept. She needed to go badly. And why not?

Crittenden read the answer in her eyes before she could utter it.

"You will? That's mighty fine of you!"

"Wait!" She checked him, but with a reassuring smile. "One question——"

"Name it."

"Can you—afford this, Mr. Crittenden?"

"Of course I can. I'm a good distance from the end of my tether, really; I could hold on for months yet, if I had to. But I won't have to. In a day or two I'll be independent."

"Then one condition—the one you yourself suggested. We're to pretend we've known one another since ever so long; we'll have no questions to ask, no memories to dissect—as you said—no plans for the future. To-day must be a day apart, a day that somehow mysteriously managed to slip in between yesterday and to-morrow, and so will slip out, leaving not a trace—not so much as the ghost of a memory. Is that agreed?"

"Certainly it is," he assented gayly. "I'd promise anything you asked—and stick to it, too—to get you to go."

Her smile was shadowy and wistful. "I shouldn't," she said slowly; "but it will be jolly, and I want to awfully, and—I'm going!"

"That's the best news I've heard since Mr. Inventor of Occupations told me about the job he was going to patent for me," Crittenden declared, hurriedly consulting the dollar watch that had replaced an heirloom. "We've got a little over twenty minutes in which to catch the boat at the Battery; not enough time if we depend on either the L or the subway. But there's a taxi across the street, and—I'm curious to know how it feels to ride in one again."

She experienced a sensation akin to that of one strong to swim, yet powerless to breast the current; the tide had her in its grasp, was sweeping her away—who should say whither?

III.

THE MAN WITHOUT A SMILE.

It was rather late, on the verge of twilight, when hunger drove Cynthia and Crittenden to offer themselves to the critical consideration of the person presiding over the destiny of one of the seaside hotel restaurants adjacent to New York.

At first glance this head waiter was inclined to treat the applicants with an access of hauteur approaching disdain and presaging neglect. They were as

modest of manner as of attire, if that were possible; and to this large and dictatorial person, who in the winter months was accustomed to lording it over the money-spending clientele of one of the largest establishments on Longacre Square, they conveyed a cursory impression of belonging to that class of casual strays who infrequently drift into superior restaurants and dine unhappily with diffidence for their sauce and the red ink figures at the foot of the impending bill dancing before their appalled vision.

But because he was really an excellent head waiter, he indulged in a second glance. And immediately his manner was moderated by a very perceptible thaw. Not for nothing had he attained to his awful estate through sedulous cultivation of the qualities named tact and discretion, with the additional assistance of a good working memory.

He was able to see that beyond question madame was a lady of a caste to which the best he had to offer would prove nothing startling, while the gentleman accompanying her was the Mr. Bruce Crittenden, whose recent total and inexplicable self-expunction from the circles he had once frequented and adorned was only just ceasing to be a matter of debate; and Franz was not unmindful of the several notes of legal tender which had, in time gone by, found their way from Mr. Crittenden's pocket to his own.

He bowed then, with precisely the proper shade of respectful recognition, and allotted them a desirable table, one not too conspicuously placed nor yet too far from the orchestra.

While Franz stood by attentive to take Crittenden's order, Cynthia settled herself in her chair with a luxurious movement suggesting an incarnate sigh of content. She was a little tired and glad to rest. A throng of new impressions besieged her fancy—of the boat trip down the bay and through the Narrows with the clean salt breath of the Atlantic reinvigorating every wearied fiber of her being; of the landing in the tawdry seaside city of tinsel, paint, and plaster, weird and extravagant as the nightmare of a scene painter; of fluent throngs of people amusement mad, seeking the bubble sensation at the barker's mouth; of a thousand smells of food and animals and melting sugar, dust, smoke, humanity; of a deafening roar of blending dissonances, shrieks, cries, yells, groans, windy roaring of megaphones, brassy blaring of bands, crash and whine of carrousel organs, barking of motor horns; of their eventful flight therefrom to a lonely spot of sand and sounding waves; stronger than all else, of Crittenden's constant sympathy, courtesy, and quiet humor.

"Is this normal—does it go on this way all the time?" she had asked in consternation.

"The summer through," he answered. "And this is a quiet day—Monday."

"It all seems so strange to me." This in apology for her slowness to comprehend the spirit of her native land.

"You'll get used to it. Unlike the English, we take our pleasures raw and ravenously."

If Crittenden's choice of a diversion seems curious, it had none the less proven effective; it had diverted. She had forgotten temporarily.

Slowly withdrawing her gloves, Cynthia let her gaze seek rest in the dimming distances of twilight on the sea. To excitement succeeded relaxation, a gentle fatigue enveloping body and limbs with a touch as soothing as that of approaching sleep. Just then she was ignorant of a care in life; languor saturated her thoughts like an anodyne. Her eyes were warm with the stuff of dreams, and her barely parted lips shadowed with that vague, pensive smile which Crittenden, even in the few hours he had known her, had learned to look for.

After the waiter had departed with his carefully considered order, Crittenden rested his arms on the edge of the table, joined his hands, and watched the woman, his own eyes thoughtful.

Cynthia was rather more than merely pretty. She had that inexplicable quality we call charm. She had, be-

sides, distinction, and, when she chose to exercise it, humor and wit.

With a slow movement of her head, recalled to herself, Cynthia looked back to him. Her smile deepened insensibly, out of sheer friendliness, as their glances met.

"Tired?" he asked, solicitous.

"A little," she conceded, amending quickly: "Not very."

"You were so quiet," he explained.

"I was thinking—wondering if you, too, would now forsake Madame's."

"Why 'too'?" he asked. "Are you going to desert?"

"Perhaps. But I didn't mean myself. I was thinking of the other man that went away with the Inventor of Occupations. Did you notice he never returned?"

"Which?"

She described the man whose bearing had suggested the sea.

Crittenden readily recalled him. "Yes, I remember. That's so, too; he hasn't been back. Wonder why? Perhaps his new-found occupation is much the same as mine."

"Then you may never lunch at Madame's, you think?"

"It may be." He lifted his shoulder with a quiet laugh. "It'd be hard to say."

"You intend to leave New York?"

"I may have to, I'm told."

"I'm sorry," she said gravely. "But I shouldn't be, I presume. I ought to offer you congratulations; you're very fortunate."

"Am I?" he queried as soberly. "I wonder?"

They were interrupted by the waiter with their service.

Silent and serious for a span, Cynthia's attention was apparently held by the show of life and gayety.

"I don't like mysteries," she averred suddenly.

"No more do I," he said.

"But we must respect our bargain," she insisted. "'No questions to ask, no——'"

"'No memories to dissect,'" he recited; "'no plans for the future.' But for one thing that would be a hard bargain."

"Yes?"

"That we're friends—the other half of the bargain: old friends, just for today. Friends," he said softly.

"Friends . . . old friends . . .
What is it ends
With friends?"

There was a flash like summer lightning in the eyes that held her own. She caught her breath sharply. A sudden swirl of half-formed emotions bewildered her. Something, somehow—she had no time to analyze—had surprised her off guard, and filled her being with a sweetly strange confusion and alarm.

For the first time she was brought to face the fact that he was a man and she a woman.

A second time the waiter disturbed them, earning the gratitude of both. When his services were for the time discharged and he had retired to a discreet distance, the situation was saved. Crittenden broke into an amused commentary on their experiences of the afternoon, and Cynthia's laughter swept her mood away and with it his.

Slowly the dinner parties rose and left; the restaurant remaining only moderately busy with the demands of an intermittent trickle of belated patronage.

Silences lengthened between them as each anticipated with refreshed regret the approach of that moment when their rising must signal the preliminary to their parting.

At length unwillingly, Crittenden looked at his watch, then signaled to their waiter.

"I'm sorry," he said, apologetic. "We've just time to catch our boat."

"I'm sorry, too—very," she said softly. "You have been kind, more than kind. I have no way of thanking you but by my appreciation—but is it too much to ask you for a further kindness, a word of advice?"

"You couldn't gratify me more," he said.

"I want to know if you think"—she colored, stammering—"if you think that

possibly the Inventor of Occupations might be induced to invent—something for a spinster—like myself." Her laugh was brief and self-conscious.

"You might ask him," said Crittenden quietly. "He's a curious creature—I've found that out already—though I know little about him. If you like, I'll ask him over."

"How—what do you mean?" she demanded, puzzled.

Crittenden indicated a direction with a faint nod. "He's over there now," he said, smiling. "I saw him roll in—like a sure-enough fireball—about ten minutes ago."

"Truly?" she gasped; then she saw that the veritable Red Man was seated, by himself, at a table near the other edge of the veranda. There was no mistaking that ensanguined shape. The only wonder was she had not noticed him before.

"Has he seen us?"

"The instant he came in," said Crittenden. "Those blue glass eyes have been bulging ever since; he's positively aching with curiosity. Shall I put him out of his misery—ask him over?"

"We will miss our boat?"

"What's that compared with the advantage of setting his inventive brain to work on your behalf? Besides, we can as easily go back by trolley."

Crittenden summoned the waiter—who required no description more specific than "that man in red" before he trotted off.

In another moment the Inventor of Occupations was heaving his huge bulk impatiently down the long aisle between tables.

"A pillar of fire by night," observed Crittenden irrepressibly, rising.

"Evenin', Mr. Crittenden." The Red Man halted, perfunctorily seizing and dropping the other's hand. His blue eyes remained steadfast to Cynthia. He bobbed his bullet-shaped head uncertainly in her direction.

"Miss Grayce, this is Mr. Rhode."

"Please' t' meet yuh," said Mr. Rhode, projecting his big red hand suddenly and enveloping Cynthia's in a moist, warm grasp.

As she acknowledged the introduction, she was shaken by a mad desire to do something to mitigate the awful seriousness of that wide red countenance. Features hewn out of red marl would have conveyed an effect of no more immutable immobility. Cynthia discovered another nickname for him presently: The Man Without a Smile.

A waiter brought a chair. Mr. Rhode took it from him with an air of forestalling a practical joke—he was not to be fooled into permitting that chair to be withdrawn from under him when he sat down—planted it firmly at the unoccupied side of the table, between Cynthia and Crittenden, and resolutely sat down. His stony blue eyes shifted from face to face suspiciously.

"Didn't know you two knew each other," he observed with fine directness.

"Indeed?" answered Crittenden suavely.

"We didn't," Cynthia interposed frankly, "until this afternoon."

Here the Inventor of Occupations interjected an "Oh," as inexpressive as his face.

"I happened to see your card," Cynthia continued, with winning directness. "And I asked to meet you. Your business must be a fascinating one, Mr. Rhode."

The Red Man shifted his cigar thoughtfully from corner to corner of his mouth. "Well, yes, it is," he assented grudgingly.

"I understand you have found—invented an occupation for Mr. Crittenden."

Rhode removed the cigar from his mouth. "What's he been tellin' you about it?" he demanded in a breath.

"Simply that," said Cynthia.

Crittenden shrugged and laughed quietly. Rhode received the assertion with an unintelligible grunt.

"You do, really," the girl pursued, a little timidly, "invent occupations?"

"You might call it that," rumbled the Red Man. "I just put that line on my card to fix people's attention, as you might say. Anyway, I do find some folks work. Why? You want a job?"

"I——" faltered Cynthia, confused.

"Thought so. Funny, us meetin' this way. I was goin' to speak to yuh tomorrow." Rhode reinserted the cigar, and mumbled it through a long, ruminative moment. "Then all of a sudden something immediate turns up this evenin', and I'm sort of wishin' I could lay my hand on yuh, and I'm comin' down here in my car to look for a feller—and here you are puttin' it to muh. Now I call that funny," he concluded.

But it is doubtful if he had ever thought anything really amusing.

A great wave of hope flooded Cynthia's consciousness.

"Yes," she breathed.

"Uh-huh," Rhode concurred, without emotion. "You really want work, now?"

"Very badly."

"Well, then, y' understand this is business with me. I got to know all about you. I got to ask questions."

"Oh! Certainly."

The Red Man had been excavating one of his breast pockets, producing a bulky sheaf of torn and thumb-marked papers—mainly, to all appearances, letters in their original envelopes. From these he sorted out an envelope with an unmarked back; its fellows, one noticed, were for the most part blackened with innumerable memoranda in fine, clear penmanship.

Placing the envelope on the table before him, he unlimbered a fountain pen, decorated the cloth with a casual spatter of ink, and looked up at Cynthia.

"Name, please?"

"In full? Cynthia Urcilla Grayce."

The blue eyes looked a trace more opaque.

"What's that?"

With careful enunciation, Miss Grayce reiterated.

"Spell it," suggested Rhode brusquely. "I mean the middle name. The others are easy."

"U-r-c-i-l-l-a."

"Why not s-u-l-a?" the inquisitor demanded aggressively.

"I'm sure I don't know," admitted Cynthia blankly.

"Ursula I've read in a book somewhere," said the Red Man, plainly making every allowance; "but 'Cilla, ne-ver."

"It has always been so spelled in our family," Cynthia explained.

Rhode put down his pen to stare. "You don't mean to say it's your *real* name? *Family* name?"

"Of course," she said, coloring slightly. "I have no other."

He raked her with a calculating glance. "Sounded somethin' like a stage name," he justified his comment.

"I am not on the stage."

"Never been?"

"No."

"Relations?"

"None."

His ears were quick to detect the note of hesitancy.

"None yuh care to speak about, huh?"

"No one I can ask for aid," she corrected a trifle primly.

"*Hmm.* Where do yuh live?"

"At present——" She hesitated, then gave him the address of the third-rate boarding house where she had a room, and was relieved when neither he nor Crittenden seemed to think the neighborhood undesirable.

"Age?"

"Twenty-two," she said.

"Married or single?"

"I am unmarried."

"Engaged? Excuse *me*, but I got to know."

"No," she said evenly, "I am not engaged to be married."

"Health good?"

"Yes."

"Occupation?"

"I have none."

"Never studied any trade or profession at all?"

"Unfortunately"—her voice was almost a whisper—"no. I once thought I might be able to earn a living with my brush," she added; "I am fond of painting. But I have not had sufficient experience, I find."

"Have you any resources?"

Cynthia shook her head.

"No friends to turn to?"

"No."

"You mean you won't—too proud," Rhode observed calmly.

"No," she said patiently; "I mean what I say. I am practically a stranger in New York. I was born in America, but have been in this country only the last five months since I was a young child."

The Red Man sat up at attention, and with a nod encouraged her to: "Go on."

"My father," she said, after a retrospective pause, "was a scientist well known abroad—Doctor David Grayce, the biologist. He was said to be well-to-do. We had our own home in Paris, everything. He died some years ago, and when his estate was settled up it was discovered that he had been speculating unfortunately on the Bourse. My mother and I had a bare living left. My mother died early last year, leaving me about a thousand dollars. I had no friends from whom I could ask or accept aid. Then there were reasons why I didn't want to live in Europe. I came here at length, hoping to be able to make money by painting."

She concluded with an eloquent movement of her hands.

Rhode shifted in his chair and sat back, glancing from one to the other of his companions. He grunted subterraneously, and cleared his throat in a most candid and public-spirited manner. Then he slipped the Cynthia memoranda into one breast pocket, and from the other brought forth a second handful of letters and paper, more or less shopworn, from which he selected one—a yellow telegram form—and handed it to Cynthia.

"I guess," said he, "you can fill that bill all right, all right—goin' by what you tell me. Huh?"

Cynthia spread the form out upon the cloth, afraid to trust her hands to hold it, lest by their trembling they should betray her agitation.

For a moment or two the lines of typewritten words, blurred and befogged with purple by the copy press, melted all and merged together into incoherence beneath her eager eyes. But gradually she was able to force herself to recognize and comprehend them.

Addressed to Rhode at his downtown office—the address given on his card—and with the date of that same day affixed—the body of the communication ran in this fashion:

Herald tuesday help wanted ads companion desired by elderly lady must be young educated refined able to discharge light secretarial duties play good hand at bridge married or single no objection ocean travel good remuneration no agents old maids or parties with pet dogs apply tues a m desk hotel monolith ask for mrs A B S row today Biddle fired old woman on warpath get busy and dont let this get past you

(*Signed*) CYD.

Cynthia read and reread with a puzzled frown, then showed bewildered eyes to Rhode.

"Well?" he asked. "How does it strike you?"

She hesitated. "Perhaps I don't quite understand—— I don't like to seem stupid. Or does this simply mean that somebody you know intends to advertise for a companion to-morrow morning, in the *Herald,* and you think I could fill the position?"

"You'll do," said Rhode, applauding Cynthia's insight in the cryptic tongue he habitually employed.

"You really think so?" she asked anxiously.

But Crittenden enjoyed his smile alone, unheeded.

"You've doped it out right," Rhode asserted vigorously. "Now this Madum A. B. S. is a party by the name of Savaran, widow of a side partner of mine that died recent'. She's got money to burn—but when it comes to that kind of a Glorious Fourth she's strong for the safe-and-sane thing." This statement was made in a moderately aggrieved tone. Crittenden laughed spontaneously. But Cynthia seemed only the more perplexed, and in the face of Rhode's resentful glare he subsided and permitted the other to continue.

"As I was sayin', this Biddle party that was on the companion job didn't make a hit, so she got the hook, Madum Savaran preferrin' young folks—lively

—same's yourself. This Biddle tried too hard to live up to her name; called herself a spinster. That'll give you a line on what to sidestep. What the old lady is out for is first her own way, and second a good time.

"Now, what you want to do," he continued, "is to get up with the chickens and be ready at the gate while the rest of the field's warmin' up. There'll be more'n a million dames mobbin' the desk clerk at the Monolith by nine o'clock. You gotta be there by eight, or there won't be any part. Of course it's a gamble, but, if Savaran don't fall for you the first pike, I've got the wrong ticket."

Here Crittenden interrupted out of sheer compassion for the girl whose mystification was plainly becoming more and more acute.

"Just a minute, Mr. Rhode," he said, with a laugh, "but Miss Grayce hasn't been in this country long enough to be wise to the line of talk you're unwinding. If you don't mind my translating," he pursued, addressing Cynthia, "Mr. Rhode means you to understand that Madam Savaran is well-to-do, but careful of her money. I assume you gathered he advised you to call at the Monolith Hotel no later than eight, in order to forestall all other applicants. His last remark was intended to convey his belief that, while it's all a chance, if you succeed in seeing the lady, she will like you at sight."

Rhode endured this effort at interpretation with a bored and aggrieved air. "That's what I meant," he admitted ungraciously, "but I don't see how your way of handing it out has got anything on mine. However——"

He consulted Cynthia's face with the manner of intense anxiety peculiar to him.

"I understand perfectly," she said, with gratitude, "and I don't know how to thank you. Of course I shall tell Madam Savaran——"

"No!" Rhode broke in, almost in panic. "Nothin' like that. You'll queer everythin' if you mention my name. She don't like me so's you'd notice it, and, if she suspected I'd put you wise to this, it would be exit running for yours. You just want to have a copy of the *Herald* with you and say nothin' at all about me; she'll naturally take it you piped the ad. in the usual way, and so you'll get in right. You see," he amended hurriedly, before the girl could object, "Savaran and me were good friends, but he couldn't get on with the old lady, nor she with him; they hadn't lived together for twenty years when he cashed in, but all the same he was strong for her, and I promised him I'd keep an eye on her and—well, see she didn't get buncoed. Now, there's a party I'm on to, what they'd call a designin' female in a play, laying for the madum, wanting to get next to her bank roll. I'm workin' against that, and so I'm puttin' this chance up to you. All you've got to do is to be on the square with the old lady and forget you ever met me, and you'll be doing us all a favor—me and her and yourself. Believe me, this is a swell opening for you, and you don't want to let it get by you."

"I think," said Cynthia with sweet seriousness, "that you are very good and kind."

"You'll try it on, then?"

For the briefest instant she hesitated, with precisely what reason she could hardly have said. An instinct moved her to guide herself by Crittenden's advice; she had no one else to ask for counsel; and yet she did not know him well enough——

But he took advantage of her pause to interpose of his own notion. "If you don't mind," he said to Cynthia, "I'll venture to urge you to accept—that is, to do all you can to secure this employment. Mr. Rhode asks nothing of you," he continued slowly and distinctly, "in return for his suggestion, other than that you give loyal service to the widow of his late friend. If I were you I'd at least see her first thing to-morrow."

"Thank you," Cynthia answered; and to them both, brightening distractedly, she announced: "I will."

"That's sensible!" grunted Rhode, pushing back his chair with an abrupt

and hasty movement. "Lucky I run into you two down here. But I don't see anythin' of the party I was lookin' to find, and I got to hustle back to town. And if you're going my way, I'll be pleased to have you come with me in my car. There's all the room in the world in it."

IV.

THE GIRL IN WHITE.

Crittenden offered no objection when Cynthia consulted his wishes with a shyly formal glance, which for some reason pleased him uncommonly. She herself seemed ready enough to fall in with the Red Man's offer, and, since they had missed the last boat for New York, a motor ride would be infinitely preferable to its only alternative: the trip by trolley or elevated, in cars packed to the point of suffocation with the dregs of Coney Island's floating population.

So presently this singularly assorted trio rose and passed back through the hotel to the carriage entrance.

Here a stalwart person, not less imposingly invested in livery than in the habit of authority, consented to accept of Mr. Rhode a quarter of a dollar together with the numbered ticket for his waiting car, and went languidly away to sort out that particular vehicle from what seemed little less than half a hundred others, all parked in a shadowy reservation to one side of the carriage drive.

Then the Inventor of Occupations suddenly discovered his cigar magazine to be quite empty, and, after snorting immitigable disdain of the cigarette Crittenden gravely offered, hurried off to lay in a fresh supply of his preferred deadly black projectiles with brilliantly illuminated stomachers.

"I wanted to ask you——" Cynthia began the moment they were alone.

"And I wanted to tell you," Crittenden interrupted. "We may not have another chance. This man Rhode I know nothing about, practically; he seems to be a rather unusual type of the man who lives by his wits, and I wouldn't advise anybody to trust him out of hand. But Madam Savaran is quite another proposition. I know something about her; in fact, almost everybody in New York does; she's a —well, an original. But she'll probably tell you all about herself, if you land the job, and there isn't time now. There's no reason whatever why you shouldn't engage yourself to her, if you want to—especially since you're in no way bound to Rhode. Don't forget he has done nothing but give you advance advice of the opportunity. Of course—there's no question but—I—he has—ah——"

Crittenden's words were trailing off into hopeless incoherence even as his voice fell to an inarticulate mumble. Cynthia, who had been listening attentively enough while idly watching the arrival of a belated but evidently high-spirited motor party, whose car had just then run into the carriage landing, turned to look wonderingly at her companion.

She surprised him in a state of utter consternation, stammering to a full stop. Even in the semidusk of the veranda, the hue of pallor replacing the healthy color in his dark face was noticeable, while the eyes she had thought so kind and pleasant were cold and staring, just as the gently humorous lines of his mouth had hardened into a set, thin line of lips. She thought his appearance that of one to whom an ineradicable affront has suddenly been offered—detecting a little something of the struggle to retain his self-command that was taking place within the man.

Naturally she looked for the source of this unpresaged change in him, and with a woman's unerring instinct found it in another woman—one of the newly arriving party.

There were four of this company, two men in dinner clothes and two women all in white. Of these last, the first to be helped from the body of the car was coming up the steps to the veranda.

Even though she were a thought too strikingly attired, Cynthia thought her ravishingly beautiful—thought so even when conscious of that first antagonis-

tic and resentful pang that invariably assails a pretty woman confronted by a rival of equal if not superior physical attractions and more fortunate in the possession of a wardrobe better calculated to set off her charms.

She was what reporters are fond of calling a golden blonde, with very regular and handsome features and a really superb, if slightly exaggerated, habit of carrying her head and finely proportioned body.

As she reached the level on which Cynthia and Crittenden stood waiting, her glance embraced the two, at first indifferently, a suggestion of lazy insolence in her large and heavily lidded eyes; then, recognizing the man with a swift flash of surprise, as swiftly veiled. She paused the hint of an instant, looked from Crittenden to Cynthia and back again, and nodded coolly.

"Why, Bruce," she drawled in a soft, rich voice, "what a surprise!"

By this time he had himself well in hand; his bow was immediate if distant and unaccompanied by spoken reply. But the woman had not waited for an acknowledgment of her salutation; already she was trailing past them, moving slowly toward the hotel entrance, while her companions raced up the steps to overtake her.

To the latter Cynthia gave little heed after receiving an impression that the second woman was rather more plain and plainly dressed than the other, and that neither of the men was particularly distinguishable from those types of well-groomed and well-set-up Americans to the sight of whom she had become accustomed in the last few months.

One of the men, however, knew Crittenden, and threw him a greeting with a cordial wave of his hand in passing:

"Hello, Crit! Thought you were out of town."

To this Crittenden responded with an air as casual and good-natured: "Good evening, Tommy."

And the entire party disappeared in the direction of the restaurant, leaving Cynthia to try to realize that the encounter, to her intuitions so fraught with provoking significance, had all taken place in hardly more than a minute of real time. Already Crittenden, quite the same cool and collected, friendly-mannered young man of that afternoon and evening, was saying in a manner of amused detachment: "Fancy people who live in New York being surprised to meet one another at Coney Island!" And already the Red Man was rolling heavily back to them in the wake of one of his huge cigars; while, the other car having drawn aside, the important and bedizened flunky was ushering in Rhode's car and with much pomp and circumstance making ready to open its door. In a moment they were off.

Air pungent with the odor of the marshes, salty sweet, gave way to that hot with the smell of earth and man; the gentle darkness of meadows and country roads to the illumination of city streets. The hour was late, late enough for the thoroughfares to be moderately clear of traffic other than cars like their own, the majority of which were bound in the same direction. They climbed a long ascent between rows of trees, swung into a broad, smoothly paved avenue, and shot without a break down and down its descent. Then the air grew thicker and more foul, only thinning for a little time as they drove at a steady, lawful pace over a narrow roadway suspended in mid-air by a multitude of tiny threads shining like wrought silver in the light of electric arcs—the East River black and broad beneath. And then again miles upon miles of choking streets.

Drowsily conscious of this all, as though a mist of dreams, Cynthia roused only when the machine drew up before her lodgings.

Crittenden got out and turned to help her alight. Rhode rose and turned, proffering a great moist paw over the back of the seat. As her own hand was smothered in its fervid grasp, it encountered a slip of cardboard.

"M' card," explained Rhode. "If you don't cop out that job t'-morrow mornin', le' me know about it soon's

you can. G'd night. Hope you enjoyed the ride."

"It was delightful," she told him prettily. "You've been awfully kind—you have both been awfully kind. I can't thank either of you enough."

"Don't mention it," said the Inventor of Occupations, and sat down again.

Her fingers rested an instant in Crittenden's palm as she descended to the sidewalk. He moved a pace or two with her toward the brownstone stoop.

"If possible—and if I may," he said "I'll lunch at Madam's to-morrow Shall you be there?"

"I'll try to," she said a bit doubtfully.

"I'll be anxious to know about Madam Savaran," he pursued. "You won't mind——"

"Indeed," she said, disturbed by something in his attitude, "I shall be glad. . . . And—oh, thank you, thank you, Mr. Crittenden!"

His smile was curious, as revealed by the half lights of the street: a smile somehow wistfully whimsical.

"It's you who were kind," he insisted quietly, "to take pity on my loneliness. Good night, Miss Grayce."

V.

THE MAN OF SECRETS.

As the driver skillfully swung the motor car into Broadway, Rhode twisted and leaned back over his seat, to address Crittenden, who now occupied the tonneau in lonely state.

"You in any rush to get home?"

"No," said Crittenden pleasantly.

Rhode stared somberly at the thinly patronized open trolley car they were passing. Then he nodded abruptly, ejecting a huge cloud of stifling smoke. "A' right," he said.

A few minutes later the car slackened speed, and swept to a standstill by the curb, a block or two north of Thirty-fourth Street.

As Crittenden stepped out, he was aware that Rhode, on the sidewalk by the driver's seat, was thumbing a roll of bills of considerable size. Presently, discovering one of the proper denomination, he presented it to the chauffeur, then turned to Crittenden.

"Come on over to the Marlborough and have a drink," he said. "I got somethin' I wanta say to you."

Crittenden assented amiably, amused.

They found seats at a table, and, after the drinks had been served, the Red Man demanded abruptly: "That girl—what d' you know about her?"

"Just as much as she told you—not a thing more."

Rhode concentrated a hard blue stare on the young man's face. "Funny," he averred. "You wouldn't take her for the kind you could pick up without a knockdown."

"I shouldn't advise anybody to attempt it," said Crittenden dryly. He considered a moment, then briefly narrated the circumstances under which he had made Cynthia's acquaintance. "Is there anything else you want to know?" he concluded.

The Inventor of Occupations shook his head morosely. "No," he rumbled; "I had a hunch it happened like that, but I wanted to be sure. A fellow in my line's gotta be careful who he takes up with."

"But are you?" Crittenden's surprise was patent.

"You bet I am," said Rhode, with an emphasis that drew the eyes of the room.

"I wouldn't think so."

"You wouldn't, huh? I guess you've got an idea I go stumbling around with my eyes shut, just because I happened to speak to you without a formal introduction?"

"What would you think, if you were I?"

"I'd think hard, that's what I'd think. I ain't in business for my health; I gotta know everythin' about the people I do business with. Take yourself. I spotted you two weeks ago, but I knew all about you before I 's much as looked cross-eyed at you."

"Indeed?" said Crittenden. "May I ask just what you learned about me?"

"Sure. Here." Rhode delved into one of his pockets and brought out its store of folded documents. He select-

ed an envelope densely darkened with his singularly fine handwriting. "How's this, now?" He began to read:

"Born, Baltimore, 1883. Educated U. of P. Came to N'York 1901. First job, clerk in law office—Higginbotham & Hunt, Wall Street, 1905, writing stories and books. 1908, wrote a show called 'Bridge'—made a pot of money. Next year, another show, called 'Faustine.' That fell down. Since then you haven't been doing anything."

Rhode paused, met Crittenden's glance, and looked hastily away.

"Go on," said Crittenden in a level tone.

"That's all."

"That's not all you have written down there."

"No," Rhode admitted reluctantly. He looked down at the envelope in his hand; then with a quick movement of his strong fingers tore it across, placed the halves together, and tore it again and again. "The rest of it's none of my business," he growled surlily as the cloud of scraps drifted from his hand to the floor.

For several moments there was constrained silence between them. The Red Man employed the time with the trimming and lighting of a fresh cigar. Crittenden sat staring at his glass; then slowly his face regained its normal coloring, and his eyes their calm.

"And on the strength of that," he said, "you feel justified in offering me a job."

"Sure," assented the other, visibly relieved.

"Just what kind of a job precisely?"

"Well—we got to have a purser——"

"On the *Cynthia,* late *Cydonia?* That's a position of some responsibility, isn't it?"

"Yeh," admitted Rhode, faintly abstracted.

"And you have that much confidence in me?"

"I ain't worryin' about you. You're all right."

"Then suppose you go a step farther and tell me what this is all about?"

But the red head was shaken in slow but firm negation. "I told you this afternoon," said Mr. Rhode sadly, "you'd be told everything good for you to know, once we get clear of New York."

Realizing he would have to be content with that much, Crittenden refrained from pressing the inquiry further. But after a moment, he asked:

"And Madam Savaran?"

Rhode started. "What?" he demanded, slightly confused.

"What's your interest in Madam Savaran?"

"Oh, you don't got to worry about her," Rhode evaded, intensely interested in his cigar.

"My interest is in Miss Grayce."

"That's all right; she won't get hurt."

"But why do you want her, rather than anybody who might chance to see that advertisement, to get the situation?"

"Well——" The Inventor of Occupations studied the ash of his cigar thoughtfully. "I got a hunch that that girl's straight," said he slowly.

"I think you'll find she's too straight to be your catspaw."

Rhode subjected the cigar to a still more keen inspection. Then, moving back his chair: "That's just what I'm countin' on," he said inscrutably. "Come on; we gotta be movin'. They're shuttin' up."

Baffled and wondering, Crittenden followed the adventurer through the door to the hotel lobby and on out to the street, where they paused.

"Goin' downtown, I suppose?" said Rhode. "Well, g'd night. Remember, if anythin' turns up to change our plans, I'll wire you. Otherwise, you come aboard by nine, if not before."

"Very well," said Crittenden shortly. "Good night."

He walked slowly down Broadway, suddenly aware he was acutely tired.

On the corner of Thirty-fifth Street he paused an instant, the shafts of his eyes instinctively seeking one of the huge painted signboards raised above the roofs of a row of buildings on the south side of Thirty-fourth, at the corner of Sixth Avenue. Only that morning he had noticed the painters at work, blocking out a new design; it was fin-

ished now, glaring in its coat of gaudy colors beneath a row of electric lights:

Opening Tuesday, September fifth. Princess Theatre—Letty Noon in "Witchcraft"—comedy by Tynan Dodd.

He lifted his shoulders, smiled oddly, and moved on, lips framing noiselessly unspoken thoughts. If he had until that moment entertained any lingering doubt as to whether he would in the last analysis close with the proposition put before him by Rhode, it was now altogether swept away and as if it had never existed.

VI.

THE SIGNATURE.

For some forty years Madam Savaran had wakened without reluctance at the hour of seven; but for upward of thirty-nine she had looked forward to those days to come when she would be free to time her arising at her own sweet will.

And now, at the age of sixty, Madam Savaran found herself a free agent in every sense of the phrase—within mundane bounds—but a slave to habits she herself had assiduously cultivated. She was wealthy; she was a willing widow; she had sold her business, retaining only an interest large enough to permit her to interfere when other diversions palled; she had nothing to do but nurse her crotchets; but she was a slave to her habits. Worst of all was her inability to sleep as late as she liked.

It was the only annoying circumstance she had not been able to circumvent. She had got rid of poverty, she had got rid of her worthless husband, she had got rid of the harness of affairs, she had got rid of that immaturity which had once hampered her freedom of speech; but she couldn't get rid of the subconscious alarm clock which roused her unfailingly at an ungodly hour, whether she retired early or late.

Small wonder that the poor lady vented her resentment in what can be called nothing else but a snort, when she turned her handsome head upon the pillow and looked the clock in the face and discovered that on this day, as on all others, she was awake at seven. It availed nothing to mitigate her indignation that on this day especially she had need to be up betimes and stirring, who had threescore details demanding her attention and supervision. She elected to be in an ill humor, and spent several minutes lying there, staring at the ceiling and making up her mind on whom to visit her wrath.

All things considered, her maid seemed to be the predestined vessel. She rang for her.

The suite of rooms Madam Savaran occupied in the Hotel Monolith consisted of "parlor, two bedrooms, and bath." One of the bedrooms had until the previous day been occupied by the unhappy Miss Biddle—the latest of a long series of indigent lady companions whom madam had suffered to the best of her endurance and whom Sidonie, the maid, had conspired to oust with—ultimately—invariable success.

As Madam Savaran sat at table, enjoying the clean and sweet if slightly warm breeze that sighed in through the window at her elbow, and likewise enjoying iced cantelope, she looked easily five years younger than the hard-faced Belgian woman attending her. But then Sidonie looked older than her age by an equivalent span—easily fifty-five. So that the mistress would have passed for fifty at face value.

Madam's morning meal comprised simply fruit, dry toast, and coffee. She consumed it at leisure with a newspaper propped before her.

The meal concluded, Sidonie removed the tray, in its place presenting the morning mail. Her mistress poked through the batch of letters, to a running accompaniment of trenchant comment. The majority went to the wastebasket half read, and with these went the picture post cards. The remainder of the mail was intrusted to Sidonie to be placed in the leather writing case madam used when traveling.

And now Madam Savaran prepared to enjoy herself.

"Sidonie, fetch my jewel case," she said.

Sidonie said a naughty word, but obeyed without demur.

It was a commodious strong box, that jewel case, whose nickel-steel construction was concealed by a sheath of grained leather. To open it, one required both a key and a password with which to cajole the combination lock. Its interior was arranged with four trays of varying depths, each divided into compartments, and yielding only to individual keys.

Sidonie had the keys, her mistress the combination. But sometimes Madam Savaran neglected the latter, being, in spite of her keen business instinct, inordinately heedless and negligent.

In this instance the key alone served to release the hinged front, which fell flat on the table, permitting the trays to be removed. Madam Savaran attended to this with her own jealous hands, and when the four trays lay in a row before her, their glittering, glistening hoard disclosed, she sighed a little, and then her breath came momentarily fast, while her eyes shone greedily and her shapely, well-cared-for hands trembled as they hovered over the treasure.

In opening the case, Madam Savaran had unlocked her soul. Its ruling passion lay revealed. She adored jewelry with a devotion not even transcended by her love of having her own way. The collection was in the main composed of curious pieces and antiques. Its values was indisputably very great, but by no means so staggering as they were led to believe who heard rumors of the old lady's wealth in gems and jewels.

Each piece had its individual niche or compartment. One tray was entirely given over to rings, another to necklaces, a third to bracelets and brooches, the last to a heterogeneous assemblage of strange, rare articles.

Deliberately, bit by bit, Madam Savaran took up and examined the selection of rings. She was still busy with them when Cynthia Grayce was announced.

Heaven alone knows how women manage these things. Certain it is Cynthia had had little sleep the previous night. Before she dared go to bed, she had much to do to make herself presentable in the morning—mending, cleaning, pressing. And after that there had been what seemed endless hours of half-conscious dozing, excitement—a froth in her mind of fresh impressions and emotions—working with care to hold back the craved loss of consciousness.

A man who had undergone as much would have felt and looked wretchedly seedy.

But Cynthia, faltering on the threshold there, was as fresh and pretty as any dew-drenched rose at dawn. Her color was clear and glowing as with health; something with which, no doubt, her rapid walk across and uptown had much to do. Her manner of composure moderated by reserve became her wonderfully well.

In fine she was altogether charming. Madam Savaran and her maid granted this at a glance, though otherwise both received her appearance with surprise.

Cynthia's gaze, moving from the maid's face, fixed upon that of the handsome old lady behind the small table by the window. She inclined her head a little diffidently.

"Madam Savaran?" asked she.

"I am Madam Savaran," said that person. "Won't you come in?"

Cynthia entered and Sidonie shut the door.

"Come here, please—to the light," said Madam in her most impressive manner; and when Cynthia had complied: "You wish to see me?"

"Your advertisement in the *Herald*——"

"Ah," said Madam Savaran dispassionately. In fact, she was disappointed. She had hoped for something different, Cynthia's appearance prepossessing her.

"I wish to apply for the position."

"Sit down," said Madam, with just enough hauteur to render Cynthia vaguely uncomfortable, as she took the seat indicated. "Your name, please?"

"Cynthia Urcilla Grayce."

"Ah!" This time the interjection

was unmistakably pregnant with meaning; only the meaning remained indecipherable.

With keen old eyes, Madam Savaran looked the young woman up and down, without apology for her rudeness; and you may be certain nothing escaped her.

Cynthia stirred uneasily. A look of satisfaction lit up Madam's eyes; she smiled a smile faintly sardonic, and the tip of her tongue showed between her strong white teeth and touched her lips.

"What," she queried. "What precisely is your understanding of your duties, should I engage you?"

"Why," replied Cynthia faintly, "I understood you wanted a companion and secretary, some one who had no objection to travel——"

"Yes," Madam interrupted. "You saw that in the advertisement?"

Cynthia's lips sought to shape the affirmative, but her tongue would not utter it. She had not yet learned to lie. So she was silent.

"No," the old lady presently answered for her; "you did not see it in the advertisement. Do you know why?" turning to Sidonie. "Because I didn't insert the advertisement, after all, you she devil! I thought you were a bit too interested in it, when I caught you patching together the scraps of the first draft; so I said nothing and simply pretended to go out to the *Herald* office. Then you sold me. Really, I'm an old fool not to have expected it of you. Don't you think so?"

The pallor in the maid's sallow face spoke for her more truthfully than her stammered negative.

"What a liar you are, Sidonie!" observed Madam, with irony corrosive as an acid. She turned upon Cynthia with something less of personal hostility in her manner. "Who sent you here?" she demanded.

"I—why——" Cynthia said in crimson confusion and shame.

"Who told you about the advertisement I had in mind? It was that scoundrel Rhode! Wasn't it?"

"Yes," said Cynthia of the pitiful eyes.

"You admit it? You dare tell me to my face he sent you here to win my confidence and spy on me and sell me to him—like Sidonie there?"

Her spirit came to Cynthia's rescue, tardily, but not too late. "That is not so," she said clearly. "There was no such understanding. You have no possible right to assume so much—or to talk to me this way."

"Indeed?" said Madam in her most caustic tone.

"Yes, indeed!" Cynthia insisted courageously. "I came to you simply because I was poor and needed work. I learned from Mr. Rhode, by the merest accident, that you needed a companion. I never knew him before yesterday, and I hardly know him now. There wasn't the least intimation that I was to deceive you in any way; only he advised me not to mention his name."

"I should fancy," said Madam Savaran with edged significance. "And how, pray, did all this come about?"

"I was dining with a friend." Cynthia told her brief story as succinctly as she could. "After dinner he—Mr. Rhode—came in. He knew this friend, and so was introduced to me. He calls himself an Inventor of Occupations—I presume you know that?"

"I do. Go on," said Madam severely. "Sidonie, stop making those hideous faces instantly. Stand behind Miss Grayce—anywhere, so she doesn't see you."

Sullenly Sidonie complied.

"I was pretty desperate because I needed work; that made me ask him if he could invent an occupation for me. He said he could and showed me a telegram to him, containing a copy of the advertisement which it stated was to appear in the *Herald* this morning. He told me I had a chance of getting the position if I got here early enough. It was distinctly understood I was in no way bound to him for telling me about this chance."

"And why was that so distinctly understood, please?" As yet Madam's voice had lost nothing of its edge of

sarcasm. But already her eyes were twinkling.

"Because my friend mentioned it—indeed, insisted on it. And that," added Cynthia, rising, "is all I have to say to you, Madam Savaran."

"But it's not all I have to say to you, young woman. Sit down."

"I shall do nothing of the sort," replied Cynthia, moving toward the door.

"But I haven't finished with you, girl!" Still Cynthia did not turn back, and in this extremity, faced out, Madam had need to have recourse to wheedling. "Miss Grayce!" she pleaded with so complete a change of tone and manner that Cynthia looked round in surprise, with her hand on the door-knob. "Just a minute longer, please."

"Not if you're going to continue being uncivil to me," stipulated Cynthia.

The old lady's sense of humor was so tickled that she laughed outright. "Come back, you droll creature!" she gasped. "I promise to handle you with gloves, my dear. Please—to please an old woman—just for a minute!"

Uncompromising of mien, the younger woman consented and came back to her chair. By the time she was seated, Madam Savaran's temper toward her had undergone a complete change. She had a not unfriendly smile for the girl.

"My dear," said she in this new and kindly voice, "you should have more patience with a lonely woman of my age who is harried by cares and upset by treachery. And you must admit you came to me with the worst credentials imaginable."

"I know nothing about Mr. Rhode," said Cynthia, relenting. "You should know best what he is."

"I do. Now, before we have a little talk—I believe you are truthful, my dear; those big eyes couldn't lie—tell me one thing. You say you saw this telegram?"

"Yes."

"What signature did it have? Or perhaps you didn't notice?"

"I remember perfectly," Cynthia asserted. Then she spelled it out: "C-y-d."

"Ah!" commented Madam with a return to her earlier, fighting manner. "C-y-d," she iterated; and if looks could wither Sidonie had been shriveled then and there. "C-y-d or S-i-d—Sidonie!"

"Madam?" The maid's tone was frightened.

The mistress dissembled her covert joy; it was something, it was much, at last to have brought this creature to the fear of God. Almost Madam Savaran could have forgiven her, in this time of triumph. But not quite; there be crimes too heinous for forgiveness, and treachery heads the list.

"Your trunk is packed, Sidonie?"

Sidonie's face was ghastly. "Practically, Madam," she mumbled.

"Go to your room, take out of your trunk whatever it holds that is mine, telephone for the porter, and get away as quick as you can. I give you ten minutes to leave my rooms. If you are here at the end of that time, I will telephone for the police and give you in charge for the theft of my amethyst ring."

"Yes, Madam. Very well, Madam." The accents of the maid as she left were barely audible.

VII.

AS IN A DREAM.

"Beast!"

That crisp epithet, barbed with whole-hearted rage and contempt, fell sharp upon the shutting of the door behind the gaunt, unpleasing, sullen Sidonie. Uttering it, Madam Savaran sank heavily back into her chair, replacing her cane in its corner. She sat in silence for a long minute, her eyes scintillant.

Then her mood veered. Then ten plump and active fingers of her two hands drummed the devil's tattoo on the polished top of the little table before her. Her handsome old face clouded. "Whatever shall I do?" she soliliquized in despair. "I can never replace her, never!"

To that instant Cynthia, untroubled by the envenomed glance the discharged maid had given her in parting, had been

faintly amused. She was so no longer. She detected in the old lady's exclamations a very real and poignant distress. Sympathy stirred in the girl's generous bosom.

"You mustn't think that," she said soothingly. "I'm sure there must be plenty of maids——"

"There's only one Sidonie!" declared Madam with vigor. "That animal!" she cried. "Think of it! For ten—no, for more years than I can say without stopping to reckon, she has been my servant. One doesn't uproot from one's heart the association of that time and not feel it! She was a paragon of maids; she understood me thoroughly; I never had to tell her a word of her duties. It is true she would steal my trinkets and pawn them for money to get drunk on, she would lie to me and carry tales to turn me against my companions—she has got rid of at least one rival a year by such means; but then I could say anything to her. She was the only maid I ever had who could endure my temper. I have a bad temper," said Madam Savaran complacently.

"And you don't think you could take her back?"

"What? That snake? That ingrate! Nev*errr!*" The old lady swore cheerfully. "Anything but treachery I could stand; but let that once show its head, and it is over—all—everything is finished!" She waved her hands excitedly, folded them, and breathed, or rather sighed plaintively, a three-ply, copper-riveted malediction on the head of the departing maid.

Shocked, Cynthia involuntarily sat bolt upright, eying Madam in wide dismay. The movement did not pass unremarked.

"I do swear terribly," observed Madam. "Sometimes I wonder at myself. But it *is* a great comfort. You mustn't mind; you'll get used to it in time."

"I!" Cynthia exclaimed, amazed.

"You—certainly—my dear. Why do you imagine did I call you back if I intended to let you leave me?"

"But——"

"You needn't think I hold it against you that you were sent me by that red-faced blackguard, Rhode. It only goes to prove that good may come of evil. You see, my dear! I believe you, and I don't believe that if you were to attach yourself to me you'd sell me, like that criminal. How old are you?"

Cynthia told her.

"And your middle name—how do you spell it?"

Cynthia detailed the orthography of Urcilla.

"Don't you wonder why I ask?"

"Perhaps you thought the name unusual," Cynthia ventured.

"Rather," Madam Savaran affirmed, with a strong, humorous drawl. "But I had another reason. But no matter; I will explain later. Now, tell me more of yourself?"

In the course of the next ten minutes she proved herself an exceedingly able practitioner of the art of cross-examination.

Cynthia told everything, indeed—what Crittenden had missed in her more constrained self-accounting of the evening previous; the story of her mother's arrant infatuation with the notion of marrying her child to money, through pursuit of which her small competence had ebbed as she moved wearily on from seaside watering places to gambling centre, dragging with her the poor, overdressed, shrinking, sullenly mutinous girl and thrusting her beneath the notice of the fashionable crew they followed; and the story of the senile devotion of a certain Englishman to whom she had reluctantly engaged her hand before her mother's death, only to beg and plead and pray and finally to fly for freedom, when death came to ease her of the necessity for self-sacrifice upon the altar of daughterly love.

Guilelessly she disclosed everything.

"And now, my dear," said Madam, "I'll tell you why your middle name interested me. The only woman I ever knew who wore it with the same spelling was Miss Urcilla Wayne, of the Waynes of Washington Square."

"My mother!" cried Cynthia. "You knew her?"

"Of course I knew her," returned

Madam, with some asperity. "Why not? Not intimately, you understand, but still in a somewhat personal way. I designed the gown she was married in—to say nothing of the rest of her trousseau—I, Adele Blessington. I remember her perfectly. You are very like her, only, I should say, a mite prettier. And you should know that Urcilla Wayne was considered the most beautiful bride of her year. So you see——"

"You, Madam Savaran—you were Madam Blessington? Really?"

"Yes, it was I who founded the great Blessington dressmaking establishment, and made it what it is, easily the foremost house on Fifth Avenue. I'm out of it now—and they feel the loss of me, I can tell you; but that's another matter. Savaran was responsible for that, the beast! He was my head cutter, in the beginning. I married him—let me see—yes, the year your mother married Doctor Grayce. Immediately he stopped working. He seemed to think the husband of the head of the house ought to do nothing. And then he took to drink. I stood it for a while. Then I discharged him."

She smiled sweetly in reminiscent enjoyment.

"You discharged your husband, Madam?"

Madam nodded emphatically. "Assuredly. Do you think I would stand his nonsense? Not I. I refused to have him hanging round the establishment. Certainly I discharged him. He would not believe me, at first; but soon I convinced him. Even then I had my famous temper—the thing was known. So one day he went. And then it was I who could not believe it true—that blessed relief!—until I discovered the thief had absconded with ten thousand dollars of my money. It was cheap at the price, I told myself; of course, after that, he would never return. And he didn't. I am always right. I never saw him again until a month or so ago, when he was dying. Then he sent for me.

"My dear," she pursued, "fancy my feelings! That blackleg, Rhode, came to me with the longest face imaginable to tell me Savaran was dying and had asked for me. I flew to him, repentant, prepared to forgive him—to forgive him even the ten thousand dollars. Besides I had made my mind up that he had long since squandered it in reckless profligacy, and I expected to find the poor man dying in want and misery. Instead I found him on the point of expiring, surrounded by every imaginable comfort and luxury! Never was woman so disillusioned. Do you believe he had sent for me to beg my forgiveness? Not he; not Savaran. He merely wanted to do Rhode an ill turn. They were associated in a business venture none too savory, and had quarreled, so he summoned me to make me a present of his interest in it, that I might be a thorn in Rhode's side.

"What a deathbed! I thought it was I who would die of amusement, as soon as I got over being indignant. I bear George Rhode no love myself; he is my son-in-law. He's a bad one, a cut off the same piece as Savaran—only a rarer cut, you might say. He married my only daughter against my will, and got what he deserved. She was more Savaran's daughter than mine, anyway, and she left him after making him properly miserable for a year."

The old lady paused to rejoice with unnatural glee over the discomfiture of the Red Man; and Cynthia, fascinated, interjected an excusable query.

"Is she living, Madam—your daughter?"

"Of course. We never die, we Blessingtons. But she's no good. I have nothing to do with her, beyond give her money when she's broke. But to get back to my husband. We had it hot and heavy, right and left, Savaran, Rhode, and myself. Rhode wished to prevent his talking; he's slow, that one; he'd never guessed what Savaran was up to when he asked for me in his pathetic whisper. And in the end I had to put the hulking red brute out of the room, and he let me do it. Just fancy that! He was afraid of me, the great coward!

"Then Savaran told me something

about his affairs. It seems he had not wasted the stolen money. He actually had the face to insist it was my temper that made him drink, and that once free of it he straightened out, went on the water wagon and into the restaurant business, and positively made money. My ten thousand had grown to twenty in as many years. Meanwhile he had got acquainted with George Rhode, through my daughter, somehow—I'd never suspected she ever saw her father—and when Rhode proposed his scheme to make cent per cent. by a questionable means, Savaran sold out his business, retired on a quarter of his capital, and put the rest of it into Rhode's venture. On the eve of its inception, he fell ill; the matter had to be postponed, against Rhode's wishes. Delays exasperate that devil. So they began to fight—and I inherited a fifteen-thousand-dollar interest in their plant.

"The dickens of it was the money was tied up. I couldn't get it out without losing most of it. And by rights it was mine. Savaran was a fiend for cunning; he got even with both of us by that move. And then he turned his back to us and died chuckling. It was as good as any play.

"So here am I, on the verge of stepping off into the unknown with my arm crooked through a rascal's—for I wouldn't trust George Rhode out of my sight with a dollar of my money. And here are you sent me by him to be my comfort and delight—he'll bite his cigar in two when he finds out how things stand with you and me. Not that I'm not fond of you for your own sweet self already, my dear; but it doesn't lessen my joy in you to know all this will make George Rhode run round in circles. Now we ought to be up and hustling, getting our things packed. We must be on board by nine to-night, you know, though the steamer doesn't sail till morning."

"But—Madam Savaran——" Cynthia protested in bewilderment. "The steamer! You say we must be on board to-night—what steamer? And where is she going?"

"Her name is *Cydonia,* and as for her destination you know as much as I, my dear—or very nearly. Rhode won't say, beyond that she's clearing for Rio de Janeiro; and that may be true. But when you've known George Rhode as long as I have you'll take everything he says with several grains of salt. *He* says Rio and sticks to it; *I* say I don't know."

"Is that the only reason you have for believing his intention to be dishonest?" asked the girl.

"I need no other. I know the man. He declares the *Cydonia* is bound on a perfectly legitimate business venture, carrying a valuable cargo to its market; I say the man's as crooked as the off hind leg of a mongrel hound pup, and therefore wouldn't turn his hand to anything on the level. Besides, he had Savaran with him to start with; and Savaran was a scoundrel if ever there was one. And even he intimated the speculation was off color, though he was despicable enough to stop at that and refer me to Rhode for particulars. And then Rhode has fought tooth and nail against my coming; and *that's* more proof. If he is going to turn an honest trick, why should he object to my company? Thank goodness, I'm too old to have the wool drawn over my eyes by a clumsy rip like George!"

The old lady wound up with a wide, combative flourish of her cane; but she had been studying her companion's face while she rattled on, and now was instant to encourage the girl, recognizing that her mind was troubled.

"That isn't all you wanted to know, my dear?"

"No, Madam Savaran." Cynthia hesitated, coloring adorably. "It's very kind of you to want me, and I—I'd like to come—but——"

"And come you shall. Make up your mind to that. I'm not taking no for an answer from you, child."

"But I can't," Cynthia blurted in desperation. "I'm not prepared. I—I haven't any clothes for an ocean trip."

"Indeed!" commented Madam, unperturbed. "And do you think that shall stop you or prevent me from hav-

ing you when I've set my heart on it?" She deliberated briefly, keen old eyes searching the young and beautiful ones that met them so openly and honestly. "But not against your will," she said suddenly. "I want you, but not unless you really wish to come with me. Tell me truthfully, Cynthia: If you had the proper outfit, would you be willing to come?"

"Oh, yes——"

"Then it's settled. While I'm looking round and making up my mind where to begin, please go to the telephone, call up Blessington's—ask for Mr. Simonson, and I'll talk to him."

As one who dreams, Cynthia complied.

And later the feeling of unreality was stronger, when, after a long and weary ride to Brooklyn, she and Madam Savaran crossed a gangplank and entered a stuffy-smelling and poorly lighted saloon, where Rhode greeted them, dawning upon Cynthia's consciousness like some sullen midnight sun, blazing ungracious. The sight of him jogged her perceptions of their glutted stupor for a little, but she was too utterly weary to remain awake for long. Even a sharp passage-at-arms between Madam Savaran and her son-in-law had no more effect than to rouse dull wonderment that they had energy enough to quarrel.

She experienced a sensation of moving down a narrow, dark tunnel, termed by Rhode an alleyway, of coming to a stop in a small cabin bright with electric light and white-painted woodwork, of understanding that this was her own private stateroom adjoining that to be occupied by Madam, of bolting the door behind Rhode and unlocking and unpacking divers pieces of hand luggage.

Then dull, sweet, narcotic darkness.

VIII.

THE CHANGELING CYNTHIA.

When Cynthia opened her eyes the next morning, she was conscious of the fact that the *Cydonia* was under way. It was a meek and chastened Sidonie, reinstated in the service of Madam, who opened the door and announced that the bath was ready.

That the *Cydonia* in its present state of commission was anything but a passenger steamship in the accepted understanding of that expression, was demonstrated to the young woman from the instant she stepped out of her stateroom to follow the maid to the bath. There was an air of disuse and emptiness in the alleyways, strong as the effluvia of desolation in a vacant dwelling. Door after door that she passed was hooked back to the partition, showing a succession of staterooms not only unused, but half dismantled. One and all the ports were screwed down hard and fast, their glass bull's-eyes opaque with dust and grime. Her bath slippers scraped over dingy planking destitute of its accustomed strip of carpeting.

Later—Madam Savaran having breakfasted simply, as ever, at an early hour—Cynthia had her morning meal alone in a dining saloon that seemed painfully small in comparison with that of the gigantic steamship which had carried her back to America. It was also dingy—not unclean, but dim with desuetude, the luster of its bright work dulled, its white paint tarnished. Three tables ran lengthwise through it, the longest, in the middle, the only one in use apparently. It was covered with a long strip of tapestrylike cloth, worn and stained, like the clumsy pivot seats immovably fixed at close intervals down its sides and at either end. The other tables were quite bare, but the main one boasted three nickel-plated casters with cruets for vinegar, oil, and pepper.

Cynthia sat near to one end of this main table, where a small white cloth had been laid for her. She assumed that everybody else had had breakfast long since. The main companionway ran up to her right, forward; to the left, at the after end of the saloon, were doors to starboard and port, giving access to the galley and the officers' quarters respectively. No one passed through either while she occupied her place, save only the steward attending her, a taciturn, hard-faced fellow whom

she thought a little strange to his duties. He served her acceptably, however, and she found the food ample in quantity and well cooked, if restricted in variety.

She wondered whether Crittenden was aboard. It was for this mysterious voyage, undoubtedly, that the Red Man had enlisted him. His veiled allusions—the half admissions their conversation had drawn from him—all had pointed to some odd, anomalous adventure such as this promised to be—gratuitously to endow it with the equivocal complexion favored by Madam Savaran.

She looked at the steward, who was waiting impassively near at hand for her to go that he might clear the table.

Briefly she studied the man, giving him more heed than heretofore. He was something undersized and stocky, apparently middle-aged, and carried himself with a certain manner of assurance and quick-footed readiness that seemed native to men of his occupation. This more narrow inspection furnished her with a surprise in the discovery that his eyes were incongruously gentle and pleasant in a face, tanned and modeled by exposure, that was somehow reminiscent of portraits she had seen of heroes of the prize ring.

He remarked her interest, and came forward instantly.

"Anything you'd like me to get you, miss?" His intonation was notably English, and his manner as civil as could be wished.

"I was wondering if you could tell me if there was a Mr. Crittenden on board?"

"Yes, miss, there is, if I'm not mistaken. 'E's the purser, this trip."

"Thank you," said Cynthia, disturbed to learn she could feel so unreasonably elated over so light a matter. She swung round her chair, preparing to rise.

"If you'd like to speak to 'im, miss, 'e's in 'is office. I could easily tell 'im you——"

"Oh, no, thank you," Cynthia interposed hastily. "I—it's not necessary. I dare say I shall see him some time during the day." She rose, adding pleasantly: "I hope I haven't made you much trouble, being so late this morning."

"Not at all, miss," the man affirmed, without enthusiasm. "Besides, it's a bit balanced like, by you and Madam Savaran 'aving the myde do up your rooms."

Cynthia hesitated. "Are you the stateroom steward, too?" she asked blankly.

"Yes, miss—supposed to be, for yourselves and some of the officers. That's my regular work; I'm not accustomed to wyting at tyble. I 'ope you'll overlook mistykes the first day or two, miss."

"Why, certainly. But isn't it unusual?"

"Yes, miss, it is; but being a bit short-'anded, as the s'ying is, the work doubles hup on us, so to speak. It ayn't as if we were in the North Atlantic tryde, carrying passengers regular. But when a chap gets out of 'is job in New York, 'e inclines to tyke on anything that turns up, you know; at least 'e does if 'e's an Englishman."

"You've worked on the big boats—the transatlantic steamers—then?"

"Yes, miss," replied the man in a subdued tone. "I was with the W'ite Star until I lost my job."

Something plaintive in his accents moved Cynthia to pursue kindly: "How did that happen?"

"I got drunk, miss," was the matter-of-fact if thoroughly regretful answer. "Every man likes a bit of a lark once in a wye, you know; and 'e's generally sorry for it, like me. My boat syled without me before I woke up. So I 'ad a bit of 'ard knocking abaht, and then I 'appened to meet Mr. Rhode, and 'e offered me this charnce on the *Cynthia,* and I was glad enough to close with 'im."

"The *Cydonia,* you mean?" corrected Cynthia to cover the embarrassment of being made the confidante of this disconcertingly candid person.

"That was 'er nyme when she was in the fruit tryde, miss, but now it's *Cyn-*

thia. They chynged it when they sold 'er."

"But why should they? Or don't you know?"

Cynthia was beginning to discover that the mysterious is generally very commonplace, stripped of the imagination. Why the Inventor of Occupations had written *Cydonia* in brackets after *Cynthia* was now quite clear, and even the hieroglyphs which had followed those words, examined in a light of calm reason, began to bear a strong resemblance to an abbreviated address, such as: "Pier Y, Erie Basin, 9 p. m., August 10th."

And the steward was continuing helpfully further to elucidate.

"It's sometimes done, miss, when a boat chynges 'ands, 'specially if the old owners want to retyn the nyme for any reason—like they might think it lucky. The Caribbean Fruit Company, as used to run this boat, nymes all its vessels beginning with a C and ending I-A, and likely they wanted to use *Cydonia* on a new vessel."

"Oh! I understand."

"It's not much trouble—is it, miss?—to chynge *Cydonia* to *Cynthia*, there being only three letters different?"

"No—that's true," Cynthia agreed.

Certainly this common-sense explanation made the circumstance seem much less underhand and doubtful, and it was in the girl's mind that very likely Madam Savaran's outspoken suspicions of Rhode's honest intent on this venture might seem less plausible if subjected to like illumination.

"You spoke of this as a 'chance,'" she pursued, lingering to lead the man on. "Do you mean it's really a promising opening for you?"

"Not that exactly, miss; but it puts a bit of 'ard cash in my pocket, as they say, so I'll be ayble to p'y my passage 'ome in cyse I can't pick up a job in Rio."

"Then you don't intend to stay with the—the *Cynthia?*"

In the act of bending over to take up his tray, the steward paused to question her face with a surprised glance.

"'Ardly," said he. "She's been sold, so I understand, to an Argentine company for coastwise service. That wouldn't suit me at all. That's 'ow we come to be so short-'anded—just a scratch crew to tyke her down for delivery."

"Oh, I see," said Cynthia slowly.

He shouldered his tray. "My nyme's Acklin, miss, if ever you should 'appen to want me for anything," he concluded. "Good morning."

"Good morning, Acklin."

If that were all—if this were true then——

She took on deck with her a heart as light as the daintily shod feet that danced up the companionway and through the musty saloon of the upper deck, and as a result showed a face so prettily animated and colored that it won an approving look and word from Madam—whom she found snugly wedged into a long-suffering deck chair in the shadow of the superstructure amidships.

Nobody paid Cynthia any attention whatever; even Madam became absorbed in a yellow-bound novel. She had all the liberty the ship afforded. She wanted to talk to somebody; in reality, to exchange impressions with Crittenden, though she was far from admitting as much even to her private consciousness.

Abaft the skylight over the engine room stood a deck house that had as yet escaped her investigation. Its doors were hooked back. Cynthia paused and looked in, recognizing the fittings and arrangement of a smoking room.

At a little table in the middle of it sat Rhode, brooding over a glass half empty. As her figure darkened the doorway, he looked up, and nodded heavily.

Cynthia returned the salutation with some uncertainty. Her "Good morning" owned a ring of dubiety. But to her relief, the Red Man seemed to harbor no ill feeling toward her. Indeed his first and most grave concern resided with her employer apparently, for his first words, spoken after he had hastily drained his glass and heaved his

heavy bulk out of the chair and toward the door, were accompanied by a jerk of his thumb in a general forward direction.

"What's she doing now?" he demanded in a husky stage whisper.

"Reading," replied Cynthia, restraining an almost irresistible impulse to laugh; this reception of her was so different from her anticipations, his anxiety to avoid rousing Madam's attention so naïve. "At least, I left her so."

"Thank Heaven!" said the Red Man, with unaffected earnestness. Leaning a huge shoulder wearily against the doorcase, he rummaged in a hip pocket, found a pink-bordered handkerchief, and mopped his face diligently. "Say," he observed plaintively, "she sure can raise more h—*h'm!*—Cain to the minute—— Has she tried to scalp you yet?" he added with some show of anxiety.

"Not yet," said Cynthia cheerfully. "We seem to get along very well."

"Wait," said Rhode in a sepulchral voice. "She hasn't got your number yet. Honest, she's a wonder. She flayed me alive this morning, and then did a monologue over my prostrate form. And I hope I may die if I'd done anythin' but tell her she ought to be grateful to me for sendin' her a nice girl like you."

Cynthia searched his expression narrowly; but there was not a ghost of a smile there—merely mournful retrospection.

"I'm sorry," she said. "I had to tell her—she knew."

"I know," he sighed. "She knows everything, and the worst of it is, generally she knows it first. You can't beat that woman. I didn't mean her no harm, sendin' you to her—not to her nor yet to you; I only asked you not to mention me because I knew what 'd happen if you did. But what's the use? Get in wrong with her just once, and you're all in. Gee!" he exclaimed in reminiscent torment.

"I'm glad you're not angry with me ——" Cynthia began diffidently.

"Who, me angry with you? Quit your kiddin'. I ain't such a fool as she'd like you to believe; I don't blame you, I'm just sorry for you."

"I don't think you need be——" Cynthia said with some dignity.

"You wait. It's comin'. Between her and that Belgian cat, they'll frame up somethin' that's your fault, and then you'll get yours, same's the rest of us. But take it from me, Miss Grayce, the first time you hear her crack the whip, you crawl right under the table and be a good dog. It's no use tryin' to make her understand. The only thing to do is to give right in. I've been there, and I *know*."

He craned his fat red neck round the corner of the deck house, cast a hasty glance forward, and as hastily dodged back.

"Still readin', but you can't tell when she'll take it into her head to wake up. I'm goin' to beat it while the beatin's easy. It's me to make a swift exit, with a hunted expression and my ears flappin'."

He rolled cumbrously over to the head of the fixed ladder leading down to the main deck aft. There he turned to eye Cynthia morosely as she stood crimson with suppressed laughter.

"You mind what I said," he advised dourly. "And when you get into trouble—well, you know me, and you know I'm your frien'."

With that he let himself cautiously down to the main deck, and, turning, disappeared into the superstructure.

TO BE CONTINUED.

The second and concluding part of this story will appear two weeks hence in the first April number, on sale March 10th.

The Rain Maker from Raton

By Charles E. Van Loan

Author of "The Crab," "A Job for the Pitcher," Etc.

For some time you have been reading Van Loan's clever baseball stories in THE POPULAR. Many of these have been very unusual. Now in this number he begins a new series of stories, a succession of humorous adventures of the redoubtable Professor Hanrahan Shea.

PROFESSOR HANRAHAN SHEA sat in the shade of the Santa Fé station building at Raton, New Mexico, and jingled two silver dollars in his pocket.

Tall, slender, on the shady side of the thirties, there was that about the professor which demanded attention; women said he had a powerful personality, which was true; men said he was too good-looking to trust, and that also was true. He had the brow of a student—and he had been a student—the dark curls of a musician—and the Professor could coax melody out of anything from a jew's-harp to a concert grand—the eyes of a poet—again we plead guilty for the Professor—the sensitive mouth of an actor—and he had played Shakespeare without the aid of a net—the chin of a fighter—the Professor lost few decisions—and the nose of a born leader of men—and Hanrahan Shea lived up to his nose. Wherever the Professor was located, there also was the centre of the stage and the spotlight could play accordingly.

As we have indicated, his career had been various and entertaining. Those slender aristocratic fingers, so free from callouses and grime, knew many a strange trick, and had often been turned to odd accounts. During his professional career Hanrahan Shea—no more a "Professor" than you are, gentle reader—had been conjurer, hypnotist, Oriental seer, clairvoyant, mesmerist, mind reader, palmist, street medicine faker, and magnetic "healer," and under many names and engaged in many games, he had left a streak of fire from Maine to California.

To return to Raton—the name is pronounced to rhyme with platoon—the Professor would have jingled more than two dollars had there been more to jingle. Among other things which might have been noted at a glance, he required the attention of a barber and a manicurist, to say nothing of the warm and pressing attentions of that much-maligned fowl, the tailor's goose, sure signs that the Professor did not know how far his two dollars might be called upon to go.

He had quitted the city of Albuquerque for its good and his own health, and his departure had been so much a thing of sudden impulse that he had left his extensive wardrobe behind him, together with a hotel bill, fifty or sixty excited citizens, and some other trifles. For the best of reasons, into which we need not go at this time, the wardrobe would remain in Albuquerque until Professor Hanrahan Shea was well out of the State.

Arrived at Raton, a disastrous session at faro bank completed the chain of catastrophes, and the Professor, with two silver dollars in his pocket and twenty brilliant ideas in his head, was endeav-

oring to decide what to do next. He was turning the matter over and over in his mind and turning the two dollars over and over in his pocket, when a sudden puff of wind blew a torn sheet of newspaper against his thin shanks, and it clung there.

In his own way, the Professor was something of a fatalist, and there were a few things in the world in which he owned to belief. He glanced down at the newspaper as it clung fluttering to his legs.

"It's been sent to me," said the Professor to himself. "It's been sent."

The Professor captured that "sending" and examined it closely. There was nothing on one side to interest him, but he turned it over, and far down in the corner he found his message. It was only a paragraph, under a Santa Fé date line. Before he had read six lines, a grin appeared on the Professor's face.

This is what he found in his "sending":

SANTA FE, N. M., June 17.

A curious story comes from the southern part of the State to the effect that the Mescalito tribe, discouraged over a long dry spell, have contributed to a fund and made an offer of $5,000 in American gold coin which they will give to any one who can produce a rainfall sufficient to save their extensive crops. Incidentally they have imprisoned their medicine man because he has failed to bring the rain. It is evident that the Mescalitos have heard that some charlatans claim to be able to produce rain by artificial means, though where they got the story is a mystery, as members of this tribe are seldom, if ever, seen off their own reservation. They are one of the oldest tribes in the Southwest; and are sober, industrious, peaceable, given to agricultural pursuits, and accounted quite wealthy as a people.

The Professor read this through four times before he cut the paragraph from the paper and placed it in his pocketbook. Then he rose and sauntered idly over toward the business street which confronted the railway station. The clatter of chips and the whir of a spinning ivory ball came to him through an open window. The Professor hesitated, thrust his hand into his pocket, and brought out his two dollars, shaking his head mournfully as he surveyed them. The whirring noise grew less, and ceased with a click.

"Two is the number, gentlemen!" chanted a high-pitched, whining voice. "And nobody there! No-obody there!"

The Professor started slightly, as if he found some subtle connection between the dealer's number and the coins in his hand. Drawing out his pocketbook, he examined the clipping again.

"June the seventeenth!" he ejaculated. "The gambler's number! My lucky number!"

He walked swiftly into the place. Half a dozen weary-looking citizens were sitting or standing about a roulette table. The other gambling devices were shrouded in their coverings. It was too early for Raton's sporting element. The dealer, a thin young man with a long, twisted nose, was sorting out a small heap of multicolored chips, talking all the while in a high, nasal monotone, which gift had won him the pleasant sobriquet of the "Crying Kid."

"Friend," said the Professor, as the dealer flicked the ball out of a spinning compartment with one deft movement of his middle finger, "what was that last number?"

"Two! Even number, and in the second colyum!" said the dealer monotonously. "She's a-rollin, boys. Make your bets in time, 'cause—you—can't—bet—when—she—stops!"

The Professor flipped one of his silver dollars upon the table and shoved it over until it rested upon the space marked with the number seventeen. Then he turned his back and began rolling a cigarette. So long as the ball remained in the groove, it whirred merrily, but when it lost the first impulse of its momentum its song dropped to a drawling hum, and the ivory sphere began to swoop in narrowing circles toward the spinning compartments. Then came a nerve-racking series of clicks and rattles, after which the ball dropped to rest with a "chuck."

"Sev—enteen, odd and black!" sang the dealer. "Neighbors, see what that gentleman done to me! One big, iron, dobey buck a-setting on the seventeen! P-a-a-y the lucky stranger!"

From the rack at his right hand, he drew forth a shining cylinder of silver dollars, slipped it deftly across the oil-cloth, and crowned the Professor's bet upon the seventeen.

"*A-a-a-a-nd* the gentleman's paid!" he chanted.

The weary citizens who were betting ten-cent checks, brightened up a bit, and began to talk. One of them complained savagely under his breath.

"I been a-playin' that seventeen for the last hour!" he announced. "This time I keep off, and she comes! Only time I been off in a *week,* ain't it, Kid? Leave it to you."

"You cert'nly been a-hoverin' around that number, friend, but you wasn't home when the company come!" whined the dealer.

By this time the Professor's cigarette required no more of his attention.

"What's the limit on a number?" he inquired.

"Twenty pesos," wailed the Crying Kid. "Twenty big, round, smiling, iron, dobey, dollar bucks! Bet less, if you desire, men, but don't bet no more, 'cause the pore old boss won't let me pay you! Here she goes again, men! Round and round the little ball goes, where she stops, nobody knows!"

Once more the ball hummed in the groove. The Professor reached out, ran his long fingers down the silver stack upon the seventeen, and lifted a handful of money. Quick as a flash the Crying Kid measured the height of the pile remaining.

"Guess that gentleman never stacked no money before!" he sang. "You're a good guesser, neighbor! Twenty bucks it is! Go with him, men! Get down on a lucky player!"

The weary ones decided that if the Professor was reckless enough to risk ruin on a "repeater," he could do so alone. They bet elsewhere, and the peevish member of the group snorted wrathfully.

The little ivory ball wabbled out of the groove, spun slowly down the incline, flirted outrageously with a dozen numbers, and stopped with a musical plunk. A shout went up from the table.

"He's hit 'em again! Twenty bucks straight up on the seventeen, and she repeats for him! Yow!"

Even the Crying Kid, blasé as he was, could not deny himself a startled ejaculation.

"Hell's bells, men! Sev—enteen, a ree-peater!" he cried. "This gentleman must want to put the poor old boss outa business! That's the time he ruined me, men! Yes, sir, he busted me wide open!"

The weary players were stirred as by a breath of swift, cooling breeze. They broke into clamorings, and pounded upon the table. The man who had not been "off the seventeen in a week" reminded every one of that fact, hoped he might choke if it was not the truth, and demanded corroborative evidence. He regarded the Professor with frank malevolence. In some strange way and by devious and inexplicable mental calculations, he had arrived at the point where he looked upon the Professor as one who had robbed him of great gain. The dealer, still whining musically, unlocked a drawer under the table and counted out two piles of twenty-dollar gold pieces, which he shoved across toward the Professor.

"The gentleman bets me *white* money," he droned, "and I got to pick the canary to pay him!" As the Crying Kid's interest in the wheel was limited to the dollar an hour which he received for operating it, he could afford to converse amiably, even to the point of jesting. If there were to be tears, the owner of the "layout" would furnish them; no doubt of that.

The Professor transferred the shining coins to his pockets and reached for the pile of silver still remaining on the seventeen.

"Y'ain't all *done,* neighbor?" chanted the dealer reproachfully. "That ain't no nice way to do—slip in and hit me a bat in the nose, and run out again! Stick around and carry it *all* away! Man with your luck could bust the Bank of England! The boss will be sore when he gets the news! Yes, sir! No? All done? Gentleman shakes his head! Oh, very well! Just to show they's no

animosity, no hard feelings, no bitterness, le's all have one little drink on the pore ole boss!" He touched a button, and an attendant sprang up, balancing his tray at an inquiring angle.

"Allow me!" said the Professor, dropping four silver dollars into the waiter's palm. "See that these gentlemen have what they will take, and bring us a twenty-five-cent cigar apiece. Mine? Let it be a little water—*rain water*, if you have it."

When the tray returned the weary gentlemen stood up and drank as befitting those with "manners."

"How!" said they.

"Here's wet weather in the Mescalito country!" answered the Professor.

After he had gone, the dealer began to talk to himself, still in his high, level whine.

"He comes in here, a perfect stranger," he crooned sadly, "he kicks my head off with only two turns of the wheel, and then he *asks for rain water, and drinks a toast to wet weather!* Gentlemen, I ain't got a thing against that man, but I hope an' trust he runs up agin' a *flood!* I surely do. Make your bets, men, make your bets while she rolls, 'cause I—don't—pay—no—other—kind!"

II.

Now that fortune had smiled upon him, the Professor might have been pardoned for overlooking the sad and dusty plight of the agricultural aborigines of Mescalito. Having raised the wind in an unexpected quarter, there was no longer a crying need that it should rain on an Indian reservation. But the Professor never overlooked anything, much less a foolish tribe of farmer Indians with five thousand dollars in gold coin to squander upon superstition.

The Professor made all possible haste to set about his mission to that far-away people. True, he had no great confidence in his ability to manufacture rain to order, but if the worst came to the worst, it would have to rain some time, and the Professor could wait and take the credit. He had other plans, too.

His first act was to dispatch two telegrams to Denver, one to a house which sold fireworks, and one to the friend who knew where to lay his hands on the stage properties of "Mysto, the Conjurer."

The shipping clerk of the concern which dealt in fireworks was handed the following message:

Rush at once, express, C. O. D., H. Shea, Raton, N. M., half dozen star-shower bombs, largest size; two explosive skyrockets, red, white, and blue shower, dozen assorted lights, red, green, blue.

"Somebody must be goin' to celebrate," said the shipping clerk. "Suppose I ought to warn 'em not to fire these bombs unless they have a mortar? These big star showers ought to be shot a mile in the air to be absolutely safe."

While the Professor waited for his express shipments, he comforted himself with the thought that, somehow, somewhere there existed human beings with five thousand dollars in gold coin and a belief in rain makers.

He made several inquiries, but learned little of the Mescalitos. One man said he had heard of them.

"Some of them tribes," said he, "is richer'n all git out. This Mescalito reservation is a long ways from anywhere, and the Injuns own the whole country. Don't know's I ever saw one of that partickler tribe; they stay to home mostly."

The keeper of the general store at Coyote Tracks, one of civilization's lonely outposts, was surprised when he learned that the tall, military-looking stranger wished to make a trip down into the Mescalito reservation.

"Why, sure," he said, "I can supply you with a good horse and two pack mules, but what you want to go down there for, skins me! You can't sell them Injuns nothing, that's a cinch!"

Professor Hanrahan Shea waved his hand, and hastened to clear his skirts of the taint of trade. He said he was writing a book upon the Southwestern tribes, and was studying the subject at first hand.

"Well, you ought to get along all

right, then," said the storekeeper. "Speak some Spanish, do you? That's good. Most of 'em talk Spanish pretty well. No, none of 'em ever come up this far. They don't ever buy nothing. They got all they want right there on their own reservation. Plenty of land under cultivation, I've heard, but mighty few people ever go down into that part of the country. No, they ain't mean; they're quiet, peaceable, farmer people. They 'tend to their own business and don't mix up none. Yes, this long, dry spell will play hell with the crops, unless they get rain soon."

The storekeeper at Coyote Tracks was not a particularly bright specimen, but he wondered, when he helped the Professor load the pack mules, what use a literary man could find for one-half dozen star-shower explosive bombs. At least, that was the way the box was branded.

The Professor, having his own reasons for keeping his business as quiet as possible, did not answer any of the storekeeper's clumsy leads, and rode away at last, headed for the reservation.

He had not been long on his way until he understood why the Mescalitos wanted rain. By day, the sky was a saucer of molten lead or brass, and the nights brought small relief. The journey consumed three days, during which time the Professor did not meet a white face, and but very few brown ones.

On the third day he saw, through the clear atmosphere of that wonderful country, a great concourse of adobe houses lying at the foot of a range of hills, sprawling along a dry watercourse. It was the main pueblo of the tribe.

For hours the Professor rode through fields which should have been green with alfalfa or corn; they were withered, and dry, and burned until the very earth was crusted as if to protect itself from the frightful heat. The rude irrigation ditches were dust furrows sunk in the ground, and as far as the eye could reach there was no green thing save a few dispirited trees.

When the Professor was within half a mile of the dry river bed, he saw that a reception was being arranged for him. Hundreds of the Indians trooped out to meet him, and even in that fearful heat the men wore their thick, bright-colored blankets and heavy cloth rolls from knee to ankle. One tall buck, deeply pitted with smallpox scars, acted as the spokesman.

The Professor, very impressive in an olive-drab suit, cut to resemble as much as possible a military officer's uniform, neat pigskin leggings about his long, thin shanks, and a broad Panama hat with a many-colored band about it, rose to the occasion—that is to say, he stood up in the stirrups. He held his right hand over his head, open, and palm outward. He remembered having seen a picture of an Indian holding his hand over his head in a like manner. It was called "The Peace Sign."

"My brothers," said he, in passable Spanish, "the great White Father at Washington has heard the cries which have gone up from these barren fields. He has sent me to you, in order that I may cause the rain to fall upon these dry places!"

The blanketed savages received this news with manifestations of surprise. The Professor, who expected to find them on the lookout for a rain maker, was amazed to detect a trace of suspicion in their dark faces.

"What is this talk about rain?" demanded the pockmarked leader. "My people do not believe any but the gods can send rain. We have made our prayers, but not to a white face."

The Professor was slightly annoyed, but he did not show it. Evidently there was a hitch somewhere. This was no proper attitude for a people who had subscribed five thousand dollars in gold coin to be paid as a reward for rain.

"Bid all your tribe assemble as the sun goes down!" he cried. "I will show them that earth, air, and fire are my servants to do my bidding! In the meantime I require food and shelter."

The tall Indian, whom the Professor at once christened "Jim Jeffries," because of his stately bulk, bowed with grave courtesy, and the strange proces-

sion moved across the dry watercourse and into the pueblo. The Professor was assigned to one of the adobe huts, and some of the young men of the tribe unpacked the mules and carried the stores inside. They were a sober, quiet people, and the Professor, who knew the language of the human eye, remarked to himself that the Mescalitos were evidently Missouri Indians —they would believe, but not until they had seen.

Soon the young women brought him frijoles, steaming hot and very palatable, and one young buck came grunting in with a red earthenware jar containing drink.

"The water is almost gone," said "Jim Jeffries," who was evidently the chief of the tribe. "The gods have forgotten my people, and our wells are going dry."

"My brother," said the Professor, between mouthfuls, "there will soon be water—water in the river, water in the wells, water on your parched and thirsty fields. This land shall turn green again. My gods, who are more powerful than your gods, have decreed this thing, and I alone command them, and they obey." A look in "Jim Jeffries'" eyes caused him to add: "At sunset, you shall see, and, seeing, shall believe!"

The Professor began to unpack his belongings, and the chief, with native courtesy which scorned curiosity, strode outside.

"The man is mad," said he, to those who waited. "But he promises that we shall see miracles at sunset."

"I might have gone after Jimma da Jeff about that five thousand," reflected the Professor, as he unpacked, "but it would be a raw play to begin talking money too soon. Time enough for that after I get 'em hooked."

The "hooking" was scheduled for sunset, and the fish were present in shoals. None but the blind and the hopelessly bedridden missed the sight of the Professor as he climbed upon a large flat rock in the middle of the pueblo. He wore a loose coat with many inconspicuous pockets, and his first act was to roll up his sleeves and bare his arms to the elbow.

"Watch me closely," he cried, "in order that I may not trick you! I will show you how the gods send me flowers out of the air!"

A nervous movement swept through the close-herded ranks of the simple-hearted people. In all their lives they had never seen or heard of sleight of hand or feats of legerdemain. Low, gutturals greeted the announcement, but the eyes, the Professor noted, were mutely demanding proof.

He next produced a large sheet of white paper, which he turned over and over before he passed it out into the crowd with a request. The Indians handled it gingerly, shook their heads, and returned it.

"Watch me closely!" rose the Professor's clarion voice. He deftly rolled the sheet into a large funnel, and again showed them that it was empty.

"I call upon my gods to send me *flowers!*" he shouted. "Let them be white and red; yellow, purple, and pink!" He extended the funnel at arm's length over his head. "My brothers, I have no wish to deceive you! You have seen my hands; they are empty! You have seen the paper, also empty! Watch, my brothers! You shall see if the gods have sent me flowers as I commanded them!"

The Professor tilted the funnel and shook it sharply, and an amazed grunt came from his audience. The mouth of the cone suddenly overflowed with bright bits of color, which fell to the ground, and the young bucks in the front row leaped back in fright. Still the "flowers" came, until from that small receptacle, a bushel basket might have been filled with gaudy artificial blossoms. The Rianos watched with bulging eyes and heaving breasts. The conquest of the tribe was complete. When the last scarlet blossom drifted to the sun-baked earth, the Professor opened the sheet, showed it empty, crumpled it in his hand, and tossed it into the air. He caught it as it fell, juggled it for a few seconds, and lo! before their eyes it disappeared into thin

air. A low groaning sound passed through the crowd. The "hooking" was accomplished.

After that the Professor might have done anything with them. He plucked gold coins from their blankets, and they vanished even as the Indians stared. He called upon his gods, and they answered him, evidently from a great distance. Nobody watched the Professor's throat closely during this performance.

In the gathering dusk, he produced his final miracle. Lighting a small wax taper, he announced that he was about to call upon the fire spirit to appear. Holding the taper at arm's length over his head, he blew his breath into the air, and a great plume of flame spouted from his very lips. It was the finishing stroke.

"And thus," cried the Professor, "will the rain god obey me when I command him! Water shall fall upon this parched ground—much water. Your crops shall be saved, my brothers. Your fields shall be green before the next new moon. Now I am weary and I would rest. Let food be carried to my house, and see that none disturb my slumbers!"

The tribesmen fell back reverently as he passed among them; they had seen a man fashioned of flesh and blood who was able to commune with the spirits of the air and make them answer him.

There was little sleep in the pueblo that night; in fact, it might have been said that the Professor, weary from his hard journey in the saddle, had a monopoly upon untroubled, dreamless slumber. He had calculated shrewdly. After the seed is sown, a little time must be allowed in order that it shall burst and send out shoots of green. Then the golden harvest. After the fish is hooked, no harm comes of playing him; he is the more easily landed.

The next day he sent for the chief, who came, serene, sober, and evidently awed.

"Now, as to that reward which is to be paid for rain," said the Professor. "I desire that it be placed in my house."

The Indian's face became perfectly blank; only the eyes betrayed amazement.

"Reward?" he repeated. "What is it that my brother desires?"

"It has come to my ears," said the rainmaker loftily, "that these, my brothers of this pueblo, have offered five thousand pesos in gold to such an one as may produce the rain. I am that one."

The tall Indian grunted.

"That is not good talk," he said simply. "There is no gold in this place. My people till the soil. What have they to do with gold?"

The Professor reeled slightly. Then he thrust his hand into his pocket and drew out a coin.

"Have my brothers no treasure of this sort?" he demanded.

"Jim Jeffries" took the coin and examined it closely, and his face brightened. It was a silver half dollar.

"Treasure!" said the Indian. "Yes, there is treasure. Let my brother await me here and I will bring it."

He departed with a dignified and stately tread, and when he returned he bore in his hands, as carefully as a man might bear the crown jewels of England, a battered old cigar box with a gay lithograph on the cover. This, with a gesture of stern pride, he placed in the Professor's lap.

"Let my brother look!" he said.

The Professor looked, and a low groan of agony issued from his lips; it marked the bursting of a five-thousand-dollar bubble. The strong box of the tribe contained two dollars and thirty cents in Mexican silver coins, two of which were rudely plugged with lead.

"My brother sees we are no poor people," said the chief, swelling under his scarlet blanket.

"Oh, hell!" said the Professor. It was at best an inadequate expression of the grief which he felt, but it was the only thing which occurred to him at the time.

Later, he drew from his pocketbook a soiled clipping, and glanced at it.

"Me!" he said mournfully. "Me! After all these years! I fall for a thirty-cent newspaper fake like this! And I'm obligated to deliver a million dollars' worth of rain for two dollars

Mex! Oh, this is *good!* This is *immense!* Stung by my friends of the press, when I know 'em so well! Shades of P. T. Barnum, look down!"

That evening the Profesor announced that he was about to depart. He had reached this conclusion after nursing his head in his hands for three hours. The chief was very much surprised.

"But the rain!" he expostulated. "You have promised my people the rain! All day they have been waiting!"

"Let 'em wait!" said the Professor heartlessly. "Let 'em hold a prayer meeting. That's what they do in my country!"

The chief of the tribe called a council of the fathers of the pueblo and they talked until far into the night. It is no trifling matter for a magician to promise rain upon a thirsty land, and then alter his plans.

The fathers of the pueblo reached their decision at eleven o'clock. At five minutes past the hour, the Professor awoke, gasping and struggling under a brown avalanche. Before he could think twice his hands and feet were securely bound.

A solemn voice boomed from the doorway.

"My brother has said that he can bring the rain." The chief spoke more in sorrow than in anger. "We have seen that he is a great wonder worker, and the spirits have answered him. My brother has made a promise to a thirsty people. Until that promise is redeemed, there shall be neither food to eat nor water to drink. Let my brother who speaks with a forked tongue purge his bad heart, and call upon his gods that they send the rain!"

III.

After twelve hours the Professor followed a portion of that advice—at the top of his voice. The heat in the little adobe hut was terrific at noonday, and the sweltering prisoner, more ardently than he had ever desired anything in the world, desired a drink of water. He was not accustomed to these long spells of drought. Very scientifically trussed, Hanrahan Shea lay upon the hard ground, and the red ants explored him thoroughly. What time the ants left him for thought, he devoted to heaping blessings upon the reckless journalist, whose ready but mendacious typewriter had lured him into this trap. Then he began to call upon his gods, and the whole pueblo paused to listen to his howls of anguish. After five minutes of this, a shadow blocked the doorway.

"It is well," said the chief gravely. "I have heard my brother's voice."

The Professor sat up—with his arms tied behind him, which was quite a feat in itself—and he fixed the chief with a feverish and glittering eye. He said that his heart was good, and he would no longer speak with a forked tongue. Did his brothers still crave rain? They should have it. They should have a cloudburst, a washout, a flood—anything in the wet-goods line which their little hearts desired. But they must treat their rainmaker with more respect.

"To-night!" cried the Professor wildly, "I will call upon the rain god, and he shall hear my voice! Give commands that I be loosed from these bonds and given cold water and food, that my heart may be strong!"

"Now my brother talks good talk!" said the Indian. He bent over and slashed the thongs, and a few moments later the Professor was dipping his long, aristocratic fingers into a bowl of frijoles, and washing down the food with great gulps of cool water.

At dusk the Professor went abroad. The chief, taking no chances, provided him with a powerful escort. About the magician's neck was hung his large canteen, and it was full of water. He explained that this was a portion of the ceremony of invoking the rain god, and the simple savages were satisfied.

The Professor walked about the pueblo, twenty powerful young bucks at his heels, and from time to time he spilled a few drops from the canteen, and howled dolefully. He continued to prospect about until he located his horse in a corral close to the dry watercourse.

After he had located the horse, he also located the proper spot in which to address the rain god. It was very close to the corral. The Professor was glad to see his horse; the animal loomed up among the wiry Indian mustangs like a camel in a flock of sheep.

As the night shut down, the Professor retired to his adobe and completed his simple preparations. It cut him to the heart to leave the saddle behind, but when stern necessity drives, no man may pick his riding gear. The Professor wrapped the bridle about his waist underneath his coat, which was the loose coat of many pockets. Never was conjurer's jacket so welcome as that one. It held a dozen tins of sardines and two of the bombs, which were quite heavy. Considering the fact that one bomb contained enough high explosive material to wreck a house and enough fireballs to paint the sky for miles, the weight was not to be wondered at.

Next, the rain maker opened a long, narrow box and took out two of the largest skyrockets ever made. If one miracle missed it, the other would answer.

It is a wise rain maker who leaves nothing to chance, so the Professor examined all the fuses carefully. Then he stepped out into the open, where he saluted what he was pleased to term the "Jim Jeffries' marching club." His young men were faithful to their trust, and they closed in about him in a solid cordon as he moved toward the spot selected. It occurred to him that he was making a very inconspicuous entrance, so he lifted up his rich baritone voice in song, and it seemed appropriate to him to select "The Soldier's Farewell," as his overture.

"How can I bear to leave thee?" His voice rang out like a sweet-toned bell in that hushed pueblo; even the goats on the hills heard it. The Professor took no chances; he sang the German version.

It was not an auspicious night for rain making. There was a pale thread of a moon and millions of tiny stars looked down, without so much as one cloud to veil their bright, inquisitive eyes. It was pitchy dark when the Professor halted on the slope near the corral.

"Let my brothers all stand back from me!" he commanded. "Over against the wall, so!"

Thus he herded them away from the side on which the corral was located. He was a great stage director, the Professor. A pale-blue light appeared, and then a green one; the Professor was handling his own calcium effects. In the weird, ghostly glow hundreds of dark forms took shape; hundreds of black, beady eyes sent back answering sparks through the gloom. Once more the Professor was playing to standing room only.

His pale face was ghastly in the unearthly light as he unscrewed the top of his canteen and began tracing a wide circle with the scattered drops. He was speaking in an unknown tongue, and quoting recklessly from memory.

"Mar-r-rk well where she stands! *Ar-r-r-round* her form I draw the mystic circle!" He drew it, with the canteen. Then solemnly and with immense feeling he concluded: "Take but one step, Jack Dalton, and on thy head, e'en though it wear a *cr-rown*——"

It is only fair to the Professor to state that it was magnificently rendered. Having a weakness for quotations of all sorts, he slipped gracefully into "Hamlet's" soliloquy, and closed with "Spartacus to the Gladiators," and, when he had finished, all about him was silence; tense, breathless, quivering silence. The blue light burned low and disappeared; the green light sputtered, and once more the darkness shut down.

"Oh, my brothers!" boomed the Professor's voice solemnly, "you have heard me call upon the rain god! You have seen me sprinkle the water! If he has heard me, a sign shall appear written upon the heavens with a finger of fire! It shall rain stars of red, white, and blue! Listen! If the rain god thus answers me, let no man dare to stand upon his feet! If the stars of red, white, and blue shall fall, let my brothers humble themselves in the dust and give thanks for the rain! I have spoken! See that ye obey!"

A shuddering sigh swept through the close-packed ranks. The Professor lighted a thick cigar and puffed upon it until a fiery red eye shone through the gloom. Now, igniting a powerful rocket and flinging it into the air is not to be recommended, but the Professor had neglected to provide a wooden rack to guide the flight of his miracle, and what would have happened had this seven-dollar meteor run amuck in the crowd was something about which even the rain maker dared not think.

The Professor's right arm flashed in a half circle, a sputtering spark whizzed upward, swelled into a mighty spout flame, and cleft the heavens with the roar of an express train. It left a long fiery trail behind it.

"Down!" yelled the Professor. *"Down on your faces!* It shall rain fire!"

And that was the only rain which this great prophet delivered on schedule. At the height of one thousand feet, the hissing monster exploded with a stunning crash, and the serene stars paled above a shower of colored fire such as those peaceful hills had never beheld. The pueblo prostrated itself in the dust.

"Do not dare to look!" shouted a voice. "Pray for the rain!"

A confused murmur broke forth from the ground.

It was the clatter of iron-shod hoofs which aroused those devout worshipers at last. The magic circle was empty; the magician had disappeared. The chief cried out a warning. The young men of the pueblo scrambled to their feet with savage cries.

The Professor, crossing the dry watercourse at a hand gallop, looked back over his shoulder, and observed that the prayer meeting was breaking up in some disorder. Dozens of dark objects were converging upon his trail. Shrill cries floated across the sand of the river bed, and there came the sharp rattle of tiny hoofs.

"Every heat a race!" said the Professor grimly. "I'm so strong with these people that they can't bear to see me go!"

There are a few white men who can ride well without a saddle. The Professor's name is not on the list. He bounced prodigiously, and the heavy canteen battered him until he groaned with pain. As soon as he struck the open country he looked back again. The Indians were gaining upon him. Their wiry little mounts were good for a terrific flash of speed.

"I beat the barrier," thought the Professor bitterly, "but this lizard of mine is no-o-o front runner! He's dogging it now!"

The next quarter of a mile convinced the Professor that simple flight was worse than useless. Barely two hundred yards away he identified the tremendous bulk of "Jim Jeffries," careening along upon a pinto pony. Behind the chief came a black mass of riders.

"Peaceful farmers, eh?" said the Professor to himself. "That's what they said about the Boers!"

The yelling swelled to a strong chorus of triumph. The Professor, cocking one ear, knew that the time had come. He produced a round object about the size of a cabbage, and checked the speed of his horse.

"Whoa, boy!" he commanded. "This ain't what you might call *safe*, and maybe it's murder, but——" He pressed the lighted end of the cigar against the fuse and hurled the bomb behind him with all his strength. Again the horse sprang forward. The Professor looked back over his shoulder. A bright spark was winking, full in the path of the oncoming horde.

"It's all off with the rain maker, if you go out," said the Professor, addressing the tiny gleam. "Please! Just for me!"

Then earth and sky were ripped wide open with a terrific crash. The star bomb had exploded twenty feet in front of the estimable Mr. "Jeffries."

By the light of scores of whizzing fire balls, the Professor caught a glimpse of rearing mustangs, and the air was full of hurriedly dismounting riders, most of whom were alighting upon their heads. Dismal howls pursued him, for a ball of colored fire is probably the hottest thing in this world, and those

peaceful agricultural aborigines had been pitched headfirst into a very Vesuvius of flame. The pursuing force was unhorsed to a man, and the mustangs wheeled and ran for their lives, screaming in terror.

The Professor drew rein and looked back upon the rout of "Jim Jeffries'" light cavalry.

"You would monkey with a prophet!" he yelled. Then he reflected upon his latest miracle.

"I might as well do this thing right," he mused. "I may be a mark, but nobody can ever say I was a piker. I'll give 'em the other barrel just to keep 'em from following me on foot!"

He produced the other bomb, lighted the fuse, hurled it as far as he could, and rode for his life. There was another cataclysm, and by the light of spouting fire balls the Mescalitos saw the last of their rain maker. They bade him farewell with deep, heartfelt grunts, rejoiced to be so well rid of him.

"He goes," said "Jim Jeffries." "It is well—for his medicine is very strong."

Hungry, haggard, and very thirsty, the Professor drew rein in Coyote Tracks.

"So soon?" asked the storekeeper politely. "Where's the saddle and the mules?"

"I've decided to buy 'em," answered the Professor briefly. "Have you got any arnica in your store?"

"Did you get some good stuff for your book?" asked the inquisitive tradesman.

"All I could use," said the Professor promptly, "and I knew a man once that got rich running a store of this kind."

"So?"

"So. He knew enough to mind his own business."

That evening the Professor sat out under the stars with his cigar and his thoughts for company. To him there came a thin, coughing skeleton which might, two years earlier, have been a young man. He spoke in short gasps with a painful pause between his words. The type is pitifully common in the Southwest.

"How d'ye do?" gasped this ghost. "Glad to meet a—writing man again. I'm one myself."

"What do you write?" demanded the Professor, not unkindly.

"Used to be—night police reporter—Chicago," coughed the skeleton. "Night work—knocked me out—got some throat trouble—I'm doing fine down here. I send out—some stories once in a while."

The Professor nodded.

"Pretty tough scraping up news in this section, isn't it?"

"No news—fakes!" gasped the apparition. "I slipped over—a bird—last month—it was copied everywhere—even out here."

"M-m-m-m," said the Professor. "Fine work. What was it about?"

"Oh," said the creature, "it was a—pipe dream—I thought out—myself." He chuckled. "It was about—some pauper Indians—down here—wanting to pay five—thousand dollars—for rain. Awful—raw fake—but they ate it up—all over the country. Got fifty—dollars for it."

He rocked back and forth and chuckled to himself, as if the recollection amused him. The Professor looked up at the stars in the dry heavens. A little couplet of poetry occurred to him—he was very strong on quotations of all kinds. A foolish little thing which he had not thought of in years. Let's see? How did that last line go?

Finds *mark* the archer little meant.

That was it. Mark. The Professor shot a sidewise glance at his companion. And so this gasping, coughing bundle of bones had loosed the shaft that found a mark in Raton—found him sitting in the shade of a railway station, and pierced him through and through!

"You don't think that's funny," chuckled the invalid as he looked at the Professor's stern profile. "But think of *me*—away out here—putting over one—as *raw* as that—even on an *Eastern* paper! Honest, mister—you

wouldn't believe—anybody *could* be fool—enough to swallow—that fake. *Would* you?"

The Professor removed his cigar from his lips in order that pearls of wisdom might drop therefrom.

"Son," said he softly, and there was charity in his tone, charity and a trace of pity for the credulous in this world, "son, there's a mark born every minute. Every minute!"

There was a pause, during which the pitiful little figure nodded its head with a grave assumption of worldly wisdom.

Then the Professor finished the rest of the quotation.

"And the wiser they are," he said mournfully, *"the harder they fall!"*

In a fortnight you will get another story about the versatile Professor Shea. That's only one of the many good things that will appear in the first April POPULAR; on sale March 10th.

ON BEHALF OF RELIGION

FRED A. EMERY, of Washington, looks like a divine, but most distinctly he is not. He was on a visit to a little town in New Hampshire when a friend of his at the hotel introduced him to a group of business men as the Reverend Doctor McCabe. Emery fell in with the joke, and his pious-looking face helped the thing along. In a short while he was lamenting the tendency among men to disregard the duty of going to church.

"Golf," he said sadly, "and automobiles and other amusements have supplanted worship in the church. This generation is deteriorating, and it is the greatest thing we have to fight, this lack of interest in the church."

With that he heaved a windy sigh and looked like Niobe at her worst.

The business men looked uncomfortable and agreed with Doctor McCabe. This moved him to make an appeal.

"Why can't you start the reform?" he asked, and added enthusiastically: "How many of you will promise to come to hear my sermon to-morrow morning?"

Of course they all promised. This performance was repeated with another group, and when the thing was all over Emery had the promises of twenty men that they would hear his sermon the next morning at the church he named.

At church time he stationed himself with his friend in the vestibule of the building, and, as each of the faithful twenty filed in, Emery laughed up his sleeve. They saw him, and realized how they had been sold, but they were too far in to back out, and they heard the sermon preached by a real minister. After church, they looked for Emery.

But he had been wise. He had taken a train which ran through the town at a convenient hour while services were in progress.

SOMETHING NEW IN CRITICISM

KIN HUBBARD, who is one of the best-known cartoonists in the Middle West, enjoys also a reputation as a humorous writer. His style is of the pithy, epigrammatic kind, and he signs the name "Abe Martin" to a lot of this sort of stuff.

Some years ago Kin was assigned to do a criticism of "Uncle Tom's Cabin" on its first night in Indianapolis.

Here is the verdict he passed on the show:

That fine old play, "Uncle Tom's Cabin," was presented here last night. The dogs were fine, but their support was wretched.

An Enemy to Society

By George Bronson-Howard

Author of "Norroy, Diplomatic Agent," "Scars on the Southern Seas," Etc.

SYNOPSIS OF OPENING CHAPTERS.

Several dwellers in the underworld learn of the birth of a son to Stephen Janissary, millionaire expert in coffee, tea, and spices. Their headquarters are at the House of the Wolf. In this company are Wolf Axtell and Hilary Quackenbos. Their bosom friend is the corner grocer, Van Tromp, who has a grudge against Stephen Janissary and all "oppressors of the poor." Wolf shows him that the way to punish Janissary is through his son. The boy is kidnapped. He is given the name of Stephen Adams and is told that Hilary is his uncle. He is taught to cheat at cards, to pick pockets, to "spring" windows, and to steal in various ways. He accomplishes several big thefts, the victims always being dishonest men of wealth. "Rag", a piano player, gives him lessons in boxing. He learns French from George Le Fay, and German from Morganstein. On board an Atlantic liner he meets his own father, but neither recognizes the other. In a card game the father loses heavily to the son, who uses marked cards and who declares that Janissary's money is "tainted" and will go to charity. On the same steamer he becomes interested in Decima Duress, a wealthy girl Socialist.

PART FIVE.

THE APACHES OF NEW YORK

I.

AT POLICE HEADQUARTERS.

CANBY KERNAHAN did not covet the assignment that had the solving of the Vaughan jewel robbery for its object. He had served his apprenticeship as police reporter in another town, and when relieved of the obnoxious task vowed that he would never under any circumstances take such a position again. Since his arrival in New York—to which city he had been lured by an editor who admired his signed, provincial work—he had sat in his own private room and twisted semifacts into those pleasant fictions, agreeably illustrated, which are known as "Sunday stories."

But when a woman places her jewels on her dressing table, turns to open her safe, and then reaches for her jewel box only to find it gone; when the thinnest kind of a rope is found attached to a cornice of a house next door, and within that rope is concealed a piano wire that would bear the weight of a baby elephant, yet could be rolled up and put into a man's pocket without spoiling the shape of his coat; when the amount of the robbery aggregates close upon a quarter million of dollars; and the lady's husband has sworn to apprehend the thief if it takes all the profits of the Flour Trust, of which he is the head, for a year—yes, even if he must again decrease the size of the poor man's loaf of bread to make it up—then indeed the matter becomes worthy of a higher-salaried man than the ordinary police reporter, and Canby Kernahan, weaving romances in his mind, was detailed to the work.

So, for the first time, he made his way through foul, ill-smelling Mott Street; passed those rabbit warrens called tenements; and came to the building—ugly as crime itself—where kept vigil those whom the State had intrusted with the power to protect its citizens against malefactors, and who, far from fulfilling their trust, kept that same vigil with but one eye open and that upon the main chance.

Kernahan entered the building by the Mott Street door, which was the rear one, and passed into an atmosphere where domination was visualized into brass; brass buttons everywhere except where there were brass railings.

This story began two weeks ago in the first March number.

He introduced himself to an officer, and was ushered into the presence of the chief of detectives.

"I hear you've got the man who robbed Mrs. Vaughan?" said the reporter, after refusing the usual thick cigar.

The chief of detectives—a thin, nervous fellow with an eye that strove to be inscrutable and only succeeded in being theatrical—nodded in a self-satisfied manner.

"Sure," he replied. "We've got him. Now maybe your paper will stop hollering about the inability of the police to get crooks! This is the biggest deal pulled off this year, and we nabbed the fellow two days after he turned the trick. Pretty good, I call it."

"I agree with you, chief. May I ask —have you also got the——"

"The stuff? Naw; not yet. But we'll get it!"

"May I ask—How do you know you've got the right man?"

"How do I know? Now, listen, Mr. Kernahan, you're new to this game; don't go gettin' the idea that we're a lot of boneheads. It's easy enough to sit in a newspaper office and tell us how to do our work; but it's *our* work, and we know more about it than you do. Your paper now——"

"But—so many robberies this year, chief. Big ones, too, and not a single conviction!"

"Conviction?" snarled the policeman. "There'd 'a' bin plenty of convictions if those silk-stocking guys from uptown had kept their hands off. We made the pinches, all right."

"Yes—but the alibis—the witnesses that——"

"Aw, fudge! I can alibi you out of anything for ten dollars. Not worth a busted night stick."

"Or a policeman's oath," smiled Kernahan, looking him squarely in the eye. "May I see the prisoner, chief?"

He picked up his soft hat, and stood, awaiting permission. The policeman's tone took on a pleading note.

"Aw, say! What for?"

"I'd like to hear his story."

"You don't think he'll tell you the truth?"

"It isn't that; but we can't be one-sided——"

"I'd rather you didn't see him to-day, Mr. Kernahan."

"I'm sorry, chief. But that won't go with my city editor. He gave me orders to see him—you understand my position——"

The inscrutableness which the chief of detectives affected now disappeared entirely. He broke the silence of a moment of thought by striking a bell and directing the policeman who answered it to fetch Lieutenant Kneebreeks.

Evidently the lieutenant was within easy hailing distance, for he answered the summons almost immediately, his heavy frame, broad shoulders, and Indian-like face—seemingly cast iron in its immobility—a menace to those in the shadows of life.

"This gentleman," said the chief, indicating Kernahan, "is connected with ——" He mentioned Kernahan's paper. "He wants to see your prisoner."

"Which one?" asked Kneebreeks, who found it politic to be pleasant to newspaper men, and, if possible, to indulge in some pleasantry of which this was a sample. "Have to be specific, mister, when you spring a thing like that on me."

"'Sheeny Mike.'"

"Oh——"

There was an exchange of meaning glances between chief and lieutenant.

"Oh—sure," said Kneebreeks slowly.

"Up here, of course," added the chief.

"Oh—sure."

He turned to go. Kernahan arose.

"Where are you going?" asked the chief, also rising.

"Why, down to the cell with Lieutenant Kneebreeks."

"I'm going to bring him up here, young fellow," explained Kneebreeks, controlling his temper with some difficulty. "Although I can't see *why* you want to see him. He's confessed—wrote it all down how he done it. The chief's got it—all written out it is."

"So we heard," said Kernahan.

"That's why I want to see him. No use bringing him up here."

"Please sit down, Mr. Kernahan, and let Lieutenant Kneebreeks go. Our time is limited! Anybody 'u'd think," he added, as Kernahan reluctantly reseated himself and the door slammed behind the lieutenant, "that you imagine Kneebreeks is going to threaten him or something! That's just the wrong idea you fellows get about us. Why, Kneebreeks is as tender-hearted as a baby. You don't know Kneebreeks."

"No; I haven't that pleasure," Kernahan admitted.

"Here's Sheeny Mike's confession if you want to read it."

He handed Kernahan a sheet of foolscap covered with typewriting.

"Why," said Kernahan, gazing in surprise, "what's this?"

He pointed to the bottom of the sheet.

"'Sheeny Mike—his mark,'" translated the captain. "Can't write, you know."

"Can't write! But, chief, surely you don't believe that a man who can't write was capable of framing up such a gorgeous robbery! Why, first they had to 'sound' the house and find that every window and every door—except those opening on the air shaft—was provided with a burglar alarm. They had to know also that Mrs. Vaughan's safe was provided with an electric buzzer that went off the moment any one not provided with the proper combination attempted to touch it. Why, you've already caught four 'pete men' who attempted to drill the safe, caught 'em red-handed—the best 'petes' in the country. This thief must have studied the thing out like a problem in chess. He had to know the construction not only of Mrs. Vaughan's house, but of the two houses on either side of it; had to get on the roof of the Croysmiths' house probably, and watch Mrs. Vaughan retiring for several nights, before he found what she did with her jewels; and then, best of all, had to invent this piano-wire rope to hold him—an ordinary rope would have to be about as thick as a cable to do the same job. And then you tell me that this thing was accomplished by a man who can't even write his own name?"

"He did the tooling," replied the chief, turning sullen. "Of course the trick was turned by a mob; we know that as well as you do."

Kernahan read the confession aloud:

"I, Michael Kornatowski, alias 'Sheeny Mike,' having been duly sworn, do declare of my own free will and without coercion of any kind, that I am guilty of the crime of feloniously entering the house of Henry K. Vaughan at 0176 Fifth Avenue, New York City, on the night of December 15th, nineteen hundred and blank, and removing therefrom gems and other personal adornments valued at $237,500."

"As clear as mud," commented Kernahan, handing it back. "It gives the public many interesting little details it would like to know—as, for instance, how he managed to 'feloniously enter' that house, how he 'removed therefrom' the amount he speaks of. Not very lucid, chief."

It was spared the chief any tax upon his mentality to answer Kernahan's objections for, the door opening at that moment, a cowering figure was pushed in by Lieutenant Kneebreeks.

Kernahan took a careful look at the prisoner—a poor, weak creature with the mark of the tenements upon him; white, pinched face, skinny hands, terror in his blinking eyes. Obsequiousness was in the very shape of his back, servility in the movement of his fingers, and sheer horror in his every gesture.

"Now, Mike, speak up!" said Kneebreeks. "This gentleman here is a newspaper guy. He wants to know who done that there touch up to Vaughan's."

"I—I done it," whimpered the man. "I ain't said I didn't, have I? I done it. Sure I done it!"

Kneebreeks snatched up his confession, and thrust it into the prisoner's hand.

"That's yours, ain't it? Come on, now; tell the gentleman!"

Without even glancing at the paper, the man nodded vehemently.

"Come on; speak up. It's yours, ain't it?"

"Yes, sir; yes."

"You turned that trick, and you signed this paper—that's what you want this gentleman to know, ain't it?"

"Yes—yes, sir."

Kneebreeks viewed Kernahan triumphantly. The reporter's eyes wandered to those of the chief, who had resumed his inscrutable gaze. Kernahan shrugged his shoulders.

"That's all you wanted to know, Mr. Kernahan? Well, then, Kneebreeks, I guess——"

The policeman on duty outside opened the door. The chief frowned at him.

"I can't help it, sir. It's that Mr. Adams again."

It now appeared as though the chief had never had any inscrutableness. He took the deep breath of a helpless child. Kneebreeks' face purpled.

"He can't come in—not now," said the chief faintly.

"I'm sorry, sir. He's just behind me—— Oh, certainly; yes, sir."

The latter portion of his speech was due to the fact that he was suddenly pushed aside and a young man of generous proportions—withal of a slenderness sufficient to present a good appearance in a smartly cut morning coat—entered the room and saluted the chief with a movement of his malacca stick.

"That'll be all right," he assured the guardian of the door, who, staring helplessly, looked to the chief for his orders. He received an angry nod, and the door closed.

Stephen Adams, while waiting for some one to speak, leaned over and breathed the perfume of the rosebud which he wore in the lapel of his coat. As no one seemed desirous of breaking the silence, he took that upon himself also.

"I love flowers," he said. "When I was little I seem to remember flowers growing all around me—although my uncle says that must be my imagination. But down in this quarter I find life simply unsupportable without them. Ever hear the story of the French noblewoman who carried a rose with her while they were driving her to the guillotine so she could keep off the smell of the sweating mob who were crying for her blood? I'm like that, too."

"Any time we've nothing better to do, we'll be glad to hear you lecture on botany, Mr. Adams," said the chief, with heavy irony. "But, just now——"

"Oh, but I didn't come down here to lecture about flowers—oh, dear, no! I've got something of vastly more importance—confound those English expressions! I pick them up so easily—of *much* more importance, I should have said. You know, you people are so infernally careless about arresting other people, I have to be on hand all the time to see you don't make any mistakes. And our dear little friends, the criminals, they are so vastly obliging—good-natured little things—they want to help you out of your troubles so much that they'll even go to jail to please you. I've come to see Sheeny Mike. Where is he?"

A silence almost visible in its concentration fell upon the room. The prisoner, crouched against a chair, did not even raise his eyes; knowing that if he did so he would but meet the baleful gaze of Kneebreeks. So oppressive was the silence that even Kernahan found some difficulty in voicing the simple statement:

"There he is."

"Why, thank you, sir," said Stephen, in genial surprise, and searched him with his eyes; discovering the inevitable folded sheets of copy paper thrust into a side pocket. "Oh, a newspaper man? My name is Adams—Stephen Adams."

"Stephen Adams!" Kernahan's eyes lighted with genuine pleasure. "Well, I'm sincerely glad to meet you—really sincerely. My name is Kernahan. I've written a lot about you, Mr. Adams; never had the pleasure of seeing you before."

"Oh!" deprecated Stephen, blushing a little, "you fellows are too kind to me. I'm afraid I'm a little spectacular; there are lots of people doing more than I am. On this case—Vaughan robbery?"

"Yes. Are you interested?"

"In a way. I want to see justice done. This poor devil"—he indicated the prisoner rather contemptuously—

"could about steal a doormat with 'Welcome' on it—or a few milk cans or maybe some plumbing out of an empty house. The Vaughan robbery loses all its dignity by being fastened on him."

"Fastened!" repeated Kneebreeks slowly.

Stephen nodded.

"Can't you see?" he said, slapping the lieutenant on the shoulder. "The fellow's ambitious. He wants to get out of his class and work with a swell mob. And, of course, lieutenant," he burlesqued, again slapping Kneebreeks' shoulder, "he wants to stand in with you—do you a good turn as it were. He knows these are cold days for a plain-clothes man to be out working, and, anyhow, he probably calculates to be warmer in jail than he would be outside. He has a lot of reasons for confessing. Come here, my boy!"

He addressed the prisoner, who remained motionless, his eyes swiveling from Kneebreeks to the chief. Kneebreeks crossed between him and Adams. Stephen disregarded his action.

"You—Mike!" he said. "Come here!"

The prisoner retained his pitiful motionlessness.

"Why," rallied Stephen scornfully, "be a man, Mike! No? Well, then—if you will pardon *me*, lieutenant——"

With a shoulder grip and a backward motion as graceful as it was difficult, Stephen removed Kneebreeks from his path, and shook the prisoner vigorously. Mike uttered a little scream, and went down on his knees.

"Poor devil," said Stephen, shaking his head; then he turned sharply to the chief:

"Discharge him. He's no more guilty than you are. I've got the keeper of the 'rope house' where he slept all that night; also three 'ropers' who remember him being there at twelve o'clock. Mrs. Vaughan didn't get away from the opera until eleven-twenty-five, according to her own statement; the supper at Canary's afterward lasted until one; so she couldn't have been home until a quarter after at least. Now these men I've got outside are prepared to swear that Sheeny Mike was sound asleep long before that hour. Better let him go before I take the thing before a judge and make you look ridiculous again. And you know how I hate doing that. Shall I have them come in?"

"How about—this here signed confession that he done it?" asked Kneebreeks, whose color had remained apoplectic through the strain of keeping his temper.

Stephen took the paper, and glanced at it; then laughed.

"That's the answer," he replied, pointing to the prisoner, who was still on his knees. "I guess the least said about this confession the better, don't you? I'd conveniently lose it if I were you. But come, I've wasted enough time, gentlemen. My valet has the witnesses outside—shall they come in?"

"Kneebreeks," said the chief, drawing the other aside, "I think—I think that——"

"Think nothing," Kneebreeks whispered back. "We've got it on him. I told you he'd butt in. We're framed for him this time. Don't back down, chief. Tell him."

The chief resumed his seat, and stared fixedly at the floor for a sufficient length of time to twist his features into his usual steady frown. He seemed to be contemplating the aspects of affairs of great moment, giving them earnest and thoughtful consideration.

"Some one," he said finally, "is a perjurer. Now we happen to have two witnesses ourselves. Both of them declare that Sheeny Mike made a statement to them that he had been 'trailing' Mrs. Vaughan for days and that he was all 'prepped' to turn this particular trick. Their sworn statements—taken in connection with this man's confession, which is also sworn—makes the evidence against him so strong that I'm afraid we'll have to let you take your disreputable lodging-house keeper and your bums before the judge who will decide whose case is the stronger—yours or that of those hopeless incompetents—the police!"

He had so far regained his spirits as

to attempt irony—a manner he affected with those who were bound to show visible signs of appreciation or who were too dependent upon his mercy to forget to laugh in the proper place.

Stephen Adams appeared to be crestfallen.

"Have you—have you really got witnesses who will swear that?"

"We have, Mr. Adams," Kneebreeks answered for the chief. He had lost his apoplectic hue and spoke in important tones, as one who doles out valuable words sparingly.

"Oh!" said Stephen blankly, and then, brightening up a bit, added: "Oh, stool pigeons, I suppose?"

"No, Mr. Adams," answered the chief. "Much as I admire your courage, I regret your conventional methods of deduction. If you will glance at these sworn statements and note the names, you will observe that they are not those of stools."

Two folded papers, similar to the confession in form, were struck open by the man at the desk, placed together, and handed to Stephen, via Kneebreeks. He studied each one carefully; for a single moment wrinkled his brow in thought; then, again smiling, and, this time ignoring the policemen, addressed Canby Kernahan.

"Old man, you want a good story for your paper, of course?"

"Surest thing you know."

"Come along with me, then; I'll give you a pippin; one that will probably result in there being a new chief of detectives; and, incidentally, in the transfer of Lieutenant Kneebreeks back to harness with a station somewhere in a lonely part of the Bronx. Good day, gentlemen. Don't be afraid, Mike. Don't imagine you're going to get the worst of it. When to-morrow's paper comes out, you'll be a prisoner only a few hours longer. Again, gentlemen, good day!"

Linking his arm in that of Canby Kernahan's, Stephen Adams pushed open the door. The chief cast a look of piteous appeal at Kneebreeks, who winked reassuringly; but his superior was not the lieutenant's equal in fortitude, and before the newspaper man and his cicerone had passed out he recalled them both in tones that were decidedly weak.

"What did you mean by that, Mr. Adams—that there would be a new head to the detective bureau? That Lieutenant——"

Kneebreeks, disgusted, turned his back. Stephen addressed Kernahan:

"Will you give me your word not to print a line of what I am going to say if they release this poor devil immediately? Come, man, you're a human being first, a reporter afterward. If the police throw down their hand," he added in a tone inaudible to the others, "there's no use in crowing over them in the papers. Will you just say that Sheeny Mike was released for want of sufficient evidence?"

The last sentence was delivered in his normal tones. Kernahan made a gesture of annoyance, but Stephen did not give him time to object.

"I'll give you my personal help on the story—the real story if you do."

"Oh, very well," replied Kernahan resignedly. "Although, if my city editor knew what I've passed up, I'd get the blue envelope sure! Go ahead, though. I promise!"

"Thanks, old man. Well, then, gentlemen; the names of the two men signed to those statements are those of members of 'Chicken' McGuimp's gang. And, since reading them, I have suddenly realized why you let 'Big Harry' and 'Nigger Jake' go on that charge of beating up Xavier McMillan's ex-coachman the other night. I know McMillan hired those two men to go as close to murdering that coachman as they could without actually stamping out the last breath of life; he's in Rose Hospital now with five ribs broken. Those two fellows did it without a single doubt. I wondered why they were turned loose the next day; now I understand perfectly—and the readers of this man's paper will get my ideas to-morrow morning unless that prisoner walks out of this room with me right now without any more talk. D'you understand? Well?"

The chief of detectives avoided his steady glance. Turning, he beckoned to Kneebreeks, who came close enough to hear his whispers, and, in reply, to mutter angrily. But the finality of his superior's attitude was unmistakable. Kneebreeks left him to put a hand on the prisoner's shoulder.

"Come along, you!" he said, unable to speak other than ungraciously. "Come along."

"Accompany them, Mr. Kernahan, and see that this fellow is turned out in regular fashion—'discharged for lack of evidence.' I'll meet you at the little saloon over the way. You know, Mr. Kernahan, of course, lieutenant? Here, Mike! Put this in your pocket and come to see me to-morrow at my apartment—Canary's—opposite the All-Night Bank. Ask for Mr. Adams—any one will tell you. And don't stop to thank me."

Holding the crumpled twenty-dollar bill, the prisoner stared unbelieving at this man who seemed woven from the gorgeous fabric of dreams. He went reluctantly, loath to lose the sight of this demigod.

Stephen was left alone with the chief of detectives. For a moment he did not speak; he seemed to be carefully choosing the right words, the exact construction of his further speech.

"Chief," he said quietly, and into his eyes crept a sadness that was hardly a match for his years. "Chief, listen. In your position, you can make so many lives miserable. Doesn't it hurt you to think of that, chief? When you lie down at night, aren't you troubled by thoughts of poor devils hanging by their arms from cell doors; flattening themselves against cell doors to escape the brutal torrent of a fire hose; crying like children for sleep while merciless men keep them awake night after night until they have signed their names to some damnable lie that will condemn them to year after year of imprisonment for offenses they have never committed? Doesn't it trouble you, chief?"

"I—I—don't know what you mean," stammered the other.

"Oh, yes, you do! Man's inhumanity to man. Will it always be this way? Will men with power always be tyrants; always oppress the weak? Chief, you know as well as I do, that man never committed that crime. But he was a poor devil of a petty-larceny crook, and you were afraid of what the people and the press would say if the police didn't offer a sacrifice. So you bribed two members of McGuimp's gang to sign those infernal lies, and you 'third-degreed' that confession out of Mike. In exchange you set 'Nigger Jake' and 'Big Harry' free when you knew that for a few dollars they had viciously beaten that coachman. But the coachman didn't have any friends; nobody would make a protest, and you let the two 'gorillas' go. But the Vaughan robbery is different—he's a rich man; he can make or break chiefs of detectives. He had to be placated—and what did a wastrel like Mike matter? But, listen, chief."

He crossed to the desk and deliberately leaned over.

"Those thefts that worry you people so much; those hundred-thousand and quarter-million touches—the Vaughan, Youngston, Willette, Friedenheim, and Gerstein robberies—they aren't committed by the sort of man you can lay your fingers on. You won't do yourself any good by trying to fasten them on other people, because, I give you fair warning, I'm not going to let you. I'm a very rich man, chief—a millionaire; and this sort of thing is my hobby. And before I've done with you, you'll throw your third degree into the wastebasket.

"But, chief, I don't want to threaten. I want to be your friend. I'll work with you in the interests of justice every time. I only ask a little mercy, a little remembrance of the fact that some of these wretches you torture have hearts and brains and people who love them; that they are guilty enough without your making them more so; that some of them are cold and hungry and miserable; poor drifters who can't find a place to sleep of nights sometimes, and very seldom enough to eat. Be a little merciful with them, chief. They are so weak, so miserable."

He saw that the man in the chair appeared not to be listening. Stephen paused a moment, undecided; then, the sadness still upon him, left the room quietly.

The chief did not look up until Kneebreeks entered, some little while later. When their glances met, he saw infuriated hate in that of Kneebreeks, and rejoiced that it should be there.

"This man, Adams——"

He held up his hand to check the flow of profanity that followed.

"Not so loud. We'll have to *do* something, not talk! He's got money, and the money he's got he's willing to spend checkmating us. It's got to stop, Kneebreeks."

"Well, if I were——"

"If you held my job, you'd be just like I am. We're helpless, you fool! But, if somebody else was his enemy, eh? Suppose Chicken McGuimp were told about what he said! He's pretty well protected; got the sheriff back of him and the organization. Eh? What?"

Kneebreeks' face was indeed immobile; it took almost a full moment for his anger to be replaced by a look of cunning which in its turn gave way to a brightening of the eye and a broad grin. Finally he burst into an immoderate bull laugh, and slapped his superior's shoulder with a hand like a ham.

"Say, chief; you're all right. Well, I guess you're all right. Well, I guess yes. You're—all—right."

II.

VISIONS IN THE FIRE.

That Eddie O'Brien, whose patronymic had been for so long a time submerged into the *nom de piano* of "Rag," could have been persuaded to sink his identity in a cutaway coat, a red and black striped waistcoat with metal buttons upon it, and a bow tie of white percale, the unmistakable badges of servitude—would have been an almost incredible prophecy to those who had known him in the old days.

With a career behind him which began at the age of seven, when he sold papers on the short-change system, taking in a period when he was known as the "sweet-boy tenor" of various rathskellers, from which occupation Rag graduated to the postgraduate course of "singing waiter"; through the various stages of piano player, floor manager of dance halls, three-card monte man, and deeper descents, which finally terminated in a few years' endurance of the State's hospitality; Rag had finally become respectable. For he was manservant to Stephen Adams, Esq., who, as all folks knew, held forth at Canary's. Now, standing in a respectful attitude near one of the brass railings at headquarters, he bowed acknowledgment of his master's exit from the office of chief of detectives.

"We won't need your men, Edward," said Stephen. "Give them something and let them go."

"Yes, sir; thank you, sir."

"I dine with the Livingstones tonight, and go on to the opera, Edward. I'll be in at six, or maybe a trifle later."

"Quite so; good afternoon, sir."

He turned to his shabby companions, and Stephen cut through the building, emerging on Mulberry Street, where, in an ill-smelling grogshop on the other side of the street, he found the newspaper man awaiting him.

"I wouldn't insult you by asking you to drink here," laughed Stephen. "And, anyhow, I'm a bit late for an engagement with the most charming young lady in New York—in my opinion. For your courtesy in the matter, I will further bribe the press by introducing you to her. Hey, taxi!"

They entered the vehicle, and Stephen gave an address in Washington Square.

"I presume you mean—Miss Duress?"

"No presumption at all. If you drink tea occasionally, she has a brand and a method that will make you swear off drinking it anywhere else. Have you the time?"

"There are some circumstances that make time for themselves," said the newspaper man. "A man doesn't often

get the chance of meeting a young lady like Miss Duress. She's about the only one nowadays who can rank with you on the sociological racket, and being a pretty woman makes it all the more extraordinary. Those model tenements of hers are scheduled to open pretty soon, aren't they?"

"Day after New Year's," replied Stephen. "And she's already had five hundred more requests than she has flats, although she has extended her plans since the first ones were drawn. They cover a triangle made up by Jonquil, Pearl, and Seventh Streets——"

"Oh, yes, I know. And I also know that you were responsible for the extension of the plans, Mr. Adams. Why, altogether, you must have fifty thousand dollars in the venture, haven't you?"

Stephen's face clouded.

"All credit for the model tenements is entirely due to Miss Duress," he said a trifle stiffly. "Just because I contributed a few thousands means nothing. It was her idea, and she raised all the money except the large sums she gave herself. Any time you have to write about them, please see that she gets the credit she deserves—which is *all* of it."

"Oh, certainly, Mr. Adams. But about this Vaughan robbery now. I've got the story to cover. You said you'd help me. Now it's my opinion—and I want you to tell me what you think of it—that this Vaughan business is just such another as the Gerstein affair and a good many others that have been perpetrated in the last year. It bears the same marks of thought in plan and execution. There is absolutely no clue left, and, like all the others, the thief wasn't seen by the person from whom the stuff was stolen. No violence, no bungling, no play with weapons—nothing. I tell you I believe there is a master criminal at work in New York City."

"Nonsense, old man," laughed Stephen. "Just coincidence, that's all. But of course every one of those robberies you speak of showed some brains. That's why I object to having them fastened on incapables like this little Polish Jew I just set free."

"Yes, I know. You interfered in the Gerstein matter; that's why I mentioned it. In several others, too. So I thought you might have some theory."

"None at all," answered Stephen airily. "Except that the police are rather stupid."

He rapped on the window of the taxicab, and the driver brought his machine to a stop before a white-columned house, in the garden of which stood a marble maiden holding aloft a jug that always ceased to pour water at the first signs of frost; a house with a certain nobility to it, its severely plain Doric outlines softened by the ivy and Virginia creeper that had interwoven in the course of the past half century.

Kernahan looked at his watch.

"Afraid I was a little too careless of the paper's time," he said. "I've got to write a lead to this Vaughan story, and I've got hardly anything of importance to say. Besides, I must look after two other men and three cubs who are working on it with me. I'm too much of a Southerner yet to take a cup of tea from the hands of a young lady and apologize for going while I drink it. May I come to see you some time, Mr. Adams?"

"Any time at all. Sorry you won't come in. You've got my address?"

And as Kernahan turned away with his romance woven now around the heroic figure of Stephen Adams to rehearse over and over the other man's splendid defiance of the law, Stephen himself, merry as a boy from school, bounded up the white marble steps and gave the nose of a brass griffon several sharp tweaks. The heavy mahogany door was opened by an ancient colored man in almost equally ancient livery.

"Yessuh; she's a-waitin' fo' yo', suh. Ve'y pow'ful draf' down chimluh today, Missuh Adams; fires jes' lak ro'in' fuhnaces what consumed sinnahs, but lef' them three fellahs what trusted in de Lawd puf'ly safe. Wha' was dem names, Missuh Adams? One of dem had uh name lak uh fish, othah one was a nigguh lak me——"

"You mean Shadrach and Abednego," laughed Stephen. "The other was Meschach."

"Pow'ful hard fo' an old nigguh to sabe his soul ef he have to know them ve'y dif'cult names, Missuh Adams. Missie Dessie, she's in her own lib'y, suh. Said yo' was to come right up."

"Thanks, Uncle Fairfax. How's your rheumatiz?"

"I'o'ly, thank you, suh, po'ly."

It was an inevitable question and an equally inevitable answer.

Stephen, crossing the broad expanse of polished parqueted hall, ascended the winding stairs whose spindle balusters of carved mahogany had been copied by every architect in the city who built houses on the Queen Anne plan.

It was about four o'clock in the afternoon; but, as the shortest day of the year was soon to be upon them, darkness was already beginning to fall, and the light of the fire sought bits of brass and silver in Decima's library and picked them out in red.

At Stephen's entrance, the girl arose from the tea equipage, which had been wheeled into the room, and gave him her hand, which he took and held with a gesture that was almost a caress. She always seemed slightly disappointed after every exchange of handshakes with Stephen, and now she reseated herself, pouring the boiling water from the little silver kettle upon the tea, awaiting its immersion.

He seated himself opposite her, the reflection of the firelight on the silver between them lighting up their faces to the exclusion of other things in the room. She was in a loose tea gown of yellow and silver threads, her hair parted in the middle and brought down low over her brows in the Greek fashion, which served to accentuate her youth. Stephen watched her slender, ringless fingers as they deftly moved the bits of silverware about, wishing he might grace one of them with a ring at once costly and simple—a proclamation to the world of his ownership.

"Of course you got him off," she remarked, as she handed him his cup of tea, the saucer bearing some thin sweet biscuits. It was not a question; simply a statement of fact.

He nodded.

"Nothing but his helplessness ever persuaded the police he could be proved guilty."

"That's the point," she said, sipping her tea. "Who would imagine that Stephen Adams—'Stephen the Magnificent'——"

"Oh, please, Dessie—forget that silly newspaper phrase."

"I shall do nothing of the sort. 'Stefan le Magnifique'—oh, beautiful, Stephen! It gives the people a picture."

"A silly picture! Those Frenchmen are always so infernally romantic. There's nothing magnificent about me—that is certain."

"Your modesty is magnificent if nothing else. Don't be absurd, Stephen. I'm sure you're always pretending. Stephen the Magnificent—why not? You're so big and good-looking and well-dressed—that's enough to begin with; but when you add to that your unselfishness, your championship of those who can't help themselves, your liberality——"

"Oh, Dessie!—please, please!"

"I can't help it, Stephen. From the very first moment we met, I've always been perfectly frank with you; always said just what was in my mind; and, just now, *you* and nothing else are on it."

She rang the bell.

"More tea?"

"I've had two cups and five crackers. I've got to think of that fifty-seven varieties of courses they'll give us at the Livingstones' to-night."

"Yes; and I suppose you'll go in with Isabel as usual—that silly little thing! You know she hasn't got one single thought that's worth listening to."

"She subscribed ten thousand to your tenements, Dessie."

"Yes; and *you* know well enough why. You can clear away, Clara," she broke off as the maid entered.

When the equipage had been wheeled out, Decima arose and closed the door.

"Yes; you know well enough why," she repeated accusingly.

"Of course; because I've persuaded her that she can be happier helping others than leading the selfish life she's led up to now."

"Oh, piffle, Stephen; excuse me—but piffle! I went over the same arguments with her a hundred times before she met you, and all she said was: 'But those people are so dirty,' as if that ended the argument. Why, you know well enough she's in love with you—head over heels—and I've a good mind not to go to their old dinner to-night—*now!*"

"Now, Dess—don't; please don't!" said Stephen uncomfortably. "You're always imagining girls are in love with me. It's so ridiculous. Why, I'm preaching a new sort of gospel, that's all, and they're so bored with the lives they lead that they've taken it up——"

"Yes; the gospel of a fine, manly figure and good-looking eyes—that's all the gospel they see, and you know it. I don't care, Stephen; I'm not going to stand it. I can't bear to see them putting on that mysterious far-away look and telling you how you are the first man who ever understood they had real brains and were not just dolls to be petted and dressed up. Why, not one of them will let go your hand when you go to say good-by; they go on talking just so they can keep hold of it, the little cats! Oh, I know you don't encourage them; I don't think you care a speck for one woman in the world; but, anyhow, I'm sincere. I had planned a lot of things for the poor before I met you. I don't just do it because I'm in love with you——"

She paused, biting her lip and looking at him. He had forgotten to be uncomfortable; his face lit up, his eyes sparkled, and he turned suddenly to her. She threw herself down on the hearthrug before the fire, and, sitting there, took his hand.

"Stephen—I didn't mean to let it out. It came just naturally—Stephen."

"Oh, my dear!" he said, and gathered her into his arms.

There was a long silence. Presently she released herself and sat on the rug again.

"You *do* love me, Stephen?"

"Better than anything in the world, dear," he replied soberly.

"And you—you don't think me immodest for telling you—when it isn't even leap year," she added, her sense of humor alert even at such a time.

"No, dear; it was my fault. I should have spoken myself. You must have known I loved you."

"I did—think so. But, whether you did or not, I wanted you to tell me so. Stephen, I loved you ten minutes after you sat down beside me on that boat last year. I couldn't help it. It just came! And I—I just couldn't stand those other women putting their hands on you. I wanted to shriek out that you were mine, mine—that you belonged to me—*me!*"

"I do, Decima; I always have. It was just the same with me as it was with you."

"But you never told me."

"That was because I *did* love you. Decima, maybe I ought to tell you something else, but somehow I can't. In this old house where everything is so quiet, every one so happy and contented, the world seems a sweet, clean sort of place My own rebellion strikes me with horror. I—no, Decima, I can't tell you—not now. Maybe, soon, I'll nerve myself and do it. You ought to know all about me, and there's a lot I've never dared tell you."

"Something I shouldn't know?" she echoed. "About you? Oh, no, Stephen, I guess there isn't much about you I don't know—not likely, when you've been in my mind day and night for the past year. And even if there was," she added a little fiercely, "it wouldn't make any difference in my love. If you're in trouble, I want to comfort you. Tell me!"

"Do you ever look in the fire and dream, Dessie?"

"Yes; of you. And you, too, Stephen?"

"Sometimes I look and I see—visions," he said. "Visions of a people happy in the happiness of others; of those who were once the oppressors become the friends; of the laughter of

the little children of the poor; of no man seeking that which will harm another. Sometimes I hear my name spoken, spoken kindly, gratefully, as of one who did his little bit to making a world like that. The wolf faces and the faces of the foxes have gone from out the race of men; all are gentle and kind."

He broke off, his face darkening.

"And then I see another vision; a race of slaves, living in great stone prisons, lettered and numbered by their masters; men with the blind eyes of moles, working endlessly they know not why, working not that they may be happy, but only that they may be allowed to live; slaves who are no longer men. I see that, Dessie, and I am afraid. So I will go on, on, fighting, fighting until the end, even with the shadow of the gallows across my path —even with that I'll fight!"

"Stephen! What do you mean?"

He took her in his arms; his eyes were wet.

"I mean, Dessie, that if we married I must give up the fight. I could not ask you to share a life like mine. I love you too much for that."

"A life like yours?" she echoed.

"Like mine. You don't know—and I can't tell you now. Love me, Dessie, and let me love you; but tell no one. Some time it may come right. Then—then there'll be always happy pictures in the fire."

III.

THE VULTURES.

Though Schramm had been gathered to his fathers, and the old chapel was replaced by a flimsy "taxpayer" building let out to secret societies and Sunday schools for meetings and amateur entertainments, the House of the Dominie, which had long since passed under the ownership of Wulf Axtell, stood intact, its bleak gray walls a landmark in the neighborhood; and in the second-story front room Wulf Axtell had sat for the past ten years, unable to move a foot and only barely lifting a cigar to his mouth by hand.

They had contrived a grandfather's chair for him, rolled about on wheels, and, when it was light, he sat at the window, with an arrangement of looking-glasses set in the frame, that he might see those who passed on both sides of the street, and even get a glimpse of Sixth Avenue where electrics had long since replaced the little smoky engines he knew in the old days of the "L."

For some time he had been companionless, but now Van Tromp was infirm, too, and they got him the twin chair to Axtell's.

So, day in and out, the old grocer would sit beside him at the window, or opposite him at the fireplace, as he was doing now, bearing with his abuse and even pretending that his own infirmity was as great as the Wolf's; although, if he awoke earlier than his companion, he would often hobble downstairs and walk up to Sixth Avenue, bearing heavily on his stick, to watch the customers passing in and out of the shop he had tended for forty years, and which now bore the sign of the grocery corporation, "Janissary and Duress, Limited."

There he would stand, weeping maudlinly or else chuckling senilely, until a servant, alarmed at Axtell's awakening, would run out and fetch him back.

They had a fire in the Wolf's house that night, too, but it was not a fire of fancies to Stephen as he entered and saw the two old men like hideous gargoyles on either side of the hearth. Van Tromp had dropped to sleep, muttering and showing toothless gums, while Axtell scowled at him from under fierce white brows that bristled, his eyes the incarnation of evil.

Hilary, in a frock coat with a gardenia in his buttonhole, sat swinging his legs from the centre table; Hilary had "indulged" but an hour or so before, and he was feeling particularly optimistic. George Le Fay, in a suit of hard-faced cloth, was smoking the cigar most patronized by the middle class; and Morganstein, a lean, handsome Jew with slightly gray hair, was plaiting and unplaiting a purple hand-

kerchief that matched his tie and socks —for he was a nervous man and must ever be doing something with those prehensile fingers. He was the member of the company who disposed of stolen goods, and was remarkably keen at a bargain, knew exactly how much any one to whom he sold would pay, and never made a mistake about whom to trust.

"A little late, Stephen," he said.

"Sorry. We're all here, aren't we?"

He looked around the room, then turned on the light from the door; a red-shaded lamp on the table responded and half lit the room. Morganstein locked the doors. Old Van Tromp stirred in his sleep.

"Piling it up," he muttered drowsily, "piling it *up*."

"Shut up, you old idiot," roared Axtell. "Hand me a book or something to throw at him, somebody."

"Oh, let him alone, Mr. Axtell," said Stephen. "He's not doing any one any harm. Well, now, let's get to business. I must get away from here before six. I've called you all together for a very good reason, and I don't want it misunderstood. So everybody get his cigar or cigarette lit and listen."

Morganstein could not resist a placid sneer.

"How long have you been the head of this organization, Stevey?"

"Now, Morgy, don't be nasty," replied the younger man. "We don't want any bad feeling among ourselves, you know. I'm not going to give any orders. I'm simply going to make a statement."

He reached into his pocket, took out a bundle of sketches, and spread them open for the others to see.

"Everybody knows what they are, of course."

Hilary, Le Fay, and Morganstein craned their necks and nodded. Wulf Axtell extended a hand.

"Ah—the Gresham Theatre 'soundings,'" he said. "Well, Stevey, boy; aren't they all right?"

"They ought to be all right," put in George Le Fay heavily. "I put in two weeks getting the dope on that place. Those plans are as good as any architect could draw. The entrance is a cinch, and the getaways immense. It's a pipe, Stevey—with nine to twenty thousand ready money in the safe every Saturday night that stays there until they take it to the bank on Monday. They're awful suckers not to deposit in the All-Night when they've got a successful play like 'Ambition' there."

Hilary scanned them also. "And, dear old chap," he said to Stephen, "I flatter myself that I made rather good sketches from George's descriptions."

"Not a single miss!" averred Le Fay. "What's the matter with them, Stevey?"

"Only this," replied Stephen Adams, and taking the plans from Axtell's hand he tossed them on the burning coals and stood with his back to the fireplace.

TO BE CONTINUED.

The continuation of this story will be published two weeks later, in the first April number, on sale March 10th.

FORESTS AND FRESH AIR

GIFFORD PINCHOT, the forestry expert, has the fresh-air fad to a marked degree. In his office in Washington in the wintertime, he keeps all the windows open, and the men who call to see him on business have all they can do to keep their teeth from chattering while they talk to him. He owns a gorgeous-looking limousine, but, because it is a closed car, he has let the auto fall into disuse. He prefers to ride downtown in the morning on the back platform of a street car so that he can get the fresh air.

A Deal in Rubber

By William P. Tiebout

Author of "His Hidden Light," Etc.

If you have two million dollars to invest, better not do as Jimmy Lannigan did—put all his eggs in one basket. There is always the risk of the bottom dropping out

JIMMY LANNIGAN came out of the gutter, and it was a circumstance in his career that a great many people were never able to forget. The two memories sharpest in the recollection of this incident belonged to the Honorable Thomas J. Thurber and Ralph B. Washburn, wealthy capitalist, and both members of the board of directors of the Amalgamated Rubber Trust.

Just how deep in the mire Jimmy originally had been nobody knew. The two gentlemen mentioned were able to recall the time when he slaved for a dollar-fifty a day in a New England rubber factory, and that was bad enough. And, furthermore, Jimmy was Irish, unpolished, and had a habit of insisting on things being done his way. All of which would have been of very little account were it not for the fact that Lannigan was president and one of the largest stockholders of the Amalgamated. It irritated the fine sensibilities of Thurber and Washburn to rub elbows with him at directors' sessions, and to argue with him over the conduct of the business, albeit Jimmy knew more about the matter than all the others put together. And so the scheme was hatched.

One night Lannigan viewed with surprise the stock report that showed Amalgamated Rubber had dropped two points on the New York Exchange. The next, he was thoroughly alarmed by the information that it had dropped three more notches, and when the quotations showed that it had gone down another two points on the day following, he was filled with consternation and straightway called a meeting of the directors.

That Amalgamated Rubber should fall seven points in three days was unbelievable, although Jimmy knew full well it could tumble twenty-seven and still be above its par value. But that wasn't the idea. Somebody was tampering with Amalgamated, and to Jimmy's cautious and conservative mind it presaged disaster. Amalgamated had always been outside the pale of ordinary speculation on the market, chiefly because its stockholders clung tenaciously to a good thing. There weren't many loose shares to be bought or sold.

With due regard for the president's orders, the directors congregated and discussed the situation, with the ultimate outcome that Jimmy's fears were salved over, on the grounds that some foolish operator was endeavoring to seek pastures new, and would soon meet a deserved fate at the hands of the Street. Jimmy's anxiety was somewhat allayed, but he was unconvinced. However, he let it go, realizing that his range of knowledge ceased with the boundaries of the Amalgamated factories. The other fellows knew Wall Street.

The next day Amalgamated was stationary, the next it actually rose several points, but the third day after the meeting another slump was registered. Another one followed that, and then another.

Jimmy again began to sit up and

take notice. He knew the value of a dollar, and he still had vivid recollections of his nine-dollar-a-week wage years before. That he now had two millions, all tied up in Amalgamated, was also a matter to which he gave considerable thought. The other fellows could lose every dollar of their Rubber holdings and still keep out of the poorhouse. He couldn't; he wasn't rich enough.

Slump followed slump, day after day. Jimmy took to walks in the street to ease his mind. He met Dawson and Hunter in a bank and stopped to talk the matter over with them. They tried to calm his fears, and emphasized the fact that he wasn't the only one interested in Amalgamated.

As Dawson said: "Do you think we're crazy? We wouldn't risk our necks by letting the thing go if we thought there was any danger. We don't have to bother about those measly skinflints who are selling Rubber short to force the stock down. There are people on Wall Street who will attend to them."

He met Thurber and Blass at the Board of Trade rooms, and he met Williams and Harlan at the theatre. They all told him the same thing.

So Jimmy shook his head and bridled his anxiety. He began to feel ashamed of his lack of faith in Amalgamated. Eagerly he watched the market, with Rubber dropping a point or two one day, flopping like a wounded bird the next, and perhaps rising in a short and suddenly checked flight on another day.

When in the course of a week the quarterly meeting of the board rolled around, and Thurber arose and, apparently without any previous consideration of the question, proposed an increase in the capital stock of the Amalgamated, Jimmy was dumfounded. When, after a long argument, the question was put to a vote and carried almost unanimously—Jimmy's was the only negative ballot registered—he was incapable of expressing his feelings in words. With the market going down, with the earnings paying a mighty good dividend to the few who now held stock, it seemed to him like a parody on business to whack up the spoils in smaller proportions.

But when the paper, upon which each director subscribed to take up a certain proportion of the new stock, was circulated and finally came to him with every nickel's worth of the $3,000,000 increase accounted for, then—then the great light dawned upon him. His shrewd Irish mind glimpsed the whole proposition.

It was the signal for Jimmy's flight. He decided that if he wanted to save anything but his clothes it was time for action. Forthwith he hurried home, packed his forty thousand shares of Rubber in a grip, and took the night boat for New York.

He landed just as the sun was beginning to peep up over the east, had his breakfast, and trailed his luggage to the nearest broker's office.

There he told his story, announcing his intention to sell out to the last share.

The broker smiled suavely, and replied:

"You don't want to sell, Mr. Lannigan; you want to buy."

"Don't want to sell? Want to buy?"

"Sure! If Thurber and Washburn and the rest of those fellows are after you, as you think they are, you'll only be helping their game by selling now. Why, man, if you dumped those forty thousand shares of Rubber on the market just now you *would* knock the bottom out of it."

Jimmy studied the situation.

"Don't you see," his broker urged, "that this is all a game to frighten you and drive you out at a low price? There's no market for Rubber now. You'll have to make it, or you can't sell and get your money's worth."

"How much must I buy?"

"You'll need about three hundred thousand dollars."

"Three hundred thousand! Man, who do you think I am? I haven't got that many cents, except what's tied up in Rubber!"

"Well, perhaps you haven't. You can borrow it, can't you? A man in your position in the financial world, Mr. Lan-

nigan, ought to be able to get that much money on his credit."

So Jimmy scurried around and raised the $300,000. Then he went back home and through the newspapers followed the campaign of his brokers. At first there was no perceptible change in Rubber's movements. The clique continued to hammer it down doggedly, a point more or less each day.

Then finally there came a demand from the brokers for more money. They wanted $200,000 this time. Jimmy raised a kick to high heaven, but again he was brought around.

After a week there was a check in the Rubber slump. From 56, its lowest mark in years, it rose to 60. That evening Lannigan met Thurber uptown.

"Why, Jimmy," the honorable piped, with anxiety so feigned that it was apparent in his speech, "what's the matter with you and Rubber? I heard you had sold out every share!"

Lannigan hedged. "Who told you?" he queried.

"Why, I got it on pretty good authority," Thurber chuckled. "The Hatch people let it leak, and they claim to be acting as your brokers."

Jimmy was surprised, but his faith in his brokers maintained his equilibrium. He nodded noncommittally.

"And at sixty-one, too. Jimmy, I never thought you'd lose your nerve over a little thing like that." Thurber chided. "Why didn't you tell us about your intentions?"

"Why?" inquired Jimmy innocently. "Would you have bought?"

"Of course we would. To tell the truth, we got it anyway, every one of the forty thousand shares. We just happened to get into the market at the right time. Jimmy, we'll be sorry to lose you from the board. So-long." And Thurber was gone up the street.

Jimmy was considerably disturbed. He had dumped half a million dollars into some sort of a hole, and all he had got out of it was $61 a share for his Rubber. His brokers must have slipped a cog somewhere. Straightway he started for New York for a conference.

He came away from Hatch's with a wide and satisfied grin on his face, which broadened as he read the market reports showing that Rubber had soared phenomenally in two days. It had reached 87, nearly the high-water mark before the clique began its crusade.

Then Lannigan took the first train out of New York for home. When he arrived he neglected his evening meal to visit the familiar haunts of the Rubber crowd. He wanted some one to offer him more sympathy.

It was at the club that he finally ran across Thurber. Jimmy exulted. He wanted to get this man of all the others!

"It's too bad," Thurber declared, "that you didn't hang on a little longer, Jimmy. Did you notice where Rubber went to-day?"

"To eighty-seven," Lannigan replied.

"You're right. And do you know, Jimmy, some fools were actually crazy enough to sell short at that figure to-day. Washburn and Dawson and I gobbled up another forty thousand shares."

"You did?" Jimmy inquired mildly. "Well, you and Dawson and Washburn seem inclined to buy everything I have to sell, don't you?"

"Everything *you* have to sell? You don't mean to say *you* sold the forty thousand shares we bought to-day?"

"Sure I do."

"But you sold every dollar's worth of your holdings days ago! You don't mean to tell me you were insane enough to go short at eighty-seven?"

"No, not that," Jimmy drawled. "You see, I had this thing figured out some time ago. I knew just what your game was, and I guessed just how you were going to play it. Everything came out to a 't.' Those forty thousand shares which you and the rest grabbed onto several days ago were shorts which my brokers bought at fifty-eight and sold at sixty-one. My holdings, which I sold to-day at eighty-seven, are in the vault at Hatch's. You can have them any time you want them. Ta-ta!"

And Jimmy grinned as he went out.

Lonesome Land

By B. M. Bower

Author of "The Lure of the Dim Trails," "The Happy Family Stories," Etc.

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS.

Coming from prim New England with romantic ideas about the West, Valerie Peyson finds Montana a pretty grim place and her dream castles topple. Worse still, the cowboy she has come to marry—Manley Fleetwood—is so drunk he cannot meet her at the station. Mrs. Arline Hawley, a rough but big-hearted landlady, befriends the girl from the East. Also, Kent Burnett, a quick-thinking cowboy, comes to the rescue, doses Fleetwood with "whisky killer" and announces that the husband-to-be has a bad headache. Val is all sympathy. She nurses Fleetwood, never suspecting that he has been drinking. The marriage takes place and Fleetwood and his young wife leave for the ranch—a bleak place with a rough shack for a home. A prairie fire occurs while Manley is in town and Val is alone at the ranch. Kent arrives on the scene and by prodigious efforts saves the girl, though the hay and buildings are burned. When Manley hears of the disaster he promptly gets drunk. Mrs. Hawley comes with a rig and drives Val back to town, where the girl learns from Kent the truth about Manley. There is a trying interview between husband and wife, but Manley promises to reform and Val forgives him.

CHAPTER XIII.

A HOUSE, it would seem, is almost the least important part of a ranch; one can camp, with frying pan and blankets, in the shade of a bush or the shelter of canvas. But to do anything upon a ranch, one must have many things—burnable things, for the most part, as Manley was to learn by experience when he left Val at the hotel and rode out, the next day, to Cold Spring Coulee.

To ride over twenty miles of blackness is depressing enough in itself, but to find, at the end of the journey, that one's work has all gone for nothing, and one's money and one's plans and hopes, is worse than depressing. Manley sat upon his horse and gazed rather blankly at the heap of black cinders that had been his haystacks, and at the cold embers where had stood his stables, and at the warped bits of iron that had been his buckboard, his wagon, his rake, and mower—all the things he had gathered around him in the three years he had spent upon the place.

The house merely emphasized his loss. He got down and picked up the cat, which was mewing plaintively beside his horse, snuggled it into his arm, and remounted. Val had told him to be sure and find the cat, and bring it back with him. His horses and his cattle—not many, to be sure, in that land of large holdings—were scattered, and it would take the round-up to gather them together again. So the cat, and the horse he rode, the bleak coulee, and the unattractive little house with its three rooms and its meager porch, were all that he could visualize as his worldly possessions. And when he thought of his bank account he winced mentally. Before snow fell he would be debt-ridden, the best he could do. For he must have a stable, and corral, and hay, and a wagon, and—he refused to remind himself of all the things he must have if he would stay on the ranch.

His was not a strong nature at best, and now he shrank from facing his misfortune and wanted only to get away from the place. He loped his horse halfway up the hill, which was not merciful riding. The half-starved cat yowled in his arms, and struck her claws

through his coat till he felt the prick of them, and he swore; at the cat, nominally, but really at the trick fate had played upon him.

For a week he dallied in town, without heart or courage, though Val urged him to buy lumber and build, and cheered him as best she could. He did make a half-hearted attempt to get lumber to the place, but there seemed to be no team in town which he could hire. Every one was busy, and put him off. He tried to buy hay of Blumenthall, of the Wishbone, of every man he met who had hay. No one had any hay to sell, however. Blumenthall complained that he was short, himself, and would buy if he could, rather than sell. The Wishbone foreman declared profanely that hay was going to be worth a dollar a pound to *them,* before spring. They were all sorry for Manley, and told him he was "sure playing tough luck," but they couldn't sell any hay, that was certain.

"But we must manage somehow to fix the place so we can live on it this winter," Val would insist, when he told her how every move seemed blocked. "You're very brave, dear, and I'm proud of the way you are holding out—but Hope is not a good place for you. It would be foolish to stay in town. Can't you buy enough hay here in town—baled hay from the store—to keep our horses through the winter?"

"Well, I tried," Manley responded gloomily. "But Brinberg is nearly out. He's expecting a carload in, but it hasn't come yet. He said he'd let me know when it gets here."

Meanwhile the days slipped away, and imperceptibly the heat and haze of the fires gave place to bright sunlight and chill winds, and then to the chill winds without the sunshine. One morning the ground was frozen hard, and all the roofs gleamed white with the heavy frost. Arline bestirred herself, and had a heating stove set up in the parlor, and Val went down to the dry heat and the peculiar odor of a rusted stove in the flush of its first fire since spring.

The next day, as she sat by her window upstairs, she looked out at the first nip of winter. A few great snowflakes drifted down from the slaty sky; a puff of wind sent them dancing down the street, shook more down, and whirled them giddily. Then the storm came and swept through the little street and whined lonesomely around the hotel.

Over at the saloon—"Pop's Place," it proclaimed itself in washed-out lettering—three tied horses circled uneasily until they were standing backs to the storm, their bodies hunched together with the chill of it, their tails whipping between their legs. They accentuated the blank dreariness of the empty street. The snow was whitening their rumps and clinging, in tiny drifts, upon the saddle skirts behind the cantles.

All the little hollows of the rough, frozen ground were filling slowly, making white patches against the brown of the earth—patches which widened and widened until they met, and the whole street was blanketed with fresh, untrodden snow. Val shivered suddenly, and hurried downstairs where the air was warm and all a-steam with cooking, and the odor of frying onions smote the nostrils like a blow in the face.

"I suppose we must stay here, now, till the storm is over," she sighed, when she met Manley at dinner. "But as soon as it clears we must go back to the ranch. I simply cannot endure another week of it."

"You're gitting uneasy—I seen that, two or three days ago," said Arline, who had come into the dining room with a tray of meat and vegetables, and overheard her. "Yuh want to stay, now, till after the dance. There's going to be a dance Friday night, yuh know—everybody's coming. Yuh got to wait for that."

"I don't attend public dances," Val stated calmly. "I am going home as soon as the storm clears—if Manley can buy a little hay, and find our horses, and get some sort of a driving vehicle."

"Well, if he can't, maybe he can round up a *ridin'* vee-hicle," Arline remarked dryly, placing the meat before Manley, the potatoes before Val, and the gravy exactly between the two, with mathe-

matical precision. "I'm givin' that dance myself. You'll have to go—I'm givin' it in your honor."

"In—my—why, the *idea!* It's good of you, but——"

"And you're goin', and you're goin' to take your vi'lin over and play us some pieces. I tucked it into the rig and brought it in, on purpose. I planned out the hull thing, driving out to your place. In case yuh wasn't all burned up, I made up my mind I was going to give yuh a dance, and git yuh acquainted with folks. Yuh needn't to hang back—I've told everybody it was in your honor, and that you played the vi'lin swell, and we'd have some real music. And I've sent to Chinook for the dance music—harp, two fiddles, and a coronet—and you ain't going to stall the hull thing now. I didn't mean to tell yuh till the last minute, but you've got to have time to make up your mind you'll go to a public dance for onst in your life. It ain't going to hurt yuh none. I've went, ever sence I was big enough to reach up and grab holt of my pardner—and I'm every bit as virtuous as you be. You're going, and you'n Man are going to head the grand march."

Val's face was flushed, her lips pursed, and her eyes wide. Plainly she was not quite sure whether she was angry, amused, or insulted. She descended straight with a purely feminine objection.

"But I haven't a thing to wear, and besides——"

"Oh, yes, yuh have. While you was dillydallying out in the front room, that night, wondering whether you'd have hysterics, or faint, or what all, I dug deep in that biggest trunk uh yourn, and fished up one uh your party dresses—white satin, it is, with embroid'ry all up 'n' down the front, and slimpsy lace; it's kinda low-'n'-behold—one uh them down——"

"My white satin—why, Mrs. Hawley! That—you must have brought the gown I wore to my farewell club reception. It has a train, and—why, the *idea!*"

"You can cut off the trail—you got plenty uh time—or you can pin it up. I didn't have time that night to see how the thing was made, and I took it because I found white skirts and stockin's, and white satin slippers to go with it, right handy. You're a bride, and white'll be suitable, and the dance is in your honor. Wear it just as it is, fer all me. Show the folks what real clothes look like. I never seen a woman dressed up that way in my hull life. You wear it, Val, trail 'n' all. I'll back yuh up in it, and tell folks it's my idee, and not yourn."

"I'm not in the habit of apologizing to people for the clothes I wear." Val lifted her chin haughtily. "I am not at all sure that I shall go. In fact, I don't——"

"Oh, you'll go!" Arline rested her arms upon her bony hips and snapped her meager jaws together. "You'll go, if I have to carry yuh over. I've sent for fifteen yards uh buntin' to decorate the hall with. I ain't going to all that trouble for nothing. I ain't giving a dance in honor of a certain person, and then let that person stay away. You—why, you'd queer yourself with the hull country, Val Fleetwood! You ain't got the least sign of an excuse. You got the clothes, and you ain't sick. There's a reason why you got to show up. I ain't going into no details at present, but under the circumstances, it's *advisable.*" She smelled something burning then, and bolted for the kitchen, where her sharp, rather nasal voice was heard upbraiding Minnie for some neglect.

Polycarp Jenks came in, eyed Val and Manley from under one lifted eyebrow, smiled skinnily, and pulled out a chair with a rasping noise, and sat down facing them. Instinctively Val refrained from speaking her mind about Arline and her dance before Polycarp, but afterward, in their own room, she grew rather eloquent upon the subject. She would not go. She would not permit that woman to browbeat her into doing what she did not want to do, she said. In her honor, indeed! The impertinence of going to the bottom of her trunk, and meddling with her clothes—with that reception gown, of all others! The idea of wearing that gown

to a frontier dance—even if she consented to go to such a dance! And expecting her to amuse the company by playing "pieces" on the violin!

"Well, why not?" Manley was sitting rather apathetically upon the edge of the bed, his arms resting upon his knees, his eyes moodily studying the intricate rose pattern in the faded Brussels carpet. They were the first words he had spoken; one might easily have doubted whether he had heard all Val said.

"Why not? Manley Fleetwood, do you mean to tell me——"

"Why not go, and get acquainted, and quit feeling that you're a pearl cast among swine? It strikes me the Hawley person is pretty level-headed on the subject. If you're going to live in this country, why not quit thinking how out of place you are, and how superior, and meet us all on a level? It won't hurt you to go to that dance, and it won't hurt you to play for them, if they want you to. You can play, you know; you used to play at all the musical doings in Fern Hill, and even in the city sometimes. And, let me tell you, Val, we aren't quite savages, out here. I've even suspected, sometimes, that we're just as good as Fern Hill."

"We?" Val looked at him steadily. "So you wish to identify yourself with these people—with Polycarp Jenks, and Arline Hawley, and——"

"Why not? They're shaky on grammar, and their manners could stand a little polish, but aside from that they're exactly like the people you've lived among all your life. Sure, I wish to identify myself with them. I'm just a rancher—pretty small punkins, too, among all these big outfits, and you're a rancher's wife. The Hawley person could buy us out for cash to-morrow, if she wanted to, and never miss the money. And, Val, she's giving that dance in your honor; you ought to appreciate that. The Hawley doesn't take a fancy to every woman she sees—and, let me tell you, she stands ace-high in this country. If she didn't like you, she could make you wish she did."

"Well, upon my word! I begin to suspect you of being a humorist, Manley. And even if you mean that seriously—why, it's all the funnier." To prove it, she laughed.

Manley hesitated, then left the room with a snort, a scowl, and a slam of the door; and the sound of Val's laughter followed him down the stairs.

Arline came up, her arms full of white satin, white lace, white cambric, and the toes of two white satin slippers showing just above the top of her apron pockets. She walked briskly in and deposited her burden upon the bed.

"My! them's the nicest smellin' things I ever had a hold of," she observed. "And still they don't seem to smell, either. Must be a dandy perfumery you've got. I brought up the things, seein' you know they're here. I thought you could take your time about cuttin' off the trail and fillin' in the neck and sleeves."

She sat down upon the foot of the bed, carefully tucking her gingham apron close about her so that it might not come in contact with the other.

"I never did see such clothes," she sighed. "I dunno how you'll ever git a chanst to wear 'em out in this country—seems to me they're most too pretty to wear, anyhow. I can git Marthy Winters to come over and help yuh—she does sewin'—and you can use my machine any time yuh want to. I'd take a hold myself if I didn't have all the baking to do for the dance. That Min can't learn nothing, seems like. I can't trust her to do a thing, hardly, unless I stand right over her. Breed girls ain't much account ever; but they're all that'll work out, in this country, seems like. Sometimes I swear I'll git a Chink and be done with it—only I got to have somebody I can talk to onst in a while. I couldn't never talk to a Chink—they don't seem hardly human to me. Do they to you?

"And say! I've got some allover lace—it's eecrue—that you can fill in the neck with; you're welcome to use it—there's most a yard of it, and I won't never find a use for it. Or I was thinkin', there'll be enough cut off'n the trail to make a gamp of the satin, sleeves and

all." She lifted the shining stuff with manifest awe. "It does seem a shame to put the shears to it—but you never'll git any wear out of it the way it is, and I don't believe——"

"Mis' *Hawley!*" shrilled the voice of Minnie at the foot of the stairs. "There's a couple uh *drummers* off'n the *train,* 'n' they want *supper,* 'n' what'll I *give* 'em?"

"My heavens! That girl'll drive me crazy, sure!" Arline hurried to the door. "Don't take the roof off'n the house," she cried querulously down the stairway. "I'm comin'."

Val had not spoken a word. She went over to the bed, lifted a fold of satin, and smiled down at it ironically. "Mamma and I spent a whole month planning and sewing and gloating over you," she said aloud. "You were almost as important as a wedding gown; the club's farewell reception—'To what base uses we do——' "

"Oh, here's your slippers!" Arline thrust half her body into the room and held the slippers out to Val. "I stuck 'em into my pockets to bring up, and forgot all about 'em, mind you, till I was handin' the drummers their tea. And one of 'em happened to notice 'em, and raised right up outa his chair, an' said: 'Cind'*rilla,* sure as I live! Say, if there's a foot in this town that'll go into them slippers, for God's sake introduce me to the owner!' I told him to mind his own business. Drummers do get awful fresh when they think they can get away with it." She departed in a hurry, as usual.

Every day after that Arline talked about altering the satin gown. Every day Val was noncommittal and unenthusiastic. Occasionally she told Arline that she was not going to the dance, but Arline declined to take seriously so preposterous a declaration.

"Yuh want to break a leg, then," she told Van grimly on Thursday. "That's the only excuse that'll go down with this bunch. And yuh better git a move on—it comes off to-morrer night, remember."

"I won't go, Manley!" Val consoled herself by declaring, again and again. "The idea of Arline Hawley ordering me about like a child! Why should I go if I don't care to go?"

"Search me." Manley shrugged his shoulders. "It isn't so long, though, since you were just as determined to stay and have the shivaree, you remember."

"Well, you and Mr. Burnett tried to do exactly what Arline is doing. You seemed to think I was a child, to be ordered about."

At the very last minute—to be explicit, an hour before the hall was lighted, several hours after smoke first began to rise from the chimney, Val suddenly swerved to a reckless mood. Arline had gone to her own room to dress, too angry to speak what was in her mind. She had worked since five o'clock that morning. She had bullied Val, she had argued, she had begged, she had wheedled. Val would not go. Arline had appealed to Manley, and Manley had assured her, with a suspicious slurring of his esses, that he was out of it, and had nothing to say. Val, he said, could not be driven.

It was after Arline had gone to her room and Manley had returned to the "office" that Val suddenly picked up her hairbrush and, with an impish light in her eyes, began to pile her hair high upon her head. With her lips curved to match the mockery of her eyes, she began hurriedly to dress. Later, she went down to the parlor, where four women from the neighboring ranches were sitting stiffly and in constrained silence, waiting to be escorted to the hall. She swept in upon them, a glorious, shimmery creature all in white and gold. The women stared, wavered, and looked away—at the wall, the floor, at anything but Val's bare, white shoulders and arms as white. Arline had forgotten to look for gloves.

Val read the consternation in their weather-tanned faces, and smiled in wicked enjoyment. She would shock all of Hope; she would shock even Arline, who had insisted upon this. Like a child in mischief, she turned and went rustling down the hall to the dining room. She wanted to show Arline. She had not thought of the possibility

of finding any one but Arline and Minnie there, so that she was taken slightly aback when she discovered Kent and another man eating a belated supper.

Kent looked up, eyed her sharply for just an instant, and smiled.

"Good evening, Mrs. Fleetwood," he said calmly. "Ready for the ball, I see. We got in late." He went on spreading butter upon his bread, evidently quite unimpressed by her magnificence.

The other man stared fixedly at his plate. It was a trifle, but Val suddenly felt foolish and ashamed. She took a step or two toward the kitchen, then retreated; down the hall she went, up the stairs and into her own room, the door of which she shut and locked.

"Such a fool!" she whispered vehemently, and stamped her white-shod foot upon the carpet. "He looked perfectly disgusted—and so did that other man. And no wonder. Such—it's *vulgar,* Val Fleetwood! It's just ill-bred, and coarse, and horrid!" She threw herself upon the bed and put her face in the pillow.

Some one—she thought it sounded like Manley—came up and tried the door, stood a moment before it, and went away again. Arline's voice, sharpened with displeasure, she heard speaking to Minnie upon the stairs. They went down, and there was a confusion of voices below. In the street beneath her window footsteps sounded intermittently, coming and going with a certain eagerness of tread. After a time there came, from a distance, the sound of violins and the "coronet" of which Arline had been so proud; and mingled with it was an undercurrent of shuffling feet, a mere whisper of sound, cut sharply now and then by the sharp commands of the floor manager. They were dancing—in her honor. And she was a fool; a proud, ill-tempered, selfish fool.

With one of her quick changes of mood she rose, patted her hair smooth, caught up a wrap oddly inharmonious with the gown and slippers, looped her train over her arm, took her violin, and ran lightly downstairs. The parlor, the dining room, the kitchen were deserted and the lights turned low. She braced herself mentally, and, flushing at the unaccustomed act, rapped timidly upon the door which opened into the office—which by that time she knew was really a saloon. Hawley himself opened the door, and his eyes bulged at sight of her.

"Is Mr. Fleetwood here? I—I thought, after all, I'd go to the dance," she said, in rather a timid voice, shrinking back into the shadow.

"Fleetwood? Why, I guess he's gone on over. He said you wasn't going. You wait a minute. I—here, Kent! You take Mrs. Fleetwood over to the hall. Man's gone."

"Oh, no! I—really, it doesn't matter——"

But Kent had already thrown away his cigarette and come out to her, closing the door immediately after him. "I'll take you over—I was just going, anyway," he assured her, his eyes dwelling upon her rather intently.

"Oh—I wanted Manley. I—I hate to go—like this, it seems so—so queer, in this place. At first I—I thought it would be a joke, but it isn't; it's silly and—and ill-bred. You—everybody will be shocked, and——"

Kent took a step toward her, where she was shrinking against the stairway. Once before she had lost her calm composure and had let him peep into her mind. Then it had been on account of Manley; now, womanlike, it was her clothes.

"You couldn't be anything but all right, if yuh tried," he told her, speaking softly. "It isn't silly to look the way the Lord meant yuh to look. You—you—oh, you needn't worry—nobody's going to be shocked very hard." He reached out and took the violin from her; took also her arm and opened the outer door. "You're late," he said, speaking in a more commonplace tone. "You ought to have overshoes, or something—those white slippers won't be so white time you get there. Maybe I ought to carry yuh."

"The idea!" She stepped out daintily upon the slushy walk.

"Well, I can take yuh a block or two around, and have sidewalk all the way;

that'll help some. Women sure are a lot of bother—I'm plumb sorry for the poor devils that get inveigled into marrying one."

"Why, Mr. Burnett! Do you always talk like that? Because if you do, I don't wonder——"

"No," Kent interrupted, looking down at her and smiling grimly, "as it happens, I don't. I'm real nice, generally speaking. Say! this is going to be a good deal uh trouble, do yuh know? After you dance with hubby, you've got to waltz with me."

"*Got* to?" Val raised her eyebrows, though the expression was lost upon him.

"Sure. Look at the way I worked like a horse, saving your life—and the cat's—and now leading yuh all over town to keep those nice white slippers clean! By rights, you oughtn't to dance with anybody else. But I ain't looking for real gratitude. Four or five waltzes is all I'll insist on, but——" His tone was lugubrious in the extreme.

"Well, I'll waltz with you once—for saving the cat; and once for saving the slippers. For saving me, I'm not sure that I thank you." Val stepped carefully over a muddy spot on the walk. "Mr. Burnett, you—really, you're an awfully queer man."

Kent walked to the next crossing and helped her over it before he answered her. "Yes," he admitted soberly then, "I reckon you're right. I am—queer."

CHAPTER XIV.

Sunday it was, and Val had insisted stubbornly upon going back to the ranch; somewhat to her surprise, if one might judge by her face, Arline Hawley no longer demurred, but put up lunch enough for a week almost, and announced that she was going along. Hank would have to drive out, to bring back the team, and she said she needed a rest, after all the work and worry of that dance. Manley, upon whose account it was that Val was so anxious, seemed to have nothing whatever to say about it. He was sullenly acquiescent—as was perhaps to be expected of a man who had slipped into his old habits and despised himself for doing so, and almost hated his wife because she had discovered it and said nothing. Val was thankful, during that long, bleak ride over the prairie, for Arline's incessant chatter. It was better than silence, when the silence means bitter thoughts.

"Now," said Arline, moving excitedly in her seat when they neared Cold Spring Coulee, "maybe I better tell yuh that the folks round here has kinda planned a little su'prise for yuh. They don't make much of a showin' about bein' neighborly—not when things go smooth—but they're right there when trouble comes. It's jest a little weddin' present—and if it comes kinda late in the day, why, you don't want to mind that. My dance that I gave was a weddin' party, too, if yuh care to call it that. Anyway, it was to raise the money to pay for our present, as far as it went—and I want to tell yuh right now, Val, that you was sure the queen uh the ball; everybody said yuh looked jest like a queen in a picture, and I never heard a word ag'inst your low-neck dress. It looked all right on *you*, don't you see? On me, for instance, it woulda been something fierce. And I'm real glad you took a hold and danced like yuh did, and never passed nobody up, like some woulda done. You'll be glad yuh did, now yuh know what it was for. Even danced with Polycarp Jenks—and there ain't hardly any woman but what'll turn *him* down; I'll bet he tromped all over your toes, didn't he?"

"Sometimes," Val admitted. "What about the surprise you were speaking of, Mrs. Hawley?"

"It does seem as if yuh might call me Arline," she complained irrelevantly. "We're comin' to that—don't you worry."

"Is it—a piano?"

"My lands, no! You don't need a fiddle and a piano both, do yuh? Man, what'd you ruther have for a weddin' present?"

Manley, upon the front seat beside Hank, gave his shoulders an impatient twitch. "Fifty thousand dollars," he replied glumly.

"I'm glad you're real modest about it," Arline retorted sharply. She was beginning to tell herself quite frequently that she "didn't have no time for Man Fleetwood, seeing he wouldn't brace up and quit drinkin'."

Val's lips curled as she looked at Manley's back. "What I should like," she said distinctly, "is a great, big pile of wood, all cut and ready for the stove, and water pails that never would go empty. It's astonishing how one's desires eventually narrow down to bare essentials, isn't it? But as we near the place, I find those two things more desirable than a piano!" Then she bit her lip angrily because she had permitted herself to give the thrust.

"Why, you poor thing! Man Fleetwood, do you——"

Val impulsively caught her by the arm. "Oh, hush! I was only joking," she said hastily. "I was trying to balance Manley's wish for fifty thousand dollars, don't you see? It was stupid of me, I know." She laughed unconvincingly. "Let me guess what the surprise is. First, is it large or small?"

"Kinda big," tittered Arline, falling into the spirit of the joke.

"Bigger than a—wait, now. A sewing machine?"

Arline covered her mouth with her hand and nodded dumbly.

"You say all the neighbors gave it and the dance helped pay for it—let me see. Could it possibly be—what in the world could it be? Manley, help me guess! Is it something useful, or just something nice?"

"Useful," said Arline, and snapped her jaws together as if she feared to let another word loose.

"Larger than a sewing machine, and useful." Val puckered her brows over the puzzle. "And all the neighbors gave it. Do you know, I've been thinking all sorts of nasty things about our poor neighbors, because they refused to sell Manley any hay. And all the while they were planning this sur——" She never finished that sentence, or the word, even.

With a jolt over a rock, and a sharp turn to the right, Hank had brought them to the very brow of the hill, where they could look down into the coulee, and upon the house standing in its tiny, unkempt yard, just beyond the sparse growth of bushes which marked the spring creek. Involuntarily every head turned that way, and every pair of eyes looked downward. Hank chirped to the horses, threw all his weight upon the brake, and they rattled down the grade, the brake block squealing against the rear wheels. They were halfway down before any one spoke. It was Val, and she almost whispered one word:

"Manley!"

Arline's eyes were wet, and there was a croak in her voice when she cried jubilantly: "Well, ain't that better'n a sewin' machine—or a piano?"

But Val did not attempt an answer. She was staring—staring as if she could not convince herself of the reality. Even Manley was jarred out of his gloomy meditations, and half rose in the seat that he might see over Hank's shoulder.

"That's what your neighbors have done," Arline began eagerly, "and they nearly busted tryin' to git through in time, and to keep it a dead secret. They worked like whiteheads, lemme tell yuh, and never even stopped for the storm. The night uh the dance I heard all about how they had to hurry. And I guess Kent's there an' got a fire started, like I told him to. I was afraid it might be colder'n what it is. I asked him if he wouldn't ride over an' warm up the house t'-day—and I see there's a smoke, all right." She looked at Manley, and then turned to Val. "Well, ain't yuh goin' to say anything? Yuh dumb, both of yuh?"

Val took a deep breath. "We should be dumb," she said contritely. "We should go down on our knees and beg their pardon and yours—I especially. I think I've never in my life felt quite so humbled—so overwhelmed with the goodness of my fellows, and my own unworthiness. I—I can't put it into words—all the resentment I have felt against the country and the people in it—as if—oh, tell them all how I want them to forgive me for—for the way I have felt. And—*Arline*——"

"There, now—I didn't bargain for

yuh to make it so serious," Arline expostulated, herself near to crying. "It ain't nothing much—us folks believe in helpin' when help's needed, that's all. For Heaven's sake, don't go 'n' *cry* about it!"

Hank pulled up at the gate with a loud *whoa* and a grip of the brake. From the kitchen stovepipe a blue ribbon of smoke waved high in the clear air. Kent appeared, grinning amiably, in the doorway, but Val was looking beyond, and scarcely saw him—beyond, where stood a new stable upon the ashes of the old; a new corral, the posts standing solidly in the holes dug for those burned away; a new haystack—when hay was almost priceless! A few chickens wandered about near the stable, and Val recognized them as Arline's prized Plymouth Rocks. Small wonder that she and Manley were stunned to silence. Manley still looked as if some one had dealt him an unexpected blow in the face. Val was white and wide-eyed.

Together they walked out to the stable. When they stopped, she put her hand timidly upon his arm. "Dear," she said softly, "there is only one way to thank them for this, and that is to be the very best it is in us to be. We will, won't we? We—we haven't been our best, but we'll start in right now. Shall we, Manley?"

Manley looked down at her for a moment, saying nothing.

"Shall we, Manley? Let us start now, and try again. Let's play the fire burned up our old selves, and we're all new, and strong—shall we? And we won't feel any resentment for what is past, but we'll work together, and think together, and talk together, without any hidden thing we can't discuss freely. Please, Manley!"

He knew what she meant, well enough. For the last two days he had been drinking again. On the night of the dance he had barely kept within the limit of decent behavior. He had read Val's complete understanding and her disgust the morning after—and since then they had barely spoken except when speech was necessary. Oh, he knew what she meant! He stood for another minute, and she let go his arm and stood apart, watching his face.

A good deal depended upon the next minute, and they both knew it, and hardly breathed. His hand went slowly into a deep pocket of his overcoat, his fingers closed over something, and drew it reluctantly to the light. Shamefaced, he held it up for her to see—a flat bottle of generous size, full to within an inch of the cork with a pale, yellow liquid.

"There—take it, and break it into a million pieces," he said huskily. "I'll try again."

Her yellow-brown eyes darkened perceptibly. "Manley Fleetwood, *you* must throw it away. This is your fight—be a man and *fight*."

"Well—there! I'm through with the stuff for keeps!" He said with several heartfelt oaths, held the bottle high, without looking at it, and sent it crashing against the stable door.

"Manley!" She stopped her ears, aghast at his words, but for all that her eyes were ashine. She went up to him and put her arms around him. "Now we can start all over again," she said. "We'll count our lives from this minute, dear, and we'll keep them clean and happy. Oh, I'm so glad! So glad and so proud, dear!"

Kent had got halfway down the path from the house; he stopped when Manley threw the bottle, and waited. Now he turned abruptly and retraced his steps, and he did not look particularly happy, though he had been smiling when he left the kitchen.

Arline turned from the window as he entered.

"Looks like Man has swore off ag'in," she observed dryly. "Well, let's hope 'n' pray he stays swore off."

TO BE CONTINUED.

The continuation of this story will appear two weeks hence, in the first April number, on sale March 10th.

The Fugitive

By Max Marcin

Author of "The Nomination That Went Begging," Etc.

A very short but very dramatic story of a man whose head was bowed beneath the bludgeonings of Chance—a hunted, haunted man whose name was writ beneath the ominous word: "Wanted!"

HE drank it all in hungrily—the noise and the movement and the feverish activity of the city. His famished senses feasted on it, devoured it with the gluttonous satisfaction of a starving nature seated at a new and gorgeous banquet board. The crowd flowed past him indifferent to his presence, yet he felt himself attached to it by an unseverable tie of brotherhood. For he was back again to claim membership in the multitudinous family of the city. He could have embraced the first passer-by.

Yet, had he done so, the chances are he would have been violently repulsed. His appearance did not invite fraternal intercourse. His shabby clothes, worn shoes, and stained hat bespoke hard wear with a minimum of care. The hunted expression stamped on his face betrayed a mind long tortured by fear.

He glanced about furtively, as from long habit, yet possessed by a thrilling sense of happiness, almost exultation. For the first time in many years the stony hardness of his gaze melted, and he became aware of a warm moisture that blurred his vision; and for one long, throbbing moment he gave himself up unreservedly to the exuberant emotions kindled by his home-coming.

For a single moment only. Then the cold reality of his position began to press on him, crowding out these new sensations, chilling him with the terrifying possibility of having made a mistake, after all. He must look.

From the inside pocket of his coat he produced a handful of newspaper clippings which he had preserved throughout the long years of his wandering. As if to assure himself that he had not been nourishing an illusion, he read the first of these clippings half aloud:

REWARD.

The sum of five thousand dollars will be paid for information leading to the discovery of the whereabouts of Sidney Tanner; or for proof of his death. The said Sidney Tanner was employed up to November 10, 1890, as note teller in the Stuyvesant National Bank, on which day he disappeared. Address Harmon, Lewis & Wylie, Attorneys, Nassau Street, New York City.

The other clippings were sickening repetitions of the first—with a single difference. The reward mounted steadily until at last it reached twenty-five thousand dollars. He replaced the cuttings in his pocket, conscious of a growing exultation and a corresponding return of courage. A triumphant gleam leaped into his eyes.

No, he had not miscalculated. There was the date—November 10, 1890. It was twenty years, to a day. The statute of limitations had intervened. On this day the indictment expired, died a painless, legal death. He had eluded his pursuers; he could flaunt his presence openly before them now.

But the pursuit still lingered with him like a frightful nightmare that extends into the waking hours. The sum total of his peculations had amounted to twelve hundred dollars. An insignificant sum compared with the vast resources of the bank! Yet he had been trailed across Europe and the length of the African continent—twenty times the amount of his theft must have been

spent in the chase. What diabolical persistency! Other men had stolen more and been hunted less. Why this relentless pursuit of him? It smacked strongly of persecution. His fist clenched resentfully.

He might have returned the money if they had given him a chance. He had found numerous jobs; but one after the other he had to relinquish them and migrate to more distant parts. And wherever he had tarried that accursed advertisement had appeared. In English and foreign papers it had loomed up to torture him. This typographic specter, implacable as fate, waling his uneasy conscience as with knotted thongs, had driven him on, into succeeding hardships in remoter places, until at last he had settled in Johannesburg, courting obscurity and counting the days until the blessed moment when he was free to return.

He had left a young man of twenty-five and come back an old man of forty-five. But he was back, homeless yet home, defiantly eager to present himself before those pitiless lawyers, to mock them with the knowledge of their impotence, to wave that glorious statute of limitations in their complacent faces.

Like a man about to draw a final satisfaction out of the pitiful shipwreck of his life, he hastened in the direction of the lawyers' offices.

"Any member of the firm will do," he explained to the office boy, writing his name on a slip of paper.

"But what's the nature of your business?" persisted the boy. "If you tell me, I'll be able to direct you to the one you want to see."

"Just hand anybody my name—they ought to be familiar with it around here by this time," he returned.

The boy went within, returning after several moments, a changed expression on his face.

"Come right into Mr. Harmon's office," he beamed, leading the way.

Harmon, seated at his desk, his small gray eyes peering cautiously from beneath bushy gray eyebrows, directed a suspicious glance at the shabby stranger.

"So you are Mr. Tanner?" he asked in a voice entirely devoid of emotion.

For an instant Tanner remained standing in the doorway, palpitant, with drooping lips, then he stepped boldly forward.

"I'm Tanner!" he exclaimed. "What are you going to do about it?"

If the lawyer sensed the violent throb of agonized passions burning within the visitor, his face did not betray it.

"Sit down!" He waved Tanner to a chair. "Where have you been?"

"Where!" echoed the visitor ironically. "What's the difference now? But your detectives didn't get me—did they?"

"Then you knew we had men after you?" The lawyer looked up in mild surprise.

"I didn't care about the detectives," replied Tanner. "But these blamed advertisements——" He tossed the sheaf of newspaper clippings on the table. "You went to a lot of trouble to find me, didn't you?"

"Well, we spent close to thirty-one thousand dollars in the attempt," acknowledged the lawyer. "We thought we had you located at least twenty times, and sent a man after you."

"Then that was one of your men I nearly killed in Cairo?" He trembled and grew cold at the recollection of it. "Nearly made a murderer of me—didn't you? He recognized me at the express office, but I recognized him first."

Out of the corner of his eyes the lawyer scrutinized the battered hulk of a man. "You didn't prosper in your wanderings?"

The remark released all the compressed force of Tanner's rage. "Look at me!" He rose, throwing open his coat, the better to display his emaciated form. "Do I look as if I haven't suffered? For ten years I sweated my soul out in the blistering tropics. The other ten I slaved in other parts of the world. And every time, just as I was getting on my feet, one of your men came around or that cursed advertisement appeared."

He bent forward, fixing the lawyer with his weary, lightless eyes.

"Why couldn't you let me alone—give me a chance?" he demanded, with feverish ferocity. "I'd have returned the money to the bank. It was inhuman—this hounding of me! For twenty years I've been cut off from family and friends. Why"—his voice broke—"why, at this moment, as I'm sitting here, I don't know whether my mother is alive or not. Not a single soul have I dared to communicate with. Everything in life that I cherished has been crushed out of me—everything except bare life itself. You were determined to make an example of me! Well, you've made one. Could a term in jail have accomplished what I did for myself—with your unrelenting assistance?"

The lawyer, oppressed by the thought that this man held him responsible, in part, at least, for his shattered life, felt a painful contraction of heart, and with difficulty stifled a groan.

"It was your own fault," he shifted back the burden.

"But why was I hounded so?" cried Tanner, his resentment rising. "What good did it do you?" A crafty expression crept into his eyes. "You didn't get me, did you? I eluded the lot of you!" An exultant note rang in his voice. "I eluded you, yes, right up to to-day—and now I can sit here and laugh at you."

The hollow ring of his mirthless laugh sent a tremor galloping up and down Harmon's spine.

"It was all so futile!" he moaned.

"You bet it was futile," agreed Tanner, eagerly accepting the remark as a tribute to his own resourcefulness. "I outwitted you, didn't I?" The pride of achievement now gleamed in his seamed countenance. "You can't touch me now; you admit that, don't you? I'm free to walk the streets unmolested. I'm forty-five years old, and I know I look seventy-five. But I have a few more years to live, and I'm going to live them right here. Right here where I was born! And I warn you right now not to try any underhand legal tricks to deprive me of my rights!"

The lawyer stared helplessly.

"No one can deprive you of your rights," he replied.

Tanner thought he discerned craftiness and evasion in the statement. It was an attempt to beguile him into believing himself secure, while that adroit legal mind was planning even now to deprive him of his liberty.

"Well, don't you try to do so!" He was trembling violently. "Your implacable pursuit is over. To-day the statute of limitations interposed between the bank and me. The indictment is dead. The indictment is dead," he repeated, "and don't you try to resurrect it!" He shook his fist menacingly in the lawyer's face.

The threatening gesture brought Harmon out of his melancholy reflections.

"The statute of limitations doesn't apply to you," he said.

"What!" Tanner recoiled as from a blow. "Then I'm back only to meet the fate from which I ran away?"

"You're back to receive the legacy from which you ran away. Your absence delayed the partition of your uncle's estate for twelve years," the lawyer continued in a voice throbbing with emotion. "He died three days after you left. You inherited one hundred and eighty thousand dollars—a sixth of the estate."

Tanner stood transfixed, bewildered, his senses swimming.

"But the indictment—the indictment!" He recalled it with a painful rush of memory.

"There never was an indictment. We repaid the money to the bank out of your inheritance and the matter was dropped."

The fugitive, glancing back across the dreary lapse of those twenty years, sank into a chair with a groan of smothered suffering. The lawyer, his heart shaken, rose and laid a hand tenderly on his shoulder.

"Come!" he said. "Brace up! The future beckons."

Slowly Tanner lifted himself to his feet and stretched wide his arms, eager to embrace the pleasant outlook. And the light that shone in his eyes was of a dead soul resurrected.

Getting the Crowd

By Bryce Dunlop

Author of "Going Up," Etc.

It's a little early to think about the seaside, but this is such a good story that we want you to have it right away. It tells how the arrival of an aviator affected business on the Board Walk. You will get more of Dunlop's airship stories later on

HARLAN, newly graduated from shop mechanic to exhibiting aviator, paused before Miss Murray's little shop on the Board Walk and contemplated the bathing suits and sweaters in the window. He was a sturdy young man, with fine, steel-blue eyes and a set to his chin that told how he had won his way out of the ranks—a story of I-want-what-I-want-and-I'll-get-it. His trunk would have made it quite clear that he did not want a sweater or a bathing suit; but there was an unsatisfied, curious expression on his face. And as he continued to gaze at the attractions in Miss Murray's window, the look deepened.

Presently he squared about and walked boldly into the shop. A girl in white duck came forward. She was an alert, businesslike little person, with dark hair and expressive eyes that surely could be interested with matters other than those pertaining to commercial life; and she had a voice that was pleasantly crisp and ringing.

"What can I do for you?" she asked.

Harlan leaned against a show case.

"I don't suppose you carry aviation stuff—aëroplane things?"

"You mean costumes?"

The young fellow nodded.

"My name is Harlan," he explained, "and I'm booked here next week. I am to fly along the beach——"

The girl's eyes brightened.

"Oh," she exclaimed, "I've heard of you. I read all about your flight last week—it was wonderful."

Harlan looked down at his shoes.

"I wish everybody wouldn't talk like that," he muttered, "but they all do. I'm not Frank Harlan. I'm 'the fellow that drives the airship.' I don't like it."

"But what you do is so astonishing," said the girl. "Of course, it comes first, but I'm sure the people don't overlook you, yourself."

He stared about the room.

"Some don't," he told her. Then: "I want a cap. But you don't keep my kind of stuff, I guess."

The little proprietress of the place glanced hopelessly over her shelves.

"I have nothing now but ladies' bathing caps," she admitted. Then, with a sad note in her voice, she added: "And perhaps I won't have even those much longer."

The tone of regret was so pronounced that Harlan was impressed with it.

"Why," he inquired, "what is the matter?"

"Business," she answered. "It's no good."

He laughed. "I thought all these Board Walk places made money—and lots of it."

"Some of them do," she corrected, "but not all. And my store has lately joined the latter class. A man without a conscience is to blame."

Harlan leaned both elbows on the show case and looked her in the eyes. They were clear, and honest, and confiding.

"Say!" he demanded, at length, "what's the matter? Go on and tell me. You look like you might be in some sort of trouble, and if I could help——"

"You can't," came the swift words, "but I'll tell you about my affairs, if you wish to know—every one along the Walk knows. You see, it was Joe Grossman——"

"He's the fellow that has the big amusement building down that way, isn't he?" interrupted the aviator.

"Yes," she replied. "But last year he ran a picture show where I am now, and some other things like that—a shooting gallery and a place where they made photographs on post cards—such things. You know what they are?"

"Yes."

"Well," she continued, "he had a lease on this place, and he wanted to get out, he told me, because the show wasn't paying. He said he was going to give it up, but that the other places would run, the same as before, and they'd draw the crowd, as usual. So I took over the lease and moved in. Then, what did he do but move everything down the Walk—'way down there where he is—and all the people followed him! The move left this section dead."

Harlan scowled. "That was a mean trick," he said.

"Of course it was," she agreed. "You see, the place where he had a hurdy-gurdy that made lots of noise with its organ—you have to have noise to get the crowd—well, that place is rented to a Hindu palmist. And he's no good to draw a crowd. No one goes to him but silly women, who say they go 'just for fun,' but believe all he tells them. Then the shooting gallery is replaced by a candy stand. And this end of the Walk isn't at all what it used to be. Yes, Mr. Harlan, that man set a neat trap and caught me in it. He leased that big building where he is and then deliberately deceived me in order to unload his lease on me."

There was sympathy in the air man's face as she concluded the story.

"I wish I could do something to help you," he said.

"But you can't," she reminded him. "Nobody can. I must stay here and face the music. After a while I shall fail, and then I suppose I'll be a waitress in one of the hotels."

"I wish you better luck than that," said the young man. He was too much of a virile, open-air individual to be competent in matters requiring word juggling. He was sorry for Miss Murray, yet he felt quite at a loss when it came to expressing himself. So he walked toward the door.

"Where do you s'pose I could get those caps?" he asked.

"You might try Stone's," she suggested, "they carry athletic goods. You'll find them three blocks up the Walk."

"Thanks," said Harlan, departing. But he could not refrain from turning and calling to her: "I wish I could do something."

But, even as he was saying it, he realized the futility in planning for the welfare of his new acquaintance, who had, somehow, become an important person from his viewpoint. She had leaped into prominence the minute he glimpsed her through the open door of her shop. That is why he had stood and gawked at her bathing suits and sweaters. And now the personal note had entered into the situation. At first Miss Murray had been a girl. Now she was an attractive business woman with a trouble. And chivalry, even though latent in our day, is ever ready to rise at the call of a damsel in distress.

However, it is one thing to rescue lovely femininity from the waves, or swat a rude villain on the nose, and it is quite another to make over a deteriorating business site into a spot aflush with trade. Harlan knew this, and, as he walked along, thinking, he presently regarded it as being as axiomatic as two times two. Apparently there was but one thing to do. He must stand by and watch Miss Murray struggle, and eventually go under. And he was powerless to help.

Even as most people who are creative or do the unusual are temperamental—which psychic condition is largely composed of sympathy—so the aviator was of this breed. And he found himself weighted with the woes of the unfortunate shopkeeper as he entered his hotel and made for the elevator.

A bell boy approached him with a card. It bore the name of Joe Grossman, with a "Mr." prefix.

"The gent'm'n's over there," vouchsafed the boy, pointing out a large, puffy-faced man in a chair against the lobby wall.

"I'll see him," Harlan decided, and approached the fellow, who was pulling at a big, black cigar. He arose as the aëroplane operator came up.

"I guess you're Mr. Harlan," he began. "I know you from your pictures. Can you give me a few minutes?"

"Yes," was the answer.

"I merely wanted to help you out a bit," went on Grossman. "You see, I own a pretty big section of the beach, down my way, and I want to offer it to you, together with a few conveniences. There's some men—workmen—around my place, too, that ain't very busy; and if you've got any sheds to put up, or anything like that, you're welcome to 'em."

"That's very good of you," said Harlan, beginning to wonder at the motive behind this generosity. He had learned enough about the man to suspect that he gave nothing without a return.

"Not at all, not at all," exclaimed the generous one, with a deprecatory wave of his hand. "I'm interested in the success of your flights, that's all. I want to see you come through with bells on, Harlan. You are going to bring a lot of business to the beach, and, of course, all of us people down here are for you. But I've been interested in aviation ever since you fellows began to startle folks, and I want to have some little part in this exhibition—perhaps you can blame it on a man's natural vanity—lots of us like to be in on things that we can't do ourselves." He laughed, and Harlan laughed with him.

"So I'd be obliged to you if you will take what I've got," went on Grossman, "and if there's anything I ain't got that you want, just set up a little holler for it—um, you can choose whatever spots on the beach you want for starts and finishes, can't you? Nobody's got any say about that but you, have they?"

"No," replied Harlan. "And I'm studying the conditions now, so I'll know the beach by the time my machine gets here—I expect it Saturday, and I'll have it set up ready for Monday afternoon. I've got to avoid the neighborhood of that big hotel. You see, there are too many wind currents there——"

"My place is four blocks below," Grossman hastened to assure him.

"Then I'll think about it," said Harlan.

Grossman arose.

"There's a big beach where I am," he concluded, "and mechanical facilities and men. You'd better decide to make it your headquarters. And," he added, with a mysterious wink, "if you want anything else—any inducements that a man can carry around in his pocket and spend—just say so. Or, if you're backward—well, I'll see you again before long."

And he went out, leaving the aviator in a puzzled state of mind. He was new in the business, flying on salary for the concern that made his aëroplane; and this was the first time he had met with the business underworld. Plainly Grossman had offered him a bribe, but for what? Where did the profit to the amusement man come in?

Harlan thought over it for a long time, but could come only within vague view of the truth. He was entirely unfamiliar with resort business conditions; and his mental processes were handicapped by that. Had he known the value of loud bands, of jangling pianos, of the bally-hoo man's shrill rattle, he might have gone behind Grossman's proposal. But he did not know, and so he puzzled over the situation like a man dressing a baby, utterly at sea.

But there were other things demanding his attention, and so he put Grossman out of his mind for the time, and went about selecting a suitable starting point.

He found conditions at the seaside different from those at the inland factory, the evaporation of the ocean creating a changeable state of the atmosphere. Then, too, there were tall ho-

tels that he knew were the centres of currents and eddies.

For several days he investigated, even sending up toy balloons as feelers and noting their actions. And then, after taking into consideration the sweep of the beach, its width and indentations, he concluded that Grossman's place was the best for his purpose.

The man's offer of men was, of course, not considered, as a crew from the factory would come with the plane. The beach was the main attraction. And so Harlan decided to set up headquarters there. When he told Grossman of it, the fellow was vastly pleased, but later he eyed the aviator curiously, as if he expected something further on the subject. However, as nothing came, he accepted the announcement with the air of a man who has made his point cheaply, and went his way, quite content.

Monday afternoon was the fag end of a still, hot day, exactly in accord with Harlan's wishes. A slight breeze blew out of the north. The aëroplane, tuned to perfection, stood waiting on the hard sand near the water. Harlan was near it, the centre of a vast crowd's gaze. All day long excursion trains had been pouring humanity into the resort until the Board Walk was a solid mass of it, crowding, shuffling, laughing.

It was a happy throng; and in it, but not of it, was Grossman, pleased as a girl with a hank of new store hair. He was very busy about his attractions. People were shooting in his galleries, posing before his cameras, buying his salt-water taffy, and riding on his merry-go-rounds with all the careless regard for money that a pleasure-seeking mob exhibits.

Directly in front of his place were Harlan and the aëroplane, and the people bore down in droves to look on. When their first curiosity had been satisfied, they dropped back upon the nickel lures, to await the soaring of the big bird.

Harlan did not know, but Grossman knew, that the airship was worth a hundred barking bally-hoo men, a hundred wheezy mechanical music makers, a hundred brass bands. It got the crowd more surely than the whole list of old-time come-on devices, and, what was more, it held it.

Grossman did not even stop to look at the poised machine. His interest in aëronautics was sadly laggard in the sound of the showering nickels. He did not care what became of Harlan and the aëroplane, just so they did not leave the front of his establishment.

At length, however, Harlan decided that it was time to do that very thing. He entered the machine, his helpers twirled the propeller until the engine started, the plane swept over the ground for a few hundred feet, and, with a lunge, was in the air. It shot along over the beach for a short distance, and then began a wide circle above the water.

Harlan heard the crowd cheering him noisily, and he took his attention from manipulating the plane long enough to glance down at the black jam on the Board Walk. He noted that it was most dense in front of Grossman's, and that it trickled almost to nothingness as it strung out past Miss Murray's store. Not many people were that far up. Harlan perceived this in a general way, but he was more interested in something else.

Of course, his machine required practically all of his concentration, yet he found time to glance toward the door of the little shop wherein were sold sweaters and bathing suits and various seaside requirements. And when he saw a recognizable figure standing in the doorway, he did not look that way any more, but paid strict heed to his flying.

There was a contented smile on his face, however, and a bit more of the dare-devil entered into his work. He sailed his flyer with the recklessness of a ten-year-old boy walking the top of the back fence with the neighbor's pig-tailed daughter looking on.

For fifteen minutes he jockeyed through the air, dipping, and rising, and carving figure eights in the nothingness. The crowd, cheering at first, stood awed and mystified. It was a miracle they were seeing; a supernatural performance that bereft them of all

power save that of staring. They were witnessing a man riding on emptiness; and they watched him, silent, as he performed the last of his evolutions and glided down to the sand.

He had been successful in his flight, so much so that the police were put to it to keep back the enthusiastic ones who would have overwhelmed him and damaged his air craft in their delight. And it was with this knowledge that he sauntered down the Walk later, in the direction of the tiny shop, which was so close to the verge of oblivion.

"You made a fine flight," Miss Murray told him, when he arrived. She was arranging some newly arrived goods in the window, in the hope that some chance evening promenader would fancy something, and buy it.

"Any change in the prospects?" he asked, for the doom of the establishment was ever on his mind.

"No," she replied, "not for the better. Things are worse——" She checked herself.

"Worse?" he exclaimed.

"There wasn't much of a crowd around this afternoon," she evaded.

He looked hard into the girl's troubled face and a pucker began to show in his forehead. It was as if he were trying to remember something—to grasp some elusive idea.

"The crowd?" he muttered, then stopped.

"The summer-resort slogan of success is 'get the crowd,'" she laughed.

"I—I got the crowd," he said slowly. "I got it and——"

"Joe Grossman," she finished for him.

Then it was that the phantom idea in Harlan's brain shone out in true form and proportion. In that instant a great many details of his life during the past few days placed themselves in their logical position, and took on relative values. Joe Grossman's visit was one of them; his kindness was another; his veiled offer of money was yet another; and his many little flatteries and attentions formed a background for the whole. Harlan knew now. Grossman was an aviation patriot to "get the crowd."

A deeper red burned in the young man's tanned cheeks. His expression reflected the shame he felt at the realization that the amusement man had made of him a catspaw. He dropped his eyes. Then he raised them again and gazed squarely into Miss Murray's.

"Say!" he said, "you fix up your window with a lot of signs, and hire a clerk. I guess this shop isn't going to bust." For a moment he stared almost stupidly at the girl, then he abruptly turned about and walked away.

The next day the excursion trains dumped their loads, as before, into the resort. But now they were bigger loads. The newspapers of the country had blazed big with Harlan's feat of the day before; and it followed that hordes from the near-by cities turned out to see it repeated.

By three in the afternoon the Board Walk was massed with the populace, peanut shells dropped in showers, and the bally-hoo of the place was in full cry.

And, like unto conditions of the previous day, the crowd focused at Grossman's. His amusement building was jammed with those who waited for Harlan to lift into the air. His hirelings were deluged with small change. And he, himself, coatless and perspiring, ran hither and thither among his catchpenny contrivances, joyously observing the smooth, money-making action of it all. He was indeed a glad man, and he was so anxious for his happiness to endure that he sought Harlan's connivance.

"Gee!" he cried, making his way to where the young man and the assistants were preparing the plane for flight, "I tell you, business is good. What time are you going up?"

"In fifteen minutes," replied the aviator coldly.

Grossman looked displeased.

"Can't you stall around a while," he suggested, "till those rubes spend a little more money in my places? They're letting go of it like it was a hot stove."

"I'm going up as soon as the plane is right," declared Harlan. And though Grossman pleaded with all his persuasiveness, that answer was final.

Harlan paid slight heed to him, but went about the flyer, pulling at the bracing wires, testing the control, and examining the connections until he had at last satisfied himself that the machine was safe, and in condition for action. Then he told his men to make ready, and got into his seat.

As he did so, the waiting crowd surged against the outer rail of the Walk, the word went through it that the flight was about to take place—and Grossman's places of profit were instantly deserted.

The men turned the propeller, and the engine cracked its exhaust into the air. Slowly the plane moved forward, then faster, faster, until the wheels were cutting over the packed sand like those of racing bicycles. All at once the forward planes pointed upward, and the flyer was in the air, skyward bound. It rose until it was twenty feet above the sand, then took an even keel and shot along the water front. In another minute it had the ocean beneath it.

Suddenly a cry arose from the spectators. The aëroplane seemed to be in trouble. It dipped, rose; dipped perilously near the water, wobbled, and seemed hurt, like a bird with a hunter's shot in its wing. And now it turned in toward the beach, as if seeking a solid landing place. Once again it flew along evenly, but slowly.

Clearly something was the matter, and the crowd began to move up along the Board Walk, to be in at the death. It was a wondering, silent crowd, apprehensive, eager. It trampled on itself, and pushed, and elbowed—and stared.

Once again came a cry:

"He's down!"

And he was. The aëroplane lay motionless on the beach. Harlan stepped out and looked up over the edge of the walk. Through the gathering mob he caught a glimpse of Miss Murray's face in her doorway. For the flying machine had come to earth directly in front of the little shop, wherein were sold sweaters and bathing suits and odds and ends dear to the heart of the summer vacationer.

As Harlan looked, he grinned. Then he boldly climbed up on the Walk, pushed through the crowd to the girl's side, and whispered:

"To-morrow you'd better lay in a stock of picture post cards."

He was there only long enough to say it rapidly. The next instant he was off up the Walk, to his headquarters. When he returned, he had with him a long can of lubricating oil. This he proceeded to pour into the reservoir of the machine. And, while the police kept back the thousands of humans, he gravely consulted with his men, who had run up, and finally gave it out that he was not sure of his propeller; that the continuance of the flight would have to be postponed for a half hour or so, until a new one could be unpacked and fitted to the shaft.

For fifteen minutes the spectators stood still and stared. Then they began to get uneasy. They fidgeted and moved about, talking among themselves. Finally some one glanced at the sign of the Hindu palmist and began to joke about it. A woman saw a bathing cap in Miss Murray's window. Turning to her escort, she said:

"I'll just buy one of those while I think about it. I lost mine in the water this morning." Thereupon, she proceeded to act.

That started it. Within five minutes Miss Murray was a very busy young woman, selling souvenir side combs, hatpins, and the like. By the time the plane was ready to resume its flying, she had disposed of a sweater, four men's bathing suits, and enough of other stock to bring a grand total of thirty-two dollars and seventy cents into her cash drawer.

Moreover, six young women told her that they would come in after the aëroplane exhibition was over, and look at beach costumes. She felt quite content as the roar from Harlan's engine announced the end of business for the time being.

Although the young aviator did not

know the extent to which he had benefited Miss Murray by his stop, he was certain that there had been some results; and his heart was light as he sped away over the waves in fulfillment of his contract with the Beach Association. His flight, that day, was a repetition of his first, with the exception that it was longer and more thrilling. At its conclusion he went to Grossman.

"Who owns that strip of beach where I came down this afternoon?" he asked.

Grossman regarded him questioningly.

"The Seaside Hotel people own it," he replied.

"Well," announced the young man, "I'm going to get permission to start and finish there. It's a better place for my purpose."

Grossman flushed.

"Say!" he sneered, "don't you think I can meet their offer?"

Harlan looked squarely into his eyes.

"Grossman," he began, "I know very well that a man like you can't comprehend the fact that there are honest people in the world—men who can see higher than a dollar. I won't try to argue with you, because I don't care what you think—you'll think rotten thoughts, anyway. If I stay on this beach, you'll believe that I'm trying to hold you up; if I don't take your money, you'll be very certain that it's because I am afraid of being exposed by you, and stay, through fear. If I leave, you'll know in your heart that I'm bought off. But, let me tell you, Grossman, my real reason for going away is that my eyes have been opened, and I don't care to be around the premises of a man like you."

As he finished, the young fellow turned his back on the amusement man and went over to the mechanics who were about to house his aëroplane.

Grossman stood still for a moment, then his upper lip curled disgustedly, and he slowly mounted the steps to the Walk and disappeared into his amusement palace.

That evening Harlan sought out Miss Murray.

"The hotel people have given me permission to use their beach," he told her, "and I'm going to move my hangar tomorrow. The beach extends from the hotel, past here, you know."

"Yes," she said, "the hotel is my landlord."

"I'll be here a month," he went on, "and there isn't any reason why you shouldn't do a big business."

"No," she admitted, "there isn't."

He was silent for a moment. Then:

"I've known you several days——" he began.

"Six," she informed him.

"Well," he went on, "I'm used to speed. I often go more than sixty miles an hour in the plane."

She was silent.

"But," he continued, "I guess you're not so used to it as I am, so I'll give you a chance to get caught up with me. I'll tell you this much, though: when I came in your store the first time, I didn't come in to buy a cap. I knew you didn't keep 'em, and, anyway, I didn't need one—say! close up the place, Miss Murray, and let's look at some vaudeville."

And, when the young woman agreed, she had the appearance of one who understands thoroughly, and is not at all displeased.

THE PARTICULAR MR. BIEBER

Sidney Bieber, a member of the Republican National Committee, has a "bug" on collars. He will walk ten blocks to get the one brand of neckwear that he likes.

THE BASHFUL MR. HITCHCOCK

Frank H. Hitchcock, the postmaster general, who is a favorite among the belles of New York and Washington, is shy and bashful.

A Chat With You

FEW people of intelligence fail to enjoy a good detective story. Lawyers, doctors, scientists, college professors, statesmen, as well as those in the less distinguished vocations, all answer to the same common touch of nature. The late Senator Hoar found in such tales his almost sole mental relaxation, and if we cared we might fill the page with a list of notables of similar taste. If you like detective stories, rest assured you are in good company.

THE detective story is older than some of us might at first believe. We doubt not that if we could read the inscriptions on the sunburned bricks that strew the plains where once stood Babylon and Nineveh, we would find that some age-old novelist had been at work there, chipping out his tales in the most durable editions, and leaving volumes in the form of brick walls as solid and palpable memorials of his literary skill. Those who are so fortunate as to have an acquaintance with ancient Chinese literature tell us that it has mystery tales older than the oldest civilization of Europe. To come to more familiar things, there is at least one splendid detective story, vividly and briefly told, in the Bible. We won't tell you the story. You ought to remember it when we tell you that its hero, the detective, was none other than Solomon, the wise king, whose fame has exceeded that of all other monarchs of the globe.

IN the Arabic there are detective stories. Bagdad was a very hive of mysteries, and the Caliph Haroun al Raschid was, in a double sense, the prince of detectives. Voltaire, the cleverest Frenchman of the eighteenth century, read "The Arabian Nights," as well as almost everything else worth reading. He took his material where he found it, and wrote the first good detective story in what we call modern literature. Edgar Allen Poe, moody and unsuccessful, read Voltaire's story. While not so clever as Voltaire, he was a better story-teller. His detective tales were read around the world. Europe first, America afterward, recognized them as a great literary achievement. They first called to European attention the fact that there were writers in America. Then, of course, we all know of Wilkie Collins, of Robert Louis Stevenson with his "Suicide Club," of a dozen others of the last fifty years. And everywhere, no matter what the civilization, no matter what the time, the detective story has been the most popular form of literature of its day.

THE reason for this is not so far to seek as it might seem. It is rooted in one of the underlying principles of human society. The criminal is always the enemy of the social organization which he infests. He is not so much the enemy of any single man as of all of us. You can't loot a bank without hurting business and credit all over the town, besides directly ruining a number of people. You can't rob a house without disturbing the sense of security and hurting real-estate values all over the neighborhood. You can't shoot or

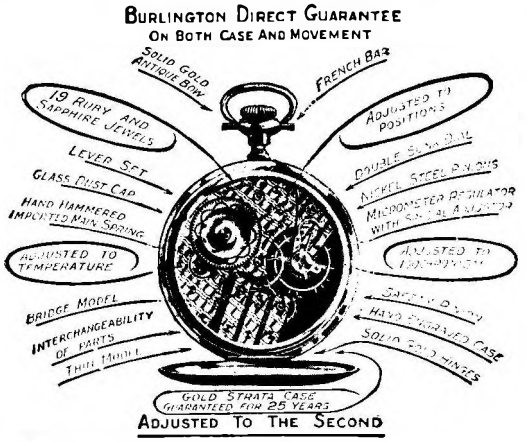
poison a man, even a bad man, without inflicting serious injury on the whole community, without doing violence to that sense of the safety and sanctity of human life which is the finest flower and evidence of our best civilization, and for which those who have passed before us in the human caravan have made endless sacrifice. And as the criminal is the secret enemy of all, so the man who points him out is the type of the defender and avenger of society. He may hold a very humble place in the ranks, he may not himself be aware of what he represents, but in absolute truth he is a soldier of the common good in the most literal meaning of the term. So if you, like ourselves, are unaffectedly and unblushingly fond of good detective stories, it won't hurt us to remember that this taste which we share with the best and wisest, is only a reflection of a worthy and admirable human impulse.

ALL the foregoing because it happened to be uppermost in our minds at present, and because as we have said before, we always in these little "chats" say naturally what we happen to be thinking about, which is always the best way between friends. At the same time it occurs to us that we have and are publishing more really good detective fiction than any other periodical in the world. You have a big installment of Anna Katharine Green's serial in the present issue, there's another story coming by Roman Doubleday, there are more new detective stories to appear by J. Kenilworth Egerton. Henry C. Rowland, whose novel of the sea you have read in the present issue, has just completed a long detective story, one of the best we have read in some time. It will appear in an early number of THE POPULAR. Also, the complete novel which will open the next issue of the magazine, the one out on the tenth of March, is a really remarkable story of mystery and intrigue, by William Johnston, more of whose stories you will read in later issues. So if you are telling some one about THE POPULAR you need not be at a loss for a phrase of characterization. Say that it's the biggest fiction magazine, and that it publishes more and better detective stories than any other magazine in the world. You'll be telling nothing but the unvarnished truth.

OF course, as a rule, verse, or poetry, as some call it, is a dead and discouraging thing. Nearly every one goes through a disagreeable period when he tries to write poetry. Hardly anybody ever succeeds. We don't go in for love sonnets in THE POPULAR. But once in a while there is a sort of verse that will stir you and remain with you for a long time. So if you see anything in any number of this magazine say by Arthur Guiterman, or Berton Braley, printed in irregular lines that don't run all across the page as these do, read it. It will be worth your while.

WE haven't room to say much about this issue out in a fortnight, but it's good enough to speak for itself. There's a splendid short story by Roy Norton, there is another account of the doings of Mrs. Sweeny, by Charles R. Barnes, there are great adventure stories by Herman Whitaker, Bryce Dunlop, James Hay, Jr., and others. There's the conclusion of the two-part story by Louis Joseph Vance, and of course there are big installments of the great serials by George Bronson-Howard, B. M. Bower, and Anna Katharine Green.

Fighting the Trust



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We ship the watch on approval, prepaid (your choice of lady's or gentleman's open face or hunting case). You risk absolutely nothing—you pay nothing—not one cent—unless you **want** the great offer after seeing and thoroughly inspecting the watch.

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THIS BOOKLET will quickly convince you too that you **DO** want an Anti-Trust watch—made in the independent factory that is fighting the trust as best it can by giving better quality and superior workmanship throughout; we will quickly convince you that the Burlington watch, on which there is only **one** rock-bottom price (the same rock-bottom price everywhere) is THE watch for the discriminating buyer; that it is THE watch for the man or woman who wants, not the largest selling brand which everybody has, but the **best** watch, the watch bought by experts, THE watch that is absolutely perfect in its many points of superiority—the **Burlington Watch.**

You will be posted on **inside facts** and prices when you send for the Burlington Company's free book on watches.

Now Write

for the free book. It will tell you what you ought to know before you even examine a watch. It will tell you the inside facts about watch prices, and will explain the many superior points of the Burlington over the double priced trust products. Just send your name and address.

No Letter Is Necessary—COUPON Will Do

BURLINGTON WATCH COMPANY
Dept. 1143, 19th and Marshall Blvd., Chicago, Ill.

CUT OR TEAR ALONG THIS LINE

BURLINGTON WATCH CO
Dept. 1143, 19th and Marshall Blvd.
CHICAGO • • ILLINOIS

Please send me (without obligations and prepaid) your free book on watches and copy of your $1,000 challenge, with full explanations of your cash or $2.50 a month offer on the Burlington Watch.

Name.....

Address.....

.....

Tell the substitutor: "No, thank you. I want what I asked for. Good-bye."

"We Need a

You Can "Fill the

The demand of the employer to-day is for the *trained* man—the EXPERT in his particular line. Not much hope for the "guess-worker"—or the "odd-jobber."

What are *you?* When the men who hire say: "We need a trained man"—where do YOU stand? Can you "fill the bill"—make good? If you can't—if you have no especial training of any kind—it's *up to you* to get busy—mark the I. C. S. coupon—and win *success and bigger pay*, as thousands have done.

Trained Men Who Have Won

Give serious thought to-day to what the I. C. S. has done for these men—there are thousands of other cases just like these—then, if YOU want to get on, begin NOW.

I enrolled for your Mechanical Engineering Course while employed as a machinist with the Union Iron Works, Minneapolis, at a salary of fifteen dollars a week. In two years the knowledge gained from your institution enabled me to double my salary. I am now mechanical engineer for the H. L. Collins Company and Superintendent for the Waldorf Box Company, at a salary of three thousand dollars a year, which I could never have attained without your training.

H. F. TEETSELL,
Care of H. L. Collins Co.,
St. Paul, Minn.

Some time ago your Students' Aid Department notified me of an opening here with the Ottumwa Box Car Loader Company, for which I promptly made application. I got the position and it is a splendid one. Two years ago I was a laborer, dissatisfied with my wages, but not knowing a way to advance. I finally took up your Course in Mechanical Drawing and applied myself to study. In twelve months' time I finished my Course, devoting only my spare time to it, and I am a man with quite a family at that. I then went to the nearest city, Cedar Rapids, and *got a job right away* making patent office drawings, at an increase of 45 per cent over my former pay, besides shorter hours. Now I am employed by the Ottumwa Box Car Loader Company at an advance of 75 per cent. All this has not only raised me to a better position and social standing, but has given me new hope and a future to look forward to, as I mean to advance in my chosen profession. Now, you have my story; *make use of it to stir other men to action.*

ROBERT ZOLLINGER,
Ottumwa, Iowa.

At the time I enrolled for a Course in Retail Advertising, I had only a common school education and was driving a delivery wagon. After six months' study of the Course I was made advertising manager for Crumley Brothers, one of the largest dry goods stores in Kingston.

FRANCIS H. WILLIAMS,
Kingston, Ontario, Canada.

I had heard of the I. C. S. several times before I enrolled, but while I wanted to take a Course of instruction, I had a family to support and was afraid I could not make the monthly payments, so I put it off from time to time until almost three years had elapsed. At the end of that time I found I was in the same position as before, and I realized that to increase my earning capacity I would have to do something. So I enrolled for your Mechanical Drawing Course, completing it in about 10 months. My old work was that of a baker, and before I was half way through my Course I began making money through my drawings. I found that, instead of going out evenings and spending money, I could stay home and make money. Under separate cover, I send you a blueprint of the first job I undertook—a large bake oven; I got $35 for the drawing and $25 a week for overseeing the completion of the work. Since then

2812

Trained Man"

Bill"—If You Will

If you want to advance—to rise in the world—to make MORE MONEY—you must have *training* that *fits you* for the job ahead. The first step is to mark the coupon—mail it—and let the I. C. S. explain how they come to you anywhere and help you—at home, in your spare time—to be an EXPERT in the line of work you prefer, no matter what you are doing now.

Every month 300 or more students *voluntarily* report their *salaries raised* through I. C. S.—405 during December. YOU can succeed, too.

Bigger Pay

I have sold four of these prints and have several other persons interested in similar ovens. I am not in my own office, but I gave up my old work about a year ago and expect to have my office built by the last of this month. As you know, I have not yet completed your Mechanical Engineering Course, for which I enrolled after finishing the Drawing Course. I would not, for many thousands of dollars, be put back in the position where I was when I first heard of the International Correspondence Schools; and if anyone is interested in knowing any more about my experience with you and my change of occupation I shall be glad indeed to have them write to me.

FRANK M. GALBRAITH,
Coalport, Pa.

My earnings have been practically doubled since I first enrolled with you. I was then a molder; I am now assistant superintendent of the American Radiator Company at the Pierce Plant, Buffalo, N. Y. My salary has been increased 100 per cent. I was helped considerably by the Students' Aid Department keeping the manager informed of my progress, for he saw by that I was not satisfied and was trying to better my condition.

H. B. HOBBS, Buffalo.

I have all the design work I can do in the evenings *and have paid for my Course many times over.* Mr. Abell, the architect, for whom I have worked 4 years, influenced me to take out the Design Course. I did not expect to remain in the architectural work—preferred to become a designer, but as long as Mr. Abell wishes me to go into business with him, I have taken out your Complete Architectural Course, and hope soon to be able to pass the State Examination for a license. I am, of course, earning many times what I earned at the time I enrolled.

G. A. CARPENTER,
1033 Prospect St., Elgin, Ill.

Mark Your Coupon

INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS,
Box 821, SCRANTON, PA.

Please explain, without further obligation on my part, how I can qualify for the position, trade or profession before which I have marked X.

Automobile Running	Civil Service
Mine Superintendent	Architect — Spanish
Mine Foreman	Chemist — French
Plumbing, Steam Fitting	Gas Engines — German
Concrete Construction	Banking — Italian
Civil Engineer	Building Contractor
Textile Manufacturing	Architectural Draftsman
Stationary Engineer	Industrial Designing
Telephone Expert	Commercial Illustrating
Mechanical Engineer	Window Trimming
Mechanical Draftsman	Show Card Writing
Electrical Engineer	Advertising Man
Electric Lighting Supt.	Stenographer
Electric Wireman	Bookkeeper

Name _____

Present Occupation _____

Street and No. _____

City _____ State _____

Tell the substitutor: "No, thank you, I want what I asked for. Good-bye."

Six Months to Pay

You will be surprised and delighted when you receive your copy of the latest edition of Woolf's Encyclopædia of Bargains—now fresh from the presses.

This book will **prove** to you that **you** may be a style leader among your friends—wear clothes of absolutely proper perfection—and pay for them in little sums—just as is most convenient to you.

We allow you six full months, in which to pay for anything you buy of us, and as we are one of the

Largest Establishment of this kind in the World

we absolutely guarantee perfect satisfaction or your money back. Our buying power is tremendous—we control the output of vast factories. We pay no middleman's profits—no drummers' traveling expense and salaries. No agents. All these savings, we turn over to you in the shape of **better clothes for less money**—with six months to pay.

We Ship on Approval

This handsome 2-piece cutaway suit. Oxford Grey Worsted, faultlessly tailored. Price..... $11.00
Others up to $27.50

We were the first concern to offer wearing apparel on credit by mail. We are the leaders. We have thousands of satisfied customers all over the country. Others attempt to imitate our methods but they can't imitate our prices nor the quality of our garments. **Our transactions are absolutely confidential.**

Send Your Name at Once

We will send you this beautiful Encyclopædia of bargains, together with a personal letter from our President, explaining the methods of confidential dealing by which we have built up the largest business of its kind in the world.

Send for your copy of Book No. 56 at once. Address

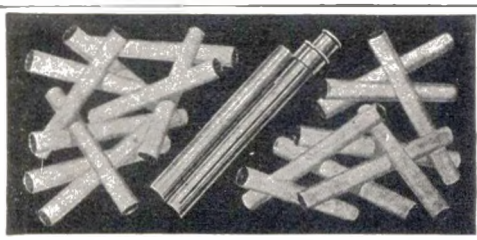
WOOLF'S INCORPORATED

Dept. 906, Douglas Park Station, Chicago

Sent on Approval. Send No Money. $2 HAIR SWITCH. WE WILL TRUST YOU TEN DAYS.

Choice of Natural wavy or straight hair. Send a lock of your hair, and we will mail a 22 inch short stem fine human hair switch to match. If you find it a big bargain, remit $2.00 in ten days, or sell 3 and GET YOUR SWITCH FREE. Extra shades a little more. Inclose 6c postage. Free beauty book showing latest style of hair dressing—also high grade switches, pompadours, wigs, puffs, etc. **ANNA AYERS,** Dept. 757

19 Quincy Street, Chicago



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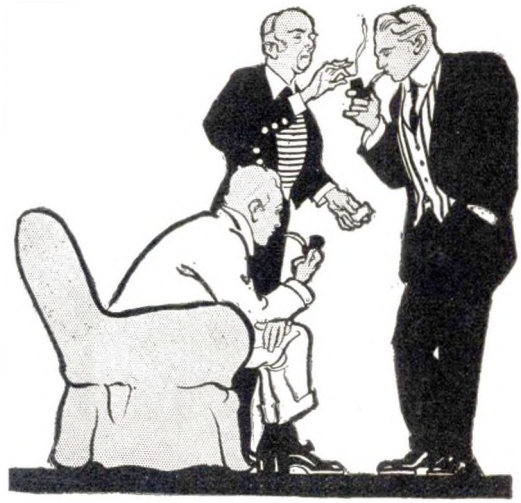
A Practical Novelty for Cigarette Smokers

One Complete Nickeled

TURKO CIGARETTE ROLLER

Sent postpaid for **25cts.** Address,

Turko Roller Co., 135 William St., New York



Velvet

THE SMOOTHEST TOBACCO

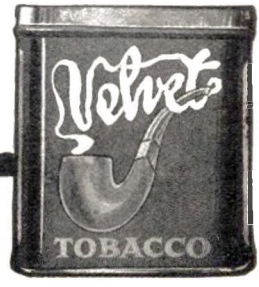
At the Club among the boys Velvet creates good fellowship. It's a rattling good smoke. It's as smooth as its name. Smooth in smoking—smooth in taste and it burns smoothly. Velvet is Burley tobacco—the choicest leaves of each plant. Cured so perfectly and made so skillfully that there isn't a semblance of a tongue burn in it Velvet is different from other tobacco because everything about it tells of quality. That's the reason. It's the kind of tobacco that makes you sit up and take notice. When you go to your dealer—be sure—insist upon getting Velvet.

Spaulding & Merrick
Chicago, Ill.

In a neat metal can

10 cents

At your dealer's or if he is sold out, send us the 10c. We'll send you a can to any address in the U.S.A.



Tell the substitutor: "No, thank you, I want what I asked for. Good-bye."

Kellogg's

TOASTED CORN FLAKES

The package of the genuine bears this signature

W. K. Kellogg

Kellogg Toasted Corn Flake Co., Battle Creek, Mich.

Canadian Trade Supplied by the Battle Creek Toasted Corn Flake Co., Ltd. London, Ont.