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The Popular Magazine

OCTOBER MONTH-END EDITION
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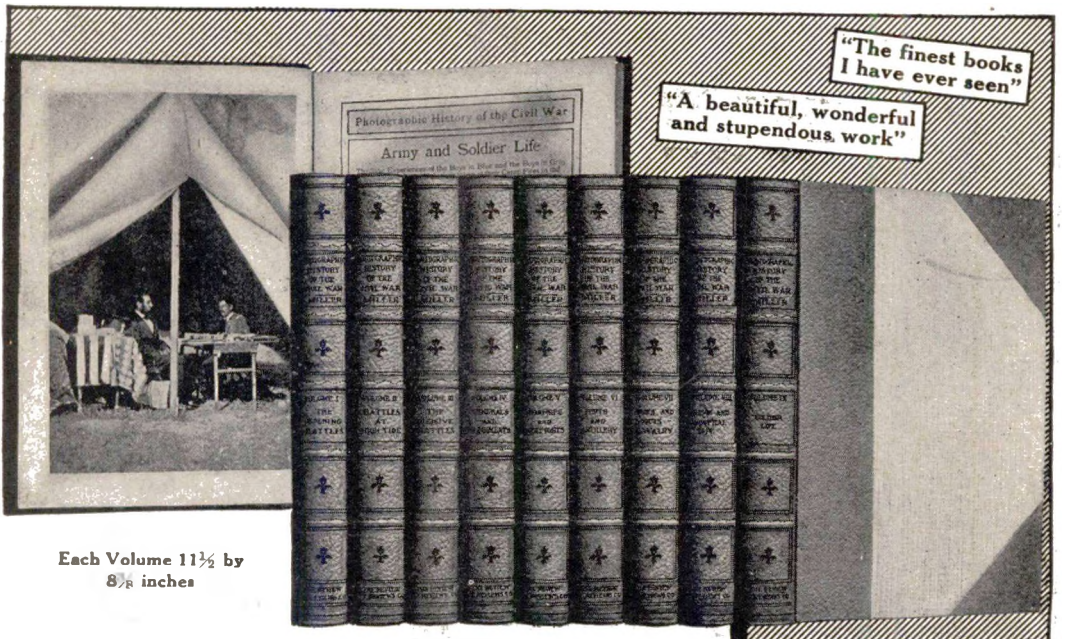

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MONTH-END EDITION

VOLUME XXII NUMBER 1

TWICE-A-MONTH

The Popular Magazine

CONTENTS

OCTOBER 15, 1911

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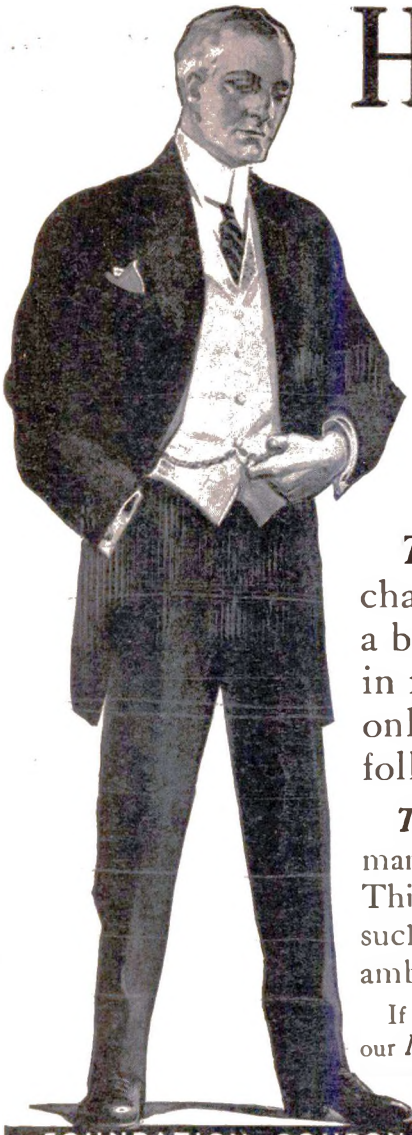

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Pop. Mag. 10-15-11

THE POPULAR MAGAZINE

VOL. XXII. OCTOBER 15, 1911. No. 1.

He's a Corker

By George Randolph Chester

Author of "Saving the Babies," "Get-Rich-Quick Wallingford," Etc.

Competition may be the life of trade, but it is more apt to be the death of somebody's business. Here is the story of a life-and-death struggle with the big combinations—a story of a phase of the business world where you must "swallow or be swallowed." Also you will find again in action Sledge, the political boss, the man who carries senatorships in his vest pocket and holds banks between his thumb and finger.

(*A Complete Novel*)

DANNY FARREL came into the spick-and-span store with a wrath which turned purple the fine little network of veins on his ruddy face, and which even seemed to crisp more tightly his curly gray side beard. Blue-eyed and black-haired Jean, in the cashier's high, little perch, more like an overgrown bird cage than the rigid business accouterment it pretended to be, looked down at her father and smiled; but she did not let him catch her at it, for the Farrel wrath, swift, tempestuous, and harmless, was recognized, in the family of two, as a more or less official function, which must be received with dignity and respect, and not laughed about until afterward.

"Charley!" he called, in a tone which made a thin, yellow-haired boy fall off a stepladder. "Clear out that north window! Quick, now!"

"Yes, sir," said Charley, blinking, and made a dive for the north window, stumbling over his own legs, and knocking down a pile of breakfast food.

"Snakes and snappers!" cried Danny, beside himself with rage. "I never saw so many elbows on one boy!" and he made an energetic movement in the direction of the fallen packages.

Pale-eyed Charley Sappy, who had stooped to pick them up, saw him coming, and let out a yelp as he fled to the front of the store. That flight was the last straw, for Danny Farrel had never lifted his hand against a child or a woman, and Charley, though he was at the age where the down on his lip was an insipid mustache, and who sighed in secret corners over the loveliness of Jean, and wrote poetry about her, and grew desperate when she chatted with men, was a youngster in the eyes of Danny.

Human endurance could go no further. Danny Farrel deliberately took a lamp chimney from his shelves, walked to the back door, and threw it with all

his might into the brick-lined ash pen. The crash was always a great help to him in emergencies; and Jean knew that the climax was over. She was quietly restoring the breakfast food to its pyramid on the counter when her father returned, and she cast up at him a glance with ever so little a trace of slyness in it. For just an instant the sapphire blue eyes of father and daughter met in humorous sympathy, and then he stooped down beside her, and humbly picked up breakfast food.

"Is it the Hasbin store, or the Tea Company, or your rheumatism?" asked Jean, as she placed the last box on top of the pile.

"Hasbin," he replied. "I'd spend a thousand years in purgatory to punch his head off every morning!"

"What has he done?" inquired Jean, in no way frightened by the blood-thirsty sentiment.

"Cut cling peaches to six cents!"

Jean seemed to think that sufficient provocation.

"The cheapest we have cost us nine," she commented seriously, glancing up, with a look of much concern, at the long shelf full of yellow-labeled cans. "Of course, they're the eleven-cent quality."

"They are that," assented Danny ruefully. "Early as it is in the mornin', that botherin' Mrs. Sullivan bought a can, and opened them, and called me in. They're as good as those Redwood Clings."

"You want to watch out, father," laughed Jean. "Mrs. Sullivan'll marry you yet."

"I love my peace," retorted Danny, with twinkling eyes, "and with you and Mrs. Sullivan in the same house—all the snakes! It's either that boy or me! One of us'll be the death of the other!"

Charley, emptying the north window of its root-beer and grape-juice display, had inadvertently stepped on a bottle, and had rolled himself out of the show window, feet foremost, into a stack of galvanized pails.

A grinning little girl, with her front teeth gone, and her mouth full of s's, came in for half a pound of coffee. Mrs. Krissman wedged through the door, in fat and panting haste, for breakfast rolls. John Clansey, three days away from his Saturday-night shave, hurried in for his regular morning paper of scrap tobacco. A wide-faced German delivery boy, the exact shape of a brick, thumped in at the back door, half an hour late, with a thick pretense of having been busy in the cellar. The breakfast emergency rush was on, and Jean, helping to wait on customers, in addition to her duties as cashier, had but little time to worry.

In the first lull, she went to the door, and glanced in at the windows of the Gilbert Hasbin Company Store No. 48. It was piled high with clean-looking cans, bearing labels of the Gilbert Hasbin Canning Company; and she reflected, with a sigh, in which there was a clearer recognition of the inevitable than her father could admit, that, in all the fifty-odd red-front Hasbin stores in the city, a "drive" was being made that day on cling peaches at six cents.

On the other side of the Farrel store was the characteristic white front of the Tokio Tea Company, grocery, which was also one of many; and she knew that, within an hour, one of their windows would contain peaches at the same or a lesser figure. Her father was preparing to do likewise, and it seemed an absurd proceeding; yet the necessity of it was too serious to be taken lightly.

One such competitor would have been sufficient, but for Dan Farrel's long-established store to be caught between the fierce cross-fire of these two warring monopolies meant his present disaster, in spite of the host of stanch customers and friends he had acquired in a quarter of a century's square dealing and sunny personality.

A brisk young man, tall, athletic, black-eyed, and very neatly dressed, swung off a passing street car, and was at the curb almost in the same swing. He tipped his hat and smiled as he saw Jean, paused a second for a swift, comprehensive survey of the Hasbin windows, and swung inside.

The olive tint of Jean's oval face blanched slightly, and she sighed. That

bow and smile of Ellis Keene's were impertinences, though under other circumstances—— Oh, well!

Young Keene was Hasbin's field manager, and her father's chiefest annoyer, next to old Gilbert himself; since it was he who planned the aggressive price-cutting campaigns, which had made the independent grocery business a daily torture.

She turned wearily back into the store, where her father was piling all his canned peaches from the shelves to the counter.

"Going to meet the price, I suppose," she conjectured.

"Going to beat it!" he declared. "We'll sell these Redwood peaches out for five cents."

"That's what Mr. Hasbin wants you to do," responded Jean. "It's an unequal battle, father. If he can make you lose money, not only on these bargains, but on all your staples, he'll drive you out of business."

"I was here first, and here I'll stay!" swore Danny Farrel, for the thousandth time.

"You can't fight them," she insisted. "Mr. Hasbin manufactures everything possible for his stores; he buys up the entire output of factories, and he uses such quantities that he can purchase everything much cheaper than you. It's a new business world, father, in which you must either swallow or be swallowed."

"They'll find Danny Farrel a tough mouthful!" he growled, and then he slipped his arm across his daughter's back, and patted her upon the round shoulder. "God bless ye, Jean, I've had somebody worth fighting for all my life!"

II.

Danny Farrel, observing, with a wince, that the recently educated neighborhood had taken a violent fancy for peaches at five cents, which would be eleven to-morrow, was starting down to the wholesale district in search of a job lot of something, upon which he could make a retaliatory drive of his own, when young Keene came in.

Before he even exchanged salutations with the proprietor, who was coming from the back of the store, with his hat on, Ellis bowed and smiled in the direction of the bird cage, but not so much as one chirrup did he elicit. The return bow was there, and the return smile was there; but the bow was a bow of cold necessity, and the smile was the smile of cold courtesy.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Farrel," he said, crisply polite. "You just going out?" His voice was a resonant bass, virile and musical, but disquieting.

"I am," returned Mr. Farrel, who dropped into a rich and delicious brogue in the presence of his most highly esteemed friends and enemies only.

"I'm sorry," responded Mr. Keene. "I had hoped to talk a little business with you."

"My business is to sell groceries. It's the only business I've had in my life. The boys or Jean'll give you anything in that line you want."

"I'll take your entire store," smiled Keene, trying to put the matter upon a light footing.

"Where's your help?" inquired Dan. "Looky here, Mr. Keene; I told you before my store's not for sale, and I meant just that."

"I have the authority of Mr. Hasbin to raise the offer I made you the other day," persisted the younger man.

Danny Farrel's answer to that was to walk straight past young Keene, out of the store, and into the middle of the street, where he stopped a car with quite unnecessary emphasis.

Keene watched him out of the door with a frowning smile, and turned pleasantly to Jean, as Charley Sappy, peering from behind the cheese case, had been despondently certain that he would.

"I wish I could get your father to listen to reason," he regretted, holding his hat under his arm, leaning against the end of the counter, and looking up into the cage, with a frank invitation to confidence. He had a hard-muscled gracefulness, which even one who was compelled to dislike him had to admit.

Charley Sappy glared savagely at the cheese knife. Jean methodically posted a bill.

"Father does not see any reason in the whole situation," she replied, when she was quite ready; "nor do I, for that matter," and her very deep-blue eyes looked coolly down into his black ones.

He frowned slightly.

"Mr. Hasbin is offering him a price at which he can retire with an excellent profit on his stock, property, and good will," he urged.

"He does not want it," she retorted. "I don't believe you can understand what you are asking, Mr. Keene. Father opened this little store before he was married. Everybody liked him; he handled nothing but reliable goods; he earned and bought the property, and expected to end his life here. Other men, seeing that he had a good location in a substantial neighborhood, started grocery stores here, failed to take his trade away, and broke up. The Tea Company tried to buy father out, and, failing in that, rented the building next door. Mr. Hasbin, who, it seems, matches every new Tokio store with one of his own, tried to buy father out, as he had done many times before, rented on the other side of us, and now nobody is making any money. Don't you think it absurd that you should try to force him out of his own territory?"

"It's the law of business," responded Keene, with a thorough belief in the righteousness of that law. "No independent dealer can hope to stand against the immense weight of consolidation. Mr. Hasbin's plan enables consumers to buy their supplies cheaper, and that's the answer. Your father, as an independent dealer, must step down and out."

Jean smiled scornfully.

"My father, as a good Irishman, will do nothing to which there is a 'must' attached," she confidently affirmed. "He is able to stand a considerable drain. He meets your prices, even when they occasion a loss, and his friends stick by him. Neither you nor the Tea Company can coax his customers away."

"Are you very sure that your father cannot be induced to sell?" he inquired soberly.

"I am very sure of it," she stated.

"Then we'll have to break him," announced Keene quietly.

"It will be the only way," she as quietly returned.

For a long minute the blue eyes and the black met unflinchingly.

"I'm sorry," said Keene, and he was genuinely so.

"You need not be," she told him coldly, and bent again to her work.

III.

Other men of prominence might go to the Occident Saloon to see Ben Sledge, and jostle with ward heelers, for the favor of an audience with the big boy, but not Gilbert Hasbin, creator and owner of the Gilbert Hasbin Company Stores, the Gilbert Hasbin Canning Company, the Gilbert Hasbin Spice Mills, the Gilbert Hasbin Pickle and Relish Company, and other Gilbert Hasbin enterprises. He either sent Ellis Keene, his left-hand man, or L. T. Morton, his right-hand man, or, on errands of much importance, he went himself, and always to the First National Bank, where Sledge held the briefest of hours, and transacted the briefest of business, and hid from lesser politics.

On this particular occasion, he came in person; a puffy-looking man, with purple pouches under his eyes, and gray pouches under his cheeks and chin, and a drooping of the thick, brown lips, which told of the decay of certain facial muscles, which he had far better have kept wholesome.

He was a big man, but not so big as Sledge; a forceful man, but not so forceful as the other; a relentless man, but not so relentless as that immovable and implacable "boss," who was not a brain, nor a sentiment, nor a will, but a mere power.

"'Lo, Gil," rumbled Sledge, in his fat throat, tilting his ponderous head in what was meant to be a nod, and glancing somberly up from beneath his heavy

eyelids. With his foot he pushed a heavy leather chair an inch or so toward his visitor.

Hasbin, dressed and groomed with much care, and stroking a waxed gray mustache, with the nicety of a habitually vain man, sat in the chair indicated, clasped his puffy white hands, with the diamond uppermost, upon the head of his cane, and glanced, with a smirk, at a neat-looking girl whom he saw in the lobby beyond. The girl caught the glance of his fishy eye, and moved hastily out of range, and Sledge, with a frown, turned and closed the door.

"How's the Tokio company's affairs?" asked Hasbin. His voice was even and phlegmatic, apparently, but there was a suppressed nervousness behind it, which Sledge detected with displeasure.

"Rather bad," he stated. "We've a bale of their paper."

"More than usual?"

Sledge nodded.

"Much of it coming due?"

Sledge nodded.

"They'll ask for extensions," said Hasbin confidently. "I had it from three different wholesalers that they're behind with their accounts. I've run them a close race, and they've had to come to it."

"You nearly broke yourself doing it," commented Sledge disapprovingly.

"It's been uncomfortable," admitted Hasbin. "But I had to do it. It was simply a case of who could stand the most, and we've stood it."

"You cut prices too much," objected Sledge.

"We'll make that all back, in three months, after we've absorbed the thirty-two Tokio stores. They're the only competition we have. We can retail at the cost price of the independents, and make money."

Sledge nodded his assent to that proposition.

"Think you're ready?" he asked.

"It looks like it to me," announced Hasbin, passing the heel of his palm slowly across his forehead, and down over his eyes. "If you'll call their loans, I think I can have a consolidation effected in less than a week."

Sledge looked at him heavily for an uncomfortably long while.

"You're not taking care of yourself," he charged.

Hasbin assumed much indignation.

"I never was in more perfect trim," he asserted. "I'm almost young again."

"That's what I thought," returned Sledge dryly. "When you old fluffs get young again, it's time you had a guardian."

"This is a business talk," remonstrated Hasbin, having recourse to his dignity.

"Uh-hunh," agreed Sledge. "That's what I mean. You don't look good to me. See here, Gil, I'll pull across this deal for you, but, if you go back to the sanitarium, I'll hand you a jolt when you come out that'll send you dippy for good."

He was so utterly dispassionate as he said this that one who did not know him might have concluded that he was talking idly; but Gilbert Hasbin knew him.

"There's no danger," he promised. "When can you put the rollers under the Tokio?"

"Monday."

"I'll make an engagement with Crothers for Tuesday," decided Hasbin, with a smile, in which the down-drawn corners of his lips had little part, and he thought, with vindictive joy, of how long he had warred with the president of the Tokio company. "I think I'll offer him the general management of the consolidation," and he chuckled maliciously.

"I thought young Keene was to get that job," suggested Sledge.

"I can use him better where he is," replied Hasbin, rising. "He ought to be willing to work a few years longer before he gets the job of a man like Morton."

"That's your funeral," said Sledge indifferently.

"No; it's Crothers' funeral," laughed Hasbin. "I've waited a long time to make that sucker my general manager.

Next I'll discharge him for incompetency."

"You'd better cut that," advised Sledge gruffly. "When you break a man, that's enough."

IV.

Returning to his office elated from his conference with Sledge, Hasbin took from his desk a little bottle, from which he poured four white pellets, and these he swallowed with the aid of a sip of water. He rang for his secretary, and a middle-aged woman, of considerable attractiveness, and sharp lines of calculation about her mouth, came in with some letters.

"What time will Keene be in?" he asked.

"He's in now," she replied. "If you want him, I think I'd better get him in a hurry, for he intends going out to the opening of the new Rogers Avenue store."

"Don't let him get away," he hastily directed, and she left the room, with slightly contracted eyes.

There was the same expression about Keene's eyes when he entered shortly afterward, for between him and Mrs. Dallison there was small liking.

"Close up everything you can, Keene," ordered Hasbin. "You've only until Tuesday to work in."

Keene puzzled a moment, and then he smiled in exultation.

"You don't mean to say you're that near to getting Crothers' scalp?" he ventured.

"That near," rejoiced Hasbin. "Of course, you want to forget that I said so, though."

"Certainly," agreed Keene, sitting easily upon the corner of Hasbin's desk. "Consolidation, I suppose."

"Absorption!" snapped Hasbin, with sudden fierceness. "On my terms."

"That's great!" commented Keene, with sparkling eyes. "Fifty-three and thirty-two. You'll have eighty-five stores then, in this city alone. You'll close about fourteen of the Tokio's, however, leaving you seventy-one."

"I count on you to get in four independents before Tuesday morning," Hasbin reminded him. "A case like Farrel's will be harder to handle after one of the competing stores is removed."

"Dan Farrel can't be handled at all," responded Keene, smiling at his recollection of that irascible old Irishman. "You couldn't buy him out at any price, and it will take a long time to break him."

"It will, with your present tactics," complained Hasbin. "You've shown poor generalship out there. The receipts have been less than in any other store in town, and you've put a high-priced manager there. What's the matter with Porley?"

"It isn't Porley's fault," replied Keene. "It's Dan Farrel's. Every man, woman, and child out there loves him. We've cut prices to ribbons, but he meets every cut, and holds his trade. I believe it would be good policy to abandon that corner."

"You believe what?" retorted Hasbin in astonishment.

"That it will be good policy to abandon that corner," repeated Keene firmly.

"You may keep that kind of advice to yourself!" snapped Hasbin, and suddenly he laid his fist upon his desk, and shoved upon it with a curious little backward and forward motion, which his physician would have classed as dangerous repression. "I never have abandoned any location I've once invaded, and I never shall! I want Dan Farrel's stand, and his custom, and I'm going to have it! If we have to break him, we will; and he's a stubborn old fool not to see it, and sell out while he has a chance." He paused, and studied a moment. "He has a mighty good-looking daughter, hasn't he?"

"Yes," admitted Keene shortly, casting a quick glance of dislike at his chief.

"I suppose she can twist the old man round her finger," guessed Hasbin. "She looks that kind."

Keene was silent.

"Why don't you jolly her up?" continued Hasbin. "A good-looking

young fellow like you ought to have no trouble, and it would be recreation besides."

"I don't fancy that way of doing business," replied Keene icily, and stood up.

"A man who represents me must expect to do business in any way which will secure results!" announced Hasbin, flushing angrily. "You try, and see what you can do with this girl."

"I'll do nothing of the sort!" declared Keene, losing his patience. "If I put in any time trying to make an impression on a girl, it will be for personal and not for business reasons."

Keene sealed his fate in the matter of the successorship to the retiring Morton then and there.

"I'll look after Farrel myself," announced Hasbin contemptuously.

V.

Charley Sappy, all awkward joints, like a colt or a calf, and spraddled from counter to shelf ledge in a mad riot of ungainliness, was stacking boxes of wafers and biscuits in the space vacated by the peaches, when Mrs. Sullivan, moon-faced, moon-bodied, and smiling for effect, came in with a bunch of paper flowers for Jean.

"They're a new kind, darlin'," she said, in honeyed accents, to Jean, as she presented her floral tribute. "Mornin' glories. I made 'em from a pattren in the *Ladies' Parlor Magazine,* and, says I, they're so purty I'll have to take 'em right over to my swate little Jean."

"Thank you," acknowledged Jean, smiling slyly to herself, and making a vast pretense of smelling them involuntarily.

"You're not lookin' so well the day," resumed Mrs. Sullivan, with motherly solicitude. "You need care and cuddlin', child."

"I know," confessed Jean; "but I'm afraid to try it."

Mrs. Sullivan concealed her grimace.

"It may come to you unexpected some time," she cheerfully prophesied; "and then you'll like it no doubt. Where's your father?"

"Down in the city," replied Jean demurely. "This is his courting afternoon, I think."

"It's about time," commented the Widow Sullivan gamely. "I always did say that a man's children, no matter how determined and swate like, never could hold him. It takes a woman, always cheerful and smilin', on the inside as well as the outside, to make a man of your father's age happy and comfortable."

"To tell you the truth, Mrs. Sullivan," confessed Jean confidentially, "I think that if father could have found such a woman, he'd have been married long ago."

Charley Sappy, at that moment, setting the house on fire, rescuing Jean heroically from the burning flames, and marrying her forthwith forever and aye, under a bower of roses, with his chest hidden behind a Carnegie medal, misplaced one sprawling foot, barked that shin from the ankle to the knee, and pulled the shelf of wafer and biscuit boxes down upon himself in an ignominious heap. One box of ginger snaps bounded from the counter, and hit Mrs. Sullivan in the soft neck. She was upon poor Charley Sappy in a flash, and had him by both ears.

"You're a disgrace!" she screamed, as she thumped his head on a flat box of salt wafers. "You're the present gineration of awkward, spoiled, sassy brats!" and, between each pause, she gave him a thump, nor felt the tug of Jean's strong arms, in her zeal to punish the new generation, of which Jean was a sample, until the voice of Gilbert Hasbin broke the spell with:

"Miss Farrel, I believe."

"Bless and preserve us!" cried Mrs. Sullivan, in the dire confusion of one who has intended always to seem sweet-tempered, and waddled hastily out the front door, while Charley Sappy, holding his ears, ran out of the back one, overturning square-cornered little Herman Heissman, with a flat fall like a toppled dictionary.

"I am Miss Farrel," assented Jean, recognizing the charming Mr. Hasbin, with a sudden, creepy chill, as if she

had found an unexpected toad in her path.

"I am Mr. Gilbert Hasbin," announced that gentleman, stroking his waxen mustache with the hand of the diamond which had so often fascinated. "Could I see your father?"

"He is downtown," Jean informed him, stepping back into her cage, and closing the little wooden gate.

"Too bad," regretted Mr. Hasbin, with the smile which had so often soothed those who feared his power, and admired his money. "I came to make Mr. Farrel a final offer for his store," and his eyes, no longer dull, but glistening greedily, followed the wave of her hair, down to her shell-like ear, and down the superb curve, which swept from the lobe of her ear to her shoulder.

She felt her face flushing scarlet, and she stooped, for some time, within her cramped inclosure, to pick up a worthless paper, so that the blush might be gone before he should see it, or that the strain of stooping might be an excuse for it.

"You will have to see father about that," she told him quietly.

"Do you think that he can be induced to sell?"

"I could not answer you that. The entire matter is father's affair, and I would not presume to offer an opinion on it."

"You're a clever girl," he assured her, in huge admiration, and smiled upon her. "Really, though, you ought to influence him in this. Let's you and me talk it over, like good friends."

His tone was that wheedling one, so effective with the little grocery clerk girls, who stood in awe of him; and he ventured to pat her hand where it lay upon the ledge of her little gate. She shrank from that touch as if it had been foul with contagion, and rubbed her hand beneath her apron. He was a toad, after all.

"I do not care to discuss it," she stated, angry with herself that her voice wanted to quiver.

"My dear girl," persisted Hasbin, blandly and blindly. "You must listen to this, because it affects your whole future. I am talking to you like a father. Mr. Farrel cannot keep this store. He will be bankrupt if he tries it, and you will be penniless. That sounds heartless, I know, but the condition is not my fault. I only represent an invincible commercial progress, the principle of consolidation and centralization. If it were not I who would drive your father out, it would be some other man, perhaps less kindly disposed toward pretty, and sweet, and innocent girls like yourself. You are charming, my dear, if you will let an old man say it, and I do not want to see you suffer," and, in an excess of fatherly emotion, he made as if to place that puffy hand upon her shoulder.

She was out of the other side of her little cage in a jiffy, and had slammed that gate and locked it, as if she feared he might come through. Out of reach of that defiling touch, she confronted him with blazing eyes.

"Now, you go!" she commanded him.

He looked a moment longer, and he went.

VI.

On Friday morning, President Crothers, of the Tokio Tea Company, looked at his calendar pad for the day, and saw:

Call Borden, Chisman, and Gainer, about extension of loans.

There were some minor notations, and these he disposed of, then he tore off the memorandum slip and gave it to his secretary, a prematurely bald young man, of so infantile an expression of countenance that one almost speculated whether, when his hair did come in, it would be like his father's or his mother's.

"Get these numbers for me," Crothers directed.

"Shall I attend to the extensions?" asked Van Couver, in a piping voice, suggestive of his face.

"I think not," said Crothers, with a slightly worried air.

He sat quietly until his bell rang,

looking worn and old, as the side light of the window illuminated his colorless, hollow cheeks and his scant white beard. It was Borden, of the First National Bank, on the wire, and Crothers drew himself together, as he answered, to throw the old-time resonance into his voice.

"Good morning, Borden," he called, very cheerily, indeed. "The Tokio has some notes falling due on Monday, and I shall want to arrange for a thirty-day extension." He spoke with easy nonchalance, as if his message were a mere matter of formality.

"That's unfortunate," regretted the pompous voice of Borden; and Crothers, in fancy, could see Borden, with his round-cut mutton chops and expanse of white waistcoat, sitting bolt upright at his phone. "A temporary stringency in the money market will compel us, I fear, to ask you to take up those notes on Monday."

Somehow, Crothers had known it.

"Very well," he temporized, as bravely as he could. "I shall have to make other arrangements. How long will you be in to-day, Mr. Borden?"

"Until twelve-thirty, and from two until four," replied Borden, imparting this important bit of news with as fine a declamatory effect as if he had been reciting a royal ukase.

"I may be over to see you," returned Crothers jovially. "We may be compelled to devise some plan to ease me up a bit."

He was panic-stricken as he waited for his bell to ring again. A business like that of the Tokio Tea Company is usually built up on credits, like an inverted pyramid, and requires a master hand at finance to balance it; but the hand of Crothers, once so firm, had now a trace of a tremor in it.

"Hello, Gainer," he presently greeted the president of the Market and Produce Bank, and his voice was again cheery and resonant. "Saw you driving a beautiful little bay yesterday evening. New one, isn't it?"

"Had him from a colt," rasped the quick, snappy voice of Gainer, who was a little, yellow man, with permanent lines in his brow and in both cheeks. "What can we do for you?"

"Extend those notes for me on Monday," stated Crothers, as lightly as if he were expressing his preference in the matter of drinks.

"Can't do it," jerked Gainer. "Instructions are to call all loans falling due between now and the first of the month."

Again Crothers felt that he had known it. He pressed tightly upon the bridge of his nose. A sharp pain had come between his eyes, which that seemed to relieve.

"Instructions your granny!" he laughed. "We'll have to get around that. Who's doing the instructing over there now?"

"Board of directors," answered Gainer briefly. "Financial stringency, you know."

"I hope it isn't epidemic," remarked Crothers, still speaking lightly. "I'll have to be over and see you about it."

"'Fraid I can't help you any."

"'Fraid you must," bantered Crothers. "Wait till I come over."

His head wanted to bow forward, but he straightened it up with a jerk. He would not allow that.

Chisman, of the Provident Trust, a harsh man, and all angles, was on the phone. Crothers had to stop to breathe heavily before he could answer.

"Hello, Chisman," he dryly hailed, speaking now with dignified reserve, for between himself and Chisman there was but frigid politeness. "What time may I come over to see you?"

"Between eleven and twelve. By the way, we're going to have to call your loans on Monday."

"All right," assented Crothers easily, and closed his phone.

It was a temptation to lean his head upon his arms, there on the desk, and close his tired eyes, and sink into blessed oblivion, and let things take their course, with him all unmindful of them and of the world; for, after all, what did it matter? He had fought the good fight for many successful years; he had taken his good part in the game

of financial juggling, and could show a decent score; he——

"Hell!" he chided himself, to the great scandalization of a modest and pretty little girl stenographer, who opened the door just then; but as soon as she was over the shock of it she giggled.

"I beg your pardon," he apologized, laughing, and arose. Somehow, he wanted to be standing, with his shoulders squared, and his old head erect. "You don't often hear me using biblical language," and he held out his hand for the sheaf of reports she brought him.

"No, sir," she answered shyly, and he heard her titter again outside the door.

He smiled himself, for a moment, though wanly, and then the mask dropped from him, and the grayness deepened in his face. He walked up and down the room a few turns, forcing himself to stride sturdily, and then he rang for his secretary again.

"Get me an appointment with Mr. Sledge, for some time to-day, if possible, and let me know immediately when you have secured it."

"Yes, sir," piped the infantile secretary, whose baby son looked more mature than he.

"And, Jimmy!"

"Yes, sir."

"My old friend, Warstairs, telephoned me this morning, asking me to recommend a thoroughly competent and reliable secretary. He named a fabulous salary, and I'm going to hand him your name."

Van Couver's eyes widened with childlike pain.

"What's the matter?" he asked quickly. "The banks?"

Crothers hesitated a moment.

"Let me know as soon as you get that appointment with Sledge," he said, and smiled.

"I trust you will excuse me," Jimmy begged. "I was really very much concerned, however. I thank you for your consideration of my future."

He turned at the door, as if he would say more, but did not.

"We'll talk about it later, Jimmy," stated Crothers.

Sledge, eh? This was the blow which hurt.

VII.

Crothers wondered if it were by design that he had been instructed to meet Sledge at the Occident Saloon, rather than at the bank, but he betrayed no sense of that humiliation as he walked down the length of the mahogany bar to the bare little board-partitioned back room, where he had been told he would find the man who carried senatorships in his vest pocket, and held banks between his thumb and finger.

Tom Bendix, a prosperous business man, from his appearance, was in the back room with Sledge when Crothers arrived, and set his mind at rest upon the disquieting thought which had hurt him most.

"Mr. Sledge's hour at the bank was full up," he explained, as Sledge and Crothers shook hands.

"What'll you have?" asked Sledge, touching the bell in the wall by the one window, which looked out upon the ash can.

"I seldom drink before six o'clock," returned Crothers pleasantly. "I prefer some French vichy, if you don't mind."

"Good dope," assented Sledge, with an almost imperceptible nod of approval. "Adolph"—this to the waiter behind the black mustache which always smiled—"a pint of vichy and some drinks. Come about those loans?" This to Crothers.

"Naturally," acknowledged Crothers, glancing about the dingy room, with quite pardonable curiosity. Here governors had been made, the municipal funds had been apportioned, and the commerce of the entire city had been swayed for many years; and this heavy-faced man, as expressionless as a huge mask, had done it—low born, coarse, illiterate.

"Nothin' doin'," huskily responded Sledge, gazing indifferently out of the window, at the grime-blackened rear fence of the narrow passageway.

Crothers knew that answer in advance; in fact, he had thought himself fully prepared for it. When it came, however, he found that he had not been. Bendix, watching him narrowly, admired his almost perfect command of himself.

"Why?" demanded Crothers.

"You're due," explained Sledge concisely. "You overplayed yourself, and you lose."

Crothers acknowledged the justice of that to himself. His pyramid was toppling, and the banks must protect themselves. The banks meant Sledge. He was president of one, director in four, and a power in all; and the man had started as the proprietor of an obscure saloon, with nothing to aid him but a huge pair of fists, and an instinct for leadership. He was an atavistic return from the stone age. Crothers, who had been fastidious about this visit, found his distaste giving way to awe.

"You're somewhat hasty," Crothers protested. "If you will send a bookkeeping expert up to my offices, I can show you that, with a thirty-day extension, I can pull through."

"For how long?" grunted Sledge. "Nuh, Crothers; Hasbin has hammered you, and here's where you break."

"I don't appreciate the particular rush about it," retorted Crothers.

"I do," rumbled Sledge, still looking somberly out of the window. "The longer you wait the worse it'll be."

"You won't have my books investigated, then. You won't look at a statement? You won't do anything?"

"The clock's struck," Sledge assured him, and, for the first time, turned his dull eyes full upon his visitor. "It's your turn," he dispassionately reminded Crothers. "You pushed dozens of grocers over the edge, one at a time, just the same way you're getting it. The banks couldn't carry 'em any longer, and pay dividends. Here's where you get a chance to jump down and see where they've gone."

Crothers lifted a glass of the water, which the rubber-soled Adolph had set down for him, and Sledge, mindful of the rites, lifted his own stein of beer at the same moment, with a little forward jerk of hospitality, while Bendix joined the solemn ceremonial with a sip of his high ball.

"It's my turn," admitted Crothers, repressing a fluttering intake of breath. "I suppose I must lose in the same way I've won, but it isn't half the pleasure," and he arose with splendid outward calmness.

"If there's anything I can do for you, let me know," offered Sledge, with an upward glance of interest, quite unusual in him.

"There isn't a thing, thank you," returned Crothers, drawing on his gloves with finicky care. "I'm going over to see Hasbin at once."

Bendix looked at him in surprise.

"Hasbin?" he repeated, and hesitated. "I should think you'd let the propositions come from him."

"What's the use?" asked Crothers. "The terms will be Hasbin's own, and I can't do a thing but show him my jugular vein. I can't even have the satisfaction of going bankrupt, on account of my stockholders. I bid you good day, gentlemen," and white-haired Crothers, head erect, and coat buttoned neatly about him, walked out.

"I'm strong for him!" commented Bendix.

"He's a good, game sport," grunted Sledge.

VIII.

The human brickbat, as red from his exertions as the ones of plainer clay, was jumping a barrel of potatoes into Dan Farrel's store, one step at a time, when young Keene arrived, thus blocking the entrance, and giving Jean time, after recognizing the coming visitor, to give her waving hair some deft, but entirely unnecessary, touches. She wondered herself why she did this, but she went right on doing it just the same.

Charley Sappy, drawing sirup into a pail, for the grinning little girl with the front teeth gone, saw those preparations and the visitor, and ran twenty-one cents' worth of the sirup on the floor. Charley had a picture in his room of a man who used nothing but

Woolenwad ammunition in his big-game rifles, and Charley peppered it with bird shot from an air gun every night, because it looked like Keene; in which act Charley showed clearer vision than either Jean or Keene.

Jean was offended with Keene for entering the store again. She displayed it by gazing down at him coldly, and he was a rather difficult person to gaze coldly upon. Frank, direct smile he had, and white teeth, and a funny little trick of pulling his ear when in doubt, as he was just now. Not that he lacked physical ease. Far from it.

"I'm afraid that I shall offend you again," he most unpropitiously opened.

"Then why do it?" she queried, with a trace of that Irish twinkle in her deep-blue eyes.

"I must," he returned, smiling up at her. "I have some business news, which I am not at liberty to repeat, but which has a direct and important bearing upon your father's welfare, and yours."

"Repeat it," she challenged him, laughing. Strange! She had intended to ignore him completely the next time she saw him.

"I can't even hint at it," he regretted, happy that she was treating him like a human being. "I can tell you this much, however: There is greater need than ever for your father to sell out at once."

Her expression changed instantly.

"Have you found a way to break us sooner than you hoped?" she asked, with scorn.

"I did not say that *I* intended to break you," he defended himself.

"You said *we*," she reminded him. "Father is only waiting for you to finish your work."

"I shall be sorry to take part in it," he earnestly assured her. "Miss Farrel, I came to you on a purely business errand before. This time it is a friendly one. I do not want to see you suffer."

He could not have made a more unfortunate speech. Jean's hair almost crackled.

"That is precisely what Mr. Hasbin was impertinent enough to tell me!" she flared.

"Was he talking to you?" he inquired, much concerned.

"He stood just where you are standing," she told him, flushing with indignation as she remembered it. "He had the effrontery to tell me that he was actuated by a fatherly interest," and she rubbed her hand again, as if she could still feel that loathsome touch.

Keene saw that movement, and understood it, and he paled. He knew Hasbin's way.

"I did not tell father," she went on, more to herself than to him. "He has trouble enough as it is."

"Hasbin annoyed you!" he hotly conjectured. "I'm going right down there."

"And make me the subject of your conversation?" she protested. "I have endured enough, Mr. Keene. You will kindly let my affairs and father's alone, except as you must annoy us in carrying out your threat. Your only business with us will be to break us."

"I may have to," he soberly replied.

"I doubt it," she taunted him. "People who do things like that don't brag about them. I have no respect for people who do not carry out their threats."

"And you admire those who do?" he countered.

They ended that interview as they had the previous one, with the blue eyes and the black ones looking into each other with open challenge.

Keene, as he left the store, was so blinded that he nearly overturned the sweet-dispositioned Mrs. Sullivan on the steps, and that honey-tempered lady was startled into giving him a piece of her mind, with which he could have well dispensed, before she realized that this was the handsome young manager of the Hasbin stores.

By the time he had listened to the blarney with which she smoothed down her precipitancy, he was in splendid condition to use one of Danny Farrel's lamp chimneys, and it seemed to him that he met with a fresh annoyance at every stage of his progress downtown.

When he arrived at the Hasbin offices, every nerve in his body was jan-

gling. First of all, he meant to have it out with Hasbin about Jean, whether she would approve of it or not. What he did could not matter to her, anyhow, since she had flouted and taunted him.

IX.

It had been an interview the reverse of what Hasbin had expected; for, while he was vindictive and gloating, Crothers had been calmly scornful. Had he writhed, had he begged for mercy, had he even seemed broken, Hasbin might have enjoyed better the triumph for which he had waited so many years.

Crothers had disappointed him, in the first place, by coming to him unarmed, asking nothing for himself, and only speaking for the protection of his stockholders. To everything in reason which had been suggested, he acquiesced; but when it was proposed that he take the general management of the combined stores under Hasbin, in the place of decrepit Morton, who was to resign, he smiled, and arose from his chair.

"I can't accept that offer," he stated quietly. "I don't think there's much more to discuss, Mr. Hasbin. The balance of it is a matter of red tape."

"You'll have to take it," persisted Hasbin, bitterly disappointed. "You acknowledge to me that this settlement will leave you without a dollar. There's no place, with any future, that you can begin. What do you intend to do?"

"Retire," replied Crothers simply, still smiling.

"Why, you'll starve!" protested Hasbin, unwilling to let this man, who had hindered his will so long, out of his clutches. "There's a good salary attached to this job."

For the first time in the aggravating interview, Crothers' patience gave way.

"If you were a gentleman, the offer would be magnanimous," he stated. "Since you're not, it is a job. Good day."

In the outer office, Crothers met Keene, and stopped to shake hands with him.

"Hello, Ellis," he said cordially. "I suppose they'll see you nosing around all the Tokio stores now."

"So we win at last!" returned Keene, suddenly aware of a thrill of pity for the older man, but forbearing to display too much of it. "Well, Mr. Crothers, you made us know we were fighting. It was good fun. I'm sorry it's ended."

"I'm rather glad of it," responded Crothers, with a trace of weariness; for, now that it was over, he was beginning to feel the strain. "I'm happy to find, however, that I'm not useless. My services are being eagerly sought for, I may state. Mr. Hasbin was just kind enough to offer me the position of general manager."

"He did!" exclaimed Keene, seeing, in a flash, how Hasbin, who had grown smaller with the advancing years, would heap daily humiliation upon this man of finer fiber, hating him for that very reason, if for no other. Keene had another reason for surprise over Crothers' statement, but he kept that to himself. "I suppose he'd hand you a time card," he suggested, with a laugh.

"And let me off on alternate Saturday afternoons," concluded Crothers grimly. "Well, Keene, good luck to you," and once more he shook hands with Keene, whom he liked, and went home to his lonely rooms, to break at last, and lie where *She* had lain, shaking with a palsy—until it was time for his man to come and dress him for dinner. He must wear his usual mask before old William!

Meanwhile, Hasbin was more shaken than Crothers had been, for his had always been a more violent blood, and now it took its revenge more violently. His hands were empurpled and trembling, and the purple pouches under his eyes were bloodshot. He had reached for the little bottle of pellets in his drawer, had hesitated, and had replaced them in fear, and now he sat huddled in his chair, an uncouth mass, a victim of those most torturing of all passions, hatred and revenge; and he felt himself quivering, too, with the loss of a misspent vitality.

It was so that Keene found him when, quietly angry, he passed into the room, and stalked sternly up to the desk.

"Whatever gave you the impression that Dan Farrel's daughter was in your employ?" he demanded.

Hasbin drew himself together with an effort.

"What business is it of yours?" he retorted, glaring up at Keene with yellowed eyeballs.

"This much," declared Keene, his voice rasping: "If you ever annoy her again I'll thrash you!"

"You're discharged!" snarled Hasbin, ringing for his secretary. "Get out of my office!"

"You bet I'm discharged," agreed Keene, "but as for leaving your office, I'll go when I'm through talking to you. You haven't a man in your employ can put me out. Why did you offer Crothers the successorship to Morton?"

"That's my business," snapped Hasbin, laying the edge of his palm upon his desk, where his hand jerked with his pulse.

"It was my business," denied Keene. "You promised me, three years ago, that, on the resignation of Morton, I should have his post."

"Get out of my office!" ordered Hasbin, half screaming. The door opened, and Mrs. Dallison came in. Seeing Hasbin's condition, she hurried to him, and felt the throb in the back of his neck. Rushing to the water cooler, she wetted a handkerchief, and placed it over the pulsing ganglia at the base of his brain.

"Why don't you go?" she ordered Keene.

Hasbin stopped her with a gesture.

"Pay him off to the first of the month," he directed, "then buy his stock at par."

"His stock!" repeated Mrs. Dallison, in amazement. "I didn't know he had any."

"He's been buying it ever since he was a kid," stated Hasbin.

"His name isn't on the books," retorted the secretary incredulously.

"It won't be till I take a notion to vote it some time," laughed Keene.

X.

Keene, making the rounds of the various Hasbin stores the next day, to gather up his personal effects, and to bid an official farewell to his personal friends, reached the store next to Danny Farrel's during the afternoon lull. He alighted from the car at the corner, and walked slowly past the Farrel store.

Jean was not in her cage; she was not in her favorite idling nook, in the corner by the big refrigerator. She was not anywhere to be seen, and so the place was deserted.

True, Mrs. Sullivan was leaning over the front counter, casting up her grocery book with Danny himself, whom she always brought into that controversy; and huge Mrs. Krissman was selecting prunes with an eagle eye, while Charley Sappy sliced a nickel's worth of dried beef for the grinning mother of the grinning little girl with her front teeth gone; and Mrs. John Clansey, one day away from her Sunday wrapper, waited her turn, and fingered all the cabbages in the basket, with a view to the purchase of one; yet these people were as nothing. The place was deserted; and Ellis Keene passed discontentedly on.

Porley was not in the Hasbin store, and its only occupant was a frowsy-haired girl, with bovine eyes, whose favorite answer to any question was "Hunk?" Again Ellis Keene passed discontentedly on, secured his umbrella, in glum silence, and walked to the back door.

The Danny Farrel Building extended farther rearward than the Hasbin store, and sometimes Jean could be seen upstairs at the kitchen window. She was there now, with her back to the sunlight, drying her glossy hair. Below her, leaning idly on one of his corners against the fence, was the human brick, gazing raptly up at those rippling black tresses, with as impersonal a curiosity as he would have bestowed upon a mop.

Came presently, creeping, to the rear door of the Farrel store, the lean, lank, crouching figure of Charley Sappy, who glared in unutterable frenzy at that desecration, his jaw protruding, his teeth exposed in his snarling lips, his eyes rolling in awful fury, his yellow hair upended.

He comes down one step, as light as a panther, every joint in him bent at right angles.

He comes down another stealthy step.

He sets foot upon the pave.

He steps upon a hoop. It flies up and cracks him on the shin.

Ah! His victim does not hear it.

With a cry, like an avenging demon, he leaps the intervening space, and hurls himself upon the body of his foe, and grips his long, sinewy fingers around that hated neck.

"Slob!" he hisses.

"Wateryuhdoin?" inquired the human brick, turning reproachful eyes upon his assailant. They were the only part of him which had been budged by the impact.

"I mean to have your heart's blood!" hoarsely whispered the avenging demon, shaking himself anew against the impassive mass, until his own teeth chattered.

Two-ended Herman tossed him off as if he had been a spent match.

"Wateryuhdoin?" he inquired again, with less wonder and more impatience.

"This!" yelled the boy terror dramatically, and, drawing back his fist, he hurt his knuckles violently against a corner of Herman's face.

For a moment young Herman, a full head shorter, surveyed his tormentor in amazement, and then it dawned upon him that Charley was trying to fight him. Slow anger mounted his brow, and, after Charley had experimented on him with the remaining fist, he became mad.

Reputable eyewitnesses afterward declared that to be the most stolidly businesslike fight ever exhibited in the back yard of a passing independent grocery.

The reputable eyewitness in the upstairs kitchen window, and the one in the rear door of the Hasbin grocery, laughed themselves almost weak over its quaint postures and intense activity, and the two onlookers laughed much more than twice as much as either one of them would have laughed singly. In fact, they quit watching the fight, by and by, and only laughed hilariously to each other.

Presently Keene detected a new note, one of quietness, in the fight, and came quickly to the edge of the fence, where he could look down and see what was going on. Young Herman, slow to wrath, had become berserk, and though he looked, from the upstairs kitchen window, to be merely lying across Charley, and resting, was in reality quietly choking him, while little flecks of foam stood upon his own thick, red lips, and his breath came with little, almost inaudible moans of fierceness.

Keene was over the fence in an instant, and pulled them apart. He carried Charley into the store, and Jean, thoroughly frightened, came running downstairs, with her father's whisky bottle.

Charley, after all, was more scared than hurt, and Danny Farrel was for going out with a barrel stave and pounding the tough young Herman tender; but Keene stopped him.

"I wouldn't fuss with that boy just now," he counseled. "He's more damaged than this one. Charley choked him and hit him twice before he retaliated."

Danny dropped his barrel stave with reluctance.

"Man or boy, he's got a right to fight back if he's hit," he acknowledged.

"That's true enough," agreed Keene grimly, and his jaws set as he thought of Hasbin.

Danny interpreted that grim look correctly, and he laughed.

"I suppose you've it in for your old boss," he guessed. "I see, by this mornin's paper, that you're no longer with the Gilbert Hasbin Company, bad luck to him."

"That's quite true," admitted Keene, with a glance at Jean.

"Well, I bear you no particular ill will, now that you're not a part of him," declared Danny magnanimously. "I suppose that he'll keep on till he drives me out of business, but it won't be you that'll be helpin' him."

"You're mistaken, father," corrected Jean. "Mr. Keene is committed to break us himself. He told me so."

She could have bit her tongue in two a second afterward for that speech, when she saw the wince of pain in his face, but it was too late. Keene looked at her with wistful eyes. With her shining black hair framing in the perfect oval of her face and the white curve of her neck, she was almost painfully beautiful to look upon; and yet it would be no weakling who would win her.

"I had intended to pass that by, now that I must begin building in new places," he told her quietly.

"Had intended to," she repeated. "You still imagine that you have only to say the word, then?"

"It would take a little more than that," he confessed, with a grave smile.

"I'd like to see you do it," she taunted him.

"I don't want to," he protested, quite seriously, and it was that seriousness, in view of his present incapacity for harm, which sounded like braggadocio, and made her laugh.

"Don't mind us," she encouraged him. "Go right ahead and break us, all by your big, strong self. I dare you."

"All right; I will!" he flared. "I'll make a bargain with you: If I break you, so strikingly that you can see I did it myself, will you marry me?"

She laughed with false hilarity at that quaint suggestion.

"Try it and see," she bantered him.

Danny Farrel suddenly interjected himself into that fool conversation.

"Looky here!" he demanded. "Mebby you're forgettin' it, but this is my store, and where do I come in?"

"You don't come in, father; you go out," she laughed, still mocking Keene.

Danny, however, looking narrowly at the young man as he winced under that last taunt, saw that he was in earnest.

XI.

Mrs. Sullivan puffed into the Farrel store, big with important news.

"Where's your father?" she asked Jean, looking about the store in the nervous haste of one who has but a few seconds to stamp out the burning fuse.

"He's having a bad day with the rheumatism," stated Jean.

"The poor man!" mourned Mrs. Sullivan. "What're you doin' for it?"

"Nothing," replied Jean, with a smile. "He won't let me come near him."

"Of course not," agreed Mrs. Sullivan, entirely too quickly. "He needs the care and sympathy of an experienced older woman."

"Mr. Sullivan had rheumatism a great deal," suggested Jean, with reminiscent enjoyment. Joe Sullivan used to lock his wife out of the house when he was sick.

"Joe had everything," remarked Mrs. Sullivan sententiously. "He died of it all. I have some queer news for your father. Could I see him, mebby?"

"Go right up," invited Jean hastily. "He's in the kitchen."

"The poor man!" sympathized Mrs. Sullivan, and hurried out to the back stairs.

Two minutes later she came thumping down, with a face the color of a tomato.

"If I had a disposition like your father's, I'd sell it to a picklin' factory!" she said. "Of all the outrageous, crabbed, swearin', ragin', insultin' divils in the world, he's the worst! Bad luck to him, and his rheumatism, and his old pipe, that he couldn't poke a broom straw through!"

"Did you tell him your news?" inquired Jean, concealing her delight.

"I did not!" repudiated Mrs. Sullivan instantly. "I only asked him could I make him a poultice for his rheumatism, and he told me to mind my own business, and go where I sent Joe! I wouldn't stay there to be insulted, so I left him cursin' his old black pipe."

The crash of a lamp chimney in the ash pen attested that Danny's struggle

with his pipe was still unsuccessful, and Mrs. Sullivan glared vindictively.

"Myself, I hope young Mr. Keene gets all the trade in the neighborhood with his new store. I wouldn't go in his company this mornin', but now I'll take one of his ten-dollar shares of stock. All the neighbors is doin' it."

Jean felt her face blanch. This was news, indeed, and it possessed the menace of mystery and uncertainty. Ordinary opposition was a definite danger, but this—— Oh, well, these clever schemes usually died young.

"A coöperative store," Jean conjectured.

"That's what he calls it," returned Mrs. Sullivan volubly, forgetting her rancor in the joy of bearing bad tidings. "We own our own store, and buy our own groceries from ourselves, and make our own profits. It's a grand scheme, and this likely-looking young Mr. Keene has a way with him, too, that'd make you believe clabber milk was white honey."

"Did you say that many of the neighbors are buying the stock?" Jean anxiously inquired.

"Droves of them," Mrs. Sullivan happily informed her, seeing that she was making a painful impression. "Mrs. Krissman, Mrs. Taylor, Mrs. Hutton, Mrs. O'Dowd, Mrs. Prindle, all of them have coaxed their husband in, and many more; even John Clansey has joined, though Heaven knows where the Clanseys ever got ten dollars at one and the same time."

Jean dejectedly wondered, too. The Clanseys owed her father a good, big bill, which had never been reduced, except by spoiled goods brought back, and Dan only held their cash trade by never pressing for payment. The most of these others, however, were customers of long standing, and heretofore stanch, reliable friends.

It was a black outlook, unless, again, the scheme should prove a failure, in which case their customers would all come back shamefacedly, and would stay forever.

"I don't understand how he got Mrs. Taylor," Jean mused.

"Well, you see," explained Mrs. Sullivan cheerfully, "nobody figures that your father's goin' to last long in business, anyhow; and how he's done it this long, with the murderin' temper he's got, is stranger than the miracles!" With this parting shot Mrs. Sullivan bounced away.

Jean followed to the door and looked thoughtfully across the street at the vacant building, which had once been a saloon before the high-license law went into effect. She understood now why it was being emptied of its rubbish and painted, and put in repair. Both her father and herself had scouted the idea that any one would be foolish enough to open a grocery store where three of them were fighting so desperately for existence; but this was different.

Keene came around the corner briskly, lifted his hat to her gayly, and turned into the new store. Somehow she could not associate the idea of failure with him, and she thought, with a smile, of Mrs. Sullivan's belief that Keene's mother was proud of him.

Suddenly she awoke with a shock to the fact that she was nursing black treason, for she had discovered in herself that, in spite of the disaster with which Keene was threatening them, she was glad that he was doing it—on her account!

XII.

Sledge, sitting in the little, bare, back room of the Occident, glanced at the bewildering array of figures, which expressed the present state of the Gilbert Hasbin Company, and dropped it contemptuously on the liquor-ringed table.

"Where's Billy Sothern?" he demanded. "Why don't somebody turn this into United States figures?"

Tom Bendix leaned forward to look at the paper, and picked it up hastily.

"You wasn't meant to draw this," he apologized. "Here's the one Billy fixed up for you."

Sledge found the second statement only a trifle more satisfactory than the first.

"All I want to know is: Does he win or lose?" he objected.

"It's hard to say that," remonstrated Bendix, himself somewhat puzzled by the statement. "It's three months since he consolidated with the Tokio companies; he's closed several stores, he's bought out some new ones, and it's hard to get at what he's doing."

"I know what he's doing, all right," rumbled Sledge, whose information bureau was flawless; "but does he show any chance of a dividend?"

"It doesn't seem like it."

"That's what I thought," returned Sledge moodily, looking out of the window. "Send for him."

"Here?" asked Bendix, rising.

"Sure," grunted Sledge, and, for just a second, his eyes turned to Bendix.

There was the barest flicker of a smile on his heavy face, and Bendix grinned as he went out. When a man of Hasbin's standing was "sent for" at the Occident, it was time for him to begin advertising in the "Lost" column for a mislaid pedestal.

"This young Keene," began Sledge, when Bendix returned from telephoning. "How does he keep 'em in line?"

"He's a hustler," explained Bendix. "In three months he's opened ten of his coöperative stores, as close to Hasbin stores as he can get them, and they're all doing the only business."

"I know that," said Sledge. "But how does he do it?"

"He's at all ten stores at once, and is framing up others on the side," replied Bendix, with a puzzled smile. "Every coöperative store that I've seen tried has been a frost, but Keene seems to have framed up a new game. He incorporates each store for five thousand dollars, and holds four thousand of it as treasury stock. I saw the constitution of one of his stores, and it has a joker in it. That treasury stock don't vote nor draw dividends, nor belong to anybody, unless the company sells out at par or above."

"Uh-hunh," grunted Sledge, with quick appreciation. "Then it belongs to Keene. "Hunh!"

"I'm conspicuous for him myself," commented Bendix admiringly. "The other thousand he sells to a hundred families, in ten-dollar shares, and cons them into believing it's their own grocery store. They pay cash, too. If they got credit, to the extent of their ten-dollar shares, there wouldn't be a stockholder left in six months."

Sledge nodded.

"I get all that," he granted. "But how does he hold his prices?"

"The higher the better," stated Bendix, with an exasperated laugh. "That's his long suit, and he had me winged on it for a month. You see, they get dividend slips once a month, payable in goods, and they're willing to pay high prices themselves because they get it back, and make themselves one easy week in the month. In the meantime, they get a high profit from the scattered customers who are not stockholders. They like it to death."

Both pondered that clever stroke in half-chuckling silence for a moment.

"People are fierce gooks," Sledge observed. "They can't get fat on the dividends from a ten-dollar certificate."

"It would be a joke," responded Bendix, "and so he don't call it dividends. He calls it a rebate. Every stockholder gets a five-per-cent discount on all his purchases at the end of a month, and the dividend goes in with it, so that the total rebate amounts to something. Can you beat it?"

"Hunh!" grunted Sledge.

Whether he was still thinking of the cleverness of Keene or not, as he looked motionlessly out at the round hand hole in the wooden gate at the end of the passageway, Bendix could not tell, but he knew better than to interrupt at such times, for Sledge usually emerged with a decision.

The two men were as silent as waxen images in the Eden Musee when Hasbin, groomed with especial care to-day, entered, secretly indignant at the peremptory summons. He tried to take a chair in the darker corner, but Bendix deliberately placed one for him at the table opposite Sledge, and directly in the light from the dusty window.

Sledge turned to Hasbin with a grunt and a surly nod, and resumed his careful inspection of the hole in the gate.

"I have an appointment at three-thirty," stated Hasbin.

Sledge continued his survey of the hole, until the silence grew oppressive. It got upon Hasbin's nerves by and by, and he found himself pressing the palm side of his clenched fist upon the table, and working it back and forth. Bendix sat as quietly content as if he were listening to soft music. Hasbin's muscular nervousness was the only motion in the room, until Sledge, without turning from the window, reached out and touched the electric button.

"Beer and a high ball," he told the velvet-footed Adolph. "What's yours?"

"Absinth," replied Hasbin, glancing defiantly at his host.

Sledge turned slowly toward him, as Adolph disappeared, and studied him, feature by feature and line by line, as coolly as if Hasbin had been a horse.

Hasbin bore that inspection with a fortitude which was entirely assumed. His eyelids had a tendency to flicker; there was a twitching at the corners of his mouth, which he could not suppress; his eyes were muddy with a thick, yellowish scum, shot with faint, pink lines; his color was pasty; and occasionally his knees twitched.

"You're in, Gil," decided Sledge, with the cool, scientific interest of a hospital interne testing the pulse of a chloroformed pauper. "D'you know I got a gob of money invested in your company?"

"It's perfectly safe," Hasbin hastened to assure him.

"Not unless you die quick," returned Sledge. "You've been gay again. Made you young to put Crothers on the toboggan, didn't it?"

"I had a right to feel elated," protested Hasbin. "I built up the biggest retail grocery business in the United States."

"And now you can't run it," charged Sledge contemptuously. "I got no pride in the size of your business. I want dividends on my stock."

His tone was so coldly indifferent to Hasbin's feelings that Hasbin, himself habitually far more insolent and overbearing than Sledge could ever be, writhed in resentment.

"Your stock cost you but very little," he retorted. "Most of it was given to you in exchange for political and banking favors."

"Cut that," warned Sledge. "It's stock, and it's mine. Now I want dividends! Why did you fire young Keene?"

"For insubordination," asserted Hasbin uneasily.

"I heard it was on account of a girl, and I got it straight. You lost out when you stirred him up."

"He can't last," insisted Hasbin, worried, nevertheless, and trying to conceal his worry.

"Hunh!" grunted Sledge. "He'll last, won't he, Tom?"

"Your statement shows that the ten Hasbin stores, near which Keene has offered you opposition, have done no business at all since he opened. They're a dead loss. I understand that he has good solicitors out, and has secured rent options on seven more. He looks like a comer to me."

"He's after your liver, and he'll get it," prophesied Sledge.

Hasbin had his first laugh of the interview upon that. He had been an invincible power for so many years that he fancied he would be always invincible.

"A long procession of men have tried that," he asserted, "but nobody remembers their names. Crothers gave me the hardest fight of all, but to-day you can't find the word 'Tokio' outside an atlas, and Crothers is hid in some dark corner, starving."

"Toss me his address, and I'll send him a square meal," said Sledge, with his nearest approach to animation. "I like a game loser."

Hasbin frowned.

"He had no right to oppose me. I offered him the consolidation and a good job ten years ago. He wouldn't take it, and I broke him. That's what I'll do with Keene."

"If you take ten years to do it, it'll be done through your heirs," Sledge commented "Now, listen to me, Gil:

Don't you fight this boy Keene. You stop him, quick."

"I can't do it now," protested Hasbin. "If I go to him at this stage of the game, I'll have to consolidate on his terms. That never has been my way. I've fought them down till they had to sell, and then the terms were mine."

He explained this with smug self-approbation, and looked about him for applause.

"You didn't get me," Sledge persisted. "I said to stop this boy. Take him in now."

"I can't," insisted Hasbin. "It hasn't been my way."

"It's your way this time," announced Sledge, rising ponderously. "Get busy." He already had his hat on—he always wore it—and he walked out of the door.

Hasbin looked at Tom Bendix in blank consternation, and it was a trembling finger which caught at his twitching under lip.

"This is an outrage!" he protested. "I have never permitted any interference in my business methods, and my success has proved that they are right. Why, Sledge is giving me orders!"

"I wouldn't call it that," corrected Bendix softly. "I'd call it advice, and men who don't take the chief's advice are always sorry."

XIII.

Finding Ellis Keene, president of seventeen separate Family Store corporations, and of one Family Store Holding and Operating Company, was like locating a flea in the dark, for he carried his office in a specially fitted suit case, which, for the most part, occupied the folding seats in the tonneau of a swift auto; and his secretary was a chauffeur.

Mrs. Dallison, after fruitless and reluctant efforts, finally secured a portion of his schedule by calling up the Warstairs Wholesale Grocery Company. It was Jimmy Van Couver who answered the phone.

"Two-per-cent Keene?" he piped enthusiastically.

"Ellis Keene," Mrs. Dallison corrected him, entirely unprepared to share his enthusiasm.

"That's the boy," he assured her. "Takes his cash discounts just thirty minutes before his ten days are up; seventy-three per cent a year. What about him?"

"I'd like to reach him."

"Drop him a line, and make an appointment," suggested Jimmy. "He has a box at the post office."

"That won't do," worried Mrs. Dallison, not deeming it necessary to state that she had written Keene three requests for an appointment. "I must find him in person to-day."

"His present personal address is a dark-green automobile, decorated with mud, but I can't give you the number," explained Jimmy, with a chuckle of admiration. "He comes in here every Monday and Thursday at twelve, and eats his lunch—an apple and a bag of peanuts—while he buys goods. That's his only regular habit that I know of, except fighting for discounts."

"This is Wednesday," mused Mrs. Dallison. "Thanks; I'll try to find him elsewhere."

That afternoon Hasbin received a telephone call from Sledge:

"Have you seen Keene?"

"Not yet," confessed Hasbin.

Sledge swore, and Hasbin heard a click, which told him that the interview was over.

On Thursday, at twelve o'clock, Gilbert Hasbin, whose nerves were in no way soothed by the humiliation, stood in the doorway of the big Warstairs establishment when Keene drove up in his green auto, closed his suit-case office, and jumped out, producing a big red apple from his pocket as he alighted.

"Hello, Keene," said Hasbin, as the eighteen times president strode up the steps, followed by his chauffeur secretary, with a grocery list and an apple of his own. "I want to see you a minute."

"So I judged from your letters," returned Keene, examining his apple speculatively, as he decided where to bite into it. "What about?" and he mounted the remaining step, the one just above Hasbin.

"Your cooperative stores."

"I didn't expect you quite so soon. Consolidation or purchase?"

"Depends on the price," responded Hasbin.

"There is no price," Keene told him. "Consolidation is all I care for, a share-for-share exchange of stock at par."

Even Hasbin, used as he was to weird stock manipulations, gasped at this atrocity.

"Why, the Family Store corporations are four-fifths water," he protested.

"That water's mine," calmly observed Keene, deciding the spot from which to take the first bite. "That's why I put it there."

"It's absurd," declared Hasbin.

"Not at all, it's serious," corrected Keene. "I have seventeen corporations, capitalized at five thousand each. In another month I'll have ten more. Delay thirty days, and it will cost you an additional fifty thousand dollars' worth of Hasbin stock, of which forty thousand dollars' worth will be mine."

"There's a holding and operating company, too," suggested Hasbin. "I suppose that's all water."

"Every drop of it," heartily assented Keene. "Its authorized capital is fifty thousand, and its only invoice, so far, consists of that automobile and suit case."

"You should have incorporated the suit case in a separate company," criticized Hasbin scornfully. "You don't expect to include your holding company stock in the par-for-par exchange, I hope."

"Why else do you suppose I organized it?" demanded Keene.

Hasbin thought it over, and the more he thought the angrier he became.

"I've no time for joking," he blurted. "I never stood for a holdup in my life, and I won't stand for this one."

"I couldn't conscientiously advise you to," replied Keene kindly, and, at last, he bit into his apple.

Hasbin returned to his office more sturdily than he had felt in many days. The legitimate cause for indignation had done him good.

"Mr. Bendix called up while you were out," Mrs. Dallison told him.

"What did he want?"

"To know when you were to see Mr. Keene. I told him that you were out to meet him now, and he said that Mr. Sledge wanted you to come over and report immediately upon your return."

Hasbin cursed, with a semblance of his former vigor.

"Am I an infernal messenger boy?" he demanded, but he went, and Mrs. Dallison, looking after him, decided to persuade him, as soon as possible, to make her that little gift of a clear deed and title, which she deserved for so many years of faithful service.

Resenting the peremptory summons, but elated, too, over the absurdity of the news he had to convey, Hasbin stalked back through the Occident barroom, and passed the crowded little tables, where men of every degree were taking their lunch, by way of keeping in touch with Sledge.

"I knew I was right," he triumphantly announced, as he entered the little back room. "What do you think Keene wants?"

"Money," guessed Bendix.

"You'll laugh when I tell you," went on Hasbin, ignoring the interruption. "He wants a share-for-share exchange of his stock for Hasbin stock. He has seventeen companies in operation, or about to be. They are incorporated for five thousand dollars each, but their actual working capital is a thousand dollars each, not one penny of which was furnished by Keene. The four thousand of water is his, in case of a sale. It foots up to eighty-five thousand, of which Keene would get sixty-eight."

"Hunh!" Sledge grunted at the hole in the gate, and Bendix laughed aloud.

Emboldened by this reception, Hasbin revealed the final atrocity.

"Wait till you hear the rest of it," he resumed. "To handle the bookkeeping, he organized what he calls a holding and operating company, at fifty thousand dollars, only enough of which was paid in to buy an automobile. That fifty thousand water is all his, and he wants par for that, too. Altogether, he

expects us to pay him a hundred and thirty-five thousand dollars of good Hasbin stock, of which he would get a hundred and eighteen thousand."

Sledge turned to Bendix, and, for the first time in months, he actually grinned.

"He's a corker!" he chuckled.

XIV.

President Keene, though managing, as Tom Bendix had said, to be in all his stores at one time, was rather more emphatically present in his first one than in all of the others. He had the natural pride in it which one has for all successful beginnings, and, besides, he could see Jean Farrel occasionally from its front windows.

To-day, as he stopped in before it, his heart gave a leap of dismay, for Danny Farrel's store doors were closed, the blinds were down, and there was crape on the handle.

The shock of that was mitigated by the fact that Danny sat peacefully smoking in one upstairs front window, that Jean sat peacefully sewing in the other one, that Charley Sappy was emerging from the passageway in his street clothes, and the human brick was sitting disconsolately on the front steps.

Jean went hastily away from the window when she saw Keene, and he hurried inside, much concerned.

"Is any one dead over there?" he asked Porley, who, with many others, had come with Keene from the Hasbin stores.

"The business," replied Porley, with a grin. "It took a long time to get that old scrapper, but we got him."

"By George, I'm sorry I had to do it," said Keene, feeling all at once very small and mean. "I wonder what he's going to do?" and he looked anxiously over toward the sightless store.

"Everybody who comes in has a separate answer to that," returned Porley, still laughing. "I really believe the old fellow has told each person a different thing, in order to set them disputing each other. He's going to Ireland; he's going to live there till he eats up his stock; he's going to open a drug store; he's going to run a restaurant. There's only one thing they're all agreed on: That he won't sell his building to any one who'll open a grocery there, and especially that he won't sell out to Hasbin. A delivery wagon brought out a new wardrobe trunk to-day."

Keene went right across the street.

"Hello, Danny," he called up at the window. "When's the funeral?"

"You'll read the date on your invitation card," announced Danny, but with no trace of a smile.

"I ought to know beforehand," persisted Keene. "I furnished the corpse."

"It isn't polite to give the assassin too much information," retorted Dan.

Keene hesitated for a moment.

"May I come up?" he asked. "I want to talk with you a little bit."

Danny turned, and apparently asked a question from some one inside the room.

"I'll come down," he presently informed Keene, and, in a moment or two, he arrived and, gently displacing the human brick from the steps, sat down and lit his pipe, and puffed away quite noncommittally, leaving the beginning of the conversation entirely to Keene.

"Have you closed the store for good?" asked the young man.

"I'd have to hunt hard for the good in it," returned Dan soberly.

"Permanently, I mean," corrected the other.

"The word ain't long enough," stated Dan, with calm emphasis.

Keene's smile was but a brief one.

"I'd hate to see that," he declared, genuinely sorry.

"I hated it first," Dan replied.

"What do you intend to do?" asked Keene.

"Start a coöperative saloon," announced Dan gravely.

Keene looked at him almost impatiently.

"I have no right to ask, I know," he acknowledged, dropping the tone of banter in which the conversation had been conducted up to this point. "I

would not do so, except that I am very anxious not to have you go away from here. I am quite sure that, before long, you may have your old business back."

Dan slapped his knee with a resounding smack.

"I don't want the business back!" he emphatically stated. "I wouldn't have the business back! I wouldn't take the business back if they'd hand it to me on a gold plate garnished with diamonds!"

"The business will want you back," persuaded Keene.

"I hope so, so I can insult it!" retorted Danny, raising his voice. "I've stood in my door, goin' on four months now, and watched all my old customers and friends, that I've sold honest goods to for twenty-five years, and gave long credit to in sickness and slack times, go in and out of your store, payin' cash at high prices, until I'm that sick and sore at the whole world I wouldn't believe in my own loyalty to myself; and this mornin' I saw that grinnin' little Miggles girl, with her front teeth out, come from the door across there, dippin' her finger in the sirup pail and lickin' it. I don't know what there was about that to make me so tired of it all, or so homesick, or so mad, I don't know which, but I come in and shut the doors, and I'll never open 'em again."

"Yes, you will," insisted Keene, laughing. "The neighborhood can't get along without you, Dan; nor you without them."

"I'll show them about that, and you, too!" asserted Dan, instantly indignant.

"I don't think so," dissented Keene, forgetting that Dan was Irish. "Now, you do just as I tell you, and I'll guarantee that you'll have your old trade back in no time at all, and without opposition."

"I don't want it, I say; I don't want it!" protested Dan, running his fingers through his curly gray hair, and dropping his pipe.

Keene should have taken that for a sign, and should have conveyed the balance of his suggestions on the installment plan; but he had heard a hint that Jean might go to Ireland.

"Yes, you do," he disputed. "Just say nothing to anybody, Danny, keep your stock as it is, and——"

"That's enough!" interrupted Dan, rising in wrath. "You not only boast that you're goin' to ruin my business, because you have a dispute with my girl that you can do it, but you set your whole mind to it till you make me close my store, that I've run for twenty-five years; then you have the ingrowin' impudence to give me advice. Get off of my doorstep!"

"Certainly," said Keene, with alacrity, and stepped quickly off the curb. "I wouldn't fight with you for a million dollars, Dan."

"You'd better never!" advised Danny, smacking his fists together. "Young as you are, and as old as I am, you never saw or will see the minute that you could lick one side of me. If you'll pay me a battered old copper cent for the job, I'll paste you right now!"

"I'm going to run, like the coward that I am," laughed Keene, and walked briskly across to his own store.

Danny went upstairs, breathing fires of fierce vengeance.

"You should have heard the cheek of that fresh young Keene!" he fumed.

"I heard him from the window, father," returned Jean, with blazing eyes. "He is an impertinent young schemer, of no principles and no manners! I wondered that you held your temper so long!"

"Well," explained Danny, put a trifle upon his defense by that, "he seems such a likable young chap that I never can be real mad with him in the beginnin'. He has to aggravate me first."

"The sight of him is enough aggravation!" she indignantly asserted. "I hate him, father! I'll be glad when you can sell this place, so that we can go away, where we shall never have to see him again!"

"Well, I don't know that he's so hard to look at," Dan considered soberly. "He's a smart, shrewd boy, too, and I believe that at bottom he has a good heart."

"A good heart!" she cried. "Why, father! He is a brutal, merciless, crafty scoundrel!" and she burst into tears.

Danny walked over behind her chair, and leaned down over her shoulder, cuddling his cheek against hers.

"God bless ye, Jean," he said. "Don't take it so to heart. I've seen you gettin' pale and thin all these months, blamin' yourself for draggin' your old father into this trouble; but you mustn't do it, darlin', with your good Scotch mother's beautiful hair and her sweet name. I'd 'a' got it a year later, anyhow, for I can't keep up with these monopoly ways of doin' business; and it's better to get out now, and save a year of worry, and a year of loss, and a year of life."

He kissed her, and patted both her shoulders at once.

"Don't you see, Jean, dear? Your old daddy, God forgive him, has been deceivin' you all these years, and he has quite a tidy bit of money put by that you don't know about. We'll go away and spend it, Jean, and rest; and I'm sure it'll last till I'm laid away, and till you're married to a brave, handsome laddie, that'll take better care of you than me."

She laughed even through her tears, and put one shapely arm back, and up, and around her father's neck.

"I don't want to get married, daddy," she told him. "I want to just take care of you. The very word makes me angry. Why, do you remember, Mr. Keene had the effrontery to threaten to marry me as soon as he had broken you? I shall never forgive him!"

"You might," returned Dan shrewdly, after considering the matter well, and remembering that his own Jean had led him a feverish chase.

"Never!" she cried, with a return of the sob in her throat. "You don't understand what an insult that was, father. I hate him for it! I hate him, and hate him, and hate him!" and her blue eyes blackened with wrath.

Dan's own eyes twinkled till they radiated little wrinkles in every direction, like star rays on a summer night.

"Tut, tut, Jean, darlin'," he laughed. "No woman ever hates a man that much unless she thinks a lot of him."

XV.

Hasbin, whipped into thoughtfulness by the attitude of Sledge, and by the dear price he had had to pay for Keene's coöperative stores, began to take good care of himself. He put himself under the charge of a doctor and a nurse; he retired early; he dropped off drink, drugs, and tobacco, and all the indulgences which had undermined him. He put in short but busy hours at the office. He reported to Sledge daily, at that gentleman's significant request; he desisted, for the time, from his passion for extension, stopping, thereby, his ruinous warfare upon specific independents whom he had planned to absorb; he closed all the stores which were not paying, and reduced them to the compact and profitable number of sixty-five, including the seventeen of Keene's Family concerns.

The closing of these was a final blow to coöperative schemes in that city for decades to come. They had been the most successful of all, and even they had been compelled to sell out to the good old reliable Gilbert Hasbin Company.

The reduction of his loans, he promised Sledge, was a matter he would take up next, and he strove seriously to obtain a clear understanding of his own financial situation, a most difficult matter, since his manufacturing companies, and his retail corporation, had been freely used to bolster up each other, and to bear the enormous weight of his greed for expansion.

His own personal holdings of stock, of which he had always been careful to retain more than fifty per cent, were scattered as collateral in a score of banks. There had been innumerable reissues and increases of capitalization, and he awoke to a realization of the fact, just a short time before the annual stockholders' meeting, that, though he was rated personally as being worth millions, his actual worth, if he were to sift down his possessions, and offset his

assets by his liabilities, would accurately be represented by a rimless cipher.

In that situation, however, there was nothing to cause him great uneasiness. So long as he kept the ball rolling, he was, for all practical purposes, including credit, power, and satisfaction, worth the millions he was popularly supposed to be; and there was no possibility that the ball would stop rolling. Sledge was deeply interested in his company, and, in protecting himself, must protect Hasbin, which meant that the limitless resources of the people, stored in the banks under Sledge's control, were his to command.

Sledge! There was a remarkable man. Hasbin, viewing the field as a general studies, with saddened gravity, the disposition of his forces after he has made a heavy sacrifice of troops, to gain an important position, had to acknowledge the clearness of Sledge's vision. The cutting away of the dead wood had strengthened the enterprise immeasurably; and, for the first time in years, during which the earnings of the company had been absorbed in feverish expansion, the Gilbert Hasbin Grocery Company promised to be represented by a legitimate dividend-earning stock.

He viewed that result with intense gratification, for no one knew it but himself and his head bookkeeper and Sledge; and a quiet purchase of all the outstanding stock which could be secured would be a shrewd move at this time. It was quoted now at a round seventy-five, and had a borrowing power of much less. By discontinuing the greed for expansion, which had been an obsession with him from the first, and by following the sane course laid down by Sledge, the stock should be worth par in a year.

Elated, Hasbin, priding himself upon the fact that he was in so much better physical condition, went to Sledge, during that Olympian's hour at the First National, to propose a secretive stock-purchasing campaign, with the idle funds which a trusting public had placed at the bank's disposal without interest.

Borden, looking much more like a president than Sledge, received him with pompous blandness in the president's office.

"Will Sledge be in soon?" asked Hasbin carelessly, sitting in the big leather chair he was wont to occupy.

"Not to-day," replied Borden, with the same oratorical effect he would have used in reading the Declaration of Independence.

"I'm sorry," regretted Hasbin, still easily. "I have a rather important proposition to lay before him, and one in which there is not much time to spare. He will be in to-morrow, I suppose."

"I scarcely think so," declaimed Borden, smoothing his close-cropped, silver-white, round-cut mutton-chop, with the vast complacency of a man who knows that he looks important. "He left for the East last night, without leaving an address or stating when he would return."

Hasbin frowned. If Sledge was away upon one of his "gumshoe" trips, which might mean the unseating of a senator, the slating of a national convention, the steal of a franchise, or the swallowing of a hundred hungry commercial wolves by a stronger dozen, there was no finding him for an indefinite period.

"I'll see Tom Bendix," decided Hasbin, rising. "He may be able to give me some better information."

"Possibly," admitted Mr. Borden; and now, sitting in Sledge's big revolving chair, he smoothed his left fist softly with his right palm, over and over. "By the way, Mr. Hasbin." There was a curious hesitation about him—for Borden.

"Yes?" inquired Hasbin, a trifle impatiently. He was contemptuous of Borden, who was a figurehead, a hollow-sounding pretense, a four-flusher.

"You have some paper falling due day after to-morrow. I just thought I'd remind you of it, as the amount is rather large."

"Oh, yes," returned Hasbin indifferently. "That will, of course, be renewed."

"I supposed that it would be," agreed Borden, again smoothing his fist with

his right palm, a movement which was strange enough in him, always at so much self-ease, that Hasbin took note of it. "Unfortunately, however, I have no authority, in the absence of the president, to sanction such an extension."

Hasbin, still contemptuous of him, bent upon him displeased brows.

"That's utterly foolish," he charged. "There is a perfect understanding between Sledge and myself that my loans are not to be reduced at present, and that this and the other accounts at the First National, as well as those at the other banks, are to be carried."

"I have no doubt whatever of that," admitted Borden, recovering his pompous assertiveness, as the other became overbearing. "In the meantime, I must repeat that I have no authority to do other than call this loan."

"You must extend it!" demanded Hasbin. "This is necessary not only to protect me, but to protect Mr. Sledge."

"I can only do my duty," returned Mr. Borden, with magnificent recklessness.

Hasbin looked down at him and laughed.

"Don't be an ass," he chided. "If Sledge returns, and finds that you have thrown his interests into a jam, he will have your scalp, and I will take your ears." He bent the knitted brows of all the ruthlessness in which he was so thoroughly capable on Borden, but that hero never flinched.

"There is only one course open to me," he insisted. "That paper must be met on the moment it falls due, unless you can get into communication with Mr. Sledge, and secure his order for the extension; otherwise the First National will be compelled to foreclose the stock which is here as collateral."

"You're entirely too useful, Borden!" said Hasbin, in a rage. "This job is too small for you. I'm going to see if another one can't be found for you," and he stalked out, leaving Borden but very little intimidated.

He hurried back to his office and called up Tom Bendix. Bendix did not know where the chief was, nor when he would be back. Beginning to be nervous about the blunder, Hasbin called his auto, and went to see some of the directors of the First National. They could do nothing without Sledge, they assured him, even after he had thoroughly explained the situation to them. Warstairs, however, pointed out to him a way through his difficulties.

"I can readily understand that the amount is too large for you to swing at such short notice, but why don't you go to Borden and arrange for a nominal foreclosure? The foreclosure and sale, to the bank, of course, may be made very quietly, and with only a surface transfer of the stock. As soon as Sledge returns, you can repurchase it, and renew your loan on it."

"I don't like that," said Hasbin, shaking his head.

He noticed a queer thing about himself as he returned to his auto. Looking squarely at the step, he put out his foot, and missed it by two inches; and, when he arrived at his office, he missed the doorknob, by about the same distance, and found himself fumbling aimlessly about the panel. He had immediate recourse to the bottle of little white pellets, and felt much better.

He lit a strong cigar, and enjoyed it thoroughly. It soothed him. After all, the situation was not so bad. It was a mere egotistical pose of authority on the part of pompous Borden, and he would probably bridge it over in the manner pointed out to him by Warstairs.

Suddenly a disquieting thought came to him. He called up Chisman, of the Provident Trust.

"I have some paper falling due over there pretty soon," he stated. "When is it due, and what is the amount?"

Chisman held him a moment while he looked it up.

"It's not much. Fifty thousand, on the twenty-fifth," he replied.

"Thanks," acknowledged Hasbin. "I shall, of course, want an extension."

"Very well," agreed Chisman, in a matter-of-fact tone. "Come over when you are ready."

Relieved, Hasbin called Strong, of the Commercial; Davidson, of the Ger-

man National; Gainer, of the Market and Produce, and two others where he held minor accounts falling due in the near future. There was no trouble along the line.

Hasbin chuckled at himself for a fool. He had been panic-stricken, for a moment, lest this was the beginning of the end; lest the time had come for him to walk the pirate plank, blindfolded and hands tied, into the depthless sea of commercial oblivion; lest his name had been called to clamber into the same tumbril which had carried Crothers, and a host of his forgotten predecessors to the guillotine.

The next day he went to Borden and arranged for the friendly foreclosure, which Warstairs had suggested. There was only one aggravating feature of that arrangement. Borden had insisted upon an actual transfer; but, after all, this was only a matter of form.

XVI.

A number of new faces confronted President Hasbin at the annual stockholders' meeting, faces bequeathed him by the consolidations with the Tokio company and Keene's coöperative stores, and Keene himself sat smilingly among them.

Hasbin called for the stock book, and was amazed to find how much had been entered in Keene's name, aside from the large amount which that enterprising young man had secured through his disposal of the Family stores. He looked hastily, then, for the First National. It had no entry, and, in the name of Borden, then present, and of Lewis, the second vice-president, stood only their usual amounts.

He was about to call the meeting to order when Tom Bendix loafed up to him out of the crowd, and presented a sheaf of certificates.

"Sledge wants these entered before the meeting," he observed.

"Is he back?" asked Hasbin eagerly.

"Just last night," returned Bendix idly.

Hasbin opened the sheaf of certificates, and was startled to find them the ones which had been held by the First National. He turned them over. They were duly transferred to Sledge.

"I see," he said easily, as the situation dawned on him. "He's brought them in to be voted, but I didn't need them. How is Sledge?"

"Same old boy," replied Bendix, and stood by while the secretary made the transfer on the books, after which he replaced the certificates very carefully in his pocket.

The meeting was well under way. Hasbin's annual address, a self-centered compound of shrewdness and egotism, had been delivered, the routine business had been disposed of, and the election of officers had been reached in the order of business, when Tom Bendix slipped out for a few minutes. When he returned, Sledge was with him.

"The first office in order of election will be that of president," announced Hasbin, with his annual smile. "The chair is now ready to receive nominations," and he gazed about him, with a perfunctory air of friendliness.

Then up rose lanky L. T. Morton, tottering and white, and still in the harness, through the successive refusals of Crothers and Keene to take his post of general manager of the Hasbin stores, and performed his annual duty.

"I desire to place in nomination the name of the stanch warrior, who has led us on to victory for so many years," he quavered, with a feeble smile. "I have the honor to propose Gilbert Hasbin."

Then Henry Disston, a chunky young man, with a cleft in his chin, who had followed up the ranks into Keene's place, arose to perform Keene's annual duty.

"I second the nomination," he rasped.

The next annual duty devolved upon the head bookkeeper, whose part in the burlesque it had been to move, at this juncture, that the nominations be closed; but he was not in the room, and Hasbin looked around for him with impatience.

Another man arose, however; Porley, the emergency man, who was usually sent to build up business in difficult lo-

calities, who had defected to Keene, who had been taken back on probation, and who now was doubtless eager to reinstate himself in the good graces of his boss. Hasbin recognized him graciously enough under the circumstances, and waited for him to move the close of the nominations.

"I nominate Ellis Keene," said Porley instead.

"Second the motion!" shouted another voice, which Hasbin was too confused to recognize.

"Move the nominations be closed!"

"Secon' th' motion!"

He knew that last voice—a voice which rumbled in the throat, but carried far; as far as the city hall, and the courthouse, and the State capitol, and the capitol at Washington, and which was the decision wherever it was heard.

In an incredulous daze, Hasbin heard the balance of the proceedings, realizing vaguely that he was no longer president and dictator of the immense business which bore his name; that he was not even upon its board of directors, that he had no voice in it whatever; that Keene was the new name of ultimate power in the retail grocery world; that Sledge had accomplished it with the aid of the stock of which Keene had milked him, and of that out of which Borden had tricked him, at Sledge's order. He saw dimly that his collateral in other banks would go into the same capacious maw at their absurdly low loan valuation, and that Sledge would increase his already swollen fortune by their quick raise in worth.

He found himself annoyed by a shrill, cackling laughter close at hand, and it made him nervous, so that his hands were groping aimlessly in the air to shut it out, and he did not discover that the laughter proceeded from himself. And we leave Hasbin here, as he concerns us no further. The story of *his* life was almost completed.

XVII.

Sledge walked into the aforetime Hasbin offices, where Keene now directed that big organization, and sat down comfortably. It had been many years since he had taken a purely friendly interest in the fortunes of any other man, but there was something in Keene's cleverness and energy and self-sufficiency which both attracted and amused him.

"Located that missing stock?" he inquired.

"Yes," answered Keene, laughing. "It doesn't seem to belong to anybody. It was an error in accounting at the time of the absorption of the Tokio company. It's not a large amount, but it's enough to keep an idle man in comfort for some time."

"Don't see how it got past Dallison," commented Sledge, with a chuckle.

"Nor do I," answered Keene. "She got away with everything loose, the minute she heard that Hasbin was a final wreck. This was so easy, too. Anybody could have stolen it. What shall we do with it?"

Sledge regarded him with a curious smile. "You didn't seem to want it."

"No," laughed Keene. "It wouldn't be any fun to get it that way. The only fun is in fighting for it."

"Uh-hunh!" assented Sledge thoughtfully. "That's what I liked about Crothers."

Keene turned to him with sudden eagerness.

"That's the idea! Crothers!" he exclaimed.

"Is it?" asked Sledge. His face was as heavy and impassive as ever, his somber eyes as expressionless, but still he was enjoying Keene immensely.

"The stock, I mean," Keene explained. "Let's give it to Crothers."

Sledge pondered that a moment, and nodded his head.

"Fine," said he. "Crothers is a good, game sport."

"No question of that!" declared Keene enthusiastically. "He moved into one little room a month ago, and I guess he must be down to about his last dollar; but old William, who has a job now as doorman at that exclusive new ladies' shop down in the next block, calls around and shaves him every morning."

"Hunh!" grunted Sledge. "Can't we slip William something?"

"It will be enough for William," smiled Keene, "just to have Crothers send for him again at the old apartments. We'll have to work this crooked, though, or Crothers will turn us down. I know what I'll do. I'll send Jimmy Van Couver to him to explain that this was saved out of the wreck some way or other. Jimmy can fix up his own lie, and he'll be tickled sick to do it."

"I'm for it," approved Sledge. "Say, Keene, what's the matter with you?"

"Nothing. Why?" returned Keene.

"You're thin. You got circles under your eyes. You stop and think, and come back with a jerk."

"I've been working pretty hard," evaded Keene.

"Nix," denied Sledge. "Work don't do it. It's what a man does when he rests that gets him. You don't drink."

"No," smiled Keene.

"You don't smoke."

"No."

"You don't use dope."

"No."

"You don't gamble."

"No."

"What do you do?"

"Work," insisted Keene, and laughed.

"I said nix," responded Sledge, and studied him gloomily. "I know," he presently concluded. "It's a skirt."

"And a shirt waist, and a pair of blue eyes, and some black hair," supplemented Keene.

"She's Irish," decided Sledge. "Is that the girl you had the scrap with Hasbin about?"

"How did you know that?" asked Keene quickly.

"The Dallison woman. She got a salary from me for information. What did Hasbin do that you threatened to punch his head?"

"Talked to her," replied Keene, still indignant.

"That was enough," agreed Sledge. "Why won't she marry you?" and he betrayed a trace of impatience.

Keene laughed heartily, and then he became gravely serious.

"I threatened to break her father's business," he explained.

"Didn't you do it?"

"Unfortunately, I did," replied Keene, who had found reason to regret it. "She won't speak to me now, nor even see me."

"What more do you want?" demanded Sledge shrewdly. "Who's her father?"

"I'll tell you all about it," said Keene, glad to confide in some one: "Her father is a grocer on the hill, by the name of Danny Farrel."

"Danny Farrel!" repeated Sledge. "Stop till I laugh. Why, Danny's the very spit of the shamrock. He walks six blocks out of his way, every time he sees me, to tell me that he never voted for a man on my ticket, and never will. If I needed a dollar, Danny's the first man I'd go to."

"He offers to fight me with a hobble skirt on," laughed Keene. "It started when I was running the Hasbin store right next to him. I tried to get him to sell out, and he wouldn't. I tried to get Jean to coax him to sell, and she wouldn't. I told her I was sorry, because we'd have to break him. She dared me to do it, and I did. That's all."

"Except that you lay awake nights. That's why they say that store up there's so rotten."

"Do they say that?" asked Keene hopefully.

"That's the report I get," Sledge told him. "I'd have kicked about it before, but everything else is running right, and I just supposed it was a bad corner."

"I know it isn't business, Sledge," confessed Keene, "but I want Danny to open his store again, and take back his old customers. They've been to him, singly and in committees, to beg him to do it, and he's having the time of his life inventing new ways of telling them to go to the devil. I'm running that store rotten deliberately."

"Go to it!" consented Sledge. "You're the president."

XIII.

The grinning little girl with the front teeth out came hissing up the back stairs, in great excitement, to tell the

Farrels that a big man was trying to find his way in at the front stairs door. Danny Farrel poked his head out of the window, and looked down.

"It's that graftin' old Ben Sledge," he told Jean. "If he's come here to ask my influence for any man in his party, I'll throw him downstairs." He put his head out of the window again. "Hello, Sledge!" he called down. "Just turn the knob, and push hard. The door sticks."

"Hello, Dan," said Sledge, turning the knob as directed. "Have you a vote for a friend of mine?"

"I have not!" repudiated Dan emphatically. "I never voted for a man on your ticket, and I never will! Come on up. Jean," he instructed his daughter, "see if you can find Herman out the back way, and hurry the growler down to Flannery's. Mr. Sledge drinks nothin' but beer, and plenty of it; and tell Herman to tell that blackguard Flannery that if the bucket comes back with a six-inch collar on it this time, I'll dent his thick head with it! Then run down in the store, and bring up a box of them Ryos de what-you-call-'em cigars. I never could say the name; but they're the best we have. Right this way, Mr. Sledge," and he opened the door with a flourish to the sound of the footfalls outside.

Sledge came in as Jean went out at the other door, and he cast an approving eye after her.

"Is that your daughter, Dan?" he asked, shaking hands.

"That's my Jean!" returned Dan proudly.

"She's a corker!" complimented Sledge, sitting comfortably in the big rocker Dan moved up for him.

"You're a man of good taste and judgment," Dan complimented him in return.

"There's a friend of mine wants to marry her," stated Sledge.

"I believe you, if he's seen her," replied Dan loftily. "Why don't he say so himself?"

"He did once, but she won't give him another chance."

"Then there's somethin' the matter with him, and we don't want him," asserted Dan stoutly. "Who is he?"

"Ellis Keene," answered Sledge.

"Oh, him," responded Dan, with a grin. "If I was a younger man, or him older, we'd have seen who would say 'Yes, sir,' to the other, long before this. I owe him a beatin'."

"He's a smart boy, and a comer," defended Sledge. "There's nothing the matter with him."

"Did I say there was?" demanded Dan indignantly.

"Why won't she marry him, then?" persisted Sledge.

"Listen," said Dan, bending closer. "She will."

"I wish she'd hurry," returned Sledge seriously. "He's neglecting his business over it. I got a lot of money tied up there."

"He's an expert at that," commented Dan dryly. "He tied mine."

Sledge grinned cheerfully.

"He'll be able to take good care of your girl."

"He'd better!" threatened Dan.

"He's been at it," Sledge informed him. "You know why Hasbin fired him?"

"Because he was afraid he'd own the stores," guessed Dan.

"Nix," corrected Sledge. "Hasbin talked to your girl."

"He did!" shouted Dan, rising in wrath, for the reputation of Hasbin was a byword.

"He did," repeated Sledge. "And Keene told him if he ever spoke to her again he'd beat his head off."

Dan hurried to the rear stair door.

"Do you hear that, Jean?" he called excitedly down.

"What is it, father?" asked Jean, in blissful ignorance.

"Come up here, and I'll tell you," promised Dan.

"All right," she cheerily answered, and presently came in with a box of cigars, which she offered to Sledge, with a grace which charmed him.

"Do you know what happened to Keene?" asked Danny, as he accepted the second cigar.

"No. What?" she inquired breathlessly, and paled.

"He got fired that time, for darin' Hasbin, with his fists, to ever speak to you again!"

Jean flushed violently, and sat suddenly down.

"Mr. Sledge come out to ask you would you marry Keene," Danny went on. "The boy's gettin' thin and pale, and neglectin' his business."

Sledge scratched his head in perplexity. He felt that he ought to say something, but he was stricken dumb.

"Did Mr. Keene send you here?" Jean asked indignantly.

"No," confessed the Boss, damning himself, anyhow, when it was too late, for "butting into" a love affair. Politics he knew, and business he knew, and men he knew, but here he was a puling babe, and he felt it keenly. "He's a corker, though!" he blurted desperately.

Jean looked from the one to the other with blazing indignation, for a moment; then suddenly she saw them as they were, and ran downstairs, giggling.

"Now, what does she mean by that?" puzzled Dan, scratching his curly gray hair.

"I pass," rumbled Sledge, in equally painful perplexity. "When the women vote, I'm going out of politics. Have we queered it?"

"I dunno," worried Dan.

"I hope not," returned Sledge. "Would it help any if Keene shut up that store across the street, and let you open up here?"

"Afterward, mebby," said Danny confidentially. "If Jean marries, and goes away, I'll be pretty lonely here, and there's a fat old woman, that's twin sister to the devil, that'll slip in and marry me in my sleep, if I don't hire a night watchman."

"Why don't you move?" suggested Sledge, much concerned.

"I'll do better than that," chuckled Dan. "I'll marry another woman—a good old friend of ours that I've sent for; and she'll keep poor Joe Sullivan's widow away, praise be! I'm only waitin' for Jean to be settled down. If she hears a word of this just now, I'll deny it!"

There was the noise of a stopping auto on the opposite side of the street. Dan hurried to the window. He had no difficulty in catching Keene's eye, for Keene was looking anxiously in that direction. Dan beckoned to him mysteriously, with one gnarled finger, which he immediately placed to his lips in warning.

Keene advanced a step or two, and looked up in wonder.

Dan repeated the gestures, and pointed to the front door.

Keene came over to the curb, and looked up for further instructions.

Dan elaborated his signals of secrecy, and motioned for Keene to come upstairs.

"It's Keene," Dan explained to Sledge. "I don't know what we've done, but I'll put the responsibility on him. I don't dare take it myself."

"I think I'll step out," suggested Sledge, cowed for the first time in his life.

"No, you don't!" warned Dan fiercely. "You'll stay right here and help me bear it."

"What is the matter?" whispered Keene anxiously, as he came into the room, and stopped with surprise as he saw Sledge, who was staring somberly out of the window, and longing for the hand hole in the gate.

"I dunno," worried Dan. "I think we fixed it for you with Jean—mebby. She's downstairs."

Keene looked at them doubtfully for a long minute, and then he went slowly down the back stairs.

"Do you suppose we did?" asked Dan, longing for comfort.

"Hunh!" grunted Sledge noncommittally, and looked steadily out of the window.

A long, long time they smoked in dismal silence, and with strained ears for sounds from below; but none came. Finally the mercurial Danny could stand it no longer. He motioned Sledge to follow him, and tiptoed to the hall door. Danny and the Mighty Force stood

quietly by the back-stairs banister, but no sound floated up. They tiptoed through the long, narrow hall to the kitchen, and looked out of the side window, down into the narrow passageway which led to the back yard.

In the rear door of the store sat Keene and Jean. She had her black hair pillowed comfortably upon his shoulder, and they were unconscious of everything in the world.

"Jean, darlin'," called Danny presently, "did you send Herman for the beer?"

ON THE JOB

WE'VE seen all the sights of the glorious city,
We've sampled its various fun,
We've walked on its pavements that's granite an' gritty,
We've seen how its doin's is done;
We blowed in our cash like the craziest sailors,
There was action, wherever we'd been,
We was live ones an' leaders—not pikers an' trailers;
But now—we herd cattle again!

It was two days er three, I ain't sure of the number,
We rambled along the whole line,
We hadn't no time fer indulgin' in slumber,
We wouldn't drink nuthin' but wine;
The fellers we met was admirin' our paces,
We bought fer 'em careless, an' then
We found we was down to a couple of cases—
So now we herd cattle again!

We finished our play, an' we're back to our toilin',
Our pay is all vanished an' spent,
But we sure kept the kettle consid'able boilin',
There was 'class to the pace that we went!
An' yet, it's sure good to be ridin' a pony,
An' to talk to yer own kind of men,
An' to gallop the range with yer pal an' yer crony,
A-herdin' the cattle again.

It's good to be back where the fresh wind is blowin',
An' the star-sprinkled sky is yer roof,
Where off in the distance the mountains are showin'
So splendid, an' cold, an' aloof.
The city's all right fer a glorious spree in,
But it's sort of a narrow-walled pen,
An' I'm glad to be out, like a real human bein',
Just herdin' the cattle again!

BERTON BRALEY.

The Lost Village

A STORY OF THE SHERIFF OF BADGER

By George Pattullo

Author of "Telepathy," "A Club Flush," "A Cow-puncher Widow," Etc.

IT is not given to every one to consort with dead men who are alive. This sounds involved. Therefore, it is best to set out my facts soberly, and in due order, for fear skeptics may arise to question the veracity of the recital. Lafe Johnson, sheriff of Badger, came through such an experience, and his narrative follows.

As a warning to suspicious and crafty persons, let me state at the outset that it will avail nothing to seek out Johnson upon the chance of obtaining a denial from him, because Lafe and I agreed to tell nothing but the truth. To this end we compared stories with the utmost exactitude, and will stick to them through thick and thin. Besides, Lafe Johnson is not his real name, nor is there a town called Badger, although such a community really does exist. Moreover, I believe Lafe told what he saw, because he has not sufficient imagination to concoct such a lie.

A week after Pat Killough put the sheriff on the sick list by a blow on the head with a bottle, Johnson went about as usual, although a large piece of plaster adorned one ear. His first care was to talk with the proprietor of the Fashion, which ended in that gentleman leaving town in haste. He prayerfully assured Lafe that he had not tampered with his gun intentionally on the night of Killough's invasion of the sheriff's house, but the latter requested him to get moving on general principles and for the good of the community. Then the sheriff set quietly to work to ascertain what had become of Killough.

"I've got to get him, Hetty," he told his fiancée. "If I don't, he's sure to get me. It's either me or him. So we'll have to put the wedding off, hon, till this is straightened out."

"All right," she agreed slowly, and turned away, that Lafe might not see her face.

"You see, hon, I want to have a clean slate," he went on. "Do you get me? When we get married, I want to throw up this job of sheriff, and take to running cattle again with ol' man Horne."

"Huh-huh!"

"Don't look that way, hon. Pat, he's the last of the ol' tough bunch"—the sheriff was much in earnest—"I'll get him, and then I'll have done what they put me in for."

"Oh, of course, if you think more of the people who elected you than you do of me," said Hetty.

Johnson looked at her and laughed, for he knew that she would not have let him throw up his task had he wished to do so.

He did not have long to wait for news of the outlaw. A telegram came from old man Horne.

Pat Killough in Manzanal Mountains. Killed Raphael Salazar to-day while running off bunch of horses. Five hundred reward for him.

It was in obedience to this wire that the sheriff rode up a cañon in the Manzanals on a cool October afternoon. The wind played through the live oaks and scrub cedar, and went whistling upward, to be lost among the solemn peaks. Some cattle were watering at a shallow hole, and a ground squirrel scurried across his front. From all

Other stories of the sheriff of Badger appeared in the following issues of POPULAR: First August, August Month-end, September Month-end and First October.

about came the soft, mournful cooing of wild doves, which is an everpresent sound in silent places in the Southwest. The sheriff had no eye to the beauty and splendid calm about him. Killough was an hour ahead. Often he reined his horse to listen for a sign.

All morning he had been climbing. Sometimes he traveled five miles to gain a mile of distance; winding upward to high mesas, skirting them, and descending into another cañon nearer the summits toward which Killough was heading.

Presently he was confronted by a wall of rock. It was about thirty feet in height, and water ran down its face into a small pool. There seemed no way out, and Lafe scanned the cliffs around him in search of the blocked trail. While he lolled thus in the saddle, there came a shot from above his head, and his hat flew off. Without hesitation, he fell from his horse, and scrambled on hands and knees to the shelter of a tree.

"I near got you that time, Lafe," a clear voice called to him.

It seemed to come from behind the crags above the pool. Then he thought he heard the ring of a horse's shoe on stone, but he was too cautious to expose himself at once. For fully an hour he waited, listening for evidence of his enemy, and occasionally sighting along the barrel of his thirty-thirty. Then, persuaded Killough had seized the chance to increase his lead, he remounted, and continued the pursuit.

In late afternoon he threaded a broad cañon, and entered on a stretch of brakes, perhaps six miles in length, and one in width. The top of its numberless bald hills overlooked the cañon's sides. The ribbon of trail he followed ran along a narrow plateau; at intervals, chalky cliffs dropped sheer away on his right hand to a depth of two hundred feet, and there were gaping cavities into which a mountain could have been dumped, resembling in their formation the craters of extinct volcanos. Giant fissures showed in the mounds of salmon-colored clay, and, close beside him, a yawning void threatened, whence a hundred thousand tons of shale had slid. Of vegetation there was none, save a tangle of prickly pears at the mouth of a gulch.

"There he goes now," said the sheriff, jabbing his horse.

Killough was nearly a mile ahead, and moving leisurely, as though he had no fear. He topped a rise, and waved his hand cheerily at Johnson before dipping out of sight.

Something in the character of the region oppressed the sheriff with a sense of foreboding. It was not that the land was rent with wounds, hideous in its misshapen barrenness; but he sensed something sinister in the heavy, brooding silence. More than once he felt like peering back to see what lurked at his shoulder; and then, with a shudder, he would quicken his pace, as though to escape an unknown presence.

"Pshaw!" Johnson muttered. "I'm getting nervous as a ol' woman."

Pat came again into view, and the sheriff pulled his rifle from the holster strapped to the saddle beneath his left leg. He was close enough to risk a shot, although the chances were a thousand against him. He waited until Killough showed clear against the sky line, and then pulled. The only result was that the outlaw leaned far forward, and started off at a run. Lafe rubbed his eyes and gaped. The trail looked unbroken; there were no dips or windings, yet Killough was gone. The sheriff stood in the stirrups, and shook up his mount to a gallop.

As he rode, he tested the chambers of his weapon, allowing the reins to hang slackly on the horse's neck. He had just given a pat of approval to the barrel of the rifle, when the horse stopped, his forefeet thrust forward to brace himself. Lafe went on over his head. Space seemed to rush by him at furious speed, and there was a rumble and swishing as of falling earth. He brought up on hard ground, with decomposed lime and pebbles and stones cascading about him. Stunned, he lay at the foot of the slope, and considered the sky. Then he raised himself painfully to peer about.

He was lying in a small basin, eighty or a hundred feet below the point from where he fell. The bottom of this basin was black, and caked and flaky, as though it had once held water, and all around opposed precipitous mounds of chalky white rock.

As he was rubbing his leg where a root had torn it, a noose softly encircled his neck. The sheriff grabbed at it, and tottered to his feet, but he was too late. A sustained force dragged him down, and began to haul him off. The light changed from amber to dusk. He was evidently in the shelter of an overhanging shelf of rock, and under this natural roof it was already twilight. Hearing a groan close beside him, he looked that way. There was Killough, trussed up like himself, and with his right arm dangling limply.

"Now," a voice told them, "we'll go."

A big negro stood over the pair, grinning at them nervously. A sickening scar ran the length of his right cheek, and he wore a conical Mexican hat, with tarnished silver braid. Instead of boots, the black had sandals, and the rest of his garb consisted of a sleeveless shirt and a pair of overalls. He bent over Killough, and bound his arms fast to his sides, heedless of the rustler's cries of pain when he handled the broken shoulder. Lafe's turn came next. While he was swiftly debating what to do, their captor settled it for him by a tug on the rope, shutting off his breath. By the time he had recovered, he, too, was pinioned. Readjusting the noose, the negro took the loose ends of the ropes, and plunged into a dark tunnel. Stumbling, sometimes falling, but dragged forward with merciless insistence, they followed perforce.

They trod an underground passage. For most of its length, it was about the height of a man, but when the black growled a warning they would stoop; and twice the sheriff's head scraped projecting bowlders. Dark shapes swooped by on soundless wings, the wind of their flight fanning his cheek. Once during their march a shaft of light dispelled the gloom, and they traversed an illumined space more than ten yards across. Lafe could see far above him the blue sky. Across this radiant aperture a huge bird wheeled—a buzzard, in quest of carrion.

With an occasional pull on the ropes, the negro proceeded four or five hundred yards, and stopped. Johnson could not see him at all, but there suddenly reverberated through the passage a cry, so harsh and tremulous that his hair bristled. It scared Killough. He edged over, and Johnson could hear his straining breath. Another jerk on the noose, and an answer came from back of the impenetrable dark. It was taken up in a dozen directions, and, as though an echo had multiplied the signal a hundredfold, a perfect babel resounded.

They emerged unexpectedly into twilight. They were upon the borders of a pool, whose dark waters bubbled from bottomless springs. That much the sheriff had opportunity to note, and then there was a rush of humanity toward them. Forms were for the moment indistinguishable.

"Back! Keep back!" their guard shouted, beating savagely at bare bodies with the knotted end of a rope.

Naked children shrank from them, gibbering. Some dashed back at the noose, and seized it, but the scarred negro repelled them. A few were ebony in hue, more were brown, and at least three of the poor wretches possessed skins as white as Lafe's own. Apparently they spoke no human language, but mouthed a hoarse jargon to the accompaniment of rude gestures. With the children hanging to their rear, they passed between two lines of lowering or apathetic faces. Had they burrowed to a subterranean village? And were these the inhabitants, these fearful specters fashioned in the image of man? They clustered in sad ranks, and watched the trio go by, nor one of them spoke. Then they closed in behind, and followed.

"Back! Keep back!" the giant negro commanded again.

He tied the sheriff and Killough by the wrists to a stake, and disappeared on some errand of his own. The vil-

lagers constituted themselves a guard, gathering in a semicircle. Soon they squatted on the ground, the better to survey the captives, and they watched silently. That was the horror of it. When by chance Johnson caught their peculiarly bright stare, they would not meet his eyes, but shifted their gaze in sullen reluctance.

Occasionally one would mutter, and the sound would make the circuit. They were of all ages, and of varying colors —some mottled grotesquely—and about evenly divided as to sex. Never had he seen gathered under the skies a crew so forbidding. They must have perished in daylight, as do the unfit in nature's scheme. Disease had ravaged them. Of clothes they had nothing but wretched tatters, fluttering from their gaunt limbs. Nine out of ten were barefoot. On the feet of the more robust were sandals and worn shoes. One squat mulatto displayed a pair of patent leathers with childlike pride.

At first it amazed the sheriff that there was not a bit of headgear among them. What, then, did they do in the shriveling heat—these beings who studied him with the flickering gaze of madness? The answer lay in their eyes, for the weak, rheumy orbs rolling toward him had surely never faced an angry sun. They lived in a perpetual half light, as much at home in the murk of their tunnels as the bats which clung to the walls.

Of the score of children squabbling beyond the cordon of elders, over bones and hunks of meat, a third appeared to be deaf mutes, and gurgled in their greedy striving. Sagging lips told the story of outraged nature. Two coal-black negroes sat on rocks beside the pool, and never removed their gaze from a point in the opposite cliff. Suddenly Killough inclined forward against the stake, and his eyes closed. He had fainted.

"Here, you two!" Johnson broke out. They did not stir.

His captor approached, and undid the fastenings at their wrists. The outlaw revived, but still swayed on his feet. The negro coiled a rope leisurely.

"What place is this? What place is this, I say?"

He paid no heed to Lafe, but drove back the inquisitive villagers. They turned their backs on the pool, and now was revealed the mystery of the village. All around the spring, to a height of twelve feet, the limestone cliffs had been eaten away, so that between the water and the solid base of the hills was a beach, a gradual slope sixty paces in width. Thus a sort of arcade was fashioned, with an opening two hundred feet above the pool as a skylight. They crossed it diagonally.

"Where're we going?" the sheriff demanded.

Their guard replied by a tightening of the ropes. Night had fallen—that much Lafe knew from a last glance, ere they left the spring—and it was dark under the ledge, but the chalk of the ground rendered objects vaguely discernible, and he was aware that they passed several openings in the cliffs. From one came a strong draft of comparatively pure air. He reasoned that this was a tunnel piercing the hills.

"Go ahead and pull on that rope," Johnson cried. "I won't budge another step until I know where we are."

A man answered in front of them: "You're in Eden. Bring them in."

The sheriff threw up an arm to shade his eyes from unexpected light. Some one had drawn back a blanket, and they faced a deep cave, with a post in the center of it. With his back against this sat a negro; it was he who had cast the rays of the lantern on them. Now he placed the light on the ground, and signed to the guard to enter. Slowly he looked them over, his thick red lips drawn back from his teeth in a jovial smile. He spoke courteously.

"Won't you sit down? Foxhall——" the smile vanished, and he growled at some one back of him. A man shuffled about to much-whining complaint, and a discarded fruit box was shoved forward. Lafe descried the object that propelled it, and recoiled.

"Don't mind Foxhall," said the leader, noting the movement. "He's crazy, but he won't hurt nobody."

The aged death's-head moaned and muttered, and Johnson sat down, with Killough standing beside him. Directly opposite, the negro with the torn cheek watched hawklike.

"What do you think of Eden?" came the query, accompanied by a show of teeth.

"What're you going to do with us?"

"Don't you think it's a mighty fine place for a town?"

"What're you going to do with us?"

The black showed some impatience, and pulled out a pipe. A big man, but not so huge that the sheriff lost hope.

"You're all alike. Ain't they, Jim?" The guard nodded. "You all think so much about yourselves that you never take time to figure out the experiment we're making here."

"What're you going to do with us?"

"You'll know soon enough," was the placid answer, "but I want to talk to you first. It's a mighty long time since I done talked to a man from outside. The last one was—let's see, now—five years ago, wasn't it, Jim? But he was only one of these here missionaries, with an empty——"

Lights danced like fireflies in the outer darkness, and a chorus of angry voices swelled and sank, and burst forth again. The leader got to his feet and went out. There followed sharp yelps of pain, and then quiet. Soon he returned, smiling amiably, and resumed his lolling pose, reclining on one elbow.

"Sometimes you have to take to 'em," he explained, "but they mighty soon see their mistake."

"What is this place? Who are you? And who are these people?"

Killough had not once opened his lips. He appeared dazed, and unable to comprehend their plight.

"This is Eden," said the leader. He lay still, regarding them thoughtfully. "How did you get here, you mean? Did you ever hear of the Ninth Cavalry?"

Lafe nodded. He had heard a legend concerning a company of this corps, which had gone stark mad on the plains of Texas for want of water. Then—— "Why, man alive, that was 'way back in seventy-seven!" he exclaimed.

"That was in seventy-seven," the other repeated. "You remember that some were never found. People said as they died; but they didn't."

"Well?"

"They drifted away down here. They didn't want to go back. They couldn't. Afterward they got married."

"Married?"

"Let's call it that. They took some Mexican women."

Lafe could not bring himself to ask of the white children who had fled at his sight. He said instead: "All this ain't of that blood?"

"No," the other replied, with a fearful grin, "we've had a few recruits. Once, three white ladies——"

The sheriff jumped up, heedless now. He remembered only that he belonged to a dominant race.

"You're from the North, ain't you? I reckon you call yourself a colored gen'l'man. Do you know what I call you? You're a nigrah, yes—a low-down nigger."

The leader came up like a spring uncoiling, the straining breath distending his broad nostrils. His hand fumbled for the knife, but he mastered himself, and waved Johnson back to a box. When he finally spoke, it was in a voice husky from scarcely controlled passion.

"You'll have to say that again. I'll sure ask you to say that again—some other time. But just now——"

"I don't want to hear no more."

"Not even where I came from?" The chief was able to summon a smile again. "You must want to know who has got you."

"Speak up," his captor interjected, poking Lafe with his foot. "Don' you hear the cap'n?"

"For," the chief went on, "it's got a lot to do with what's going to happen. Jim, there, was in Dallas when some of you white folks flung his cousin out of the courthouse window, and hung him to an arch."

"I don't know nothing about that."

"No? It's queer how easy we remember it. You'll have a chance to think about it mighty soon." He paused, but the sheriff held his peace. "Fox-

hall was once a slave in Virginia. At forty he came West, and they hung him from a cottonwood on Bull Creek. Some cowboys did that. They wouldn't allow no colored folks."

"He seems to be alive now."

"That ain't your fault. Ol' Kearney—he's dead now, Kearney is; he was our last messenger, and white—well, Kearney cut him down, and brought him to Eden."

The figure crouching in the rear of the cave set up a pitiful whimpering.

"Take me"—he lighted his pipe in intense satisfaction—"why ain't I as good as you? I was educated fine at a good school. They wanted to make me a teacher. But there was trouble in Springfield, you remember—and so I came away. After a while I heard about this place, and found it."

He blew out a cloud of smoke, and watched it eddy upward. There were fissures in the roof somewhere, for the pungent spirals disappeared completely. As another puff followed, he lowered his glance.

"They keep a-telling us," he sneered, "they keep a-telling us that the only thing for us to do is to get off by ourselves somewhere. That's what they call segregation. That'd make it nice for them, and fine for us—oh, yes. Yet I done heard a New Orleans planter say once that if we-all got away from you white folks for two generations, we'd be barbarians. What do you think?"

"This ain't—now—segregation." Lafe was excited. "Why, to bury alive the poorest specimens of a poor race, anyhow, in a hole like this, where there ain't no air, and there ain't no sunshine——"

"You're talking of Eden," the chief reminded.

"Well," the sheriff retorted, "you've seen cattle raised, haven't you? How far could inbreeding go with them?"

"This is only a starter."

"But why don't you get out in the open? Why don't you have laws, and farms, and marry decent? Look at Mound Bayou."

"Aye," he mocked, "why don't we? Do you think half of those out there"—with a contemptuous wave of the hand—"do you think they could keep their liberty outside? They'd be locked up. Some of 'em never saw the sky. As for laws, we've got laws. Ain't we, Jim?" He turned toward his aid, who seemed to listen to him entranced.

"It's jist as you say, cap," was the hasty reply.

"You bet it is," the leader resumed. "It's just as I say. There's got to be one-man rule in any new community. Ain't you ever read history? It works fine here."

"How do you live?" The sheriff did not care, but, entertaining a fondness for life, he considered it wise to keep him interested. "And what do you do when one dies? Or I reckon you don't never die here?"

"You needn't talk so loud," the chief told him, with quite impersonal severity. "We've got a messenger. No, you haven't seen him. He's away just now. He's deaf and dumb. I made him dumb. He buys what we need in Agua Caliente, and brings it in on our mule. So, you see, we often need money. Say, that reminds me. You got any?"

Johnson was about to turn out his pockets, when the negro restrained him. Apparently avarice was not among his vices. Killough was swaying dizzily, and Lafe pushed him down on the box.

"He's all right. If he ain't, it don't matter. He's an ignorant man—not like you and me. Your name's Johnson, ain't it?"

"That's what they call me."

"Well, Mr. Johnson, it don't take much for us to live. You saw the gulches out there? Often we find a cow or steer, and nobody's the wiser. Jim was looking for one when you two come a-tumbling down on him. Jim, he hunts for us, and so do I. It ain't safe to trust the others with firearms."

"Do you mean to sit there and tell me that nobody in these parts knows you're here?"

"Once or twice," he said, weighing his words, "stray travelers have seen a heap more'n they ought. What do we care? They can't find nothing. You

couldn't locate this place again if I was to show you how. Once Paul got drunk in town, but he couldn't talk, and so they were fooled when they tried to find out where he took the food. I had to whip Paul for that." He laughed over the recollection, as at some pleasant piece of humor.

"What're you going to do with us?" the sheriff inquired again.

"I think I said——"

"I don't care what you said." The sheriff employed the tone he would have used to a cheeky colored man in his own world. Time after time has the mere assertion of racial superiority in manner and voice taken the bravado out of a colored man, swollen with importance. "One day they'll get you, and then where'll you be? You're done for in another generation, anyhow. I thought you were educated fine? If you were, you'd know that."

It was the spot on which he was most sensitive. With the vanity of a partially schooled black man, his intelligence and education were exalted above all else. Yet he held himself in check.

"I'm hungry," he interrupted. "Take them away, Jim. And feed them—Johnson, anyway."

Jim proceeded to prod the two with his knee. The leader was eying the sheriff morosely.

"Perhaps you noticed that stake beside the pool?"

"He tied us there."

"Good! See anything about it in particular?"

"No—yes. It was a lot thicker once. It has been charred," Lafe said.

"Yes," said he. "It is charred."

He stared steadily into Johnson's eyes, and then motioned Jim to lead them away.

Most of the villagers had gone to their dens, but a few still hung about the spring, gnawing on the meat of a freshly killed horse. It was Killough's mount. The carcass lay a few yards from the water, only partially skinned, and with large holes hacked in it. The negro removed the rope from Killough and the sheriff, and, by an expansive gesture of the hands, intimated that they were free to roam about. Himself slouched to a group sprawled beside a shaded candle, and presently there mingled with the click of dice, the passionate wooing of fortune in which a colored man indulges when gambling. Once Jim slashed wickedly at a youth who was winning. The boy dodged, and cried out in protest.

"Where," Lafe demanded, approaching this group, "where can I find wood for a fire?"

"He wants to cook his meat," Jim explained to the players. "That's the only fire we got. No, go mo' to the right. It's out now, but you kin light it."

They were not playing for money, for which there could be no employment among them, but for articles of everyday use—for knives, matches, and tin cups. Near the group was littered the remains of their meal, and a glance discovered to Lafe that they had devoured their meat raw, or with merely sufficient cooking to warm it. Killough was lying on his back, sunk in apathy. He had not yet said a word to Johnson. The sheriff cut a slice from the horse, and roasted it in the hot coals, and they ate.

"The cap wants you." Jim came to where he was stretched out on the pebbly rim of the pool.

The chief of the lost village sat in his cave, with his back to the post. He was reading ostentatiously a frayed copy of "The Origin of Species," and he let the sheriff stand for five minutes, purposely ignoring his presence. At last he yawned, and glanced up.

"I just wanted to tell you good night," he began, "and to wish you pleasant dreams."

"You set me on the road at daylight, or this town'll be wiped out."

"They'll hunt for you?" he asked, and the carelessness was not feigned. "Then I reckon you're a bigger man than the other four."

"What other four?"

"Well, Jim is wearing one of their hats now. Those boots of yours will fit him pretty good."

Lafe had no comment to make on this. From the leaves of Darwin's

work, the negro now extracted several newspaper clippings. They dealt sparsely with the doings of Mr. Booker T. Washington, and devoted columns to the exploits of Jack Johnson. Curiously enough, he rated the dusky pugilist far above the colored educator. He contended that Mr. Johnson had done wonders for his race—that he was the black Moses. The chief appeared rather chagrined that the sheriff should take so little interest in their discussion.

"I've been experimenting," he said. "You see, I like experiments. We've tried on white men everything I've seen them do to colored folks. There's just one I haven't tried."

Johnson looked at him expectantly.

"They took it different ways," he continued calmly. "Three were pretty plucky, I'll say that for them. But one was a coward. I've been sort of wondering—— What was that you said about a low-down nigger?"

An object rolled along the ground toward the sheriff, and there, lying in a circle of light, was a human skull.

"Foxhall must have his joke," said the leader indulgently, and trundled the grim reminder back.

Lafe was not minded to remain there to be baited. He wheeled and sought the air, nor did Jim attempt to stop him.

"To-morrow," said the negro at the stake. He was laughing.

"You kin sleep heah," Lafe's guide halted at an opening in the cliff; "or you kin sleep beside the spring. You cain't git away. These tunnels ain't straight, and some is full of big ol' rattlers. We'd catch you mighty quick."

The inhabitants were asleep, and the village was silent as a grave. Killough lay on his side close to the spring, where the sky was visible, and Johnson hunched on his heels near him. He tried to persuade himself, by staring at the powdered stars, that the whole affair was a horrid phantasm, and that he would wake soon to find himself safe in bed in Badger. Killough moaned, and turned his pallid face toward the sheriff.

"I wish I had an apple," he said.

"Better go to sleep, Pat," Johnson advised, not unkindly.

"I can't. My arm hurts too bad. Say, Lafe, we're in for it now, I reckon."

"Go to sleep. We'll get loose some way. If only we hadn't lost our guns."

"I never want to see another," the outlaw rejoined.

"Brace up, man. Don't show the white feather before a bunch of niggers. Oh, say, Pat, you're my prisoner. Don't forget it."

"Sure," said Killough. "I wish you'd hurry and take me to a nice, safe jail."

He fell to meditating and talking to himself. The sheriff nursed his knees. He was growing drowsy, when some one plucked at his sleeve. He struck vengefully into the blackness, thinking they were coming at him in his sleep, but his hand was caught. Foxhall leaned over him.

"Hurry! You betteh hurry," he whispered.

"Let's take Killough, too," the sheriff answered.

"No, no. It don't matteh abaout him. Come on! Come on!"

"I'll take my prisoner, too," Lafe said stubbornly.

Whatever Foxhall intended, it were better to run the risk; he could throttle this sensate ghost with ease. An incautious step, and Lafe's heavy riding boot crunched on a heap of lime.

"Hello, who's that?" They caught the rumbling tones of a disturbed sleeper settling down again. It was Jim.

"Hurry!" Foxhall flitted through what appeared to be the solid cliff, dragging Johnson after him by the hand. Killough held on to the sheriff's left sleeve. Crawling things slithered on both sides, and sometimes, at a sharp rattle and hiss, Foxhall would pause to plead in wheedling tones. It frightened Lafe horribly—he was pacifying the deadliest of snakes, this madman. Creatures of the night wheeled about their heads. Sight was of no avail here; it but contributed to panic by peopling the dark with shapes. For five minutes they advanced, the noise of

their breathing loud against the tunnel's walls.

"Look!" said Foxhall.

It was the free sky. Killough began to sob. A great moon hung above a long ridge to the east, and a myriad of stars smiled kindly upon a slumbering world. The earth seemed to breathe in her sleep. Foxhall, who had been leading, became at once a cringing old man. Outside his noisome dens, their relative positions were resumed without a word being exchanged, with the first intake of breath.

"Look! I done brought you out. You give me some money, cap?" He fawned on Lafe.

They stood at one end of a defile, whose high sides were clothed in some sort of brush. Its other end was lost in distance, but the sheriff judged from the blotches of shadow that the draw contained plenty of vegetation.

"You won't forget a ol', ol' man, cap?"

"Come on. They'll chase us." Lafe made to lead on.

"I cain't go no furtheh. You'll give me some money? Jist a li'l' something? Hah, that's it, that's it." He gloated over the pile of silver, with palsied fingers. Somewhere an owl cried, and he crossed himself, his eyes frightened.

A coyote sat on the edge of a hill, and sent his evensong pulsating over the wastes.

"Bow-wow-wow. Ki-yi, yeow-eow-eow-eow-eow."

The familiar yelp energized Killough. He tried weakly to run. Foxhall straightened, and pulled the sheriff's six-shooter from his bosom.

"Do you reckon I brought you out for this money?" he exclaimed wildly. "That ain't why; no, 'deed. You done called him a niggah, a low-down niggah. I was theah, an' I done heard you, cap. That's wliat he is, too. Po' trash. He ain't a cullud man, laik me. I comes from good people."

He chuckled with the thin cackle of senility.

"He done said ol' Foxhall was locoed," he went on, with extraordinary venom. "He done lied! I'll learn him!" His thoughts appeared to stray, for he mumbled to know what he had been talking about.

"Are you coming?"

"You done called him a low-down niggah. I remembah." He clapped his hands together in joy. "No, no. I must git back. You hurry, cap. Sometimes they caitch people off'n the road. They's lots of white fam'lies out beyond, I reckon, who don't know what place their kin has went to. Yes, suh; three women an'——"

"Which is the way out?"

"Go straight up, cap, an' you'll find a big ol' mule a-grazin'. We only turn him out at night." He inclined his head to listen, but all was still behind them. "He'll kick the daylights out'n you onless you're keerful. The way that rascal kin kick—say, give him this heah bread, an' he'll let you caitch him."

"And the road?"

"Straight ahaid, beyond this draw."

"Good-by, Foxhall."

Running and falling, rising to run again, Lafe and Killough had covered half a mile of the draw, when from a blurred shape in front sounded a snort of suspicion.

"Good boy. Good ol' boy," Johnson cried soothingly, advancing with the bread extended.

The mule jumped sidewise, hampered by his hobble. He sniffed wrathfully, and the sheriff followed, with endearing words and blandishments. Would he never stand still? It was a gaunt animal, with an especially large head. Probably it smelled the delicacy, so rarely enjoyed, because it came blowing gingerly at Lafe's hand. While it munched on the crust, Johnson removed the hobble and tied the rope around its neck. Then, with a fervent prayer that the evil latent in every mule might be appeased, he hoisted Killough to his back, and clambered up behind him. They headed out of the draw.

The sun was an hour high when they paused at a wallow in a well-worn road, to give their mount a sip of water. Outside the brakes he had obstinately refused to proceed faster than a walk, and Lafe's sense of security was not

sufficient to dispute the pace with him. As he lifted his massive head from drinking, a pair of mules shoved their noses above a rise, and a wagon came into view. A white man was driving. Johnson waved his hat, and shouted a frantic greeting.

The stage was already descending, and the driver could not stop it, although he laid himself back on the reins in the attempt. The sheriff regarded him in amazement. Was he, too, gone crazy? When almost opposite, he let out a whoop, and, running out on the pole, cut at the team with the punishing blacksnake. They went by at a gallop in a cloud of sand. Lafe caught a fleeting glimpse of the driver's white face and wavering eyes. Then their mount was seized of the infection of fear, and, sinking his head, pitched as only a mule can. Killough went off at the first jump; at the third, Lafe scattered the waters of the wallow.

The opposite ascent was of soft sand, and, before they reached the top, fatigue compelled the stage team to drop to a walk, and the driver looked back, apprehension showing even in the bend of his neck. The gray mule had disappeared. Seeing Johnson on foot, helping Killough from the ground, the man threw on the brake, and the stage came to a halt. The sheriff toiled painfully up the hill, holding the suffering outlaw around the waist.

"Here," the driver whispered, in a dry voice. "Git in. Git in." Together they lifted Killough in. The driver released the brake, and urged his mules to a gallop.

"I swan! I swan!" he ejaculated.

"Why the devil didn't you stop? Hey? What do you mean by running by that way?" the sheriff asked angrily.

"Runnin' by? Runnin'—— Why, man alive," croaked the driver, "that dog-gone' ol' mule you rode has been daid five years."

THE GENIUS AND THE GIBE

AT one stage of his career, Dick Mitchell, the theatrical manager and press agent, was advertising a play which, to say the least, was not good. In some way the management kept the piece alive, and made it pay expenses. Mitchell, traveling ahead of the show, struck Minneapolis, where he had a number of friends. The bunch, one of whose members had seen the play in New York, welcomed him with loud acclaim and many congratulations.

"Dick," said the man who had been to New York, "I want to congratulate you all over again. You're the greatest press agent in the world. My boy, you're a genius in the business."

"Thank you," replied Mitchell, immensely pleased.

"You're a wonder," continued the enthusiastic friend. "Anybody who could keep that rotten show on the boards a week is simply inspired."

HEAT AND HOBBIES

DOCTOR HARVEY W. WILEY, the pure-food expert who continually preaches that the germs in food will get us if we don't watch out, had just enunciated his theory that summer heat is largely a matter of imagination, and that people would not suffer from it if they made up their minds that they were in reality delightfully cool.

"If our imagination can prevail against the heat so perfectly," a perspiring critic suggested to the doctor, "we can kill all these food germs by the same process."

"Oh, no," objected Wiley, with a grin. "You must remember that germs multiply in the heat."

Tricky Mr. Tannenbaum

By William Hamilton Osborne

Author of "The Running Fight," "The Red Mouse," Etc.

Many a man is a perfect bear-cat outdoors and a meek little mouse when he's home. Mr. Tannenbaum isn't that kind—at least not till Mrs. Tannenbaum realizes what she is missing

THERE was an insistent knock upon the door. Mrs. Lena Tannenbaum held up her hand. The sewing machines stopped. Hand seamstresses held their needles in the air.

"Somebody knocks," announced Mrs. Tannenbaum, saying an undisputed thing in a very solemn way. She lifted up her voice.

"Come in!" she cried.

The door was pushed open, and a very stockily built young man with very red hair staggered into the stuffy working room. He held his hand over one eye. He groaned. He wept.

"She gimme the knock-out blow," he wailed.

Mrs. Lena, who had started for the door, now stepped back in surprise.

"Oh," she cried, "it should be Mr. 'Kid' Morrow, this here champeen featherweight pugilistic prize fighter, should it not?"

"It's Kid Morrow, all right," groaned her visitor, "and she give it to me good and proper. Look what she done to me eye."

He took his hand from his face and exhibited it to the assembled toilers. The assembled toilers were all women, and a feminine scream—composite—filled the stuffy room. There was no doubt that "she" had give it to the Kid good and proper. "She," be it known, was not a champeen lightweight suffragette, but she rather was Kid Morrow's wife. Tannenbaums lived on the second floor. Kid Morrow, et uxor, lived on the third.

"Say, missus," wailed Kid Morrow, "have you got a bit of raw meat, or somethin' cold an' slimy, like a oyster, what I could put on this here? Anything'll do."

He crept into the room, and closed the door behind him. From overhead there was the sound of slamming doors. Kid shivered.

"Save me from 'er!" he cried.

Lena Tannenbaum waved her hand again. This was the signal for the machines to start up, and for the hand sewers to resume their work. Reluctantly they did so. Lena inspected the damaged eye of Kid Morrow. Then she glanced uncertainly toward another door.

"I don't know if I could give you a piece of raw meat"—she, too, shivered in her turn—"only I should have to ask my husband first, and—I don't like to, maybe—because he was out last night to one of these here important society committee meetings like, and in the morning—he ain't up—and——"

Kid Morrow shook her warmly by the hand. "Lady," he cried enthusiastically, "I see what it is. You're afraid of your husband."

Lena spread her hands. "Well," she admitted, "a husband is a husband. *Hein?*"

Kid shook her hand with renewed vigor. "You're all right, lady," he went on; "any lady is all right that's afraid of her husband. It's the way for ladies as is ladies, to be. Don't never be ashamed of being afraid of your husband, never. It's the proper thing to

be. Nature intended it. The law says it." He trembled. "What kind of a proposition have I got—she ought to be afraid, and she ain't. She ought to respect nature and the law. Does she do it? Naw! She's a ruffian, that's what she is. You're all right, Mrs. Tannenbaum."

Lena Tannenbaum went back to her machine. "I don't durst wake him up and tell him about this here," she faltered.

Kid Morrow nodded. "All right," he cried, *"I'll* take the blame. Is this his room? All right. You kin just bear witness that it was I broke in, and not youse. He knows where the meat is, don't he——"

"Where everything is, he knows," sighed Lena Tannenbaum.

Kid Morrow placed his shoulder against another door, turned the knob, and softly entered, closing it behind him. Once in the room, he breathed easier. He had a man to deal with now. He seized Mr. Tannenbaum by the shoulder and shook him hard.

"Wake up, you souse!" he cried.

Mr. Tannenbaum woke with a start. "I give you a crack, Lena, you don't leave me——" He staggered to his feet, rubbing his eyes. A frightened expression crossed his face as he saw who stood there.

"I ain't no souse," he answered; "not by a long shot! You always have your little joke, Mr. Morrow. How did you get in, anyhow?"

"Broke in," said the Kid; "all the women hanging to my coat tails to keep me out. This is why I'm here."

He exhibited his eye. *"Hein!"* exclaimed Tannenbaum. "For why you did not tell me you were in a bout last night? I was at one no good one—not even one knock-out. I would rather see you get a knock-out than anything, Mr. Morrow. So much I think of you."

"This happened this morning," said the Kid. "I wasn't in no bout. *She* bunged my peeper. I come here to get a piece o' raw meat, that's all. Get a move on, bo. This here is swelling to beat the band."

Mr. Tannenbaum drew on a pair of trousers and led the way to the larder. He seized a generous slice of bologna and began to eat it. Then, groping about, he drew forth a huge piece of the round of beef.

"That's the ticket," said Kid Morrow. "Now cut me off a piece."

Mr. Tannenbaum sliced off a piece. The Kid made a grab for it, but Tannenbaum eluded his grasp. He placed the slice of raw meat on a pair of scales and weighed it.

"About seven cents' worth, friend Morrow," he remarked.

He waited until Kid Morrow had separated himself from that amount of coin. Then he passed over the slice of meat. The Kid clapped it to his eye instantly, holding it there with his hand.

"How much would a piece of rag cost me, Tannenbaum?" he said.

Mr. Tannenbaum thought that three cents would be about right, and he threw in his services in aiding the Kid to tie it on.

"I get me a good cigar this a. m.," mused Mr. Tannenbaum aloud.

He placed a patronizing hand on the Kid's shoulder. "For shame that you would let a woman kill you," he said. "You should make them afraid—always afraid of you. That is the way to do it."

"Oh, is it?" said the Kid sarcastically. "Much obliged for the advice. Maybe you'd like to train her in while I'm gone——"

"Where do you go—where are you going?" queried Tannenbaum.

The Kid waved his hand. "Anywhere—away from here. I'm never coming back. I go for good, Tannenbaum. She kin slug some other feller. I'm through."

These last words of Mr. Kid Morrow's were indelibly impressed upon the mind of Mr. Tannenbaum. They became significant later, when the Kid's wife came downstairs with a letter in her hand.

"What do you think of this, Mrs. Tannenbaum?" exclaimed Mrs. Kid Morrow. "Here's what I get from Baltimore. He's down there—been there

a week, and he says he's never coming back. The coward!"

She handed the letter to Mrs. Lena Tannenbaum, who glanced upon it as though she could read it readily. But Mrs. Tannenbaum's lord and master, who was then present, took it from her.

"Aha!" he said. "He told me as much. There in that there room next door to this, he tells me last week——" He stopped.

"What does he tell you?" demanded the Kid's wife.

"Aha!" went on Mr. Tannenbaum cautiously. "Maybe there is court work from this here—eh?"

"There certainly is," ejaculated the Kid's wife. "What did he tell you?"

"Court work," went on Tannenbaum. "That means I should go before the magistrate once, grand jury twice, and at the hearing maybe two more times." Mr. Tannenbaum straightened up. "For ten dollars I will tell all—anywhere, any time," he said, "just to be friendly and like neighbors, just for that. Yes, I have made up my mind. For ten dollars I will do it."

The Kid's wife clenched her strong right hand. Her eyes glittered. But she cooled down at once. "Honest Injun, Mr. Tannenbaum," she said, "I ain't got hardly ten cents. But, you help me out, and I'll tell you what I'll do: I'll steal it off the Kid, when he gets back——"

"Will you get him back?" queried Tannenbaum.

"Ah!" she returned. "Will I? Look at that."

She handed him the torn corner of a newspaper—a bit of the sporting page. It announced in cold type that Kid Morrow, known to the profession as Redney Buck, would pull off a fight of eighteen rounds with Scanlan, the Southern Sizzler, at Baltimore, on the fifth of the following month.

The Kid's wife once more clenched her hand.

"Will I get him?" she exclaimed. "Ain't the grand jury in session every day—ain't the detective bureau tryin' to keep busy all the time? Watch me! Will I get 'im? I should smile!"

It was Donovan, of the detective bureau, who blew into Baltimore on the evening of the fifth of the following month. He dropped into headquarters and exhibited his duly certified copy of the New York County indictment.

"I want this lad extradited," he informed the desk sergeant.

The desk sergeant shook his head. "Do you know where to pick him up?" he asked.

Donovan seized a Baltimore paper, and turned to the sporting page. He held his finger on an item while the desk sergeant read it. The desk sergeant sniffed with some excitement.

"Purse o' five hundred, too," he mused. "Quite a fight, I'll wager." He drew off his coat. "I'll tell you what, officer," he went on, "my day's work is done, but I'm always ready to do my duty. What do you say we go together? I'll pick him up with you."

"Fine and dandy," agreed Donovan.

"Of course," said the sergeant, "we ought to be there before the fight begins, so that he don't get away. And I suppose we ought to wait until the fight ends—this is a case of desertion and non-support—maybe his five hundred'll come in handy for his family back home."

"If he gets it," said Donovan.

The Kid got it. And it was just as the crowd was carrying the Kid out on its shoulders that Donovan and the sergeant interfered.

The Kid came down to earth. He was scared. "What you going to do with me?" he asked.

"Hold you to bail for extradition—then take you back to the big city."

"Never!" squirmed the Kid, in fear.

"I thought you was going to lose that fight, Kid," said the sergeant.

"Nobody kin lose a fight who's tackled *her*," groaned the Kid; "she's got all the trainers beat to a standstill." His eye lighted with hope.

"Wot'll the bail be?" he asked. "I kin put up five hundred cash, all right."

"It'll be ten hundred," said the sergeant laconically.

It was ten hundred, and the Kid

fumed and fretted inside of a cell for the next few days until the governor of Maryland had done his duty by the governor of New York. Then, at the expense of the County of New York, the Kid was pushed aboard the New York train, and a few hours later was ruminating in the Tombs.

"Make the bail five hundred, Your Honor," pleaded the Kid next morning, "and I'll put it up like a little man. New York had ought to be good to its own."

"It is," commented the court, "to its wives and its children. Held in fifteen hundred dollars bail to appear. Hearing set for Friday, ten o'clock."

Meantime, Kid Morrow's wife, being, after all, a woman, had had time to think. Also, she had read in the newspapers that Kid had copped half a thousand down in Baltimore. Congratulations were showered on her by the thousand—her friends didn't all know that she had taken up arms against the Kid herself. But success in men is a great softener of womankind. Solitude likewise. And on the day of the hearing, when Kid was brought through the ironclad door into the courtroom, his wife fell upon him and devoured him with kisses and embraces, and washed his sins away with her tears.

"Gee!" whispered the Kid to the officer, when he at last was loosened from her grasp, "the other day it was a sparring match. Now it's a wrastlin' bout. Wait till I get me breath."

At that instant, the case was called. The Kid's wife reluctantly took the stand, and immediately burst into tears. Not only was she unable to testify against the Kid, but she invoked denunciation on her own head because she had prosecuted him. Mr. Tannenbaum stood silent all the while, waiting to be called. He was not called. The court was moved by the lamentations of the woman.

"Complaint dismissed," he cried. He shook a warning finger at the Kid. "Don't come here any more," he said, "or I'll surely send you up. Clear out, all of you."

They cleared out. As they went, Mr. Tannenbaum placed a hand upon the Kid's arm.

"Fifteen dollars you should give me," he whispered, "for that I came here to testify for you. My testimony, it would have cleared you. I could have proved such so many of these here assaults by this your wife. Fifteen is little."

The Kid peeled fifteen from his roll, and took his wife by the arm.

"Gee, Gertie!" he cried, as they wended their way to a restaurant; "the State brought me back. Didn't cost me a dollar for railroad fare or meals, and —gee! but you ought to have seen me walk around the Southern Sizzler! What?"

When Mr. Tannenbaum reached home, he found the news had preceded him. There was a buzz of conversation in the workroom as he entered, rather than the buzz of sewing machines.

"Here, here!" he cried; "what kind of a manager of this here cloak business are you, Lena? Is it for kaffeeklasches that you manage this here work —or what?"

Lena, explaining that it was merely the excitement due to the Kid Morrow fiasco, drew her husband into the back room.

"Did she pay you this here ten?" she asked.

"Not," he replied. "For why do you ask?"

Lena's shoulders drooped. "You promised me five if you should get ten," she wailed, "and I promised myself some spending money and a holiday tomorrow afternoon."

"Only five could I squeeze from her," said her husband; "and that is *my* five. *Your* five I could not get at all."

Lena held out both hands pleadingly. "I work so hard, Sam," she exclaimed. "And if I could to get a dollar, maybe two. Then afterward I work all the harder to make it up. It is so long—so long since I could spend a little—just a little money."

Tannenbaum frowned. *"Hein!"* he cried. "What do you expect? Here you have everything—everything. Food —clothes—a place to sleep. What more?

Also you are manager of skirts. You have a place of trust. You are even fat. What more?"

Lena looked up pleadingly into his eyes. "Just half a dollar, then?" she asked.

"Womans," he cried sternly, "I am master in this here place. Also I treat you as some good husbands should. Not like this here Kid Morrow do I treat you——"

"He treats *her*," exclaimed Lena, pouting. "Now and then always do they go to little places and eat, and drink, and see these here shows, and——"

Tannenbaum clutched her by the shoulder and thrust her into the workroom.

"Manager," he said, "go to your work. No more."

Lena obeyed. Her shoulders drooped low over her machine that afternoon. She brooded heavily. Something was wrong—what was it? Suddenly it came upon her like a flash.

She did *all* the work. Her husband did *none*.

It smote her with terrible suddenness.

He took in the money—that was all he did. It is true he sold the goods, but that only meant handing them through the door to regular customers. He did nothing but take in money. And the money—yes, the seamstresses—they got their pay. But Lena Tannenbaum, never. A roof, a bed, food, clothes—yes. But *she* provided them—she worked for them. He did not.

She turned and looked in the little cracked mirror on the wall. Yes, it was true, what some of them said—she was growing old, round-shouldered—she worked too hard. She had no play.

What made it all the worse was that Kid Morrow and his wife swept into the workroom that afternoon—the Kid a bit teetery, and the missus with a face good-naturedly flushed. In fact, she informed the workroom that the delicate aroma that assailed their nostrils was champagne.

She leaned over Lena Tannenbaum. "I copped his five hundred," she said, "and he's got to spend it all on me. Will we cut a wide swath? What! Oh, no, not at all! Watch out!"

Lena watched out. And as the weeks stretched into months, and as she worked, she became unusually dissatisfied. Why should the wife of a pugilist—a little, red-haired brute—have money to spend? Why should not the wife of Tannenbaum have it—a manufacturer of skirts, rated in the agencies? Why?

But the effect of the five hundred was not only felt by her. Tannenbaum himself began to sniff with excitement. He was made to enjoy himself. Why should he not do it? The fever began to burn within his veins.

"Lena," he said one day, waving a sheet of paper before her eyes—any sheet would do—Lena could not read—"this here is from Ellenbogen. He is in Chicago, Lena, and he says the market there is so better as it is here. He advises that I make up extra lots of skirts and bring them out. Like hot cakes he says they will sell. Here trade is slack. I think it should be wise to do as he says. *Hein?*"

Lena clapped her hands. "And—me?" she cried. "I also—to Chicago. It is good."

"No," bellowed her husband, "would you bankrupt us, then? It is expense enough for me, alone. How could I take you along? What do you think it is—a pleasure trip! I go to sell goods, not to have me and my wife bumming around. Where would be our profits?"

Lena said nothing more. Her shoulders drooped the lower over her machine—she worked, worked, worked.

One day, a week later, however, a heavy load seemed lifted from those shoulders. She welcomed her corps of colaborers with a smile on her lips. She didn't know why it was.

"For why do you smile so," they demanded, "when your man has just gone away? Such a fine man, too."

Lena hid her smiles. But she knew why she smiled—knew why the load seemed lifted—it was *because* he had gone away. She had been a slave—now she was momentarily free. The

sword of Damocles no longer was above her head. No longer was the invisible whiplash raised in air. She was glad—so glad she was afraid of herself—she seemed to tread on air. No longer was there a taskmaster at her back—she was the boss now—she could do as she liked for a week—two weeks, maybe three.

She raised her hand.

"Everybody stop working," she exclaimed suddenly in the middle of the hot afternoon.

She crept downstairs, with a huge yellow dish in her hand, and crossed to the candy store on the other side of the street. Her workwomen clustered about the windows, and watched her enter—waited in wonder—watched her come out.

"It is soapsuds she is bringing us in the bowl," they cried.

"It is flour," they said again.

An instant later Lena burst into the room, and dropped the bowl on the table of her machine.

"Cold," she cried, "but it freezes me almost from my hands." She drew back, while they stared at her.

"Ice cream," she cried, in glee, "a gallon of it. It is for all of us to eat."

Twenty minutes later one of the seamstresses pointed with her needle to the floor above.

"Who would drink champagne even," she exclaimed in ecstasy, "when one could get ice cream?"

Two weeks later Mr. Samuel Tannenbaum woke up in Denver, Colorado. He had landed at Chicago—had disposed of his entire stock that he carried, had pushed his substantial roll well down into the depths of his trousers pocket—and then had begun to spend it. The spending of it, such as he could remember, had been glorious.

But he woke up in Denver, Colorado. He woke up "broke."

Not entirely so. He still had a few scraps of change, running up to five dollars or a little more. But his home was in New York. Five dollars would not span the distance.

"What shall I do?" he asked himself.

The first thing he did was to wire Ellenbogen in Chicago of his plight. That gentleman maintained a discreet silence. Then Tannenbaum reluctantly wired his wife.

He received no answer. Upon reflection, he knew the reason why.

"It is my fault," he said to himself; "that woman would no more dare to spend money for a telegram than she would fly."

He sat down, and thought hard. The first thing he must earn some money. He had hard work finding employment. It was so long since he had worked. Finally he found the place he looked for—a little cloak and suit factory. He satisfied them that he could handle a needle and sew on a machine. He could earn enough, at any rate, to keep body and soul together.

"I ain't never made for work, though," he told himself.

At the end of the week, when he got his pay, the idea struck him—the tremendous idea.

"*Hein!*" he exclaimed. "For why did I never think of it before?"

That night he sat down, and wrote a short, crisp letter. It was addressed to his wife, Mrs. Lena Tannenbaum, at her home in New York City.

MRS. TANNENBAUM: Do not think that I shall ever come back to you no more. For good and all I have left you, and you can shift for yourself all you should want to. I don't care are you my wife or are you not my wife, it is good-by forever.

Your husband,
S. TANNENBAUM.

That was one letter. Laying that aside, he sat down and wrote another. This was the other:

DEAR LENA: One liar is that Ellenbogen. No market was there in Chicago, so I have come on here to Denver, and my address you see at the bottom of this here letter. I sold out at a big loss, and I am strapped. Wired you, but you did not know enough to send me money. Maybe there is none, anyhow, as I have already told customers not to pay bills till I come back. So afraid was I you would spend three or five dollars now and then.

Now, my dear Lena, you will find another letter inclosed with this. You will get somebody to read this letter and the other to you

What you do is this: You take the other letter to the grand jury and the magistrate, and you make a complaint against me for desertion and nonsupport. Then this will follow: they will indict me; they will send a detective out here; they will arrest me; they will take me back; and *they will pay for everything.* Then, when I get there, you can cry like anything, and so I am back once more. Your esteemed husband, SAM.

Lena received the letters in due course. She did not get Kid Morrow to read them, but took one of her seamstresses into her confidence. She followed directions implicitly; she did not dare to disobey.

In due course, Tannenbaum was indicted—his present address ascertained and confirmed by wire, and in due course Donovan, the long-distance detective, went on to Denver to bring him back.

He brought him back. Tannenbaum came back wreathed in smiles. He loved a railroad journey. He liked dining-car food. And as for sleeping two in a berth, he was pleasantly conscious that it was pleasanter for him than it was for Donovan.

"Hang the man," said Donovan, as he turned him over at the Tombs; "he snored down the back of my neck all night long, except when he took to coughing in my ear, in his sleep. No more like that for me."

At the hearing, Lena Tannenbaum, dissolving in honest tears, took the witness stand.

"I do nod want him sendt to chail," she cried.

She told the truth. She did not want him sent. *Non constat,* as they say in the books, the last six weeks had seemed like a bit of heaven to her.

The court glanced sternly at Tannenbaum. The court was satisfied of the sincerity of Tannenbaum's wife. Every glance of her eye, every expression on her countenance, bespoke her honesty. And it was that that made the court hesitate. He didn't like Tannenbaum, and he did like her.

"Now, see here, sir," demanded the court severely; "if I let you go, will you promise to stay home and support your wife?"

"S'help me God!" cried Tannenbaum fervently.

The court held out his hand to Lena. "That was a cold-blooded letter," said the court, "that your husband sent you. Let me read it once more."

Lena produced it from the folds of her dress, and handed it to the court. The court glanced at it, and his countenance froze. But he gave no other sign. He merely called to the assistant, who was prosecuting, and asked him to look it over, please. The assistant looked it over. His face didn't freeze.

"Well," queried the court, sotto voce.

The assistant nodded. "It's not a new game. It's been done before.

The court beckoned him to come closer. "What do you think of the *woman?*" he demanded.

"Straight as a die," said the assistant; "everybody says so. Besides, she don't know how to read. Besides, she works like thunder. He's the king pin in this case."

The court toyed with the letter in his hand. "Shall I let *him* know?" he asked.

The assistant district attorney shook his head. "I think he'll take it out on her, if you do," he said, "and I'm sure she's straight."

The court once more looked at the woman—once more looked at the man.

"Tannenbaum," he said severely, "the desertion of a wife is a crime against the State. I'm tired of letting people like you go. Tannenbaum," he went on, "I sentence you to one year in the State's prison, you to stay there after that until you pay the costs."

Tannenbaum, with a groan, slumped back into the arms of an officer. His wife thought she would faint, but she didn't. She would have fainted, though, and so would Tannenbaum, had they known that Mrs. Lena Tannenbaum, the witness on the stand, had given the *wrong letter* to the justice on the bench.

Mr. Tannenbaum had suddenly been hoist with his own petard.

Months later a man knocked cautiously at the door of the Tannenbaum flat. The man was Tannenbaum.

"Come in," said a female voice, strong but pleasant in its tones.

Tannenbaum crept in. Then he stopped. The room was light, bright, clean. The operators were healthy looking, and they sang as they worked. At a little table Lena Tannenbaum was looking over some accounts. She rose, and her husband entered.

"Oh, Sam," she cried joyfully, "you're just in time. Lug this bale of cloaks over to Stern & Co.'s in Spring Street. You remember where it is. And then come back. Don't loiter on the way."

At the foot of the stairs, Tannenbaum met Kid Morrow. The Kid shook him warmly by the hand.

"Glad to see you're out, Sam," he exclaimed; "feels great, don't it, to get out?"

"Pretty good," said Tannenbaum.

Kid Morrow clapped him on the back. "Say, Sam," he said, "there's one thing I always liked in you. You keep your wife in fear of you all the time." He drew Tannenbaum toward the corner.

"Have a drink," he said.

Tannenbaum shouldered the bale, and shook his head. "Don't know as I dare," he said.

THE TIME FOR VIOLENT HANDS

PRESIDENT ALDERMAN, of the University of Virginia, is a brilliant orator, and makes it a habit to travel through the country, delivering speeches to the alumni associations of the institution which he governs. On one occasion he was making such an oration, and was in the midst of a glowing, star-shaking tribute to the old students, when he stopped, laughed, and said:

"The fact of the matter is, gentlemen, that the alumni of the university are dear to my heart, whether they commend me or abuse me. I am like the Irishman who lined up his family of seven giantlike sons, and invited his caller to take a look at them.

"'Ain't they the fine boys?' inquired the father.

"'They are,' agreed the visitor.

"'The finest in the world!' exclaimed father. 'An' I nivver laid violent hands on any one of 'em except in silf-definse!'"

COLONEL MOSBY'S MEMORY

COLONEL JOHN S. MOSBY, the fire-eating guerrilla chieftain of the Confederacy, walked into a Washington bank one morning, slapped down a check in front of the aged cashier, and demanded the money for it.

"I will have to find some one to identify you," said the cashier. "This check is made out to John S. Mosby, but identification is a rule which we must observe."

About three million shafts of blue lightning were darting from the colonel's one eye, when another employee of the bank hurried up and said he knew Mosby.

"That old man should have known you, colonel," said the acquaintance, while the old fighter was counting his coin. "He was an officer in the Union army."

"Now that he stands with his back to me, I recognize him perfectly," said Mosby hotly. "I remember having seen it twice—during the war."

SOMETHING GOOD IN FLOWERS

B. Pickman Mann, who is an examiner in the United States Patent Office, is also an entomologist. He has edited a catalogue of the "Phænogamous Plants of the United States"—and he says he knows the definition of "phænogamous."

The Phantom League

By Charles E. Van Loan

Author of "The Ten-Thousand-Dollar Arm," "Three and Two," Etc.

The baseball scout, the man who holds down the job of finding the boys who are to be the stars of to-morrow; this is his story. In New Mexico he finds "a regular Indian team, and holy Moses! how those boys *can* hit."

ROBERT DAVIS FRISBEE—"Pop" Frisbee for short, was a big-league scout.

For the benefit of those who may not know the exact status of the baseball scout, we will lay a finger on a few of the conditions which created this particular branch of the sporting service.

A long time ago baseball was a recreation. Then it grew into a commercial experiment, broadened into a paying proposition, and is now, in point of money invested, interests staked, and popular following, the greatest outdoor amusement enterprise in the world.

When baseball began to pay, the managers set about securing performers who would draw money at the box office; that is to say, players who could win games. The game itself developed along scientific lines, and the big league came next, with its ever-increasing demand for new blood.

At the present writing, sixteen major-league clubs, with tentacles reaching into every minor league in the country, are feeling about for the youngster who can play ball well enough to pick up the veteran's glove as he drops it.

The big league is an unfeeling sort of an octopus. The player who struggles to the top holds his job just so long as he can play his position a little bit better than any other man whom the management can find, and the management is everlastingly on the lookout for that other man. That is where the scout comes into play. His job is to find the boys who are to be the stars of to-morrow.

Sometimes the scout is a superannuated ball player; sometimes he is a man who never had a baseball in his hands. He must have the ability to pick a sterling performer at a glance. He must have judgment, secretiveness, and a certain amount of initiative. A well-balanced scout will save a small fortune for the management which employs him—money which might otherwise be spent in "trying out" unsatisfactory recruits.

Pop Frisbee was a good scout. Between his teens and his thirties, he had been a ball player and a team captain famous in the minors. His inability to hit high-class pitching had condemned him to spend his active days just outside major-league organizations, but he was a marvelous fielding first baseman, and had a knack for developing raw material in a short space of time.

When Frisbee began to take on weight and could no longer "spear" the bad throws at first, he began to look about him for a permanent position of some sort, and Timothy Cahill, at that time managing the Wanderers from the bench, employed Frisbee as a scout. Cahill had once played second base under Frisbee, and he had respect for Pop's judgment of a yearling.

Frisbee made good. He took real pride in his work; pride in his record; pride in his ability to go out into the waste places and come back with the

goods. He knew more about the little leagues of the bush country than any three scouts in the business, and he never slopped over in his anxiety to impress upon Cahill the necessity for securing an unknown. A modest commendation from Pop Frisbee meant more than hours of oratory from Kernohan, Henry McDonough, of the Blues, or Davy Martin, of the Benedicts.

Frisbee went about his work silently. He never hunted ball players with a brass band or a torchlight procession, and he kept his mouth shut. Once during his first year he had opened his heart to a friend, and it had cost him a wonderful right-handed phenomenon whom he had discovered pitching in a timber league in Michigan. That taught Pop a lesson. He kept his own counsel, covered his trail where he could, and when on the scent was as secretive as a detective. Competition was stiff, and all the clubs were wondering where Frisbee "dug up his live ones."

It was Pop Frisbee who found "Gertie" Judson, the infielding sensation of his time, and nobody ever heard so much as Judson's name before Frisbee trailed in with his modest report. "Butch" Galloway and "Moose" Terrill were also in Pop's private gallery, both of whom might have been in the tall-grass country yet but for old Frisbee's prying eye.

Pop enjoyed the work. No prospector who unearths a "pocket" of nuggets ever felt more pleasure than did this plump, red-faced, middle-aged man at the sight of an unknown playing big-league baseball on an unknown diamond.

Pop Frisbee has another job now. He is an inspector for a public-service corporation. Into his work he puts no enthusiasm, and out of it he gets no pleasure. His salary check is smaller, too, and it may be that he notices the increased cost of living.

His judgment of a ball player is every bit as keen as it was ten years ago, and he still retains the qualities of mind which made him a success as a scout. Then, why is he an inspector? Because he was laughed out of baseball, "guyed" out of the business to which he gave the best years of his life. He was the victim of a practical joke, which was certainly never aimed at Robert Davis Frisbee; he was caught in a snare which was not spread for his cautious feet. Looking back on the circumstances, Pop may lay a full half of the blame upon his own secretive methods; a little frankness, a few judicious questions, might have saved the day—and ruined this story.

Be patient, for the story begins—begins with Johnny Meegan sitting in front of an adobe house in the hamlet of San Miguel, County of Rio Arriba, State of New Mexico.

In most of the little towns of New Mexico, far away from the main lines of the railroad, there are men from east of the Mississippi. Some of them live in that high, dry atmosphere because they find the fag end of life sweet to them. There are others who, as they say, have "taken it in time." These expect to get well and return some day to God's country. That phrase is as old as the garden of Eden, and it was invented when Adam looked back over his shoulder and caught the flash of the sword at the boundaries. God's country is never the land in which one lives, but the land to which one cannot return. Thus to Johnny Meegan, "God's country" meant Chicago; to Billy Kilbourne it meant Boston; to Fred Parks it meant Shamokin, Pa., and to Jefferson Davis Johnson, "God's country" meant Baltimore.

The Chicago sporting writers gave Johnny Meegan a farewell banquet and a loving cup to take with him when he went away, and they drank his health with a choke in their throats, for they did not expect to see him again. Sentence had been pronounced upon him by a specialist of international reputation after the star baseball reporter had coughed all winter.

"There is a chance," said the specialist. "Try New Mexico or Arizona."

"Never let it be said that I quit

while there was a chance," said Johnny Meegan. "I'm on my way, doc."

So the boys gave him a loving cup, and drank from it to his very good health and his speedy return. John Meegan, Senior, who owned a few banks in Indiana, opened his check book wide, and we begin to untangle this story with Johnny Meegan planted in an unknown hamlet of a queer, dry country with seven white men for companions—four of them were worthless from any standpoint you choose to take—and the balance of the population Mexicans and Apaches from the Jacarilla Reservation. The Apaches were nice, quiet Indians, not at all like the sainted Geronimo. They would do almost anything for a drink of whisky.

Johnny had seen the local specialist at Albuquerque, who had given him hope and good advice. Open air had been recommended, and Johnny had made a long, rambling trip with a mustang and a pack horse. San Miguel had been at the end of that journey. That was because of Billy Kilbourne.

Billy was existing in San Miguel with more comfort than he had been able to find elsewhere. Billy was only twenty-five, but he had lived his life in a tremendous hurry, and crowded so many things into it that it had been New Mexico or heaven, and Billy took no chances. He mourned for Boston and the Maine woods, and nearly wept with joy at meeting some one who could give him an expert opinion upon the probable strength of the Boston Nationals. Kilbourne's people were quite wealthy, and he had turned an adobe house into a very comfortable affair. The furniture had been bought in Denver and freighted from Chama at the foot of the Cumbres Pass. The interior was decorated with gaudy Indian blankets, baskets, and beadwork.

"You'll stay here with me for a while," said Billy. "Nothing happens by chance, you know. You were sent here to cheer me up. Just think of a regular big-league baseball writer dropping in out of the clouds! It's too good to be true! Now, how is this young Hawley going to do in the outfield? And why did they tie the can to Homer Kennedy?"

So Johnny Meegan stayed on at San Miguel, filling his lungs with the clean, dry air, and his stomach with the excellent nourishment furnished by Jefferson Davis Johnson, who had once been Kilbourne's valet, but, through love, was now his cook.

Beside Kilbourne and Meegan, there was Fred Parks, a wandering printer, who had reached the end of his earthly pilgrimage at San Miguel. Parks had a small general-supply store, and managed to make a living, mainly through the large orders which Kilbourne gave him. There was also Antonio, a young Jacarilla, who had been to Carlisle, and sometimes liked to remember that he had played center field with the fastest ball team that that school ever produced. Antonio was interesting. He took Kilbourne and Meegan on long rides through the reservation, and Kilbourne pretended that he was making a collection of Indian blankets. It gave him a slender interest in life.

One evening, Meegan, Kilbourne, and Parks were sitting in front of the "Hotel Touraine," as Kilbourne persisted in naming his house. He said it had a homelike sound. They had exhausted seven-up, cinch, and dominoes, and Meegan had been recounting some of his newspaper experiences.

"Gosh!" said Johnny. "I wish we had a paper here!"

Kilbourne laughed until he coughed.

"Man alive!" he panted. "What for?"

"Why, just for the fun of getting it out!" said Johnny. "Think of the things we could put into it! No copy desk to 'get by,' no city editor to howl. Why, we could 'kid' the whole Southwest!"

"It wouldn't pay," said Parks solemnly, whereupon both young men hooted at him.

"Oh, laugh if you want to," said he. "A fellow tried it once. He must have been nutty. He died. I found his whole plant put away in the back room of the store when I bought out Moreno. The Mexican took the works for a

small debt—an old 'army' press, some type, ink——"

"Where is that stuff now?" demanded Kilbourne.

"Oh, it's down there yet," said Parks easily. "I never bothered with it, and there ain't any market for junk closer than Durango."

Kilbourne looked at Meegan, and together they looked at Parks.

"Right here, on this very spot," said Kilbourne impressively, "we found, create, institute, organize, and incorporate the San Miguel *Messenger*. I speak to be owner and publisher because all any owner ever has to do is furnish the money. That lets him out."

"Me for the editorial department!" said Meegan. "And I'll show these folks around here what a real sporting page looks like, believe me!"

"That being the case," said Parks solemnly, "I'll print it. You ain't got a thing on me. I'm as game as you are. And as much of a damn fool," he added softly.

Pop Frisbee had several good friends among the newspaper men, and whenever he was in Chicago he made it a point to drop in on Charlie Hough. Charlie was an old-timer, and had a record which reached back to the days of the Brotherhood. Pop had known him for nearly twenty years.

The big-league pennant races were drawing to a close when Pop dropped into Chicago on his way West. While he did not mention the fact, he was headed for Albuquerque. By slow stages he intended to reach the principal city of New Mexico in time for the great annual baseball tournament which takes place in the fall after the close of the big-league season. This tournament is the great attraction of the State fair, and the cities of the Southwest often hire the best pitchers in the country to represent them in the annual struggle for glory and the thousand-dollar purse. Pop Frisbee never missed that Albuquerque tournament, for there he knew he would find the flower of the Southwestern diamonds.

Charlie Hough was glad to see Pop, and chatted with him for several minutes. Then he was called to the managing editor's office, and left Pop alone beside the roll-top desk.

A pile of papers lay upon the top of the desk, and Pop ran through them, glancing at the sporting pages. Halfway down the pile he came upon a stranger—the San Miguel *Messenger*. It was a queer-looking sheet, and when Pop saw that it was published in San Miguel, Rio Arriba County, New Mexico, he slipped it into his pocket. There might be some news of the coming tournament.

That night at his hotel, Pop remembered the *Messenger*, and drew it forth. It was not much of a newspaper, as it contained only four small sheets, and under the title line appeared a peculiar motto:

Vim, vinegar, and vitriol; frijoles not regarded as legal tender.

Pop glanced at the front page. Leading the paper was an amazing news item:

We regret that we must once more call public attention to the habits of our esteemed fellow townsman, Señor Juan de la Cruz. Juan was over at Tony's again last night, bathing his vitals in liquid tumult. After he was pretty thoroughly potted, he proceeded up Tin Can Boulevard until he reached his bungalow, where he was greeted by the charming and popular Señora de la Cruz, the beautiful and talented society matron and leader of San Miguel's Four Hundred. In the excess of his alcoholic exuberation, the ebullition of his spirits, Señor de la Cruz settled a right haymaker upon the delicate smeller of his queen consort. Señora de la Cruz did not quit under punishment. She immediately retaliated by biffing her lord and master between the eyes with a copper kettle. Señor de la Cruz took the long count, and is around town this morning with his lamps trimmed low.

We have frequently deplored the prevalence of such occurrences in our best circles, and it would seem that alcoholic excesses are undermining the foundations of our social fabric. The fundamental principles of our social structure are threatened.

We intended to print in this number a great blank verse poem entitled "The Demon Rum," but our staff poet sought his inspiration in the subject of his lofty lines, and found so much inspiration that he is now confined in the Bastile until such time as he ceases to see herds of red, white, and blue elephants, pink mice, and other peculiar animals.

This gem appeared under the heading: *"SOAKED!"*

On the same page there was another startling item:

APACHE UPRISING!

It was rumored that upon Wednesday last there was an uprising among the Jacarillas. This we wish to deny in the strongest terms. We were on the inside of the insurrection, so to speak, or at least we had some dope on the inside of the uprising, and we now explain the whole sad affair.

Our late printer's devil, whom we christened Sockalexis P. Bender, better known as Man - Who - Lays-Down-on-his-Job-and-Refuses-to-Get-up-Again, was an aged Apache of the Jacarilla tribe. He claimed to be the second cousin of Henry Clay Geronimo, formerly a citizen of prominence in these parts and well known in Washington. After the late Socks had concealed about a pint of squirrel booze, the family resemblance became most striking.

Last Wednesday, being thirsty, the aforesaid Sockalexis P. Bender horned into the editorial sanctum and snared therefrom a half-gallon jug of St. John's Celebrated Spavin Cure, believing the same to be rye whisky. Citizens who saw our late employee throwing handsprings in the middle of Lafayette Boulevard placed the wrong construction upon his actions. The uprising was a personal affair and entirely internal. The interment yesterday was private.

We mourn our loss, yet it is not for the late Sockalexis P. Bender that we weep. The spirit of the second cousin of Mr. H. C. Geronimo is now at large in the sweet fields of Eden. His tepee is pitched on the other side of Jordan. The smoke of his camp fire salutes a peaceful sky. According to the lamented Moore, the soul of Sockalexis P. is now

"Sleeping in light, like the green birds that dwell
In Eden's radiant fields of asphodel"!

No, we do not weep for Sockalexis P. Bender. We weep for the quart of spavin cure which he carried with him into the Great Silence.

Pop Frisbee read these items with a corrugated brow.

"Huh!" he snorted. "Some bush-league newspaper man trying to be funny."

Then he opened the paper to expose the inside sheets, and his opinion of the San Miguel *Messenger* suffered a sudden change. The entire inside section of the paper—two full sheets—was devoted to sporting news, and the thing which caught Pop Frisbee's eye and caused it to bulge slightly was the column of box scores and the "Official Standing of the Independent Northern New Mexico League."

"Suffering snakes!" grunted the scout. "I never knew they *had* a league in northern New Mexico! Outlaws, of course!"

There it was, under his very eyes—the percentage column of the league with four clubs in the order named:

	Won.	Lost.	Pct.
Apaches	39	22	.639
Boston Terriers	34	24	.586
San Miguel Sidewinders	29	27	.518
Johnson's Coyotes	14	43	.246

"They've been playing all season, Saturdays and Sundays!" thought Frisbee. "Well! Well! Well! I wonder if I know any of those players!"

He cast his eye down the line of the box scores. There was not a professional name that he had ever heard before. The San Miguel Sidewinders had a Mexican line-up, judging by the names—Ortiz, Gonzales, Martinez, Valdez, Morales, Garcia, Gomez, Vigil, and Meegan. The last name jarred slightly. Evidently the Sidewinders had an Irish pitcher.

The Apache team contained such warlike souls as "Running Wolf," "Singing Mule," "Raw Dog," "Howling Henry," "Hungry Coyote," "Bald Hornet," "Footloose Pete," "Sweet Evening Breeze," and "Aztec Antonio," the pitcher.

"Well, what d'ye think of that?" mused the scout. "A regular Indian team, and holy Moses! How those boys *can* hit!"

Indeed the box score of the game between the Apaches and the Boston Terriers proved it. The hit column was thickly sprinkled with twos and threes, and in the summary the list of extra base hits was a long one. Aztec Antonio was credited with two home runs and a double; Singing Mule had two doubles and a triple; Footloose Pete, with four hits out of four times up, had a home run, a triple, and two singles; and Bald Hornet had two triples.

Then came the crowning surprise—the name which appeared at the begin-

ning of the story of the games. There it was, just as Pop Frisbee had seen it a thousand times in days gone by—in ten-point Gothic—"John Meegan, Jr."

"Johnny Meegan!" said Pop. "So that's where he went! And he's working on a rotten little paper like this! Too bad! Well, there's one boy who knows a ball player when he sees one. What does he have to say?"

John Meegan, Junior, had a great deal to say. His account of the game between the Apaches and the Boston Terriers left no vague shadow of doubt in Pop Frisbee's mind. From the instant his eyes alighted on the "standing of the league," he had felt the inclination to make a trip over into Rio Arriba County, wherever that should prove to be, and take a look at this unknown collection of ball players. When he ran his eye down the figures which represented the terrific hitting ability of the Apaches, the inclination grew stronger, but when he read what Johnny Meegan had to say about Aztec Antonio, Singing Mule, Footloose Pete, and Bald Hornet, the fate of the Independent Northern New Mexican League was settled. Thus wrote Johnny Meegan:

Never has such a hitting team been gathered together in any league of the country. Kilbourne, who twirled for the Boston Terriers, had all his usual control, curves, and change of pace. He mixed up his repertoire with all the skill at his command, but man after man the Apaches walked to the plate and smashed the ball to the fence. If the Terriers fumbled at times it was because the balls which were hit through the infield traveled at such terrific speed that it was physically impossible to handle them cleanly. On the other hand, Antonio, using his lightning speed at all times, held the Terriers helpless and all but hitless. Kilbourne's men were game and fought hard in the face of an overwhelming defeat, but no pitcher seems able to stop the Indians when they begin to hit.

A detailed description of the game followed, and there was also an account of the game between the Sidewinders and Johnson's Coyotes. Meegan pitched for the Sidewinders, but Pop passed that trifling circumstance without notice.

"Same name, I reckon," said he.

The thing which amazed Frisbee was that he could not find any mention of the Albuquerque tournament or an intimation that any one of the four teams would take part in the great baseball carnival.

"Seems to me those Apaches ought to be a great drawing card," reflected Frisbee. "If they could hit half that well against first-class pitching, they'd win out hands down. Funny I never heard of that outfit before."

And when Pop rolled into bed that night, his face was turned toward the West.

Frisbee stopped off in Denver to greet a few old friends and ask some questions about Western leaguers. On the second afternoon, as he was loafing in the lobby of the Brown Palace, he saw Davy Martin limp in with his suit case and write his name on the register. Davy was the scout for the Benedicts—the very miscreant who had robbed Pop of the timber-league pitcher aforementioned. Pop held a newspaper in front of his eyes until Martin was safe in the elevator, and then going to his room, he hurriedly packed his suit cases.

"It wouldn't surprise me a bit if Davy was after the same bunch," he thought to himself. "Well, if he beats me, he'll know he's been traveling!"

A night spent on a D. & R. G. Pullman landed Pop in Alamosa in time for breakfast, after which he embarked on a narrow-gauge train for the long, jolting ride over the Cumbres Pass with Chama as the objective point. The train was delayed so that a night at the Chama House was necessary, and the following day Pop climbed into the buckboard for San Miguel. The driver was a Mexican, who had no English fit to print, so the conversation was limited. After several hours, the equipage drew up in the midst of an adobe town, and the driver, with a grunt of relief, flopped to the ground, and made signs for Pop to descend.

"A mistake," thought Frisbee. "Baseball in a dump like this? Not in a thousand years! Hey, boy, what's the name of this place?"

A fat, pock-marked young Mexican emerged from Parks' General Merchandise Emporium in time to answer the question. It was indeed San Miguel.

Pop stood in the whitish dust between his suit cases, and felt in an inner pocket. His brain staggered between doubt and certainty, and he clung desperately to a printed word, as men have done since newspapers were invented.

"Amigo," said Pop, pointing to the heading of the paper which he held in his hands, "where will I find the sporting editor of this great religious daily?"

The Mexican appeared troubled, and began to roll a cigarette.

"Quien sabe!" he said.

"Meegan is his name," said Pop. "Johnny Meegan."

"Ah!" said the youth, with a smile. He pointed toward a large adobe house which stood on a slight rise of ground on the outskirts of the village.

As Pop waded through dust to his shoe tops, he cursed the San Miguel *Messenger* venomously, and regretted that he had not asked a question or two along the way, even at the expense of marking the trail for all the Davy Martins to follow.

"A league in a country like this? Bah!"

The front door of the adobe house was open, and, as no attention was paid to his knock, Pop Frisbee stepped inside. In the middle of a large room, two men were seated on opposite sides of a table—a negro and an Indian. A white man, little more than a skeleton, sat at a small table with a pencil in his fingers and a pad of paper before him. It was Fred Parks. Not one of the queer trio looked up as Pop entered the room, and the two men at the large table were deeply engrossed in some game which they were playing.

There was a click, a whirring sound which ceased suddenly, and the white man said:

"That was a strike, Jeff. You offered at it."

Pop Frisbee was about to speak, but this remark jolted the conversation out of him. "A strike!" He "offered at it!" What nonsense was this?

Once more the Indian bent over his end of the board. His blue-black hair tumbled down over his crimson blanket, and he squinted hard at a trigger which should release a round white pellet the size of a small marble. At the opposite angle of the board, the negro crouched in an expectant attitude.

"Come on, Antonio!" he coaxed. "Get 'em oveh! Get 'em oveh!"

The Indian jerked smartly at a string, the trigger fell, and the round pellet shot forward. The negro made an abrupt motion with his wrist, there was a click, and the pellet went flying back until it was stopped by the railing about the board. The thin man arose, and examined the spot where the ball struck.

"A two-base hit!" he exclaimed. "That scores the man on second. Who is that, Hayes or Tilden?"

The Indian picked up a small counter which had been lying on the board, turned it over, and spoke in excellent English.

"Neither one. This is Cleveland. You'll have to be more careful with that score, Parks. You'll get it all balled up again."

The negro crowed.

"I been a-layin' for that curve ball of yours for three innings," he said. "Stick it over here again, and watch what I'll do to it!"

Pop Frisbee started to edge toward the door.

"I've got into a private asylum," he thought.

Just then there came a quick step on the hard-baked earth outside, and two young men burst into the room. A voice cried:

"How's the game going, Tony? The Apaches eatin' 'em alive, as usual? Come on, you Singing Mule! That's the—*well! For Heaven's sake!* POP FRISBEE!"

And before Frisbee knew how it happened, there was Johnny Meegan, thin and brown and evidently as hard as a wire nail, pumping away at his right

hand and trying to thump him on the back with his left.

"Johnny," said the scout, "it's good to see you again—good to see you looking so well! Your Chicago friends would never believe it was the same fellow! Why—you look fit to go ten rounds with a champion!"

"Sure!" said Meegan. "It's the country does it! A fine place to spend the summer—if you say it quick. Oh, excuse me! Billy, I want you to meet Pop Frisbee, one of my old friends. Pop, Mr. Kilbourne, of Boston, and a grand fellow! That's right, get together! Now, then, what on earth are you doing in this God-forsaken country?"

Pop produced his copy of the San Miguel *Messenger,* and Meegan and Kilbourne exchanged quick glances as he opened it. The game had stopped, and the Indian had faced about and was staring at Frisbee. The negro had left the table. Slowly the scout laid his finger upon the "official league standing."

"What am I doing here?" he repeated. "That's what I expect *you* to tell *me.* Johnny, what does this thing mean?"

Meegan glanced at the sheet, looked at Pop for a full two seconds in order to make sure that he was in earnest, and then, suddenly seizing Kilbourne by the shoulders, he began to laugh as he had not laughed in six months. He cackled until his breath was all gone, and Pop Frisbee, watching him, began to perspire about the temples. The light was breaking in on him at last.

"Oh, Billy!" panted the sporting editor of the San Miguel *Messenger.* "This is immense! This is the best ever! I forgot to tell you that Pop here is the scout for Tim Cahill and the Wanderers, and he's come down here—Lord! I'll die in a minute!—he's come down here, Billy, to look over our league! Our league!"

Then Kilbourne began to cackle, and the two boys clung to each other, and laughed until poor Billy went into a spasm of coughing. When he could recover sufficient breath, he reproached Frisbee weakly.

"You oughtn't to make me laugh that way," he panted. "It's bad for me."

Pop Frisbee, whose sense of humor was never his strong point, clamored for further information.

"And this stuff," said he, tapping the paper accusingly, "is all the bunk, I suppose? There ain't any league here at all?"

"Pop," said Meegan tearfully, for he had laughed until he cried, "you do us an injustice. You are now in the presence of the Independent Northern New Mexico League! Allow me! Mr. Kilbourne here is the Boston Club—Paul Revere, first base; John Adams, center field; John Harvard, catcher! Our friend, Chief Antonio here, is the Apache Club—Raw Dog, Bald Hornet, Singing Mule, and others too numerous to mention. Jefferson Davis Johnson is the Coyote Club—nothing less than a statesman in the line-up, and I—I represent the Mexican population with the San Miguel Sidewinders. This gentleman is our official umpire and score keeper, Mr. Parks. The games are played upon the board which you see on the table—the invention of a Chicago fan, and the cleverest thing of the sort I ever saw. You have interrupted a great double-header between the Apaches and Coyotes, and the score is—Parks, what is the official score?"

"Eight to three, favor of the Apaches," said Parks gravely. "Singing Mule got two more home runs."

Pop looked about him, discovered a chair, and found his way to it upon his shaking legs.

"Well, Johnny," he remarked grimly, "all I've got to say is that you and your bunk newspaper have made an awful sucker out of me."

"Oh, I say!" cried Kilbourne.

"You're mistaken, Pop," said Meegan earnestly. "It was the fellow who handed you the copy of the *Messenger* who made a sucker of you."

Here Frisbee turned very red, and sank still deeper into his chair.

"You see, it's this way," continued

Johnny. "We get out that paper for our own amusement, and it's not for general circulation. We print just enough to send to our friends. We fake everything in it, and there's never been any intention to fool any one. You don't know how slowly the time passes in a place of this sort, and if a man hasn't something to keep him busy, he's likely to go nutty.

"A pal of mine in Chicago shipped me this mechanical ball-game device because he had found it interesting. We discovered that we could not only play a regular game on it, but could score it if we gave names to the counters. It struck me that we could get up a four-team league and have a pennant race and at the same time get some live news for our sporting page. It has been a good laugh to us and to our friends. If anybody told you this league was on the square, he lied, and you'll have to fight it out with him."

There was a long, awkward silence. Then Pop Frisbee swallowed hard, and acknowledged the corn.

"It's up to me," he said bravely. "I swiped that paper off Charlie Hough's desk—and I guess it's coming to me, Johnny!"

The Coyote team of the Northern New Mexico League stood humbly at Frisbee's elbow as befits a tailender. He carried a tray, upon which were placed several long glasses, in which fifty-cent-a-pound ice tinkled expensively.

"Let us all have a little drink," said Billy Kilbourne. "Johnny, a toast!"

Meegan smiled over the top of his glass at Frisbee.

"I give you the Phantom League, gentlemen!" said Johnny. "There'll never be another one like it!"

"Amen to that!" said Pop Frisbee.

It would be a pleasant thing to end this story without mention of its sequel. The joke, carried too far, sometimes becomes a tragedy.

To do Johnny Meegan justice, he never intended that the facts concerning Frisbee's visit should become public property, but the friend whom Johnny asked to regard the letter as confidential had a sense of humor developed at the expense of his good taste. Inside of two weeks the story appeared in four hundred newspapers, copied from the original, which was printed in Chicago. Pop Frisbee and the Phantom League became the standing joke of the "winter leagues," and hot-stove fanning bees.

They laughed Pop Frisbee out of baseball, and they came near laughing him into an asylum, so in the end the Phantom League became very real to him. The joke broke his heart, and spoiled the best scout in the country to make a second-class street-car inspector.

Johnny Meegan is back on the job again. Sometimes he comes across Pop Frisbee in his blue uniform, but Pop always happens to be looking the other way, and Meegan would give a great deal if the Phantom League had never existed.

PRAISE INDEED

WHEN the whole country was predicting that, unless the Democratic House of Representatives acted wisely on all matters of legislation last spring, the next Presidential election would be won by the Republicans, the Democratic leaders were always wondering what outsiders thought of their policies and principles.

One day Champ Clark, the Speaker of the House, met former Representative James Tawney, who, as a Republican, has spent most of his life abusing, decrying, and ridiculing Democracy.

"Well, Jim," said Clark quizzically, "how are we doing?"

Tawney's response was highly gratifying:

"Too rotten well, Champ!"

The Heart of Peter Burnham

By Ralph D. Paine

Author of "A Campus Rebellion," "Sandy Sawyer, Sophomore," Etc.

A study of a struggling undergraduate at Yale who is making a belated start toward educational fitness; one of those self-made, self-taught heroes who fight their way into college and through it—a man with plenty of heart, though he doesn't wear it on his sleeve. No need to tell you that there is the real college atmosphere here. Ralph D. Paine tells the story, and we know of no other author who can bring a reader so closely in touch with the life of the campus. But Peter Burnham isn't all student. An altruistic impulse takes him into the thick of labor troubles at the Oak Creek collieries where he carries out some of the doctrines learned at New Haven.

(*A Complete Novel*)

THE undergraduate journalist who wrote the following extract from the Yale *Daily News* mustered the routine facts in an orderly manner, and wasted no words. It was a creditable piece of amateur reporting, but, of course, the detailed episodes of this annual battle could not be included.

FRESHMEN STORM FENCE.

Immediately after chapel on the morning of Washington's Birthday the sophomores rushed out and lined up six deep along four panels of their class fence opposite Farnum Hall. The freshmen drew up on the open campus toward Dwight Hall, and the upper classmen and nearly a thousand eager spectators formed a close circle about the opposing lines. Then while both classes were in the midst of long cheers the freshmen formed a flying wedge and rushed at the sophomore center. The men at the fence held their position, and the attack changed into a fierce pushing match. High hats and bamboo canes were well smashed in the first encounter, and little by little the sophomores were forced back against the rails of their fence, and many of them shoved clear over it. At no time, however, was the fence swept clear of sophomores, and the freshmen were unable to rally round any one post in large enough force to start a cheer, which has been the traditional sign of victory for the attacking side. After fifteen minutes of conflict, Head Marshal Peter Burnham, captain of the university nine, put a stop to the scrimmage, and according to the established rules proceeded to count the number of hands which each class could show on the top of the fence. He declared the freshmen winners of the rush.

It was one of the episodes omitted by the amateur reporter that bore a sequel very disturbing to the peace of mind of Peter Burnham. As umpire of the fray, his word was law, although few words were needed. The sight of his tall figure and grimly serious countenance, together with his fame as an athlete, sufficed to tame the most rampant spirits. With never a smile he watched the absurd tall hats of the sophomores go swirling underfoot like so many chips in the surf, while the air was filled with the fragments of shirts, coats, and sweaters plucked and peeled from yelping freshmen.

When two or three wild-eyed assailants piled upon one of the foe, and the odds seemed unfair to Peter Burnham, he waded into the riot, and yanked the offenders forth by the neck. In this task he was aided by Jim Stearns, the

oarsman and football captain, while Hector Alonzo McGrath, a spectator at large, danced about the edge of the cyclone, and shouted impartial encouragement to both sides. At length Peter glanced at his watch, shoved a path to the fence, and announced:

"Two minutes more, and then I'll count hands. Quit your fighting, and grab the fence, and hang on for dear life."

The advice was sound enough, but nobody paid any attention to it. The fence was totally submerged in a score of human eddies, and as fast as a pair of hands clutched the top rail their owner was stood on his head and dragged out by the heels. Burnham stepped aside for a moment, and his altitude of six feet three inches enabled him to survey the lively scene with somewhat of a bird's-eye view. His attention was presently caught by the behavior of a warlike bantam of a sophomore, who was spreading more devastation than his size seemed to warrant. One freshman who tried to haul him away from the fence staggered back, rubbing his head, and another was holding a handkerchief to a red welt across the cheek.

It was a rule of the fence rush that the sophomores should go into action with their tall hats and bamboo canes, this being the day on which they were first allowed to sport these manly adornments, but Peter Burnham muttered to himself:

"That little rooster yonder is fanning the air with something heavier than a regulation bamboo. Bang! There goes another freshman with a broken head. That is a solid, hardwood stick painted yellow, or I miss my guess."

This suspected breach of etiquette demanded instant investigation, and the umpire roughly pushed into the crowd with the energy of a runaway locomotive, calling out as he drew near the offender:

"Here, you Bob Oliver, give me that cane! What do you think this is, anyhow? A Donnybrook Fair?"

Young Mr. Oliver was in a very heated mood, and not to be reasoned with. His immediate neighborhood had become so unhealthy for freshmen that several pairs of sophomore hands were able to grip the top rail in his lee, so to speak, and time would be called in a few seconds. With fire in his eye, and an impudent retort on his lips, he laid about him more vigorously than ever, while the spectators shouted uproarious encouragement.

Peter Burnham shot forth a long arm to collar the culprit, who promptly swung his yellow cane and smote his would-be captor behind the left ear. Peter was more surprised than hurt. The audacity of the attack was almost incredible. He caught Oliver by the wrist, wrested the stick from him, broke it over his knee, and then, lifting the youngster clear of the ground, tucked him under one arm, and so stalked with him to the edge of the crowd.

Dropping his squirming freight, Peter hastened back to stop the rush and announce the verdict. The panting adversaries clung to the fence like so many drowning sailors to the life line. Two freshmen had succeeded in maintaining their hold at the place so suddenly vacated by Bob Oliver, and their show of hands helped to swing the narrow margin of the official tally. Solemnly, and amid a silence that was literally breathless for lack of wind, Captain Peter Burnham completed his delicate task, and declared in stentorian accents:

"The freshmen win the rush, and they have therefore earned the right to sit on their section of the fence for the rest of this year. Please lay down your arms and disperse. No more rough house on the campus. A long cheer for the freshman class."

The proud and happy youngsters piped up lustily, and most of the sophomores joined in, being foemen of a generous sort, after which they sought their battered tall hats, and formed in column to march down Chapel Street and display their pulchritude to the admiring populace. Bob Oliver refused to join them, however, and lingered to

air his grievances in sputtering accents. Two or three of his classmates who had been members of the rush committee turned back to rebuke him.

"Don't be a little pest," cried one of them. "We told you not to carry that stick. Burnham was perfectly right in ruling you off. You must have been crazy to make a swipe at him."

"He had no business to interfere with me," was the distressful reply. "What if I did have just a plain, ordinary cane? Look at the size of me! Those big freshmen would have eaten me alive if I hadn't defended myself. They put all their football players and crew men in the front rank."

"Well, you didn't have to sail into the rush at all, Bob," affirmed another classmate. "It's all right to be spunky, but this isn't your kind of a game."

"I'm sick of being called 'Pint-o'-peanuts,' and 'Stumpy Oliver,' and 'Bobby the Runt,'" was the rejoinder. "Darn it, I was trying to show my college spirit, and that great, long, seven-foot gawk of a Peter Burnham had to go and disgrace me before my whole class. It wouldn't have been so b-blamed b-bad," here the chagrined sophomore wiped his eyes and swallowed hard, "if—if he had d-disqualified me in a decent, d-dignified way, but he hoisted me under his arm and carried me out up-upside down. And two newspaper men snapped their cameras at me, and—and—I know several girls who were in the crowd looking on."

"Oh, cut out the prize oration, and come along with the gang," unfeelingly quoth one of his friends. "It's a good thing for the campus that you *are* a runt. If you were as big as Peter Burnham or Jim Stearns, the class would have to hire a lion tamer to room with you, Bobby."

The ruffled bantam followed sullenly, eying each passing freshman with a malevolent glare, and pausing to shake his fist at the distant figure of Peter Burnham, who was hurrying to keep an appointment with one of his tutors. Like many another man of diminutive physique, Oliver had a full-sized idea of his own importance, and usually strutted the campus with a jaunty, assertive air, as if it would take a good deal to knock the chip from his shoulder. His allowance was lavish, his raiment of the smartest cut and pattern, and whatever midnight oil he consumed was more likely to illuminate a poker table than an array of textbooks.

The encounter with Peter Burnham had dealt his vanity a cruel blow. The grim and terrible varsity baseball captain had handled him as if he were a child, virtually spanked him in the presence of the whole college.

"It showed a lot of nerve for me to go into the rush at all," said Oliver to himself. "Anyhow, I hit that big bully a crack behind the ear, and nobody else in my class would have dared to do it. I'll get even with him somehow. If he takes me for an easy mark, he guesses all wrong."

With a threatening scowl, the bantam-weight sophomore buttoned his coat, expanded his chest, held himself very erect, and strode to overtake his noisy class which was weaving through the mazes of a snake dance on the town green after a spirited game of football, in which tall hats were punted with much dexterity.

Peter Burnham knew not that he had made an enemy who nursed vengeance in his heart. Although his sense of humor was rather scanty, perhaps because there had been small time for play in his hard-working career, he might have chuckled at the notion that disgruntled little Bob Oliver was to be taken any more seriously than an irritated mosquito. As head marshal of the fence rush, Peter had done his duty, conscientiously and without favor, and he thought no more about it.

A fortnight later he was turning into Elm Street, to go to the baseball cage for the afternoon practice at batting, pitching, and sliding bases, when the campus postman hailed him on his rounds and hastily scanned the bundle of letters in his hand.

"There is one for you here somewhere, Mr. Burnham," said he. "Climbing four flights of stairs to your

room may be all right for an athlete, but excuse me whenever I see a chance to dodge it."

"You are getting fat and lazy, Joe. You had better run around the gymnasium track three or four miles with me after baseball practice," replied Peter, as he took the letter and regarded it curiously.

"And have you pinched for manslaughter? Thank you, I'll stick to my own kind of slavery," quoth the merry-hearted postman, as he trudged on his way.

Peter gazed at the letter a moment longer before opening it. The envelope bore a New Haven postmark, and the writing was obviously feminine. Other Yale athletes of fame, Jim Stearns, for instance, now and then received admiring notes from impressionable damsels who should have known better, but this kind of hero worship was unfamiliar to the great pitcher, who shone much more brilliantly on the diamond than in the drawing-room. He viewed with good-natured contempt the college "fussers" who wasted their time in the attractive circles of New Haven society beyond the campus boundaries.

The expression of Peter's rugged countenance indicated that some slight uneasiness was blended with his curiosity as his strong fingers gingerly opened the square, cream-tinted envelope. Then, as he read the contents thereof, the uppermost emotion was unqualified dismay.

Mrs. Pemberton Stirling requests the pleasure of Mr. Peter Burnham's company for dinner at seven o'clock on Friday, March the eighth.

Thirteen Hillhouse Avenue, March the sixth.

Peter shook his head in a slightly dazed manner, as if young Bob Oliver had stolen up and hit him behind the ear. His gait became slower and slower as he moved toward the baseball cage, although the chapel chimes were ringing the hour, and he had never been known to be even a minute late for practice.

He knew Mrs. Pemberton Stirling by sight as the wife of the distinguished Farnum Foundation Professor of the Romance Languages and Literature, and while leading the baseball squad at a jog trot into the suburbs for routine exercise he had often passed their spacious, dignified home beneath the elms of Hillhouse Avenue. But as for being formally invited to dinner——

Peter continued to cogitate, and presently his gloom was lightened ever so little as he muttered, under his breath:

"I can sidestep it, can't I? I don't have to go. Why, I'd rather play sick, and be taken to the infirmary, than face a game like that. But how did it happen? Think of the batting list in that dining room! Professors and their wives, and all talking French, most likely!"

Peter Burnham was a modest giant, keenly conscious of his own deficiencies, one of those self-made, self-taught heroes who fight their way into college and through it, willing to pay any price in toil and sacrifice for the prize of an education. It would never have entered his head that possibly Mrs. Pemberton Stirling regarded him as a celebrity.

"Come to think of it, perhaps I was introduced to her after we won the deciding Harvard game last year," he soliloquized. "When the fellows carried me off the field on their shoulders, they dumped me down in the thick of a faculty crowd in front of the grand stand, and everybody was shaking hands all round. I have kept a pretty high stand in my French classes with 'Prof' Stirling, and perhaps he put his wife up to this."

Tucking the invitation in the hip pocket of his gray baseball breeches, Peter awoke to the fact that he had business on hand, and entered the long, low building known as the "cage" at a brisk trot. Peeling off his sweater, he set the waiting squad at work without delay, and soon the place was noisy with the crack of bats, the thud of the ball in the catcher's mitt, and the quick exhortations of the captain and his assistant coaches.

The practice was at its liveliest when a slender young man of a cheery and

carefree countenance strolled into the cage, and was compelled to dodge frantically to escape collision with Peter Burnham, who had slid feet first for the bag.

"I'd sooner have a house fall on me," observed Hector Alonzo McGrath. "Giving the squad an object lesson, Peter? Why, they can't be expected to slam themselves against the landscape like that. You are an iron man."

"This is not prisoner's base or squat tag," retorted the other, eying Hector with an affectionate twinkle. "When I tell a man to *slide* I want him to tear up the dirt. Why haven't you reported for practice?"

"Quit your joking," laughed Hector. "None of the captains will take me seriously, you know that. But if you want a gingery young shortstop, capable of holding his own in big-league company, I might train for baseball as a personal favor to you."

"You are too speedy for us. Jim Stearns had better find you a place on the crew. Oh, by the way, Hector"—and Burnham became as solemn as an owl—"I need a few words with you. Can you wait for me? I'll dismiss the squad in ten minutes or so."

Peter absently clapped his gloved hand to his hip pocket, made sure that Mrs. Pemberton Stirling's invitation had not slipped out, and returned to his task of making life uncomfortable for his bruised and perspiring band of recruits. As soon as he was free to saunter toward the gymnasium with Hector Alonzo at his elbow, he confided, and his accents were mildly lugubrious:

"Read this note, and tell me how to crawl from under without making any misplays. I want an excuse that will be polite and plausible, and I lack the talent of a gifted liar. You see, Hector, I am working for honors in Professor 'Pemmy' Stirling's advanced French courses, and I don't want to impair my friendly relations with him."

Hector glanced at the invitation, then looked up at funereal Peter Burnham, and vigorously protested:

"You make me tired! Of course you are going to accept. The Pemberton Stirlings give the nicest dinners in New Haven, very formal and exclusive, and it is an honor for an undergraduate to be allowed to climb over the bars. The old boy has probably taken a shine to you in the classroom, and his wife has heard of the bully fight you've made to work your way through college, and, of course, your fiendish activity on the diamond makes you one of the biggest men in college."

"But I don't want to go. I have had no time to get in training for formal and exclusive dinner parties. And women scare me. I can't think of anything to say to them."

"Then I shall have to coach you in the saucy small talk, the airy persiflage, the swift repartee, and the merry jest," chirruped Hector Alonzo. "Mrs. Stirling will probably give you a nice girl to take in to dinner, and you can play safe by talking baseball to her. If she is a New Haven girl, she will know all about you, and be just dying to hear what you think of our chances against Harvard."

"It doesn't sound good to me," was the unconvinced reply.

"Then we will put it up to Jim Stearns. Here he comes with the crew squad. Thank Heaven, I don't have to run with them."

Two score young men were dragging their weary feet toward the gymnasium entrance after a long cross-country run, while Stearns, the splendidly muscled stroke oar, trotted in front of them, with springy, untiring stride.

"Hello! Come into the dressing room," he sang out to his two friends. "I'll be ready to walk to the campus with you in a jiffy."

They followed at a more leisurely gait than his, and sought a bench between long rows of lockers while the crew men splashed and shouted and slanged each other from the shower baths. At the first opportunity, Hector briefly outlined the situation to Stearns, and plaintively commented:

"Isn't he the sandless, useless, asinine Peter, though? If I had a step-

ladder I should climb up and poke him one in the nose."

"Sure, he is all wrong," promptly agreed the stroke oar. "He is going to the party if I have to appoint a committee to blindfold and back him into his evening clothes. It is an honor to your class to have you invited to one of Mrs. Stirling's dinners, you chuckle-headed, grouchy old woman hater, Peter. You are going, understand?"

"S-s-sh, you can coax, but you cannot drive our darling Peter," counseled Hector. "Moral suasion is the stunt. Talk to him about the refining and elevating influences of select feminine society, Jim. If you try to use force, he will lay back his ears, and you'll have to build a fire under him to make him budge."

"If you can make me see that it is my duty," began Peter, wavering ever so little.

"There, we have him going," cried Hector. "This will do for the first lesson. We'll take another fall out of him after supper, Jim."

"He is shy, that's all," said Stearns, waxing satirical. "He never faced a crowd, ten thousand of them in the grand stand and bleachers, all yelling at once, and the bases full, and the score seesawing, and the heaviest hitter of the Harvard team next man up."

"That's different," mumbled Peter, with a perceptible blush, for he perceived the absurdity of his attitude.

Having discovered the crevice in his armor, McGrath and Stearns artfully resumed the argument after supper, insisting that Peter must regard his invasion of New Haven society as a duty to himself and his class. Whatever he construed as duty, the serious-minded Burnham was in the habit of pursuing to the bitter end, and with a troubled sigh he capitulated, and penned an acceptance while Jim Stearns stood at his elbow and acted as official censor. The envelope duly addressed to Mrs. Pemberton Stirling, Hector caught it up and slipped it in an inside pocket of his coat with the explanation:

"You might weaken between here and the post box, Peter. I will mail this on my way back to the rooms. You have done well, and we are proud of you, my son."

"I'd rather be taken out and shot," growled the unreconciled Peter.

His comrades bade him "cheer up, the worst is yet to come," and clumped noisily downstairs to seek their own quarters and wrestle with textbooks for the morrow's recitations. No sooner had they reached the quiet, shadowy campus than a noise of concerted cheering was borne from the direction of College Street, followed by a clamor of eager shouts and turbulent outcries of "Sophomores this way!" "Help, help! Freshmen to the rescue!"

"Some kind of a scrimmage," exclaimed Hector. "We upper classmen will be expected to stop it."

"Come along, then," returned Stearns, as he sprinted for the gateway between Welch and Lawrence Halls. "It is probably the aftermath of the fence rush."

Hector ran as fast as he could, and instantly forgot all about mailing Peter Burnham's note of acceptance to Mrs. Pemberton Stirling. He was a young man of praiseworthy intentions, but rattle-brained withal, and it would have been wiser had Peter attended to mailing the note himself.

Racing into College Street, Hector and Jim beheld one group of figures scampering across the green in full retreat, while a larger party pursued with loud jeers.

Overhauling a straggler, Stearns learned that a band of sophomores, rashly attempting some impromptu hazing, had been overwhelmed and outflanked by freshmen reënforcements summoned by scouts, and that the battle was as good as finished. The two guardians of the peace therefore resumed their homeward march, and found so many things to talk about that they thought no more of Peter Burnham and his impending ordeal.

On the night of the dinner party, however, Peter again found a place in the foregrounds of the interests of Hector Alonzo McGrath and James Mont-

gomery Stearns. They felt a weighty responsibility as his counselors and aides, and were promptly on hand to help him into his clothes and to bombard him with insane suggestions.

"It is not considered good form to chuck your hostess under the chin," said Hector.

"At least, not before the salad course," suggested Jim. "Why don't you slide feet first into the reception room, Peter? It would make a bully entrance. Society is very keen on novel stunts."

"And *don't* hitch up your belt, because you haven't any on, you know."

"And if the butler drops a plate, for goodness sake don't be absent-minded and scold him for muffing an easy one."

With unusual patience, Peter submitted to these insults until he was ready to put on his overcoat. Then he stood and glowered at his tormentors. Black-haired, black-browed, tanned by exposure and hot summer suns, the campus had aptly nicknamed him "The Last of the Mohicans." His face brightened in one of his rare smiles as Stearns exclaimed impulsively:

"By Jove, Peter, you do look stunning in your glad rags. Go in and win. You will be a lion among the ladies."

"Seven feet of stalwart manhood, or thereabouts, incased in a hard-boiled shirt, with an honest heart behind it," quoth Hector.

Peter dealt him an affectionate cuff over the head, which sent the slim youth spinning across the floor, and announced:

"I die game. If I am not home by ten o'clock, send a hearse scouting up Hillhouse Avenue, will you?"

They followed him downstairs, keeping step, and chanting dolefully:

The shades of night were falling fast,
Upi-dee, upi-da,
As through the Alpine village passed,
Upi-dee-i-da.
A youth who bore mid snow and ice,
A banner with the strange device,
Upidee-i-dee-i-da.

As Peter, the unwilling guest, stalked away from the campus, followed by a farewell cheer, his faithful friends turned and moved arm in arm along the walk that led past the nearest dormitory.

"Good old Peter! What a solid rock of a man he is!" began Hector. "Think of it, Jim! He was twenty-three years old before he entered college—working in the Pennsylvania coal country, saving his wages, studying nights, and now——"

"Jumping Jimmy! Look there! The whole place will be on fire in a minute!" yelled Stearns, as he leaped for the dormitory entrance.

A window of a ground-floor sitting room had been left open at the top, and the drapery, blown by the gusty March wind, was streaming inward as far as the gas lamp on the desk. The flimsy fabric had been ignited, and its blazing length was scattering sparks among a disorderly pile of papers and books directly beneath it. The door into the hallway was unlocked, and Jim Stearns was in the room in a twinkling, tearing down the draperies and bundling the stuff through the window, while Hector stamped out the sparks and played a stream on the desk from a convenient siphon of seltzer.

"Pretty good little fire company, eh?" said he, as he aimed the siphon at Jim, and doused the back of his neck at point-blank range. "Who lives in these rooms? Any one we know?"

"A sophomore. Little Bob Oliver. He has no roommate," answered the other. "I called on him once, to pull his leg for tickets to the Junior Prom. How dare you turn the hose on me?"

Deftly tripping Hector Alonzo, he sat him down in a corner and clapped the waste basket on his head like an extinguisher. A few scraps of torn paper fluttered to the floor, or lodged in Hector's luxuriant crop of hair. After disgustedly extricating himself, he noticed that one of these bits of paper had fallen inside the upturned hem or roll of his trousers, no self-respecting undergraduate deigning to appear on the campus unless his trousers carried one or two reefs to show a fancy pattern of socks.

Hector extracted the little strip of note paper, and was about to drop it in the waste basket, when a few words of writing caught his eye, and he stood staring with such puzzled interest that Stearns said:

"Come out of your trance. Found the missing will? 'Ha, ha! the long-lost papers. Give them to me. Who am I? Old Sleuth, the detective.'"

"You have pretty near guessed right," soberly murmured Hector. "Well, of all the—— Here, Jim, lock the door and sit on the floor so nobody can see us through the window. I smell a rat. Now, what do *you* think of this bit of paper?"

Jim scrutinized it carefully, and read aloud:

"Stirling . . . the pleasure of Mr. Burnham's company for . . ."

He whistled softly, but looked rather blank until the quicker-witted Hector picked up a lecture notebook from the table and blurted:

"See here. Look at Bob Oliver's handwriting, and compare it with this scrap of paper. He has disguised his style to give it a feminine twist, up and down and angular, and he has done it darn well. But this is his fist, I'll bet you a new hat. Read it again. *'The pleasure of Mr. Burnham's company for——'* Do you get that? And *'Stirling'* was part of the line just above it. Doesn't that sound to you like Mrs. Pemberton Stirling's dinner invitation to Peter?"

Jim nodded comprehendingly. "You mean that Bob Oliver forged it?"

"You are almost lucid," cried Hector. "Now, we must paw over the rest of the scraps in the basket, and rummage the desk. Perhaps we can find some more of it."

They fell to like a pair of terriers at a rat hole, but no more incriminating fragments could be discovered.

"He meant to burn all the evidence, but this bit of paper clung to the bottom of the basket and he overlooked it," surmised Hector. "Come along. We must leg it over to Peter's room, and find that invitation of his. If we have guessed right, perhaps we can run fast enough to overtake him before he reaches Mrs. Stirling's house."

They sped across the campus at breakneck speed, mounted the stairs in a series of bounds, and clattered into Peter Burnham's sitting room with no breath to spare for conversation. Luckily Peter had left the invitation in plain sight on his desk, and Hector pounced on it without loss of time. Flopping into a chair, he panted:

"Oh, those four flights of stairs. Whew! And I touched nothing but the landings."

He placed the purloined fragment of writing beside the invitation. No words were needed. The same hand had penned both, beyond a doubt.

"I'll have to get my wind," Hector managed to say. "Wait a minute. Bob Oliver faked it—poor Peter Burnham is stung—and, oh, Cæsar! Jim, we fairly bulldozed him into going to the Pemberton Stirlings to-night!"

Stearns, who showed no signs of distress after the killing pace, promptly hauled Hector to his feet, and cried:

"The vindictive little rooster has had it in for Peter ever since the fence rush! For Heaven's sake, let's get busy. This is an awful fix for poor old Peter. Maybe we can nail him before he gets there."

Hector tottered to the stairs, and reached the campus sooner than might have been expected, for he tripped on the last landing and rolled down one flight, thereby saving a few seconds, but considerably damaging his knees and elbows. Stearns tarried not to pick him up, but shouted back:

"The slow freight for yours, old man. I can't wait."

Hector limped in chase of the trained athlete, who was tearing toward College Street bent on rescuing that unbidden guest, Peter Burnham. These friends of his felt a guilty sense of responsibility. They were innocent conspirators who had meant well, but had they not been so active in persuasion Peter would have avoided the snare set for his undoing by that ingenious and wicked rascal of a sophomore, Bob Oliver.

"The low-lived runt," said Hector to himself, as he leaned against a tree to ease a stitch in his side. "He has been bragging that he would make Peter Burnham sorry for yanking him out of the fence rush upside down."

Picking up the pursuit, Hector trotted doggedly past one corner after another, Jim Stearns lost to sight and sound in the darkened distance. The McGrath pluck exceeded its wind and staying power, and, although his heart was thumping against his ribs and his knees had begun to wabble, his gait slackened not until he turned into the wide stretch of Hillhouse Avenue.

The residence of Professor Stirling was midway of the second block, set well back from the street. Realizing that his violent exertions were useless, as Jim Stearns must have arrived at the destination by now, Hector halted and listened. Some one was walking rapidly toward him. It might be Peter Burnham retreating from his harrowing experience of presenting himself at a dinner party to which nobody had dreamed of inviting him.

Hector deemed it the part of prudence to avoid Peter under the circumstances. The baseball captain was likely to be in a savage mood, ready to blame his devoted friends for getting him into this infernal scrape. Stepping quietly behind an elm, Hector awaited a nearer view of the oncomer.

Presently he descried, not the towering proportions of the pitcher, but the broader and more compact outlines of Jim Stearns, who was slouching along with the demeanor of one deeply downcast.

"Hello, we lose, eh?" observed Hector, emerging from his coy ambush.

"Lost by a neck," bitterly explained Stearns. "I was just about here, still running hell-bent for election, when I saw the front door open and somebody walked in. There, in the bright light from the hall, this person loomed up like a human shot tower, and, although I saw only his back, it was Peter Burnham and none other."

"Oh, dear! Oh, dear!" mourned Hector. "And he is the last man in the world to carry off an awkward situation like that. I can't imagine him ready with some kind of a bluff, and then backing out gracefully. They haven't thrown him out yet!"

"No, but he is liable to come out boiling into the street at any minute. And he will surely be looking for trouble."

"Perhaps it is not a formal dinner party," hopefully suggested Hector.

"Oh, it is a party, all right. Trust that little devil, Bob Oliver, for finding that out," was the gloomy reply. "Two carriages have unloaded since I got here, and several other guests have pranced in on foot."

"What shall we do now, Jim? Wait for him?"

"Yes, it won't be long. I shouldn't be surprised if he has lingered to murder some harmless gentleman who ventured to crack a smile at his predicament."

Always optimistic, Hector spoke up, while he sought a resting place upon a granite gatepost:

"But other people have made mistakes of this kind, Jim. I have been guilty of one or two bad breaks myself in the society line, being the champion forgetter of the family. It is different with Peter, I admit."

"Of course it is," snorted Jim. "He is stubborn enough to stand up and argue the matter with Mrs. Stirling and try to convince her that she is all wrong. And he will take it to heart, and hold a grouch for a month. Why, look here, Hector," and Jim went on to say, with excited vehemence, "Peter wrote a note of acceptance, and you took it to put in the campus mail box. If Mrs. Stirling received it, why didn't she notify Peter of his blunder in time to head him off?"

The darkness hid the blushes that reddened the countenance of Hector Alonzo McGrath as he haltingly exclaimed:

"I mailed it, didn't I? Great Scott, Jim, don't breathe such a horrible suspicion. Why, we went right past the box that night. Of course I dropped it in. Pshaw! Why not?"

"Because we dashed off to find that sophomore-freshman riot before we got to the mail box," was Jim's disconcerting reply. "Dollars to doughnuts you forgot all about it."

Hector covered his face with his hands and groaned:

"I never thought of it again. And those clothes were carried to the tailor's next morning, and they haven't come home. Oh, Jim, *could* I have been guilty of such an asinine performance?"

"Yes, indeed, Hector," was the cheerful assurance. "Your college record is all against you. Between us, we have certainly sent poor Peter Burnham to his doom."

"Well, we can take it out of Bob Oliver if there is enough of him left to wad a gun after Peter interviews him."

"Do you know, I think we had better keep mum about Bob Oliver," advised Stearns. "Peter is a poor hand at seeing a joke. And while he wouldn't lay hands on a shrimp like Oliver, he might nurse a grudge for a long time."

"Right you are, Jim. I am wondering how Professor Pemmy Stirling, old Fuss-and-Feathers, will take it. He dislikes campus jests, and perhaps he will think Peter has butted in to win a foolish bet of some kind."

"He *is* peppery," reflected Hector. "Remember when he asked me in class to tell briefly who Joan of Arc was, and I said 'Noah's sister, of course.' He gave me a condition in the course, and wanted to haul me before the faculty disciplinary committee. Gracious, Jim, we shall freeze to death waiting here. And where, oh, where, is Peter, the housebreaker?"

They walked slowly in the direction of the Pemberton Stirling residence, halted, gazed sadly at the many lighted windows, and wondered why the eruption of Peter Burnham was so long delayed. The air was winterish, the wind had a nipping edge, and the brace of uneasy sentinels snuggled their chins in the upturned collars of their coats and shivered in their shoes. At length, the amazing truth filtered into their intellects. Jim Stearns expressed it concisely, forcibly:

"As sure as I live, Peter Burnham has somehow managed to get away with it."

"And we thought we knew him!" murmured Hector Alonzo, between chattering teeth. "Who would have picked him as a parlor strategist? Come on, you old fool. Let's go home."

II.

Trepidation stirred behind the gleaming armor of what Hector had called the "hard-boiled shirt," but the demeanor of Peter Burnham was outwardly composed as he strode across the wide porch of the Stirling house and rang for admittance. Had you asked him to describe his symptoms, he would have diagnosed them as "a bad case of the rattles."

He had been schooled to pull himself together under fire, however, and the maid who opened the door surveyed with visible approval a very tall, grave young man, who bore himself with such matured dignity that she set him down as a new professor of some sort or other.

He was shown where to lay aside his hat and coat, and, with a hasty glance at a mirror, he gave his tie a twist, his waistcoat a tug, mechanically hitched up his trousers where the belt should have been, and moved toward the large parlor in which could be heard the hum of pleasant conversation.

Standing irresolute in the doorway, he came but little short of filling it from top to bottom. The guests noticed him instantly. Peter was not easily overlooked, and the talk and laughter slackened perceptibly while Mrs. Pemberton Stirling stood stock-still, her wits jumbled for the moment, and, although she was a gracious hostess, her face revealed emotions of surprise and dismay.

Puzzled as to the identity of this intruder, for she had hitherto observed him only in baseball uniform, and at a distance, she heard her husband whisper to his companion:

"Peter Burnham, the varsity pitcher. *What is he doing here?*"

Mrs. Stirling rallied, and advanced to greet him, wondering how she should be able to dismiss him with the least awkwardness, but Peter's observant eyes, trained in reading human nature from the pitcher's box, had detected something amiss. He felt miserably self-conscious, his cheeks burned hotly, and he remained standing in the doorway, as if subtle vibrations told him he was not wanted in this room. The hostess affected a smile of cordiality, extended her hand, and said, by way of sparring for time:

"It is such a pleasure to meet you again, Mr. Burnham."

"Thank you, Mrs. Stirling," replied Peter, with a slow, doubtful smile. "Your invitation was an honor which I had not expected."

She bit her lip and laughed nervously, turning to glance at her husband as if signaling him to come to the rescue instead of remaining stupidly anchored beside the fascinating Miss Geraldine Townsend. He was staring at poor Peter with more unfriendliness than sympathy, already suspecting some mad escapade, for the undergraduate world rather terrified him, and he faced his classes in the spirit of a trainer entering the cage of a band of frolicsome carnivora.

Left alone to handle the delicate case of Peter Burnham, the superfluous and the undesired, Mrs. Stirling bethought herself of a stratagem worthy a general of division. Wafting a sunny smile to the high and somewhat chilly altitude from which Peter was gazing down at her, she exclaimed:

"While I think of it, I have something to show you, Mr. Burnham, and I am sure you will be interested. When you were carried off the field in the picturesque riot after the Harvard game in New York last year, my nephew took a panoramic photograph of the scene. It was so very good that Professor Stirling had it framed, and it hangs in the library. Wouldn't you like to see it while we are waiting for a belated guest?"

Peter read this speech as a prettily tactful design to make him feel at ease, and his somber eyes glowed with frank gratitude. Apparently she had understood his bashful, reluctant mood. His first impression that he was unwelcome must have been wrong. Stepping aside to permit Mrs. Sterling to precede him to the library across the wide hall, he answered her:

"I should be delighted, thank you. I have not been able to find a good picture of that game, and it was a corker —pardon me—I mean that for crowds and excitement, and hair-raising moments, it would be hard to beat."

While these two had been engaged in this game of cross-purposes, Miss Geraldine Townsend was using her fine mind with characteristic rapidity. For several years, nice, boyish undergraduates had laid their unsophisticated hearts at her feet, and she had gently laughed them out of court. Their clothes, their talk, their interests, were so very much alike that to know one was to have mastered the plans and specifications of all. Matured and even more beautiful than as a débutante, her most congenial friends were among the "faculty set."

She had seen Peter Burnham play baseball, and what she heard of him interested her. He was individual, different—in short, a personality. No sooner had the dismayed exclamation of Professor Pemberton Stirling revealed to her that Peter Burnham had dropped from a clear sky than her sympathies were in arms in his behalf. She wanted, somehow, to help extricate him from this very embarrassing situation.

The wisdom of Geraldine comprised both books and men, and her judgments concerning the latter were apt to be exceedingly sagacious. One's social blunders hurt and linger longer than his sins, and her intuitive sympathy told her that this episode, unless she could thwart its logical dénouement, would harrow Peter Burnham's feelings beyond words. And, moreover, she was quite sure that he did not deserve it.

Professor Stirling could not be expected to comprehend this point of

view. Geraldine had ceased to listen to his distraught remarks as she watched the tableau in the doorway, the hesitant young man, so masterful and solidly poised of aspect even in this moment of disadvantage, and the piquant, fluttered hostess looking so tiny beside him. The methods of Geraldine were impulsively direct and unconventional. She was seldom consistent, never monotonous, and society expected her to be surprising. Having analyzed the situation by means of a rapid-fire deductive process all her own, she decided to champion the losing cause of Peter Burnham.

Solicitously she waited the maneuvers of Mrs. Stirling, puzzled to guess what that distressed lady was likely to do, and angry because she obviously intended to get rid of the innocent interloper. Then, as the hostess invited him into the library to see the baseball photograph, Miss Geraldine Townsend heard and understood, nor could she withhold a tribute of admiration, frankly exclaiming to Professor Stirling:

"How awfully clever of her! The poor fellow is to be dismissed in private audience. But I know something better than that."

"Ah, yes—why, I had better join them," hastily began the professor, as if reënforcements might be needed.

"You will please stay where you are," smilingly commanded Geraldine, and added, raising her voice that the other guests might hear: "I must see that wonderful photograph. Perhaps I am in the foreground, for I made myself shockingly conspicuous, cheering and throwing violets at Mr. Burnham from the grand stand."

With this she hastened into the hall, peered into the library, listened for a second or two, and was relieved to discover that the conversation had not yet reached the dangerous stage. Mrs. Stirling was showing the picture to Peter, presumably delaying to muster courage, and her unconscious victim was studying the spirited panorama with deliberate, painstaking interest.

"Thank Heaven she has not told him yet!" breathed Geraldine. "How dare she think of humiliating the greatest pitcher that ever played for Yale?"

At her entrance, Mrs. Stirling looked startled and annoyed, but Peter's expression was something very different. This radiant, self-possessed young woman was smiling at him with such bright camaraderie that she seemed to his admiring vision like some long-lost friend. She gave him her hand, and its clasp was warm and firm as she said:

"Mrs. Stirling will pardon me, I'm sure, but she must not expect me to stand on formality with Mr. Burnham. I have been waiting to congratulate him."

"This is Miss Geraldine Townsend, Mr. Burnham," said the hostess, who stood aside in a rather helpless attitude.

"I have heard of you, Miss Townsend," replied straightforward Peter. "And I have wanted to meet you."

"This is flattery indeed," she gayly retorted. "Several of the boys have told me that you are known on the campus as Peter the Hermit, because you ignore the existence of any New Haven beyond the campus and the Yale field."

"That is because I had not been lucky enough to make your acquaintance," replied the unterrified Peter, amazed at his own audacity, and for once "finding something to say to a woman."

Geraldine was more pleased with him than ever, and chidingly retorted:

"If you talk like that, I am sure you are a very poorly trained hermit, Mr. Burnham."

Anxious to return to her waiting guests, Mrs. Stirling was all at sea again. What possessed the girl to complicate matters in this forward fashion? The ordeal would be harder for all concerned, but it could be postponed no longer.

Geraldine perceived that she must act quickly, and, with a careless candor that would have deceived an angel, she said:

"Oh, by the way, Mrs. Stirling, this

is the first chance I have found to say six words to you since I came downstairs. I almost forgot to tell you that Billy Aldridge will be late, even later than usual. I met him on the street this afternoon, and he was in a tearing hurry to attend to some sort of an important meeting. He shouted at me to tell you that you must not wait dinner for him, and that he might not be able to get here at all."

"Professor Aldridge is a charming young man, but very trying at times," sighed the hostess.

"Really, it isn't worth while waiting any longer for him." pursued Geraldine. "People generally pair us off at dinner. I suppose you expected him to take me in?"

"Yes, but my patience is at an end," murmured Mrs. Stirling, whose nerves could endure no more vexations. "We shall go in to dinner at once."

She turned to look hopelessly at silent Peter Burnham, wavering, hardly knowing what to do with him, but he bluntly took charge of matters, as if he had received an unspoken cue from Geraldine.

"If it doesn't sound too nervy, I should like to take Miss Townsend in to dinner, provided there is no other substitute."

"Mr. Burnham has never had to play substitute for Yale," was the gleeful comment of Geraldine, gratified to note how readily he had seized the opportunity she had devised for him. "If he had not been so gallant, I was about to suggest it myself."

Mrs. Stirling could think of nothing to say. The game had been taken out of her hands, and she could not openly resent the interference of Geraldine, of whose audacious policies she stood in some fear. Although inwardly unreconciled to Peter Burnham, she felt thankful that she had been relieved of the unhappy task of evicting him. Weakly she suggested, by way of protest:

"But if Professor Aldridge——"

This would never do, thought Geraldine. Peter Burnham had pricked up his ears, and was showing signs of renewed uneasiness. The scheme was working too well to be spoiled.

"I shall not allow Professor Aldridge to enter the dining room," firmly quoth she. "If he dares to appear, I intend to send him home in disgrace. Pardon me for usurping the authority of a hostess, Mrs. Stirling, but you are not firm enough with Billy. It is high time I undertook his social education."

Peter scowled viciously, as if the conversation held too much of Professor Billy Aldridge to please him. Mrs. Stirling meekly surrendered, and the trio went to rejoin the company.

All this had required much less time than it has taken to tell it. The duel for the possession of Peter Burnham had been fought briskly, in fact, and with so much finesse that its significance was not discovered. The others may have surmised that the uneasiness of Professor Stirling and the oddly sudden exit of his wife indicated a contretemps of some kind, but their curiosity was courteously dissembled.

They were an interesting group, typical of the culture and the best traditions of an ancient university town. Including Peter Burnham, there were a dozen guests. Several of the men were distinguished far beyond the campus for achievements in the arts and sciences. They had been invited to meet a celebrity, a ruddy, stalwart Englishman, Sir Harry Nevins by name, famed as explorer, author, and statesman, who had decided to see what Yale was like while en route to the Rockies to bag the festive grizzly.

At the reappearance of Mrs. Stirling, he forsook the ladies to whom he had been making himself agreeable, and stood ready to offer her his arm. She nodded to her husband, who was mystified to behold Peter Burnham with Geraldine, and he steered his partner toward the dining room. As the procession got under way, Geraldine found time to harken to the promptings of her own curiosity. Mrs. Stirling had not invited Peter Burnham. Then who had? The case demanded diplomacy, and Geraldine's first question was subtle.

"Do you often stray as far as this from the campus, or were the boys joking about your dislike of New Haven society?"

Peter chuckled, and confessed, without shame:

"I was surely an unhappy-looking object when I read Mrs. Stirling's invitation. I balked in my tracks, but two of my friends, who seemed anxious to civilize me, pestered and argued me into accepting. That sounds pretty rude, doesn't it?"

"It sounds refreshingly honest," returned Geraldine, with an approving smile. "May I ask who these devoted friends were?"

"Jim Stearns and Hector Alonzo McGrath," he answered.

Geraldine pounced on this information, and thought she saw light ahead. "I have met them both," said she. "Mr. McGrath is a delightfully irresponsible youth. He is fatally gifted in devising practical jokes, I am told."

"Oh, Hector is too good-natured to hurt any one's feelings," carelessly replied the loyal Peter. "He makes a lot of fun for the campus, and he is the most popular man in his class. His heart is as big as a football."

"It was very nice of him to show so much interest in your coming to Mrs. Stirling's dinner," said Geraldine, sweetly ironical, her suspicions marching toward conviction of the guilt of the prankish Hector Alonzo.

"Yes, indeed, he was wiser than he knew," heartily agreed Peter. "I shall apologize for all the hard names I called him."

"Meaning that you are not as bored as you expected to be?" archly queried she.

"Thanks to you, Miss Townsend," stoutly declared Peter, who was as bold as a lion.

Having followed the trail thus far, and satisfied for the present with her conjecture that the perfidious McGrath had written the dinner invitation, Geraldine devoted herself to the congenial task of giving Peter an enjoyable evening.

He had expected to flounder in conversational bogs, to feel miserably tongue-tied in the rôle of a large body partly surrounded by women, but the fates had veered in his favor. He found Geraldine Townsend as easy to talk to as one of his campus chums, and they got on famously without dragging in baseball or other college athletics.

Gaining courage, he ventured to entertain the Latin professor's wife, who sat at his other side, with humorous episodes of the undergraduate world, told with a solemn gravity of manner that lent them a most enjoyable flavor. It was not long before the celebrity, Sir Harry Nevins, spoke across the table, and his accents were jovially respectful:

"You are one of the men I wanted to meet at Yale, Mr. Burnham. I saw your photograph, and read a lot about you in one of your American magazines, don't you know."

The hostess became attentive at once, and the several distinguished scholars felt slight twinges of jealousy.

Peter's face lighted with surprised pleasure, as he replied:

"That kind of notoriety doesn't amount to much, sir. I shall be awfully proud to tell the fellows that I have met you. I have read every one of your books, and they are simply great. I used your 'Colonial Administration in the Far East' in preparing for a debate, and your chapters on American government in the Philippines seemed to me the most fair-minded criticism that a foreigner has written about us."

"Whew, I call that a home run first time at bat," said Geraldine, under her breath. "How does Mrs. Stirling feel now, I wonder?"

Inasmuch as most of the guests had no more than a cursory acquaintance with the literary achievements of Sir Harry Nevins, Peter was welcome to hold the center of the stage. The celebrity was genuinely pleased, and he showed it.

"Hear, hear!" he exclaimed laughingly. "I wasn't fishing for that sort of thing, upon my word. I like it, though, Mr. Burnham. What did you think of

the companion volume, 'The White Man East of Suez'? I believe you are an honest critic."

Honesty was, indeed, Peter's consistent policy, and his answer came after a moment's reflection:

"Some of your statistics did not agree with the British and French Colonial Office reports when I came to check them up. Of course, though, you are probably right."

"Probably not," and Sir Harry Nevins roared with enjoyment. "Well bowled, Mr. Burnham. It was the fault of my infernal carelessness in proof reading. I detest statistics, and when I was about to give the sheets of the book a final revision, a sporting friend lugged me off to Spitzbergen to shoot polar bears. I deserve this exposure, by Jove, I do."

Peter was covered with confusion. He had been rude and cocksure in his criticism, and he expressed his emotions in an aside to Geraldine:

"Somebody ought to take me out and pound my head with a baseball bat. I am not fit for polite society."

"You fairly scintillate," she returned. "Sir Harry is as pleased as Punch. *Vanitas vanitorum.* Talk to a man about his work, and he is like a kitten with a saucer of cream."

Professor Pemberton Stirling regarded Peter with an air of personal pride, as if this ready and intelligent young man owed his worth to the classes in advanced French. The hostess beamed, and took to herself the credit of exhibiting this sample undergraduate.

Sir Harry announced, after Peter had stammered an apology:

"Nonsense! It was heroic of you to read my rubbish at all. Now for something of real importance. I have never seen this game of baseball of yours. I am keen on that sort of thing, do you see. I played cricket for my county, Surrey, eleven years, but I am carrying a bit too much beef to keep it up. Tell me, is this the season of the year for baseball?"

"The ground is still soft for practice, sir, but we expect to be outdoors soon. How long shall you be in town?"

"Only two or three days," answered Sir Harry, evidently disappointed. "I wanted to see—what do you call it?—the curved ball. It sounds rather like a fairy tale, don't you know."

"I'll be glad to pitch a few shoots and drops for you to-morrow," said Peter, "although I am not putting on much speed yet."

"Quite right. You must be careful of your arm," agreed the sportsman. "And do you really make it curve in direct flight, what we call bowling a full ball? A good bowler makes a cricket ball break to left or right, but this happens after it strikes the ground."

"Mr. Burnham can pitch a ball to a man out of sight around the corner of a building, so the college swears," spoke up Geraldine Townsend.

"Really. How perfectly extraordinary!" seriously quoth the Briton, eying Peter with more respect than ever.

"Why, see here," exclaimed Peter, with unusual animation. "If you care to come out to the field to-morrow afternoon, I will choose two scratch nines, and we'll play five innings, just to show you what the game is like. The diamond will be muddy and the fielding ragged, but we'll do our best."

"Bully! You are a sportsman after my own heart," and Sir Harry's solid fist banged the table. "I can't thank you enough. What is it you chaps say when you emit your war whoop? Raw, raw, raw, Yale—eh, what?"

The conversation became more general, and the breezy interest of the celebrity was shifted to his neighbors, while Peter looked unutterably pleased and foolish at Geraldine's bantering compliments.

"Mrs. Stirling didn't know what to do with Sir Harry when she caught him," she explained. "He brought letters from friends of Professor Stirling at Oxford. He is a strenuous person to entertain for two or three days, and I now foresee that he will be chumming about the campus with you. What are your other specialties, Mr. Burnham,

besides the government of all the queer peoples east of Suez?"

"Political economy—all theory. Coal mining—all practice."

"What do you mean?" she asked. "Of course, you study political economy in college, but there are no mining engineering courses in the academic department."

Peter grinned. There was not an atom of false pride in his make-up. "I worked in an anthracite colliery for ten years," said he; "breaker boy, door boy, laborer, miner's helper, full-fledged miner, and clerk in the company's office. Then I came to college."

Miss Townsend read in this compact summary an epic of struggle and ambition that obstacles could not thwart. Her gaze was openly admiring, and her voice warm with feeling, as she murmured:

"How splendid of you! I hope you are not working too hard in college."

"Not a bit of it. I enjoy every minute. Yale is like a piece of heaven to me."

"Are you putting yourself through college?" she persisted. "I am asking personal questions, but, well—I want to know."

"Yes, mostly," reluctantly admitted Peter, who had begun to fear he had been led into blowing his own horn. "I do some newspaper correspondence, and some tutoring, and the long summer vacation gives me a chance to get a job in my home town."

"And the name of the town is——"

"Carbonville. It is an ugly, black smudge of a place, but we used to play some great ball in the open lots when I was growing up."

"Carbonville," she echoed. "How very interesting! Directly you mentioned the anthracite region, I wondered if you knew anything about Carbonville, or had been there. I have pried into your life history, and now I ought to tell you something about mine. I am an orphan, you see, and my father left his estate in the hands of a trust company as guardian of my affairs. And most of the income-bearing property consists of stock in the Oak Creek Coal Company, of Carbonville. I believe I own the controlling interest, although I know no more about it than the man in the moon. What a fascinating coincidence! Do tell me all about my coal mine, Mr. Burnham."

"Um-m; I know the company," and Peter's heavy voice had a growling undertone. He stroked his stubborn chin, stared absently across the table, and was lost in reflections which appeared to be poignantly unhappy.

"Why do you look so sad and angry?" asked Geraldine, puzzled by this strange mood.

"I worked for the Oak Creek Coal Company," said he. "The mine had been a great money-maker. It is a fine property."

"But what else? What is it that you are unwilling to tell me? You look as if you hated the very name of the corporation. You make me feel guilty of something. I am sure I don't know what."

"Do you honestly want to know, Miss Townsend?"

"Yes, Mr. Burnham, of course I do. The mine is nothing more than a name to me."

"No, you are not in the least responsible," Peter hastened to reassure her. "You deal only with the trust company, I understand that. Well, if you will have the truth, the management of the Oak Creek Mine has treated its men like dogs. Most of them are poor, ignorant Polacks, but they are human beings, with wives and children."

Geraldine winced and gasped, wishing she had kept silent. How brutally direct this Peter Burnham was! Honest people could make themselves very disagreeable. She knew he had not meant to wound her, and it was clear that she was no more responsible for the welfare of these mining folk than if they had been coolies in Manchuria. Nevertheless, the revelation was immensely disquieting. If it were true, then her income was so much blood money wrung from the misery of alien toilers.

Peter Burnham watched her keenly, sighed, and thought aloud:

"Why didn't I have sense enough to dodge it? I was about due to make some kind of a horrible break."

"You were quite right in speaking exactly as you did," impulsively exclaimed Geraldine. "I ought to know the truth. I am not offended, really. I am just thinking, and it is very hard work. The question is too big to be settled at a dinner table, isn't it? Perhaps you will come to see me some day soon, and then I shall be glad to have your advice."

Lamely did Peter apologize and protest that he should have thought twice before speaking once. The girl discerned that her unlucky mention of the Oak Creek Coal Company had touched some raw, scarred memory of his own experience, and he had blurted the truth as one cries out when suddenly hurt.

She was grateful when Sir Harry Nevins made a diversion by observing, with meditative earnestness:

"I say, Mr. Burnham, I have been thinking about Miss Townsend's statement that you can curve a ball to a man around the corner of a building. By Jove, you know, that is most extraordinary. Will you do it for me tomorrow?"

Peter was between the devil and the deep sea, but Geraldine relieved his embarrassment by confessing:

"American exaggeration, Sir Harry, but he does wonderful things with a ball. You should ask the Harvard and Princeton players after they have fanned the air in one, two, three order."

"Fanned the air?" queried the perplexed baronet. "I have played cricket in India when one jolly well needed a punkah coolie, but——"

"Tried to hit the ball when it wasn't there," mirthfully explained Geraldine. "Baseball slang is very catching."

"How very expressive!" admiringly quoth the other. "I shall take that to England with me. 'Fanned the air!' Ripping!"

"You will need an interpreter at the field to-morrow," put in Peter. "A ball player scorns to use plain English."

Soon the ladies made their exodus, and the men were left to the agreeable solace of cigars. Peter Burnham was in training, and smoking was barred. He would have preferred to follow Geraldine Townsend into the other room, but Sir Harry Nevins detained him to ask many questions concerning the mysterious pastime of baseball. Then the talk turned to current events at home and abroad, and the other men had their innings.

In this alertly intelligent group of cultivated minds, Peter felt himself to be very crude and immature, but the intercourse stimulated his ambition to be of their kind some day, and he listened silently unless addressed, and wished there might be more opportunity for the teaching staff and the undergraduates to meet outside the classrooms.

They were about to quit the dining room when there breezed in that engaging culprit, Professor "Billy" Aldridge, whom three successive classes had voted "the most popular member of the faculty." Although his attainments were singularly brilliant for a man not yet thirty, much learning had not dulled the edge of a temperament boyishly unaffected. His elective courses in English literature were so enthusiastically patronized that some of the older professors, sadly surveying their empty benches, quite disapproved of him.

"I have tried to mollify my hostess, and she refused to sign a peace treaty," he announced, advancing to extend his hand to Professor Stirling. "Will you be good enough to intercede for me? You understand how this sort of thing can happen. Mark Henshaw, the Shakespeare man, dropped off a train on his way to the Pacific coast, to talk to the English Club of the Graduate School. I have been waiting for several years to lock horns with him about certain matters in which his assumptions are preposterously all wrong. He proved to be a terrible fellow to stir up. We argued during the meeting, we argued in a trolley car to the station, we argued while he missed one train,

and I got rid of him only by hurling him bodily on board the next one."

"But have you had anything to eat, Billy!" politely asked Professor Stirling, who could understand this kind of an excuse.

"Yes, indeed, thank you. We declared a ten minutes' truce, and climbed upon two stools at the station lunch counter, but, bless you, Henshaw began storming at me with his mouth full of doughnut."

"I hope you got the better of him," said the head of the Latin department.

"A drawn battle, my dear sir. I made no visible impression upon his asinine self-sufficiency, and I am sure he failed to budge me. But it was no end of fun. I tried to telephone, but Henshaw followed me into the booth, bawling at the top of his voice. I sent a sort of message by Geraldine Townsend—— Why, hello, Peter Burnham!" and Billy Aldridge spun on his heel to grasp the hand of the smiling pitcher. "A miracle! Who would have expected to behold you dragged from your campus lair! Hillhouse Avenue is to be congratulated."

"I have reformed," said Peter. "And I don't know when I have enjoyed an evening so much."

"Ah, you were fortunate enough to ——" The young professor's eyes danced with mischief, but he checked his teasing mood, and went on to say: "By the way, I am slated to pitch in the annual faculty baseball game this year. Will you give me some preliminary coaching if I return the favor by helping you in your courses of an evening?"

Peter blushed with pleasure, and heartily returned:

"Sure thing. You used to pitch pretty good ball when you were in college, I am told."

"Oh, I was a mere child compared with you. Waterhouse, of the Greek Department, is bragging that he will make a show of me. I want to humble his pride."

"Ha, ha! Mr. Burnham will teach you how to pitch a ball to a man around the corner of a building," thundered Sir Harry Nevins, as if this phenomenon were still heavy on his mind.

When they filed in to rejoin the ladies, Peter hearkened to the call of duty, and was attentive to such of the guests as desired expert opinion concerning the outlook for a championship nine. Geraldine Townsend and Billy Aldridge, comfortably marooned in a corner, appeared to have many confidential things to talk about, and Peter endeavored not to scowl in that direction. When several of the company had said good night he bethought himself of his own departure, but the sporting baronet detained him in discussion, as one well-informed man with another, regarding the policies of the French in Cochin China, the British in Burma, and the Germans in Shantung.

After Peter had gone upstairs, Sir Harry observed to his host:

"That young man is not only the devil of a hard reader, but he remembers what he reads, and his mind is as logical as a machine. So extraordinary that he should have become so keen on that sort of thing, the problem of handling alien races."

At this moment, Peter Burnham's logical mind was experiencing a violent shock. Reaching the top of the stairs in search of his coat and hat, he blundered into the wrong room, and was about to steal into the hall and try to find his bearings, when Geraldine Townsend and Billy Aldridge came up together. Abashed by his silly mistake, Peter waited for the coast to clear. The others halted within earshot to finish whatever they were talking about, and he heard Geraldine say, her voice carefully lowered:

"Promise not to tell, won't you, Billy? It would hurt him dreadfully. I took a chance on you—that you would not arrive before we went in to dinner. After that, Mrs. Stirling would have made room for you somehow. But she was bent on getting rid of Mr. Burnham, and I rushed to the rescue. Wasn't it clever of me? What a wicked trick it was to play on him, forging an invitation, and he was so unsuspecting! I found out enough to make me almost

certain that Hector McGrath is the guilty wretch. He would view it as a great lark."

"It was a contemptible piece of business," roundly declared Aldridge. "McGrath is as mad as a March hare, but he thinks the world of Peter Burnham. I can't believe it of him."

"Well, never mind," concluded Geraldine. "I have told you, Billy, because if Mrs. Stirling ever mentions it you must clear Mr. Burnham of all blame. She ought to be proud of him. He divided the honors with the star guest."

"It was just like you," her companion ardently exclaimed.

"S-s-sh, no bouquets, if you please," she whispered. "You are in disgrace."

They passed on and parted company, soon after which Peter Burnham, very red in the face, moved cautiously in the wake of Aldridge, and encountered him in the act of slipping on his overcoat. Peter muttered an absent-minded good night, to which the other man responded cordially as he hastened below to make a farewell attempt at mending matters with his offended hostess.

Left alone, Peter lingered for a moment, his thoughts very much at sea. The discovery that he had played the interloper filled him with chagrin, and he was furiously angry, but stronger and more compelling was his gratitude for the intercession of Geraldine Townsend. Her motive and her behavior had been what he called thoroughbred. She had played the game in a manner which he could appreciate and understand, with the same qualities of wit and courage that meant mastery in the crisis of a championship baseball game.

His feelings were hurt, and deeply, by the knowledge that he had "butted in." What must Mrs. Stirling have thought of him? Great heavens, it made him hot and cold in turn to recall what he had said to her about the invitation! It was a pitiful anticlimax, in a way, but, on the other hand, Geraldine Townsend had enabled him to snatch victory from defeat, and he muttered aloud, the light of battle in his eye:

"I don't care. I got away with it."

He yearned to punch the head of Hector McGrath, and the suspicion inspired by what he had overheard was inflamed by the circumstance that Hector had grabbed his written acceptance and insisted on mailing it.

"He held it up so that Mrs. Stirling would have no chance to spoil the joke," reflected Peter. "I should not have thought it of him, but if a fellow once gets the practical-joke microbe in his system, he would play horse with his own father. However," and here Peter smiled in spite of himself, "considering the fun I have had this evening, and the way it turned out, I rather think the joke is on Hector Alonzo."

When he went into the hall, Billy Aldridge was waiting for Geraldine at the foot of the stairs. Peter delayed, hoping for a word with her alone, eager, somehow, without revealing the fact that he had been eavesdropping, to let her know how great was his gratitude, and again to stammer his regrets that his bluntness at dinner should have wounded her.

"If I can ever do anything for you," he earnestly exclaimed, as she appeared, "why, I will be ready and glad to break my neck. And as for what I blurted out about the Oak Creek Coal Company, please try to forget it, Miss Townsend."

Geraldine paused, wondering how much of her byplay with Mrs. Stirling this serious, observant young man had been shrewd enough to read. Other Yale youths, who wore their hearts on their sleeves, had protested themselves ready to do and dare all for Geraldine, but she had bidden them run away and play on the campus. What Peter Burnham said he meant, this she already believed, and her answer was no less genuine than his declaration of allegiance:

"I shall not forget, Mr. Burnham. And if I have been a negligent employer of labor at Carbonville, perhaps you will help me find the way to do better."

When Peter said farewell to his hostess, he was in a mood to face an army with banners. The knowledge that she

had sought to cast him into outer darkness embarrassed him not a whit. He had won, and he could afford to be forgiving. Even Hector Alonzo McGrath would have been convinced that Peter Burnham had a sense of humor could he have heard him say, as he bent over Mrs. Stirling's hand:

"It was so very good of you to care to invite me to dinner, and it has been a rare occasion to me."

"It was a happy inspiration of mine," she graciously returned, not to be worsted. "I feel highly honored at having entertained two celebrities instead of one."

III.

Homeward bound from Hillhouse Avenue, Peter Burnham grimly meditated as to what ought to be done with Hector Alonzo McGrath. The purpose of laying violent hands on that mischievous friend was reconsidered in the light of a solution which caused Peter to chuckle and wag his head with a most sagacious air. Without doubt, Hector would be waiting to discover why his trick had failed.

"I'll give him no satisfaction at all," said Peter, to himself. "He has more natural curiosity than a cat, and here is where I keep him guessing."

When the sound of Peter's solid footfall echoed in the hallway of his dormitory, the door of his sitting room was opened, and in the shaft of light he beheld the expectant figure of Jim Stearns.

"Hector and I wandered in to welcome you home," said the oarsman.

"How thoughtful! I suppose you expected me a good deal earlier," growled Peter, his resentment smoldering anew.

Stearns turned to look at Hector, as if suspecting that this speech might mean more than appeared. Could Peter have got wind of the truth? In this game of cross-purposes, they were anxious to divert the cyclonic wrath of Peter from wretched little Bob Oliver, while he was trying to hold his temper and wreak a subtle revenge on Hector Alonzo McGrath.

"Did you have a good time?" asked Hector, impatient to learn what had happened behind Mrs. Stirling's front door.

"Did I have a good time?" echoed Peter, shedding his superfluous raiment and perching upon the window seat. "The time of my life, thanks to you fellows. I apologize for being so pigheaded and grouchy. If it had not been for your kind-hearted persuasions I would have turned the invitation down."

Jim Stearns coughed, and Hector eyed the cheerful countenance of Peter with comic perplexity.

"Was Mrs. Stirling glad to see you?" queried Hector, playing a leading card.

"Sure. I made the hit of my life. She told me how glad she was that I could accept her invitation for dinner."

"*Her* invitation for dinner? Oh, yes—why, of course. Quite the proper thing for her to say. Everybody loves our Peter," babbled the bewildered Hector.

"And she was not surprised to see you?" ventured Stearns.

"Oh, they had a little fun with me about sticking so close to the campus, if that is what you mean. By George, I think I like the society game."

"Um-m, who did you meet?" asked Stearns, after a blank look in Hector's direction.

"A mighty fine girl," promptly answered Peter, who scorned evasion. "I took her in to dinner. None of the silly little boarding-school kind that you run after, Jim. Brains a-plenty. A stunner—worth talking to."

"Intelligent enough to appreciate Peter Burnham, I take it," murmured Hector. "Her name, please?"

"Miss Geraldine Townsend. She knows you, Hector."

"Ho, ho! Now I *am* sorry I coaxed you to go to the dinner," cried the young man addressed. "Yes, I was one of the legion of moths that fluttered around the bright flame, Peter, my boy. The glorious Geraldine! Ah, me! So you are on the list. Don't you let it interfere with your pitching, old man.

Promise to lose no more sleep than can be helped. And hold fast to your appetite, whatever you do."

"Where was Professor Billy Aldridge?" asked Stearns, in provokingly matter-of-fact tones. "He is her shadow. They do say they would have been engaged some time ago if Billy could muster nerve enough to propose."

"The devil you say!" shouted Peter, sliding to his feet, and gazing at his informant as if demanding a retraction.

"Easy, Peter, easy," remarked the delighted Stearns. "Got a rise out of you, didn't we? And nobody ever heard of your looking cross-eyed at a girl before."

"Billy Aldridge is the best friend I have in the faculty," stammered the agitated Peter, trying to cover his tracks.

"He won't be for long," was Hector's comment. "You take everything so seriously, Peter. Why not cultivate a light-hearted attitude toward life? Pattern after me."

"How awkward it will be for Peter to recite to Billy Aldridge in the English courses!" said Stearns. "If Billy gives him low marks, or flunks him, Peter will swear it is due to the jealousy of a rival who is trying to queer his college course, and put him in bad with the lovely Geraldine, who dotes on men that do things."

"Oh, this has gone far enough," and Peter meant it. He was silent for a moment, and then an inspiration filled him with unholy joy. "Say, Hector," and his voice was once more kindly, even affectionate. "You have been teasing for a chance to play ball with the varsity squad. You are one thing that I have not taken seriously. Perhaps I have been wrong. Just because you have been kicked off the football and crew squads, I ought not to be prejudiced. You may be a ball player, after all. We shall have some special outdoor practice to-morrow afternoon. Be at the field at four o'clock, in uniform, and I will give you a try-out on a scratch nine."

"That is certainly bully of you," cried Hector, in high glee. "Of course, I am out of practice, but maybe I can show some of those counterfeit ball tossers of yours a thing or two, at that."

"I have no doubt of it," said Peter. "I owe you a favor. You helped me break into society."

Unable to find out what they most wanted to know, the two visitors said good night, and Peter returned cordial farewells and thanks. As the door closed behind them, he shook his fist in their direction, and explosively soliloquized:

"And *will* I make a holy show of Hector Alonzo McGrath when I get him on the ball field to-morrow! I'll pass the word around in the morning that it is to be an exhibition game for Sir Harry Nevins, and half the college will be there. I have Hector so puzzled and crazy about to-night's doings that he doesn't know which end he is standing on, and after to-morrow I shall be ready to call it quits."

While Jim and Hector were walking across the campus, the latter sighed and plaintively observed:

"Can you figure it out at all? I am totally stumped. He talked as if Mrs. Stirling was actually expecting him to dinner. And he drew Geraldine Townsend as his partner. Apparently the proper number of guests were coupled up, and Peter fitted in as if he belonged there. What do you make of it?"

"It is too deep for me," sadly murmured Jim. "Are you sure we made no mistake in our Sherlock Holmes' work on the trail of little Bob Oliver?"

"I'll bet my shirt we were correct," declared Hector. "There wasn't a flaw in the evidence. Bob Oliver forged the invitation to get even with Peter. My head feels sort of funny, Jim. But I am due to hop into bed and forget it. I must feel fit and right up on my toes to play ball to-morrow."

"Oh, wait a minute," said Stearns, and they halted beside the campus fence. "What do you think of Peter's taking notice of Geraldine Townsend? I am honestly worried about it. It is likely to put him off his game, and he will have to pitch for his life to win from Harvard and Princeton this year. He is the whole team, you know."

"Peter is so desperately in earnest about everything," dolefully agreed Hector. "Of course, Miss Townsend is a corker, and as fine as she looks, but she is years older than us fellows, and she just amuses herself with lads that are still frolicking around the campus. She is not a college widow—nobody would dream of giving her that cheap title. She is just herself, Geraldine Townsend, the most interesting girl in New Haven, with plenty of money of her own, and a notion of going her own gait."

"I hope she will refrain from amusing herself with Peter, for the sake of the college," said Jim.

"Oh, let us watch his symptoms for a week or so," was the slightly more hopeful response. "If we discover that he is chasing himself around to her house, we can organize a Peter Burnham Welfare and Rescue Committee, or something of the sort."

"If he really and truly falls in love with her, it will take a Vigilance Committee to handle him," concluded Stearns.

Next morning Hector appeared preoccupied both at chapel and during the recitation hours. It was easy to read that the opportunity of playing with the varsity baseball squad, even for one brief afternoon, made this a red-letter day in his calendar. When he ought to have been studying he stole over to the cage with a good-natured friend, and spent some time in throwing and catching. Peter Burnham passed him once or twice on the campus, and eyed the poor boy with the expression of a cat that has cornered a particularly juicy mouse.

As for little Bob Oliver, the real villain, he might have been seen to gloat until an early edition of an afternoon paper caused him to rub his eyes and sputter himself red in the face. The item which informed him that his scheme of revenge had somehow missed fire said, in part:

Among the guests who met the distinguished English visitor, Sir Harry Nevins, at the dinner given in his honor by Professor and Mrs. Pemberton Stirling last night, were Mr. Peter Burnham, the Yale varsity pitcher and captain, Professor William S. Aldridge, Miss Geraldine Townsend . . .

Oliver read no more than this. The other guests interested him not at all. A large-sized panic took hold of him, his conscience fed his fears, and he surmised that he had been discovered in time for Peter Burnham to extricate himself from the toils. Wherefore Mr. Oliver believed himself to be marked for annihilation at the hands of his brawny enemy, and he straightway threw some things in a suit case and departed in great haste for New York to spend two or three days in pursuit of peace of mind. To those who asked why he seemed so anxious to forsake New Haven at such short notice, he replied, rather feverishly:

"Something unexpected has happened. I can't explain, because I don't understand it myself. But really I must go, whether the dean gives me an excuse or not."

While crossing Chapel Street, he was unlucky enough to meet Peter Burnham face to face. The fugitive turned several shades paler, and made ready to sell his life dearly, but the ogre of a baseball captain merely grinned in passing, and Oliver said to himself, with a shudder or two:

"He wants to fool me into thinking that I am safe, and that he hasn't caught on. He plans to devour me at his leisure. Great goodness! but I wish I had let him alone. He is ugly-tempered enough to put me in jail for forgery."

Oblivious of this mental anguish, Peter was pleasantly contemplating the program of punishment he had mapped out for the perfidious Hector Alonzo McGrath.

The curtain went up, so to speak, when the delighted Hector received word that he was to ride to the field in an omnibus with the varsity players. He had expected to trudge out on foot, and this was a privilege which he construed as having considerable significance. It made him feel that he was one of the company of heroes, and he instantly bought several packets of

chewing gum, and practiced jerking his cap over one eye in order that he might wear that professional air which distinguished the bus loads of players as they journeyed through the town.

When the party reached the field, and tumbled out at the heels of Peter Burnham, several hundred undergraduates were scattered in the grand stand. They had just finished barking a vociferous, complimentary cheer for Sir Harry Nevins, who had arrived in an automobile in company with Professor and Mrs. Stirling, Miss Geraldine Townsend, and Billy Aldridge.

The sporting baronet bowed his thanks, flourished his hat, and seemed immensely pleased with this formidable "war whoop," which may have reminded him of similar honors paid him by some of the untutored and unclothed peoples east of Suez.

Peter Burnham advanced to pay his respects to the group, and they could not help noting how very much he looked the part of the natural athlete and leader. His gray uniform was stained with grass and clay, and his gait was an easy, careless slouch; nothing showy about him, but one saw that he was sure of himself and the business in hand. Petite Mrs. Stirling wondered how she had dared to think of evicting this tremendous, square-jawed gladiator of a man from her dinner party.

As for Peter, he was looking at Geraldine Townsend even while he shook hands with Sir Harry Nevins. She was rather pleased than otherwise by his frank attentiveness, and said in reply to his greeting:

"I came to see the hero on his native heath, Mr. Burnham. Are you prepared to curve a ball around the batter's neck, and drop it in his pocket?"

"I hope you haven't been telling Sir Harry Nevins any more whoppers—oh, I beg your pardon, I didn't mean to say that," replied Peter. "I may not come up to his expectations, but we shall all try to please him."

Miss Townsend let her gaze wander to the diamond for an instant, and asked:

"But what is your friend, Hector McGrath, doing in uniform? I thought he was a sort of athletic joke. Have you taken him on the varsity squad?"

Peter's chuckle boded no good for the innocent Hector as he explained:

"I wanted to do him a favor. I owe him one. Perhaps you can guess the answer, Miss Townsend."

"If I can, I'll never tell," said she. "I am wondering whether he is going to deserve congratulations or condolences this afternoon."

"Condolences is the one best bet," was the cryptic comment of Peter, a twinkle in his eye, at which the girl surmised that he knew more about the true inwardness of the dinner party than she had given him credit for.

Having seen to it that Sir Harry Nevins was stationed directly behind the home plate, where he might best gratify his curiosity concerning the mysterious curved ball, Peter trotted across the diamond and ordered his men out for fielding practice, while he called the regular varsity catcher aside, and began to pitch "easy ones" to him by way of warming up.

Hector Alonzo McGrath was prancing with impatience to show his mettle. There was intoxicating rapture in being allowed even to practice with the mighty varsity men and substitutes, and the slim youth dashed hither and yon after batted balls with the ardor of a young retriever. A group of his classmates in the grand stand encouraged his efforts with frantic cheers whose irony he failed to detect.

At length Peter Burnham backoned him, and gruffly imparted:

"Warm the bench for the first three innings, Hector, and then I'll put you into the game."

"And what position shall I play?" was the eager query.

"Backstop—catcher—on the first nine," he was informed.

"What? And *you* are going to pitch?" faltered Hector, who looked as if he had received bad news from home.

"Certainly. You caught for your prep-school team, didn't you? I want to find how much sand you have before

I waste any coaching on you," was the answer of brutal Peter.

"But—man alive—you are the hardest man to hold in intercollegiate baseball," and Hector Alonzo spoke in imploring tones. "This is cold-blooded murder, Peter. I am not going to show the white feather, but—oh, Lord!—will you promise to attend to the funeral arrangements, and break it gently to my father by wire?"

"Sure. Jim Stearns and I will look after all those little details. You ought to be thankful for the chance to make good, you faultfinding, fussy little beggar."

With this Peter stalked off to muster the two nines, while Hector walked to the bench like a broken old man, and sadly glanced toward his friends in the grand stand, who were so soon to behold a tragedy. He could not for the life of him understand why Peter should wish to use him so heartlessly. It seemed like some kind of a practical joke, reflected Hector, but why should Peter have it in for him?

These melancholy musings were diverted as soon as the exhibition game began. Peter was not as careful of his arm as he should have been, perhaps because Geraldine Townsend was a spectator, and with the seasoned varsity catcher to handle his pitching, he delivered an amazing assortment of puzzling balls which seemed to defy the law of gravity. They floated lazily away from the plate, shot at sudden tangents toward the batter's waist, or abruptly died and dropped just as he struck at them.

Sir Harry Nevins propped his chin in his hand, and stared hard at these singular phenomena. He could actually see the ball swerve from its path and delude the batters, who lacked practice, and were unable to connect with their captain's pitching. Peter allowed them to hit it often enough to afford some lively fielding and base running, the fine points of which were explained to Sir Harry no less glibly by Geraldine Townsend than by Professor Billy Aldridge. The latter, who had baseball slang at his tongue's end, found mischievous enjoyment in conveying information in a jargon which made the baronet exclaim:

"My word, but do they teach this language in the university? 'Slammed a sizzler to short.' That sounds like a new kind of a drink. And the other chap 'laced out a bingle,' and so-and-so 'ate it up,' and somebody or other was 'nailed at the home plate when he tried to beat it from third.'"

The score seesawed through three innings, after which Peter sauntered to the grand stand, wiped the mud from his countenance, and informed Sir Harry:

"I am going to try one or two new men, so you must not charge it against varsity baseball if you see some wild playing."

"It has been simply immense," was the hearty reply. "But I am thankful that I don't have to keep wicket—'catch,' you call it—for those deadly projectiles of yours. How does the catcher chap know what the ball is going to do, eh, what? He may put out his hands for it, and it isn't there at all, don't you know."

"All a matter of secret signals, sir," said Peter. "I am going to put in a different catcher, a greenhorn, and he may amuse you."

Geraldine wanted to ask a question or two, still curious to know the motive for the presence of Hector Alonzo McGrath, who was dejectedly buckling on the mask and chest protector. Peter dodged the inquisition, however, and hurried back to the pitcher's station.

Hector dragged himself behind the bat, while his classmates appropriately chanted "The Undertaker's Song." The subsequent proceedings were a roaring farce for every one save the victim. Peter called him to a whispered consultation, and imparted sundry signals, which he had no intention of using. His intention was to drive this hapless catcher distracted, a task absurdly easy, for poor Hector was in the throes of stage fright before ever a ball was pitched to him.

He crouched close to the plate in the most approved posture, whacked the

big glove with his other fist, and waited for Peter to wind himself up and launch the missile. Pshaw, the signals must be twisted, thought Hector. The first ball was nowhere near where he dived for it. It whizzed past his right shoulder, and fetched up with a bang against the wooden backstop yards and yards away. He ran after it, visibly chagrined, tossed the ball to Peter, and followed it for another signal conference.

The pitcher was grave and courteous, confessed his error, and promised to be more careful. The batter swung at the next ball, missed it, and Hector found himself staring behind him to find out where it had gone. The third ball was straight and swift, and he hung on to it like grim death, but the momentum caused him to sit down abruptly with a heartfelt grunt.

Hector Alonzo was not in training, and, as the game wore on, he chased balls to the backstop until he was fairly dizzy. His gyrations were ludicrous to behold, and the appreciative spectators yelled their approval of the entertainment unexpectedly provided by the kindness of Captain Peter Burnham.

From the stand floated such exhortations as:

"Ring up a messenger boy, and he'll deliver it safely, Hector."

"A special delivery stamp would be cheaper, and just as quick, old man."

"Try stopping them with a basket. Why go through all those funny motions?"

"Fall down again, Hector. We like to see you do it."

Peter's desire to make this unhappy youth appear ridiculous was abundantly fulfilled, and he was ready to cry quits. Hector was almost weeping with rage and disappointment as he saw all his hopes of playing with the varsity squad go glimmering. Peter admired his pluck, and was about to dismiss him when the man at bat smote the ball square on the nose, and drove out a clean home run.

The next man up was the varsity catcher, who had been shifted to the other nine, and Peter's fighting blood was aroused. He would try to strike him out and square matters for that home run. For the moment he forgot Hector Alonzo, and let the ball go with all his strength and cunning. It was a particularly vicious, deceptive shoot, traveling at tremendous speed, and Hector no more than saw it leave Peter's hand when it thudded against his protector, a little below the heart. Despite the inflated cushion, the blow was like a kick in the solar plexus, and Hector Alonzo instantly lost all interest in baseball and everything else. Swaying for an instant, he gently collapsed and lay with eyes closed.

It was Peter, penitent and sorrowful, who raised him in his arms, carried him to a patch of untrampled grass, and tucked a sweater beneath his head. Somebody else doused him with a dipper of cold water, and presently Hector groaned feebly at Peter, and murmured:

"I'll be all right for the next inning. I must have misunderstood the signal."

"You are the sandiest lad on the squad," said the troubled Peter. "No more of it to-day. Your wind was knocked out. I'll lug you over to the dressing room, and you can lie down on a cot. It was low-down and mean for me to put up a job on you, Hector, old man. But I didn't mean to hurt you."

"Oh, I know that," was the cheerful reply. "You made a monkey of me, but it's all right. Just between us, Peter, what did you have against me?"

A convenient hack was impressed, and as the two rode across the field, Peter confessed, sorrowful of countenance:

"You tried to make a fool of me, faking that invitation to Mrs. Stirling's dinner party, and I just thought I would hand it back to you. It was all in fun, both ways, and I never dreamed of hurting you."

"I faked that invitation?" cried Hector, and sat bolt upright. "Why, Peter, you are dreaming! I tried to head you off last night, after you started for the Stirlings'. Ask Jim Stearns. He was with me."

Peter rubbed his head and looked

more remorseful than ever. Then he must have been misled by Geraldine Townsend. And he had ill-treated and humiliated a loyal friend.

"I am not a bit sore about it," he slowly explained. "I had such an awfully good time, and met such—such nice people, that I really ought to have been grateful for the bogus invitation. You are such a joker that I wanted to give you a dose of your own medicine. But who in the deuce is the guilty party, and what do you know about it, anyhow?"

"If you honestly mean that you will not take to the warpath, I'll tell you," said Hector. "Jim and I intended to keep mum about it, but now it is up to us to square ourselves. It was little Bob Oliver, trying to break even for what you did to him at the fence rush. We found it out by accident just after you had sallied forth last night."

Instead of a wrathful explosion, Peter leaned back and laughed. "There is an ingenious runt for you!" he exclaimed. "So you thought I might scalp him, or boil him in oil. Nonsense! He did me a good turn, the best ever. Well, what a foolish tangle this has been. How does your tummy feel? Will you shake hands with me?"

"Oh, I am still a bit groggy, but no harm done. Of course, we will shake hands and forget it. I don't blame you for gunning after me. And you surely did get me. I'll lie down for a few minutes, and then go to the campus in Dan Mulligan's hack."

Peter left him in charge of two classmates, and hurried back to dismiss the nines and join Sir Harry Nevins' party for a moment. The baronet was anxious to hear tidings of Hector, and was greatly pleased to know that the damage was trifling.

"He *was* a greenhorn, wasn't he?" said Sir Harry. "You gave him a terrific bombardment. He should have been armor-plated."

"I ought not to have put him in," contritely replied Peter. "I made a blunder, and I am sorry as can be. He is one of my best friends."

Geraldine had walked a little ahead of the party, and as Peter moved to her side she said, and the reproof was more in her manner than in her words:

"Don't you think you overdid it? I could not help sympathizing with poor Mr. McGrath."

Cut to the quick, and desperately anxious to redeem himself in her sight, he cried out indignantly:

"But I did not mean to hit him with the ball. I forgot myself for an instant, but I wasn't angry at Hector. What hurts me a good deal worse than that, Miss Townsend, is to find out from him that he is not guilty. He played no practical joke on me. He was trying to befriend me last night." His voice took a heavier note, and he rushed on headlong: "You see, I overheard you talking in the upper hall last night. You accused Hector, and I believed it. A sophomore did the trick. I am just as grateful to you as ever, but please don't think I meant to harm Hector McGrath. I can't stand for that."

Geraldine would not have inherited the earth on the score of meekness. She had been guilty of rashly jumping to a wrong conclusion, and the responsibility threw straight back to her. But she rebelled against being indicted by this rough-tongued, masterful young man, and he deserved to be put in his place.

"There is no need of discussing it in public, Mr. Burnham. If you choose to take Mr. McGrath's word against mine—but do you think it a good excuse for knocking him insensible?"

"Hector has forgiven me for that," said he. "And, of course, I believe him when he says I made a mistake in supposing that he put up the job on me. I —I never dreamed of doubting or accusing you, Miss Townsend. It is all a misunderstanding, isn't it?"

"Perhaps so," was her chilly assent, for she was not to be so easily won over. Geraldine was not in the habit of apologizing to undergraduate acquaintances. As soon might royalty have been expected to descend from the throne and ask pardon of the peasantry.

The others of the party had joined this unhappy pair, and, briefly excusing himself, Peter went away to convoy the stricken Hector Alonzo to the campus. At the side of the cot in the dressing room he found Jim Stearns, who explained:

"The water was too beastly rough to row on the harbor, and we came back to the boathouse early. I trotted out to see the tail end of the ball game, and look what I find? What the dickens were you trying to do to our festive playmate?"

"I guess he has told you," humbly answered Peter. "I didn't mean to stretch him out cold. Oh, you needn't rub it in, Jim. I am getting plenty of punishment."

"Pshaw, forget it!" piped up Hector, sliding from the cot and limping to and fro. "Chase out for the hack, Peter, and let's go home. If you have another date, don't mind me. Jim will hold my hand and see that I am not brutally attacked by any one else on the way to town. There is room in the automobile for one more. Go to her."

"There is no room for me," was Peter's lugubrious reply. "She has no more use for me."

"Another man swatted in the solar plexus, or thereabouts?" observed Hector, as they moved to the porch. "Did she call you names for being so cruel to me? Geraldine has a kind heart. She is a director of the hospital for stray cats."

"It is a wonder she didn't advise Peter to chloroform you, and put you out of your misery," grinned Jim Stearns.

"She was not very merciful to me," said Peter. "I am a big brute and a bully, and—— Well, my troubles are my own."

Hector whistled and winked at Jim. It was obvious that Peter Burnham was taking his discomfiture to heart. The trio clambered into Dan Mulligan's chariot, that rubicund, battered gentleman pausing to remark:

"It was a famous try-out ye had wid th' varsity lads, Mister McGrath. By way of practice an' sort o' hardenin' yourself up, why don't ye collide headfirst wid a few throlley cars before ye come to th' field again? You was all there wid th' sand. What ye lacked most was siveral more pairs of hands an' a cyclone cellar. Giddap!"

"Don't you think I won my 'Y' this afternoon, Dan?" asked Hector.

"I dunno about that, but ye came near winnin' a tasty little epitaph like 'Rest in Pieces.'"

As the hack rattled toward the campus, Peter Burnham became more and more abstracted, and the genial persiflage bandied between Hector and Dan Mulligan failed to awaken a flicker of amusement.

At length Jim Stearns poked him in the ribs, and roundly declared:

"Hector is all right. You needn't nurse a grouch over him."

"Hector be hanged!" was Peter's callous retort. "I am not worrying about him. He was a victim of circumstantial evidence, and he has played horse with so many fellows that he had it coming to him."

"Right you are," blithely agreed Hector. "The practical joker was due to take his turn as jokee."

"Confound it, I hate to be misunderstood," grumbled Peter, frowning at the landscape. "She was really responsible, but she had the best intentions, and I don't understand why she should go up in the air when I tried to straighten matters out."

"You are about as tactful as a brick house," said Hector. "I presume you told her it was all her fault. You can't handle the pretty creatures that way, Peter, my boy. They are always in the right, whether they are wrong or not. Your only chance of patching it up is to take my sagacious advice. I may be a bum ball player, but when it comes to the girl proposition——"

"You are a first-class hoodoo," was the ungrateful Peter's comment.

He left them at the corner of the campus, in haste to change his clothes and find Sir Harry Nevins, whom he had invited to the baseball training table for supper. Jim and Hector were driven to the dormitory entrance, where

Dan Mulligan remarked, by way of solicitous farewell:

"Are ye sure ye pried the baseball out of his stummick, Mister Stearns? I misthrust it pinetrated him considerable. There ought to be a law passed to forbid Peter Burnham pitchin' that kind of a ball to any one at all. Gid-dap!"

Once in their sitting room, Hector Alonzo curled up in a leather-cushioned chair, and smoked a pipe with the air of a contemplative owl, now and then rubbing the sensitive region of his waistcoat with careful hand. Jim Stearns also seemed busy with some difficult mental process, but he was first to break the silence.

"Too bad about Peter, eh? What are we going to do?"

Hector appeared startled as he returned:

"Precisely what is gnawing at my gray matter, Jim. Peter is certainly in a bad way. Did you catch the symptoms? He forgot all about me, the unfortunate victim of his own violence. That wasn't like him at all. Geraldine Townsend turned a trifle frosty, and, presto, Peter slumps in a heap, looks like double-distilled essence of calamity, and was not far from uttering unearthly moans. The strong man is laid low, for fair."

"It is up to us to mend him," pensively observed Jim. "It is a perfectly hopeless proposition, every way you look at it. Peter can't marry anybody for years and years. And he has no more show of winning out with Geraldine Townsend than a snowball in Hades."

"There is nothing flirtatious about Peter," said Hector. "Oh, you pestiferous little Bob Oliver, you were surely going some when you planned to wreak a horrible revenge!"

"Well, we helped to put Peter in the hole, and we must pull him out."

"There is only one way out," quoth Hector impressively. "Strategy is our resource. If Billy Aldridge proposes to Geraldine, it is a hundred to one that she takes him. She is just waiting for him to flutter off his perch, so everybody says. By Jove, if it is money that holds him back, I'll persuade my father to endow him. He just picked up a few odd million in some railroad deal or other."

"Perhaps we can find a less expensive way of saving Peter. What Billy Aldridge needs is some encouragement, nerve tonic, just the right kind of a push at the psychological moment. Thinking is darned uncomfortable work, Hector, but it must be done."

"Here goes, then, for a lifelike imitation of a young man thinking hard thoughts, Jim. The Peter Burnham Welfare and Rescue League is hereby organized for business."

IV.

Had his devoted pair of friends consulted Peter Burnham they would have been curtly informed that he was old enough to attend to his own business. They possessed more good intentions than discretion, and the assumption that Hector Alonzo McGrath would stop long enough to think about anything was a paradox pure and simple. Jim Stearns was more solidly ballasted, but inasmuch as he was twenty-one, and as impulsive as to be expectd of that delightful age, Peter had more wisdom and common sense than both of them. He was accustomed to keep his emotions very much to himself, and there is no getting away from the fact that the upsetting influence of Geraldine Townsend was to be classed as phenomenal and unprecedented.

Even Peter himself could not clearly analyze these disturbing emotions of his. In his present condition, a struggling undergraduate at Yale, making a belated start toward the goal of educated fitness, he had been bemused by no foolish, impossible dreams of winning Geraldine Townsend. His romantic fancy profoundly stirred for the first time, he sighed, and wished he might have met her, not here, but in after years, when he should have hammered out an honorable career for himself. She was a sort of divinity to be served and admired, but as unattainable as though she dwelt in another world.

That he should have offended her grieved him sorely; but, after all, she had been kinder to him than he deserved. Nothing could change or diminish his loyal gratitude for her stanch friendliness at Mrs. Stirling's dinner. Peter owed her recompense, and he was not the kind of man to forget it. His younger comrades, Hector and Jim, could never understand his attitude. They took it for granted that he viewed life as they did. With them, girls were joyous episodes, attacks of summer madness, intense for the moment, and then forgotten save as so many reminiscences flavored, perhaps, with forced and pleasurable melancholy. Jim Stearns' broken heart was a campus byword, and Hector's experiences with the eternal feminine had been even more evanescent.

After Geraldine had rebuffed him at the baseball field, Peter forsook his intention of accepting her invitation to call. All his indomitable courage oozed away at memory of her displeasure. He played ball and studied hard, avoided his friends, and wore an inscrutable countenance except when sitting in Professor Billy Aldridge's classroom. Then he became more absent-minded than ever, and regarded Aldridge with eyes that expressed neither anger nor jealousy, but a kind of affectionate envy. Occasionally the attractive young professor caught this glance, and felt as if Peter were quietly appraising him, trying to read his soul, weighing him for some purpose of his own. This scrutiny found no flaws, and one day Peter said, under his breath, as he lounged from the classroom:

"He is the man for her, no doubt of that. Oh, you lucky Billy Aldridge!"

Now and then, however, desire took the bit in its teeth, and ran away with reason. Peter had always fought for what he wanted, and thus far he had won every battle. He was no callow, boyish undergraduate, but a seasoned man, with his two feet under him, and tame surrender was an irksome novelty.

He was in one of these rebellious moods, when a letter came from Sir Harry Nevins, who had broken his Western journey to visit Washington by personal invitation from the White House. He wrote as follows:

MY DEAR MR. BURNHAM: This is partly to thank you again for helping to make my few days in New Haven so interesting and enjoyable. I find myself able to read the baseball news of the sporting pages and understand at least one word in five. While at luncheon with the President yesterday I took occasion to mention you in very complimentary terms, not so much as a great baseball player as the right sort of timber for your American government in the Philippines. It occurred to me that you ought to be in line for taking charge of a province or something of the sort after graduation. The President was quite keen about you. My recommendation seemed to carry a flattering amount of weight. I hope this will interest you and that we shall meet out Manila way some day. How is young Mr. McGrath, by the way? My word, but you really ought to be snapped up by the War Office as part of the seacoast artillery. With best wishes, I am, very cordially yours.

"Now what do you think of that?" cried Peter, rereading this important communication.

For some time he pondered over it, his face growing brighter and brighter. The vista of the future had been suddenly changed. All he desired was the right kind of an opportunity, and he would push his way to the top. Governor of a province in the Philippines? Why not? He had studied the problems of administration, he could take courses in Spanish for the remainder of his time at Yale, and he knew how to handle men, not only a baseball squad, but also the ignorant, stubborn aliens among whom he had toiled in the hard-coal country. He would have something to offer the right kind of a girl, something bigger in power, influence, and possibilities than Billy Aldridge could ever find in a Yale professorship. He could help make empire for his nation in those distant seas and islands where strong men were needed.

The drift of these roseate imaginings will be further illuminated if it be mentioned that on that very same day Peter Burnham might have been seen to brush his frock coat, polish a seldom-used tall hat, ransack his bureau for a

presentable pair of gloves, and borrow a cane from a man next door. As he sallied forth, braced to undertake another social invasion, he muttered, as if the affair demanded explanation:

"She asked me to call, and there is no harm in trying to square myself, is there? She can't do any more than have me thrown out, and that will be no easy job."

It so befell that the imposing march of Peter Burnham across the campus was beheld from afar by Hector Alonzo McGrath, who proceeded to have an imitation fit on the grass, to the delight of the bystanders.

"Peter in his war paint," gurgled this graceless youth. "And before five o'clock in the afternoon! He must have cut the baseball practice short. This is the greatest sensation that has happened to the campus since old Silliman's statue was painted Yale blue, and a beer stein tied to his fist."

Immediately thereafter, Hector wore a worried aspect, and hastily departed to intercept the return of Jim Stearns from the boathouse. Peter's symptoms had become acutely alarming. It was high time for action. Hector's impatience was such that he waited in front of Osborne Hall no more than five minutes, and then walked down Chapel Street at a brisk gait to meet Jim en route. The oarsman was swinging into the short cut through the green, when he heard an agitated hail from across the street, and halted to survey Hector, with the amused interrogation:

"Why so fussed up? Has Peter offered you another chance to play ball with the varsity squad?"

"Worse than that, Jim. He has gone to call on Geraldine Townsend. He means business. Imagine Peter geared up in a frock coat and a tall hat for any frivolous purpose."

"Pshaw, you may be a false alarmist, Hector. Perhaps he has gone to make his dinner call at Mrs. Stirling's."

"He pulled that off two nights ago," declared Hector, catching step with his taller companion. "Do you see what this means if we allow it to go on? The baseball season will be knocked plumb to the devil. Peter Burnham is a man of one idea. And besides the interests of the college, what about his own welfare? All his friends think the world of him. Shall we allow him to be made a plaything to amuse Geraldine Townsend?"

Jim halted and looked dismayed. Hector's earnestness was alarming. "I thought he was getting over it," was the drawling reply. "How about that scheme of ours that we hatched on the fence the other day? Can we work it in a hurry? Can you find the *News* heeler this afternoon?"

"Sure thing. I'll bet he is in his room right now. He is an awfully nervy cuss for a freshman, and he will run his legs off on a clew like this."

Perhaps it should be interpolated that the editorial board of the Yale *Daily News* is chosen by means of the most grueling competition, in which the contestants are credited with the amount of written material which they daily turn in during a period of several months. The "*News* heeler," or candidate, is the nearest thing to perpetual motion known on the campus, and the struggle is largely a matter of physical endurance. These indefatigable youths chase the news item like a pack in full cry, and can no more be eluded than the tuition bills of the treasurer's office.

The particular *News* heeler so urgently sought by that loyal brace of friends, Hector and Jim, was discovered in the act of scribbling with feverish pencil, which he dropped at sight of the distinguished upper classmen. He was a tall, shock-headed lad, with a nervous, jerky manner, nor did this invasion tend to make him appear any more at ease.

"Sit down, if you please. I'm delighted. It's quite an honor," he exclaimed, dragging forward two chairs. "I was coming around to see you tonight, Mr. Stearns, to ask you for a signed criticism of the varsity crew."

"You are the fifth *News* heeler that has tackled me this week," wearily began Jim, but Hector kicked him, and

he concluded, with more animation: "Not that I mind; oh, no. In fact, your reports of the crew practice have been so accurate, Mr. Hawkins, that I feel under obligations to you. I owe you a favor."

The gratified freshman blushed to the roots of his hair, and cried:

"Gee, but I wish you would put that in writing, and let me show it to the chairman of the *News* board. I'll bet it would be worth five hundred points of credit to me."

"Oh, I shall speak to him about it," Jim gravely assured him. "We dropped in to give you a tip. A lot of rumors have been floating around the campus about the engagement of Professor Billy Aldridge to Miss Geraldine Townsend, of New Haven. There may be something in it, and——"

"Let me make a note of it," exclaimed Hawkins, diving for pencil and paper.

"Oh, it isn't necessary," said Jim. "This will be an awfully interesting piece of news for the campus, because of Professor Aldridge's popularity, but it can't be published until he confirms it, you know."

Hawkins reached for his cap, and was about to dash for the stairway, but Hector caught him by the tail of the coat and anchored him, offering canny counsel.

"Not so swift. Listen to us. We have told no one else, but we have reason to believe that now is the time to nail Professor Aldridge. He may try to sidestep you, but you must hang to him. Don't mention our names, if you please, but tell him that everybody is talking about it. If he denies it, then try to persuade him to let you print a denial. Don't let him bluff you, understand, Hawkins?"

"You bet," cried the *News* heeler, struggling to break Hector's grip on his coat. "Some other fellow may get to him first. I want this exclusive. Another fellow and I are neck and neck in credits, and this may win me the place on the board. It's bully of you to hand me the tip."

"Put it to him straight," sang out Jim, as Hawkins flew down the staircase. "Tell him if the engagement isn't ready to announce, he had better get busy."

As Hawkins clattered out of the dormitory, Hector Alonzo beamed as one well pleased with himself, and murmured:

"That lad is loaded for bear! What do you suppose Billy Aldridge will do to him?"

"Handle him carefully, of course. Billy can't afford to lose his temper. What we aim to accomplish is to convey a certain impression to his mind. Hawkins will convince him that the campus and town expect him to make good. If he denies it, then he is in an awkward fix with Geraldine, who will probably set him down as a sandless gump."

"But the announcement ought to come from her side of the house," suggested the other.

"Don't worry. If that Hawkins boy gets no satisfaction out of Billy, he will chase himself right over to find Geraldine Townsend. As a sincere *News* heeler he is the prize p>st."

"I am inclined to think we have started something," said Hector, as they wandered homeward.

"It is all for the sake of Peter, old man. We owe it to him. Once the girl is really engaged, he will quit bothering her, and be his own sane self again."

This amiable conspiracy seemed so promising that they ceased to worry over the fate of Peter Burnham. All unwitting of the plans laid to thwart his new-found purpose, Peter wended his way, in a mood compounded of audacity and misgivings, to seek the further acquaintance of Geraldine Townsend, reëstablish friendly relations, if possible, and make clear the fact that she was likely to see a good deal more of him.

Geraldine lived in a house of her own, not far from Hillhouse Avenue, her companion one of those faded, inconspicuous monochromes known as "an elderly female relative," whose duties as a chaperon came under the

head of irregular employment. To be thought bohemian was one of Geraldine's pet detestations, but inasmuch as she was well beyond her teens, and independent of spirit withal, she regarded the aforesaid elderly relative as an encumbrance except when Mrs. Grundy positively demanded it.

When Peter Burnham had come within a few strides of invading this defenseless household, his footsteps were curiously, suddenly laggard, as if it were one thing to vow great things, and another to perform them. It was too late to retreat, however, and, with the mien of an undertaker, he mopped his perspiring brow, and fumbled for a card. Ushered into a rather small reception room, in which he felt incredibly large and awkward, he poised his hat on his knee, and sat staring into it as if seeking to read his fate.

Miss Townsend was in. He had passed the outer barrier. The omens were favorable, but Peter began to wish he had been denied admittance. She had spurned his apologies at the baseball field, and why should be expect kinder treatment now?

Very few minutes had dragged their slow length along when he heard a quick swish of skirts, and Geraldine entered, not as an offended goddess, ready to slay him with a frown, but with welcoming eagerness, as if she had been waiting for him. Peter smiled back at her with honest, surprised enjoyment, and was at a loss for words.

"You are the very man I want to talk to," she cried. "I was about to write a note asking if you could find time to come to see me this evening."

Peter all but collapsed in the nearest chair, and managed to stammer:

"I—I wanted to see you, but I couldn't wait till to-night. I have been worrying a lot about that misunderstanding——"

She dismissed the topic with a peremptory gesture. "It was childish of me. I felt sorry for Hector McGrath, that was all; and it was really my fault, but I was not ready to confess it. Please sit down. I have something very important to discuss with you." She caught up a newspaper from a reading table, nervously spread it open, glanced at the front page, and went on: "You remember what we said about Carbonville at Mrs. Stirling's dinner?"

"Indeed I do," earnestly answered Peter. "My part of the conversation has given me some mighty unhappy moments, Miss Townsend. I had no right to speak as I did about the Oak Creek Coal Company."

"Oh, I forgave you for that. But haven't you seen to-day's paper? It is almost too dreadful to think about. You must read it yourself. I haven't the heart."

"I have been too busy to look at a newspaper—— Great Scott, you are crying!" exclaimed Peter, staring aghast at her dewy eyes and tremulously troubled lips. He snatched the newspaper, whose bold, black headlines shouted the words:

STRIKERS SHOT DOWN BY ARMED DEPUTIES

Seven Killed and Twenty Wounded in Riot at Carbonville

Angry Foreigners Marching to Oak Creek Collieries Met by Hail of Bullets

THE VICTIMS WERE UNARMED

There was tragic silence while Peter Burnham read to himself every word of the double-leaded column of narrative. Then he returned to the list of dead and wounded, and said slowly, as if he were talking to himself:

"'Mike Mizata, Lithuanian, instantly killed.' A good man. I worked with him. He wouldn't have harmed a kitten.

"'Kasimer Slovenski, a Polander.' I stood godfather for his youngest, of nine. He was riddled with buckshot from a sawed-off shotgun.

"'Frank Tegios, Magyar.' He was nothing but a boy. I helped him learn to read English. He was chuckfull of ambition to be a good citizen. He crawled off in the woods to die."

Peter let the newspaper slide to the

floor, and his brooding eyes no longer sought Geraldine Townsend's face. Presently his clenched fist fell upon the arm of his chair with bruising force, and he burst out passionately:

"They were marching along a public road, these poor, dumb cattle, in this land of freedom—going to present their list of grievances to the management of the Oak Creek Company, and to recruit strikers at the other breakers. And these deputies—company clerks, town loafers, and so on—they claimed that one of the strikers had fired a pistol, so they turned loose and slaughtered them. Teach them a lesson, blast 'em! That was the idea. Discourage other miners from striking against the robbery of the company stores, and fines, and low wages, and high rents for company tenements not fit to keep pigs in. Well, they made a thorough job of it this time."

Geraldine was very pale, her breath came quick and small, and her heart fluttered like a wounded bird. This terrible indictment seemed launched straight at her. The weight, the shock of it were crushing. Peter's brief, explosive sentences were more eloquent, more convincing, than the column of printed matter. He spoke as one who knew. All aquiver, she asked, a pitiful catch in her voice:

"Is it true? Can it be true? What must I do? Oh, why didn't you come and talk to me sooner! I might have done something to prevent this. You could have helped me. Is nothing to be said for the other side? Was there no justification?"

"Yes, if might makes right," replied Peter, rising to pace the floor. "The sheriff read the riot act, in English, ordering them to disperse. Not one man in twenty of that crowd of foreigners could understand what he was talking about. They were going along peaceably enough. There may have been violence elsewhere, but this is a reliable newspaper, and it says there had been no rioting at Oak Creek."

He halted, standing beside Geraldine, and unconsciously placed his hand upon her shoulder, nor could she take offense, because it was so brotherly, as if he were comforting one of his college friends.

"I'll help you," said he. "I intend to stand by. What's done can't be undone. A sawed-off shotgun is a final argument for the man who gets in the way. You had nothing in God's world to do with it, I tell you. What right have you to condemn yourself?"

Peter became aware of his forwardness in daring to touch her, and snatched his hand from her shoulder. The momentary contact had thrilled him. It made him realize her femininity, whereas in his tremendous earnestness he had been talking almost as man to man. The pathos of her suffering touched him to the heart. Whatever the wrongs of the striking miners in Carbonville, his emotions of loyalty to her flamed in the foreground. She had befriended him when he stood in sore need of it. Her next words made him squarely face the issue.

"Can't I somehow right these wrongs? The newspaper says that the strikers are so enraged that they will try to destroy my property—the Oak Creek collieries. If those poor, ignorant, misused men were to know that in future their grievances will be righted, would they not leave my property alone? I did not know—I did not understand."

"If they mean to burn your breakers, they will find a way to do it," replied Peter. "And if the pumps are put out of commission, and the workings flooded, or if fire gets into the upper levels, it may be years before your collieries will be mining coal again."

"But you sympathize with the strikers," she cried impetuously. "You think it would serve the Oak Creek Company right to have their buildings burned and their mines ruined. You can't help thinking anything else."

"Men I worked with for years were shot down yesterday," he said meditatively, without bitterness, as if weighing this side and that. "And I cannot blame them for striking. I have always wanted to help better their condi-

tion. Coal mining need not be slavery. But I told you that if the chance ever came I should be ready to break my neck to do you a good turn. That is one reason why if I were in Carbonville to-night I should fight to save your property."

"Ah, I wish you were there in charge," she sighed. "I could rely on you absolutely."

Peter was about to pledge himself to depart on the instant for Carbonville. Then, with a jolting shock, he remembered the varsity nine. What about his duty to Yale, which had been unswerving from the day when he first set foot on the campus. College rivalries, all the intense activities which had meant so much to him, had curiously dwindled in importance during the last few moments. They seemed like playing at life. The interview with Geraldine Townsend was like thrusting a scene of tragedy among the acts of a pleasant, trifling comedy. Would it be honorable for the captain of the varsity nine to run away from his daily task in order to undertake a mission which did not concern him?

Peter wavered, the girl anxiously waiting to hear him speak. Her own thoughts were nebulous. She could not see beyond the hope that he would consent to help her work out some plan whereby the present management of her property might be set aside, and, at whatever cost to her, the price of mining coal be no longer paid in blood, and tears, and injustice. Just then Peter smiled, a trifle whimsically, and awoke from his brown study to say:

"You can't guess what made me hesitate. You see, I might be able to do a lot of good at Carbonville just now. The miners would trust me to try to get a square deal for them. And I stand well with the other side, among the operators of the district. Frank Fosdick, the man in charge of your collieries, is the exception. He is no friend of mine. I hate him. But, with all his hardness and tyranny, he has a yellow streak, and ten to one he ran away after that shooting affair. He was with the sheriff, so the paper says. And the sheriff is one of his tools. He put him in office."

"What a dreadful accusation!" wearily replied Geraldine. "Then you think there may be nobody in charge at Oak Creek, just when a brave and honest man is so sorely needed? I ought not to dream of asking you to fight my cause, but you appear to have been sent to me by Providence, and, oh, I do so want to have things done differently. My lawyers could find a way to give you authority to act for me, could they not? What were you about to explain?"

"It sounds so small, under the circumstances," he answered. "I was wondering what the college would say if I should desert the baseball nine just as the outdoor practice season is beginning. I might have to spend weeks at Carbonville. But yours is a man's work, and the other is——" He straightened himself, and drew a deep breath. "I am twenty-five years old, you see, and I have worked hard all my life. It makes a difference. I don't always see things from the campus viewpoint. There are bigger things than winning a baseball championship, do you understand?"

"Yes, I understand," said she. "You are different, Mr. Burnham. That is why I interceded for you at Mrs. Stirling's dinner. Hector McGrath's father owns railroads and mines, I am told, but can you imagine my talking to Hector as I am talking to you, expecting him to tell me what ought to be done?"

"It isn't altogether because you were so kind to me at Mrs. Stirling's," Peter began to say, and the telltale color came into his tanned cheek. "It is not playing quite fair to let you suppose that gratitude is my only motive in wanting to go to Carbonville right away——"

"And what might be your other motive?" dangerously queried Geraldine.

"Because you are *you*, and——" Peter failed to finish this impulsive and excessively personal statement. The sounds of a heated argument at the front door were wafted through the hall, and the fragmentary remarks overheard were peculiarly interesting.

"But Miss Townsend can't see you now!" insisted a servant.

"Only for a minute," begged the voice of an excitable young man. "It is awfully important. Tell her I am from the Yale *News*. Here's my card. I'm Mr. Hawkins."

"And what would she be wanting to do with the Yale *News?*" replied the undaunted guardian of the threshold. "We don't belong to the faculty."

"But Professor Aldridge does," pursued the pest of a Hawkins. "This thing has got to be confirmed or denied before I quit the trail."

"Heavens, what is he talking about?" gasped Geraldine to Peter, who looked as if the roof had fallen in.

"Shall I throw this Hawkins person out?" he truculently demanded.

"No-o, if you will excuse me for a moment, perhaps I had better see him," said she, and whisked into the hall.

Peter could hardly be blamed for not putting his fingers in his ears. Young Hawkins had a rasping tenor of a voice, which bored its way like a gimlet. He broke past the servant at sight of Geraldine, bowed awkwardly, and exclaimed:

"I know it's nervy of me, Miss Townsend, but the race for the freshman editorship on the *News* board is terribly close, and I am just working night and day to get more credits, I tell you. The tip is all over town that you and Professor Billy Aldridge are engaged, and I want the official announcement for the *News*."

"And you wish me to deny it?" coldly remarked Geraldine.

"No, I want you to confirm it," blurted Hawkins. "I went to Professor Aldridge just now, and he was so rattled and all fussed up and hot under the collar that I felt sure the report was true."

"And did he ask you to see me?" she queried.

"I should say not! He told me not to, and I thought he was going to stand me on my head. But I took a chance, and——"

"All I have to say is that there is no announcement to make, Mr. Hawkins. One must make allowances for *News* heelers, and freshmen particularly, so I will overlook your intrusion."

"Can't I write a denial and shove it in to the editors?" begged Hawkins. "They might give me some credits on it."

"If you do, you will find yourself in serious difficulties with Professor Aldridge, and I shall be very angry," and Geraldine's eyes were sparkling. "Good afternoon, Mr. Hawkins."

The disappointed freshman muttered, as he beat a futile retreat:

"Stung! I'll bet, though, the tip was straight, but I can't get either of them to stand for it."

As the door banged, Geraldine once more faced Peter Burnham, who had made up his mind what to say.

"I couldn't help hearing, but you needn't mind me, Miss Townsend. It makes no difference—about my wanting to do you a service, understand? A man that is not willing to serve without hope of reward is a counterfeit. I am going to Carbonville."

He moved toward the hall, Geraldine following in silence. The errand of the impossible Hawkins was too delicate and difficult to discuss. In fact, conversation came to a halt on both sides.

"Good-by," said Peter, as he hastened to depart.

"Good-by, and thank you," said she, giving him her hand, which he gripped so that she bit her lip to hold back an exclamation of pain. "You must not go to Carbonville. It is asking too much."

"You could never ask too much of me," was Peter's gallant farewell, as he blundered from her presence and pulled open the door.

Walking rapidly, with head down, he had no more than turned into the street when he almost collided with another young man, who seemed in as great haste to arrive at Miss Townsend's house as Peter was to leave it. The two stopped in their tracks, both extremely serious of mien.

"Hello, Peter," exclaimed Professor Billy Aldridge. "How was the baseball practice to-day?"

"I missed most of it. What about your five o'clock recitation?"

"I missed it entirely," and the member of the faculty could not help smiling at the captain of the varsity nine.

With no more parley, Peter Burnham strode grandly on his way, while Professor Aldridge plunged toward his own destination, whose name was Geraldine Townsend. At the moment of this significant meeting, Hector Alonzo McGrath, perched upon the steps of a recitation hall which commanded an extensive survey of the campus, was observing to his companion, Jim Stearns:

"The scheme could not have worked any smoother if we had rehearsed it for a month. That Hawkins boy is a wonder. He must have put the spurs to Billy Aldridge in great shape. I camped out here watching things every minute while you went to the rooms. First Hawkins came surging out of Billy's entry, and galloped off across the campus to interview Geraldine Townsend, just as we hoped he would do. A little while later, Billy emerged, and he was going some. Apparently he forgot he had a class waiting for him in Osborne Hall. He bolted around the corner of the chapel into Elm Street one lap behind Hawkins, the pacemaker."

"It looks good to me," said Jim. "No professional mind reader is needed to conclude that Billy Aldridge pulled himself together, and decided to dash over and put Geraldine wise to the situation."

"How can he discuss it, without proposing to her?" was Hector's triumphant interrogation. "Put yourself in Billy's place, old man. We have him lashed to the mast. It took him a few minutes to rally, and then he came to and recognized the fact that it was up to him to set out in chase of Hawkins. He couldn't do anything else."

"Then you think we have rescued Peter Burnham?"

"It's a cinch, Jim. Say, by Jove, has it ever occurred to you that perhaps Peter might not want to be rescued?"

"Oh, I thought of that," was the easy assurance. "Peter's wishes cut no ice. We know what is good for him. But what worries me is that we may have been too speedy. What if Peter and Hawkins and Billy Aldridge meet Geraldine all in a bunch?"

"I didn't expect Hawkins to cut out such a swift pace," admitted Hector Alonzo. "He went off, bang! like a firecracker, the instant we lit the fuse. Peter ought to be coming back by this time."

"Let's sit here and wait for him."

When, at length, Peter hove in sight, it was possible to discern afar off that he was not in the humor for the idle chat and merriment of the campus. His gleaming tall hat was jammed on the back of his head, he had forgotten to bring away his cane, and his hands were deep in his trousers pockets. Straight for his room he headed, glancing neither to right nor left.

"I don't like the careless way he wears his glad raiment," said Hector to Jim, as they sauntered over to intercept him. "He started off quite jaunty and well groomed. Something has happened to Peter."

"If there has been a collision, Billy Aldridge must look a good deal more disarranged," replied the other.

Peter saw them and proceeded to adjust his hat at the proper angle and otherwise regain the spruce appearance demanded of a "fusser" on parade. They were likely to pester him with silly questions, and he preferred to avoid the friendly inquisition. He had intended to seek Jim Stearns after supper and tell him certain things, but this chance meeting thwarted postponement.

"What ho!" cried Hector Alonzo. "The guard of honor will escort you upstairs and wait while you change your clothes for supper."

"Come along. Fine spring weather, isn't it?" said the noncommittal Peter.

"We hope you found it not inclement," politely murmured Jim. "No more signs of frost?"

"Don't tease him," whispered Hector, "or he will shut up like a clam. We want to find out things."

They were lounging upon the window seat, and Peter had vanished into his bedroom before he gratified their hard-held curiosity by announcing:

"I called on Miss Townsend this afternoon."

"We are surprised and delighted," this from Hector. "It was rumored that you had gone to baseball practice in your frock coat and tall hat, just for a stunt. And she was as charming as ever?"

"More so," vouchsafed Peter, and said no more until Jim ventured to inquire:

"Won't you tell us more about it? It is such a novelty for you to be chasing petticoats that your friends are interested. I thought you and she were peeved at each other."

"Not a bit of it," and again Peter became harrowingly reticent. Presently he came out of the bedroom, and said abruptly: "Speaking of baseball practice, I am going home to-night, and I may be away a couple of weeks."

"What? You are joking," and the other men sprang to their feet.

"What is the matter? Bad news from home? Anybody ill?"

"There is nobody left in Carbonville that belongs to me," slowly answered Peter. "I am going on business, and I am afraid I could not explain it to make you understand."

"You are not short of money, or anything of the sort, are you?" asked Hector. "My check book is yours, you know that, Peter."

"Thanks, but I don't need it. You fellows know I am not apt to fly off on foolish tangents. But if I sat down and told you the whole story you would say that I ought to stand by the baseball team. And I couldn't argue you around to my way of thinking. I may be a fool, at that; but, at any rate, I am showing my conscience the easiest way out."

"But when did all this happen, Peter?" faltered the agitated Hector. "You were not planning to run away in a cloud of mystery when we met you at noon. Have you had any letters since?"

"No; it happened after I saw you," reluctantly admitted Peter, who shrank from this catechism. "I tell you," and his voice was more emphatic, "you wouldn't understand. So we'll have to let it go at that."

"But the baseball squad may go all to pieces without you during these critical weeks," cried Jim Stearns. "You used all your influence to have the professional coach dismissed this season, and now you quit the job without giving any reason."

Peter perceived how hopeless it was to let the argument drift into any deeper waters. For the time being he had ceased to be an undergraduate, and this was why he could not make his comrades comprehend. There was a kind of resigned sadness in his voice as he replied:

"This is the first time you have ever accused me of disloyalty to the college. You might give me the benefit of the doubt. I am playing my own game as best I can, and just now I have to go it alone."

"God bless you, Peter," gustily shouted Jim Stearns, throwing an arm across the pitcher's shoulder. "Hector and I swear by you. Don't go away thinking we are sore. If you say it is all right, we'll sit tight and wait till you are ready to 'fess up.'"

"Same here," exclaimed Hector. "No more prying into the dark secret. It isn't an elopement, is it? But you wouldn't lug her off to Carbonville, I am sure."

This lessened the tension, so that Peter guffawed, and was soon ready to join them for the stroll supperward in the quiet and kindly humor which they best knew. After he had left them to go to the baseball training table, Jim said to his comrade:

"Tell me, is my head on straight? What is the answer? Is Geraldine Townsend responsible for Peter's jumping the reservation, and where do Hawkins and Billy Aldridge come on in this act?"

"You can search me," wearily sighed Hector Alonzo McGrath, "and nary a clew will you find concealed about my person."

V.

Peter Burnham was tramping along the muddy road that led from the town of Carbonville to the outlying collieries made conspicuous a long way off by the black mountains of culm, or refuse, and the grimy, towering structures of the breakers. The landscape was everywhere defiled and desolate. The natural beauty of hill and stream and valley had been obliterated. The region was like one vast, ugly smear of coal dust. Strangers stand aghast at sight of the anthracite mining country, but this unlovely prospect was home to Peter Burnham, and its familiarity more intimate than that of the Yale campus.

As he drew near the first of the squalid, huddled hamlets in which dwelt the miners of the Oak Creek Company, something seemed unusual, abnormal. The place had a deserted air. No sooty men, their lamps fastened upon their greasy caps, were lounging in the street or drifting into the corner saloons. Absent also were the gossiping women, talking strange tongues, who were wont to hang over each other's fences, their heads wrapped in bright-colored shawls.

Presently Peter descried a flock of children and a few old or feeble folk gathered on top of a culm bank just beyond the settlement, their faces turned in one direction, as if they were waiting and looking for something. He scrambled up the black slope, and was about to ask a question, when there came to his ears the sound of a brass band wailing the refrain of a dead march.

A few moments, and there came into view a slow-trailing procession, a number of somber vehicles followed by a great crowd of men and women on foot, and then a curious assortment of buggies, wagons, and carts. Behind the band marched a company of miners wearing gilt-braided caps and baldrics of red, white, and blue, and Peter recognized them as belonging to the Hungarian Order of St. Joseph. Except for this spot of color, the straggling column was dreary and commonplace to behold. The band ceased playing, and the noise of women wailing and weeping came to Peter Burnham on the culm bank. He counted the hearses in the van of the procession, and said to himself:

"Four of the men who were shot. This can't help but make the situation more critical than ever."

Past him moved the hundreds of silent, dejected men of many races, paying the last tribute to their dead comrades. He bared his head, and waited until a group of miners among whom he had once worked trudged abreast of him, when he descended to the road and walked with them for a little way.

His expressions of sympathy were sincere, but these others showed little pleasure at meeting him again. Peter Burnham was no longer one of them, and they knew that latterly he had been a clerk in the company's office, among whom the murderous deputies had been recruited. The tragedy had acutely provoked class against class. The resentment of the miners against unfair treatment had been turned into blind hatred against their employers and all associated with them.

At heart Peter sided with the strikers. In college his friends were for the most part carefree young men belonging to the privileged order of American society, members of a certain caste who inherited their views from their fathers and had not been compelled to think for themselves. They took for granted the comfortable ease of circumstances that is vouchsafed to the very few and unknown to the immense majority, but this environment had not colored Peter Burnham's outlook on life.

Now, as he turned aside to follow the road to the Oak Creek collieries, he was in thought once more a miner—puzzled, hopeless, and angry in turn, wondering why the operators should not be willing to make the hard occupation less dangerous underground, and why they should be so zealous to wring the last possible dollar from their people aboveground.

Again he was dreaming his dreams

of a model colliery, humanely operated, recognizing the need of giving opportunities for decent home life and citizenship. These were the problems which had moved him to study the methods of handling alien toilers in other parts of the world.

It was perhaps unfortunate, if Peter were to be a fair-minded, impartial visitor, that he should have chanced to see this very pitiful funeral procession. It aroused emotions which stirred him to the very depths. His purpose wavered, and he berated himself as one who had undertaken a fool's errand. Why should he try to interfere in behalf of the property interests at Oak Creek? The management deserved to be mobbed and to have its breakers crippled or burned, and Peter would have been glad to join in a war dance around the ashes of the company store where he had been compelled to buy his blasting powder for three times what it cost the company per keg.

His plans were exceedingly vague. He had plunged headforemost into this difficult situation because of an unselfish quality of loyalty to Geraldine Townsend that made this mission appear an act of duty. He must first get at the facts, and then conclude what to advise her. Between him and the nearest breaker of the Oak Creek Company the great culm banks rose like a series of forts, and on the crest of one of them he perceived a solitary figure boldly outlined against the sky. The man was no miner. The brown slouch hat worn at a jaunty angle, the trim khaki blouse and cavalryman's breeches and puttees, and the carbine resting in the crook of the elbow, proclaimed the trooper of the State Constabulary.

Peter went out of his way to accost this businesslike sentinel, who proved to be an old acquaintance against whom he had played baseball as a lad. Indeed, they were cut after the same pattern—tanned, square-jawed, upstanding young men who had been trained in a hard school.

"What's the news, Larry?" asked Peter. "I hope you haven't been shooting up any of my friends."

"I hope I won't have to," said Larry McCormick. "I'd be afraid of plugging some old ball player of yours. There is only one troop of us here. It isn't a general strike, you understand. The Oak Creek miners quit without orders from union headquarters. That bunch of deputies sure tamed them, but we're sort of looking for trouble after the funerals. The women are the worst. They're eggin' the Polacks on something fierce, and these foreign women are the devil and all to handle. I'm scared to tackle 'em, and I ain't ashamed to say so."

"Who is in charge of things at Oak Creek?" asked Peter.

"Oh, Frank Fosdick, the big noise, is hard to find," was the careless answer. "He was a terrible man till the trouble broke loose. They tell me that the shooting started after he tried to collar a striker, and drag him off the road. The Polack pushed him over, and then the lead began to fly. Fosdick said he was brutally assaulted, and he is mostly confined to his home by his injuries. Do you get that, Peter?"

"I said he had a yellow streak when I read the newspaper account," contemptuously growled Peter. "I suppose he expects you State troopers to guard his breakers for him. How about those gallant deputies?"

"They are busy hiring lawyers and helping the sheriff cook up his defense," grinned Larry McCormick. "I don't love these Hunks, and Polacks, and dagos, God knows, but they got a raw deal handed out to them that time. Say, I thought you were pitching ball for Yale. What are you doing out here? Going to work for the company till the trouble blows over?"

"Not much, Larry. I just want to look at things. Do I need a pass from your troop commander to get inside the lines?"

"No; tell 'em who you are. Every man of our gang knows your batting average, old sport, and reads the college baseball dope just because you come from Carbonville. I'll be relieved late this afternoon. Come around to the camp for supper?"

"Sure. And I hope you fellows will find nothing to do to-night."

"Same here, Peter, but if there is anything doing, we'll be right there on the job," sang out the trooper.

As Peter approached the company's offices, the silence of the inclosure seemed uncanny. The harsh clatter of the breaker machinery had ceased, the deep drone of the hoisting engines was stilled, and nothing was heard but the steady, faithful beat of the pumps and the ventilating apparatus. A few employees and a handful of troopers were lounging outside the buildings, and in the offices a corporal's guard of nervous clerks pretended to be busy with their books and papers.

The mine superintendents and the lesser bosses were more or less demoralized by the absence of the generalissimo, Frank Fosdick, a coal operator of the bullying, dictatorial type, who ruled his kingdom as a one-man power. His staff had not been prepared to cope with an emergency unless he were present to assume charge. They criticized him openly and bitterly. He still refused to make any compromise terms whatever with the strikers, but he also denied their grievance committee admittance to his house, and could not be found at his collieries.

"He is afraid they will kill him on sight," explained one of the superintendents to Peter, who found a cordial welcome. "Every miner in the district believes that Fosdick gave the sheriff the order to shoot. And, between us, a lot of them would leave him too dead to skin if they caught him on the road between here and Carbonville. He was thinking of himself, not of us or the breakers, when he sent a hurry call for a troop of State police."

"But the newspapers are roasting him so unmercifully, all over the country," replied Peter, "that he will have to come to the front and shoulder the responsibility."

The telephone rang just then, and the superintendent answered it. His face expressed surprise and relief, as he spoke into the receiver:

"You will be out in an hour, Mr. Fosdick? Yes, sir. You don't want an escort of troopers? Very well. Yes, the roads are all clear. Every miner in sight has gone to the funerals. No signs of trouble anywhere. Glad to hear you are recovering."

The speaker turned from the telephone and ejaculated:

"Now what do you think of that? The old man has been shamed into making a bluff. He woke up to the fact that he couldn't possibly be mobbed this afternoon, for lack of strikers, so he throws out his chest, and tells me he is coming out in his automobile."

"I am awfully glad to hear the news," exclaimed Peter. "Now that he is sort of cowed, perhaps I can talk to him without being thrown out of the office. I worked for the company a good many years, at both ends of the game, and I am hoping I can frame up a proposition that he will listen to, and that the miners will accept."

"He will listen, maybe—if you hit him with an ax as an opening argument," observed one of the clerks.

After listening for some time to the frank discussion of the events which had culminated in the strike, Peter decided to visit another of the company's breakers. This other mine was perhaps a third of a mile distant, beyond an intervening range of broken, ragged hills and culm banks. The two properties were connected by railroad trackage and sidings, and Peter set out to walk along the ties as the shortest way. Much of the stretch, however, was either newly ballasted or in process of repair, and the footing was so rough that he soon took to the wagon road which twisted and climbed to find the easiest grade among the hills.

At length Peter walked up a long slope, from the summit of which he commanded a widespread bird's-eye view of the Oak Creek collieries, the mining villages scattered round about, and the unkempt city of Carbonville in the background. This hill was a sort of natural observatory, and, moved by an impulse to see all there was to be seen, he climbed a fence and scrambled up a knoll hard by. Here and there were

the vigilant squads of troopers, patrolling not far from their picketed horses, or riding slowly from one breaker to another. Back and forth upon the distant culm bank marched the alert, well-set-up figure of Larry McCormick.

Toward Carbonville a square area, carefully fenced, was discernible, and in it many rows of tiny white dots. Out from the gates of this cemetery was moving a long black column which crawled across the landscape like an immense serpent. The miners were returning homeward from their funeral services, and Peter, curiously fascinated, lingered and watched the winding column diminish in length as detachments of it veered off to seek the roads leading to this settlement and that.

The main body still numbered several hundred men as it advanced along the highway that intersected the road along which Peter Burnham was bound. Off to the right stretched the brown ribbon of turnpike leading directly from Carbonville to the headquarters buildings of the Oak Creek Company.

Peter was about to resume his journey when his attention was caught by the quick glitter of an automobile moving out from Carbonville at great speed. It appeared for an instant, and vanished behind an intervening culm bank, then dipped into sight around the side of a hill. The road it followed would take it clear of the marching miners, but Peter delayed to watch its progress, believing that Frank Fosdick, the operator, must be in the car, for no one would think of motoring into this disturbed region on pleasure bent.

The panorama suddenly became immensely interesting to look at from the hilltop. The remnant of the funeral procession was drawing nearer on one road, while the automobile was running almost in the same direction by another route, which was screened from the sight of the miners. There appeared to be no chance of their meeting, and it was easy to understand how Fosdick had planned to make a display of his courage by refusing an escort of troopers. Obviously he had taken pains to learn the whereabouts of the enemy at the latest possible moment before he ventured out of Carbonville.

The plan was well laid, but in a twinkling it went wrong, as might have been surmised from Peter Burnham's exclamation of excited surprise. Apparently Mr. Fosdick's chauffeur had been instructed to make a detour of a small settlement of miners' tenements, but, instead of swinging back into the highway, he blundered into the intersecting road along which the miners were advancing. Peter beheld the car slow down and come to a halt, while the burly figure of Fosdick emerged from the door of the limousine, and his arms swung in heated gesticulation.

The chauffeur was protesting no less vigorously, and indicating in pantomime, which Peter had no trouble in comprehending, that the road was too narrow in the cutting between the hills to turn the car around without ditching it, and that he must push ahead to a wider stretch before trying to maneuver.

The miners, many of their women with them, were trudging along in weary silence. The brass band had been dismissed, and all the passionate excitement and lamentation were at ebb tide. Although they were now only a few hundred yards from the automobile, which was still screened from their view, Fosdick had received no warning of their approach. The chauffeur, evidently confused and intimidated by the anger of his employer, had somehow stalled or stopped his engine, and was climbing down from his seat, with the intention of cranking it.

Peter's emotions were what might be called harrowed. A few moments and the vengeful miners would be bearing straight down upon the man whom they held guilty of the death of their comrades. They were in a mood to give no quarter, and the obliteration of Mr. Frank Fosdick would have brought no great grief to Peter Burnham. Viewed from another angle, however, the collision would be a catastrophe, the lighting of a fuse which might touch off the whole district in a riot of bloodshed

and disorder. More than this, Peter's instinctive sense of fair play recoiled from the impending attack of a mob against one man.

First he turned and wildly waved his arms like a human semaphore, in the hope of catching the eye of Trooper Larry McCormick, who still marched in silhouette along the ridge of the distant culm bank. The sentry halted, waved his hat, as if recognizing Peter, and plunged down the slope in the direction of his camp. Then Peter took to his heels, and flew downhill with gigantic strides, straight toward the stranded automobile, vaguely hoping to find enough old friends among the crowd of miners to help him hold them in check.

He was vaulting a fence when the dusty assemblage of Lithuanians, Poles, Hungarians, and Italians trudged around a turn of the road, and spied the automobile dead ahead of them, and, standing beside it, the bulky figure of the coal operator of Oak Creek. They recognized him instantly, and such a yell arose as made the hills fling back shrill, clamorous echoes.

Fosdick stood staring like a man in a trance, recovered his wits, and shouted profane commands at his chauffeur, who shot one startled glance at the dangerous mob, dropped the engine crank, and deserted his post of duty like a shot out of a gun. As he passed Peter Burnham he was making a remarkable cross-country flight of it, while the curses of his employer hurtled by his unheeding ears.

Peter ran first toward the miners, begging them to listen to him, but the women had taken command by now, and they were too busy shrieking and throwing stones to pause for argument. Tossing their shawls aside, these brawny amazons led the charge with a fury that was appalling.

A stone grazed Peter's cheek, and he fell back, unwilling to use his fists or a fence rail against these wild-eyed, hysterical assailants, whom it would be absurd to regard as the gentler sex. They were capable of meting out punishment to Fosdick without masculine reënforcements, and, indeed, their husbands and brothers were wavering and taking counsel among themselves.

Fosdick turned pale, and dove inside the limousine to dodge the ugly volleys of stones which were crashing against the engine hood, and breaking the windows.

Peter Burnham did not want to run away, but his position was untenable, and he saw but one thing to do. Swiftly retreating to the automobile, he took cover behind it for an instant, ripped off his coat, threw it about his head with the sleeves tied around his neck, and made a dash for the crank. He was a man of tremendous physical strength, and as he laid hold of the crank and whirled it, the engine fairly spun.

One more mighty effort, and the cylinders picked up their task with explosive grunts that were sweet music to Peter's ears. A stone, hurled at close range, bruised his left arm as he leaped into the driver's seat, jammed home the clutch, and grasped the speed lever. With the strength of sixty horses, the big car lunged forward, and, reckless of the gears, Peter shifted to higher speed.

This monster projectile drove full tilt at the noisy mob, which scattered with cries of panic. There was no need to toot the horn. Men and women tumbled heels over head, sputtering strange oaths. The automobile, no longer helpless, had taken the aggressive, and was seeking to devour them. Here was a thing to cow even the frenzied women, and they displayed marvelous agility in clearing the road.

Again the gears clashed and broke into loud, humming song as the grim and steady chauffeur thrust his lever to high speed, and the car bounded over the rutted, pitted byroad. The mob wheeled about and gazed dumbly in slow-witted bewilderment. Their arch enemy had been snatched from their grasp as by some infernal magic.

Peter was absorbed in trying to prevent the runaway chariot from climbing hillside and culm bank. He had occasionally driven the car of a friend in college, but never in such a mad hur-

dle race as this. The danger past, he began to slacken speed, and then it occurred to him that he had a passenger who might have something to say.

Fosdick was bawling at him to seek the main road and go to the company's offices. He would send the State troopers to disperse the mob, and Heaven knows what else.

Peter nodded absently, and permitted himself an enjoyable chuckle. He had kidnaped the coal operator by some special arrangement of the fates, and he preferred not to act hastily with respect to the problem of disposing of him.

Keeping the car running at such speed that the obstreperous passenger might not undertake to jump out, Peter frowned at the road ahead, and meditated large thoughts. Surely this was an extraordinary opportunity for a heart-to-heart conversation with Mr. Frank Fosdick touching the management of the Oak Creek Coal Company. Peter perceived that he held a hostage, so to speak, and it remained only to play the cards boldly.

The automobile sped merrily, straight away from the collieries, tirelessly eating up the miles that carried it farther and farther away from Carbonville. The passenger ceased swearing, and thrust an arm through the broken front to collar the abductor. Peter picked up a wrench, and rapped the man's knuckles with the emphatic admonition:

"Now, you be good while I figure out what I ought to do with you. I know these roads, and I intend to keep on going for some time."

"You saved my life, Burnham," shouted the beefy gentleman inside. "I mean to reward you handsomely. But we are out of danger now. Don't lose your nerve and run away. What the devil do you think you are doing with my car?"

"Driving it," briefly answered the other. "It is a bully good car. You can afford the best."

Fosdick became silent, curious, and not a little fearful. Peter had worked in the company's offices, and ought to be loyal to its interests, but there was something sinister in this flight into the wilderness country. The coal operator began to wrench at the door handle, at which Peter shoved the car along at higher speed, reckless of the rough road and the rain-washed gullies.

At length there appeared ahead a grass-grown lane leading back into the hilly woodlands, and used by the logging crews which brought out timber for bracing the underground workings of the Carbonville collieries.

Peter steered the car into this secluded lane, and drove carefully until the road was lost to sight and sound. Then he stopped the engine and dismounted, opening the door with the ceremonious invitation:

"Will you be kind enough to step out and sit down on that log yonder, Mr. Fosdick? I was afraid you had a revolver with you, but I took a chance."

"I did have," sputtered the other, "but it must have fallen from my pocket when I got out of the car back yonder. Do you mean to——"

"You couldn't put up much of a scrap," judiciously observed Peter, as he surveyed the florid countenance and massive girth of his captive. "You are in awfully poor condition. Too much fat. Not enough exercise. Short-winded, too. Your heart will go back on you some day."

"See here, Burnham, as man to man, what is all this nonsense about?" demanded Fosdick, mopping his brow and glaring formidably. "You were always a quiet, level-headed fellow. Do you want to hold me up for a big reward for getting me away from those people back there?"

"I wouldn't touch a cent of your money with a pair of tongs," said Peter. "You just sit down and listen to what I have to say, or maybe I'll beat you insensible and run over you a few times. Your legs are a bit trembly, I notice. Better back over to that log."

"I can put you in jail for this," snorted the other.

"You are a trifle shy of witnesses," and Peter smiled pleasantly. "And you have no deputies present to shoot me full of holes. Besides, you are not

anxious to be laughed at. Well, Mr. Fosdick, if I should call at your office or your house to talk for the miners, you would have me thrown out. It is different here, just by ourselves. Supposing I do give you the kind of a licking you deserve. I should get a lot of satisfaction out of it, but I prefer to save that as an argument of last resort. Or I might leave you here to walk home, and you would have a merry time dodging your miners, wouldn't you?"

Fosdick decided to try the rôle of bluff good nature. He laughed and answered:

"You are wasting your talents as a clerk, Burnham. I should have promoted you years ago."

Peter deliberately sat down upon the log beside the other man, and announced:

"You are the meanest coal operator in this whole district, Fosdick. Every other company is trying to do something for its people to make them contented, to give them a chance to save a little out of their wages, to let their children grow up in fairly healthy surroundings. You treat them as brutes, and when they object you have them shot down. The stockholders of this company won't stand for you any longer."

"So you have turned labor agitator, have you?" sneered Fosdick. "I suppose the union headquarters sent you as a delegate."

"The United Mine Workers won't have to interfere in this trouble," returned Peter, his color rising, but his temper well controlled. "You and I are going to settle it right here. I represent the controlling interest of your company."

Fosdick stared and laughed, but not good-naturedly. "A flimsy bluff to throw at me," said he, "and from a youngster in college who was a breaker boy not so very long ago. Guess again, Burnham."

"*You* guess wrong," replied Peter. "I am speaking for the Townsend estate."

"The Townsend estate has nothing to do with this company. The control is tied up hard and fast in the Schuyler Trust Company, of New York, trusteed, assigned, and double-riveted. The Townsend estate draws its fat dividends, and there is nothing else to it. This is a farce, Burnham. You mean well, but you are so young, so green!"

"Thank God I am young enough to make a fool of myself," declared Peter, rising to his feet and hitching up his belt, as if he were clearing for action. "It is a waste of time to argue with you in behalf of the miners. I've got you where I want you, Fosdick, and I'm willing to do time in jail for this afternoon's work."

"I'll attend to that part of it," snapped the operator, "unless you quit all this tomfoolery, and take me back to Carbonville."

Peter patted his own right fist, and significantly breathed on the knuckles. "You saw me whip big Joe O'Donnell, when he insulted the daughter of that Polack door tender? I think you were there, Mr. Fosdick. And I wasn't as strong and handy as I am now. All right, we'll have no more tomfoolery. You are going to write out your resignation as general manager of the Oak Creek Coal Company. Is that straight enough talk for you?"

The other man struggled heavily to his feet, his face suffused, as if he were threatened with apoplexy, and his utterance was choked as he cried:

"You—you—half-witted fool! You ought to be locked up in an asylum. Write out my——"

"Yes, here, on the spot, now, Mr. Fosdick." Peter thrust his chin close to the operator's face. He was no longer the quiet, self-contained Yale undergraduate, but the rough-and-tumble miner, primitive, reckless, tough-fibered. He took from one pocket a notebook, from another a fountain pen, and held them while he went on to say: "Date it from Carbonville, address it to the Schuyler Trust Company, and chop it short."

The other man caught hold of the pen with uncertain fingers, his manner dazed, as if he were controlled by a stronger will than his own. His nerve-

had been broken by the tragic collision between the deputies and the strikers. Its aftermath of public denunciation had made him doubtful of himself, a prey to fears that he had made an enormous mistake. The legal consequences might not touch him, for the formal responsibility was upon the shoulders of the sheriff, whom the grand jury was likely to exculpate, but there was another kind of verdict which he could not escape.

The sublime rashness of Peter Burnham delayed not to analyze these things. He saw that he was dealing with a man who was an abject coward under the skin, a man whom he could bully and tame.

"You figure that you can explain and withdraw this forced resignation as soon as I turn you loose," observed Peter. "But can you? What kind of a story have you to tell? That you were kidnaped in your own automobile by a young man from college, who carried you off to a lonely spot, and was perfectly mean and horrid to you? Fudge! Wouldn't the newspapers just gloat over that yarn. This proposition can't be explained, and you know it. And your employers, the trust company, would set you down as a fine, sandy, resourceful man to handle a coal strike."

Fosdick's glance had wandered to the log upon which he had been seated. Close beside it, and no more than a few feet from him, a stout hickory stake was half buried in dry leaves. Peter's vigilance had lapsed, perhaps diverted by the sound of his own eloquence, and his careless contempt for the courage of his prisoner made him oblivious of the intended maneuver.

Plunging forward, Fosdick shoved Peter aside, and dived for the hickory stake, which he caught up with a clumsy effort. The blow he aimed was at close quarters, for Peter dove like a football player to throw and disarm him. Although the bludgeon swung at random, it was heavy enough to break down his guard, and strike the top of his head with force enough to lay open the scalp.

An instant later and the stake had been wrested from the agitated grasp of Mr. Frank Fosdick, who found himself compelled to sit down upon the log with a jarring thump that would have done credit to a pile driver. Peter did not strike him, but laid hands on his shoulders and crumpled him up.

"I didn't think you had any fight left in you," said the damaged young man, as he wiped the blood from his forehead and blinked with a ludicrous air of surprise. "A little more swing to it, and that club of yours might have given me a headache. I'm not going to be peevish and do things to you. I need you in my business. I guess you had better write that resignation."

Fosdick grunted, and appeared less rebellious against his fate. His self-respect had been raised a peg, and he eyed the other man's broken pate with evident relish.

"You win," said the captive. "Just between us, Burnham, I have thought of resigning, but I disliked the idea of quitting under fire. What do you propose to do with this document?"

"Mail it to the trust company tonight," said Peter, "and give a copy to the newspaper reporters, with no comments. You can hand out any interviews you like. This sending in a resignation written on the leaf of a notebook may look irregular, but you are the original man in a hole, and I didn't have time to bring a stenographer along."

Fosdick kicked the leaves aside, and disclosed the fountain pen, which he had dropped to pick up the hickory stake. Peter gravely presented the notebook, and the few necessary lines were written and signed.

"This is more like a bad dream than anything that ever happened to me," sighed the conquered coal operator. "It is so ridiculously preposterous—— But what else can I do?"

Peter was reading the document with scrupulous care. "All correct. 'To take effect immediately.' Get in your car, Mr. Fosdick, and I shall be pleased to drive you to Oak Creek, or home, and I think I can dodge the miners."

With never a word, but breathing

heavily and forlorn of aspect, the owner of the expensive automobile climbed inside, and sat staring at the wooded landscape while Peter Burnham found a turning place, and steered back into the road. The whole episode seemed as unreal to him as it could have possibly appeared to the other actor. It was like some mad college escapade transformed into a drama of vital importance.

As he turned it over and over in his mind, however, he could find no flaws in the transaction with the hapless Fosdick. The operator could not repudiate the resignation without exposing himself to such a storm of ridicule as would drive him into hiding. Who would the trust company appoint to take charge of the collieries? How was the strike to be adjusted? And was it true that the Townsend estate had no voice in the management of its own properties? These were problems to be threshed out a step at a time.

The kidnaped operator broke into these meditations by shouting through the window:

"I think you had better strike off to the eastward of the mines and take me into Carbonville. I have had trouble enough for one afternoon."

"You don't want to go to Oak Creek?"

"For what? Let them fight it out among themselves. You've put me out of commission."

Peter grinned at the wide, wide world, and scanned the road with considerable anxiety. He felt bound in honor to deliver his hostage safe and sound as part of the bargain. Having tramped all these country highways as a lad, he was able to give the Oak Creek settlements a comfortably wide berth, but the detour covered a long distance, and the afternoon was far spent when he came to the outskirts of Carbonville.

His passenger had become enwrapped in moody silence, which was not interrupted until the automobile halted in front of his pretentious residence. Then, as Peter affably pulled open the door, the deposed lord of the breakers grunted in farewell:

"I suppose I should have been a dead man by now if you hadn't run away with me, Burnham. Are we all square?"

"I am satisfied, thank you," replied Peter, as he abandoned the battered car and strode off to find his hotel, transact his business, and return to Oak Creek.

The trifling cut on his head had ceased bleeding, and he was still in excellent fettle to undertake whatever might be the next task in hand. Carbonville was uneasy with rumors of more trouble with the strikers, and the latest report said that ten thousand miners of the district were to be ordered out to join cause with their comrades at Oak Creek. The sheriff had urged the governor to send more troops to the scene. Peter knew the region well enough to comprehend how readily such alarms were magnified, and felt no fears for his own safety as he sought the countryside in the darkness of early evening.

At the boundary fence of the Oak Creek property, a sentry sharply cried out the order to halt. As the two met face to face, Peter recognized Trooper Larry McCormick, who grasped him by the arm, and demanded:

"What happened to you this afternoon? For the love of Heaven, tell me the answer. I saw you making windmill signals for help on the top of a hill. Anybody that had ever seen you pitch ball could ha' told it was you a mile off. I reported, and six of us men and a sergeant rode over there, lickety-cut. All we found was a crazy bunch of miners making a noise in the middle of the road. We managed to extract the information that you tried to run 'em down with Frank Fosdick's automobile, and him inside of it. Put me wise, Peter."

"I was holding the center of the stage, Larry, but the story will have to wait. I was surely going some."

"But I thought you were a friend of the miners," said the other. "How long since you took the job of driving Fosdick's gas wagon? That won't make you popular with the Polacks."

"Oh, I was working for the miners every minute," chuckled Peter. "But

what about the situation here to-night—anything doing?"

"Perhaps. The tip is out that the bunch will try to burn this breaker before morning," and the trooper was no longer jesting. "Those funerals made them awful sore. There are not many of us, you understand, and we're split up, with the other breakers to guard."

"Whew! there may be something in it, Larry," anxiously returned Peter. "But, see here, supposing they knew that Fosdick had quit the company? Wouldn't that make a difference?"

"They hate him worse than poison," was the reply. "Get him out of the way, and this strike can be handled without any more rioting. What do you know? Are you giving it to me straight?"

"Fosdick is down and out," said Peter. "The miners will have a new general manager to deal with in a few days. He lost his job because of the way he bungled this strike. Take that from me."

"Inside information, eh?" remarked the trooper, evidently impressed. "You always were a brainy guy. Leak in the company's offices, was there, and you got next?"

"No, I found it out for myself, when I was driving his car," soberly vouchsafed Peter. "I suppose old man Henderson will be in charge to-night. He ranks next to Fosdick. See you later, Larry."

He passed inside the stout plank fence which surrounded the buildings like a low stockade, and walked into the offices where Henderson, the grizzled superintendent, was in conference with several of his trusted employees. In another room perhaps twenty deputies, armed with rifles or repeating shotguns, were talking in low tones, and moving about uneasily. The sheriff had found it difficult to enroll volunteers since the bloody affair in the road, and these men were a poor-looking lot, some of them out-and-out hobos, picked up in the railroad yards. They would be worthless if the breaker were seriously attacked, thought Peter.

He wondered if Fosdick had sent any message by telephone, but, before he could make inquiry, Henderson called him aside, and said:

"I hear you helped the old man out of a tight place this afternoon. He sent word a little while ago that he couldn't come out here to-night, and told me to run things. What did he tell you?"

Peter perceived the folly of announcing the operator's resignation. Henderson would not believe the news, coming from this source. "He didn't seem any too fond of his job," was the brief response.

"We know that," said Henderson, who was disgusted with the company's conduct of the strike. "I suppose I shall have to——"

A horse galloped into the inclosure, and those in the building crowded toward the doorway, attentive, expectant. The trooper flung himself from the saddle, and announced:

"At least a thousand of 'em have started to march, and other crowds are waiting to fall in at the crossroads. I scouted as far as the village by the creek, and almost ran slap into a gang that turned loose revolvers at me. Where's the captain?"

He ran toward the nearest culm bank, while Henderson turned to rally the panicky deputies. Peter Burnham was thinking of Geraldine Townsend. This was her property, and he was pledged to help defend it. He went outside, and blundered into Larry McCormick, who panted:

"We are to stand ready with our horses. You'd better keep out of this, old sport. You were seen with Fosdick this afternoon. The miners will just love to take a crack at you."

A bugle sounded, clear and lilting, the call of "boots and saddles," and the shadowy figures of the dismounted sentries scurried from the gates, the culm banks, the roadside, and breaker. Peter turned in another direction, and walked to the open area of the railroad sidings to listen for sounds of the approaching mob.

Soon a low, droning murmur, as from a gigantic beehive, came over the

hills from far away. A great sadness took hold of him. This little army of ignorant, misguided foreigners was undertaking a futile thing. The blind instinct for vengeance which swayed their clouded minds would be turned against them like a two-edged sword. The troopers were making ready to ride them down. And what if they succeeded in burning a coal breaker? More soldiers would be summoned, the district put under martial law, the reign of order restored at no matter what cost.

It was all so unnecessary. Peter could not quite see how it was to be accomplished, but he believed that the passing of Fosdick meant the end of the old régime at Oak Creek. If only the miners could be made to understand this before they came to the end of their mad journey and the encounter with the armed horsemen waiting in disciplined readiness.

"I must have some old friends in that mob," he said to himself. "I was always on the level with them, in the mine and in the office. It is up to me to take a chance. I can't see anything else to it. And I'd be a darned poor Yale man if I lost my sand just because things are sort of stacking up against me."

Crossing the tracks to the watchman's hut, he picked up a gasoline torch, felt in his pockets for matches, and, without striking a light, moved quietly toward the gate that opened to the highway along which the miners must approach the breaker. No one saw him go, for the troopers had not been sent to their new stations, and he was glad to be left alone to set forth on his fool's errand.

The advance of the mob was slow and disorderly, lacking leadership and determination. Peter had walked perhaps a quarter of a mile before the buzzing murmur of sound began to be articulate, to separate itself into angry shouts and drunken expostulation. He came to a place where the road slightly pitched downhill, and stood ready to light his torch in order that the men might see who he was. Then, as its bright flare revealed him standing in a wavering circle of illumination, he swallowed hard, fought down the sense of physical fear that suddenly gripped him, and tried to think of words that should make the swiftest, surest appeal.

The front ranks of the assemblage halted and pressed back on those behind. There was silence for a moment. The solitary figure with the torch, looming so boldly in the middle of the road, had leaped from the darkness with uncanny effect. This respite gave Peter a chance to shout:

"You know me. I'm Burnham, that was one of you. Fosdick is out. Fosdick has jumped the job. He's fired. You're going to get a square deal. Let the breaker alone. You have won your strike."

There was a great clatter of voices, the men who understood English bawling the import of the speech to their gaping friends. A few of them raised a cheer, and Peter hoped the crisis was broken. Others, and theirs was the greater number, cried out wrathfully, some cursing Fosdick and the company, many denouncing Burnham as a liar and a traitor who was trying to turn them aside with false information.

Peter flung out his arm and implored them:

"Don't be crazy, men. Listen to me. I got Fosdick away from you in his automobile to-day because he was worth more to you alive than dead. I am here on the job to help you win your fight. No coal company on God's earth can buy me. I'm a miner all the time. Fosdick is down and out to-night. It's the truth. And you are going to be treated right."

An Irishman roared back at him:

"I believe ye, Pete Burnham, you big tarrier. I'm hankerin' to beat th' head off a deputy, but maybe it's more sinsible to quit frolickin', an' take chances with th' new boss, whoever he is."

"Ay—oh, what about my brudder? Dey shooted 'im dead?" wailed a woman in the midst of the throng. "After we burns da breaker oop we go to Carbonville and finds Fosdick. Dere ain't no soldiers dere."

Again the irate outcry swelled in volume, and Peter's friends could not make themselves heard. He was making headway, however, and he had checked the advance. If he could compel them to listen and thereby gain further delay, the temper of the mob might cool. But, before he could raise his voice, some one called out, with a brutal laugh:

"The —— —— big stiff! He's hired to bluff us. Here's his pay."

At the flash and report of a pistol, Peter Burnham dropped his torch, and put his hands to his stomach. Then, with a long sigh, he sank to his knees and toppled over, his face in the dust of the road.

VI.

Springtime was stirring on the Yale campus. The hundreds of young men who passed leisurely to and fro were reluctant to forsake the pleasant out-of-doors and spend an hour in classroom and lecture hall. They were too busy after their own random fashion to be annoyed by studies and recitations. The immemorial call of the awakened year came to them with the warm sunshine, the new grass, and the fresh leafage, because youth was theirs, and the joy of living, and a dream world to dwell in.

Nevertheless, they took themselves and their pursuits with delightful seriousness, and strove manfully to live up to the fine traditions established by many generations of their elders. Silent influences worked ceaselessly to make them worthy of this heritage, nor would they know until the after years how much more the spirit than the spoken teachings of the place had left its lasting imprint.

This spring weather was particularly trying to the good intentions of Hector Alonzo McGrath, who shied from recitations like a colt at sight of a scrap of paper. The college was pouring out of chapel, and Hector lingered at the fence, a flower in his buttonhole, a song on his lips, and a lawless impulse in his heart to charter a catboat for the forenoon and sail down the harbor into the dimpling blue Sound.

Presently Jim Stearns passed, two books tucked under his arm, and his manner that of a young man hastily seeking knowledge.

This spectacle displeased Hector. It was too much like parading a moral lesson before his eyes, and he sang out:

"Hey, you greasy grind. Too busy to notice your disreputable friends?"

The oarsman lost his abstracted air, and cheerfully returned:

"Hello, you loafer. You are due at this first recitation. Get a move on you."

"You can't hurry me on a fine, lovely morning like this, Jim. I'm liable to cut that first recitation if I can find a pal who is lost to all sense of shame."

"You have rung up the wrong number if you expect me to join one of your flighty expeditions," said Stearns.

"Tut, tut! Much learning hath made you mad," caroled Hector. "Say, is that a morning paper sticking out of your pocket? What is the news from Harvard and Princeton? This baseball proposition is getting on my nerves since Peter Burnham jumped the reservation."

"Haven't had a chance to look at the paper," replied the other. "My monitor kept his eagle eye on me in chapel."

Hector purloined the newspaper, and carelessly scanned the front page before turning to the sporting columns. A conspicuously displayed dispatch fairly jumped at him, and stunned him for a moment. He gaped at Stearns, who, startled by his sudden pallor, failed to see the type at which the other's shaky finger was pointing.

"Read it!" quavered Hector. "Poor old Peter! The sandiest man in college! And—and we blackguarded him for deserting the baseball team."

Jim was gazing over his chum's shoulder, and they read the news through in woebegone silence. Peter had been shot while trying to prevent a mob of miners from attacking one of the breakers of the Oak Creek Coal Company. Several of his old friends among them had picked him up in the

road, and carried him to the company's offices, and from there he was hurried to the hospital in Carbonville. It was reported, although not confirmed by the physicians, because of the lateness of the hour, that he had been shot through the body. The tragedy had disorganized the attack of the miners, many of them denouncing the affair, and they were easily dispersed by the State troopers without further bloodshed.

Interviews with employees of the company and with the miners themselves showed that Burnham had volunteered to allay the hostile spirit among the strikers. In the afternoon he had been seen in company with Mr. Frank Fosdick, the operator in charge of the collieries, and doubtless some of the miners had misunderstood his motives in attempting to halt their march at night. Mr. Fosdick had refused to be interviewed, and his resignation was announced through the Associated Press.

Following this was a brief paragraph which instantly illuminated the whole matter of Peter Burnham's flight from college. Hector read it aloud, his accents halting and unsteady:

The resignation of Mr. Fosdick may bring about an early settlement of the strike. The Oak Creek Coal Company is directly controlled by the Schuyler Trust Company, of New York, which will doubtless appoint a new general manager at once. The majority interest of the stock is owned by the estate of the late Caspar Townsend, of New Haven, who left it in trust to his only daughter, Miss Geraldine Townsend.

Jim Stearns' textbooks fell to the ground. He leaned against the fence, rested his chin in his hand, and gazed across the happy campus with unseeing eyes. There were not two more miserable young men than these in the whole world. The enormity of their blundering interference was too great for words. Discussion was really unnecessary, and Stearns was talking to himself when, at length, he muttered:

"And while Peter Burnham was making up his mind to do this thing because he loved Geraldine Townsend, we were doing our darndest to get her engaged to Billy Aldridge. Oh, Hector, he is too big a man for us to understand. We ought to have let him alone."

Hector's troubled sigh was wrenched from the bottom of his soul as he murmured:

"We are the prize pair of meddlesome kids, all right. Is there anything we can do? You have more sense than I? For Heaven's sake let's find out the truth about Peter's shooting scrape. He may be dead for all we know. The long-distance phone may put us in touch with the hospital."

They fled across the campus, and Hector dived into the booth of the nearest drug store, while Jim fretted and walked the floor. The minutes seemed hours, and the delay almost more than nerves could bear. Every now and then Jim jerked the door of the booth open to listen, but nothing could be heard except Hector's end of an excited wrangle with the operator. At length he hung up the receiver and announced, the tears starting to his eyes:

"Can't get a through connection. Wire trouble somewhere in the mountains between Wilkesbarre and Carbonville. We'll have to send a telegram."

As if he had been waiting for his cue, a uniformed messenger boy just then strolled into the drug store, paused to light a cigarette at the cigar counter, and demanded of the clerk:

"Say, sport, what dormitory does James M. Stearns live in? He's the varsity crew man, ain't he? Think we're goin' to lick the Harvards this year?"

Two young men made a simultaneous dash for him, the same hope occurring to both. He ducked clear and fled for the door with a yell of fright, but a glance over his shoulder led to recognition, and he wheeled to say:

"Sure it's Jim Stearns himself. How about handin' me an inside tip on the boat race? I want to get a bet down."

His thirst for information totally overlooked, he surrendered the telegram, and vanished with a seriously offended air. Jim ripped open the tele-

gram, and his laugh was hysterical as he read aloud:

"CARBONVILLE, April 10.
"Am resting easy. Will get well to pitch the big games. Don't let the newspapers put you up in the air. PETER BURNHAM."

Jim Stearns first cuffed Hector across the head, then dug his knuckles into his own eyes, and lastly blubbered:

"Y-you couldn't k-kill him with an ax. I hereby d-declare this a legal holiday. C-come on, we must tell all the fellows."

They were moving arm in arm across the street to the campus, when Hector fetched up as if he had run into an obstacle, and declared:

"It is the best news that ever happened, Jim, but what about the rest of it—the girl, and—you know. Peter with a broken heart may be better than Peter shot full of holes—but I'm not quite sure about that."

"Good Lord, I forgot!" groaned Jim, his gladness instantly dispelled. "After what he has done for her, he surely deserves a fair chance with Geraldine Townsend. And we have queered his game."

"But have we, Jim? Hawkins, the *News* heeler, failed to get anything to print about it. And Billy Aldridge was giving a poor imitation of a joyous, just-engaged person when I saw him yesterday. I thought he was carrying a grouch."

"It's a terrible mess," lamented Jim, "and if you can find any silver lining to the cloud, you are the campus optimist, and no mistake! Just imagine it! Think of Peter coming home, a battle-scarred hero, an up-to-date Sir Galahad, and finding that the girl accepted Billy Aldridge in his absence, and that we put up the job—we, us, you and I—the best friends Peter has in the world! Why, for two cents I'd let a trolley car run over me."

Having wandered into the quadrangle, they steered an aimless course, until Hector suggested:

"Better go to the rooms and talk it over. You don't want to go to any recitations this morning."

"I am due in Billy Aldridge's classroom at ten o'clock, and so are you," growled Jim. "Excuse me. I might try to assassinate him."

"Don't blame Billy. It is distinctly up to us. Do you know what we have simply got to do, Hector?"

"Jump a train for Carbonville, and confess to Peter. Decency demands it," lugubriously affirmed Hector Alonzo.

"You are in the right church, but the wrong pew, my son. We are going to toddle around to see Miss Geraldine Townsend right now. There is where we did the damage, and there is where we must try to mend it. Perhaps she didn't even know that Peter had hit the trail for Carbonville."

"I am game to have a talk with her, if you think best," was the obedient reply. "What the deuce shall we say? Ask her if she is engaged to Billy Aldridge?"

"No, that sounds crude, Hector. We must be diplomatic. We tried to steer her out of Peter's reach, and now the square thing is to persuade her to give him a show. He has earned it. I feel like seventeen kinds of a traitor."

"Benedict Arnold had nothing on me," sighed Hector. "We sized Peter's game up all wrong."

"Never, never butt into a grown man's affairs," said Jim. "It is bad medicine."

As they walked toward the home of Geraldine, each stole wistful glances at the other, as if seeking moral support. Their mission was vague in the extreme, but their intentions deserved the heartiest sympathy. It is one of the peculiar charms of the college campus that its young men are wont to act on impulse, as the powder speeds the bullet; and as a rule these impulses are wholesome and unselfish.

This unhappy pair stood ready to make any sacrifice on the altar of friendship, and theirs was the time of life and the environment that lend to friendship its most genuine and golden qualities. In silence and with hanging heads they stood at Miss Townsend's door, and wondered if she would consent to see

them at this informal hour. The servant regarded them dubiously, and said:

"I'll tell her your names, but I am sure she will be not at home."

"It is very important," Jim hastened to assure her. "Kindly inform Miss Townsend that we wish to see her about a mutual friend, Mr. Peter Burnham."

"Ah, Mr. Peter Burnham, indeed!" was the interested reply. "That's different. She has a telegram from him. A black shame it was that thim beastly dagos shot him with a bullet. He had no business messin' up with 'em at all."

Before Geraldine could be summoned she was descending the stairs, and very lovely she was to look at, although her vivid color had fled, and one might have surmised that her night had been wakeful and troubled. Her greeting smile was tremulous as she addressed the visitors by name, and said:

"Have you heard this morning's good news? Mr. Burnham was not dangerously hurt, and——"

"We got a telegram. Hooray for Peter!" impetuously interrupted Hector Alonzo. "We thought you might not have heard. That first report was an awful blow, wasn't it? We didn't hear it until after chapel."

"I heard it at midnight," said Geraldine, as they followed her into the reception room. "I was so anxious to learn the latest news of the strike that I called up the office of the New York *Herald*. The managing editor was a friend of my father. He told me what you read this morning."

"And did Peter send you a cheerful telegram?" asked Stearns.

Geraldine glanced down at the slip of yellow paper which her fingers still held, but she did not offer to read its message. Slightly confused, she answered: "Yes, he was very reassuring. He told me not to worry about him or the collieries, that the backbone of the strike was broken." She hesitated, found courage at sight of the eager, ingenuous faces of Hector and Jim, and continued: "I know that you are his most intimate friends. Please tell me, did he explain to you why he was going to Carbonville?"

"No; he was mum as an oyster, said we couldn't understand if he told us," answered Jim, and then it was his turn to appear agitated, as he stammered hurriedly: "You see, Miss Townsend—it was this way: Of course you are wondering why we came to see you. Well, when we read that those coal mines belonged to you, we sort of put two and two together, and—and we figured it out that Peter had dashed out to Carbonville in your interest—it would be just like him to do that kind of a fool stunt—I beg your pardon—to be heroic and rash—and a regular old brick generally—so we wanted to drop in and just talk it over with you—not that it is any of our business, except that we think the world of Peter—and——"

He perceived that he was getting nowhere, so the speech ended abruptly, and he vigorously fanned himself with his hat while gazing appealingly at Hector Alonzo McGrath. Geraldine was puzzled by the embarrassment of the stalwart oarsman, who had hitherto impressed her as a young man quite at his ease among the ladies. She had her own trying confession to make, and hers was the hard part, or so it seemed to her. With a drooping, sorrowful smile, she said:

"I am very glad that you came to see me so promptly. It was the natural thing to do under the circumstances. You hold me responsible for sending Peter Burnham to a place of danger, to risk his life—and this will not sound like an anticlimax to you—to leave the varsity nine in the lurch. But, really and truly, I did not send him. I was very anxious and helpless, and I asked his advice because he had been a coal miner in the Carbonville district, employed by this very Oak Creek Coal Company. And I never dreamed that he could be so foolishly, splendidly brave and self-sacrificing."

"You didn't know Peter Burnham as well as we do," was Hector's earnest comment. "We don't blame you, Miss Townsend. Why, Peter is glad he stopped that bullet. You see, he would do anything in the world for those min-

ers, and besides, when he thinks a lot of any one—we'll say a girl, for instance—though, of course, I don't mean to be personal—why, he'll stand by to the finish, and the tougher the finish the better he likes it."

"You *are* somewhat personal, Mr. McGrath," said Geraldine, with a glint of her wonted mirthfulness. "Mr. Burnham is a friend in a thousand. I am grateful that you have no hard feeling toward me."

"No sane man could have," gallantly spoke up Hector. "My nerve is oozing fast, Miss Townsend, and Stearns here is going to pieces even faster. If I don't make my speech now, I'll never get it out of my system. I feel small enough to slip through a crack in the floor without scratching a button, but here goes. When—when Hawkins, the *News* heeler, came to see you the other day—you remember what he asked you about—— Here, Jim, hold my hand, I feel faintish—— Well, Miss Townsend, Stearns and I put him up to it. We sent him first to Professor Aldridge, and sort of reckoned that if Billy turned him down he would gallop over here and pester you, and—it was really my scheme."

"I am just as guilty. We hatched it together," cried Jim. "It sounds like an ungentlemanly, muckerish trick, but our motives were respectable."

Geraldine sat very erect, looked poor Jim square in the eye, and crisply inquired:

"Will you be kind enough to tell me what the respectable motives were? I ought to be angry, but you are so absurd."

Hector Alonzo shuddered, rose very carefully from his chair, walked to the window, and mumbled:

"What a lot of weather we are having!"

Jim Stearns stared at his feet, which struck him as looking unusually large, and uttered a hollow laugh.

"You are wise enough to guess what we were driving at, Miss Townsend," he said, after some time. "You simply want to make it hard for us, and it serves us right. Hector, you tell her."

"I'll match you, one toss," returned Hector. "Here's a coin. Heads or tails?"

"Heads," said Jim.

The piece of silver was flipped in air, fell upon the polished floor, and rolled under a divan. Hector scrambled after it on his knees, and announced, in muffled accents:

"Heads it is. You win, Jim. I shall have to tell her."

Geraldine watched this singular performance without comment. The ways of the campus were familiar to her, and this logical method of breaking a deadlock had its merits. Hector Alonzo squared his shoulders, drew a long breath, and proceeded to declaim in a faltering, die-away manner:

"Well, it was this way: Peter Burnham is a serious-minded man, and we thought he was thinking too much about you, Miss Townsend, and for the sake of the college we didn't want him to go distracted during the baseball season, and lose his pitching form. And we couldn't see that Peter had any show to win—I don't mean in baseball—and we thought that if Billy Aldridge had the proper kind of a shove—encouragement in due season—if somebody touched off a firecracker under him—— Haven't I said enough?"

"You have said a good deal, Mr. McGrath," gravely observed Geraldine. "Of all the incredible, well-meaning busybodies——"

"I don't want to be a quitter," put in Jim Stearns. "Hector has spoken his piece like a little man. As for the rest of it, why, when we learned why Peter had gone to Carbonville, and what had happened to him, we wanted to be on the level, and ask you to forget all about that conspiracy of ours, and give Peter a chance, if it isn't too late. We owe it to him. This interview is very painful for us, but——"

"It is excessively awkward and disconcerting for me," said Geraldine. "And what reply do you expect me to make? Oh, but you are a delightfully foolish pair of boys."

"You needn't say a word," declared Hector. "Just think it over. If you

understand our position, we shall feel tremendously relieved."

"And do you expect to go to see Mr. Burnham?" she asked him.

"Why, of course I do. I couldn't think of but one thing at a time. Me for the first train to Carbonville. How about you, Jim?"

The oarsman sadly shook his head. "I wish I could, but I can't leave the crew, Hector, unless it is a matter of life or death. If I could be of any real service to Peter I'd try to arrange it, but he will understand, and you can see to it that he is getting the best of everything."

"Mr. Stearns is right," was the verdict of Geraldine, "but I shall go with you, Mr. McGrath. If you will be kind enough to telephone for a carriage, I will tell my aunt to pack her suit case and mine."

Whereupon she bestowed a smile of forgiveness on Jim Stearns, bade him farewell, and vanished from the room with the most businesslike celerity.

"She certainly drives on high speed," Jim delayed to whisper to his comrade. "What do you think it means? Is Peter's stock going up?"

"You never can tell. Women are so sudden and inconsequential," replied Hector. "She thinks it is her duty to fly to Peter's bedside. That is loyalty and gratitude. She put it into his head to go charging off and hunting trouble. Her conscience is hit, but her heart—— My boy, this is too complicated for me."

Jim looked at his watch, and said:

"You are through with me. I can make the next recitation by sprinting for it."

"I'll write you, Jim. Holler up at the rooms, and tell January Ferguson to hurl a few things into a bag, and I'll dash in for it when we go down College Street."

There was no long waiting for Geraldine Townsend when she had made up her mind to expedite matters. There was still time to catch the next express train for New York when she reappeared, followed, after a brief interval, by the flustered, elderly female relative whom she presented to Hector as "my aunt, Miss Ellen Forbush." The latter was still protesting meekly:

"But have you thought it over, Geraldine? People may misunderstand. It is good-hearted of you, but——"

"We can discuss it at our leisure in the train," replied Geraldine. "I am sorry to have to drag you off with me in this helter-skelter fashion, but otherwise the campus might suppose I was eloping with Mr. McGrath. Is the carriage here?"

Hector murmured that such an elopement would not be in the least disagreeable, and convoyed his personally conducted party to the waiting hack, which happened to be commanded by Dan Mulligan.

"Sure I'll make the train if this old hearse holds together," said he. "'Tis dreadful sad about Mr. Burnham, God bless him! The news is goin' round that he ain't hurted as bad as they said. He's Irish clean through, an' if he ain't he ought to be. Giddap!"

So earnestly did Mr. Mulligan belabor his steeds in order to live up to his word that as he drew up to the curb near the campus, in order to permit Hector Alonzo to run to his rooms, the rattling onset was checked barely in time to escape collision with a young man who was reading a newspaper as he crossed the street. His startled glance beheld not only Hector about to alight, but also the charming profile of Geraldine Townsend, who saw him an instant later, and called warningly:

"It isn't safe to let you roam without a keeper, Billy. Didn't you see us coming?"

"Bless me, no," cried Professor Aldridge. "But where are you going? To a fire?"

"To see Peter Burnham," demurely answered Geraldine.

Aldridge had just survived one shock to his nervous system, only to encounter another, much more disturbing than collision with a hack. "I was just reading about him. Dreadful, isn't it?" he returned rather feebly. "But what *do* you mean? You are not going to Carbonville?"

"That is my intention, Billy. I can't honorably do anything else. Those are my coal mines. It is high time I visited them."

"But let me go with you," he implored. "That region is in a state of war. It is no place for you."

Geraldine said, very softly:

"I sent Peter Burnham there. Isn't that a good reason why I should go to see him, now that he is wounded and suffering and alone?"

Aldridge was silent, his sensitive, clean-cut features clouded with grieving jealousy and wonderment. He was too proud to demand further explanation, too generous to reproach her for caring to do a kindly, loyal deed. But why had she not sent for him, instead of confiding in Hector McGrath? He was about to turn away from the carriage when she put out her hand and detained him, saying:

"This is not like you, Billy. I will tell you all about it when I come home. There were good reasons why I could not explain after Peter Burnham went away. You might not have understood. Aren't you going to say good-by?"

Whatever else Aldridge might have had in mind to say was thwarted by the return of Hector McGrath, who took in the tableau with a smile of mischievous enjoyment. The young professor tried hard to hide his tumultuous emotions, and had time only to wave his hat in farewell as Dan Mulligan plied his whip, and the steeds made a valiant attempt to jump through their collars.

Hector glanced at Geraldine, who had become uncommunicative, whereupon that wicked youth began to hum the refrain of a Glee Club ditty, whose words ran in this wise:

Fare thee well, for I must leave thee,
Do not let the parting grieve thee,
And remember that the best of friends must part, must part.

At this impertinent provocation, the silence of Geraldine became positively freezing, and Hector was driven to make desultory conversation with Miss Ellen Forbush. That timid lady viewed the unconventional journey with such clouded misgivings that she was poor company, in spite of her efforts to be politely responsive, and Hector's cheerful sallies fell with what he mentally dubbed "a dull, sickening thud."

His flighty but ever-active intellect was, therefore, driven to a contemplation of the very singular circumstances into which he had plunged, and, after reviewing the swift march of events, he said to himself:

"Put it in a book, and nobody would believe it. And even now I don't even know how to pick the favorite. Is Peter still the hundred-to-one shot? I dare not ask her any more questions. Here is where I play the useful little traveling companion, and watch the game work itself out to a finish."

During the journey to New York, he solicitously plied Geraldine with candy, magazines, and novels, and was such a devoted, humble slave that she relented, and told him what a nice boy he was when he refrained from meddling in other peoples' affairs. They were passing through the Grand Central Station to make another railroad connection by way of a Jersey City ferry, when Hector shouted at sight of a distinguished-looking, very well-groomed man of middle age, who was walking away from the telegraph office.

"Why, there is your father, Mr. McGrath!" exclaimed Geraldine. "I met him at one of the Harvard games last year. What will he think of your absence from college?"

"Sure it's my dad!" cried the youth. "He will think you are a perfectly good excuse. Wait here, and I'll fetch him."

Geraldine beheld an affectionate greeting, and no signs whatever of paternal wrath, the elder McGrath appearing to find considerable amusement in what his son had to say. They chatted for a moment or two, Hector declaiming with earnest gestures, pausing to tow his father by the arm, and announce, as soon as he was within hearing distance of the others:

"Father was just going to run up to New Haven to see me, Miss Townsend. I am trying to explain our errand of mercy."

"You had better not try," laughed

Geraldine. "How do you do, Mr. McGrath? It looks very much as if I were running away with your son, doesn't it?"

"He could not be found in more delightful company," was the reply. "I came on from Pittsburg to attend a director's meeting, which has been postponed until to-morrow, and now I am very much at your service."

"Of course, you are a plutocrat and a robber baron and a railroad king and various other awful things," spoke up Hector Alonzo, "and we can't expect you to sympathize with coal strikers. But you have seen Peter Burnham pitch against Harvard, and as a Yale man you will have to stand by if we need you."

"Peter Burnham forever," good-naturedly chuckled the elder McGrath. "I was greatly distressed to read of his injury, but he ought to have let that strike alone."

"It was my affair, if you please," said Geraldine. "The Oak Creek Coal Company mostly belongs to me, and it has been dreadfully managed. Mr. Burnham was acting as my personal agent."

Mr. McGrath appeared surprised, then puzzled, and he reflected before saying:

"Hum-m. I am greatly interested. I know very little about anthracite coal properties, but since the affairs of your company have been aired in the newspapers, I'll confess that I have been inclined to side with the miners. If I can do anything for you——"

"Can he do anything?" excitedly interrupted Hector. "Miss Townsend, leave it to me. We must hustle to catch our train for Carbonville. Will you ride across town with us, father? We'll send you a bulletin, and tell you our needs. We may ask you to take the Schuyler Trust Company away from the directors, and tuck it carefully in your waistcoat pocket. It looks to me like a cinch, alongside of some of your stunts with railroads."

Mr. McGrath begged for more information, which his son obligingly gave as the party rode to the ferry. The great capitalist paid more heed to Geraldine Townsend, however, as she explained, with an appealing frankness, how much at heart she held the welfare of the miners of Oak Creek.

He was a just and fearless employer of many thousand men, rewarding loyal service, and when they disagreed with his opinions he fought them in the open and stood by the verdict. It pleased him more than he showed that his only son should be proving himself a chip of the old block, sticking by a friend through thick and thin, and going his own gait because he thought it the right thing to do. When Hector asked a favor it was seldom for himself, and this unselfishness, no matter how erratic the turn it took, found a ready response in the fond heart of his father.

"I shall be in New York until day after to-morrow," he said at parting. "I am sure I don't know what Miss Townsend and Peter Burnham, and you, Hector, may want to do, but if you can put up a convincing argument, perhaps I can bring pressure to bear in the right quarter."

"Pressure to bear!" gleefully echoed Hector. "When you get into action the other fellow feels as if a steam roller had passed over his frame, dad. Good-by. This playing hooky from college surely hurts my conscience, but can you blame me?"

"If I were at Yale, and a Miss Geraldine Townsend needed me, I should hesitate about a fraction of a minute," answered the parent, with the bow of a courtier.

VII.

A nurse went to the side of the bed in a private room of the hospital at Carbonville, and counted the pulse of her patient. He was asleep, and the rugged resolution that strongly stamped his features was softened by an expression pleasant and boyish, as if all stress and worry were banished from his land of dreams. The nurse was girlish, gray-eyed, and comely, and the white uniform she wore added something to her charm of aspect. Instead of recording the patient's pulse on the

clinical chart, she lingered to look down at him with more than professional interest. He stirred, opened his eyes, and smiled contentedly.

"I was dreaming of you, Annie," said he. "Why shouldn't I? Seeing you again reminded me of the years we went to school together, before I got my first job as a breaker boy. How long have you been working in the hospital?"

"Oh, I am a graduate nurse, Peter. The wards are crowded with sick and wounded miners, and the staff is short-handed. I was called in to take care of you. You are not supposed to talk very much."

Peter yawned, carefully passed a hand across his bandaged stomach, and mutinously retorted:

"Barring the fact that I feel as if I had been kicked by a mule, I don't see why I shouldn't talk all I blame please. So I wasn't really shot more than enough to notice it. Talk about Yale luck!"

"That heavy brass belt buckle saved your life," said the nurse. "The bullet struck it, glanced off, and plowed under the skin. It was the terrific shock that made you insensible."

"What you might call a rib-roaster," smiled Peter. "Now I know what happened to my friend Hector McGrath when I pitched a ball into his solar plexus. So the men that picked me up thought I was a dead one. How long am I supposed to lie on my back and twiddle my fingers?"

"Not very long, Peter. That is for the doctor to say. I told him you were apt to be an unruly patient."

"Thank you, Annie. You haven't forgotten how to tease me, have you?"

"You were always so easy," laughed this winsome slip of a nurse, with the eyes of Irish gray, as she left him to muse over bygone days.

Little Annie Considine, the one sweetheart of his rough-and-tumble boyhood! Her parents had moved to another mining town of the district when she was perhaps a dozen years old. Peter recalled the parting. She had tearfully bestowed upon him a handkerchief holder, sprawlingly embroidered with his initials, brushing a mop of brown hair from her eyes, and accompanying the gift with this feeling tribute: "No matter where we go to live, I don't believe I'll ever, ever find as good a boy as you, Peter Burnham."

He had expressed reciprocal emotion by staring hard at the ground, doubling his fists, and blurting: "Say, Annie, if any boys get fresh with you, or pull your pigtails, you just send for me, and I'll lick 'em same as I did the kids in primary and grammar school."

The blurring passage of the years, the change of scene, the whole new order of interests and activities had caused Annie Considine to fade from memory along with Peter's other chapters of early life in Carbonville. In fact, he had lived two lives, and until now they had been widely sundered. The campus and the collieries could have nothing in common, or at least this had been true until he met Geraldine Townsend.

After recovering consciousness in the hospital, he had become aware, gropingly at first, of a changed outlook, as though the shock had cleared his vision. He had been fetched back into the world of realities after an excursion among the things that could not be, that were never meant to be, and he was not profoundly sure that he wished them to be. Had he volunteered to serve Geraldine Townsend because he truly loved her, and aspired to win her love, or had he been moved rather the more by admiration, and gratitude, and ideals of friendship partly innate, partly inspired of the spirit of the campus? Would he not have offered to do as much for Jim Stearns or Hector Alonzo McGrath? Had he not been dazzled by the fact that Geraldine appeared so unattainable?

Now, it may be that such doubts as these were somewhat inspired by the welcome presence of Annie Considine. A man may be neither shallow nor fickle to feel a sentimental flutter at meeting a childish sweetheart who has grown to be surprisingly charming in every

way. More than this, she revived the memories of home ties, she brought with her the magic of the long ago, and she was Peter Burnham's kind of girl.

And, be it also noted, he felt in his heart that Professor Billy Aldridge was Geraldine Townsend's kind of man. Peter had fought the good fight, the account was squared, he had all but given his life for the sake of Geraldine, and, although he could not understand it himself, that chapter seemed logically to be closed.

The letter from Sir Harry Nevins—the interest of the President of the United States in his career—those high hopes of empire building—these were phases of a dream that was fast fading. He must finish his college course—this was the business of supreme importance, and there was abundant time in which to decide his plans for future usefulness.

While Peter Burnham rested and pondered, and was hugely interested in himself, he seldom let his gaze wander from the doorway of the room, as if anxiously awaiting the return of sunny, comforting Annie Considine. When she came it was to say, in a dictatorial manner which no one at Yale would have dared to use toward the greatest of intercollegiate baseball heroes:

"You have a caller, and I shall allow him to talk to you precisely ten minutes. I should have refused him, but he promised on his word of honor to be soothing."

"What name, please? There has been nothing soothing about the men I've met so far during this visit," said Peter.

"Franklin. Mr. Edward Franklin. He says he is an old Yale football player."

"Ned Franklin, the greatest half back that ever stepped on a field? I'll be as good as gold, Annie. It will make me feel better to shake his hand."

The nurse looked dubious, but went into the hall, and returned with a stocky, genial person of thirty or so, who seemed to have been thoroughly subdued during his progress through the hospital. He waited for permission to address the patient, and after Annie Considine had nodded graciously, he said, rather timidly:

"Hope I won't tire you, Burnham, but I thought you might like to see somebody from the old place."

"Delighted. I met you when you were coaching the eleven last fall," replied Peter. "Do you live in this part of the country?"

"Across the mountains—in a mining town called Black Run," answered Franklin. "'Dutch' Harvey and I—he was in my class—have a colliery over there. I wish you'd come and see us when you get well. We have a pretty nice little coal business."

Peter mounted his hobby in a twinkling. "You bet I want to see it. Two Yale men in the coal business—and old athletes at that—ought to be carrying out some of the doctrines they learned at New Haven. You are giving your miners a square deal, I know that without your telling me."

Franklin laughed, and surveyed Peter as if he had found a man after his own heart. "Well, we have been experimenting," said he. "We are running what you might call a model colliery, and we haven't lost money. Believe me, this puzzles the old-time operators. We don't have any strikes. Dutch and I were called a pair of cheerful idiots when we set out to handle this foreign labor as if it was human. We cut out the company-store system, spent a lot of money on apparatus to make mining safer for the men, we give them honest weight checks for their coal, and we added a lot of fancy frills. There is a clubhouse, for instance, and it has made a great hit. And we run our own schools for the children, and a night school for the men and women."

Peter's eyes were glowing like coals. This Ned Franklin was a cheering, if not exactly soothing, influence. "Tell me," demanded the patient, "what about the living arrangements?"

"We build the dwelling houses, not tenements, but cottages with water in them, with a yard in front and a garden patch behind, and we sell them to

the miners on easy payments. All our steady men are buying their own homes. We figure on getting no more than a six-per-cent return on our investment. If they prefer to rent, we are contented with our little six per cent. Once a month Dutch and I meet a miners' committee in the clubhouse, and talk over all sorts of things—complaints, ideas for improving things, the wage scale, and the social gossip of the town. It's a great game, Burnham. I wish you were with us."

"It sounds too good to be true," said Peter. "And you tell me it pays you?"

"Yes. We are doing mighty well. In fact, things are running so smoothly that Dutch Harvey can handle the business, and I am looking around for more collieries. What do you know about this trouble at Oak Creek? Is Fosdick really out? He surely played horse with that property."

"Just you wait till I get on my feet!" exclaimed Peter Burnham. "Franklin, you have blown in here as the one man in a million. You belong at Oak Creek, and——"

The patient's voice was fairly stentorian, and one arm sawed the air. He did not finish his declaration, for Miss Annie Considine moved quietly to the side of Mr. Edward Franklin, and said, in low, even tones:

"You are about as soothing as a keg of powder. Please pick up your hat and come this way."

Humbly the "greatest half back that ever stepped on a field" did as he was told, with never a word of protest, while the king of varsity pitchers cowered beneath the bedclothes.

"I'll keep in touch with you," sang out the latter, to which Franklin called back: "I'll drop in again to-morrow, and try to run the blockade."

After dismissing the disturbing visitor, Annie Considine tripped back to draw a chair to Peter's bedside, and meditatively scrutinize him, observing, after some time:

"What ever possessed you to come out here and interfere with this coal strike, Peter Burnham? Are you one of these born trouble hunters? I ought not to let you say another word this afternoon, but you may answer just one question."

Peter blushed. Also he wiggled his toes. These signs of distress were not unobserved by the nurse. There was no good reason why he should not tell her that he was playing the knight-errant in behalf of a certain Miss Geraldine Townsend, but he basely resorted to subterfuge, and plaintively returned:

"I think I have talked enough, Annie. My head is tired."

Contritely she exclaimed, all sweet alarm and sympathy:

"How horrid of me to bother you! I deserve to be reprimanded. You ought to report me to the superintendent."

"Oh, no harm done," benignly remarked the patient. "Do you mind feeling my pulse again before you go?"

This duty was so important that it had to be performed with the greatest care and deliberation. The nurse missed her count, and had to begin all over again, and the warm pressure of her fingers so oddly accelerated the pulse aforesaid that she was quite sure he had overexerted himself during the afternoon. Once, when their eyes met, she said, with pretty sincerity:

"All the collieries and miners in this district are not worth your little finger, Peter—I mean to the Yale baseball team, of course."

"By Jove, Annie, you have never been to New Haven, have you?" was the irrelevant remark. "I wish you could come on for the commencement game with Harvard this year. And I'd like to have some of my friends meet you."

She put a finger to her lips, nodded reprovingly, and tried not to show the sweet surprise and gladness that filled her heart to know that this hero of her childhood's fancies should regard her in this wise. Peter was left to gaze contentedly at the ceiling and meditate anew on the topsy-turvy tendency of things in general, and his recent experiences as a concrete instance.

Early evening came, and he was drowsily shifting the make-up of the Yale nine, and trying to devise a new

team play when Annie Considine tiptoed in, waited until sure he was awake, and declared, with a very saucy little tilt of her chin, and the firmest of accents:

"Two friends of yours from New Haven are downstairs, but they can't possibly see you now. You have had quite enough excitement. They will be admitted to-morrow morning, if you have a good night."

"Two friends from college?" exclaimed Peter. "Jim Stearns and Hector Alonzo McGrath! There is a pair of trumps for you."

"One of them is Mr. McGrath," said the inflexible guardian, who was very bright-eyed and rosy, her breathing a trifle faster than usual, and her voice the least bit unsteady. "The other is *not* Jim Stearns. It is a *she*, a Miss Townsend. Your friends in New Haven are very devoted, Peter."

"How splendid of her!" cried he, which made her appear even more unreconciled to this visitation. "You see, Annie, Miss Townsend and I are business acquaintances. She owns the Oak Creek Coal Company, and——"

"I should judge from her manner that she owned the earth," was the unsympathetic comment. "She is beautiful, I'll admit, and she dresses in perfectly stunning taste, but I am not used to the queenly, patronizing manner, and I detest it. So there!"

"Whew! Here goes for a tempest in a teapot," murmured Peter. "What is it all about? I am sorry she rubbed you the wrong way."

"She seems to think you are stranded among a lot of heathen who may not give you proper care," loftily continued Annie. "Not that she was rude enough to say so, but she had to see the superintendent at once, and ask him all sorts of questions, and tell him that expense must not be considered, and she looked me over in the most irritating way that——"

"I am sure you misunderstood her," gently remonstrated Peter. "Think how fine it is of Miss Townsend to come all the way from New Haven to see——"

"I mustn't argue and excite you, Peter. I suppose I am horrid and catty. Mr. McGrath is a dear. I know I shall like him. What do you suppose he said? I hadn't been talking with him two minutes before he asked me if I would nurse him in case he was lucky enough to find a stray bullet to get in front of."

"He is as fresh as paint," growled the patient. "You tell him for me that if he doesn't behave himself I'll be convalescent enough to slap his face tomorrow."

"He sent you a message," demurely murmured Annie, no longer unhappy. "You are not to worry about affairs at Oak Creek. He has the strategy in working order for standing the something-or-other trust company on its head."

"That is good news. Thank you, Annie. All the clouds are clearing. Please tell Miss Townsend how grateful I am for her interest——"

"You will please tell her yourself, Peter."

"My, but you are unreasonable, Annie! Promise me that you will put Hector McGrath in his place. You mustn't believe a word he tells you."

"My, but you are unreasonable, Peter!"

"I guess you are right," smiled the patient. "Good night, and God bless you, Annie."

"Sweet dreams, Peter."

Next morning this inconsistent patient awoke to face the new day with a sense of returning strength, and a mind relieved of anxieties. He looked forward to meeting Geraldine Townsend with no more fluttering trepidation. She had been a stormy interlude of his college life, but she needed him no longer, and his heart was turning elsewhere, as a ship is borne by favoring winds toward some dear and half-forgotten haven after years of wandering absence.

When, at length, Geraldine and Hector McGrath came into the room, Peter was calm, but she appeared not quite herself, and his intuition, subtle for once, told him that she was agitated lest

he misunderstand the motive that had brought her hither. Their meeting was perceptibly constrained on this account, and Hector, failing to comprehend the significance of the scene, tried to think of some excuse for leaving them together. He hemmed and hawed, and exclaimed, somewhat nervously:

"It is great to find you are all here, Peter, old man. Jim Stearns and the rest of their crowd sent their love. Guess I'd better run downstairs to the office and send them a few telegrams."

Geraldine turned quickly, and no words were needed to reveal what her face betrayed. She was not anxious to be left alone with Peter, who understood, and said:

"Here, you Hector Alonzo. You stay where you are put. I have all kinds of things to talk to you about."

"I cannot begin to tell you, Mr. Burnham, how wonderfully brave and noble I think you are," began Geraldine, with a novel timidity of manner. "I am very unworthty of such service. If friendship, and gratitude, and admiration too great for me to express are any recompense, if——"

Peter Burnham stretched forth a large, hard hand, which clasped hers as a symbol of that friendship which was all she had to offer him. It was all that he expected, all that he desired, and to make the understanding mutual, to clear away any misapprehension, and to declare himself, fully and finally, he exclaimed, and his voice rang out with startling vigor:

"Your friendship and gratitude are reward enough. I ask nothing more. I hope for nothing more. It was a small favor to do for you. You had done a greater one for me."

Perhaps Geraldine had not expected just this kind of an answer. Its honest emphasis left no room for doubt. One never can tell. Perhaps she was disappointed that he was so ready to accept her own appraisement of the relation between them, so anxious to make it clear this was not a sentimental pilgrimage. Whatever illusions may have been in her heart, and no matter how illogical her attitude, one thing was certain—that she had not expected Peter to take her at her word; and his answer was a distinct shock. A princess royal may demand steadfast allegiance, even though the quest be hopeless.

Hector Alonzo McGrath well knew that whenever Peter Burnham spoke in this fashion he meant it to the hilt. There was nothing evasive in the pitcher's habits of thought. He went straight to the point, like a bull charging through a fence. Hector was an onlooker puzzled to distraction. If Peter had not hoped to win anything more than friendship from Geraldine, then why in the world had he been so extravagantly, insanely devoted? And if the girl felt the same way, why had she come to Carbonville? Hector strolled to the nearest window, and said, under his breath:

"If any kind-hearted coal baron has been thoughtful enough to endow a padded cell in this institution, please lead me to it."

He was diverted by the entrance of Annie Considine, very serious and professional of mien, and perhaps a trifle haughty.

Peter beamed at her, and said, with no trace of his recent vehemence:

"You have met these friends of mine, Annie. I am so glad to have them know my old playmate."

Geraldine smiled faintly, and said:

"Mr. Burnham always finds friends when he needs them."

"And he has never been ashamed of his plain, everyday friends back here in the home town," exclaimed the nurse.

Nothing had been said to warrant this defiant assertion, but it mightily pleased Peter, who surmised that there had been a passage at arms below stairs. Annie thereupon proceeded to tuck him in and fuss over him with a studied air of proprietorship, obviously aimed at Geraldine, and Hector Alonzo began to understand. By way of averting further complications, he ventured to inquire:

"Do you feel strong enough to tell us something about the condition of affairs at the mines, old man?"

"I should say yes," cried Peter. "You will meet a man named Franklin here to-day, the Yale half back of eight or ten years ago. He is the man to take charge at Oak Creek, Miss Townsend. A few minutes' talk with him will convince you that he will give your miners a square deal. He walked in here yesterday like the original god from the machine. He will be glad to show you his model colliery before you go back to New Haven."

"Oh, that sounds too good to be true," said Geraldine. "But has Mr. Fosdick really left the company?"

"I am a witness to the fact," gravely answered Peter. "It is a long yarn, and I must save it until later. I kidnaped him, and various other things."

"But how am I to interfere in the management of the company?" was Geraldine's troubled question. "I don't care about the dividends. I want the hideous wrongs to be righted."

Hector took the center of the stage. For once he was about to intervene without bungling matters. "Father and I will bring pressure to bear," he pompously declared. "This seems to be the only kink in the situation. And if he can't handle a little thing like this Schuyler Trust Company I shall have to be severe with him. His banking connections in Wall Street are so powerful that he is positively nefarious, according to the newspapers. And, believe me, Miss Townsend, this putting an old Yale football star in charge of your coal works will please him right down to the ground. I will telegraph him all the details after you have conferred with this able Franklin person. So long as Peter Burnham indorses the scheme it is plenty good enough for me."

The patient sighed happily. His work was done. He felt suddenly weary, his nerves no longer tense with apprehension for the future of the miners of the grimy hamlets at Oak Creek. The watchful nurse was quick to note his listless mood, and whispered to Hector that the visit had been long enough.

Geraldine lingered by the bedside, hesitated, and then, with a kind of noble disregard of those who beheld her, she leaned over and kissed the forehead of her knight-errant.

"Good-by, Peter Burnham," she softly spoke. "You have done everything for me, and I can do nothing for you. I know that you will have the best of care."

The room was empty before Peter had recovered from his dazed bewilderment. Nor did he fully understand what the farewell of Geraldine had signified until Annie Considine consented to let him talk to her later in the day. Her feminine insight had read the riddle aright, and instead of revealing resentment she most cheerfully confessed:

"I am sorry that I was snippy to Miss Townsend. You ought to be proud of her friendship, Peter."

"Of course I am," stoutly quoth the patient. "But what has made you veer around like a little weathercock?"

"Well, men are so simple-minded and obtuse that perhaps I can't make it clear to you," explained Annie, and her eyes were dancing. "If she loved you she wouldn't have kissed you in public. Women do that on the stage when the hero is dying to slow music, you know, but it isn't natural. And, besides, she would have been hanging around this hospital for a week or so longer, instead of bidding you a high tragedy good-by after one glimpse of you."

"Interesting, if true," cried Peter, in great glee. "Say some more."

"Well, if *you* loved *her*, you wouldn't have to have a lecture with diagrams to explain to your dense intellect why she kissed you."

"And why have *you* taken pains to analyze it so carefully?" he demanded, which was certainly taking an unfair advantage.

"I am always interested in my patients," artfully answered Annie Considine.

June had come to the Yale campus. Jim Stearns and Hector Alonzo McGrath were loafing in front of Osborne Hall, watching the gay panorama of

Chapel Street, which was thronged with undergraduates and visitors moving toward the baseball field. It was the day of the Harvard game, and the blue was flaunting everywhere, in bonny flags and ribbons and violets.

"Fine show, isn't it?" said Jim. "First time I've seen it. A crew man misses all the fun of commencement week by being marooned at New London. The coaches said I was a bit stale, and laid me off for to-day, so I persuaded them to let me have a change of scene."

"Great! You will have a chance to meet Peter Burnham's best girl," replied Hector. "She and her mother are over at the New Haven House. I'm going to take them out in my new car as soon as the mob thins. Better come along with us. She is a peach, Jim. It will amuse you a whole lot to see them together. Nothing flighty about that pair. Peter won't even admit they are engaged. He is going to peg along until he can make a living, and she intends to keep on with her nursing until they are good and ready to marry."

"I would have given half my year's allowance to see the finish of the act in the hospital at Carbonville," sighed Jim. "We certainly did set things going."

"Peter thinks we did him the best turn of his life. So I long ago chased remorse to the tall timber."

"We were only playing minor parts, as a matter of fact," said Stearns. "Little Bob Oliver and his loaded cane were really responsible."

"Why, hello, here comes our busy young friend, Hawkins, the *News* heeler," Hector ejaculated. "He is gunning for crew stuff from New London. No use trying to dodge him. He'd chase you up a tree."

The indefatigable Hawkins approached at an easy lope, and was as breathless as usual. His predatory glance was roving lest some passing victim might escape him, but the pencil and notebook were not in sight as he accosted Stearns:

"I am glad of the chance to thank you and Mr. McGrath for the tip you gave me last spring. Remember? The reported engagement of Professor Billy Aldridge and Miss Geraldine Townsend. They stood me off then, but I didn't forget 'em. Not for a minute. I was bound to have that item exclusive. Billy Aldridge was blowing himself to violets in the florist's place this morning, and I just put it up to him again."

"Did he throw you out?" asked Hector.

"Not this time. I caught him with the goods," cried Hawkins. "He as much as owned up, and then I saw Miss Townsend, and she said that if Professor Aldridge would put his O. K. on the item there was no reason why it should not be printed in to-morrow's *News*."

At this instant Hawkins spied a distinguished alumnus and bounded after his quarry at top speed. Jim and Hector looked at each other.

"I blush to recall that interview with her," began the latter.

"When we put up a plea for Peter," concluded the former.

"I have a notion that if Peter hadn't found his little playmate, Annie Considine, in the hospital, he might have been still nursing the grouch of unrequited love."

"I have a notion that if Miss Geraldine Townsend hadn't found Peter's little playmate in the hospital she might have—— Oh, pshaw, what's the use?"

"Women puzzle me occasionally," was the final comment of Hector Alonzo McGrath.

An hour later, Peter Burnham walked across the green diamond to send his men out for fielding practice. The cheering and clamor of the multitude had no effect on his iron composure. His cap was pulled low over his eyes, his jaw worked methodically on a wad of gum, and his gait was easy and careless. When the team had scattered to their stations, he called the catcher to the cleared space close to the grand stand, and began to limber up his mighty pitching arm.

The Harvard players were watching him with fascinated interest. He had caused them many troubled hours, and they reluctantly confessed to themselves that he appeared to be at the top of his

form. Grim, machinelike, he put more and more speed behind the ball, as if he had no fear of tiring himself in practice.

At length he waved the catcher aside, slipped into a gray sweater, and mopped his face with his sleeve. Just then Geraldine Townsend and Billy Aldridge passed close by, hurrying to find their seats.

Peter stepped in front of them, offered her his hand, and said:

"May I be one of the first to congratulate you?"

Geraldine cordially answered:

"Thank you, Mr. Burnham. And may we congratulate you?"

"Oh, not until after the game. Harvard has a mighty good team, and we may get trimmed," blurted Peter. He became boyishly confused, blushed rosy red, and added: "I suppose that is what you meant."

"Not at all," laughed Aldridge. "Guess again."

"Oh-h," and Peter's eyes wandered to the grand stand, and found an eager, girlish face, whose smile made his heart dance. "We are not ready to announce it in the Yale *News*."

Geraldine passed on, but once she turned to look back at the tall, square-jawed figure of the athlete, and a shadow crossed her lovely face, a shadow hardly to be defined as wistfulness or regret, and yet it mirrored some fleeting emotion that was not as joyous as the day demanded. Peter Burnham did not see her. He was striding over to pick up a handful of violets which Annie Considine had plucked from those at her breast. Quite unashamed, he stowed them carefully in the pocket of his shirt, and heard Hector Alonzo observe to the girl from Carbonville:

"Well, you have educated Peter. To think of his gathering violets and looking sentimental five minutes before the opening of a Yale-Harvard game! He is usually in a temper to bite nails in two."

"Oh, you never understood Peter," replied Miss Considine. "He is not the least bit ferocious. You see, I have known him ever since he was a little boy, and——"

"Play ball!" croaked the pugnacious-looking umpire, and Peter Burnham sauntered to the pitcher's station, stalwart, frowning, inscrutable, a man to face the task in hand, whatever it might be, with a quiet courage that could not be shaken.

"I can't feel anxious and excited when he looks like that," Peter's sweetheart whispered to Jim Stearns. "Nothing can beat him or make him afraid. He must have stood just that way and faced the mob of miners."

The oarsman smiled into her winsome, lovelit face, and earnestly replied:

"With you to look on, he can't lose, to-day, or in the game of life that you are going to play together. You have won the biggest prize in college—the heart of Peter Burnham."

IMPLICIT CONFIDENCE

Whenever the Detroit team is in a hole, and Ty Cobb goes to the bat, Hughey Jennings, the manager of the pennant winners, expresses his confidence in Cobb's home-run habit by saying, in a shrill voice:

"If you do it, Ty, be sure to touch every base!"

LIFTING THE LIMIT

President Taft once worked as a reporter for a Cincinnati newspaper for twelve dollars a week. Recently he was offered by a magazine two dollars a word if he would write an article for the publication. He declined the proposition.

Hiram in Search of a Gold Brick

By Frank Condon

Author of "Changing the Luck," Etc.

How Mr. Stubblefield makes a return visit to New York, accompanied by the conventional green carpet bag and longing with an intense yearning for some one to come along and try to sell him a gold brick

THE three balls swayed gently in the air above the entrance to Einstein's philanthropic refuge for the financially broken.

Dave the Dude entered, with a quick, brisk step. In his hand he held a box of dark leather, locked with a small, metal clasp.

"How much on these?" he asked, pushing the box over the dusty glass of the case.

Einstein wrinkled his parchment countenance, pushed his horn-rimmed glasses up, opened the box, glanced into it, sighed, and said:

"Vaire dit you get it?"

"I found it, of course," drawled Dave the Dude. "How much?"

"Fife dollars," replied Einstein cheerlessly. "It is paste."

"Thanks," grunted Dave. "That's what I wanted to know."

He reached for the leather receptacle, snapped the cover shut, placed it in his pocket, and walked out.

"I will gif you seex dollars," said Einstein.

"Cheese, kid; cheese," retorted Dave, with deep scorn. The pawnshop door banged shut behind him.

Some hours previous to his appearance in Einstein's, Dave the Dude had been wandering slowly along Lexington Avenue. His mind was filled with solemn thoughts. He had not removed money of the realm from fellow citizens for a number of weeks, and the thought galled him. Business had been undeniably and disgustingly bad. A little child in an innocent pinafore toddled before him, playing some sort of game, with the curbstone as a foundation.

The game was, so far as Dave could comprehend it, to hold a box of dark leather in a pair of childish fists and bring it down sturdily against the curb, with an effort, obviously, to open it. Dave stopped an instant, and surveyed the innocent amusement. The appearance of the box attracted him. He bent over the tiny figure, and removed the box from the moist and dirty fingers.

"Where did you get it?" Dave asked, opening the box.

"I found it in the woad," replied the cherub.

"You mustn't find things in the road," Dave continued, fingering the contents of the box abstractedly. "Here's a penny. Go somewhere, and buy yourself candy with blue paint on it."

In the back room of Casey's bun breeder, Dave the Dude gave the contents of the leather box protracted examination. A necklace of diamonds, with a ruby heart and a sapphire-studded cross, flashed up into his eyes. Shortly afterward, he brought the matter to the attention of Einstein, who corroborated his innermost thoughts.

"Of course, I couldn't land on the real thing," Dave complained. "If I broke into Tiffany's, I'd come out with paste in both hands."

The nine-forty-two accommodation from West Bugle, N. Y., bustled into the collection of homes, which is placed by our dyspeptic clerical friends in a position slightly below Hellgate and slightly above Hellfire. From the sec-

ond coach north of the locomotive emerged the principal citizen of West Bugle County, Hiram Q. Stubblefield, farmer, philanthropist, and ex-fall guy. He looked about him suspiciously. Every time he came to New York he cast a withering gaze upon the townsfolk. In his keen eye was the look of the rural citizen whose eyeteeth have been cut clear down to the red and who cannot be handed gold bricks, embossed bonds, silver-mine certificates, opportunities to pronounce judgment as to the precise position of the little pea, and similar aids to metropolitan well-being.

Mr. Stubblefield was accompanied by the conventional green carpet bag. He wore unpolished leather boots, with Copenhagen blue straps protruding at the top. His whiskers surged away from the lower portion of his face in a façade effect, and he was chewing a high-grade West Bugle County straw.

As he walked across Forty-second Street, several of our discerning citizens gazed upon him with interest. A slim crook from West Broadway passed judgment for the whole.

"Nothin' doin'," said the crook, viewing Hiram's outward manifestations with disapproval. "That style passed out with the Spanish War. He's probably a process server in costume."

Mr. Stubblefield proceeded in peace and dignity until he came to the hotel which he invariably graced with his presence. After a generous meal of boiled bacon and greens, he combed his whiskers, inserted a fresh straw into the left corner of his mouth, glanced insultingly about the modest lobby of the hotel, and strayed forth to read the new electric signs that grace the rim of America's most celebrated thoroughfare of lights, sights, and tights.

He crossed the equator at Forty-second Street, and headed into the south with a reminiscent gleam in his sophisticated eye. In the salad days of his impetuous youth, here had he sundered himself from his golden coins and his crinkling bills. Above yon twinkling lamp had he backed mythical horses before a mythical telegraph instrument with perfectly unmythical pesos and cinque lires. He chuckled above his waving beard as he glanced hurriedly back. How many times had he bounded into West Bugle County with solid bricks of base metal beneath a sneering veneer of gilt!

The thought gave him gladness. He had had his fling. The fires of his youth had galvanized him into a wise old geezer, and he longed with an intense yearning for some poor, deluded citizen, crook, wire tapper, joint runner, knockout-drop specialist or other to come up to him and try to pry him away from his legal tender. It would be such a jovial procedure, said Hiram Q. Stubblefield to his swaying whiskers.

At Forty-first Street, Dave the Dude stood beneath an electric light, flooded with disconsolate misgivings and permanent pessimism.

He looked idly into the flowing stream, and, after a time, the hearty, honest features of Hiram Q. Stubblefield came within the range of his vision. Dave looked again, and then turned away in keen disappointment.

"What's the use?" he grumbled. "They don't dress in those stage clothes any more."

But there was something about Hiram that caused the perceptive eye of Dave the Dude to linger again. Perhaps it was the buoyant West Bugle County stride of the veteran agriculturalist; perhaps a wave of metaphysical inundation swept across the intervening theatergoers and tinkled the bell in Dave's prospect department. Who knows? At any rate, Dave swung in behind the honest yeoman, and at Fortieth Street he tapped him gently on the shoulder, and began:

"Well, if it isn't my old friend, Josh P. Oatbin," said Dave, with genuine and deceptive heartiness.

Then Hiram turned a beaming countenance to Dave, clasped him joyously by the hand, and burst into a wealth of laughter.

"My boy," said Hiram, still gurgling sounds out of his system, "you have given me the one pleasure that I feared I might never have again. Heaven will

look down and bless you for this night's work. I was fearful and afraid that none of you would come up to me and call me out of my name, just like you used to in the old days; and now I am overcome with excitement and imprudent joy."

"I beg your pardon," replied Dave stiffly. "I thought you were my old friend, Josh P. Oatbin."

"Of course you did," retorted Hiram, the tears of pleasure trickling down his rugged cheek. "Of course you did. And now that you find I'm not Mr. Oatbin, you'll willingly let me look at the brick you have saved these many years for him. Or do you wish me to purchase five thousand dollars' worth of government money for a paltry five hundred? What is it, my boy? Say the good old words to me. It's years since I've heard them. It's ages since I peeled off my roll to buy excelsior and brown paper."

"I can see," said Dave, "that I've made a mistake. You're nobody in the world but J. X. Wisenheimer, from Wise County, Wiseconsin. But, even so; even so. What harm for you to investigate! There are many opportunities within the confines of our festive city for the visiting stranger to turn an idle hour into profitable investments. I have in my possession a diamond necklace. It is practically priceless, but I will let it go to you for half its price, and simply because you recall my dear friend, Josh P. Oatbin, of Gangrene City, Georgia."

"My boy, nothing could give me greater pleasure," returned Mr. Stubblefield. "Let us hie us hence to a suitable gin mill, where we can discourse in profitless retirement."

On the way to the back room, Hiram Q. Stubblefield chuckled, and chuckled, and chuckled. It was all the same, then. Nothing had changed. The merry old days of yore were still as merry as ever. But it was the new Hiram they cast their happy light upon; it was a burned and stung and wisdom-filled Stubblefield that Dave palavered with.

In the dim back room of the Rat's Nest, Dave and Hiram sat beside a blackened table and drank heartily. Dave drank lightly. Hiram spilled his drinks upon the floor and enjoyed his deception to the point of instant apoplexy. He simulated the first stages of jovial intoxication, and Dave was pleased. He affected the manifestations of the second stage, and Dave the Dude smiled approvingly.

"This diamond necklace," said Dave suavely, "containing the ruby heart and the sapphire-studded cross, is worth sixty thousand dollars. I don't mind telling you, Mr. Stubblefield, that it was stolen from the safety-deposit vault of John Jacob Rockefeller, who gave it to his oldest daughter on the occasion of her marriage to the Duke of Orleans, son of the present King of France. The diamonds alone are worth fifty-two thousand dollars. I will let you have the whole thing for five hundred dollars. It is impossible for me to sell it to any one in New York because I would be detected and thrown into prison. Therefore, I am forced to sell it to an out-of-town citizen, and I am offering you this priceless opportunity, the like of which you will never have again."

Dave the Dude raised the glittering bauble to the dim light, and shook it before the apparently drowsy eyes of Hiram Q. Stubblefield.

"Ha, ha!" said Mr. Stubblefield joyously. "I haven't had such a thoroughly good time since the Methodist Church burned down. Diamonds, hey! My boy, you're a corker to hand me this line of conversation. I love you for it. But now let's be sensible. I'll buy you a few more drinks. Then I'll go home, because I'm not as spry as I used to be, and the old bed looks attractive about this time. But I want to thank you for the evening's entertainment. I was afraid I'd never get to it again. Of course, you can't sell me that paste junk. I'm old. I'm wise Hiram Q. Stubblefield, of West Bugle, New York, and I'm so slick that tar glides off me. Forty years ago, my boy, I'd have bought that junk, mortgaged the old farm, and put you in prosperity for the remainder of your life. You're just forty years late."

Dave the Dude sighed disconsolately. The apples had turned to ashes in his mouth. He gulped a glass of beer mournfully, and snapped the lid shut. Hiram Q. Stubblefield dozed, with his head on his arms, just as he had once dozed after a casual injection of knock-out drops in the dear, dead days.

Dave looked at him cheerlessly.

Then he tossed his head significantly, and "Blisters" slipped over to Hiram and ran his hands through the agriculturalist's pockets. "Blisters" extracted the three dimes and the two nickels that Hiram had placed in his pockets with malice aforethought before leaving the hotel. "Blisters" shook his head in sorrow and disgust.

Dave the Dude yawned, stretched his arms above his head, and was about to rise, when a tall stranger sauntered over from an adjoining table.

"Pardon me," began the tall stranger, with a slow nod in the direction of the dozing Hiram Q. Stubblefield, who was watching intently under the rim of his honest slouch hat. "I've been watching your deluded efforts with our misanthropic and pernicious friend and the sad consequences thereto. But where one man fails, another may succeed. I'm in the same business as you, and if I happen to know the whereabouts of a party with a strong leaning toward expensive jewelry and a total ignorance of whether paste is paste and diamonds are diamonds, why, that's my luck and your misfortune. There's a little tailor uptown that might buy that neckpiece you just put in your pocket, and afford me a reasonable and just profit. Now, for about how much could I persuade you to sell it to me on a gambling chance that the little tailor takes it?"

"I am weary of the world and the modern advantages of education," replied Dave the Dude, "and I am some disgusted with this college-bred yokel in our midst. If I can't sell my honest jewelry, about how much more than four dollars would you consider giving me for it?"

"I suppose ten long green bills ought to give me a complete ownership," replied the tall stranger.

"Make it fifteen, and I'll go you," said Dave.

"Well, I ought to clear up twenty from the little tailor. He ain't much up on gems. We'll call it a deal at fifteen bucks."

Dave the Dude passed the leather box over to the stranger, who inspected the necklace with interest.

"It ain't a bad fake, either," he remarked. "Well, so long, stranger. I'll just be on my way. Here's a newspaper I've marked with a lead pencil. It may be interesting reading while I'm on my way up to the tailor." He tossed a copy of an afternoon edition on the table before Dave the Dude, and disappeared through the side door.

Hiram Q. Stubblefield awakened suddenly and rubbed his eyes. Dave the Dude picked up the newspaper and opened it. He searched for several moments before finding the marks of a lead pencil. Hiram Q. Stubblefield followed his search with interest.

Suddenly Dave the Dude leaped to his feet.

"Great Somethingorother!" Dave snarled. He rushed to the door and disappeared. A few moments later he returned and sat down weakly. While he was gone, Hiram Q. Stubblefield perused the newspaper at the point where the stranger had marked it, and as he read his honest face flushed.

Under the Lost and Found heading was the following advertisement, neatly bordered with lead pencil:

REWARD
TWELVE THOUSAND DOLLARS.

The above sum will be paid and no questions asked for the return of a diamond necklace containing a ruby heart and a sapphire-studded cross, lost from an express wagon on Lexington Avenue.

MRS. CORNELIUS PUFFINGTON,
567 Lexington Avenue, New York.

The print was large and plain. Hiram Q. Stubblefield read it very easily. He looked up, and found Dave the Dude staring at him. Dave's face was white and hard.

"Go home, you rustic encyclopedia," Dave said bitterly. "Go away and leave me before I wipe you from the face of the earth."

Double Thirteen

By Francis Lynde

Author of "The Fight for the G. V. & P.," "Shouting Simms, Hero," Etc.

It's worse than giving a dog a bad name to stick two thirteens in the number of a locomotive. No wonder the Double Thirteen comes to be known as the "Hoodoo." A distinct misnomer, by the way, but it is a hard thing to rout superstition

THE panic on the Red Butte line began automatically with the advent of Engine No. 1313 on the Hophra Division, and Maxwell, division superintendent, blew up with a loud noise and let it be known that the first man offering the unlucky number as an excuse for road trouble would get his, and get it quick.

The big ten-wheel compound bearing the ominous number was one of a batch of twenty locomotives ordered for the Pacific Southwestern system, and was the only one of the twenty which was assigned to the Red Butte. Like all engines sent out by the manufacturers, it came on its own wheels, partly stripped, and as a unit in a freight train; and the trouble began before the freight which was hauling it had gotten out of the Copah yards.

"New Eng. Thirteen-thirteen split switch wrong way Copah yards send wrecker heavy crane," was the report that trickled in over the dispatcher's wire in the Brewster Division headquarters; and Maxwell happened to be near enough to hear it.

"What's that?" he rasped. "Send a hundred-and-fifty-ton crane two hundred miles to pick up a simple derailment? What the blank blank is the matter with those fellows over on the main line?"

"I don't know, but I'll find out," said Crocker, the day dispatcher; and thereupon issued a fierce volley of sounder clickings designed to convey Superintendent Maxwell's opinion of a main-line division outfit incapable of grappling with the small problem afforded by a derailed engine in its own yards.

"Jumped switch broke through culvert turned over on her side," came back through the Copah man's key, and with it the explanation and excuse: *"Our crane and all hands out picking up freight wreck in Lost Creek Cañon. Send yours."*

Maxwell, yielding to the inevitable, gave the order verbally to Crocker for promulgation—with embellishments, and adding a warning. "And if you hear anybody chewing the rag about bad luck and that new engine's number, you step on him as you would on a cockroach!"

Three days later—all of three days, mind you—the wrecking train came in from the east, trailing the new ten-wheeler behind it. Twice on the two-hundred-mile journey, the 1313 had climbed the rail, entirely without provocation, so everybody said; and when it was pushed into the back shop and turned over to the erecting gang to be put into commission, the men were already calling it the "Hoodoo."

Safely blocked over one of the erecting pits, the huge, inert mass of iron and steel seemed harmless enough. Yet on the first day Billy Grogan, the fat boiler maker, got stuck in the fire-box door, and had to be pulled out by main strength; and the following morning John Chesney, pitman, connecting up the links in the valve motion, had a finger bitten off.

"We're going to have trouble finding a crew for that new man-killer over in the shops," said Dawson, the master mechanic, drifting into the superintendent's office in the afternoon of the 1313's second day in Brewster. "I've been wondering if we couldn't paint her number out and give her another one."

Maxwell was not normally a violent man, or one given to picturesque profanity. But at the master mechanic's suggestion he blew up again.

"What!" he ripped out; "you, too, Dawson? Suffering cats! What we need is a consignment of straitjackets and padded cells! Why, good gad, man! That engine is one of a lot of twenty, all built in the same shops and from the same drawings and specifications. The only difference is in a number and a few dabs of paint!"

"I know," rejoined Dawson patiently. "The trouble isn't in the engine; it's in human nature. And I guess we can't change that."

"By Jove, we're going to change it in one respect, right here and now!" stormed the big boss. "We don't give down an inch for any such fool superstition as that. Pick your engineer and fireman, and assign them. If they kick, send them to me."

"Of course," admitted the master mechanic, "you're the doctor. But I've been through a ghost dance of this kind once, and I said then that I'd duck the next time—if I had the chance."

Maxwell found a cigar in a desk drawer, and bit the end of it ferociously. But by the time it was going he was cooled down sufficiently to argue the point.

"Look it squarely in the face, Fred," he urged. "If we recognize this idiotic superstition even by name, we're in for the limit. The next thing we know we'll have the train men getting hunches and refusing to go out on Friday shifts. What is the particular pet asininity connecting itself with the number thirteen on a locomotive?"

"There are as many of them as there are men to talk about them. But the one that persists is that a number thirteen will kill at least one man before it will settle down to business. And our hoodoo has two thirteens in its number."

The superintendent smoked in silence for a full minute before he handed down his decision.

"I'm going to knock this thing in the head, once for all, on this piece of railroad, Fred," he said, at length. "Put the ten-wheeler into service as soon as you can get it out of the shops, and pick out the most superstitious man you've got in the bunch for its engineer. Or wait—I'll do it myself. Give her to old Hank Disbrow. He's been doing a lot of the ghost talking."

Dawson got up to go.

"As I said before, you're the doctor," he returned. "As it happens, it fits all right. Disbrow is pulling the Limited with the Nine-four-six, and the 'Thirteen is intended for one of the heavy passenger runs, anyway. But the old man will kick."

"If he does, send him to me. How about his fireman?"

"He has young Cargill now; a level-headed, handsome young fellow who is in love with Maisie Disbrow. He is about the best fireman on the division, and, so far as I know, he hasn't yet been bitten by the panic flea."

"All right; let it go at that. When will you get the new engine into commission?"

"To-morrow or next day. I want to take her out on a trial run, first."

Dawson himself pulled the throttle on the try-out of the 1313, as he had planned to do; with Baldrick, the roundhouse foreman, in the cab with him, and young Cargill, whose dead time between regular runs gave him the day off, shoveling the coal. And because the devils, hoodoo and otherwise, can bide their time, apart from being a little stiff and hard to handle for the newness' sake, the big compound behaved admirably.

Catching his orders as he could, Dawson dodged his way between trains up the long grades to the pass over the Hophras, through the summit tunnel, and down the western hills to Sancho,

the locomotive-changing station in the edge of the Magdalenes. Turning the big engine on the "Y" at Sancho, he got orders from Crocker to double head as second engine on the fast freight up the mountain on the return run.

Throughout the grueling freight pull up the Hophra west-slope grades, the new compound buckled down to the job like a Mallet. In spite of its big drivers and the fact that it was designed and built for fast passenger service, it clung to the rails with a grip that not even a wide-open throttle was able to break; and on one of the long tangents, when Dawson signaled Borckman, the train engineer, to shut off his power, the 1313, rising to the occasion, stormed on up the grade, towing the entire train alone.

"She's a bird, in spite o' that danged number she's a-carryin'," was Baldrick's verdict, given when the new compound had come, without fault or mishap, to the Brewster finish of the trial run; and Cargill, also, was enthusiastic. "She didn't tear her fire any, to speak of, even when you gave her the whole job to herself coming up the Hophras, Mr. Dawson," he said.

Dawson stood aside with the fireman, while Baldrick was backing the compound from the service water spout into the roundhouse.

"Like her, do you, Billy?" he said. "This is one time when you win out. She's going on your run."

Cargill was a handsome, fair-haired young giant with a skin as clear as a woman's, and his quick flush showed through the coal dust on his face.

"Who runs her?" he asked, half anxiously, Dawson thought.

"Disbrow."

The young man ground his heel into the cinders, and hesitated. There was a rank-and-file barrier interposing itself as between the hired man and the company official.

"It isn't my put-in, Mr. Dawson," he said, at the end of the awkward pause, "but I reckon I can't help it this time. I don't believe Daddy—Mr. Disbrow—will take her."

Dawson smiled at the sudden switch to the courtesy prefix, knowing the cause. Disbrow's daughter, a black-eyed little witch who was easily the prettiest girl in the division town, was engaged to Cargill, so the gossips said, and even in the unfettered West a man may speak respectfully of his potential father-in-law.

"Why shouldn't he take her?" asked the master mechanic.

Again Cargill made heel holes in the cinders.

"I reckon you've heard what the men are saying about her—on account of her number," he ventured.

Dawson nodded briefly.

"Well, Mr.—that is, Daddy Hank believes in such things, or says he does."

Dawson thought it was a good time to drive a nail, and he drove it.

"The spook talk is all rank nonsense, Billy, and you know it," he said. "Some report of it has got around to Mr. Maxwell, and he's hot about it; hot enough to fire somebody if it comes to a show-down. Tip that off to Disbrow, if you get a chance. The Thirteen-thirteen replaces the Nine-four-six on the limited run, and that's all there is to be said about it. What Mr. Maxwell says, goes as it——"

The interruption was a shrill yell as of one in the death agony, and with one and the same thought the master mechanic and the fireman spun around and darted through the open doors of the roundhouse. What they found was a sickening tragedy in the making. After a day of faultlessly good behavior, the big compound with the fatal number had reached for a human life and was getting it.

Baldrick, rolling the big engine from the turntable, had backed over the cinder pit, and one of the wipers had gone around to the rear to drop into the pit with his scraper to clean the engine's ash pan.

As it chanced, Baldrick had backed a little too far; so far that the opening between the '13's rear brake beam and the pit edge was too narrow to admit the cleaner. Heedlessly the man had wedged himself into the opening, and

when he found that he could not squeeze through, still more heedlessly he had shouted to Baldrick to pull up a little. Baldrick had mistaken the signal for the usual one to "place" the engine's ash pan over the pit, and had begun to back when the agonized yell rose above the hissing of the steam into the cylinders.

Dawson, quick-witted and cool in an emergency, took in the situation at a glance. The cleaner, caught across the breast by the advancing brake beam and crushed between it and the track floor, was already black in the face. To reverse the engine and pull it ahead was to take the chance of killing the man outright.

"Clamp her with the driver jams! Don't move her—don't move her for your life, Baldrick!" he shouted. And then to the men who came running from all parts of the roundhouse: "The jacks! Bring the jacks and the blocking, quick! Jump for it, men!"

Luckily the hydraulic lifting jacks were within reach, and instantly a dozen skillful hands placed them with a hook lift under the rear trucks of the compound's tender. When the weight was off, other willing hands gently drew the crushed man out of the trap into which he had unwittingly thrust himself. He was still alive when the ambulance surgeon from the railroad hospital examined him a few minutes later; was living when the stretcher men carried him across the yard tracks to the waiting vehicle. But that was about all that could be said of him.

"Don't that beat the very devil!" was Maxwell's comment when, later in the evening, Dawson reported the roundhouse accident. "It's a thing that might have happened anywhere, with any engine, but, of course, the lightweights will make the most of it. Have you notified Disbrow and Cargill yet?"

"I told Cargill this afternoon, but I haven't seen Disbrow. He's going to kick like a bay steer. Cargill intimated as much when I spoke of it."

Maxwell frowned and felt in his pockets for the cigar of amelioration.

"We'll have to fight it out with somebody, and the good effect will be more striking if we hold Disbrow up to the rack," he said. "Besides, the Thirteen-thirteen goes on his run, and it's up to him to take her in the natural order of things."

This was spoken while the two—the superintendent and the master mechanic—were sitting out the after-dinner hour on the hotel porch, a post of vantage from which they could look down upon the railroad yards where the flooding moonlight was turning the rails into lines of silver, and the detached freight cars were casting grotesque shadows on the ballast.

Two squares away, as squares are measured in a hill town of the Timanyonis, two young people were sitting on the porch steps of a small cottage, also enjoying the moonlight. One of them was the prettiest girl in Brewster; the other, the fair-haired young athlete who had spent the afternoon shoveling coal into the maw of the 1313.

"You've got something on your mind to-night, Billy; don't tell me you haven't, because I *know*," the young woman was saying. "What is it?"

Cargill made a face wrinkle, which was meant to figure as a smile. "Haven't I been doing an 'extra,' and earning another little old iron dollar or two to go toward——"

"That isn't it," was the prettiest girl's interruption. "You are so big and strong that you don't know what it means to be tired like other folks. Besides, I said mind, not muscles."

The blond giant was cornered, and he was glad of it. Manlike, he wanted to unload, and he had been only waiting for the psychological moment.

"There's trouble ahead, Maisie," he said gravely. "You know about the new compound?"

She nodded briskly. "I should say I did! Daddy hasn't talked about anything else since he heard what her number was."

The big fireman was silent for the space of a full minute. Then he said: "You don't believe in all this ghost talk about unlucky numbers and such things, do you, Maisie?"

She did not answer at once. There is something in heredity, the writing doctors to the contrary notwithstanding; and Henry Disbrow's daughter was finding it difficult to deny the prompting of the blood.

"The reasoning part of me scoffs and says there *can't* be anything to it, Billy," she returned, matching his sober mood fairly. "And yet, away down deep inside of me there is something that shivers and says 'Ugh!' when I hear daddy and the others telling about the things that have happened—really happened, you know; one wreck meaning two more to follow, and all that."

"I've reasoned that three-wreck business out for myself," said Cargill thoughtfully. "It's what our old professor back in Lexington used to call the 'vicious circle.' One wreck happens, and then everybody is looking for the other two; and when half the men on a railroad are ready to jump if you say 'Scat!' at 'em, you don't have to go very far to find trouble."

"But why does it stop after the third wreck?" asked the girl.

"Because then everybody gulps hard and says: 'Thank God! That's the last of 'em!' and settles down to good old solid business again. Don't you see how it works?"

If the prettiest girl were not wholly convinced, she was at least silenced. When she began again, it was about the 1313.

"But this new ten-wheeler," she said; "isn't it true that they've been having lots of trouble with her already?"

"Yes; trouble that nobody would have thought of getting rattled about if she'd happened to have any other number. She's a bird of an engine. I told you I'd been out all afternoon with Mr. Dawson. I didn't tell you that we'd been trying out the 'Thirteen."

The girl was looking away down the quiet moonlit street.

"I'm glad I didn't know where you were, Billy," she said, and the lustrous eyes were heavy-lidded.

"Maisie," he broke out, "I've got to tell you something, and I wish I knew how I could make you climb up to where I am and get a good fair sight out over the top of things. Mr. Dawson told me this afternoon that the Thirteen-thirteen's going on our run."

She bit her lip on a little gasp.

"On *your* run, Billy?—and you'll have to fire it?"

"Yes; and I'm glad enough to get the chance. It'll be a whole heap easier on me. She's a crackajack steamer, and the 'Forty-six is so light for the Limited—since they put on the extra Salt Lake sleeper—that not many of the men can stand it to fire her over the hill, if I do say it."

"But if you get the Hoo—the 'Thirteen, does daddy get it, too?"

Cargill nodded. "That's what I've been tryin' to tell you—and didn't know how," he said.

Again there was a silence, and at the end of it: "I'm scared—scared stiff, Billy, and there is no use trying to wiggle out of it. You'll both be killed! *There are two thirteens in the number!*"

"Maisie, girl, that's the sheerest nonsense, and I know that the reasonable part of you is telling you so, this blessed minute. But I don't deny that I'm some anxious about your father. He's been talking—a good deal for him—about the Hoodoo, and it's got around to Mr. Maxwell. The super's hot about it, and he's hit back by giving the engine to us for our run. Mr. Dawson didn't put it just that way, but he said enough so that I could savvy, plenty. Whereabouts is your father now?"

"I don't know; down at the roundhouse, I suppose, talking it all over with old Jake Sherra."

"Then he's heard the latest, and it'll make things a whole lot worse."

Again the prettiest girl bit her lip to stifle a nervous gasp. "What was it, Billy? Something that happened this afternoon?"

"Something that happened after we got back." And he told her of the crushing of the ash-pan cleaner. "Take a good grip on yourself, girlie," he urged, in conclusion. "Make yourself

see that it might have happened anywhere, at any time, and with any engine."

"I know," she shivered. "But it never has happened here before, and it waited until this horrible man-eating thing came! Can't you beg off some way, Billy, dear? For yourself, I mean; I'm never going to let daddy put his foot on that dreadful engine!"

The fair-skinned young athlete took a deep breath, and charged the inner citadel.

"I know you love your father, Maisie; do you love me?" was the way he began.

For answer she caught up the big hand that lay nearest, and pressed it to her cheek.

"Well, it's this way," he went on. "We're men, both of us, and we couldn't dodge if we wanted to. If I believed ever so much in the unlucky-number business, I'd go anyhow; I'd have to. I couldn't back down and still go on calling myself a man. Your father *does* believe in the hoodoo business, like a good many of the others, but he'll feel just the same as I do about backing down. Don't you see, girlie?"

"I see that I'm going to lose you both!" she said shakenly. And then: "Don't ask me to persuade father that he ought to do it—don't ask me that, Billy!"

"That's just what I am asking you, Maisie—or about the same. He won't need persuading, but if you set out to do it, he might let himself be persuaded the other way—for your sake."

"Well?" she said.

"You mustn't do it, girlie. It'd be just like taking out a bit of your father's heart—the man-sized part of it—and throwing it away."

For a long time, the girl did not reply. She was gazing again into the moonlit distances leading down to the railroad yards; looking and listening absently for the familiar figure and the well-remembered step on the board sidewalk. At the end of the ends she caught up his hand again, and again pressed it to her cheek.

"I—I'm just a little piece of you, Billy, dear," she said softly. "I've got to do what you tell me to, haven't I? But I'm scared—scared!"

The man-sized one took her in his arms, and kissed her—doing it rather hurriedly because some one was coming up the sidewalk. When he got up to go, she went with him the half dozen steps to the gate, and they were saying good night across the little barrier when the upcomer paused and said: "Good evening, Miss Maisie," and to Cargill: "Hello, Billy."

It was Langley, the yard-office operator, going home at the close of his nine-hour shift, and Cargill held him for a single question.

"Any word from the hospital?—about the fellow that got pinched in the roundhouse?" he asked.

"Who—Dixon? He's dead; died before they could get him on the operating table, they said."

The two men said good night soberly, and went their opposite ways, leaving the girl standing at the gate. When Cargill's step was no longer audible on the plank walk, she put her face in her hands, and her shoulders were shaking.

"One!" she shuddered, with a gasp of uncontrollable terror. "The horrible monster has taken one life, and it will take one more! Oh, Billy, Billy! Will it be yours—or daddy's?"

II.

Mr. Frederic Dawson, a born master of men, as well as of machinery, rather dreaded the job of telling Disbrow, the grizzled veteran of the passenger runs, that he was slated as the man chosen to beard the great god of ill luck by pulling the throttle on an engine whose number was a double thirteen. But as it turned out, it appeared that he had been borrowing trouble needlessly.

Two days after the roundhouse tragedy, Disbrow, homing on his regular run, passed through the master mechanic's office to report a cracked wheel under the 946. Dawson saw him, and called him into the small pen which served as a private office.

"I suppose you know that the 'Forty-six is due to come in for a general overhauling, Disbrow," he began, when the veteran had taken the chair at the desk's end.

Disbrow's heavy brows became penthouses for the shrewd old eyes, and his hard-bitted mouth twitched under the stiff, iron-gray mustaches.

"Yes; I heard Baldrick sayin' something about it," he admitted.

"We've been waiting until we could get one of the new engines to put on the run," Dawson went on evenly. "You're to have the new compound."

The look in the veteran's eyes was that of a man who has just heard his death sentence pronounced, but he made no other sign.

"You've had her out; how does she handle?" he asked, with neither more nor less than his usual gruffness.

"She is a little stiff yet, but you'll work that out of her in a trip or two over the big hill. She steams well, and holds her grip on the grades like a mogul."

Disbrow nodded, and got up out of his chair rather stiffly, as a man suddenly realizing his years.

"When do I get her?"

"On to-night's run. You might come down some time during the day and shift your tools and dunnage from the 'Forty-six."

Disbrow turned to go, but at the gate in the railing he seemed to think of something else to say.

"I ain't much of a kicker, Mr. Dawson, but I've been layin' off to brace you for another fireman," he said slowly. "If I'm goin' to have the compound, I got to have another man."

"What's the matter with Cargill?" snapped the master mechanic, and the harshness in his voice was a mere mask for another and far different emotion.

The veteran frowned heavily. "I ain't makin' no charges," he said. "Billy's a good enough boy. But me and him don't hitch."

"Well, I'll think about it," said Dawson, and so the matter rested.

Later in the day the master mechanic had occasion to go over to the superintendent's office, and he found Maxwell, who had been hearing more of the panic talk, in a frame of mind.

"By heavens, Dawson!" he exploded wrathfully, "you'd think that an earthquake had been predicted, the way this thing is spreading over the division! Benson is just in from the Red Butte branch, and he says every man he met had something to say about the Double Thirteen and what it would do to us before we were through with it. But I'm laying for them! The first man that gets a case of the jumps on account of that engine's number gets fired so high that he'll never live long enough to come down!"

Dawson shook his head. "It's as unreasoning as any other kind of a panic, of course. If the compound can manage to make a few trips without killing somebody else——" he broke off, and began again. "I'm banking a good bit on Disbrow."

"Humph! You've told him, I suppose?"

"Yes; this morning."

"Well, he's one of the king pins among the prophets of evil; let's see what he makes of it."

"He's more than that; he's a man, Maxwell—a man, right. If you could have seen the look in his eyes when I told him—— But he was all nerve. Never said a word until he got up to go, and then he asked me to transfer Cargill—on the ground that he and Billy didn't 'hitch.' Which meant that he fully believes that the 'Thirteen will kill them both, and he doesn't want Maisie to be widowed and orphaned in the same minute."

"The darned old scoundrel!" said Maxwell affectionately, red wrath dissolving instantly into generous appreciation. "If it wasn't for the discipline, I'd let him off and put one of the reckless devils on the Hoodoo. When does she go out?"

"To-night, on the regular limited run."

"Of course you haven't transferred Cargill?"

"Not in a thousand years. If Disbrow is tempted to let his nerve flicker,

the sight of that boy will tune him up. And, besides, I want at least one absolutely sane man on the 'Thirteen. I don't know as you have ever noticed it, but Cargill is good and wide between the eyes."

There were head shakings and predictions enough to go with the big compound at eight-forty that night when the off shift at the roundhouse stood aside to let Jordan, the little night hostler, put her on the table and take her up to the waiting track at the station.

Jordan got through the moving part of his job without the expected catastrophe, and at the station he found Disbrow.

"She all yours, gentlemen," he said, in mock politeness, when he had brought the big engine to a stand beside them. And then he dropped from the high gangway and fell in a heap.

Cargill was the first to reach him. "What's the matter, Jordy?" he asked, and the hostler groaned.

"Sprained ankle, I guess." And then, with a bloodcurdling malediction directed at the 1313: "I yapped a little too soon, that was all. I'd ort to 'a' waited till I was safe on the ground."

Train 202, the Nevada Limited, was rocketing in from the east, and Cargill, no less giant tender than he was giant strong, gathered the little hostler into his arms, and carried him into the waiting room of the station. When he got back to the platform, the Timanyoni Division engine had been cut off, and Disbrow had pulled out over the switch and was dropping down to make the train coupling.

Cargill swung up to the footboard as the engine slowed past him. In the act he saw Maisie crossing the tracks from the townward side of the yard. A moment later she came around the front end of the big flyer, and ran lightly down the platform to the gangway.

Cargill met her at the engine step, squatting on the tender deadwood to speak to her. But the veteran, humped upon his driving seat in the overhanging cab above, and testing the air in response to the coupling man's signal, seemed not to have seen her.

"I couldn't help it, Billy," she was protesting, in reply to his saying that she ought not to be out so late and alone. "I just *had* to come. Something kept telling me that you—you and daddy—needed me."

"Well, we don't," he retorted, with loving gruffness. "What we need is to have you chase back to your Aunt Mary just about as straight as you can go."

"You'll be careful?" she pleaded, lingering the one necessary second to say it.

The air whistle in the cab was shrilling the starting signal, and the conductor's cry of "'Board!" rose above the sob of the '13's air pump.

"Of course I'll be careful. Wasn't that a part of the bargain when you said 'Yes'? Now, skip—and don't stop running till you get home. You promise, and I'll promise not to sweat about your bein' out without somebody to take care of you."

When Cargill stood up to reach for the bell rope, Disbrow, still apparently unconscious of his daughter's coming and going, was inching the throttle open, and the big compound, simpled for the start, was shuddering under the mighty strain of the four cylinders and grinding at the rails. The fireman, glancing past the crouching figure, bent double over the throttle lever, saw the girl of his heart flit like a dark-robed shadow down the platform, with the evident intention of crossing the track ahead of the moving train.

For one heartrending instant, the instant when she sprang from the edge of the low station platform and disappeared in front of the engine, the scoffed-at panic demon seized and shook Cargill, freezing the marrow in his bones. Then the great engine gathered headway suddenly, and sanity came surging back when he saw Maisie, or thought he saw her, waving to him from the electric-lighted street crossing on the townward side of the yard.

One little tremor of the panic returned when he wondered how she could possibly have run fast enough to cross the many tracks before he could

get that second glimpse. But now cool reason was reasserting itself, and he was presently able to push the panic doubt aside, or at least to forget it for the time in his arduous duties.

III.

The initial run of the Hoodoo '13 with the west-bound Limited on that starlit August night was a thing to be remembered as long as the Red Butte line holds its charter and the men gather in roundhouse tool rooms or about the red-hot winter stoves in the division wikiups.

Having the long, level dash across the Red Desert and the sliding drop down Timanyoni Cañon to its west-bound credit, the Timanyoni Division was usually able to deliver the Limited on time to the Hophra men at Brewster. But from Brewster west, after the first few circling miles down the river and around the cliff-crowned bluffs of Little Butte, there is a steady climb of eighty miles to the summit of Hophra Pass; a time-killing, heart-breaking storming of the mountain heights which usually culminated in a humiliating report from the tunnel station: *"Train 202, cleared twenty minutes"*—or maybe thirty or forty minutes—*"late at S. T."*

Among the four engineers who shared the fast-train run, Disbrow had never been able to win anything better than second place with the 946, and before the initial run of the Double Thirteen had covered the mile and a half from Brewster to the Gloria Bridge, Cargill began to realize that Daddy Hank was out for blood and a record. Also, he suspected that the veteran meant to drown the panic fiend in the fine wine of excitement, if he could.

The first stop was at Little Butte, and the wheels had scarcely ground themselves to a stand before Disbrow was off with torch and oil can, and was scarcely off before he had made a running circuit of the big ten-wheeler and was on again, jerking viciously at the bell rope for the starting signal as he swung up to his seat.

At Little Butte the climb began, and for the next hour and fifty minutes there were only water-tank stops and a few isolated stations. At the tank stops, Disbrow would jump down and make the racing circuit with the oil can while Cargill sat on the filling spout and held the drop valve open. At the stations the veteran would hang out of his window and watch grimly for the rise and fall of the conductor's lantern, saving thereby the half second or so over the slightly tardier shriek of the cab air whistle.

As the miles raced backward under the clamoring wheels, Cargill became vaguely conscious of two things. The first was physical and exhilarating; the big compound was behaving like a lady, steaming freely, tracking around the curves with an easy pendulum swing, and storming up the grades like the winner in a Marathon. The other consciousness was mental, and was a left-over, nerve-shattering dating back to that bloodcurdling instant when he had seen Maisie Disbrow step from the Brewster platform fairly in front of the moving train.

It was altogether in vain that he tried to hold himself down doggedly to the task of keeping steam on the racing compound. In the intervals between the coal shovelings, the backward-rushing darkness was full of ominous shadows, and more than once, above the clatter and grind and roar of machinery in motion, he could have sworn that he heard a woman's scream.

The stiffest of the Hophra grades—that between the foot of the mountain proper and the summit tunnel—begins at Relay, a night telegraph station, where there is a three-stalled roundhouse for the engines which double head up the final hill with the heavy freights. On the approach, Disbrow was peering at the face of his watch and calling to Cargill.

"If we don't have to hit the spout for more water, we're goin' to bust all the records and make the tunnel on time!" he shouted exultantly. "Stick a leg into the tank, Billy, and see if we can do it."

Cargill dropped his scoop, climbed back over the diminished coal supply, and quickly lowered himself into the manhole. The tank was half full, and he slid down the coal, and so reported.

Disbrow was easing the brakes on for the Relay stop, and his eyes snapped.

"By grapples, we're goin' to do it, Billy; in spite o' hell and all the thirteens in the 'rithmetic! Get the 'go-ahead' on your side."

Cargill was leaning from his gangway when the heavy train shrilled to its stop at the lonely mountain station. The station semaphore stood at "Clear," and the operator was out and signaling that he had no passengers. Also, there seemed to be no passengers to debark, since Jackson, the train conductor, merely leaned from an open vestibule and swung his lantern in the "go-ahead" circle.

"Right you are!" yelled Cargill, and almost without pause the wheels began to turn and the short stack to bark again its defiance to the mountain echoes.

Beyond the station the track curved, and for a flitting instant the shifting beam of the electric headlight swept the three-stalled roundhouse, the outdoor turntable, and the sidetrack leading to it. On the sidetrack, standing to watch the train pass, stood a man with a lantern. Cargill saw and recognized him; it was the roundhouse watchman. When the storming Double Thirteen was less than a hundred feet away, he suddenly raised his lantern high over his head, and seemed to be trying to make out the number of the engine's foreplate.

Cargill, still leaning from his gangway, saw the man in the full glare of the headlight, and, as once before in this night of alarms, his blood ran cold. The watchman was standing stiffly in the middle of the siding, and pointing with his free hand apparently at the compound's number plate. One glance in the quick sweep of the headlight was all that Cargill had of the man's face; it was the face of one struck dumb in a paralysis of horror.

Since the Hophra tunnel climb is the hungriest coal-eating stretch on the Nevada Short Line, the big fireman had his work cut out for him for the next thirty minutes. But when it was over, when the Limited, for the first time in its history, had reported "On time" at the tunnel station and was whipping along smoothly on the twenty-mile gravity run down to Sancho, the locomotive-changing station in the Magdalene Hills, he crossed the cab, and spoke to Disbrow.

"Did you see Pringle, the watchman at Relay?" he asked.

The veteran shook his head.

"He was standing between the rails of the siding, and he pointed at us as if he had seen a ghost."

"Maybe he did," rasped the panic fighter. "I been seein' and hearin' 'em all along, Billy. *But, by grannies, we're makin' our time!*"

It was one-thirty-five to the minute when the Limited slid down to the engine-changing stop at Sancho, and a flagman ran forward to cut the coupling. There was no night hostler at Sancho, and Disbrow pulled the Double Thirteen out on the siding to make way for the relief engine. In a trice the couplings were made again, and the Limited rushed on to become a diminishing roar and two tail-light eyes of red in the westward darkness.

Cargill swung down from the high step of the compound, and Disbrow followed him. The night watchman was coming across from the coal track, and the veteran drew a long breath, and passed his hand over his eyes.

"I'm glad it's finished, and us here to tell about it, Billy, boy," he said wearily. And then: "Let's go on over to Mother Shanahan's and eat a bite and turn in. M'Garrity'll take care of her now."

Their shortest path to the Sancho boarding house lay around the front end of the Double Thirteen, and that was how they came to find out what it was that the Relay watchman had pointed at. "Oh, my God!" cried the big fireman, with a pitiful break in his voice. He was standing, as the Relay man had stood, and pointing, not at

the compound's number plate, but at the figure of a woman, white-faced and unconscious, crouching on the engine's pilot platform and clinging with a death grip to one of the fore brace bars.

It was the lover, and not the father, who loosened the clinging fingers, and lifted the girl gently from her perilous shelf. Also, it was Cargill who carried her, as if she had been a child in his arms, across to the boarding house. Luckily Mother Shanahan was up and preparing the midnight meal for the two, and what with hot-water bottles and blankets and such homely restoratives as the warm-hearted Irishwoman could command, the prettiest girl was presently brought alive again.

Cargill was kneeling at the bedside and chafing her hands when she opened her eyes; and the veteran, who was standing helplessly beside him, swore out of a full heart, consigning the big ten-wheeler and all things great and small bearing the ominous number to the deepest depths of perdition.

"No, daddy, dear," said the girl, in whispering protest; "you mustn't say that. You must *love* the 'Thirteen as long as you live, and—and trust it, too. In one little minute of thoughtlessness, I threw my life away—and the 'Thirteen caught it and gave it back to me. Hold me tight, Billy, dear—I—I'm slipping away again!"

It was on the third day following the record-breaking run of the Double Thirteen with the westbound Limited that Dawson sauntered into Maxwell's office in the headquarters building.

"Well, I suppose you've heard?" he said, when the superintendent looked up from his desk.

Maxwell nodded. "About Disbrow's girl, you mean? Yes, but not quite all of it. How did it happen?"

"She came down that night to see the train pull out; she was scared up a little by the ghost talk, I suppose. Cargill scolded at her for being out alone, and sent her home. She tried to cross the track ahead of the train, and fell, almost on the 'Thirteen's pilot. Just then Disbrow, who hadn't seen her and didn't know she was anywhere this side of the Hill Street cottage, started the train. In her fright the girl grabbed blindly for things, and the way she tells it the big compound reached out an arm and lifted her to the pilot platform. She rode there all the way over the mountain, clinging for dear life and going from one fainting fit into another, as a girl would. They didn't discover her until after they had made the cut-out at Sancho, though Disbrow must have been within arm's reach of her half a dozen times when he was oiling around at the different stops."

"Hold on a minute," said Maxwell. "How was that, about the 'Thirteen reaching out and picking her up? I don't quite savvy that part of it."

Dawson was smiling gravely.

"That is the lucky part of it—for us. As near as I can make out, it was the air-brake pilot hose. It's new and stiff, and the wire winding makes it act like a coil spring. My guess is that the girl caught at it in her wild grab for handholds, and pulled it out of the holding hook. If she did that, it might have sprung back and given her the idea that it was pulling her up—though I fancy she did most of the scrambling herself."

The superintendent was biting the tip from another of the cigars of amelioration when he said: "I see. But you said it was lucky for us. Where do we come in—outside of the general thankfulness that the girl wasn't killed?"

Dawson smiled again.

"You haven't been 'listening in' on the wires—as I have—for the past three days, or you wouldn't ask. The curse is off. The 'light heads,' as you call them, are taking the girl's story at its face value. She says the Double Thirteen saved her life after she had carelessly thrown it away, and they believe it. The ten-wheeler is rechristened; they've dropped the 'Hoodoo,' and are calling her the 'Hophra Mascot.'"

Maxwell's smile was good-naturedly cynical when he rose and closed his desk to go out with the master mechanic.

"The Mascot!" he chuckled. "Wouldn't that jar you, Fred? It

strikes me that it's up to us to give Maisie Disbrow a send-off when she marries Billy Cargill. And, by Jove, we'll do it, if we can find any silver sets in pairs of double thirteens with a hoo-doo design. Let's go uptown and see Goldschmidt. He'll have to order from the East, and from what you say I guess the time is short."

But, after all, it was old Jake Sherra, box fitter in the roundhouse night gang, who had the last word about the Double Thirteen.

"Mascot, hey?" he shrilled, when the men of the night gang had gathered in the tool room to eat their midnight luncheons. "That's all right. I said she'd git a man, and she got Dixon, didn't she? And what was the use in her killin' a girl atter that!"

THE COLONEL CASHES A BET

HERE is one they tell on the famous Colonel Jack Chinn, of Kentucky:

The colonel's nephew knew a man who owned a trotter called King Avondale. After a time, Avondale won so many races that nobody in the Blue Grass State would bet against him, and, facing this sad situation, the colonel's nephew persuaded the owner of the horse to "pull" the next race, and to join him in betting vast sums of money against the speed monarch.

The colonel, who had indorsed the nephew's notes on the condition that they were to share, half and half, on the money won, was astonished the day before the race, when the youngster told him:

"We're due to lose like the devil to-morrow. We've scraped together eleven thousand dollars, and bet it against Avondale. That part's all right. But the talent is onto the game, and we've just got to let Avondale win. If we don't, those mutts in the grand stand will shoot the owner as he drives past the finish, a loser."

"Now, look here!" exclaimed Colonel Chinn hotly. "Your story's all right. But how do you get that 'we' into it? I indorsed your notes, it's true, to raise the money. But don't try to count me in on your losings."

The nephew, desperate at the prospect of having to make good the notes, found the owner of the horse, and told him:

"It's true that the talent will plug you full of holes if you make Avondale lose the race. They'll shoot you as you touch the finish line. But I'm going to be halfway down the home stretch, and, if Avondale isn't behind the bunch as you pass me, I'll shoot you before the grand stand gets a crack at you."

The race was on. The owner of the great king pulled him in time after time, jerked him back on his haunches, but it was no good. Every time the horse recovered himself and stretched out, he forged to the front. The driver was desperate, and he dodged the first danger. The colonel's nephew was in earnest, all keyed up by the thought of the eleven thousand dollars. So the owner switched Avondale into the fence, and lost the race.

"Colonel," said the nephew, "I pulled off the race according to my original plan. That fellow was afraid to win—and now I'm a lot of money to the good."

"Oh, piffle!" exploded the colonel. "Your enthusiasm's all right, but how do you get that 'I' into the story? We—*we*—put up that money, and now we—*we*—will cash in on it."

STREET CLOTHES ALL THE TIME

Lee Cruce, the governor of Oklahoma, refuses to wear a dress suit. When he was elected, he said he never had worn one, and he never would. Up to date, he has observed the vow.

Sociology at Snowslide

By Frederick R. Bechdolt

Author of "The Unwelcome Guest," "Wolf's Story," Etc.

You won't find Ryan's brand of sociology in the textbooks. He knows more about tunnel progress than he does about the science of the constitution, phenomena, and development of society. But when a sullen spirit settles over his camp, fomented by a long-faced orator, he makes a pretty good stagger at a sociological cure for the trouble.

"CONSTRICTION of the output increases the demand for labor."

The speaker stood on a bowlder at the end of the dump. One hand was raised; in the other, as if it were something which he had forgotten to lay aside, he held his idle shovel. Tall and lean and long of face, he wore his battered oilskin hat far back on his head. His voice was thin and high, as are the voices of many who have worked for years in the lower levels of deep mines.

"And labor must protect itself!" he cried.

The outside gang, six blond-haired Swedes, stood around him in a half circle. Their faces were upturned to his; they were listening eagerly. Each man of them held his shovel in his right hand, leaning on it. In the middle of their half circle, culminating in the bowlder on which the orator stood, the muck lay as it had been dumped, untouched, unnoticed. The string of cars were rattling away up the dump, which stretched behind them, long and gray, to the portal of the tunnel.

The long-faced orator was warming up; his voice grew louder and more shrill. His features tightened; his eyes flamed. The blond-haired audience drew a little closer; the mouths of two or three began to open.

The "Old Man," on his way to the post office, caught sight of them, and hurried down the track. They did not see him, nor did they hear him. He stopped close by; he stood a moment, with his booted legs wide apart. His huge bulk seemed to stiffen, and his face grew redder as he heard the words; he looked like an inflamed Colossus.

"Labor suffers at the hands of capital." The long-faced orator raised his fist on high. "The time has come for the——"

"The time has come fer me an' ye to settle!" roared the Old Man, as he charged. He seized the speaker by the collar with one hand, and lifted him clear of the ground, then kicked him down the bank.

"Constriction av the output!" he growled. "Go up to D quarters an' get yer time."

The dump sloped abruptly here into the mountain stream that ran through Snowslide. Ryan hurled the last injunction downward before the long-faced man had gotten halfway to the water. Nor did he wait to witness the immersion at the bottom, but turned to the blond-haired audience, whose members were still standing, leaning on their shovel handles. The mouths of all six were now wide open. "Get busy!" he roared.

Their shovels flew to the muck; the muck flew over the bank. Ryan spent a matter of thirty seconds indulging himself in the luxury of such invective as came to mind. It sounded like a chant. When he had done, the long-faced man was climbing up the bank some distance away, his garments dripping ice water.

The Old Man walked on, whistling out of tune between his teeth. His rubber boots, all splotched with mud, swung wide apart, so that he took up all of the path. He was frowning, and his eyes were bent on the ground, as if he were bothered with some problem.

"Constriction of the output!" he muttered to himself. Tunnel progress was his religion; and, what with men deliberately laying off, and other men as deliberately soldiering, progress reports had been bearing small figures of late. A strange, sullen spirit had settled over the camp for two months; he did not understand it.

The doctor was standing in the door of the post office, which was also the camp drug store, immaculate and British, every inch of him. The doctor was the oracle of Snowslide, the confidant of many of the men. He was also the friend of law and order and things established. He had witnessed the long-faced man's immersion.

"Come in," said he to Ryan. "My word! You're feeling fit this morning!"

Together they went into the back parlor, and sat down, with a bottle and long glasses on the table between them. The Old Man was still breathing heavily.

"Constriction av the output!" he said slowly, in an undertone. "Phwhat do ye think av that? Small wonder the muck is not comin' out."

"I say!" The doctor smiled. "You're active for one that carries a bit of weight."

The Old Man's scowl vanished before a fleeting grin. "There's nawthin' is more fun fer me," he said, "than kicking wan av them walkin' dillygates off the works. In my time I've lifted a hundred av thim." As swiftly as it had come, the grin departed. "Phwhat is ut, annyhow? Phwhat's come over the min? There's half av thim layin' off this month."

"Quite so." The doctor busied himself with the siphon bottle. "It's bad business; too many trouble breeders. The big strike has sent a lot of them out here, and they're agitators, every one of them."

"It ain't that," Ryan shook his head. "These tarriers av mine don't give a cuss fer agitators. Now if 'twas only that Coeur d'Alene bunch, I c'u'd see the why of ut; them fellers has been mishandled by fool superintendents back East until they're always lookin' to get the worst of ut, and huntin' throuble. But these bos of mine, the ould bunch that come here wit' me, is as bad as anny av thim. Last month there was no big drunk; and this month they're all hanging out downtown, licking up phwhat whisky they can graft, and doin' nawthing. You bet there's something more than walkin' dillygates makes that. I know thim bos. Some of thim I've drove fer better than ten year; they've followed me from Hell Gate on out to Snowslide. They're gettin' better wages than they iver got; *and* the grub is good. It's botherin' me."

"Exactly." The doctor smiled. "I suppose you know they're forming a union?"

"They are!" Ryan shook his fist beneath the doctor's nose. "I'll organize thim! I'll——"

"Last night they got Jerry Morley and Gunner Flynn, and ten others of the B bunk-house bunch," the doctor went on quietly.

"So!" Ryan had settled back in his chair again, and was breathing thickly. "Jerry Moreley and Gunner Flynn? Hot union men, thim!" He chuckled hoarsely. "B bunk house! That gang of bos w'u'd niver jine annything only a free-lunch line."

"Kennedy and his crowd are ringleaders," said the doctor.

"Of course," retorted the Old Man. "I know that. 'Tis what I w'u'd expect from thim. Them black Irish dynamiters is always in some sort of hell. Good drill runners, too, the best they make. But phwhat gets me is phwhy

these hobos av mine that used to fight them mine wreckers at the drop av a hat is mixing wit' them now. And in a union! They'll be callin' themselves labor leaders now. It w'u'd make a cat laugh!"

"They're going to meet in the Gem to-night," said the doctor. "There'll be speeches. We could drop into one of those back rooms by the back door, and listen."

"I'll go ye," shouted Ryan. "I want to hear thim spaches; and I want to see *Mister* Flynn, and *Mister* Moreley, and some of them others av mine; and perhaps I can find out what's drove them crazy *this* time."

The Gem candidly announced itself on a flamboyant canvas sign as a saloon and dance hall. That dual capacity lasted only during pay-day week. Between times it was simply a barroom. It was an ill-smelling, low-ceilinged place, and it was scarred by marks of many free fights.

To-night the room was crowded. Unlike other occasions, when the men came here en masse, there was now no revelry. The reason was simple; the Gem's proprietor was not an altruist; he extended neither credit nor hospitality to any save those who were on the pay roll. And the majority of this company were not at present.

They packed the place, a throng of big-limbed, hard-faced men, clad in rough garments and oilskins. And here, where usually they gambled and fought and drank and roared as cave men might have roared at play, they hung together now, and talked in undertones.

The yellow rays from the kerosene lamps flared on scowling faces; and in the shadows little groups were whispering. Huge giants, with great, gnarled hands, glanced sidelong as they grumbled together. And, among them all, like restless, trouble-breeding spirits, a half dozen men were continually moving about from group to group, speaking a word or two in each place. These were of the same type as the man whom Ryan had kicked off the dump that morning; blacklisted strikers, organizers bred by troubles farther to the east.

In a dark back room, which was separated from this by a partition full of cracks and knot holes, the Old Man and the doctor stood, watching the crowd. Ryan was marking the manner in which the evangels of discontent sought out the hard-rock men, and ignored the Coeur d'Aleners. At times he rubbed the knuckles of one hand against the palm of the other, as if they itched.

Occasionally the front door swung open, and newcomers joined the crowd. As the numbers increased, it seemed as if the noise were growing less; a general air of expectancy was coming over the place, and this, in turn, became a sort of tenseness. At length a stir arose; a knot of men were pushing their way through those about them. They stopped before the bar, and one of them leaped upon that battered pine counter.

"Fellow toilers!" he cried.

Back in the dark, rear room, the doctor pinched the Old Man's arm. "Look out," he whispered. "If you make so much noise, some one is going to hear us."

"I was just having a quiet laugh," said Ryan.

The orator was the long-faced man, whose immersion had taken place that morning. He raised a lean arm, and shook his fist at the ceiling.

"How long?" he cried, in his thin, high voice, and then again: "How long?"

He paused. The crowd muttered like a huge animal, whose rest has been disturbed. He lowered his long arm, and held his hand out over them. "Will you be slaves forever?"

He went on swiftly, with a certain rude eloquence, to tell them how they were suffering from injustice. His speech became full of ready-made phrases—"unearned increment," "residual share," "collective bargaining." The hard-rock men, who had no use for any talk unless it had to do with action, or with something easy to understand, were listening as if they had been thirsting all their lives for political economy. When he finished they

joined the Coeur d'Aleners in a yell of applause.

Other speakers followed, then some one shouted "Kennedy!" A score of deep voices took up the cry, and a giant, with a reckless face, and eyes all bleared, yet shooting fire, climbed to the bar. He was the leader of the Coeur d'Aleners.

The Old Man whispered to the doctor in the back room: "The 'Dynamiter' is phwhat they call him. As good a man as iver cranked a drill, too."

"Bad business," whispered the doctor. "You should get rid of him."

"Get rid of nawthin'!" Ryan retorted. "He's been sp'iled, that's all is wrong wit' that hobo. Before I get tru wit' him, I'll have him standin' hitched."

Kennedy was no orator; his voice came bellowing from his chest, and he talked straight to the point. He did not hint at political economy; nor did he mention bargaining. "What we want, we get," he roared. "If they don't give ut to us, we'll make thim. Raymimber the Bunker Hill Mine, boys." And the crowd roared back at him.

As he ended, and was about to step down, a man yelled: "Kennedy fer president! Hurray fer the Dynamiter!" There was pandemonium. When the long-faced organizer put it to a vote, it carried in a universal shout.

"The funny thing about ut all," said Ryan, when he and the doctor were sitting in the latter's back parlor, "is that none of them fools knows phwhat they're after, or phwhat ut's all about. Them hobos of mine is crazy. I ort to send fer strait-jackets fer the whole of thim."

"A bad lot." The doctor shook his head. "My word! It looks nasty. I'm afraid you'll have to get militia before this thing is over."

"That's it," growled Ryan. "'Tis that they're lookin' fer. Collective bargaining! Collective hell is phwhat they want. Phwhat do they care fer wages? I've known them tarriers to quit three dollars a day fer two because they c'u'd git pie fer dinner. It's a free-fer-all they're lookin' fer." He paused abruptly, and was silent for some seconds; then he chuckled.

"What is it?" asked the doctor.

Ryan's mouth had widened toward his ears. "Phwhat is ut ye call wan of them fellers that's always writin' books tellin' people how to mind other men's business?" he demanded.

"A reformer?" hazarded the doctor.

The Old Man shook his head. "I mean wan of thim college professors that's always gettin' fussy about the workin' classes and sewer connections in tinimints, and phwhy men goes to jail, and all that sort of thing."

The doctor laughed. "A sociologist," he said.

"That's it," said Ryan. "I'm wan of them. Only the soshology that I will be after handin' thim hell's scourings of mine was nivver in anny book."

"What is it?" the doctor was grinning, too.

"You wait," said Ryan. "I'll show ye when the time comes. Now, we'll not bother our heads wit' this union anny more. I'll tind to them."

It was two days later when a committee from the Snowslide Union came to call on the Old Man. They found him at his cottage on the hill; he looked down on them from the porch while they stood looking up at him from the steps. There were five of them, headed by Kennedy; among them were Jerry Moreley and Gunner Flynn.

Ryan's face was unusually calm; there was no trace of anger in his demeanor; a fact which made the Coeur d'Aleners of the committee press forward, and for some reason caused the hard-rock faction to retreat one step farther down. Kennedy made a brief speech; they came with a demand for five cents more an hour; they would give the company a week to answer; if the reply were adverse, they intended to strike.

Ryan nodded. "Is that all?" he asked.

"That's all," growled Kennedy.

"Good marnin'," said Ryan.

Kennedy and his Coeur d'Aleners stood fast; Jerry Moreley and Gunner

Flynn were now at the bottom of the steps.

"Good marnin'," Ryan repeated.

Kennedy scowled up into the Old Man's eyes. "Raymimber," said he, "a week from to-day."

"Good marnin'," Ryan repeated once more. He was very placid. Yet there was something which had just come into his eyes; it made them all start quickly away.

"I wonder what he's up to?" said Jerry Morley as they were going down the path toward the dump.

Gunner Flynn who owned but one eye winked that solitary optic and grinned at the Dynamiter. "Make no mistake, Kennedy," said he, "ye've bit aff a big chunk."

The Old Man went inside the house. When the door was closed between him and the committee, he chuckled. "I'm off fer Seattle," he told his wife. "I've got to get down there and look after gettin' them electricians."

On his way to the depot, he stopped at the drug store and told the doctor of Kennedy's committee. It was as if he were recounting a joke. "I'll fix them," he wound up. "Ye wait."

"Quite so," the doctor retorted, "I *am* waiting. For the life of me, I can't get what you're up to. And, I say, the men are getting worse every day. D'ye know, they're talking of violence now!"

"Sure!" said Ryan calmly. "Phwhat else w'u'd they be in this fer? I'd tell ye if I had ut all mapped out; but there's detail in this here soshology of mine that needs some fixin' up." He pulled out his watch. "I've got to run fer that train. I'm goin' to town to get electricians to string them trolley wires and set up motors fer haulin' out the muck."

"As things are going," said the doctor, "the mules haven't enough to do."

"When I am tru wit' the Snowslide Union," said Ryan, "them mules will be swamped in muck. I'll be back in a day or two."

But the Old Man was not as good as his word this time. Two days went by, and the third passed, and there was no sign of him. The doctor wondered what would be the outcome of it all; the bosses were getting uneasy; the walkers were staying up nights, trying to hold what few men they had left. The camp was demoralized; the strange, sullen spirit had permeated everywhere; there was always muttering in the bunk houses; and the saloons were full. There was no money, and there was but little drinking. A sullen, ugly atmosphere, and discontent was growing. The speeches in the Gem were drawing larger audiences, and every evening there were more hard-rock men listening to the Coeur d'Alenders tell stories of violence during the big strike.

All this time Ryan was staying at the ornate hotel which he always patronized when he was in Seattle. Usually during these visits he spent his time with powder agents, material men, machinery salesmen, and others who dealt along the same lines; but now it was different. He wandered into new places; he visited a number of cheap lodging houses; he hung around such places as are frequented by longshoremen, lumberjacks, and coal heavers. He watched the crowds, as if he were seeking for something among them; but always he went away after these trips, as if he had been disappointed in that quest. This kept up until the week lacked only two days of being over.

He was sitting in his room when a bell boy brought a card to him. He saw the name of an electrical construction company, and shrugged his wide shoulders. "I may as well get *that* aff me mind, annyhow," he muttered, as he rode down in the elevator.

The man was waiting for him in the lobby. Ryan glanced sharply at his red face, which was round as the moon in full, and saw evidences of a kindred spirit. They shook hands, and went to the barroom without any discussion on that point. They sat down in a little booth, and Ryan outlined the job. The other heard him, and, when he had finished, nodded regretfully.

"I was hoping," he said, "it might be something bigger. I've got a bunch of thirty linemen, good men, too, just off

one job to-day; and I've nothing else for them for ten days or so. I can't hold them without there's work; and, the way you want this done, it won't take only four at the outside."

"Linemen," said Ryan slowly, and with a thoughtful expression on his face. "I mind wan bunch av them back in Pittsburg, a hard-fisted crowd they was."

"Like enough," said the other. "These wire stranglers of mine are bad ones, if ye get them started."

A light was stealing over the Old Man's face. "How manny of thim did ye say?"

"Thirty," said the other. "They'd string that wire of yours and get them motors set up so that the cars would be running inside of a week."

Ryan pondered briefly; then he smote the table with his fist—carefully as one who has paid bills for broken glassware before. "Listen," said he. "I want ye sh'u'd hear phwhat I've on me mind."

When he had talked for some time, the round face of the other began to grow wider in a smile; the smile in turn became a grin.

"I'll go ye," he said.

Then the two leaned across the table like a pair of conspirators, and they talked in whispers. One seeing them would have said that the plot was vastly pleasant to both of them.

The Gem was crowded. It was the last evening of the week. To-morrow —unless the Old Man answered favorably, which they did not expect—the men of Snowslide would go on their strike. The temperamentality of the hard-rock men, at this time, was given expression by Jerry Moreley when he growled to half a dozen scar-faced giants around him:

"For why sh'u'd we be waitin' fer Ryan to answer us, when we know he'll tell us to go to thunder! Better we go up to D quarters, and start somethin' now. I'm sick of listenin' to spaches, and all the time my tongue hangin' out fer the want of a drink."

"Right ye are," cried a listener. "We can't drink spaches. There's no fun in this. I was lookin' fer something to be a-doin'."

Kennedy, the Dynamiter, strode through the pack of big-limbed men; his reckless face was all aflame, as if he, too, had found it hard to wait. The organizers were counseling together in a corner.

It was time for the union meeting to convene, and every one was standing around, when a stranger entered the place. No one noticed him until he bought a drink. Such a proceeding marked any one these days. He swallowed his liquor surrounded by a large and envious audience. To the bartender, he said:

"I've the contract fer the electrical work."

At which the bartender extended the hospitality of the house. As if he had noticed the audience for the first time, the stranger looked around him, as he set down his glass. He smiled; his round, red face beamed good nature as he pushed a greenback on the bar.

"Join me?" he asked.

The invitation was delivered quietly. The result, however, was startling. A billow of humanity surged toward the bar; the edges of that wave came from the farthest corners of the room. It was as if some sort of mental telepathy or other mysterious agency had carried the words beyond earshot.

The bartender stooped down, and when he straightened again he had in his right hand a long piece of two-inch rubber hose, loaded at one end with lead.

The stranger grinned. "Looks like this camp was thirsty," said he. "Let 'em come; never mind the hose; it's on me, boys; all hands is welcome."

It took some time to serve the crowd; the task was none the easier because of a tendency on the part of many to "repeat," which pleasant fraud, when detected, brought the rubber hose into play. By the time it was over, the red-faced man was surrounded by a ring of drill runners, all bent on making friends with him at once.

Subtlety was not strong among the men of Snowslide. According to some

of that circle, the stranger must have been in many places at the same time, for while one swore that he had known their host up in the Copper River country, another was recalling a meeting during the same year somewhere down in Mexico, and still others had memories from distant corners of the continent. To all of these the stranger acquiesced. In that acquiescence, no one could see any discrepancy; and any possibility of such a thing was dispelled when he asked them to drink again.

Snowslide had its own ideas of ethics and of etiquette. When the rest of the room attempted to repeat the invasion which had been successful before, the line of invited guests, now stretched out before the bar, resisted manfully. The discomfited outsiders immediately sought acquaintance with the source of entertainment.

The red-faced man found himself shaking hands with jostling, struggling, fighting men, most of whom vowed they loved him as a brother. He took it cheerfully; he seemed, in fact, to enjoy it; and no sooner had the line in front of the bar been served, before he had bidden a new crowd to take their places.

It was not long before the bartender scented what he thought to be a psychological moment, and invited the whole house to drink. And then—for the first time in weeks—the sound of rough laughter and loud voices arose in the Gem.

A half hour went by in this manner; the stranger spent his money with a rapidity and a constancy beyond anything in the camp's history of careless financiering. More than twenty drill runners were struggling to hold their places before the battered pine counter until the bottles could come their way, and a dozen others had joined in a stag dance, when the long-faced organizer buttonholed Kennedy.

The Dynamiter had his arm around Jerry Moreley's waist; and Jerry Moreley, in his rôle of lady, had one ham-like hand on his partner's shoulder; they were whirling slowly in what dance-hall floor managers call a "nice, long, dreamy waltz."

"Time fer the union meeting, boys," said the long-faced man.

"Let the union wait," growled Kennedy.

"Be aff," cried Jerry, "or I'll take a punch at ye. Ye sp'iled me step."

Gunner Flynn, whirling by in the arms of a Coeur d'Alener, had the long-faced man on his blind side and bumped against him. Tearing himself from his partner's embrace, the Gunner came back, peeling his coat from his shoulders as he came. The organizer retreated hastily.

"I'm happy," said the red-faced stranger to the bartender. "I'm feelin' cheerful to-night. I'm goin' to celebrate." He groped in his pocket, and brought out a roll of bills; he placed them on the bar. "Tell everybody to come up," he ordered, "and to keep on coming. When this is gone, there's more."

By the time a dozen fights had started, and the floor was crowded with dancers, whose whistling chorus rose above all the noises of strife and laughter, the long-faced organizer grew desperate. He sought out Jerry Moreley again. He found him locked in sanguinary struggle with another of his size; and then gave it up in despair. The long room throbbed with the sounds of revelry; and in all that uproar there was now no muttering. It was like one of the old occasions when the men of Snowslide played.

There were exactly thirty linemen on the late train to Snowslide. They were of the breed which their craft calls "floaters." They rode in the smoking car, and by the time the train had come fifty miles out of Seattle, there was no one else in that coach. It was a trip replete with incident. They left the train the worse for several broken windows, and their own number was the worse for several broken heads.

The linemen had heard of Snowslide. Mysterious rumors had circulated among them, all to the same purport. That purport was the toughness of the camp. And now they marched in close order, seeking their welcome,

ready to take it in whatever form it might happen to come. They reached the door of the Gem; they crossed the threshold; they surged into the room.

As they entered, the red-faced man, with considerable nimbleness, climbed over the bar. The bartender stooped down, picked up the rubber hose, and stood, holding it in both hands. The men of Snowslide looked around to see who these newcomers might be.

The linemen stood in their places, close together. Among these giants they looked very small, a pack of fox terriers, come among a drove of bulldogs. The two crowds drew nearer.

And then a little lineman noticed Gunner Flynn at the forefront of the throng in the barroom, squinting at them, belligerency written all over his puckered face.

"Hey, boys!" he cried. "Pipe this guy wit' the bum lamp." And, that there might be no mistake as to whom he meant, he reached out and chucked the Gunner under the chin.

In all his life, no man had ever accused Gunner Flynn of being hypersensitive; but there are limitations to everything. He locked himself with the stranger, and they crashed together to the floor. At that same moment, Kennedy, seeing in the largest of the linemen something which he did not fancy, sprang upon the offender. Before the second had passed, ten single combats were raging; and in the next minute the number increased to twenty.

Back to back, the linemen stood, and the men of Snowslide milled around them like maddened cattle. They fought each other to get near the enemy. It was as if they had been starved for fighting. There was no longer coherent action; incident was lost in one grand chaos, where every man struck at whatever face appeared before him. The roar of imprecations shook the roof.

Behind the battered pine counter, the bartender whispered to the red-faced stranger. "Quick," he said. "They'll wreck the place. The fire hose is in the back. Get to it, while I look out fer the glasses."

Ten minutes went by; the linemen were holding their places like men in a broken square when the enemy will give no quarter. Another minute; the red-faced man saw some of the thirty reaching downward to their leather belts, where their tools and heavy steel "spurs" reposed like side arms. Then he took down the hose and turned on the water.

The Old Man was standing behind the walker's chair in D quarters the next morning when the men of Snowslide came back to work. The walker was busy with his time books; the room was crowded, and outside others kept coming constantly. As fast as he was able, the walker set down the names of those within the place. As soon as each man's name had been put down, he pushed his way through the crowd to the door. The Old Man watched it without expression.

Jerry Moreley and Kennedy approached the walker's chair. Even in this assemblage of bruised cheeks and lacerated lips and flattened noses, the faces of these two giants stood out beyond the rest.

As Kennedy gave his name—"Phwhat become av thim walkin' dillygates?" the Old Man asked.

The Dynamiter regarded him through one eye, whose mate was closed beyond any possibility of seeing anything. "Wan or two got stepped on," said he carelessly. "I guess the others beat ut while there was a chanst."

"And the union, *Mister* Moreley?" the Old Man turned to Jerry.

"Union?" said Jerry. "Aw, yes, I'd clean fergot. I c'u'dn't tell ye what did come of the union, but there was as fine a fight last night as ever I was in. Do I get a headin' machine, Harpy?"

"How did you come to think of it?" the doctor asked Ryan later.

"I sized ut up," said the Old Man, "like ye w'u'd a sickness. Thin I run acrost this electrical feller, and seen my chanst. Ye see, I knew phwhat these tarriers needed—I used to be wan myself. All they wanted was a fight."

The Assignment that Failed

By Clarence L. Cullen

Author of "The Puncturing of Percy Pell-Pell," Etc.

A new kind of newspaper yarn which violates the traditions in that the city editor isn't a crab and a grouch, nor is there any cub reporter to make good. You'll find it a decidedly good story none the less; probably as thrilling a story as you have ever read.

DENNISON, c'm'ere," said Waddell, the city editor, in his ordinary speaking tone. He did not take his eyes from the assignment book lying open before him, but merely held out a crooking index finger. This is the city editor's way of summoning some particular slave or the world in general. But invariably it is an effective way. Dennison, lounging at his desk, a good twenty-five feet from where the city editor sat, heard his name, and saw the beckoning finger at the same time. A man who has lolled in the local rooms of newspapers for a good many years, waiting for assignments, comes to know, through the psychical process known as the "hunch," the moment when he is due to be called by the city editor. And it behooveth him to know, and to be on the watch.

"Anybody going to be at the hotels to-day?" inquired the city editor—never removing his gaze from the fascinating assignment book—when Dennison stood beside his desk.

Dennison "did the hotels" as a steady assignment, but took his share of general or special assignments on the days when no interviewable possibilities—personages of actual or imaginary importance—happened to be registered at the Chicago hotels.

"Secretary of the Treasury's at the Auditorium," replied Dennison, not in any hushed tone of reverence whatever in mentioning the title of that distinguished member of a forgotten cabinet. "But the afternoon papers'll pump him dry. He spills all the chatter there is. I got him for two columns last time he was here, three weeks ago. Cagy guy. Talks, but doesn't say anything."

"H'm—my idea of nothing to print is an interview with a secretary of the treasury—*any* secretary of the treasury," said the city editor, glancing up at Dennison, through thick, near-sighted glasses, with an agreeable smile. (Yes, this is a violation of the stereotyped newspaper story, which inevitably makes the city editor a crab and a grouch, just as it infallibly attends to it that the cub reporter shall make good. But no matter.) "About a stick and a half'll do for this one this trip. I'll get one of the rewrite men to grab it out of the afternoon papers. Any other chatty worthies at the hostelries that you know of?"

It was Dennison's turn to grin. Exalted individuals don't visit Chicago in droves in midsummer. So Dennison, in combination with another hotel reporter, had been manufacturing important persons, and writing astonishing "interviews" with them in order to hang on to his hotel assignment, which was technically known as "soft." One of these "interviews" had been with a purely hypothetical "member of the Italian Chamber of Deputies," whom

Dennison had "quoted" at great length as to the immediate likelihood that the Pope would abandon the Vatican in Rome, and establish the Holy See in Berne, Switzerland. This one, copious excerpts from which were cabled, had caused the chancellories of Europe to sit up and take strained notice, until it was discovered that the "interview" had been printed in a Chicago newspaper, and that the "name" of the member of the Chamber of Deputies, given as "Elffipo," spelled "O Piffle!" when turned around. Another "interview" had been with "the Baron Kalnoky, son of the prime minister of Austria," in which the junior baron had been made to patter with prolixity as to the German war lord's intention of dismembering the Empire of Austria-Hungary upon the death of Francis Joseph. Dennison would have "got this one across," had not the Baron Kalnoky, the prime minister of Austria, sent a laconic cablegram to another Chicago newspaper, stating that if he really had a son running loose in Chicago he was both surprised and shocked at himself, seeing that, although he was an old man, he had never taken the time to get married. And so Dennison felt that he had a grin coming.

"I might make the rounds and see if there are any live ones on the registers," he suggested craftily. Something seemed to tell him—the "hunch" method gives seasoned reporters this sort of prescience, too—that City Editor Waddell had him slated for some special assignment of the "bug" variety; and Dennison, on these scorching afternoons, liked the dim corners and the electric-fan-created coolth of the spacious hotels, where, between reflections of the quenchful variety, he could scribble "talks" with suppositious tourists, "temporarily in Chicago," about the pearl fisheries of Ceylon, the increasing strength of the Chinese army, and such easy and engaging topics.

"Er—uh—or dead ones," brittly tacked on the city editor, his smile touched with sardonicism this time. For a moment, while Dennison rather uneasily shifted his weight to the other leg, the city editor resumed his absorbed contemplation of the assignment book. Then: "Ever ride on a locomotive, Dennison?" he asked, looking up suddenly at the reporter.

The blow had fallen. Dennison saw that it *was* going to be a "bug" assignment—a ride on a locomotive, and the thermometer at ninety-eight!

"Not that I remember," he replied huskily. "Never was very keen for those T. R. stunts."

"Um—er—well, I can't get Teddy to write me his impressions of locomotive riding, and so you'll do," said the city editor, the flattery obviously unintentional. "Midnight ride on an engine—get it? Fiery, untamed descriptive junk in your lurid vein—glare of headlight, roar of—er—roar of passing scenery, foolish purple cows being hurtled through the air—that sort of thing. You're to make the little junket tonight. There'll be a special engine waiting for you at the I. C. Station at midnight, and you'll be catapulted down the line to Bevanston—that will be far enough for you and the picture kid to catch the idea.

"Write the yarn as if the engine had been hitched on to the St. Louis Express—see? Tried to make arrangements for you to make the engine of that train, but it's against the road rules. So the I. C. people offered us the special engine. But that won't stop you from writing the stuff as if you'd really been aboard the express locomotive. You'll go fast enough, don't worry—I've fixed that.

"Get off at Bevanston, and go to sleep there, and dig into town to-morrow forenoon, and write the story. Want a page of it, with the pictures, for paper day after to-morrow. Got to stick a few seethes in the way of summer specials into the old sheet, with things as dull as they are. Make this a nifty one, son. I want to show that doodle-witted Sunday editor of ours that he doesn't know a local special when he sees it with a Yerkes binocular—that he—er—um—send Hollister to me, will you?"

Hollister was the local staff stunt artist. Dennison, surcharged with gloom, sauntered into the "art room" —so termed because half a dozen age-yellow and dauby originals of Sunday-supplement drawings were pasted against the board partition separating the room from the local room—and found Hollister affectionately patting a pass which he had just succeeded in squeezing from the reluctant sporting editor for the next day's ball game.

"His nobs," said Dennison, jerking a finger in the general direction of the city editor's desk; and Hollister, shooting a questioning glance at Dennison, went in, and got his instructions from the city editor about the kind of pictures that were to go with the midnight-ride-on-the-locomotive story. Hollister had a look of crumpled misery when he returned to the "art room," and found Dennison gazing stonily out of a window.

"Ain't it the lid-off limit?" groaned Hollister. "And me all dated up for one o' those 'raus-mit 'im' parties to-night over at the West Side Turnverein Garden, with the Teutonic eats and the Tyrolean dolls all planted, and the—yes, and b'gee! I'll have to miss the ball game to-morrow, after I had to rope and tie and buck and gag that mucilaginous-mitted sporting editor for a pass! I can't do these doodadded pictures to-morrow and go to the game, too, and——"

"More bugology, that's all," gloomily cut in Dennison. "Serves us right for working on one of these billy-bedinged, saffron-beetle sheets. Serves us perfect-ly right-o. I wish now that I'd played it up that that bum Secretary of the Treasury had staked me to the hint that he was going to spring a new bond issue or something, and that he was going to dish the story out to me exscoopively—if I'd had the stall ready to do that maybe I'd have flagged this greasy engine job."

"Uh-huh—fine for you, but I'd have caught it, all the same," mumbled Hollister, digging viciously at a caked pipe with a knife blade.

So they fell to condoling with each other—not, from their angle, without some justification. The pair had been assigned to a lot of the "bugological" stories of the kind newspaperishly known as "summer specials for the daily." A fortnight before they had gone up in a huge captive balloon to get a story on "How Chicago Looks From the Sky," and had both been made scandalously airsick from the tugging and rocking of the wind-tossed gasbag.

Shortly before that, in Rube-and-Zeke make-ups, they had made the Sunday rounds of the fashionable South Side places of worship, to get a story on "How Wealthy Chicago Churches Treat the Strangers Within Our Gates." And there had been a raft of other "insectuous" assignments, as Dennison called them, handed out to the pair by a city editor who, while neither a grouch nor a crab, possessed a highly developed penchant for "tossing action and spunk into the daily," as he expressed it.

"Oh, well, we've got the afternoon and evening to ourselves, anyhow," said Dennison, at the end of the growl-fest. "Me for home and a romp with the kids, and about seven hours in the pajams, holding down the shucks. Meet you about nine—nine do for you?—at the billiard room of the Great Northern, and we can nudge in a game or so of Kelly pool, and buck up for this fool bullgine ride."

"Home and hay for mine, too," said Hollister, who was unmarried, but scheduled for marriage at an early date; and the two went their respective ways, to build up a little edifice of sleep for themselves against the hour of rejoining for their grimy assignment.

About one o'clock on the following morning, Jim Hinton, the fat news editor of the *Globe,* waddled swiftly from the telegraph room to the local room, and slapped a bulletin, just yanked from the typewriter of the operator on the "special" key, on the desk of Cox, the night city editor.

The jowly, usually ruddy face of the news editor was pale under the perspiration beading his hanging cheeks,

and he nervously bit off and expelled half-inch chunks of his unlighted cigar. The night city editor shot a questioning glance at the veteran news editor, for whom pallor or visible indications of repressed excitement or strain were novelties, and then read the bulletin, which ran:

Unattached locomotive on I. C., loaned with crew by road for *Globe* service, leaving I. C. station, Chicago, shortly after midnight, ran full speed through open switch into roundhouse twelve miles south of city, turning completely over in turntable pit, locomotive boiler exploding, partially wrecking roundhouse. *Globe* men and engineer and fireman probably under locomotive, which is turned completely upside down in pit. Wrecking crew on way. More later. REED.
Operator Z-N Block Station, I. C. R. R.

The night city editor, as he read, gripped the yellow slip of paper more tightly in his fingers, and his face suddenly became even chalkier than the news editor's.

"That means Dennison and Hollister!" he gasped.

The fat news editor bit off and disposed of another chunk of his dry smoke, and nodded.

"Yep, Dennison and Hollister," he said huskily. Then, after a little pause, "Decent fellers, too, both of 'em," he added, and waddled over to a window, and gazed out at the murky night, through which were beginning to rip sharp flashes of zigzag lightning preluding a heavy wind and rainstorm advancing upon the town from the lake.

Three copy readers, late men, glanced up, looked curiously at the drawn features of the night city editor, and then removed their eyeshades. It takes a good deal to arouse the interest, much less the curiosity, of a copy reader. But they had subconsciously caught fragments of the few words that had passed between the night city editor and the news editor, and they were puzzled.

"What's up, Cox?" asked one of them. "What's that you said about Dennison and Hollister?"

"Poor devils are under a locomotive in a roundhouse pit," replied Cox absently. Then, suddenly electrified by the news instinct, he pulled himself together, and, pushing back his chair, jumped to his feet. "Here, Chandler and McBride!"

The two emergency men of the reportorial staff, engaged at that moment in whittling down cable and telegraph news in a far corner of the local room, clattered out of their chairs, and were at the night city editor's desk in a few strides. Cox pointed to the bulletin lying on his desk. Each grabbing a corner, they read it.

"Get out there, you two," directed the night city editor, with hoarse succinctness. "Freeze onto the first automobile or taxi you can snag. Get the story. Chandler, you're in charge. Phone in your stuff. You can make an outline story for the first edition. On your way!"

The two men, seasoned reporters, were into their coats, and bolting for the stairs—they had no time to wait for a sleepy night-elevator man—before the night city editor's directions were fairly out of his mouth.

"I'll send a couple more men to help you as soon as I can nail 'em," Cox, stepping swiftly into the hall, called after them. "See that Dennison and Hollister are got out of the pit without delay—use the paper's name for that—we'll send an undertaker from this end."

Then Cox, his head down, walked slowly back from the hall to his desk.

"Poor devils!" he muttered to himself.

The fat news editor turned away from the window, and skillfully made it appear that he was only employing his handkerchief to mop the perspiration from his bedewed brow.

"Decent little fellers, those two," he repeated, forgetful of the fact that both Dennison and Hollister were six-footers, and therefore towered fully six inches over him; and he waddled softly back to the telegraph room, shaking his head as he bit off chunks from another unlighted cigar.

The three copy readers readjusted their green eyeshades, and picked up their mutilating pencils, but somehow they were not ready to return to their work of ripping to tatters the work of

the men who had turned in night assignment stuff.

"Some writer, that Dennison," said one of them, in a low tone, to the others, as he tapped with the blunt end of his pencil on the copy before him. "Had the right idea of condensation. Nifty descriptive style. Never had to chop his stuff much."

"Had a novel about half finished," said one of the other copy readers. "Often worked until daylight on it. Liable to be a winner, fellow told me who read some of it. Rotten luck, to cash in like that, eh?"

"Yes, and Hollister was a comer, too," put in the third of the copy readers. "Vigorous, kapoo style, he had, and he'd have been strong at the cartoon thing, too, if they'd have given him any show at it here. Had several offers to go to New York, but wouldn't grab any of 'em, because his folks live here, and his girl's folks, too—girl he was going to marry in October—the one that plays the small parts with the stock company."

The night city editor, fluttering the leaves of the reporters' address book to find two or three men to send to the scene of the accident by telephoned directions, glanced nervously out of the windows when the terrific storm of wind, accompanied by flashes of arabesque lightning and terrific peals of thunder, suddenly broke. He was thinking about Chandler and McBride, probably just starting on their motor ride to the roundhouse, of the likelihood of telephone and telegraph wires being put out of business, and of other matters that afflict night-working newspaper men at critical junctures.

He was picking up the telephone to call up some of the married reporters, whom he could rely upon as being at home and abed, when the managing editor, with the absorbed, benevolent brown eyes and the bushy white beard, trudged into the room, clutching a handful of proofs.

"Er—uh—Mr. Cox, did the board of aldermen take any action on that gas franchise at their meeting, or——"

He suddenly broke off, for, over the iron rims of his thick glasses, he noticed the oddly strained expression on the night city editor's face.

"Er—is there anything the matter, Mr. Cox?" he inquired, with a blandly baffled air.

The night city editor briefly told the absorbed old managing editor, wrapped in contemplation of civic plunder by rapscallion franchise thieves, what was the matter. The kindly old gentleman looked pained.

"Dennison, did you say?" he inquired, after a moment's pause. "I seem to remember Dennison—tall young man, wasn't he? How long had he been employed here?"

"Only been on the paper six years," replied the night city editor, the sarcasm not very veiled.

"And Hollisman—oh, yes, Hollister," said the managing editor, missing the mild barb. "How long had he been reporting for the——"

"Wasn't a reporter," cut in Cox, sighing drearily. "Hollister was an art man on the local staff. Been here four years."

There was a pause. The old managing editor stroked his Merlin beard, and looked thoughtful.

"It is very unfortunate," he pronounced then. "Poignantly unfortunate. Regrettable in the extreme. The *Globe,* of course, will see to it that their interment is properly provided for." He paused again, fingering his snowy beard. "Er—did the board of aldermen take any action on that gas franchise at the——"

But the night city editor dumbly shook his head to flag a repetition of the inconsequential question, and the old managing editor, meaning everything benign, shuffled out, immersed, to his own room. The very old ones who have been through the newspaper grind for forty or fifty years, see such a panorama of tragedy that each succeeding tragic office incident becomes, to their old, tired view, more and more secondary and subservient to the job in hand—that of getting out the paper.

The night city editor was answering,

between thunderclaps, the inquiries of three or four of the other Chicago morning papers, which had been bulletined as to the roundhouse accident, as to whether anything further had been heard, when the night manager of the telephone company cut in to tell him that the storm was putting the whole service to the bad; and in the midst of his talk the telephone manager's voice suddenly broke off, and the wire died.

Cox, turning to clap the receiver onto the hook, saw Waddell, the city editor, walking into his own room from the hall. Waddell wore a cheerful expression, and was softly whistling an air from an extravaganza he had heard at one of the roof theaters that night. He had dropped into the office on his way home from an after-theater bite, to dodge the storm. Cox knew by the whistling that Waddell didn't know. He stepped quietly into the city editor's room. Waddell, looking contented and relaxed, was tipped back in the revolving chair before his desk, fanning his face with his straw hat.

"'Lo, Coxy—how's she headin'?" he inquired chipperly, when the night city editor stepped into the room.

Cox, without a word, handed him the yellow bulletin. The city editor sat up straight in his tip-back chair, and spread the slip out on his desk, to get a better light on it. He read it through two or three times, without moving a muscle. Then, still without moving, he stared straight ahead of him into a pigeonhole of his desk for two or three minutes, saying nothing, a man wholly stunned. Then, slowly turning his head, and looking up at Cox with a wan, drawn face, the city editor groaned:

"Great cats! And I sent those two boys on the assignment! I sent them!"

"Buck up, Waddy, and forget that part of it," said Cox, placing a hand on the other man's shoulder. "Anybody could have sent the poor chaps"—his voice broke a little—"on the assignment; it was in the course of the grind. Forget it. Better be sending an undertaker out there, hadn't we?"

The city editor nodded. The night city editor mopped his face, took a turn or two up and down the little room, and then stopped again, with a hand on the city editor's shoulder.

"And about their womenfolks—how about that?" he asked. "Wires are all down—can't get 'em by phone. Glad of it, for that one reason. Hate to be the one to tell Dennison's wife—dandy little woman, and she had Dennison rated as somebody in a class by himself. And he *was*, dammit!" He had to fight the hoarseness of his voice to go on. "Three kids, too," he added drearily.

"It'll be my job to tell her," said Waddell then, in a very low tone. "It's up to me. I'll go out to her home after a while, and see her. If it hadn't been for me they wouldn't be—wouldn't be ——" He let the phrase go unfinished.

"Rot!" said Cox soothingly. "They were boys that knew how to play the game, not the cry-baby kind. Nobody could blame you. Get that out of your system. Look here, weren't you acquainted with that nice-looking girl that Hollister was engaged to—learning to be an actress with the Columbia Stock Company, wasn't she?"

Waddell nodded again.

"I'll have to tell her, too, after I see Dennison's wife," he said, after a pause. "Fine girl—known her since she was a baby. I'll see her and tell her—tell her who sent 'em, too. It's up to me." He got up, plunged his hands into his trousers pockets, and, with head sunk on his breast, panthered up and down the room. "If only something had happened to keep me from sending them!"

He plumped back into his chair with a groan, and the night city editor, abandoning his comforting job as hopeless, went back to the local room, and tried all of the telephones, with a degree of patience very unusual in a night city editor, to get in touch with Chandler and McBride, who he felt sure had reached the roundhouse by this time. But the telephone system had gone temporarily dead, as had the "special" telegraph wire. So Cox, having no one else to send at that hour, put on his coat, and, after a word of cheer for Waddell, went out to find a downtown undertaker to send to the roundhouse.

Nearly half an hour later the city editor, still huddled broodingly in his chair, and with all of the lights in the room turned off, heard the clang of the elevator door, a sound not frequently heard on the editorial floor at three o'clock in the morning, with most of the men gone, and the paper almost "up." Waddell, chin in palm, gazed down the long, dimly lit hall, expecting to see Cox, now a bit overdue from the undertaker's, step from the dark elevator, and emerge into the light.

Instead, two figures stepped from the elevator, linking arms as they did so, and sauntered up the hall toward the local room. Waddell, in the darkness of his little room at the end of the hall, up which the two tall figures lounged easily and chattily, gripped the arms of his chair.

The two men were Dennison and Hollister.

There was a cheerful, condescending grin on Dennison's face, befitting a man who has just won eighteen games of Kelly pool to the other fellow's seven, and each game having a thirst quencher as a prize and reward of merit. But Hollister did not appear to be taking his defeat to heart. If anything, his grin was broader than Dennison's. But of course the thirst quenchers had gone both ways at the end of each game.

"I think I could ha' put th' bee on you that last game, neighbor, if I'd only——"

Hollister was saying it, but he broke off at a nudge from Dennison. Dennison could sit up for three nights running, and still retain his keenness of vision. And Dennison had caught sight of Waddell sitting, with hands tightly gripping the arms of his revolving chair, in the dim little office of the city editor at the end of the hall.

"Nix—we're nailed," whispered Dennison, and Hollister followed Dennison's gaze, and saw the situation, too.

The city editor got up, rather totteringly, to receive them. They had to pass through the stream of light from the local room to get into the little office. But it is against the profoundest principles of copy readers ever to look up from the desk or table at which they are playing ten-cent limit after they are through with their work. They were thus engaged; it was to slip into this game that Dennison and Hollister, after their joyous evening at Kelly pool, had returned to the office; and the copy readers did not see them as, answering the silent invitation of the city editor, they passed through the stream of light and entered the little office.

When they had entered, Waddell closed the door and switched on the lights. He gazed at them steadily, from one to the other. Later, at the Press Club, he told some of the older men how he had longed to grab them both around the middle, and stake them to a grizzly hug of gladness. But he didn't do anything like this, for city editors are wonderful adepts at the art of self-repression, as well as other kinds of repression.

"Well?" he said sepulchrally.

Dennison turned a guilty grin upon Hollister. Hollister gave it right back to him.

"Did you fellows accidentally miss that locomotive trip?" asked Waddell, sepulchrally again.

"Well, yes, accidentally, seeing that you're decent enough to suggest the lie," said Dennison. "Anyhow, we missed it. If I had a two-weeks'-old fox terrier pup that couldn't write a story of a night ride on an engine, with one paw tied behind his back, without actually taking the engine ride, I'd chuck him into the lake."

"That goes for the pictures, too," chanted Hollister recklessly.

The three men heard a commotion in the local room. Chandler, just in, was fairly shouting to the copy readers:

"Dennison and Hollister, bless the old sons o' guns, weren't on that engine at all! They missed it, and the engineer, thinking they weren't coming, started for the roundhouse, and ran into a switch into the wrong roundhouse. Engineer and fireman jumped, and only got bruised up—and Denny and Holly, th' ol' rummies, are all right! Wow-ee!"

"Whee!" cheered the three copy readers—and cheering is an almost uncannily unusual thing in copy readers.

There was a big lump in Waddell's throat, but he fought it down, and his face took on a heavy scowl.

"And so you two fellows fell down on your assignment, did you? Laid down on me, eh? All right. You're both fired! Get that? Fired!"

And the city editor grabbed his hat, and stormed out of the office.

Dennison and Hollister gazed blankly at each other, then grinned.

"Oh, well, if we're fired, we might as well nudge into this little piking game, and cop some o' the change," said Dennison, and they walked in upon the amazed copy readers and Chandler —who told them all about it—and spent a very agreeable and profitable two hours at ten-cent limit with the mutilators of reportorial copy.

But they were not really-and-truly fired. A few days later the city editor sent them out on a "summer special for the daily": "How Chicago Would Look in a Mirage as Seen Upside Down From a Lake Steamer," and they did the yarn gorgeously.

THE POWER OF THE POLICEMAN

TWO men were walking on the grass in the capitol grounds at Washington. A policeman, tall, stalwart, grim, approached them on the run.

"Get off the grass!" he shouted, no hint of uncertainty in his tones.

The two trespassers paced on, unheeding, unmoved by the warning voice.

"Get off this grass!" shouted the policeman to the smaller of the offending couple. "It's against the law for you to be here, and I'll arrest you."

Still the two walked on, bruising the grass, ignoring the minion of the law. A heavy hand fell on the small man's shoulder. The policeman was in deadly earnest. Already the station house yawned wide for the stubborn men.

"Who appointed you to your place?" asked the small man.

"Mr. Stokes Jackson, an official of the House of Representatives," answered the policeman, with dignity.

"Well," said the questioner calmly, "you tell Mr. Stokes Jackson that you twice warned Representative Garner, of Texas, and Representative Lee, of Georgia, to get off the grass, and that they didn't pay a blanked bit of attention to you."

WHEN BAN JOHNSON SLUGGED

BAN JOHNSON, the baseball magnate, and Gus J. Karger, the political writer, began their careers as reporters of police news in Cincinnati. One morning Ban, having decided that Karger had "held out" a piece of news from him, and had scooped him on the story, hunted up his opponent, and made this observation:

"Right here, Gus, is where I beat you up."

The remark was followed by a blow that landed on Karger's nose. But that was merely the beginning of the mill, for Gus backed Ban into a corner, and gave him the beating of his life.

AN EXPERT ON DOGS

Henry L. Stimson, who succeeded Jacob Dickinson as Secretary of War, is a great lover of horses and dogs. He is a fine rider, and knows about all there is to know about the breeding of dogs.

Topping the Market

By Robert V. Carr

Author of "The Pride of Kid Caldwell," "The Love Lyrics of a Cowboy," Etc.

The marketing end of the cattle industry. How a range rider gives up punching cows and tries the game of lassoing cattle shippers for a live-stock commission house. He finds it even more exciting than snaking his lariat over the steers. A spirited yarn, told by the puncher himself.

WERE you ever broke—clean and without a red? No; then your tears are not for me. But listen: I've been so badly busted that the Injun on a one-cent piece looked like a whole Sioux tribe to me. And there's been times when I couldn't raise the price of a grazin' permit for a fly—which, if you'll stop to think it over, is some poverty.

Still, and for all that, I traveled a fairly swift pace, and lived my life in bunches. I don't know of anything I overlooked; if there was, I never begrudged the time goin' back to take care of it. It always peeved me to find out I'd passed by something that sounded like trouble. I was one of those kind that would stop and examine a dynamite fuse to see if it was lit. If she blowed up, I knew; if she didn't, I lit her. You've seen those kind of trouble artists, haven't you? Well, I was one, registered and pedigreed.

About the first thing I knew, I was a sure-'nough cow-puncher, and could roll a cigarette with one hand, and wear a number six boot. Besides, I was afraid I'd die rich, and people would quarrel over my money. So whenever I'd round up a summer's wages, I'd drag it for some place where I could back in and unload my wealth. That's how I happened to drift down to Chicago with a shipment of H L (connected) cattle, and the rest is history.

I have a recollection of dancin' to the music of a banjo-playin' slot machine. Seems then I drifted into a lady barber shop and got a haircut, a shampoo, a shave, a massage, a shine, and an earful of canned jolly. Then I met a feller who claimed he once heard of a man who said his wife's brother-in-law's sister danced with a cow-puncher who saw a friend of mine in the spring of eighty-one. It was near enough, and we had a drink on all concerned, for old acquaintance's sake. And for fear we'd slighted some one, we has another round.

Late the next day I woke up in a cheap roomin' house, money gone, gun gone, all gone save honor, and that lookin' kind of poorly.

When I got so I could think, I hunts a free phone and calls up Billy Dayton, live-stock commission man, and gets him to send up a boy with ten bucks to the Great Northern. When the kid arrives with the coin—I was financially as clean as the inside of a soap bubble—I nails it, and takes on a Kentucky breakfast. Feelin' better, I waltzes down to the yards and tells Billy Dayton my troubles. I'd just sort of got it in my noddle I didn't want to punch cows any longer, and I struck Billy for a job.

He looks at me for a spell with his keen eyes before he answers: "Know what you're goin' up against?"

I told him I did.

"Guess you can open and shut gates, then, for a while," he says, like he didn't have much hope for me. "You look strong enough, though a little fuzzy just now. Go to work in the mornin' if you want to." I did.

Didn't sell any stuff durin' the years I worked for Billy; was just a sort of handy man around the pens. And havin' more or less of a cheerful disposition, I entertained the shippers. I knew most of the range outfits, and Billy got so he leaned on me to take the Western boys uptown and show 'em around.

You know how it is when a man comes in with eight or ten loads of cattle. He wants to see the town before he goes back home. It was my job to see that shippers didn't have to strain their eyes lookin' for a little fun. Besides, when a man goes out with you and kind of throws himself loose, he feels as if he ought to hang onto your friendship. You might wander out to his place some time and his folks might find out what an old cut-up kid he was. So he goes out and has his little old vermilion time, and ships his cattle to you next year. That may not be exactly correct, but it's near enough to the truth to be good business.

I guess I'd worked about three years for Billy, when he calls me into the office and tells me he wants me to go on the road. That was before the exchange shut down on solicitors, and it was a good job—for a single man.

"Dunsmore's quit," says Billy, "and I want you to take his place. I'm not kickin' on Dunsmore, but I don't believe he went after the range business as he should. You know Western shippers, and I expect you to show results." That was Billy's way, sharp, quick, and to the point.

"You won't have much opposition out there," he goes on, "except Dad Bumps, of Field & Smith. You probably don't know Dad's methods, and I'll wise you up a bit. Dad Bumps is an old-timer, and he holds his trade on the strength of bein' able to talk old-time stuff with the old cowmen. Don't underestimate his strength, either. There are some of those old shippers out there you couldn't get away from Dad with a club. They ship to his firm because they can't break themselves of the habit. Dunsmore was never able to make a dent in Dad, but I'm expectin' you to clean him up. The one weak point in Dad Bumps' system is that he's an expense trimmer. He spends more time figgerin' on how to get a cheap room and sweat his expense account than hustlin' new business. I expect you to spend money, but I want results." Billy said that word "results" like he wished he could dent it in my mind.

"And now, as a starter," he says, nice and quiet, so's to break it to me gentle, "I want you to get Joe Summers. Dad Bumps has been after 'Old Tongs' for years, but never has touched him. And, for that matter, we're all in the same pen. It's up to you to get him."

I nearly fell off my chair. Joe Summers, or "Old Tongs," as his riders called him, had never shipped a hoof east of the river since he started in the cow business. Every commission man in Chicago handlin' Western stuff had taken a crack at Joe Summers. But nothin' doin'. One little old firm in Omaha with no branches got all of Joe's cattle, and that with what he dragged was sure some business.

"But, Billy," I said, with my eyes hangin' out like a pair of door knockers, "can't you give me something easy at first, say liftin' the Masonic Buildin' or drinkin' the Missouri dry, or some such little thing?"

"Johnny," he says, like the crack of a six-shooter, "I've got to have those Summers cattle. They're heavy, and should come to Chicago, anyway. Stuff that averages right around fourteen-fifty and runs as high as fifteen hundred has no business on a feeder market. I want those cattle to make a record on. You've got to get Summers east of the river. Get him, and a lot more will follow."

"But——"

He choked me off right there. "The cashier will fix you up for expense, and now get out—to-night, if you want to. Good-by."

I stood around for a minute on one foot. "Have you time to give me a few more pointers?" I said, nice and polite.

Say, did you ever imagine how it would look on a hot day if you lifted the lid off of you-know-what? Well, that's the way Billy Dayton looked to me. He just boiled and bubbled. While he was in the middle of a new brand of cuss words, I slipped out. I never asked Billy for no pointers after that. I found I wasn't drawin' my salary and an expense account you could hear whisper across five States, to ask pointers. When I wanted any pointers I went out and gathered them myself.

But, think of it—me out to get Joe Summers! Don't you see what I was up against? If I didn't kick in and get him, I might just as well lay down. I knew Billy wouldn't can me, but I'd be openin' and shuttin' gates again and takin' shippers to the theater, and the rest of it. I was just naturally backed up into a corner, and nothin' to do but fight my way out. It was Joe Summers or bust.

Well, I'm in a sleeper, and we're rockin' along toward the end of the line. Old Dad Bumps is on the train, but he's up in the chair car so as to get the knock-down on his expense for sleeper. I wondered how he knew I was goin' West, but you never can tell how things get around in the yards. You can lock yourself in a safe and use sign talk, and before you're out somebody knows what you said. Anyway, old Bumpsy's on the train and at a station or two he comes over and grunts at me. I don't give him much satisfaction, and he goes away fightin' his head. No, I don't dislike Dad Bumps, but I've seen people I liked more. And I could see he had no use for me. Maybe I wouldn't have rubbed it into him so strong if he'd spoke decent to me; but he didn't, and so he sort of made it my life's work to corral his goat.

Them old gobblers what have wore out many a good pair of pants settin' in front of a hotel, as Billy says, don't take kindly to any one that sets a swift pace for 'em. They make all their long drives in an armchair, and they study the expense account like it was the Good Book. But it's them old boys that save the money on the road. Cheap rooms, thirty-five-cent meals, chair cars—and then turn in expense first class. You can see where they ain't losin' anything. But you can't do that and get business. You've got to spend money to get business, and you've got to concentrate on one thing or another. Take it from me, you can't spend all your time watchin' expense and get results. Show me a go-getter, and I'll show you a man who never thinks of expense. Show me an expense trimmer, and I'll show you a dub that overlooks all the big bets while he's countin' his change.

I finds Joe Summers the second day I landed in the burg where he held out. Soon as I seen him, I knew why his riders called him "Old Tongs." His pockets were the farthest from the ground I believe I ever see. Put him on a horse, and it would be like hangin' a pair of tongs on a jack rabbit. And, say, he was the original stony face. Jaw like a big iron hinge, nose you could dig a post hole with, frizzly-frazzly mustache, and them cold, faded gray eyes. There was just about as much comfort in him as a rainy mornin', no wood, and the cook sick.

But he took a drink with me, and looked over my head. I turned around once to see what he was lookin' at, but whatever it was was on the other side of the earth, so I give up tryin' to see it, and begins singin' my song again.

What kind of a song did I sing to Cattle King Joe Summers? Well, it started with a few lines about *our* market havin' the *most buyers;* then it worked out a thrill or two on a "good fill." What's a "good fill"? Makin' the buyers pay for Lake Michigan water. Then the song gets up into the high notes on there not bein' *much* difference between the freight rates and the shrink to the Missouri and Lake Michigan. Then a bar or two about *our* market *settin' the price* for the river markets. Then the chorus of your cat-

tle are so heavy and well-bred that they just naturally belong in Chicago, and the wind-up of make-yourself-right-to-home - in - my-heart-old-scout-and-ship-to-Billy Dayton.

But I got no encore from Joe Summers—absolutely nothin' doin'. I felt that I had been nailed to the floor. But I threw another drink into old frozen face and another and another. He stood there crookin' his arm and lookin' over my head. I told him the story of my life. I give him my family history. I talked on everything in the dictionary that held any hope of swingin' around to the subject of shippin' to Billy Dayton. Did you ever try that? No. Well, I got so I could start out talkin' on whether there was folks on Mars and swing it around to shippin' to Billy Dayton. How? Well, Mars is a star, hain't it? A star is a leader in a play. And isn't Billy Dayton a star of a commission man? And don't his sales outshine them all? Here, let me show you a few of his sales—holy smoke, I'm talkin' the old bull to you! But it just shows what you can do when you have your mind on one thing.

But let's get back to Joe Summers. We started in on Scotch high halls, then I fed him gin fizzes for a while, a few lines of whisky sours next, and then just plain booze. And talk! Even the bartender got a headache, and forgot to ring up one round of drinks. I talked so much I could walk over on the other side of the room and see myself do it. Funny feelin', that—like subtractin' yourself from yourself and findin' yourself left. But, as I've said before, it never reached Joe Summers. He just stood there and swallowed Billy Dayton's money. I figgered that the reason he didn't thaw was because by the time one drink hit the glad place he was dry in the throat. He was sure some tall.

Pretty soon Dad Bumps drifts in. He gave me a sour look, but I asks him to have a drink. As he never overlooked anything free, he ordered gin. Funny how those old scouts like gin. Well, pretty quick foxy old Bumpsy springs the old-timer gag on Summers, and they leave me and goes over to a poker table and sets down to talk about something that happened before I was born. That was Dad Bumps' way. He couldn't get Joe Summers himself, and he won't let me get him, either. Take it from me, Dad Bumps was a near relative of the dog in the manger.

There I stood, lookin' down at my feet, and nothin' accomplished. Joe Summers had just said two little bunches of words, "Pleased to meet you," when I introduced myself, and "Yes," when I asked him to have a drink. Maybe I talked too much; I don't know. It's sometimes bad medicine to chin too free with those old rannikins. But there I was, stalled at the first crossin'. I went out in the hotel lobby and sat down on one of those seats built around a pillar.

"Johnny," says I to myself, "you've got to figger out a new deal."

Just then I heard Dad Bumps' voice. The two old codgers had come in and sat down on the other side, and from what they said I guess they didn't know I was there.

Old Bumpsy was talkin' about me, and he was sure doin' some left-handed knockin'. "This young Reeves," he says, like he'd just happened to think of me, "is not a bad boy, but he don't know the business. They send 'most anything out on the road now. They think us old-timers are dead ones, but we've got a little life left yet—hey, Joe?"

"Some," agrees Summers. That old boy sure hoarded his words.

"I always like to encourage a boy," goes on old pussy-foot Bumpsy, "but I notice this young Reeves' talk tired you, or I would have backed up. Us old-timers know that talk is cheap. He's a good boy, so far as I know, but——"

Now, wasn't that the limit? Old Bumpsy would even halfway knock his own market to keep me from gettin' a chance at Joe Summers.

I didn't hear the rest of it, because when I get mad I don't hear well, and my eyesight gets poor. So I got up and went out in the fresh air.

Thinks I: "All is now fair between

old Bumpsy and me. From now on, I will only live to get his hide and tallow."

The next day followin' Dad Bumps' knockin' session, I spoke pleasant enough to Joe Summers, had a drink with him, but didn't lay on his chest none. I let him stand and look over my head until he could hear himself think.

Finally he says: "Grass's curin' well." That's all, just three words, then we has another drink, and parted.

Next day, I meets him purely accidental, but I'm as short of words as a bank cashier. That day he spoke seven words: "You said you once rode the range?"

"Yes," I replies.

We then had another drink, and parted.

The day after that he spoke to me almost human. He was just goin' into the dinin' room, and had with him what I rightly guessed was his wife and daughter. He introduced me. There was no way he could get by me without walkin' over my dead body, so he introduced me.

Then I asked them if they would eat dinner with me. The girl looked at me a second, and said they would. Right then I took a long fall as to who was runnin' the Summers outfit. It was a young woman, medium height, brown hair, gray eyes, smiley mouth, but no foolishness, and with a way of tellin' what you were thinkin' about before you thought it. She was the one and only thing Joe Summers was livin' for. That old liquor funnel just doted on that girl. I refer to the old man as a "liquor funnel" with no disrespect. He was one, that's all. Seems they'd had a boy, too, but he was drownded in a cloudburst. No, the old man never got what you could call drunk. He just liked his tea, that's all.

Well, we went in to dinner, and I found out her name—the girl's—was Leona—Leona Summers, and I did very well at that feed.

Old Dad Bumps sat over on the other side of the dinin' room in a mass of gloom and eatin' Irish stew because it was cheap and wouldn't cut very deep in his hotel allowance. He glared at me like a red pig comin' out sudden from a bunch of weeds. You know how they come out quick and say, "Woof! woof!"

Dad Bumps was a queer proposition. He had reddish hair and a thick neck, and his face looked like he'd been hung once, and never got his features back in place. He was a good old soul, was Dad Bumps—if you don't care what you say. As I look back now, and with my prejudice bedded down, I can say that maybe Dad Bumps was part human.

I finds out at that dinner that the Summers folks boarded at the hotel, and that the girl likes to ride horseback and dance. I began to see some bright points about my job.

So I says to myself: "Me for Leona, if it takes a month. If I can get the girl on my side, her dad is my meat."

I had three suits of clothes, and there was class to them all. I began to put in more time dollin' up.

Two nights later I took Miss Leona and her ma to a dance. Don't think I was foolish enough to overlook mother. A woman only a little past forty is no has-been yet. Believe me, I've met some of those dear old ladies that were the merry-go-rounds.

You don't have to hurt your imagination figgerin' that I courted Leona and her mother, too. No, I didn't overlook the old lady. Some might, but I didn't.

A week skips by—two—three, and then a month. About that time I got a wire from Billy:

If dead, wire name of undertaker.

I wires back:

Alive and playing Cupid to win. Give me more time.

Just ten words I sent him, and I didn't hear another yip out of him.

And so I went on puttin' my best foot forward with Leona—and her ma. There are those who might have passed up mother, but I didn't. It was a way I had in those days.

One night, after we'd rode out quite a way from town—Leona and I—we has a long conversation.

"What do you think of me as far's you've gone?" I asks.

"You've treated me nice," she replies.

I took her hand, and she let it be. "It's a nice night."

"Very," says she.

"Aren't you a little chilly?" I asks.

"A little," she replies.

I put my arm around her waist so she wouldn't freeze to death, and we sets there watchin' the moon come up. Finally I asks her: "You like me a little bit, don't you?"

"Yes," she admits.

I places her head on my shoulder. "Does that rest you?" I asks, thinkin' she was tired.

"Yes," she whispers.

Now, what would you do under the circumstances? Would you stop right there or would you lean over and—well, what would you do, anyway? Whatever it is, I did it.

"Do you kiss every girl you meet?" she asks, when she could speak.

"No," I replies. And it was the truth. Some of them I didn't want to, and some wouldn't let me.

But it was when I got back to my room in the hotel that I made a discovery. It come to me bang! just like that. I was takin' off my collar, when it hit me, and I fell back on the bed.

"Johnny," says I to myself, "you've been a maverick a long time, but this trip you're tied down, and the iron is ready. You've trifled and trifled, but this time you're done. You're in love with Leona Summers, and there's no trail out except by a preacher."

Wasn't that fierce, now? In love with a nice girl, and connin' her along to get business for Billy Dayton.

Thinks I: "Johnny Reeves, if you done the right thing, you'd go out and lay down on the railroad and let the engine bump you out of a good girl's life."

But I got sleepy all of a sudden, and when I woke up I concluded to stick around just to see how it turned out.

The next night we went ridin' again. We're up on the same divide, and the same moon is comin' up.

Now, whatever I do, I do quick. Sometimes I overstep myself, but there's class to me when I strike my gait. If anything, I'm a little too fast, and am liable to lope, when trottin' would do just as well. But whatever I do, you don't have to wait for action.

The fact is this: I forgot all about business. I didn't care whether any one shipped to Billy Dayton or not. I only knew Leona and I were there together, and it was a big night, and she seemed contented, and I said *it*. And she said, "Yes." Then, right after that I struck a match to find the back comb of the girl who had promised to become Mrs. Johnny Reeves. And I was so happy I couldn't talk.

The next step was her dad. I sure hated to face him, but I thought I might as well die game as any other way, and I hunted him up. I didn't waste no time in frills.

"Mister Summers," I says, like a man who is about to be hung and don't care if his tooth does ache, "I'm goin' to marry your daughter."

He looked at me for about two hours and a half, maybe longer, and then said: "You don't say so!" That's all, just four words—four, and no more.

But the girl tells me later that the old boy comes to her with tears in his eyes and takes her on his lap and—oh, well, Joe Summers is about as fine as they make 'em—when you come to know him. All he asked was, did she love me. She said, "Yes," and that settled it.

Later, I wrote Billy Dayton a special delivery letter that run something like this:

> My future father-in-law, Joseph Summers, Esquire, informed me to-day that hereafter you will get all his business.

And some time after that I gets a wire from Billy:

> Summers cattle top market for season. Leave to-night to attend your wedding.

And he did.

The Winning Game

By A. M. Chisholm

Author of "The Come-On," "The British Investor," Etc.

SYNOPSIS OF OPENING CHAPTERS.

Disgusted with political conditions, John Barton, banker, gets together a group of men to beat Sam Fox, boss of the corrupt "machine." Barton's daughter, Beth, is run down by a fire horse and narrowly escapes death. Young Sam Fox, son of the political boss, saves her at the risk of his own life. "Tough luck!" Sam bewails when he learns the identity of the girl, for he is strongly attracted to her. He is churlishly thanked by Barton, but is made happy by Beth's invitation to call. Barton sees little hope of bettering political conditions, but Halloran, a straight-talking contractor, who has broken with Boss Fox, tells the banker that he is "playing the wrong system." There is a meeting of the Citizens' League and Halloran sets forth his views. "Split the party!" is his watchword, and he proposes that Robert J. Delafosse, a young lawyer who has defended many clients in the underworld, be placed on the reform ticket. This is agreed to. Delafosse makes up the slate and insists that the candidates he names be accepted. There is some squabbling, but he has his way. Sam Fox, Junior, following a call on Beth, where he had also met Delafosse, comes upon Barney Shea, a college chum, who confesses that he has come to town to "expose the grafters." Young Fox laughs at him, but Shea declares that he means business. Miss Dawson, Beth's chum, is an old friend of Shea. This causes many pleasant meetings between the four, Miss Dawson, Beth, Shea and young Fox. As a retaliatory measure for joining the reformers, old Fox has all work on Halloran's city contracts stopped at a huge financial loss to the latter. At this time Delafosse is about to propose to Beth, but she, realizing what he wants to say, tells him to wait until after the election. Sam hears that Shea is to be put out of the way by one of the "machine's" thugs, and warns him to be careful. The *Examiner*, backed by the reformers, makes a series of vicious attacks on the machine and the elder Fox. Following a particularly nasty one Delafosse and Sam have an accidental meeting and the former provokes Sam into a fight. The rival press make much of this encounter, each paper playing up its candidate and reviling the other. Beth, reading the *Examiner's* report, feels that Sam has been at fault. She meets him on the street the next day and he tells her the truth, and asks her to marry him. She tells him also to wait until after the election. That night Shea, forgetting Sam's warning, is attacked and drugged. Sam goes on his trail and finds him in a hospital but tells Miss Dawson, who is much worried, that Shea has gone out of town on a "story."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE election campaign, with its attendant strategy, its ambushes, its skirmishes, its reconnaissances in force, its verbal and editorial bombardments, closed. The rival parties clashed in the pitched battle of the ballots.

The city resembled a disturbed ant hill. Feeling ran high. There was an excitement, artificial, feverish, out of all proportion to cause, a species of self-hypnosis produced by focusing the mental vision upon one object for weeks until it swelled and loomed vast, filling the eye to the exclusion of all else. It dominated men, swaying them out of their customary orbits, sweeping them temporarily in its tide into the waters of the tossing political sea. Each, for the time being, was a politician *in esse*.

The day was cold and overcast with the promise of storm; but, nevertheless, the life of the city was outdoors, seething on the surface. Motors, carriages, cabs, nondescript vehicles in all stages of decrepitude, dashed and crawled up and down the streets conveying voters to and from the polls. Men hurried from place to place, preoccupied, anxious, important, extraordinarily busy, consulting notebooks or mysterious slips of paper, halting for an instant to hold hasty conversation, then rushing on again.

Others clustered about the door of each polling place. These were the out-

This story began in the September Month-end POPULAR. Back numbers can be had of any news dealer.

side men. They importuned each voter for his name, and struck it off their lists, making frequent returns to ward headquarters, thus preparing for the final hour or two of the day when the "slow" vote must be brought out. Still others, would-be sharpshooters on the battle's verge, intercepted those on their way to the polls, beseeching them to vote "right," thrusting campaign literature upon them, using personal argument to those of their acquaintance.

At the various headquarters the campaign managers and their staff were hard at work. Returns from the scrutineers showered in upon them; the telephones rang incessantly; voters uncertain of their polling places applied for information, and got it in the twinkling of an eye; indignant individuals whose votes had been challenged or who had been refused ballots were given expert opinion. Doubts were solved, misunderstandings adjusted, grievances allayed.

Early in the day it became evident that a huge vote was to be polled. The tally of those who had exercised their franchise grew with startling rapidity. Ordinarily, in an urban election there are three rush hours—when the polls open, at noon, and just before closing. But this time the rush seemed to have come in the middle morning.

Fox, Soper, and half a dozen of the leaders, at central headquarters, noted the abnormal vote, and commented upon it.

"So many less to look after," said Soper.

"Yes, but it's coming out too fast," said Fox doubtfully. "It means that the stay-at-home-vote is being polled. No telling how that cat will jump. I think we'd better make the rounds of ward headquarters while we have the time. You'll want to go around the polls and show yourself to the boys later on."

They entered South Ward headquarters just as an outside man was handing in the returns from one of the polling subdivisions. The headquarters man took the list, glanced down it, and suddenly swore.

"Here, this is a mistake! This is dead wrong. You've got J. B. Lumley down as voted. You fellows got to be more careful."

"If he's down there, he's voted," said the outside man.

"Voted nothing! Lumley's in the hospital, I tell you."

"Is, eh!" exclaimed the other. "You dead sure? Then somebody's voted for him. This is up to the inside scrutineers. They sent out the list."

Obviously this was so. By itself it was not a very important matter; but it gave rise to a series of very grave questions. Who had plugged for Lumley? Which way had the vote been cast? And if one vote had been plugged in, how many others might be?

"How about it, Jimmy?" Fox demanded of the headquarters man. "How does Lumley vote?"

"With us."

"Then did we have him voted?"

"Not that I know of. He broke his leg yesterday. Here's Mr. Steiner. Maybe he can tell."

But Steiner could not. Some of the boys might possibly have done it, but he had no systematic plugging going on. He made the admission regretfully. The problem was solved by the arrival of an indignant citizen who, having attempted to cast his vote at another poll, had found that some one had done so for him. And this was only the first of a number of similar complaints.

Immediately a general warning was sent out to every poll, but the mischief done could not be undone, and it proved to be widespread. The plugging seemed to have been carefully planned, and the skill of its execution lay in the fact that it was all done comparatively early in the day, and stopped just before it was detected. There was no doubt that it had cost Fox many votes.

Matty Donovan, when he heard of it, was thoroughly indignant and disgusted. "They'll be voting all purgatory on us next," he growled. "We got a smooth bunch of scrutineers—I don't think. What do they think they're there for?"

"It got past them, and that's all there is to it," said Sam, who was as disgusted as Matty. "Our friends seem to be going some—for a purity party."

"Purity!" jeered Donovan. "A lot of those fat-headed old stiffs don't know enough to be crooked. I'll hand them that much—they don't *know*. But you can risk your roll Mike Halloran knows and Delafosse knows. What gets my goat is that we let them slip such a jolt across. I'm ashamed of meself. Well, if they want it that way, they can have it. I got a bunch of huskies on the job now, and the oath they won't take ain't framed yet. Besides, as well, and also, I'm hanging out the 'cash for votes' sign right across the street. I'll make the hold-outs come a-runnin'."

Matty was as good as his word. His agents rounded up the "hold-outs," gentlemen willing to realize upon the asset of their franchise, and naturally desirous of getting as much for it as they could.

Matty received them one by one privately.

"Now, sport," he said to the first arrival, "you are holding out for what you can make. Don't shoot me no line of thawed air about bein' in doubt who to vote for. I know that by heart already. I can prompt you without the book. The only question is how much you want right now."

"What you payin'?" asked the free and independent elector.

"I'm not payin' anything," said Matty, "but a feller was tellin' me about a man that is. If you should happen to run across him, I think he'd give you, well——"

Matty named an amount. The elector grinned cunningly.

"If votes is worth that much now, they'll be worth more about half-past four this afternoon."

"This gent nails the head back in the barrel at four, sharp," said Matty. "Take it from me, there's no auction this trip."

"I can get——" the elector began.

"You can get out of here—quick!" snapped Matty. "I'm not dickerin' one dick. If you think the other fellers will see this and raise, try them. But don't come back here. Now, then, is it on or off Finnegan?"

It was on. The elector metaphorically held out an itching palm. But Mr. Donovan was not of the genus *Catostomus*. He believed in payment on delivery, and not before; and he also believed in covering his own trail. He handed the elector a typewritten slip which was merely an address.

"You go there and ask for Mr. Smith," he ordered.

Thus he launched the old "marked-ballot" game, familiar enough to most gentlemen of commercial tendencies in electoral matters.

At the given address the voter met "Mr. Smith," who was naturally an entire stranger to him. Mr. Smith collected the address slip, and gave him a ballot paper already marked. This was in every respect a duplicate of the ballots used in the election. This ballot he was to vote. And as proof that he had done so, he was to bring to another man, at another place, the genuine ballot handed him at the poll. Upon presentation of this as a voucher, he was to receive his money. And the last-named ballot, perfectly genuine, would be marked, and would be voted in the same way by the next man. Thus the transaction, so far as proof of it was concerned, was beautifully confused; also the deplorable frailty of human nature was provided against.

As the day wore on, the contest became desperate. Headquarters was swamped by the huge vote. Excited men ran in, demanding to know if certain individuals had voted, clamoring for conveyances, bringing startling rumors, impeding others by their eagerness, driving the headquarters men to distraction. They worked frantically in an atmosphere of cigar smoke, of wet, steaming garments, of hurry, and of noise.

The men at the telephones were no longer calm and courteous; they demanded numbers savagely, yelled to their comrades for quick information, and, when they got it, barked replies

into the transmitters with the irritable, nerve-jumping effect of a slamming door. The air was highly charged, electrical. Now, in the last hours, the weeks of preparation, of planning, of strain, exercised a cumulative effect. The men who had done the work keyed their nerves still tighter for the finish.

At five o'clock the polls closed. It was all over but the shouting. In the polling booths, scrutineers and deputies toiled at the ballots, counting them, objecting to some, rejecting others. At Fox's headquarters the tired staff had a breathing spell. All the now useless lists and memoranda were shoved aside. The board was cleared for the returns. They sat smoking, eating belated lunches, speculating on the result.

Of that, in fact, few of them had any doubt. They had been on the winning side so long that the idea of defeat was strange, not to be thought of save as a remote contingency bound to occur some day, of course, but later and not sooner. Bets, languidly offered, found no takers. Only a few hopeless pessimists shook their heads dismally, but secretly, conscious that they were in the minority.

But the first returns made the optimists look at each other in consternation, which later ones only increased. Poll after poll, precinct after precinct, ward after ward, gave majorities for the League's candidates. Early it had to be conceded that Delafosse was elected with a huge majority. Soper was nowhere. Alderman after alderman, seeking reëlection, was defeated. It was a complete reversal of form, a snowstorm, a landslide. Fox, the unbeatable, was beaten.

When the result was beyond doubt, the defeated candidates made speeches. Some of them essayed humorous remarks, but for the most part they were sore, bitter, charging crookedness, ingratitude, endeavoring to snatch poor consolation from overwhelming defeat.

Fox, in answer to repeated calls, got to his feet with evident reluctance. "Boys," he said, "this is as much of a surprise to me as it is to you. We can't explain it away. We've got to face it, and we'll face it better after we've had some sleep. Good night."

Immediately he put on his hat and coat. Sam did likewise.

"I'm sorry, father," he said, when they were on the street.

"Pshaw, Sammy!" Fox rejoined; "it had to come some time or other." He braced back his big shoulders, and drew a deep breath. "I didn't want to tell the boys to-night, but you're different. I'm through with the job. I'm out of politics for keeps. I was tired of the game, anyway, and it's a good chance to get out."

Sam was astonished. "Oh, hang it, you can't do that!" he protested. "They'd call you a quitter. And without you, we'd go all to pieces."

"Strikes me we're some fragmentary now," said Fox. "Sammy, we're licked—badly licked. The good old machine is busted, and I don't think it can be fixed. Anyway, I'm not going to try. Delafosse can run the town, and do the worrying for a while."

They were opposite the *Examiner* office, on the outskirts of a crowd. Delafosse was speaking from a window balcony. He was jubilant, elated, and the crowd was cheering each sentence. He concluded amid violent applause.

"You never told me," said Sam, as they resumed their progress, "why you let him out."

Fox walked ten paces before replying.

"Well, Sammy," he said, "between ourselves he was too crooked for me. I couldn't trust him. And then he wanted to run things. Well, he has the chance now."

"He won't have it long; he won't last."

"Don't you fool yourself. He's unbeatable as long as he can hold the combination that has just elected him. That depends on himself. If he lets other people manage him, he'll smash. If he does his own managing, and does it right, he's good for years."

"Not if you stay in the game."

"I'm sick of it. I don't know why I started. Yes, I do. I loved this little city, and I wanted the power to run it.

Well, it's over, and I'm glad. Sammy, I'm sick of the deals and the grafting that I had to stand for."

Sam stared at his father in amazement.

"Why," he said, "why——" and stopped.

"Sounds funny to you, hey?" Fox rumbled. "Yes, I know. It's been a bad training for you, too. But I told you at the start that you weren't to graft for yourself, and you promised me. I said I'd look after that end. You kept your word, didn't you?"

"Of course," said Sam.

"And you thought that I was getting rich—that I was getting a big slice of everything?"

"Certainly."

"Well—I wasn't. Not many people would take my word for it, but I guess it goes with you. Sammy, I never took a dishonest dollar in my life—not a rake-off. I'm thousands poorer than when I started this game. Oh, I've got quite a bunch left. The boys got theirs—I had to let them have it—but me—no! And, mind you, I've seen that the city has been well governed on the whole. Our credit is high. It wasn't when I took hold. We can sell any debentures we issue at a top-notch price. Our public health is good. Our streets are clean. Our public works are fine, and our tax rate isn't excessive. There isn't much crime. We're in good shape all round. Isn't that so?"

"Yes," Sam answered.

"Well, that's my doing," said his father proudly. "When I broke into the game a bunch of incompetents were running affairs. They were no good, and they hadn't the makings. It was waste time to try to consolidate 'em, to get 'em to pull together. No man on God's earth could have done it. So I threw in with another crowd, and the only way I could unite 'em and boost out the other fellows was by self-interest. I sunk my scruples—oh, I hadn't so many, either!—and I let 'em graft within limits. But I never did it myself. I played the game for the love of it. I had an organization that I thought couldn't be beaten. And I wouldn't be beaten now if I hadn't kicked the greedy hogs back from the trough. As it was, I made enemies, and when the right combination happened they got to me."

Sam, too astonished for speech, was silent.

"You believe me, don't you?" said his father simply.

"Every word." In spite of his developed cynicism, he was conscious of a feeling of new pride in his father which he did not analyze.

"Then, that's all right," pursued Fox, with manifest relief. "There were times when I'd have changed my system if I could have done it, but I was in too deep to pull out, and the only way was to wait till I was beaten. If I could take hold of things now, to a fresh start, I'd run them straight—not a crooked deal or a rake-off would go."

"But it couldn't be done," said Sam. "You couldn't run things that way—and last."

"I couldn't—now—because I'm supposed to be crooked. But another man could. Not Delafosse. His crowd wouldn't let him, even if he wanted to. But the system would win if he'd play it. Sam, you've been fed up on the wrong grain. I blame myself for it. I always intended to explain. There's a letter—with my will. I've seen a lot of men and a lot of human nature. A man mellows as he grows older. His judgment is clearer, he's not so positive either way, he sees more good in people. You'll find that out. Well—— You divide people into three classes—the grafters, the would-be grafters, and the suckers. It's a wrong division. There's a big bunch of honest, brainy people who would hold the winning cards, only they won't play the game. Maybe they don't care for it, maybe no one has shown them how, maybe no one has asked them to play. That's the trouble. They outnumber the grafters and the suckers put together. If I were doing it over again, those are the people I'd make a bid for, and I'd run things *clean.*"

He paused for a moment to light a cigar. Then, with an abrupt change of

subject: "I hear you're laying for the fellow that put your friend Shea away?"

"If I can get him," said Sam.

"I had it done," said Fox. "Steiner mentioned my name in those letters of his—and my price. He lied. He wanted the extra money for himself. I had to get the letters. There was no other way. I'm sorry, Sam. I had to do it."

Sam slipped his arm through his father's. "Anyway," he said, "it was a particularly neat job."

CHAPTER XIV.

For an entire week, following the election, Barton was in good humor. He emerged from the smoke of the combat a hero, at least in his own eyes. He took full credit for having brought out Delafosse, and he descanted at length upon his own political sagacity and upon the moral sense of the public, long dormant, awake at last. This being an apparent fulfillment of his consistent prophecies, gave him great satisfaction, and he treated with scorn rumors of electoral irregularities.

Beth, on her part, professed to join in his jubilations. She told herself that the outcome was exactly what she had wished. Certainly she had wished Delafosse success. And yet, somehow, she felt a certain disappointment.

Delafosse's attitude was now unmistakable. He was the suitor, waiting a favorable opportunity for declaration, an opportunity which Beth would not make. Certain of his intentions, but uncertain of herself, she avoided him, conscious that she was but postponing the event.

Finally, one evening, it was Mrs. Barton who gave Delafosse his opportunity by leaving them together.

He came directly to the point.

"I have been waiting to see you alone," he told her. "Why have you made it so hard for me?"

There was no escape.

"What nonsense, Mr. Delafosse!" she answered lightly. "How imaginative you are!"

He disregarded the words. "If I won this election," he said, "I was to ask you a question. Well—I won!"

"Yes," she said, "you won."

"I think you know what it is," he went on. "Do you?"

For an instant, she had the impulse to deny it, to obtain even a moment's delay. But her simplicity and dignity put the thought from her as unworthy.

"Yes," she answered, "I think I do."

His eyes, skilled in reading the human countenance, searched her face, but it told him nothing.

"I love you," he said bluntly, discarding the speech he had prepared. "Ever since I knew you, I have loved you. I have worked for you. I want the right to continue to work for you. Will you marry me, my dear—my Beth?"

So it had come. She was quite calm. She wondered why she had shrunk from this, temporized, evaded it. Suddenly she knew her own mind, read it like an open page. She heard the tremor of his voice, saw his hands clench upon the arms of the chair as he leaned toward her, noted the pumping pulse in his throat, and wondered at it. Of the two she was the more collected.

"I am sorry," she said; "I am very sorry. That night I never meant to encourage you, to let you think I cared for you—that I might say 'Yes' to the question I knew you would ask. I suppose it was the line of least resistance, and I took it. I didn't know my own mind then. Now I know it. I know I can't possibly give you the answer you wish."

"Why not?" he demanded. "What has happened since then to decide you?"

"Nothing. I simply don't wish to marry you."

"You mean you don't love me?"

"No, I don't love you."

"Pardon me if I ask you another question. Do you love any one else?"

"No," she answered, flushing slightly, "though it is a question you have no right to ask."

"I know it. But it is a very natural question, and I think you are inclined to be a friendly witness." He rose. "Without the slightest desire to be melodramatic, I am not going to take

your answer as final. I am going to try again."

"Please don't. The answer must be the same."

"Still, I will try," he told her.

When he had gone, she sat with her cheek on her palm, staring at the fire, thinking. She knew she had done right, absolutely, old-fashionedly right. No, she did not love Delafosse. But could she ever love him? She admired him. Would she be proof against his persistence? He would go far, there was no doubt of it. Any woman might be proud to share the career that lay ahead of him. Unconsciously the seed of ambition began to germinate, to quicken within her. She found herself thinking it over, reconsidering, wondering if, after all, this thing—this abstraction—called love, existed for every one, for her. Was it not a weakness of the head rather than of the heart?

Her musings were unexpectedly interrupted. The maid announced Sam Fox.

Her calmness deserted her. She was seized in the grip of an unaccountable nervousness.

"Why—why," she almost stammered, "I didn't expect you."

"Didn't you?" he said. He walked straight up to her. There was a light in his eyes such as she had never seen there before. "I've come for my answer, Beth."

"For your answer?" she said, in confusion. "I don't know what you——"

"Yes, you do," he interrupted.

"Oh, dear!" she sighed helplessly. "Well, then, I do. But—but, Mr. Fox——"

"Sam!"

"*Mister* Fox!"

"Sam! Get the habit."

"S-S-Sam! I was going to say that I don't think I lo—— Oh!"

He cut short the heresy by taking her in his arms and kissing her. She protested.

"Sam! You mustn't. I can't allow anything——"

Suddenly she hid her crimson face against his breast. It was surrender, capitulation, absolute, unqualified, without terms. Her philosophy of a few minutes before was swept aside, crumpled, and flung away forever.

"You do love me, you do love me?" she murmured.

"You know I do, but neither you nor I know how much," he whispered back.

Five minutes afterward Beth drew away from him, and smoothed her ruffled plumage.

"And now we come," said Sam cheerfully, "to the holding-hands stage. Sit down here beside me—no, a little closer, Miss Propriety. We're partners now—and let's size this thing up. How is your father going to take the glad tidings?"

"I'm afraid he won't like them," she admitted.

"It's a cinch he won't," he said grimly. "He'll go straight up. Well, now, here's what I'm getting at, girlie: If he digs up the hatchet and makes war medicine, what are we going to do about it?"

She shook her head gravely. This was a thing to be considered.

"To put it plainly," he went on, "suppose he declares all bets off. Suppose he refuses his consent point-blank, forbids me to call, forbids you to see me, or speak to me—it's quite likely—then what?"

"He wouldn't be so unreasonable."

"Girlie," he said, "your father has a great many good qualities, but he can give a mule points on some things. He barely tolerates me as a visitor. As a son-in-law, I'm a hopeless risk. I know it. I tell you so now. We've got to face it. He'll never give his consent. The point is this: Are we going to let him run our business, or run it ourselves? Are we going to wait for years—or please ourselves, and let him get over it if he wants to?"

"Sam, dear," she said, "I am of age, and I know my own mind. I think—at times—I am a little obstinate myself. I hope father will not take such a decided stand, but if he does—well, I can't help it. I will marry you without his consent if you think it best."

"Good girl," said Sam. "That's what

I wanted you to say. To-morrow I'll put it to him as diplomatically as I can."

Barton was fussing over his morning mail, and the way he ripped open the flap of an envelope showed that he had not only got out of bed on the wrong side, but had stepped on a tack as well. At Sam's hypocritically cheerful greeting, he merely grunted.

"Storm signals displayed at all stations and small craft warned to run for shelter," thought Sam. Aloud, he said: "Sorry to disturb you just now, Mr. Barton. Shall I run in a little later when you have more time?"

"No. Get rid of it now," snapped Barton. "What is it?"

"Well, it's a little personal matter I'd like to talk to you about. You see, your daughter Beth and I have come to like each other pretty well, and last night we—I—that is, I asked her to marry me."

Barton's explosion consisted of but one word, but he uttered it with volcanic effect.

"To—marry—me," Sam repeated, disregarding the interruption. He said it slowly, giving time for the words to sink in. "And so I'm doing the conventional thing now. We thought you ought to know. Now, about my financial position. I——"

Barton banged the desk with his fist. "*That* for your financial position, sir!" he roared. "Do you mean to tell me that my daughter has consented to marry you?"

"That's the idea exactly," Sam assented. "We haven't quite settled the date yet, but——"

"Haven't sent out the invitations, I suppose," said Barton, with heavy sarcasm. "Look here, young man, did it ever occur to you that I would have something to say about this?"

"It occurred to me right away," said Sam truthfully. "That's why I'm here. You don't know a great deal about me, and it's only right——"

"I know all I want to about you," Barton interrupted. "I'd rather see my daughter in her grave than married to you. Is that straight enough?"

"Regular stage parent!" thought Sam. But he smiled conciliatingly. "Oh, I don't think you mean that. I'm not that bad. What do you know against me, anyway?"

"If you want to know, I'll tell you," rasped Barton. "You're a crook, sir—a crook and a grafter. You're hand in glove with every political thief in this city, and you've helped their games along. You've been up to your neck in the stinking mess that we've just upset, and if we can get the evidence you and your whole crowd will go to the penitentiary. Your chosen companions are thugs and toughs and prize fighters—the dregs of the city, male and female. You're a drunkard and a gambler. My Beth marry you! I'll put a stop to that in short order. And let me see you in my house again—just let me catch you there, that's all!"

He paused, more for want of breath than from lack of material. Sam's face gradually lost its good-natured expression, and a line appeared between his eyes.

"That's pretty hard talk," he said quietly. "Now, let me ask you a question or two. And here's a starter: Can you prove that I ever did one crooked thing?"

"I don't need to prove it; your associations prove it."

"But you can't prove it. You shouldn't accuse me without some evidence, now should you? Well, we'll let that go and take up my companions. I belong to the University Club and the Federal Club, and I am on the board of governors of the former. The members of these clubs are my friends and companions. I know some prize fighters, and I know some gamblers and race-track men, and I'm not ashamed of it. If I wanted help or money, I could get it from them faster and more willingly than you could get it from your financial cronies. You say I'm a drunkard and a gambler. Well, I play a little game at times—and so do you. As to liquor and dissipation—will you oblige me by looking carefully at the whites of my eyes? Perfectly clear, aren't they? Nothing bloodshot about them, no yellowness, no dull, boiled

look. My skin is clear, isn't it? See here." He held out his hand at arm's length, the fingers spread wide. There was not a tremor in a digit. One by one he brought them together, slowly, unwaveringly. "Could a drunkard do that? Do I show any of the points of a booze fighter? I tell you that my daily life is more careful and hygienic than your own ever was. And as to women, I don't know whether you just threw in that statement for good measure or not, but it is absolutely untrue. I have nothing to hide or be ashamed of on that score."

"Very fine, very fine," said Barton. "I know what I know, and that's good enough for me. You've presumed on the service you rendered. Henceforth my house is closed to you. I shall forbid my daughter to recognize you."

"I hope you will think better of that."

"No, I won't. That's final. That settles it. Good day."

"Because," Sam continued, "although naturally we would like to have your consent, we can get along without it."

"We'll see about that!" cried Barton.

"I saw about it myself," said Sam. "Now, look here. Beth and I are going to be married. If you want to ride with the band, we'll be very glad of your company. But it's going to play whether you do or not."

And then Barton blew up. His verbal efforts occupied some minutes, and were utterly outrageous. He pounded his desk and roared. Seldom had he let himself go so completely. And Sam, his lower lip fast between his teeth, managed to refrain from uttering one word—which was greatly to his credit.

"I gather from your remarks," he said, with a calmness he did not feel, "that nothing I can say will alter your decision."

Barton assured him fervently and profanely that he had garnered an absolute truth. Whereupon Sam walked out and sought a telephone.

"I'm afraid," he said, when he had Beth on the wire, "that you're in for a hard time, girlie. He was very hostile. I'm excommunicated, utterly and entirely. I wish I could help you, but I can't. The only thing to do now is to stand by our colors."

"I'll stand," she said. "Thank you for telling me."

And she did stand. In answer to her father's peremptory instructions concerning young Fox, she shook her head.

"I won't promise anything of the kind, father. To forbid me to see him or speak to him is absurd. I am not a child."

"What! What!" cried Barton. "Young lady, I want you to understand that I am master of this house. I tell you the fellow isn't fit to associate with you."

"Then why did you allow him to do so? He came here on your own invitation."

"It was forced on me; you forced it on me. But I'll have no more of it. You'll do what you're told."

"Father," she said, "I don't want to be disrespectful, but you must not speak to me in that way."

"Must not! Must not!" shouted Barton. "Nice language to your father! I'll speak to you any way I like, and you'll do as I say, or I'll know the reason why. Now, mind, I've told you what I want, and I expect obedience."

"Why won't you be reasonable? You make statements, issue orders. If you would talk to me differently—if you would be calm——"

"Dammit, I am calm! You're a spoiled, ungrateful child. *Calm!* Whuh!"

"In this," she said steadily, "my mind is made up. I am going to marry Sam. And, as I am going to marry him, I will meet him and talk to him when and where I please."

"Not in this house!"

"Elsewhere, then!"

It was the show-down. Father and daughter regarded each other with hard eyes. Their wills clashed with the force of physical impact, but neither would yield.

"I won't allow it," said Barton. "What? You'd sneak out like a slavey after dark to meet your 'steady' on the corner? Girl, I won't let you!"

"You can't prevent me," she flashed.

"But as for meeting my 'steady' on the corner, I won't do that. I'll go where I can receive him openly."

He grasped her meaning, but not her determination.

"Fine talk," he sneered. "Let me see you try it!"

"I will," she said, "and I'll go now."

For a moment he was taken aback. But still he believed that she spoke on impulse merely.

"If you leave this house," he said, "you leave it for good. You needn't come back."

"I quite understand," she said coldly. "I won't come back."

At five o'clock that afternoon, Beth and a suit case arrived at Fanny Dawson's flat. Her trunks were packed and to follow later. At the home which she had left, her mother was in tears, and her father in a state of apoplectic rage at everything and everybody, including himself. Billy, at work, did not yet know of the cleavage.

CHAPTER XV.

The weeks following were on the whole happy ones for Beth. She saw her mother occasionally. The good lady, having the faculty of taking things as she found them, forebore comment. Billy himself, impatient of the paternal yoke, thoroughly approved her action. Almost every evening was spent with Sam. Shea and Fanny made fun of them mercilessly, but their jests had no sting. There was music, conversation, little theater parties, and suppers to follow—a mildly Bohemian existence which they thoroughly enjoyed.

But Sam insisted on an immediate marriage. There was, he pointed out, nothing to prevent it. Why should they wait? In the end he overrode all objections, and plunged Beth and Fanny into a whirl of mysterious preparations.

It was settled that they should be married very quietly. The ceremony was to take place in Fanny's rooms. Fanny, Barney Shea, the elder Fox, and Billy would be present, the latter by stealth. Barton would not countenance his wife's presence.

The wedding day was stormy, unpropitious. The sky was hidden by cold, raw clouds. In the afternoon came sleet and rain.

The apartment was cold; the janitor had neglected his fires. The flowers, ordered lavishly, which filled the rooms, mocked the low temperature. Beth was excited, nervous, almost irritable.

"I just *know* my nose will be red," she said. "That janitor ought to be *hanged*."

"Crucified, *I* should say," amended Miss Dawson. "B-r-r! I have the shivers. *Do* hold still, Beth. How can I do these hooks if you keep moving around? My fingers are almost numb."

The few guests and the clergyman arrived. The little room was crowded. The big men seemed to fill it themselves, to require all the air. Beth at the last moment recovered her self-possession, but Sam was nervous, fidgeting uneasily, clearing his throat, inarticulate in his responses.

The clergyman was pressed for time. He rattled off the service like an officer swearing in recruits. The impressive words ran together, tripped, collided with each other; the meaning of the whole was lost. Sam dropped the ring; it rolled, disappearing under the couch. He muttered a malediction, perfectly audible. Miss Dawson giggled. The clergyman eyed her stonily. The ceremony came to a halt until the ring was found. Then it proceeded, having gained nothing in solemnity by the interruption.

To Beth the whole scene was unreal. This was not the marriage that she had pictured to herself in secret dreams.

At last it was over. She found herself kissed, her hand shaken, patted on the back. She signed her name as in a dream, with a firm hand, and she moved as in a dream until she found herself in a limousine, her husband beside her. Then she awoke suddenly, and drew a deep breath. She looked at him questioningly.

"Well," she said, a little blankly; "so that's over."

"Yes, it's over," said Sam. And he added with a devout fervor to be understood only by those who have themselves been through the mill: "Thank the Lord!"

CHAPTER XVI.

The honeymoon lasted a month. On their return, the Foxes went to housekeeping on a modest scale, prosaically, taking up the common burdens of life, and began to get acquainted.

Beth was delighted with her home, interested in every detail of it. She was continually arranging, altering, and rearranging, trying the effect of pictures here, of rugs there, of the piano in this corner or in that. Only one room escaped. That was Sam's particular den on the ground floor, in a remote corner, a sort of annex built freakishly against the house. There he had his desk, his books, his papers, his humidor, and pipe rack. The chairs were big, leather-cushioned, inviting. Beth declared that there was not one in which a woman would be comfortable. But she loved to sit there with him at night before the open fire, the lights turned low, in an atmosphere of good tobacco and half silences.

One night they sat thus, Sam lying back in his chair smoking a final cigar; Beth sitting beside him on a hassock, her arm upon his knee, her cheek in her palm. His hand rested on her shoulder. Outside a storm raged. The windows shook to the volleying gusts. A coal fell from the grate, and Sam, rising, replaced. He knelt before the fire, stirring it to life. Beth dropped down beside him. The rug on which they knelt was a huge grizzly bearskin.

"I love a fire," she said. "I could sit here and pretend."

"Pretend what, old girl?"

"Anything. I could pretend that it was hundreds or thousands of years ago. This room is a cave. The fire is a mystery, incomprehensible, to be worshiped. You are clad in skins. There is a big club, knotty, just where you can reach it with your right hand. I am your wife—your woman, your chattel. I cook the meat you kill. I am afraid I have no particular complexion. And as to clothes—well, perhaps it's just as well that we don't live in the good old days, after all."

> "I was thewed liked an Auroch bull,
> And tusked like the great cave bear;
> And you, my sweet, from head to feet,
> Were gowned in your glorious hair."

he quoted.

"Not so primitive as that." But laughing, she pulled out the hairpins, and shook her head. A great wealth of shimmering, fair hair fell softly upon her shoulders, and trailed to the bearskin robe. She looked at him archly through the cloud of it. He kissed her.

"I love my cave girl. But I'm rather glad that we can order meat by phone, even if there is a trust. The old days were possibly romantic, but I'll bet they were thoroughly unsanitary, and there wasn't any certainty of three squares per. This is good enough for me. I don't want to assault any animal meat trust with a club. No doubt it was exciting, and good exercise, but it must have been beautifully uncertain. Speaking of exercise, I'll have to get more of it. Since we got home, I haven't had time."

"You've been busy, I know. Were we away too long?" she asked.

"Not long enough. But I got a little out of touch with things in general, apart from my own business. You see, I'd like to know what your friend Delafosse and the genial Halloran are up to."

"Why? What does it matter to you?"

He smiled grimly. "We can take a licking, but we'll come again one of these days. Just at present our friends are renovating and decorating and beautifying and furnishing the city hall on a fairly elaborate scale."

"I saw that in the papers. It needed it, they say."

"They *say* so," said Sam.

She looked at him, puzzled. "Well, doesn't it?"

"Perhaps. I guess so."

"Tell me," she insisted. "I wish

you'd talk to me about these things, Sam."

"But you wouldn't be interested."

"Yes, I should. I like to see the inside—to see the wheels go round. I'd like it so much."

That was her difficulty. Since their marriage, Sam had been reticent concerning his affairs, as to politics. On other subjects he talked readily. But on these matters she wished to establish confidence, to lead him to speak freely to her. Otherwise she perceived that her influence must be nil, she must remain an outsider.

"Well, this city-hall matter isn't so much," said Sam. "They are having the outside of the building cleaned with a sand blast. That's a good job—and it goes to a friend, of course. Then they are getting in a lot of new typewriters, adding machines, steel-vault fittings, new furniture, and so on, besides painting and decorating most of the interior. It will total a big expenditure. Now, if we had done that, there would have been a howl."

"Yes, but——" She stopped suddenly.

"But we were grafters. Is that what you mean, Beth?"

For a moment she was tempted to deny it, to equivocate.

"Not exactly, dear. But you had the name of it—your party, I mean."

"I am quite aware of that," he said.

She saw that he was displeased, saw that she had been tactless, recognized the quickness of his perceptions. It was a time for absolute frankness, for an understanding. Otherwise the moment would slip by, and once passed would never return. He would never discuss these matters with her again.

"I have never asked, and you have never told me," she said. "Don't you think that I should know?"

"Know what?"

"The truth about these insinuations of graft against your father and you and your associates. It will make no difference between us. But I want to know—to understand. Wouldn't it be well to tell me now?"

He frowned at the fire.

"These aren't things for a girl, Beth. Better leave them to me."

"But I want to know, Sam. Can't you understand how I feel? Every word said against you hurts me—hurts the more because I am in the dark. But if you told me—if I had your confidence, your assurance—then I should be contented. You said that we were partners. Well, then; I want to share all your life, not merely a part of it. Never doubt my loyalty, my silence. Only give me your confidence."

She saw that she had won her point.

"I guess you are right, old girl. When I went into the game, my father made me promise that I would not take one dollar from any source except for professional fees. I kept my word. He said he would look after the money end." Briefly he told her what his father had told him. "I believe him, and so may you. The graft that went on was not ours personally. It was a necessary evil which we—or, rather, my father—endured because he couldn't help it. The wonder to me is that he held the boys down as he did."

"I can see his viewpoint," said Beth. Her smooth brow puckered as it always did when she concentrated her mind on some unfamiliar problem. "He loved his city, and I quite believe he thought it was the only way. But, Sam, I think he was wrong. I think he could have accomplished the same result without permitting dishonesty."

"He doesn't go that far," said Sam. "But he does say that if he were making a start now, that's how he'd run things. I'd like to see him try it. I'd bet against him."

"He has had experience, Sam—more than either of us."

"Yes. But when he constructed a party he used the handiest materials. He would have to do the same thing now. I don't believe that any administration can live which does not wink at a certain amount of graft. It's the psychology of human nature, old girl. And then we are all party mad. The clever men of a party are there for what they can make; the stupid fellow, as the dull, must always follow their

mental superiors. And the cleverest man, outside a party, is, and must remain, a political cipher."

She picked the flaw in his argument unerringly, and, womanlike, with personal application.

"You and your father are clever, and yet you were not in it for what you could make."

"I thought I was."

"That's an evasion. He wasn't. And you see, with all the dishonesty permitted as a matter of policy, you lost the election. That proves that the majority is honest. The trouble is to get sentiment aroused."

He grinned at the paraphrase of her father's well-known views.

"It only proves, old girl, that an honest minority was fooled by a fresh set of grafters."

"Do you mean that Mr. Delafosse is a grafter? How about my father and his friends?" She spoke warmly.

"This talk seems to be of the heart-to-heart variety," said Sam. "I may as well tell you what I think. Your father is an aggressively honest old boy. But in politics he's a mark, a come-on, a fall guy. There are a number of others like him, banded together under the impression that they are a 'force,' or what they call 'a movement.' As a matter of fact, they are easier to handle in the mass than singly. Delafosse and Mike Halloran have simply used them, and they don't know it."

"Doesn't it occur to you that they may have 'used' Mr. Delafosse and Mr. Halloran?"

Sam laughed. "My dearest girl, they don't know the rudiments of the game. They couldn't frame up a clever scheme to save their lives. This was clever. Consequently it wasn't theirs. And if you look at the composition of the present council, you will see that it is made up of Delafosse's and Halloran's men. Where are the representative, solid citizens? In private life, as they have always been. Don't you see that your father and his colleagues have merely embraced a new evil?"

"No, I don't see it. You imply that Mr. Delafosse and Mr. Halloran are crooked."

"I know Halloran is. You understand it's not hearsay—it's absolute knowledge. He financed Delafosse's election. Delafosse will have to pay for that in money or in kind."

"He won't do anything dishonest, I am sure. I'm afraid you are prejudiced, Sam."

"I admit the prejudice. But I know the crowd in control now, and they are worse than our own. More than that, they are hungry. A legitimate rake-off won't satisfy them. They will simply loot the ship. Delafosse may think he's in command, but before long he'll have to obey the orders of his crew or walk the plank."

Beth was incredulous. She had pictured Delafosse as the champion of a new order of things; she had never doubted his integrity, his strength, his power to lead. But she abandoned the point.

"I don't think you are right, but you may be. Suppose you are. You're fond of politics, Sam?"

"I guess I come by it honestly."

"Then you'll stay in it. I know. Now, suppose things turn out as you think. What shall you do?"

"I don't know. The governor's out of it for good. We might get the old crowd together, put up a ticket next time, and make a fight."

"And if you won?"

He shrugged his shoulders. "The same as ever, likely."

"With the old crowd—yes. But why not a new one?"

"A new one! Where is it? Who are they?"

"I think," she said, "that they're the honest folks, Sam; the people who have never played the game, who have never tried to play it. You give your father credit for some discernment, don't you? Remember what he said."

"I didn't agree with him. There are not enough of that class. Still, we might fix up a deal with some men who have influence. If we promised a few good things——"

She stopped him.

"Sam, has it got that much hold on you?"

"Well, girl, it's a case of have to. We can't expect support without promises."

"Not promises like that. That's merely the old system again."

"It's the only one I know."

"Then learn a new one. You're a clever boy, Sam. There's nothing clever about buying support, buying votes, taking money to pay for them. Any ward politician can do that. But to fight a straight fight on principle and *win;* to devise a policy, a platform that appeals to all classes more than money, more than place, more than petty, selfish ends—that's big, that's clever, that's worthy of you, dear!"

She spoke earnestly, leaning forward to him, love and purpose in her eyes. For a moment she kindled within him a sympathetic spark; for a moment dimly, he saw the vision. Then it faded.

"Policies and party platforms were invented to deceive a certain element which it is always cheaper to deceive than to buy," he said. "I am afraid, old girl, that you are Utopian." He yawned and stretched himself. "This isn't an all-night session, is it? Suppose we turn in. I have a hard day tomorrow."

CHAPTER XVII.

The beginning of the new régime was signalized by the falling of official heads. It became evident that Delafosse intended to have his own men about him. The ax fell continually, opening places of profit. Most of those dismissed were wise enough to take their medicine in silence, and those who complained found that they were appealing in vain to an unsympathetic and cynical public.

Nevertheless certain very conscientious gentlemen, disturbed by the epithet of "spoils party," suddenly applied to them, ventured to remonstrate with Delafosse.

"These dismissals are a practical necessity," he told them. "We must fill the vacancies from our own party. That, too, is a necessity. The overconscientious man is afraid to have it said that he favors his friends. What happens? He loses the friends which he has, and he gains none in place of them. Gentlemen, human nature is coin which we must accept at its face value. We must not offend those who have helped us. They are entitled to whatever we can legitimately give them."

In this opinion, the majority concurred. The wielding of power, the handling of civic patronage, was new to most of them, and filled them with a comfortable sense of pride. Suddenly they were important, influential men of mysterious powers, whose opinions and desires carried weight. It was pleasant to have the entrée to private offices, to be greeted respectfully by civic employees, to feel that they had a part in the making of ordinances affecting themselves and their property. These things, for the time being, satisfied them. And they recognized that they owed much to Delafosse.

But Delafosse, in turn, owed much to Halloran, who had no idea of allowing the obligation to be forgotten. In the back of his mind there lurked an idea, nebulous, scarcely formed as yet; nothing less than to fill the place of Fox, to be the hidden power, the kingmaker, to pull the strings which should set all the puppets, Delafosse included, a-dancing.

It did not take Delafosse long to discover this ambition. He was aware of it, indeed, almost before Halloran. At first it amused him. The contractor had been necessary to him, he had used him, he did not underestimate his value, and he was quite willing to reward him, but he had no intention of playing second fiddle.

"Some of the boys," Halloran observed, when affairs were beginning to run smoothly, "are kicking. They want a little money. The cost of livin's scand'lous, these days. They say it's time something stirred. If we don't shake the tree, they will."

Delafosse knew that this was true. He had foreseen it.

"Of course that won't do," he said.

"True for ye," Halloran agreed.

"Every time a melon's cut we want a finger in the pie, else some day they'll leave the rind and seeds where they'll be found. Now, I was thinkin' about this city hall. Outside it's a disgrace. Ye can't see the stone iv it for dirt and soot. Sand cleanin' is what it needs—a good, thorough job, takin' plenty of time, ye understand me. Then inside it might be painted and decorated and the offices changed about a bit, all for the better. We want to be up to date in the way of filin' systems, too. Then we do be usin' old writin' machines. That ain't right. It's hard on the gyurls. No doubt ye can think of other things yerself. There's addin' machines nowadays, and newfangled books that no sensible man can understand, all ruled up into dinky colyumns tellin' ye where the money has went to. Oh, there's lots of improved ways of spendin'."

"You understand," said Delafosse meaningly, "that the contract prices for all these things must be absolutely fair?"

"Of course," said Halloran. "What's extrys for? An' the typewriter agents and the likes of that can split their commiss and no harm done to anybody. Now, speakin' for meself: Ye know I wanted the filtration-plant contract. That's gone, so we'll forget it. But we need a new rezzyvoy for reserve like, when the old one needs cleanin', or in case it breaks or goes dry, or somethin'. I want that job."

"This is the first I've heard about it," said Delafosse.

"You're the first one I've told. I have a site ready picked out. Ye can get somebody to buy it in for ye, if ye like, and the differ bechuxt what he'll pay and what the city'll pay will be yours. I want none of it. The contract'll be plenty for me."

"H'm!" said Delafosse thoughtfully. "I don't know, M. J. We mustn't kill the goose if we want eggs. This scheme of yours may be all right. You give me the data, and I'll look into it."

"The data, is it?" said Halloran. "You've got it. The data is that we're runnin' things now, and this is a good job."

Delafosse laughed. "I want more than that. I'll be very glad to give you anything good that's going, but I've got to know all about it first."

"*You'll* be glad to give me?" said Halloran.

"That's what I said, M. J. Did you suppose you would have to ask some one else?"

Halloran eyed him for a moment, and decided to refuse the evident challenge. The time was not ripe for an assertion of his independence.

"I'll have some figgers made up in my office, if that's what you want," he said. "We need another rezzyvoy bad. Suppose this one broke, or typhoid got intill it and something went wrong wid the pumping station at the same time. 'Tis a bad way we'd be in. What would we do for water to wash in and to put out fires? Insurance rates would go up, wouldn't they?"

"Naturally."

"Then, there it is for ye."

"But that's a very remote possibility. The reservoir supply is clean, and there's nothing wrong with the reservoir itself. Our pumping plant is good, too, and we have auxiliary engines in case of accident."

"Them's details that can be easy fixed," said Halloran. "Wid five hundred dollars I can make the town howl for a better water system. All ye need is an analyst's report that the wather is full of them basilisk bugs, and a breakdown of main and auxiliary engines, or a plugged intake pipe, or the likes."

"Well, get your figures together," said Delafosse. "But remember, I'm not going to place myself in a position where I have to defend the indefensible."

He found himself in the position of many a brilliant man who has dabbled in politics. He had no money, and he wanted it badly, not for his daily living expenses, for which his professional earnings were more than sufficient, but for the political career which he had marked out for himself. His ambition led him to aim high. He wished to

soar, but without money, and plenty of it, he could not attempt flight.

His attentions to Beth had been inspired originally by her father's reputed wealth. Later he had fallen in love with her, or persuaded himself that he had. Her brief engagement and marriage was a shock. It was a blow not only to his vanity, but to his material prospects. He felt ill-used, defrauded, cheated of a part of his success. He brooded over it, nursing his grudge against both her and Fox.

He found his present position a trifle difficult, calling for care. He and Halloran understood each other very well. There was little, if any, pretense between them. But with others it was necessary to keep up appearances, to avoid all suspicion of wrongdoing, at least till he had made his position more secure. So far as he himself was concerned, this was easy enough. But certain members of his council were imprudent, greedy, capable of coarse work if left to themselves. And then, though the majority had been carefully chosen by himself and Halloran, there were two or three whose candidature the League had insisted on, as well as one or two of the Fox régime who had weathered the political storm that had engulfed their associates.

Back of these stage figures was the public, suspicious by habit, one section of which, at least, would not tolerate any doubtful acts; and another section, by long experience, able to spot a marked card in the dark. Under these conditions a proposition with a grafting attachment was about as safe as an open flame by a leaky naphtha tank. But he set himself to improve them, from his standpoint, by concentrating, by drawing to himself as many of Fox's former adherents as he could; by doing favors, always strictly legitimate, to influential members of the Citizens' League.

Following his policy the city's account was transferred to Barton's bank. Barton was gratified, but he was indignant at the *Record's* report of the transfer, which hinted broadly that it was a reward for services rendered. Still more indignant was he at the jollying of certain of his intimates.

"Why shouldn't I take this business?" he demanded irritably. "Must I let an account go begging because I know the men who have it? Whuh!"

Ferguson winked at Kinsley.

"We don't insinuate that you were influenced by any improper motives," he said solemnly. "But in your position—a prominent man like you, Barton—you can't be too careful."

"Careful! Improper motive! What are you talking about?" cried Barton.

"Of course none of us who know you believe that you would *graft,*" said Ferguson. "Do we, Kinsley?"

"No, no, not for a moment," Kinsley agreed, with a grave face. "You may be sure of our belief in your innocence, Barton."

"Are you crazy?" cried Barton.

"I said he was innocent," said Kinsley to Ferguson. The latter nodded.

"I never doubted it. Imprudent, perhaps, but guilty—never!"

Barton stared at them, pop-eyed, amazed, bewildered, almost convinced that his name was entangled in some disgraceful rumor. Ferguson, unable to contain himself longer, roared. The others joined in the merriment. Barton purpled.

"Think you're funny!" he snorted. "Think it's clever to make insinuations that you know are—lies. All right, Kinsley. I hear that rag of yours is getting the lion's share of the city's advertising, and the printing is being done in your job department. How about that, hey? Is that so cursed funny? No graft there, I suppose!"

"Not so far," Kinsley chuckled, "but I notice some of the boys smoking better cigars."

Barton exhausted wrathfully, and left them in high dudgeon, his dignity hurt. The city's banking was a very good piece of business, but he was for the moment inclined to regret that he had accepted it.

Delafosse consulted him frequently in financial matters, and, as Barton's foibles stopped short where business began, received excellent advice. One

day he broached the idea of an improvement commission. He pointed out that much might be done to beautify the city. There were ravines and hollows to be filled up, hills to be cut away, driveways to be constructed, trees to be planted, marshy spots to be reclaimed. Barton thought the idea an excellent one. Thereupon Delafosse offered him the chairmanship of the commission, to be composed of three. Barton, with slight demur, accepted.

The improvement commission was organized. Two of Delafosse's men, Sadler and Brodie, were the other commissioners. Thus, while Barton had the honor of chairmanship, he could always be outvoted.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Judge Joslyn, general counsel for the S. & W. Railway, was a diplomat of ability, otherwise he would not have held that position. He rarely put an offer baldly, preferring to let the other fellow state what he wanted, but in an hour's fencing with Delafosse he had made no progress whatever. The mayor was polite, interested, willing to assist the railway by every means in his power. A big hotel, such as the judge's clients projected, would naturally require a very central site. Inside property was expensive, but no doubt it could be obtained. The judge decided to come down to case cards.

"The fact is, Delafosse, we don't want to buy a site if we can help it."

"No?" said Delafosse, refusing to take the lead. "I'm afraid I don't quite follow you, judge."

"Well," said Joslyn, "we were negotiating with your—ah—predecessor for a free site. There were delays—unavoidable. Then there was an election, resulting in a complete turnover, as I understand. So we must start all over again. A free site is perhaps a startling proposition at first, but when one considers the many benefits which will accrue from this hotel, and the consequent expenditure and advertising which your city will receive, it is evident that you will get a *quid pro quo.*"

"I grant the benefit," said Delafosse. "But a free site! That will require consideration. Whatever my private sentiments may be, I doubt if it would meet with popular approval."

"A free site," said Joslyn, smiling with his mouth, but not with his eyes, "is not necessarily synonymous with one obtained for nothing."

"I think," said Delafosse, after a long pause, "that it would help matters if you explained the distinction. It's up to you, you know."

Then Joslyn for the first time felt firm, familiar ground beneath his feet, and he abandoned the careful language of diplomacy for the more vigorous expressions of private life.

"I hear you can deliver the goods if you want to, because the city council is filled up with your own lobbygows," he said. "We figure it's cheaper to buy them than to buy the dirt, and we'll stand for a good, fat snab, but not for a holdup. How about it? Do we do business?"

"We might," Delafosse admitted.

"What's your figure?"

Delafosse named it so promptly that Joslyn surmised that he had been prepared for the proposal. But its amount was a surprise to counsel.

"You've got a nice town," he said, "but we don't want to buy it—only your council."

"You'll pretty nearly have to buy the town," Delafosse told him. "Every newspaper that supported me will have to swallow itself. No need of telling you that. Your clipping bureau sent you the leading articles before the election."

"Huh! Well"—Judge Joslyn partially admitted the force of the argument—"you mustn't forget that the papers that opposed you were in favor of the scheme. That makes it about a stand-off."

"Apart from the papers, there was a section bitterly hostile to the idea when it was brought forward before. I don't know of anything that has happened to change their views."

"What's happening right now is supposed to change them," said Joslyn sig-

nificantly. "You understand that if we put up money, we want a positive guarantee that we get something for it."

"You don't think I'll write you a letter, do you?" said Delafosse.

Joslyn laughed. "I guess we can dispense with that. We are going to get on, all right. If you have political ambitions, my people are a good crowd to stand in with. By the way, I suppose there is no doubt about your control of your council? I don't have to see anybody but you?"

"Not unless you want to. Whom do you mean?"

"Well," said Joslyn, "I did hear that Mike Halloran cut quite a block of ice. In fact, I've heard it stated that you are leader, but he is boss."

"Did you hear that from him?"

"No, merely a rumor."

"Then I wouldn't pay any attention to it. You needn't worry. Now, about this site. Of course you know what you want."

"We have," said Joslyn, "a very fair idea. We want Bell's Garden Park."

"I thought that would be it. Now, Joslyn, this is going to raise all kinds of opposition—all kinds. You know the history of the ground. In the early days a certain Anthony Bell had a truck garden and orchard. He devised it to the town, as it was then, for a recreation spot, a playground, and so on. His will is quite a curiosity, but it sets forth the purpose of the gift very clearly."

"But there was no trust created, as I understand," said Joslyn, "merely an expression of desire or intention. The city took title absolutely. There is nothing to prevent the alienation of the property."

"No legal reason, but plenty of sentimental ones. That's where the opposition will come in."

"Well," said Joslyn, "if this old hick wanted to handicap posterity, he should have done it legally. What good is the park to you now? You get no revenue from it. It's a constant expense. As for being a recreation spot or a playground, it's nothing of the kind. You don't even let the kids play on the grass. Every one must keep to the walks. Consequently it isn't used by any one but the bums who take sun baths on the benches. You have other parks at the outskirts of the town, where everybody goes. Why not swap this for something you have a use for? The city has outgrown the purpose of Bell's Garden. That's the line of argument to take."

"Good as far as it goes," Delafosse agreed. "We may be getting rid of something we don't particularly want, but, on the other hand, you are getting for nothing something you want very badly, and which has an actual cash value. Show me how to get around that."

"More money spent here, free advertising, bigger traffic."

"One for us and two for you. Now, suppose your freight department made a few concessions to our shippers and consignees. That would help. It would be an argument, anyway. And afterward you could do as you liked."

"Not a bad idea," Joslyn admitted. "I'll see about it. Well, I'll write you a letter with our proposition, and get it before the public in that way. Meanwhile you can take steps to head off any hasty newspaper comment."

As a first step, Delafosse spoke to Kinsley, merely stating that he had had an interview with Joslyn. Kinsley, as he expected, was outspoken in opposition. Delafosse listened to him patiently.

"That's all very true," he observed, "but, at the same time, we need this hotel. And we don't need the park."

"The railway needs the hotel as badly as we do. Let them pay for the ground. They can afford it."

"I wish they would, but they think they can afford not to pay for it. Joslyn assures me that it's a toss-up between here and another town. If they build there, they will make it a divisional point, too."

"So it's a holdup," Kinsley commented.

"Of course," Delafosse admitted. "What else can we expect? The point is that if we allow ourselves to be held up, we get a pretty good thing out of it. On the other hand, if we stand

out for a price, we may be worse off than we are at present. It needs some serious consideration. It seems to me that we shouldn't commit ourselves until we have gone into the thing very thoroughly."

"You may be right," said Kinsley, "but the *Examiner* is already on record against it."

"Yes, I know that," said Delafosse. "I am myself, to some extent. But the basis of our opposition was more the practical certainty that the Fox crowd would get a big rake-off than the intrinsic demerits of the proposition. At least that was how I looked at it."

"Yes, that's so, I guess," Kinsley remarked. "You don't get a rake, do you?" he added jocularly.

"I hope they send me a pass," laughed Delafosse. "The least they can do is to put up a meal ticket when the hotel is built, if it ever is built. Well, anyway, Kinsley, keep your pen off them for a little while. Take a look at all sides of the scheme. I confess I see some advantages in it."

Kinsley promised. "Let's go and see Barton," he suggested. "He was death on the scheme before. I'd like to hear what he has to say now."

What Barton had to say was in no material respect different from what he had said before. They knew his opinions; he wasn't flighty; no weathercock about him, no, by gad!

"But your main objection was the fear of graft," Delafosse argued, and Barton had to admit it. But he still objected to giving away a part of the civic heritage. Finally, like Kinsley, he agreed to consider the matter afresh. Others made the same promise. Delafosse was making very good progress indeed.

But the objection of Michael John Halloran was of quite another kind.

"What do I get out of it?" he asked bluntly.

"I don't see why you should get anything or expect to get anything," Delafosse replied, with equal frankness.

"Why shouldn't I?"

"Because you are not a member of the council. You have no vote in it."

"I may not have a vote there," said Halloran, "but let me tell ye this: I control them that has."

"Think so?" queried Delafosse. "Oh, no, M. J.; I control them myself."

"I think diff'rent," Halloran told him. "I put up the money to elect most of them, and they'll do as I say."

"That's a matter of opinion," Delafosse returned calmly. "We can test it any time you like. We'll do it on this, if you say so. Frankly, Halloran, there can't be two heads to anything, and the sooner we find out which of us is boss, the better."

"I want no quar'l wid ye, Delafosse," said Halloran; "but it's time ye knew ye can't double cross me. I broke Fox, and I can do the same to you."

"A combination of circumstances broke Fox, and you happened to be one of them. I was another. Neither of us can take all the credit. We are rather necessary to each other, but I can get along without you better than you can without me. Did you ever stop to think what chance you'd have if I dropped out of the game at the end of this term?"

"An' what chance would you have widout my money an' my pull wid the boys? Answer me that."

"That's very easy," Delafosse explained. "By the end of this term, if things break right, I will have plenty of money to run my own show, and a bigger pull with the crowd than you ever had. M. J., you've chosen a bad time to force a show-down. The council will stay with me on this question, because there's a big slice for every one. You can't make them pass it up. They won't take orders from you when it means losing ready money. And if you once give orders that you can't back up, you're a dead one. They'll back my play because I'm the money maker. In fact, M. J., you want too much. You're getting big jobs, but you're not satisfied with them. You want to butt into everything. It doesn't go, and you may as well know it now. But, mind you, I'll give you any mortal thing you ask for in your own line. I haven't turned

down a single request of yours, now, have I?"

Halloran would have liked to say that he had, but could not think of an instance. And he knew that Delafosse was speaking the exact truth as to the council. He had not seen it in that light before.

"I want no quar'l wid ye," he repeated. "'Tis little matter which of us is boss, so we pull together. I'm out for the coin, an' I make no bones about it. I've let you in some things I needn't to. Take that rezzyvoy. Did I keep it all to myself?"

"Nothing goes through without my consent, and if I want a slice I take it. You haven't any reasonable kick on the money you're making. There's more to follow. But I can't afford to split this with you, and that's the cold fact. You shouldn't ask it. There are too many to be fixed."

"Why didn't ye say so at first, then?"

"You didn't give me a chance. Now you see how it is, of course you won't insist."

"Of course not, of course not," said Halloran, who was willing to emerge from the affair as gracefully as he could. "Say no more about it. I maybe said more nor I meant. Just to show ye, now, if there's anything I can do to help the deal, let me know."

"In about a week, you'll be interviewed, and I want you to come out flat-footed in favor of this scheme. That will give the rest of them a lead. I want to put this through without trouble, if I can."

"I'll do that," said Halloran, "and if I know myself I'll build some of this hotel. Now, here's a little thing. There's a job up at the library worth twenty-five hundred, an' holdin' it down is a gyurl be the name iv Dawson. Let alone that bein' too much money to pay a woman, I'm told that young Fox got her the job. We should have her out o' that. I know a young felly that's strong on books and a good worker of ours would like the place."

Delafosse clipped the end from a cigar thoughtfully. He had never liked Fanny Dawson, and he was quite aware that she did not like him. Sooner or later, he intended to dispense with her services.

"Yes, Fox got her the job," he replied. "She's a friend of his wife, and his wife is Barton's daughter. I know the girl myself."

"Oh, if she's a friend of yours, that's diff'rent," said Halloran apologetically.

"She isn't. Between ourselves, I'd like to have her resignation, but it wouldn't look well to ask for it."

"Why not abolish the job an' the salary wid it? That'd fix the gyurl. Then in a little while ye could start it up wid a new name, an' nobody the wiser."

"That's not a bad idea," said Delafosse. "I'll think of it."

In due course the S. & W. Railway reduced its proposition to writing. Delafosse, as a matter of policy, refused to give the *Examiner* a scoop. The papers published the text simultaneously. They found themselves in a peculiar position. Those which had supported Fox and the scheme when it apparently was his, wished to oppose it now that Delafosse favored it. Those which had opposed it before were practically forced to support it now, or, at least, to offer a minimum of opposition. The swallowing feat required considerable ingenuity and dialectic skill. The result was that their leading articles were moderate in tone, and discussion was sane and reasonable.

Few argued that Bell's Garden Park as it stood was of any practical use to the city. At the same time, it was valuable to the railway. That was the crux of the situation. Against that was to be set the undoubted benefits to the community flowing from an active railway interest in the city's development. They should not, the supporters of the deal urged, pursue a dog-in-the-manger policy, but a progressive, open-handed one.

At the proper moment, Halloran came out with an interview. He had many weighty reasons pro, and but few con. He had much capital invested, he was a large employer, he owned real estate, he was a builder—in fact, no one's material future was more closely bound up and identified with the city's

than was his. Consequently his opinions carried weight. On top of this came an intimation that the S. & W., in the event of its acquiring a stake in the city, would overhaul its rates, and enlarge its yards. There was a hint of a new and palatial station that should impress visitors favorably.

The business men began to fall in line. Newspaper nature, ever progressive, more willing to boost than to knock, could not bear to be a drag on the wheel. Some one, in an inspired moment, proposed a statue to Anthony Bell. The S. & W., in a sudden burst of sentiment, offered to defray the cost. It was a little thing, immaterial, totally irrelevant to the issue, but it caught the popular fancy. Anthony Bell, leaning on his hoe or against his faithful plow horses, one hand shading his eyes from the sun, while he peered eternally at the marvelous changes that had come to his primitive garden patch! It was a splendid idea. Great! Thus would posterity pay its debt to the dead.

There was quite a Bell boom. An enterprising newspaper, possessing a *circum bellum* cut of John Brown, altered it a trifle, and ran it as Anthony Bell, "from a portrait in the possession of an old resident," thus forestalling a reckless contemporary which was preparing to do the same with an alleged likeness of Henry Ward Beecher. The Woman's Historical Society ransacked the city archives for information *re* Bell. There was talk of a Bell Day in the public schools. He was posthumously endowed with all the virtues, with prescience, with the Clearer Vision.

"Fine work," said Joslyn to Delafosse, when there was no doubt of the result. "That old rube, Bell, came in mighty handy. I wish we could send him a pass over our lines, but likely he's a bird man now. Hope so, anyway. Now we seem to have got what we want. Will the figure we agreed on cover it? If not, we'll stand a little more, merely as a mark of appreciation."

"No, it's satisfactory," Delafosse replied. "It's foolish to pay cash for what you can get by a little slushy sentiment. I come out all right, thank you."

CHAPTER XIX.

Young Sam Fox was now busy earning a living for two, but he could not help at least watching events, listening to the actors in the civic drama, criticizing their movements, their "business," noting the manipulation of the light effects, hearing the stage thunder, and guessing at what was going on behind the familiar scenery.

The once perfectly assembled Fox machine was now dismembered, little better than junk. Fox himself, having seen the débris of the election swept clear, had gone abroad on a holiday of indefinite length for which he had never had time before. So far as he was concerned, the wreck was complete, and it was not underwritten. There was nothing worth salving. In his opinion, Delafosse was unbeatable for several terms, and he did not intend to stay with a losing game when he was already tired of a winning one.

Therefore, there was no head to the remnants of the old organization. The consequence was that the rank and file, which might have been kept together, straggled, deserted, even went over to the enemy, by whom, so far as could be ascertained, they were made very welcome.

"First thing we know, they'll be too solid to shake," said Donovan. "Your old man shouldn't have went."

"No, I guess not," said Sam. "Still, I suppose he had a right to quit the game if he wanted to."

"Yes—one way," Donovan admitted. "Only it leaves us on the ropes. He might 'a' stalled along a little till we got our wind. The way it is we don't know where we're at. There's nobody in our corner to handle us, nobody we can tie to, nobody to go to the front for us. We're a down-and-out club with no president."

"How about yourself?"

"You know better," Matty chided. "I could always go the distance, but I needed a good man in my corner."

"Soper?"

"All right some ways. He can read the little words in the big print and speak a nice piece from memory, but he ain't got the inside hunch and the sand. No, Sam, he don't fit. The only man for the job is you."

"Try again," laughed Sam.

"No use. Some of us have talked it over. That's what we think."

"Well," Sam observed, "one man is just about as good as another at present. There's nothing doing, anyway."

"No telling how soon there will be," said Matty shrewdly. "That bunch is due to run till they trip on a root. I know them. They never had such a chance at easy money, and pretty soon they'll try to make a killing. We want to have our pipes laid ready for them. Say, take that reservoir job of Halloran's. Of course he makes on it—I don't mean that—but somebody made on the sale of the land to the city."

"I guess it was old Beasley, then," said Sam. "He has owned that property for forty years. I took a look at the title to make sure. Of course he got a big price, and I wondered that he held out for so much, but it all went to him."

"Perhaps maybe, and perhaps maybe not," said Matty. "It looks all right from the road, but from the back yard —I dunno."

"Beasley owned the property, and sold it to the city; he made the conveyance himself," said Sam. "You can bet the old man isn't splitting his profits with any one. He didn't have to."

"How do you know he didn't? Now, get this: Beasley has an old gardener, and the gardener has a son—a bright young feller in a real-estate office in town. The kid puts it up from something his father overheard, that somebody got an option on that property before the city bought. Of course he don't know who it was, nor the figure, nor nothing like that. What do you think?"

The inference was plain. If an option had been obtained at that particular time, it was more than a coincidence. The fact that the holder of the option had not taken it up, but had allowed Beasley himself to convey to the city showed that he did not wish to appear in the transaction. And since nobody had known of this option, Beasley had probably received something for keeping his mouth shut. It followed that somebody had made a nice profit.

"Try to find out more about it," said Sam. "It has the earmarks."

"You bet it has. Earmarks? Every blame' thing they touch has the earmarks, and that's all the good it does us. Look at this hotel business, the way they're slipping it across. Look at the graft on them city-hall contracts. Yes, and I'll bet two to one that improvement commission your wife's old man is chairman of is being worked good and plenty."

"Not to his knowledge," said Sam, paying unwilling tribute to his father-in-law.

"Well, maybe not," Donovan admitted. "But then he's a rank sucker, Sam. He wins steady at his own game, but he don't know no other. He's just a stall for somebody. Why, if I went for a walk with Sadler or Brodie, I'd leave my watch at home. You'll see."

"Do him good to get up to his neck in something," said Sam. "You can't tell him anything. He wouldn't even thank you for it."

"I ain't thinking of telling him. I got troubles of my own. Crabb is after my scalp. If I don't watch myself, I'll lose my license."

"You'd better observe the regulations pretty closely."

"No hotel man on earth can do that, the way they've got 'em framed now. They'll enforce 'em with two or three of us, and with the others—not. Why, Sam, the first thing I know I'll have to give up for protection. *Me!* It's been put up to me already."

Half an hour later, Sam had a client, a young fellow named Parks, recently married, employed in a bank. Parks, by way of providing for contingencies, was buying a lot with a small residence upon it, and wished Sam to look after the matter, an important one to him.

"We're sick of living in a dinky flat," he explained. "We want a place of

our own. This little house suits us. It's just finished—modern. And then the location is fine, and there's lots of room. The improvement commission is fixing up that street. You bet we're going to swell."

"H'm," said Sam. "You're buying from the Imperial Realty Company. Who are they?"

"Don't know. Their office is in the Fidelity Block. They built the house and a lot of others. Got the land cheap just before the commission took hold likely. They ought to make a good thing of it."

Sam dug into the title. There was nothing complicated about it. Everything was clear. He satisfied himself that the company with the high-sounding name was entitled to deal in real estate and duly incorporated. He mailed the conveyance to them, and in due course got it back properly executed. The incident appeared closed.

But a week afterward he was asked to draw another conveyance for another purchaser in another part of the city. Again the Imperial Realty Company was the vendor. And again the locality was one greatly improved by the work of the improvement commission.

This time Sam called at the company's office with his conveyance for signature. The door on the sixth floor bore the company's name with several others. Inside it was represented by a vacant chair and a desk. The secretary of the company, Mr. Sullivan, had not put in an appearance that day.

A couple of hours later he called again, this time finding Sullivan, and explained what he wanted. Mr. Sullivan, a pallid, none too clean young gentleman, promised to obtain the signature of his president, Mr. Ringer, as soon as possible.

"You fellows," said Sam, "seem to have quite a bunch of property scattered about."

"We got a few lots," Mr. Sullivan admitted grudgingly.

"Would it be too much trouble to let me see a list of what you have for sale?" asked Sam.

Mr. Sullivan, it appeared, had no list just then. But if Sam would tell him what sort of a proposition he wanted just then——

"Oh, anything for investment or a little speculation," said Sam. "I see some of your stuff lies in the recently improved districts. That should be good buying."

This should have excited the interest and enthusiasm of any secretary of a realty company with its interests at heart. But it appeared merely to remind Sullivan of a pressing engagement.

"Oh, I dunno," he said. "We ain't sellin' much. The best buys have been picked up. Excuse me, woncha? I gotta see a fella. I'll have that deed fixed up and sent to you to-morrow, sure. G'-by!"

Sam returned to his office thoughtfully, got out a map of the city, and marked on it the location of the two properties which the company had just sold. Then he marked the various localities dealt with by the improvement commission. After which he went to the registry office. His investigations there showed that the company owned a great deal of property in the improved districts. That, of itself, was perfectly legitimate, but in every case the purchase of the property by the company was prior to the filing by the commission of improvement plans affecting the districts in which the lands lay.

That evening he was unusually silent and thoughtful.

"What is it?" asked Beth, quick to recognize his mood.

"Something I'm trying to work out."

"Won't you tell me?"

He did so, as was now his custom, watching the thoughtful pucker he knew so well appear between her eyebrows.

"I think I understand," she said. "You think this company has been told where to buy?"

"Before any one else knew—yes. In other words, the commission leaks. In plainer phrase, they are standing in on the graft."

"But, Sam," she exclaimed; "father! —he is chairman."

"Yes; it's a pity."

"You don't mean——"

"Oh, he doesn't know anything about it. It's one or both of the others. But it will be awkward for him if this comes out."

"Then it mustn't come out. You are the only one who knows. And you don't really know; you only suspect."

He laughed. "What, old girl? The soft pedal!"

The blood rushed to her forehead. She was ashamed of herself, ashamed of the momentary, natural impulse to cover, to condone an apparent wrong lest some one dear to her should suffer.

"No, I was wrong," she confessed. "I see now. It must not be hushed up for his sake."

"I guess he'll have to take his medicine one of these days," Sam admitted, "but I won't be the one to hand it to him. Of course I haven't got very far yet. But if I tipped off a newspaper —— No, the importance of this thing is that it's the loose end of yarn. It shows that these fellows are grafting systematically."

"It doesn't show any general graft. Only, at the worst, an isolated case."

He shook his head. "We threshed this out before, Beth. It is hard to get absolute proof, and you are so blessed innocent that you don't know proof when you see it. You play a fair game of bridge. With experienced players, after three or four rounds, a couple of suits led or shown, you can place the rest of the cards with some certainty. A lead, a discard, a finesse—these to you amount to proof of what's in a hand. Why? Because you know the game and how it should be played. Well, I know this other game and how it is played. Things that strike you as inconclusive are to me proof. Do you follow me?"

She nodded silently.

"Take this particular case," he went on. "Here is an improvement commission created, purpose what its name implies, on the face of it an excellent thing. Its spending powers are large. Its options are larger; practically it has a free hand. That is, it may do its spending where it pleases within the city limits. And there is no doubt that money spent in this way increases the value of adjacent properties. Very well. Now, then:

"Your father is chosen as chairman. Why? He doesn't know beans about boulevards or roads or parks, nor is he in any sense an expert on the beautiful. But he is a good business man, and has been of service to his party. That may be the answer. But to my mind it isn't. I think he was appointed for his reputation for strict honesty. And yet his honesty is a suspicious circumstance; for, associated with him, always able to outvote him, are Sadler and Brodie, both of whom I think are crooked. They can do almost anything under cover of the chairman's reputation. Suspicion is chloroformed at the outset. And if it ever awakes, what happens? Why, if there is an exposure, Barton must take the blame with the others. Therefore, his associates of the Citizens' League would be against publicity. And as for our crowd, I am married to his daughter. Naturally, you see, I couldn't be very active."

Beth listened in amazement. Here were deep, turbid waters, unsuspected eddies, and cross currents in the daily life that went on around her; a forethoughtful planning, if her husband was correct, that considered and provided against eventualities, that did not hesitate to use the honest and trusting as a shield for the unscrupulous and crafty; that would sacrifice a man's reputation for the sake of a few dollars, and think nothing of it. Sam resumed:

"And now we come to the little joker, our old friend with the cap and bells, this blessed company. It's a lovely idea, latest model, perfectly simple, and almost safe. It buys cheap, outlying property, passes the word to Sadler and Brodie, and the commission, after an interval in the interests of propriety, files improvement plans. It's automatic, you see. Your father doesn't suspect. If he objects, he's outvoted. The com-

pany sells at double its investment, or puts up a flimsy house, and makes an additional profit on that. The only chance, and that's a remote one, is that some nosy lawyer may get an inkling when he is passing a title for a purchaser. Then they can buy him up. If not, the putative members of the company are dummies, and the big men can't be connected with it."

Beth, in spite of herself, was convinced. It was horribly logical, hideously simple, cruel.

"Sam," she said, "we can't let it go on. Father must resign."

"He's rather proud of the job. I don't think he would."

"He would if he were told."

"I won' tell him. He would kick over the pail and make a mess generally. It would injure him more than any one else. He's in it now. Better let it lie for a while."

"I am sure," she said, "that he would not occupy the position one day longer if he had even a suspicion of crookedness. He would make public his reasons for resigning. People would believe him."

"I don't think so, old girl," said Sam gently. "They've provided against that, too. I didn't tell you before, and I hate to do it now, but your brother Billy is one of the incorporators of this company."

"Billy!" she exclaimed. "That kid an incorporator of anything! You must be mistaken."

"No chance," said Sam. "I have a certified copy of the incorporation papers. Billy's a dummy, only you could never get any one to believe it. You see where that places your father. If he raises a row, he involves his son. And Billy's connection alone would convince the ordinary man that your father stood in on the graft himself. If he simply resigns without stating his reasons and the graft ever gets out, he'll be in a worse hole than ever. Honestly, Beth, I don't see where he gets off."

"Have you said anything to Billy?"

"No. It's a delicate matter, and not particularly my business."

"It's mine, and that makes it yours. If you won't talk to him, I will."

"Very well, then; you'd better let me do it."

The next day he saw young Barton.

"The Imperial Realty Company?" said Billy. "Sure I'm in it. I'm a capitalist now, Sam."

"How deep are you in?"

"Well," Billy admitted, with a grin, "I'm supposed to hold five shares. On paper I do. But I never paid for them. I couldn't put up five hundred, of course."

"Who put it up?"

"See here, Sam, what are you driving at? We capitalists don't let the public into our ways of financing things."

"You'd better give up, Billy. This is a serious matter."

"Give up yourself," said Billy.

Sam explained, and the younger man listened, his face growing longer and graver as the idea seeped in.

"Lordy, Sam, but that's rotten!" said he. "Halloran put up the money for my shares—at least, I think he did. He called me into his office one day, and told me there was a company being formed. He wanted me to fill in as one of the incorporators, just to oblige him. He was my boss, and of course I signed what papers he wanted me to. I never asked any questions. He said he'd be responsible for the payments. What else could I do? That's the last I've heard of it from that day to this."

This was about what Sam had expected. He counseled young Barton to say nothing. When he got home that night, he found Beth in a state of wrathful indignation. Fanny Dawson, she said, had that day been asked for her resignation.

CHAPTER XX.

Miss Dawson's resignation had not been hard to obtain. She had written it forthwith. After which she took her private papers from her desk, and walked out.

"Got her back up," Sam commented "Well, I'm not surprised. They are

firing all our people. The wonder is that she didn't get it before."

"But it's unjust," Beth insisted.

"Certainly. But they wanted her job."

"She never knew that she owed it to you, and they told her about it. That hurt her more than anything."

"Why, what's the matter with that?" Sam asked densely. "She hasn't anything against me, I hope."

Beth was silent.

"Has she?" Sam asked. "If I had any pull, I'd get her something else."

"She wouldn't take it. There was something said to her—or she overheard something—dear, I hate to tell you, but she heard somehow that it was rumored she was—or had been—very intimate with you."

"What?" cried Sam.

Beth nodded, flushing painfully. "I thought I should tell you. Fanny is heartbroken. It's—it's awful, Sam, to have such things said about a girl!"

"You mean——"

"Yes."

"If I can find the man—if it was a man!" growled Sam, his expression one that Beth had never seen on his face before. The good humor of it had vanished. Instead was hardness, truculence, cold anger. "If there was the least thing—if Fanny had ever been more than an acquaintance—more than a friend of yours—I could understand. Why, there isn't the remotest——"

"I don't need any assurance, dear," she interrupted. "I never believed this story."

"You—never—believed—it," he said slowly. "You never believed it! Why, Beth, do you mean you have heard it before?"

"Yes, I heard it—before we were married. I never meant to tell you. Of course I never told Fanny. I trusted you both."

"You may," he said simply. "To think of any one telling you such a thing!" His face grew stern. "And now I want to know what you were told and who told you."

"I had rather not, dear—indeed, I had rather not. What is the use? It never came between us. It was not even a shadow."

"Tell me!" he insisted.

"I don't want to."

He smiled gravely at the childish phrase. "Old girl, this has got beyond you now, and I have a right to know. In fact, I must know, and I'm going to know. Who told you?"

"Well—now, please, Sam, be patient, dear!—it was father."

"The old devil!" The phrase jerked from him out of his amazement and anger.

"Please, please, Sam! He believed it, dear. He thought it was his duty to tell me."

"His duty, confound him!" growled Sam, holding his temper in check with visible effort. "When was this? And what form of infernal slander did his duty take?"

"It was just before we were married, when I was staying with Fanny. Father came to see me one afternoon. He said I must give you up—must come away or be compromised." The tears were very close to the surface. "He said—he wouldn't tell me who told him—that you had been seen coming from Fanny's at three o'clock in the morning."

"It's a——" Midway in hot denial he checked himself, consternation in his face. "Why wasn't I more careful?" he groaned.

"Sam!"

"It's true, old girl. It was the time Barney Shea disappeared. You didn't know about that." He told her exactly what had occurred. "Somebody must have seen me. But, Beth, I never even entered her rooms. We talked for a moment at the door. Then I came away."

"I never doubted you or Fanny."

He kissed her. In the caress there was homage, reverence.

"Old girl, you need never doubt me. But I was imprudent—a fool. I knew the risk—not for me, but for her. It can't be helped now. But I'm going to find the man who set this story going, and I only hope he's about my own age and weight."

"Why? Do you mean you'd fight him?"

"I'd hand him such a holy whaling he'd keep his tongue off a girl's name for the rest of his life," he said grimly. "You don't understand—thank God you can't understand—how a dirty yarn like this spreads; how with some men it becomes a thing to be retailed in clubs and bars with lewd jokes, with cheap cynicisms. That's what I've got to stop if it has started, and it looks like it. I'll ask your father who told him."

"Don't quarrel with him, Sam. Promise me."

"I won't. But I'll put it to him as straight as a stretched string."

When he sought an interview with Barton the next day and sent in his card, it was returned. Barton refused to see him.

"Any one with him now?" Sam asked.

"No," said the young clerk, "but he——"

"Then I'm going in."

Sam put him aside gently, but as irresistibly as a slowly moving locomotive might have brushed a man from the track, entered the holy of holies, and closed the door behind him.

Barton, at his desk, swelled and ruffled himself like a setting hen at sight of his visitor.

"What do you mean by coming in here?" he demanded. "I refused to see you."

"You have to see me," said Sam calmly, "because I want to see you. Some time ago you told Beth a certain story reflecting upon Miss Dawson and myself."

"Well?"

"That I was ever on more than friendly terms with Miss Dawson is absolutely false. But on one occasion I was thoughtless enough to go to her apartment after midnight, merely to bring her information that she wanted. I'll tell you how it happened." He did so.

"Do you expect me to believe this story?" asked Barton.

"It is the fact. But personally, I don't care whether you believe it or not. I want to know, in the first place, where you got your information; and, secondly, whether you have told any one besides Beth."

"I won't tell you where I got it. But I have not repeated it elsewhere, of course."

"I'm glad to hear that. But this slander has got going, and it has got to be stopped. Miss Dawson has been asked for her resignation. You are probably aware that I had something to do with getting her the position she had."

"That's common knowledge."

"Well, she didn't know it till yesterday. I want this information."

"You won't get it. I'll have nothing to do with your affairs."

"But can't you see——"

"I can see that your chickens are coming home to roost, young man."

"Barton"—Sam's voice was very chilly—"it's time you quit. You're too old for me to handle as I'd like to, but don't crowd me—don't, now!"

"You—you——" spluttered his father-in-law in inarticulate fury.

"Take it as said," Sam suggested.

"Do you mean to threaten me?" roared Barton. "I want to tell you, you young thug——"

"Let me in on this," interrupted Sam. "I've taken considerable abuse from you at different times, and I've said nothing, because you were Beth's father. I like civil talk when I can get it, but you don't seem to produce that kind. Listen to a little bit of truth about yourself. You may be a fair business man, but that lets you out. Otherwise you're intolerant, pig-headed, conceited, a rank sucker, a come-on for men cleverer than yourself. As a matter of fact, you're a fussy old woman dabbling in men's affairs when you ought to be in an apron shooing chickens out of a garden. Why, you tack-headed old simp, you're being used right now by a bunch of crooks. They're grafting right under your nose, and you can't see it or smell it. Or else you are in the game yourself. I give you the benefit of the doubt, because I think stupid honesty is about your only redeeming trait."

It is safe to say that never in his life had Barton listened to such candid speech applied to himself. It was as if a lordly old turkey cock, the boss of the barnyard, had suddenly had it "put all over him" by some young fowl that he had held in contempt and misused when it suited him. Utter amazement held him silent until Sam concluded.

"Young man, I—I was never talked to that way before!"

"Well," said Sam, already regretting his loss of temper, but standing to his guns, "you crowded me to it, and it's exactly what I think. And I'm not going to apologize."

"Nobody asked you to," said Barton. Sam's words seemed to have exercised a sobering effect. He sat slumped in his chair, gazing across his desk at the younger man, much as a seasoned old fighter from his ring corner might regard a coming youngster who had given him very much the worst of a round.

Sam, looking at him, noticed for the first time the unmistakable signs of age—the gray hair, the pouches beneath the eyes, the weariness of the eyes themselves, the network of red veins, the wrinkled skin of the throat, the slightly tremulous hands. He felt ashamed as if he, with his young, fresh strength, had struck him. Barton said:

"No, I don't want an apology. I'm outspoken myself—always have been. I have plenty of faults, but I don't think your opinion of me is right. Probably you don't think my opinion of you is right. Well—perhaps we are a little hard on each other.

"I didn't want Beth to marry you. I told you my reasons; I did all I could to prevent it. She did marry you, and I had to make my bluff good, at least I thought so then. Now—I don't know. I haven't very many more years, and I don't want to be estranged from her. If you're a halfway decent young fellow, there's no need of it; if you're the confounded young scoundrel I took you for, she needs me all the more. Still—she's your wife now. What do you say?"

"If we can make a fresh start, I'll be very glad," said Sam frankly. "I know it has worried Beth. I apologize for my words. You have just shown me that I was wrong."

"You may have been partly right in some ways," said Barton. This was a great concession. He recovered his usual manner. "Look here, now. What did you mean by saying that I was being used—that grafting was going on under my nose?"

"I put it rather strongly. There are plenty of men who would use you if they could."

"That's not what you meant," said Barton sharply.

"No," Sam admitted, "it's not what I meant. I guess I'll have to tell you."

Barton listened to the story of the Imperial Realty Company and Sam's ideas concerning it in amazement. At first he was incredulous. It seemed impossible. But little things to which he had attached no importance at the time now took on a new meaning. He recalled that Sadler and Brodie in several instances had substituted proposals of their own for his. They had been insistent on pushing forward work which he had considered of secondary importance. They had always opposed publicity, keeping the public in the dark as much as possible. These things, while they did not amount to proof, were very suspicious.

He found himself in a dilemma. If he simply resigned, the graft would go on. If he did so, making his suspicions public, a large number of people would believe what would undoubtedly be said of him—that his hand was forced. Those who would not doubt his honesty, wise after the event, would laugh at his dullness, his lack of perception.

"I'm afraid they've got you out on a limb," said Sam. "This will take some thinking. If I were you, I'd stand my hand for a while."

"I hate to let it go on—if it is going on," said Barton. "To think I'm in such a mess up to my infernal, fool neck! I deserve to be kicked. Look here"—strangely he was beginning to apply to Sam for advice—"hadn't I better see Delafosse? He ought to

know of this. I'll tell him in confidence."

"I don't think I'd say anything to him," said Sam. He did not voice his suspicion. "Just keep it to yourself for a while, and see what happens. Now that you know what to look for, they won't find it so easy to put things over on you."

Meanwhile Delafosse, having sanctioned Fanny Dawson's official execution, was having a stormy interview with Barney Shea. Shea had merely heard from Fanny that her resignation had been asked for and obtained. He was indignant, and without telling her of his intention went to Delafosse. The latter was smoothly regretful, but his attitude did not satisfy Shea at all.

"Miss Dawson is the sister of an old chum of mine, and I want her to get a square deal," said Shea. "This isn't square. I've got no kick when you fire one heeler to make room for another. That's the game, it seems. But Miss Dawson isn't a heeler. She doesn't know or care anything about municipal politics, and she held the job down better than any one else you can get."

"We won't argue it," Delafosse told him. "We have her resignation, and that settles the matter."

"I don't know that it does."

"Well, Shea," said Delafosse, "your knowledge or otherwise isn't very material." He picked up a pen as a sign that the interview was closed, but Barney would not have it that way.

"I did considerable work for you people," he pointed out. "I think I'm entitled to a little consideration. I'm asking a square deal for a girl who never applied for this position. The city offered it to her. She resigned another to take it. She is more than competent. I say it's not manly, honest, or decent to dismiss her now."

"We won't discuss it," Delafosse returned shortly. "What work you did was for your paper, and I presume you were paid for it. We don't owe you anything."

"I am still being paid by that newspaper."

"In that case," said Delafosse pointedly, unable to resist the opening, "I don't wish to take up any more of your valuable time."

"I'm still paid by it," Shea repeated. "My job is to get news and tell it. It strikes me there's an interesting story or two around here."

"Help yourself," said Delafosse, with wearied politeness.

"I intend to," said Barney. "I may as well tell you that I don't like the look of some things."

"How unfortunate!" drawled Delafosse, with mild sarcasm. "For instance?"

"Several. There are a number of deals and contracts that may or may not bear investigation."

Delafosse laughed. "And so, Mr. Shea, you practically threaten me with a little newspaper blackmail unless I reinstate Miss Dawson. Well, I won't do it. Go ahead. But you will probably find it necessary to look for another job yourself."

"I'm quite able to get one," Shea retorted. "This is not blackmail; it's a fair warning. The *Examiner* supported you, but it won't stand for any doubtful transactions. I don't like a number of your deals. I don't like this reservoir contract of Halloran's. We paid a big price for that land—too large. I'm not sure that Beasley got all the money for it."

"If he didn't, who did?"

"That," said Barney, "is one of the things I am going to find out."

"Unless you think," said Delafosse, "that I am in a position to give you the information, I would suggest that you do your finding out elsewhere. Good morning, Mr. Shea."

TO BE CONCLUDED.

In two weeks you will get the concluding chapters of this serial and the beginning of another. First November POPULAR on sale October 10th.

Allison of the Bulls

By Rob Reed McNagny

Elephants are always "bulls" to show folk. Here is the dramatic story of an unscheduled star act under the "big top" by Allison of the bulls. A touching little yarn of the inside life of the circus.

COME on! Come on there! What's the trouble down here? Allison! Where's Allison? What? Well, look lively there, you with the horses. *Get a-going—get a-going!* Great snakes! We won't be on the lot by noon. Here! Tell Allison to get off as fast as he can. I've got to go down." Jeff Boyd, loading boss, was busy getting the show off the cars.

A steamy, misty pall of gray hung over everything: the first flush of dawn in the sky. Down beyond somewhere in the darkness a yard engine coughed and puffed importantly. All about, hurrying and slipping in and out, ghostly forms flitted in the half light. Shouts rang up and down the line, lanterns danced recklessly; strange oaths echoed, and the businesslike stir of moving men.

At one side among the network of tracks were ragged little groups of onlookers from the town, idly out of place in this stir and bustle. A horse wrangler—a ragged, dirty, half-grown boy—scampered up the tracks with a string of spotted Shetlands. They were breaking out and unloading one of the stock cars below. One could hear Jeff cursing the men down there, and vaguely see the little bunches of horses and ponies led down the runways.

From above, where a string of flats laden with canvas-shrouded cages and chariots faded off into the gray uncertainty of the morning, there came the steady rumble of the stake wagons pulling out for "the lot."

Another bunch of horses—heavy grays this time, for the big wagons—went by on the run, and other bunches, the heavy work harness rattling and jingling as they passed at a trot. Everywhere was hurry, and low, hoarse voices.

The light was growing stronger every minute now, and suddenly the watching crowd gasped with unmistakable expectancy. Half-awed whispers passed along, and there was a little eddying back and forward again. Necks craned. And then, out of the gray-green shadows of the tangle of box cars below, there came the clank of heavy chains, and a ponderous shape loomed up in a slow swing.

Another followed, swaying up majestically, and more—a whole string of them—coming up the tracks with a little shuffle; and beside the first and biggest—almost beneath it, one would say—was a little, dark figure, a mere pygmy beside the monster shapes moving up so steadily and quietly.

The procession went by rapidly, the clanking chains and the giant gray shadows fading off into the gloom again. In all this unreal, ghostly array of flitting, hurrying forms of men, and horses, and things, this group alone did not seem to be in haste, and yet it passed swiftly, fading off into the dim indistinctness of the morning. Allison was bringing up "the bulls."

Allison and the bulls—to showmen elephants are always "bulls"—swung rapidly off toward the lot. Often the little man talked to his charges as they marched. But this morning it was only to himself he muttered in his red anger.

"Getting old, eh?" he growled. "Old!

Yes, I *am* gettin' old. But who got it? *Benson.* That's who." He swung his hook gently into Susie's big hide, and headed her into a cross street. "Twenty-five years—I wasn't old eighteen years ago, when I took Susie out of the fit of sulks she killed Morey in; five seasons back I wasn't stiff and slow when I pulled the herd out of that Harrisburg fire; nor in the wreck in Wisconsin last year. Allison was all right then. But now *I'm gettin' old,* and he has to bawl me out before the whole gang. Blast him! I got more work in me now than Edward P. Benson, for all his cussin' of me."

For a while he strode along, muttering, scarce heeding directions. The show folk have a sixth sense that leads them to the lot—the show grounds—unerringly, and seldom does a wagon or a bunch of performers go astray in the shortest route to it.

"Old!" groaned the little fellow, his face twitching. "I wonder if I *am* getting old. If anything should happen to me——" Fear of being dropped had driven out his anger and bitterness. Old! The thought rankled and galled in his narrow bosom. These gypsies of the sawdust know too well the one big motto of circusdom—"The show must go on." Whatever befalls individuals, the rule comes first of all. The show must go on.

"I got t' keep up," he murmured to himself, terrified now. "I got t' keep spry, or they'll drop me. And I got to start savin'; I'd die if I had t' quit the show. I don' *know* anything else. And they've got no use for old men. We'll just keep a-goin' and a-goin' till—— Hi, Susie! Delphi, Cleo, Hamlet! Swing in there!" He jerked his hook into the snaky snout beside him sharply, and swung the mountain of flesh to one side and out upon the swarming lot.

A dull, sickly red sun crept up over the houses and trees to the east, and before it the fog clouds rolled up and disappeared rapidly. Already the "razorbacks" out on the lot sweated copiously as they drove stakes and stretched canvas. The air was heavy and breathless, and the lifting fog gave the whole scene the effect of a mirage, or a vision from some Arabian Nights' tale.

The wagons streamed in steadily now, and the "cook top" was almost up. "Pop" Sullivan—the horse boss—hurried by with a nod, leading a string of ring horses. "Skinny" Dixon paused long enough to borrow "the makin's," and went on across to his animals on the site of the "menagerie top." Allison watched it all unhappily as he wrestled with his problem.

The day grew hotter and hotter, and the air was heavy and still. The parade passed, and dinner, and the matinée performance, where the bulls went through their turns listlessly, and the show drew to a sweaty, breathless close under the scorching heat of the big top. Every one was suffering and complaining. Even the men of the ticket wagons, whom nothing is supposed to disturb, growled; and a general sigh of thanksgiving went up as the day drew into darkness.

Every one with "Benson's Big Consolidated" remembers that night, and will go on remembering until they play their last "date," and move into perpetual "winter quarters."

There was a big run on the ticket wagons. When the evening show began, the "reserveds" were a solid block of craning, curious heads, and the "blues" at either end were packed with "yaps" to the topmost stringers. The "big top" was *full,* and seating capacity in the big top is a variable quantity, almost as elastic as the limits of a circus crowd.

It was hotter than the day, if anything. About dark a low rumble of thunder began, with fitful flashes of lightning and little puffs of wind, hot like breaths from a blast furnace. The "Old Man"—the manager—was worried at the promised storm; turns and acts were cut recklessly to shorten the show, that they might get loaded before the worst of it burst. Almost before the crowd was in, the "kid show," and everything else but a few dens and the main top were down, and on their way to the train, and at half past eight the ticket wagon closed its window, checked

up, and followed in the van of the others.

The turns—those that hadn't been cut—snapped through like clockwork, and the show was half over before the storm burst. The ponies and dogs worked fast—too fast for a good, clean turn on regular nights—the Nelsons' act went quickly, Flornoy's high-bar turn and the Dip of Death, two-ring acts with the horses, the Jap tumblers.

Then Lillian Colby came on in her bareback feature in one ring; that French couple, the Fleurys, had the other in their sensational riding number; and Allison and his bulls were on in the center. As the ringmaster's whistle blew for them it seemed like a signal to the storm outside.

A big clap of thunder shook the ground as the big brutes sidled into the ring, and a flash of lightning lit up everything in one great, blinding glare. Then the wind came in a long, raging scream, and the big top and side walls began to flap and belly dangerously. The thunder crashed again and again, and at intervals came that blinding, withering glare—the fierce cannonading of the aroused elements, which had lain waiting all through that breathless day.

When the first puff of wind came, it seemed as if the whole thing would go in all at once. People rose in their seats, and started leaving. The "kinkers" and horsemen at the entrance looked worried, and Pop Sullivan—who had brought in Miss Colby's horse—shook his head, and looked anxiously down the line at Allison. All animals hate a storm, and the bulls are always hard to manage at such a time. A little thunder and lightning seems to drive them into an almost hysterical fit of nerves, and they require double care and attention in bad weather.

Allison's brutes were nervous and excited. They went on with their act after the shudder at that first roar, but at every crash of thunder they flinched and sidled; he barely held them together by sheer strength of will. Once he glanced anxiously across at Lillian Colby, in the next ring; there was danger there, he knew.

"Old," he muttered, slipping in and out among the swaying forms. He had clung to the thought all day. "I got t' take care of myself." Outwardly cool and alert, inside he alternately burned and chilled with the strain. This was the test—a grueling third degree of his loyalty. Calamity towered over him. A step aside, and out of the way——

"I got t' take care of myself," he whined under his breath, as he plied his iron. "If I stick I'm done—done. An' nothin'll stop 'em now, anyways." That cold fear of being dropped from the show oppressed him.

He licked his lips, and glanced across again at Miss Colby in the other ring. It might injure her—this accident he felt coming; and the crowds in the "reserveds"? Some of them would be hurt, of course; the show would have to pay. And the bulls——

"Hi, Susie!" he shouted. "Hup!" Another flash of lightning blinded him. And suddenly Allison *knew*. "I can't! I can't!" he groaned, in soul anguish. "I got t' go on." After all, he didn't make so much difference. And the show *must go on*. A new relief wiping out his terror of the future, he cried out harshly: "Up you go, boys! Clio, Delphi, Hamlet! Sharp there!" He put them through briskly.

Rapidly they edged through their turns, wheeling back into line, grunting and squealing. The storm seemed to set everything—people and animals as well—on edge. Many of the former were leaving. But a full half stuck to their seats, as if just morbidly waiting to see something happen. And it did.

Allison had them pyramided—the big, gray, unwieldy brutes in a great pile in the center of the ring—when everything seemed to go smash all at once. There came a great clash of thunder, like the clap of doom, and a flash of lightning so vivid it blinded, even inside the big tent.

The next moment, as the crowd went to its feet as one man, there came a great, ripping tear, and the twelve-foot side wall at the far end came in as if some giant hand had punched it with a

monster finger. With it came dashes of rain, and a blast of wind that sent the chandeliers swinging, and almost lifted off the big top.

For a minute—just one short, breathless moment—everything was still as death. Then the crowd began to melt out into the night with cries and screams. The two acts in the end rings stopped simultaneously, and the shivering horses were hurried away, while the performers sought the shelter of the dressing room helplessly. But Allison——

At the first blast of wind and the flash, his brutes seemed to go stark, raving mad, and only circus men know the demon that lurks in a frantic elephant. With a scream of mingled terror and excitement, Allison's pyramid came to pieces. Allison's yell was almost as loud as he wheeled the struggling brutes into a circle, and started them against their surging wills around the ring.

By a miracle, Billy Howe—who had the band—saw the danger, and kept his men playing furiously, and for perhaps two minutes Allison kept those frantic, crazed brutes milling. He couldn't have held them together in any other way.

The crowd, in one mad rush, had almost emptied the tent in that time, and the danger to them was nearly over. Then came the second crash, and the scream of the wind again, and Susie—who wears leg chains for life since she killed her first two trainers—wheeled swiftly from the circle, swept Allison across the ring, and against the big center pole with one swing of her trunk, and the whole herd swept through the tent side, barriers, seats, side walls and all—out into the storm and night. But Allison had saved lives in that two minutes. No one was hurt.

Jerry and Edward Benson—the Old Man—found the herd ten miles away in the fields at dawn, exhausted and calmed down. They hadn't done much damage in their flight across country, and he squared up, and the show moved on.

But poor old Allison—who seems old, somehow, though he is barely forty-five—couldn't move on.

"I'm done," he told Dixon, who went to see him in the hospital. "Old, worn out—*done*. I thought it all over that night in the ring. Knew this was coming. I had t' either let 'em run or take the risk of puttin' myself out fer good." He flashed Skinny a quick glance, keen with terror of the future. "It's *hell*, Skinny—to be old." Even the animal man, used to the rough play of his jungle-bred pets, sensed the horrible truth in his whisper.

"But the show must go on—an' they ain't got room fer dead timber. Some one else'll take the bulls, and it'll go on and on. The worst of it is I *can't* die. My leg'll git well, an' I'll hobble around, an' live, an' live—— It's awful!"

Dixon had to leave him, then, to catch a train, but his heart was heavy when he thought of that look in Allison's eyes.

For the next few weeks, Allison lay in a clean, white bed in the most palatial quarters he had ever occupied, fretting constantly of his charges, and consumed with lonesomeness for the only home he had ever known—an ephemeral thing of canvas and sawdust and spangles.

They were showing somewhere in Indiana, when he came back. The Old Man had been telegraphing all day, and he passed the word that there was to be a sort of reception for Allison.

The evening performance was just about to begin. Every one waited about in the dressing room, the horses and bulls with Jerry on one side, the kinkers standing about chatting, and old Benson lingering nervously in the background. Suddenly Pop Sullivan slipped in between the canvas walls, his face shining.

"Allison's back," he chirruped, and held back the curtain.

And then, shorter and grayer than before, but beaming all over with delight at his return, Allison hobbled in on crutches, and came dazedly down the waiting line. As his eye ran down the row of welcoming faces, a light like

the sudden burst of an afternoon sun on a gray, autumn day broke across his grizzled face, and with it the calm of a great peace. He was halfway down the line before the Old Man, whom he hadn't noticed until now, stepped forward. Every one stopped and looked at him.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he began huskily, "the crowd is waiting for the performance to begin, and we can't hold 'em much longer, so I'll be brief. What I want to say is that Mr. Allison is now *ours*. He belongs to us, and he stays with the show always. I have here a—er—— Oh, here, take it, Allison; it's from the whole bunch," he wound up, with a rush, handing over the gold watch the show had bought for the old trainer.

Then, as Allison hobbled forward, bewildered in the flickering light of the chandeliers, and the strange shapes and shadows of man and beast, the boss added laughingly: "Let me present to you all, the only and original 'Allison of the Bulls.'"

As he came opposite his old charges, Jerry—with dancing eyes—gave them a word. Ten snaky trunks curled up to the broad foreheads in salute, and a long trumpeting, that made the waiting crowd inside shiver in happy anticipation, swept down the line.

And so Allison came into his own again.

LANGUAGE THROWN AWAY

JOHN P. MADISON, of New Orleans, was showing a friend the sights of the city, and finally took him into a famous café. Madison called a waiter, and gave a long supper order in English, but the raven-haired servitor did not understand a word of it. He merely bowed, shook his head in the negative, and stood in a listening attitude.

Madison speaks French as well as he does English, and is proud of it. In an impressive tone, he reeled off about a yard and a half of the "Monsieur" stuff. Again the waiter did not understand. Madison reeled off the French again, and for the third time the waiter looked about as intelligent as a clod.

At that moment the head waiter, passing by, made this clarifying remark:

"There's no use in talking to that fellow in French. He understands it not at all. He's a Greek."

TY COBB'S CORRESPONDENCE

TY COBB, Detroit's star player, gets as much mail every day as a member of Congress. Letters come to him from girls who admire his style of beauty, from boys who study his style of batting, and from seasoned "fans." If he attempted to answer them all, his batting arm would soon be a wreck.

One morning, in Chicago, he was examining his mail. Out of the fifty-odd communications before him he took one.

"This letter," he said, "is the only one that gets a rise out of me. I'm going to write to this old fellow."

He passed the letter to a friend, who read:

DERE MARSTER COBB: How you kumin long? My rispecks to Madom Cobb. Pleas sir rite me a line. Dese niggers down here in Misisipi says I dont know you and I wants to show dem yore letter. Yores rispeckful, BEN JACKSON.

INTELLECTUAL GAMBLING

Albert Whiting Fox, who occasionally electrifies New York chess circles by his brilliant game, used to lay up pocket money when he was a student in Paris by betting on his games with anybody who had the nerve to challenge him.

The Triangle Cupid

By Charles Alden Seltzer

Hasn't a cowboy a perfect right to be good-looking and to ride a single-cinch saddle, if he wants to? Not according to the owner of the Triangle Ranch. He might have been forgiven his good looks but the "center-fire" saddle was too much.

CYRUS HARTLEY, owner of the Triangle Ranch, had sat long at his desk beside the open window, watching his men. For an hour they had been riding in, capable punchers, addicted to the double-cinch saddle and the grass rope—mostly Texans. They came singly, riding down to the corral gate, dropping from their ponies and disappearing into the bunk house.

An hour before, the cook had struck the deep-toned bell to summon them. All day they had traveled, riding the range among the cattle, looking for strays, driving in the weary and the sick for treatment. After a supper, a smoke, and a talk in the cool of the evening, they would seek their bunks, and be ready to go forth again at dawn.

They came from all directions. There were twenty of them. Hartley fell to telling them off mentally as they rode in to the corral gate. He sat perfectly quiet until he had seen nineteen of them come in. Then he turned and looked out over the plains, into the slumberous haze that had come down from the mountains. Far out toward "Old Baldy" he saw a traveling dust cloud that told him of the coming of the twentieth man.

An hour later the latter reached the corral gate. He was tall, lean-faced, lithe, and active. Davis, the foreman, had told him that the man knew his business. Yet, in spite of the foreman's commendatory words, Hartley did not like the man. For one thing, his name was Dexter—Lon Dexter—and Hartley had once known a man of that name who had violated a confidence, and distrust of his kind still lingered in Hartley's mind. And then the young man was rather better looking than Hartley thought a puncher should be.

And he rode a "center fire," or single cinch, saddle. This told Hartley plainer than words that the young man had come from the North, and long ago he had become suspicious of the North-country cowman. He might have forgiven the young man his good looks—that was a thing that could not be avoided. But there was absolutely no logic in a center-fire saddle, and—well—Hartley felt irritated.

And there was another disturbing thought. His daughter——

But the young man was at the door; Hartley became aware that he was standing just inside the threshold, smiling.

"I've brought a letter," said the young man, reaching out a hand. "I was ridin' close to Dry Bottom, an' I thought I'd just stop in to the post office to see if there was anything. I got this." He stepped over and placed a letter on Hartley's desk. Then deliberately he stepped to the door.

"I'm obliged to you," said Hartley grudgingly.

The young man turned, flashing a grin at the owner.

"Don't mention it." He went out, leaving Hartley to frown over the letter. Hartley heard the whiz of his spurs as he departed. He grimaced, his lips sneering.

"A lot too fresh," he said.

A little later, his head was bent thoughtfully over the letter. It was postmarked "Cheyenne, Wyoming." Hartley was a long time deciphering the crude and picturesque chirography, but finally it was done.

FRIEND CY: I expect you'll remember that about a year ago you wrote to me, tellin' me about wantin' your daughter to marry my boy Dave. Now, that pitcher you sent has got him pretty nearly flustered. He's dead loco about marryin' her. Says he's comin' down soon to fix it up. Of course I don't know whether your girl will take a shine to him. But that's up to you. You wanted it. I'm dependin' on you doin' what you kin to make it a hitch for him.

Your friend,
HARVEY SEFTON.

Hartley laid the letter aside, and chuckled with satisfaction. "I'll shore do what I kin to make it a hitch," he said reflectively. "Any boy of Harve's is good enough for me. An' I reckon he'll be good enough for Ellen." He meditated a moment, and then tucked the letter into a pocket.

Later, at the supper table, it appeared again. He laid it on the table beside him, taking a preliminary glance at his daughter before introducing the subject about which he had been thinking since sundown.

Miss Hartley was tall and graceful. There was about her a lingering air of quiet confidence that had always disconcerted Hartley more than a little. He saw about her certain signs that reminded him of her mother—who had died some years before. And he had always yielded deference to Mrs. Hartley. It was, therefore, with a qualm of misgiving that he introduced the subject.

"Ellen," he said casually, "it's been a good many years since your mother died."

The young woman looked up slowly. Usually her father had very little to say regarding his departed mate. But mention of her mother served to bring a sudden moisture to the young woman's eyes.

"It is ten years, daddy," she returned.

Hartley gave some little attention to the inside of his teacup. Then he resumed, putting a little concern into his voice.

"It's been awful lonesome without her," he said.

Miss Hartley looked up. The expression of her father's face was lugubrious. Her eyes narrowed inquiringly. It was the first time that Hartley had ever complained of being lonesome. The expression of inquiry in the young woman's eyes had suddenly become suspicion.

"I wouldn't say that it is as lonesome now as it was immediately following mother's death," she said quietly.

"Well, no," he admitted, "mebbe not. But then you was younger, an' noticed it more. But it's a heap lonesome."

His insistence had fanned the spark of suspicion that his words had brought into existence. She leaned forward, looking searchingly at him.

"Father," she said evenly, "what is it? Are you thinking of getting married again?"

He laughed. "Well, now," he said; "I ain't thinkin' of gettin' married again. It's the other way around. I've been worryin' some about you."

"Oh!"

"You've got to get married some time," he continued. "That's why I've been talkin'. You see, I've got a man for you."

He looked across the table and met her eyes. They were fixed upon his own steadily.

"You've got a what?" she questioned evenly.

"A man," he returned, his gaze shifting uneasily. "It's Harvey Sefton's boy, from up in Wyoming. I reckon you've heard me talk of him?"

"I have," she returned steadily. "But what made you think that I would marry him?"

"Well," he returned gravely, "I don't

know what made me think of it. But I've been thinkin' of it for a long time. I've got a letter here from Harve. He says his boy's comin' down here to get acquainted with you. He's seen the pitcher I sent up, an' he's some stuck on it."

Patiently and laboriously he read the letter to her. Then he laid it beside his plate and regarded her anxiously.

"I reckon you won't throw him down?" he questioned.

Her eyes met his again. "I don't think that I shall marry him," she said quietly. "You see," she went on, smiling a little at his apparent disappointment, "I have already promised to marry some one."

Hartley sat very erect in his chair, his face paling a little. "Who have you promised?" he inquired shortly.

Her eyes drooped a very little. "Lon Dexter," she said. "We have been engaged for a month."

For a full minute Hartley stared straight before him. Then his face slowly reddened, and presently he looked up at her, dull anger shining in his eyes.

"I reckon there ain't no daughter of mine goin' to marry Lon Dexter!" he declared. He rose and paced the floor of the room. "Why," he continued, "he's only been here two months, an' you don't know anything about him. I'm firin' him to-morrow!" he concluded shortly.

Miss Hartley caught his gaze as he passed her.

"If you do," she said, "I shall go away with him. We shall be married, anyway."

Hartley halted. "That's the way for a daughter to act toward her father, I suppose?" he demanded coldly.

Miss Hartley arose and swept toward the kitchen. "A father has no right to engage his daughter to a man she has never seen," she said, as the door slammed behind her.

Hartley did not "fire" Dexter the next day—nor the next. Perhaps he had considered his daughter's threat. At any rate, Dexter rode forth to his work as formerly, meeting Miss Hartley down at the entrance to the box cañon, near a grove of fir balsams—where they had met often.

Miss Hartley had fully intended that Dexter should never hear a word about Dave Sefton, but on a day nearly a week after the talk with her father she had apprised him of the situation. She had expected that the young man would exhibit emotion over the news, but to her surprise he appeared unmoved. Instead, he smiled mildly when she had finished.

"An' so you ain't anxious to marry a man you've never seen?" he questioned.

"I am going to marry the man of my choice!" she declared spiritedly.

"There's a heap of sense in that," he returned. "Did I hear you say that your dad said this Dave Sefton had money?"

"I expect that is why dad is so determined that I shall marry him," she admitted reluctantly.

"An' you ain't carin' for his money?" A pause. He laughed. "You're right. Money won't buy everything. I'm some tickled that it won't buy you."

She gravely turned a small rock with the tip of her shoe, regarding it steadily. There was much concern in her voice.

"Father is very determined," she said.

He smiled widely. "But you ain't goin' to marry any man but me?" he questioned. "If a man come here callin' himself Dave Sefton, are you sure you wouldn't hook up to him?"

"Why, Lon!" she exclaimed reprovingly.

He kissed her delightedly. "I'm goin' right up to see your dad," he said.

Half an hour later he rode up to the door of the ranch house, and dismounted. Hartley was at his desk, and looked up as the puncher entered.

"I've come to talk to you about Ellen," said the young man.

Hartley stiffened with a sudden anger. "You're wastin' your time," he declared. "Ellen ain't goin' to get hitched up to no puncher. Leastways,

if she does, that puncher ain't goin' to be Lon Dexter."

Dexter smiled blandly. "Of course, I'm workin' for you," he said. "You might fire me, as you've threatened to do. But if you do that Ellen says she'll go away with me. Then I'd get her, anyway. Now, I ain't wantin' you to fire me, nor I ain't takin' advantage of you by runnin' off with your girl. What I'm wantin' to do is to get your consent to marry her in the regular way. I'm goin' to get it. I'm goin' to marry her. You're goin' to give me your consent. Do you get me?"

Hartley sneered. "I reckon I get you. An' I'm tellin' you that I've got more respect for you now than I had five minutes ago. You've been man enough to say that you won't take any mean advantage. I'm thankin' you for that. But I'm sayin' this: You ain't never goin' to get my consent. I've promised Ellen to a man up in Wyoming. His name is Dave Sefton."

Dexter's smile was still bland. "Now we're understandin' one another. It's got to go to a show-down. I thought mebbe I'd get your consent right off. But I've been mistaken." He took a step nearer, speaking earnestly. "You say you ain't goin' to fire me. I ain't goin' to run off with your girl. But I'm bettin' that some day I'll get your consent. I've got a book here which says that I've got a thousand dollars in the bank over at Dry Bottom. I'm puttin' it against a thousand of your money that I marry Ellen with your consent."

Hartley arose from his chair. "I reckon you've made a bet, young man," he said. "I'll never win a thousand easier. Who do you reckon will hold the stakes?"

"I wouldn't want no better stakeholder than Ellen."

"Correct," agreed Hartley. He turned to the young man, grinning. "When you askin' me for her?" he questioned.

Dexter was going out of the door. But now he turned. "There ain't to be any time limit," he said; "but I'll bother you about that thousand sooner than you expect."

II.

Upon the afternoon of a day a week later Hartley sat at an open window of the office, watching a dust cloud out on the plains. Above the droning of the flies—that persisted in settling upon the bald spot on the crown of his head—he could hear Miss Ellen singing.

He smiled, leaning comfortably back in his chair, keeping a languid eye upon the approaching dust cloud. In half an hour he made out the figure of a man on a pony. A little later he saw the man ride up to the corral gate, dismount, pull the saddle from the pony's back and the bit from its mouth, and turn the animal loose in the corral.

Hartley had seen that the man was a stranger. Therefore, he sat erect, anger stiffening him and driving away the lassitude that had oppressed him. His was an elastic hospitality, but it did not allow a stranger the freedom of the corral without invitation. However, before he had time to object, the corral gates were again closed, and he saw that the stranger was approaching the office. But Hartley still sat stiffly in his chair.

Presently he heard a step on the wide gallery, the whiz of spurs, and the stranger stood before him.

He was a tall, angular man, with deep-set eyes, rimmed by lashless lids, that were narrowed to slits. One corner of his mouth was twisted upward into a satyric curve, the other drooped sneeringly. A scarf of lurid color sagged from his throat; a pair of leather chaps adorned his legs; an extra wide-brimmed hat sat rakishly on his head; two heavy six-shooters sagged from the belt at his waist—their holsters tied suggestively down. Altogether, he was a man of forbidding appearance.

Hartley had seen such men in his time, and he recognized this man for what he was—a contemptible egotist, who prided himself upon his ability with a weapon; insolent, merciless, shiftless, but withal dangerous.

He stood for a moment in the doorway, squinting at Hartley through half-

closed eyes. Then he smiled, with what he probably intended to be cordiality, but which, to Hartley, seemed a sort of mild insolence.

"I'm Dave Sefton," he said.

Never had Hartley been nearer succumbing to complete mental panic than at that moment. All stiffness was gone from him; his chin sagged to his chest with the relaxation of the muscles of his jaws, and he sat, half stunned, looking at the man out of blurred, vacuous eyes.

"You're which?" he asked feebly.

"I reckon you didn't git me," said the man. "I'm Dave Sefton. Come over from Cheyenne. Got here this mornin'. Goin' to git hooked up with your daughter—what's her name?"

"Ellen," hesitatingly returned Hartley. He arose, smiling wanly. "But I didn't expect you so soon. Set down." He waved the man to a chair.

The latter dropped into it, leaned back, and spread his legs out widely. "That heifer of yourn anywheres about?" he questioned.

Hartley had nearly recovered from the first shock. He surveyed the man with frank displeasure. "My daughter is in the house," he said coldly.

Sefton smiled. "Trot her out," he commanded. "I'm aimin' to see if she looks anything like her pitcher."

Hartley reddened angrily. "I don't reckon that I'll trot her out," he returned. "An' I ain't allowin' that she's a heifer. That there palaver of yourn don't sound like you was goin' very strong on nuptials. An' if you're Harvey Sefton's son I'm tellin' you right now that you ain't a heap like your dad."

Sefton unburdened himself of a staccato laugh that bristled the hair on Hartley's head. There was no humor in the laugh. It was harsh, dry, and shallow. Words followed it.

"I ain't aimin' to be like the ol' maverick," he said. "He ought to have cashed in long ago. Been makin' the bluff that he's got more dust than ever come out of Frisco. But it's all in his brain box. He ain't got money enough to grubstake a road runner—an' that there bird ain't exactly no glutton."

He now pushed his chin forward suggestively, speaking in a low, confidential tone. "But I reckon your girl's got wads of money," he said. "The ol' man was tellin' me that you've been saltin' it for her for a right smart while. If that's so, I'm shinin' up to her rapid. We'll hit the breeze back to Dry Bottom an' hook up double so fast it'll make you dizzy."

Hartley had settled back in his chair, and was now watching Sefton with a cold, sneering smile. He had never been accounted slow, but now his gun had been, it seemed, magically produced, so swiftly did it show in his hand. And into the sudden silence came his voice, hard, bitter, and writhing with repressed anger.

"I reckon you will hit the breeze," he said; "but it'll be farther than Dry Bottom. It'll be clear back to Wyoming. An' you'll hit it alone. If I thought a daughter of mine would hitch up to a scarecrow like you I'd have her chopped up in the feed machine an' fed to the hawgs. She'd be better off in the end." He swung the muzzle of his pistol upward, poising it. "An' I reckon I 'savvy.' You've wandered down here thinkin' to come in for some of Cyrus Hartley's dust. But you've bumped in wrong. I used to be a heap tickled with your dad, but you kin hit the trail right back to Cheyenne an' tell him for me that if he's got into the habit of raisin' things like you an' callin' them sons he'd better shuffle the cards for a new deal. You goin' now, or are you waitin' till I perforate your durned hide?"

Sefton arose, sneering. "I reckon I'm goin'. But I'm tellin' you this: When I tell the ol' man what you've said about him he'll come down here an' scatter you all over the country. Savvy?"

"I ain't addin' nothin' to what I've just said," returned Hartley coldly. "An' you ain't sayin' nothin' more. I'd admire for to shoot your dad for bein' responsible for you."

Sefton hesitated on the threshold, his lips opening for a reply.

"I ain't tellin' you again," snapped Hartley. "It's only two hundred feet to where your pony is. You're goin' out an' ketch him an' get his saddle on in just three minutes. When you go out I'm gettin' my rifle. Then I'm goin' to set by the window an' watch you hit the breeze. You goin'?"

Sefton went hurriedly out. Half an hour later Hartley sat at the window, his lips straightened grimly, a rifle across his knees. Far out on the plains a dust cloud rose, traveling always away from the Triangle Ranch.

III.

For two days following the arrival and departure of Dave Sefton, Hartley said no word to any one concerning him.

Down at the entrance to the box cañon, Lon Dexter and Miss Hartley continued to add threads to the fabric of their romance.

On an afternoon, two days following that on which Dave Sefton had departed, Dexter and Miss Hartley sat on a flat rock at the head of the box cañon. The young woman withdrew her hand from Dexter's just long enough to pass it hesitatingly over her forehead. Under the hand the forehead wrinkled into a frown.

"I don't know what has come over dad," she said.

"I ain't seen him," returned Dexter. "What's he up to now?"

"That's just it, he isn't doing anything. Just sitting in the office, moping and looking out of the window. Nothing has happened to make him act that way. There has been some rain, there is plenty of grass, and there are no signs of rustlers. But there he sits in the office, saying nothing, and looking out of the window all day. He scarcely notices me at meals."

"It couldn't be that he's in trouble of some kind?" suggested Dexter.

"I don't know. Perhaps something has occurred. The other day while I was working in the parlor I heard loud talking, and it seemed that I heard dad threaten some one. A little later I saw a man leave in something of a hurry. He was a stranger; I don't remember to have seen him around here before."

Dexter pulled her closer to him, and smiled mildly.

"Don't you think I ought to go an' see your dad again?" he questioned.

"I am afraid it wouldn't do any good," she returned despairingly.

"You can't always tell. Mebbe him sittin' so long that way means that he's been thinkin' things over. Mebbe he's decided that Lon Dexter wouldn't be such a bad runnin' mate for you, after all."

"Well," she said hopefully, "you can try."

Dexter arose. "That's just what I'm goin' to do," he said. "Mebbe you'd better come along," he added. "You see, I happened to be ridin' the Dry Bottom trail one day, an' I met a man who said he'd been over here to see your dad. He was some riled over the way he said your dad had treated him. Said your dad had run him off."

"I suppose that was the man I heard dad talking to," she oberved. "Did he say what he'd been to see dad about?"

Dexter grinned. "He sure did. Said he'd come over to get hooked up to Ellen Hartley. That his name was Dave Sefton."

"Oh!" she exclaimed. "And you say he was angry? Maybe dad has changed his mind. Do hurry!" she urged as Dexter delayed mounting.

Some time later they dismounted in front of the ranch house and entered the office door. Hartley sat at the window, his chin in his hands. He heard the noise of their entrance, and turned, confronting them, his right hand falling swiftly to his pistol butt. But when he saw who they were, his face reddened with embarrassment, and he grinned guiltily.

"I reckon I'm plum' nervous," he said hesitatingly. "I thought it was——"

"Thought it was Dave Sefton again," laughed Dexter. "I heard you'd run him off."

Hartley gasped his astonishment. "How'd you know that?" he questioned.

Dexter grinned. "Met a man on the Dry Bottom trail the other day. He told me his name was Dave Sefton, an' that you'd run him off. Said he was figgerin' on sendin' up to Cheyenne for his dad to come down and make you eat your gun."

Hartley flared up. "He said that, did he?" he shouted, a sudden rage overcoming him. "Why, the durned old ossified scarecrow! If him or his old man——"

"Seein' that things has turned out this way," interposed Dexter mildly, "I'm willin' to call off that bet we made. I wouldn't want to take advantage, now that there ain't any one around here but me who wants to marry Ellen. You get your thousand if I get Ellen. Do you get me?"

Hartley sighed with relief. He could not help comparing Dexter's magnanimity with Sefton's greed.

"I reckon I get you," he said heartily. "I'm sure some tickled that you're actin' this way. If it was ten thousand I wouldn't let a scarecrow like that stand in the way of Ellen's happiness."

"We're travelin' to Dry Bottom right now," interrupted Dexter. "We ain't goin' to take any chances on old Sefton comin' down here an' spoilin' things."

He smiled at Hartley and bowed to Miss Ellen, taking her hand and leading her to the door. Ten minutes later Hartley saw them riding over the plains toward Dry Bottom.

IV.

At noon of a day two weeks later, Hartley was at his desk looking over his accounts when a shadow darkened the doorway. He looked up, to see a man of about his own age standing before him.

"Hello, Cy!" said the man. He grinned, seeing Hartley's blank stare. "You ain't thinkin' to know me," he continued. "I'm Harve Sefton, your old side kicker."

Hartley's pistol leaped suddenly from its holster and was swung to a menacing level. His voice, writhing and malignant, accompanied the movement.

"Come down here to make me eat my gun?" he demanded, his eyes glittering malevolently.

"You ol' fool," said Sefton. Then his jaws dropped. "I've lost," he added dolorously.

Hartley sneered. "What you lost?" he asked. "That scarecrow you sent down here?"

"Five thousand dollars," said Sefton. "That boy is shore some slick."

"He sure is," sneered Hartley ironically. "But he wasn't slick enough to marry my daughter. I reckon you got him back all safe an' sound?"

"Got him back?" queried Sefton, puzzled. "I don't think I've got him back —yet. I don't know what in blazes you're talkin' about. When I was comin' down your corral fence I saw a man that looked a heap like him. Heard another man call him 'Dexter.'"

Hartley's eyes were glazed with incomprehension. "Dexter? Let me get you right. What do you know about Dexter?"

"That there man I seen is my son," returned Sefton. "He come down here three months ago, bettin' me five thousand dollars that he'd marry your daughter without you knowin' who he was. I expect he's done it."

"That feller got hooked up to Ellen two weeks ago," admitted Hartley.

"You ol' fool," grinned Sefton. "Then I lose the five thousand. I agreed to give him three months. It's up to-day. I'm thinkin' that boy has had some fun, like he said he would." He came forward, shaking hands with Hartley. "But I reckon there's somethin' happened that ain't come out yet," he added. "Who's the man you been takin' for my boy?"

Hartley arose and walked to the door, calling: "Dexter!"

Presently that young man came to the door and leaned against the jamb, grinning at the two men.

"Dexter," said Hartley, "your daddy wants to know about that scarecrow

which come down here sayin' he was Dave Sefton. Do you reckon to know anything about him?"

"Well, now," returned the young man, "that there scarecrow cost me a right smart piece of that five thousand that I've got comin' from dad. But he was worth it. It wouldn't have been no fun, comin' down here to get married to a girl that was picked out for you." He turned, speaking to his father. "Miss Ellen took a shine to me right off, dad," he said. "But her father——"

"I reckon that'll do, young man," interrupted Hartley. "You ain't got no call to tell any fambly secrets. If I was you I'd go right in the house an' talk it over with Ellen."

An hour later, the two men saw Ellen and the young man walking toward a spring at the base of a low hill. Just at the instant that their gaze rested upon the young couple Sefton—some time Dexter—drew Ellen toward him and kissed her.

The fathers looked up at the same instant. Their eyes met, a slow moisture glistening in them.

"I reckon we're a couple of fools," observed Hartley.

Sefton nodded.

ANOTHER WAY TO BORROW MONEY

A STRANGER blew into a town in New Mexico, and, when he recovered consciousness, found himself in a poker game, where he gazed into the militant face of the dealer.

"In this town," the dealer was saying, "all flushes are barred. We don't play a flush."

"Is that the rule all over town?" queried the stranger.

"It is," said the dealer.

The game progressed without special incident until seven o'clock in the morning, at which time the stranger found himself holding four aces. It developed later that one of his opponents had gathered together four kings. They bet all the money, all the jewelry, and all the clothing they had.

"This hand of mine," the stranger finally said, "looks good to me. Will you fellows give me two hours to raise more money?"

They said they would.

The stranger went to the only bank in the town, and roosted on the steps until the president went in. The president had sat in the game for a short while the night before.

"I want to borrow twenty thousand dollars," the stranger explained to the bank president.

"What collateral have you?" asked the money man.

For reply, the stranger showed him the four aces, which he had concealed in his breast pocket. The president's comment was equally brief. He handed the stranger the twenty thousand.

This story sounds like a dream too good to be true, but a politician from the Southwest told it—and politicians never lie.

STATESMEN AND SPORTS

If you want to be a United States Senator from Texas, you must first qualify as a dead-game sport. Charlie Culberson goes to the ball games every day in Washington, and Joe Bailey is kept busy refusing invitations to be a judge at horse shows in all parts of the country

The Finishing Touch

By Morgan Robertson

Author of "The Pirates," "When Jack Comes Home from Sea," Etc.

You see, Sammy's education wasn't altogether complete. He had learned a few things, to be sure, but he had never learned how to "get busy." Then stepfather comes home—a rough seaman, as thorough as he is just. Watch Sammy jump!

HE was born with a nature as simple and primitive as the physical conditions surrounding him, and endowed with a body so frail and delicate that he barely survived these conditions—which were of frost, and snow, and ice, with winter hurricanes straight from Greenland and summer fogs fed by the Gulf Stream to breed pneumonia and kindred diseases into stronger lungs than his.

But he survived to reach the age of eighteen, a tall, flat-chested, and weak-witted butt of the local school, who, while able to struggle along with the ordinary studies at the foot of the class, was yet so poorly endowed with the mathematical sense that he could only master the first four rules of arithmetic. Fractions and decimals were unsolvable mysteries to him. His name was Quinbey—first name John, later Jack.

He was of American birth, the only son of a fisherman, who had taken his smack to an isolated village on the Nova Scotian coast. Here the fisherman did well, and before the boy was half grown owned the finest cottage in the village—which he bought cheap because it was perched on the crest of the hill, exposed to every storm that blew, a nest that none but a sailor could live in. With increasing prosperity he installed a big base-burner, good for the anæmic boy, but bad for himself.

The boy rid himself of coughs and colds; but the father, changing from the chill and the wet of fishing to the warmth and ease of home life, contracted pneumonia and died, leaving the boy in possession of the house and the smack, but not enough ready money to last for a month.

Young Quinbey closed up the house, took in a partner with money, and went fishing for a season, at the end of which the partner—a shrewd business man—owned the smack.

The boy acquired a wonderful increase of health and strength, and a consuming love for a pretty girl of the village, a trader's daughter named Minnie, who repulsed him firmly and emphatically because of his poverty—for the house and base-burner were not desirable assets—and because of his weak mental and physical equipment.

But there is a school for weak mentality and physique—the Seven Seas. And to this school went John Quinbey, first, however, putting in one season on the Georges Bank, where, in a lucky craft, he made money. Richer than ever before in his life, he returned home, to try again for the heart and hand of Minnie, but found her married to the minister, a man as weak, flat-chested, and anæmic as he himself had been.

He reasoned crudely. He did not meet Minnie, but took stock and measure of the minister, a gentleman named Simpson; then, feeling his own expanding chest and enlarging muscles,

decided that Minnie would soon be a widow, and he a strong man with money; for he could work, and, having no vices, could save. So, for love of Minnie, he went back to sea, resolved to become a captain, resolved to save every cent he earned, and resolved to balk at no hardship that would lead him to success.

At Boston, he shipped before the mast as able seaman in a big deep-water ship. He was not an able seaman, nor did he become one on this voyage; it required several; but each one marked a steady advance in muscular strength, mental activity, and bank account; and, at the end of the fifth, he signed as boatswain—an able man who knew his work.

He was strong, broad-shouldered, and active; the slightly vacant look in his face that had come from his boyhood incapacity had changed to a frank stare that demanded consideration and respect. He seldom asked a question twice now—once was usually enough. He had a fist that could smash the panels of a door, a voice that he could not modulate to conversational tones—so used was he to sending it against the wind. He did not use tobacco, nor did he drink, for these things cost money, and he was thinking of Minnie, most precious of all things in the world.

At the end of each voyage he visited home, deposited the money he had brought, and waited in the street just long enough for a sight of Minnie, sweet and matronly, and for a sight of the minister, who was holding on to life with a remarkable tenacity. Then he would work his way to Boston, and sign again.

Soon he became a second mate, but never a first, nor a captain. His limitations in arithmetic prevented him from mastering navigation, a necessary acquirement in a first mate or a skipper, and he remained in the position he had reached, close to the sailors, but not of them; sharing their hardships and hard work—for with every reefing or furling match a second mate must go aloft with the men—standing watch with them, washing down decks with them, getting drenched to the skin as often as they, and differing from them only in increase of pay, cabin food, and a dryer bed to sleep in.

But the dryer bed preserved him from the rheumatism and pulmonary troubles that kill all sailors who do not drown, the better food preserved his now iron physique, and the increased pay went into the bank at home.

And so it continued until he was forty years old, when he went home to find Minnie a widow with a grown-up son—a fat, weak-chinned, pale-faced parody on manhood, who never had done a day's work in his life—a "mamma's boy," who was destined for the ministry.

The dark, seamy-faced man of storm and strength, of stress and strain, asked her again to be his wife. He asked her as he would have asked a sailor to sign articles; and the frightened little woman accepted in about the same spirit that would have influenced the sailor; but she made one condition—that he would educate her son for the ministry.

He agreed. Her husband had left her almost nothing, while Quinbey had about ten thousand dollars in the bank. From this he drew the expense of a four years' course at Andover; and, taking the youth to this famous theological college, arranged for his stay there in such a manner as would insure his completing the course—that is, he paid to the president for everything in advance, including, beside tuition and board, a moderate amount of spending money, and traveling expense home and back in vacation.

Then, with Sammy Simpson off his mind for four years at least, Quinbey returned, and married the woman he loved, feeling that he had now earned happiness and the right to remain on land—and smoke.

But he was not born for happiness, and did not recognize it when it came to him. He opened up his house on the hill, fired up the base-burner, and the two sat around it for a month, trying to assimilate each other; but they could not. He knew nothing of women; she

nothing of such men as him. He never smiled; and, when he joked, the joke was lost in the rumble and grumble of his voice. He caressed her with the gentleness of a grizzly fondling the hunter, and was nonplused and set back when she cried out in pain.

Afraid of him at first, she soon realized that he knew no better, and responded with the weapons of woman. The man, inured to cold and pain and fatigue, yet was sensitive as a child when it came to his feelings. When she learned this, she kept his nerves quivering with quiet smiles, soft and sarcastic little speeches, and deadening silences, the meaning of which did not strike him at the time because of his transparent frankness and honesty.

He became afraid of her; and she, following up her advantage, wheedled him out of money for clothes, which, though he could not see the need of them, he cheerfully gave her. He loved her devotedly; and, though he never smiled, yet he never frowned, nor spoke a harsh word to her.

But she thought him harsh, and, justified by the thought, continued the marital loot until she grew brave enough to demand a gold watch for Sammy's birthday.

This was not in his program, and he told her so. Then followed a lecture on the duties and shortcomings of fathers, which lasted an hour, and left him shaking like a sick man, sprawled out in the big chair by the fire, and smoking like a high-pressure tug. But she had brought him around, and he had arisen to go out to the town's one jeweler, when she lost all she had won.

"Where are you going?" she asked sharply, as he put on his hat.

"Going out, Minnie," he said, in his jokeless voice, "to get some catnip for you."

He meant it good-humoredly; but it was taken otherwise. The jeweler had no gold watches; but, after a two hours' search, he dug up a wholesaler's catalogue, and, with this in his pocket, Quinbey returned to have Minnie select a watch from it; but she, her trunks, and her belongings were gone, while a note on the table apprised him that she would live with no man who called her a cat.

Troubled in mind, he followed her to the home of her parents, but he was not admitted—nor given a chance to show her the catalogue.

He slept on the problem, and in the morning resolved that a little absence would be good for her; so, as the season had opened, he packed his bag and went out on a fishing trip with friends of his, expecting to be back in a month. It was eight years later when he returned.

His adventures during those eight years can only be summarized. The fishing schooner was cut down by a big ship out of Halifax bound around the Horn; and Quinbey alone of her crew succeeded in springing to her martingale stay as the smaller craft went under. No one else was saved, though the ship hove to and put out boats to search. Then the ship went on, and, as she met no inbound craft, Quinbey was forced to go with her.

But she did not round Cape Horn. A strong current threw her onto the Patagonian coast near Cape Virgins in a dead calm, and a sudden gale of wind and heavy sea ground her to pieces.

Only John Quinbey was a swimmer of sufficient strength to reach the beach, and here he lay, half dead, for a day, when he arose and struck inland, knowing that Punta Arenas was about a hundred and fifty miles along the coast of the Magellan Strait, and hoping to reach it.

He did not at once. The giant savages of this region caught him and made him one of them, preventing his escape. He was accustomed to hardship, and lived their life, tormented only by the thought that the money at home was deposited in his name, and that he had made no provision whereby the foolish little wife could draw from the bank.

But he still hoped to escape; and, as the tribe drifted inland, he was allowed more liberty. He never abused it, waiting for a final dash, always returning from a jaunt in reasonable time, and earning the confidence of his captors.

When over seven years had passed, he found, in the foothills of the Latorre Mountains, a large, heavy lump of dark metal, which he scraped with his knife and recognized as gold. It was fully the size of a draw bucket, but of what value he could not determine, except that it represented a fortune.

Strong man though he was, he could not carry it a hundred yards without resting, yet he carried it, not back to the tribe, but in a southwesterly direction, toward Punta Arenas. When forced to return, he hid it, taking careful bearings, and rejoined his masters. He waited a few days before the next trip, then moved it a few miles farther on.

In this way, exciting no suspicion, he shifted his find, step by step, until he had it on a well-defined trail that could lead nowhere but to the lonely port he was making for. Then, after a few days' rest, he packed a bundle of dried meat, took with him a native-made rope by which to drag the heavy nugget, and left the camp in the dark of night.

He reached his treasure by daylight, and started along the trail. He was not pursued, and ten days later, half starved, half mad, his shoulders bleeding from the chafe of the rope, and every bone in his body aching with the pain of fatigue, he dragged his burden onto a rickety wharf at Punta Arenas, where an eastbound steamer was coaling. Her captain was an honest man. He took Quinbey on board, took him to Boston, and helped him turn the nugget into cash—fifty thousand dollars. Then Quinbey went home.

II.

Quinbey had been right about the money in the bank. It was a tidy sum to retain on deposit, and the bank officials had heartlessly refused to pay any of it out to Mrs. Quinbey. She did not attempt to draw until her sulks left her, which occurred after the jeweler, intent upon the sale of a watch, had called upon her, and when the villagers had informed her that Quinbey had gone fishing. Then, disappointed, and somewhat worried over the future, she returned to the house on the hill, and, as it was still cold, lit up the big base-burner from the scanty stock of coal.

As the weeks grew into months and the fishing schooner did not return, she did not, like the rest of the villagers, give her husband up as lost—rather, she believed him alive, hoped for his return, and revised her opinion of him.

Soon—yet long before the grocer, the butcher, and the coal man had refused further credit—she realized that she loved the crude man she had known but a month, but who had loved her for twenty years; and, with tears streaming down her face, she prayed for his safety and return with more fervency than for the beloved son at Andover. This person wrote filial letters home, assuring her of protection and support when he returned; but they brought her small comfort, for the time was at hand when she must pay cash or go without the necessities of life.

Then Sammy came home on his first vacation, and, learning of the money in the bank, used his prestige and address to such advantage that he persuaded the local authorities to declare Quinbey legally dead—an easy matter on that coast of many wrecks.

Righteously indignant at the selfishness of the bank officials, he induced his mother to withdraw the money—shrunk to eight thousand dollars—from the bank, and allow him to take it to Boston, where, in a larger and safer bank, it would draw interest, and on which she could write checks in payment of her bills.

She consented, and Sammy departed with the money. But at Boston, before reaching the bank, he traversed the highways and the byways of the big city, imbibed certain and sundry liquids known to him only by name, loved his fellow men, and met fellow men of like state of mind, who, seeing a stranger, took him in.

He was stripped to empty pockets, spent a night in a cell, and only by the help of another clergyman was he shipped back to Andover with a letter to the president.

From here he wrote to his mother a

garbled account of his adventures; and, as the president of the college mercifully forbore writing her the truth, the poor woman merely wept a little, prayed a little, and took up her burden.

Her parents were old and indigent, unable to more than house her for a few days at a time. As minister's wife, she had made no friends that would help her now in a way befitting her position. As for herself, with only a village education, she could not even teach, even though able to found a school.

But every mother and daughter, sister and grandma'am in the village was willing to give her work by the day for the mere pleasure of gloating; and at this work she went bravely.

The sneers and insults she received soon limited her journeyings from home, and she finally became the village washwoman. The kitchen of the house was turned into a laundry, and the big base-burner allowed to grow cold; for she could not afford two fires.

In her laundry she worked, and in wintertime slept, and only on Saturdays was she seen on the street, when, with deepening lines in her face and a growing gray tinge to her hair, she struggled back and forth with her basket of clothes. But she earned her living, and looked forward hopefully to the return of her husband and assuredly to the return of her son, who would care for her.

Sammy only came home on the first vacation; the next three he spent at the homes of classmates. But at last the four years' course was ended, and, with nowhere else to go, he appeared, an ordained minister of the Gospel, but unattached.

The Reverend Samuel Simpson, as we must know him now, was twenty-four years old, as pale as ever, fatter than ever, and with a chin that, because of the fat, seemed to recede still farther into his neck. His mother rejoiced over him, was proud of him, and believed that her troubles were now ended.

The villagers welcomed him, and the gray old pastor of the church once presided over by his father invited him to preach. He did so, delivering his one sermon; but the delivery and the sermon were not of a character that would inspire the congregation to empty the pulpit for him, so the young preacher went home to wait, as Quinbey had waited, for that pulpit to become vacant by death.

But he deplored the coldness of the house, and ordered coal on credit for the base-burner; also he deplored the hard labor of his mother, assured her that the necessity for it would soon end, but did nothing himself toward this end; for, in truth, there was nothing he could do but preach; and the gray old pastor seemed as tenacious of life as his own father had been.

The mother was content, however, except for the always present, but lessening, hope that her husband would return, and happy in the company of her educated and accomplished son. And so, as bravely as ever, she carried her burden through the streets, not only on Saturdays now, but on Wednesdays; because, with another mouth to feed, she must of needs wash more clothes.

And so the time went on, the Reverend Samuel Simpson growing seedier of raiment and fatter of body, enduring patiently the sneers and sarcasms of the indignant men of the village, while the mother's face grew thinner, her body weaker, and her once blond hair so gray that she looked ten years beyond her age. Then, four years after the son's return, the breaking point came. With the front of her garments dripping wet, she stood erect from her tub, looked at him where he sat near the kitchen fire—the base-burner had long been cold—and said:

"Sammy, you must go to work. I can do no more. It is killing me."

"But what can I do, mother, dear?" he answered kindly.

"I do not know," she said wearily. "Something, maybe, that will help. You are educated. You might write for the Boston papers, or the magazines. Or you might find a pulpit somewhere else, and send me some money once in a while."

"What, and leave you alone, mother? Not for the world would I desert you. You are my mother, and have cared for me. But I have thought of writing. I have been thinking for years of a literary career, only I have not been able to decide which branch of literature I am best fitted for."

"Well, Sammy," said the mother, as she bent over her tub, "I cannot decide for you; but something must be done."

"And I will do it, mother," he shouted loudly—so loudly that neither heard the opening of the front door, nor the sound of heavy footsteps coming toward the kitchen.

Then a big, dark-faced man, with hair as gray as her own, seized her around the waist, lifted her into his arms, and rained kisses on her face and lips while she screamed, then, as she recognized him, fainted away. Still holding her, he lifted his foot, exerted a slight effort of strength, and pushed the tubful of suds and clothes off its base, upsetting it squarely over the head of the Reverend Samuel Simpson, who nearly choked before getting himself clear.

"I've been hearing things about you down at the store," said Quinbey, "and I'll 'tend to your case directly."

Then he carried the limp little woman into the bedroom, stripped off her wet garments, and covered her warmly, while he kissed her back to consciousness.

"Oh, John," she said, when she could speak, "I knew you'd come back, but, oh, the long waiting. I've been punished, John, punished bitterly."

"There'll be no more of it, Minnie," he said. "I've come home rich—that is, rich for this town. Your work is ended. They told me at the store about your son loafing on you all these years while you took in washing. But how about the money in the bank? Couldn't you get it?"

"Oh, yes, John," she answered simply. "But Sammy took it to Boston to deposit, and was robbed of it."

"Um-hum-m-m," grunted Quinbey. "The savings of twenty years at sea!" Briefly she recounted Sammy's story of the wrong done him; but he made no comment beyond saying that he would look into it.

"He's got to go to work," he added grimly. "I don't know what he can do except preach, and perhaps he can't do that. I'll write to Andover and get his record. But how about the house? It's cold. Out of coal?"

"We've got very little, John. We couldn't afford two fires."

Quinbey left her, and found his stepson in his room, changing his wet clothing for dry.

"Take this money," he said, handing him a bill, "and go down to the coal dock. Order a ton up here at once."

"I will, sir," answered Sammy, with dignity, "when I've recovered somewhat from your extremely brutal treatment of me. I must be dry before I go out on this cold day."

But he went out, shirtless and coatless, at the end of Quinbey's arm; and, as it really was cold, he hurried on his errand, and returned. Before long the base-burner was roaring, and Quinbey was recounting his adventures to his happy-faced wife; while Sammy, in the kitchen, finished up the wash. Later on he delivered it; but no more washing of other folks' clothing was ever done in that house.

Quinbey wrote to Andover, and in a few days received a reply, which he read to his wife. It was a true account of Sammy's mishap in Boston; and, while Quinbey grinned—he could not smile—the mother wept silently, but asked no forgiveness for her wayward son. And when he rummaged a bureau, and brought forth an old jeweler's catalogue, asking her to chose a watch for Sammy, she felt that it was granted; but she did not yet know Quinbey.

Sammy wore the watch proudly; and for the rest of the cold weather the three sat about the base-burner, while the color came back to the little woman's face, and self-confidence to the shaken mind of Sammy. He actually began to like his rough stepfather; and only an outsider might have guessed, by the somber light in Quinbey's dark eyes

when they rested upon him, that he did not like his stepson.

In the spring, as soon as the frost and snow were gone, Quinbey employed laborers to flatten the ground near his house to the extent of a hundred feet by ten; then, with stakes, he laid out the plan of a ship's deck. Next he contracted with spar makers, ship carpenters, and ship chandlers for material and labor; and before June three masts were erected, each with topmast, topgallant, and royal mast, the standing rigging of which was set up to strong posts driven into the ground; then followed yards, canvas, and running gear, and soon a complete ship of small dimensions, but without a hull, adorned the crest of the hill.

As Quinbey explained to the questioning villagers, he would go to sea no more, but, having spent his life at sea, wanted a reminder—something to look at—a plaything.

Sammy was an interested spectator of the work, and Quinbey was kind to him, answering his questions, and even betraying some solicitude that he should understand the rig of a ship, the names of the ropes and sails, and the manner of handling them. He even went so far as to hire a couple of sailors to climb aloft, to loose and furl canvas, again and again, until Sammy understood.

Then the cold weather came on, and the base-burner was lit; and with the cold weather came the snow, and the icy sleet, and the hurricane gales from Greenland, striking the crest of that hill with a force that threatened to tear the dummy ship from the ground. And on particularly stormy nights, the villagers, snug in their warm beds, would waken for a moment at a sound louder than the gale—the sound of Quinbey's voice, which, in a calm, would carry a mile. And the voice would cry:

"All hands on deck to make sail. Out wi' you, you blasted lubber, and lay aloft. Up wi' you, and loose that mainsail, and, when you've got it loose, furl it. I'll show you how I earned that money. Up wi' you, 'fore I give you a rope's end."

And sometimes, in the lulls, they could hear Sammy's shrieks of pain, and the thwack of the rope's end.

AN ACCEPTED APOLOGY

THERE lives in Minneapolis a German printer who is well educated, but whose ignorance of the English language as it is spoken is great. On one occasion a reporter wrote a story for his newspaper, making fun of the German, and, incidentally, making the German angry. The printer sought out the writer, and expressed his wrath.

"Yes, I wrote that," said the reporter, "and I reiterate all I said."

"Well," commented the German smilingly, "I'm glad you 'pologize."

THE CHAMPION EASY MARK

Senator "Bob" Taylor, of Tennessee, is the champion easy mark of the national capital, and almost any "tale of woe" will drag something from his bank roll. So well has this come to be known among the needy in Washington that, whenever the senator wants to be quiet and alone, so as to write a speech or a lecture, he hires a room in a cheap hotel, and doesn't even let his friends know the location of his hiding place.

PRESIDENTIAL CHOICE OF HEADWEAR

President Taft never wears a high silk hat if he can possibly avoid it. He prefers a cap, or a soft felt.

In Mid-Air

By Charles R. Barnes

Author of "Little Dixon's Speed Fright," "The Little Metal Box," Etc.

Aboard an aeroplane a thousand feet above the earth is a mighty bad place to settle differences of opinion. It is liable to be considerably more dangerous than a modern duel with pistols

LITTLE Dixon stopped the motor. Then he walked up to the tall, lanky Norris, and struck him a stunning blow full between the eyes. Norris staggered, recovered, and lurched toward Dixon. Two or three men, trussing a plane near by, dropped their work and drew close, as if they would interfere. The contest appeared one-sided, for little Dixon was easily within the lightweight class, and Norris was surely a heavy.

"He slurred my wife," growled the little fellow, white with anger.

As Norris threw his muscular body forward, Nixon stepped back, stopped, poised himself, and ducked a swing. Then, with the lightning action of the small boxer, he sent his right fist into the pit of the big man's stomach, and his left shot in a rising hook to the jaw.

Norris, for an instant, stared stupidly; the next moment his legs wabbled under him, and he sank to the floor.

"Gee!" muttered one of the spectators.

"I had to do it," snarled little Dixon. "Since I got married, he's been naggin' me about it. He says there ain't no class to my wife. He says why didn't I get some one with style and class to her—some one all the folks would rubber at when we went to church of a Sunday mornin'!"

"I guess you done him, Dixon. He ain't gettin' up." The man's voice was grave.

"It's only a knock-out," Dixon assured them. "I didn't find his solar plexus. He'd be squirmin' round if I had."

Norris moved. He groaned. And presently he sat up, gazing dazedly about him.

"What——" he began, then stopped. Slowly he understood what had happened. With much difficulty he dragged himself to his feet. It would not do to lie there any longer, for the superintendent might happen along at any time. Then there would be trouble.

"Say," he muttered, "don't let this go no further. I can't 'ford to lose my job."

"We'll forget it—sure," said one of the men.

"I'll 'tend to him myself," continued Norris, jerking a thumb at little Dixon.

"Why don't you take your lickin' like a man?" came the query. "He licked you fair and square."

"And I'll do it again if I have to," declared the victor.

"You'd better shake hands and be friends," advised the workman. "You two got to go up in the planes a lot together, and you'll alwus be scrappin' if you don't make up now."

"I'm ready," from little Dixon. He saw the wisdom of the remark, for he, as the gasoline-engine expert, worked much with Norris, who had an uncanny aptitude for flight. He was the best aëroplane manipulator in the factory. But he was not of the stuff that enters into the mental structure of the truly great.

"I won't have nothin' to do with him now," said Norris, scowling at his conqueror; "but I'm goin' to get him. No man can crack me on the jaw and get by with it. I'm goin' to get him."

The other men turned away to their work without comment. They knew what this assertion meant. Norris would lie low and watch his chance to deal the little fellow a blow from the dark. He dared not fight openly, for he had been mastered. And he realized that he would be mastered again if he placed himself in a position where those two flashing fists could reach him. So he would bide his time and wait, wait, wait until events so combined that he could strike with impunity. Then he would do it cruelly, devilishly. Little Dixon would do well to watch him closely.

In a short time both men were again at their work as if nothing had happened. Norris was adjusting the wing-flexing control of an aëroplane that would soon be ready for the try-out. Little Dixon was working on its light, four-cylinder motor, that must develop a thrust of two hundred pounds with a six-foot propeller of especial design.

Since the Hispeed Automobile Company undertook the building of air craft, a natural development of the business, he had been detailed on the new motors. They were light, refined to the highest possible degree, and capable of long-continued running.

Little Dixon loved the work. He loved it as a playwright loves his fascinating brain children. The whir of the delicate machine on the testing block was his grand opera. There was no other music in the world to him.

When, after a long period of manipulating a carburetor, the engine suddenly exhausted regularly, sharply, he would laugh aloud. And now that the safety of the planes hung upon a reliable motor, he was more than ever absorbed in his work. The triple-ignition system used in the Hispeed aëroplanes was his own idea; the reserve, automatic gasoline reservoir originated in his brain. He felt that he was a factor of some importance in the perfecting of aviation, and he knew that satisfaction which goes with meritorious achievement.

Norris was his prototype in the operating of the completed craft. Even as there are individuals who feel called to stand upon their heads on a bicycle, so Norris had an inherited knack of balancing. This had made him invaluable during the early days of flying, when the machines were not as stable as they later became. He seemed to know instinctively, even before a side eddy of air reached the planes, that one was coming; and the already warping wing tips were there to meet it.

He had confidence, too—that supreme, easy confidence that is born of a complete knowledge of the work and an utter lack of fear. Given a higher order of intelligence, and he would have been an aëronautical expert.

Since Dixon's wedding, and his subsequent failure as proprietor of a small automobile garage, Norris had been among the leaders of a crowd who harassed the diminutive mechanic. They held that his failure had been due to an absorption in domesticity, such as washing the dishes, and in other ways assisting in the housework. In their rough way, they were teasing him. But they often carried the raillery so far that its object was hurt, and on the point of giving battle. But he had held his temper until Norris made the unfortunate remark about Mrs. Dixon's lack of "class." That was too much. It had brought the clash.

For several days after it, the two men worked silently together, little Dixon attending strictly to his motors and Norris tauting wires and sullenly growling. On the fourth day the motor was installed, the operation bringing the two into close contact.

Suddenly Norris said: "Quit bumpin' against me; you're doin' it to start somethin'."

"No, I ain't," retorted little Dixon.

Norris raised a big wrench which he held in his hand.

He was beginning an oath when the hard fist of little Dixon cracked against his chin. Back went his head, and his hands dropped. Like a flash, the wiry lightweight was upon him; the wrench was hurled into a corner.

"If you try any tricks like that again," calmly said the motor expert, "I'll try a little left uppercut I know." Then he

turned his back upon Norris, and went back to his work.

The twice-defeated man would not remain longer in the room. He told the superintendent that he felt ill, and was excused for the rest of the day. An hour later he was in a downtown saloon, drinking heavily and muttering curses upon little Dixon. And it was three days before he again put in an appearance at the factory.

In the meantime, the aëroplane, completed, had been taken out to the big clearing on the outskirts of the city to be tested. Fonelle, the Frenchman, who had been imported to oversee the aëroplane section of the factory, had climbed aboard, and jumped it a few hundred feet. Finding that it acted heavy, and that the motor was not fastened down securely enough to minimize the vibration, he threw up his hands, and in his vehement way ordered Dixon to remedy his part of the shortcomings.

"And to-morrow," he went on, in his halting English, "it shall be that you and Monsieur Norrees make her perfect."

Little Dixon soon had the engine securely anchored in its place; and the following day he resumed his labor of tuning up, while Norris waited scowlingly for the machine to be ready for use. He tested every part of it, the propeller fastening, the warping wires, the elevating apparatus; every minute detail of construction; for, upon the thoroughness of the inspection, the lives of himself and little Dixon depended.

Finally he announced: "I'm ready when you are."

He seemed to have put aside his animosity for the time being. There was small sense in carrying a possible fight into the air, especially when you are the one who always gets the worst of it.

"All right," said Dixon, "get in."

Norris climbed aboard, and took his seat behind the wheel. Little Dixon slipped into the seat at his left. Behind them the powerful motor roared, unmuffled, and bent down the grass with its fierce blast of air. Several men holding the plane, awaited the signal to let go.

"Ready?" asked Norris.

"Yes," said Dixon.

The starting signal was given. The machine, free from the restraining grasp of the men, moved forward. Rapidly the speed increased until it was skimming along the ground at nearly forty miles an hour. Suddenly Norris raised the elevating planes, and the wonderful flying thing leaped into the air like a beautiful, big bird taking wing. Up and onward it sped until the turning point at the end of the field was reached. Then, at a height of fifty feet, it tilted around a graceful curve, and was away toward the lake, two miles ahead.

Norris increased the speed of the motor, which was howling a tremendous song of air conquest. The din made talking difficult; but Norris managed to yell in little Dixon's ear:

"Too much gas!"

Dixon nodded. Then the flyer came about and headed for the starting point. In a few minutes it settled lightly to the ground, and the two men got out.

"The boss wants to try a muffler on her," little Dixon began, as he tapped the carburetor air inlet with a hammer and screw driver. "I'll put it on after I get the motor to doin' all she can." He called the men to hold the plane, and started the motor. Then, listening intently to the explosions, he tapped, tapped, tapped, this way and that, until the proper amount of air was mixing with the gasoline vapor. When he had accomplished this, he went into the hangar and brought out the muffler. It required an hour to fasten it in place; but it effectively silenced the scream of the motor.

"Bet she won't rise," said Norris, taking his seat.

"Then we'll have to put six cylinders in her," little Dixon replied. "Folks are kickin' about the noise, like they usta do with the automobiles. The boss says we got to have a quiet power plant."

The men holding the plane had let go, and it was again slipping into its rising speed. The spinning propeller pushed harder and harder; and presently there was another quick lift into the nothingness. The motor was giving plenty of power.

As Norris guided the craft around the field, and sent it higher and higher, he seemed vastly pleased with its behavior. At length he turned to little Dixon.

"Say," he exclaimed, "you're sure a wonder on them motors!"

Dixon, surprised at the tribute from his late enemy, looked at him quickly.

"I got a knack for gas machinery," he explained modestly. "You drive a plane like you was pushin' a cart along a paved street, Norris. None of them French drivers has got anything on you."

"I got a knack for it," Norris echoed, and they both laughed.

For an hour they remained in the air, pushing recklessly across country to the lake, and flying out over it. Below them the wavelets gleamed and sparkled. A yacht bobbed up and down away to the northeast. Fishermen in small boats stood up and gazed heavenward. After a while, Norris turned the plane toward the shore.

"We'll give her another try-out tomorrow," he said. "I guess she is about the best we've turned out in a long time—though the warping control's got too much play in it."

Back they went, then, to the starting point, and stowed away the aëroplane until the next day. And the helpers were astonished to see little Dixon and his enemy, Norris, walk to the automobile that was to take them back to the factory, apparently the best of friends.

The boss was present at the field, the next day, to observe the operation of the muffled engine. Buyers had been demanding a silent plane, and he wanted to give it to them. But a muffler increases weight and eats up power—no racing automobile attempts speed with a muffler. And, as a larger motor meant more weight, the boss was puzzled. Finally he had slightly enlarged the cylinders of the regular power plant, and constructed a silencer that was a compromise—the exhaust was allowed a whispering *sh-sh-sh*. But the buying public would put up with that much.

Little Dixon had been consulted about the change; and some of his ideas were in the make-up of the motor. So he was as much concerned as the boss. He was proud of the successful result of the experiment.

"She travels better than any plane we've built for a long while," said he, in reply to the boss' query.

"No power lost?"

"Yes; but she's got aplenty. She'll speed up with the rest of 'em."

The boss was pleased.

"When are you fellows going up?" he asked.

"In about a half hour," replied Dixon. "Norris is fixin' the warpin' control."

The boss stood around and watched while the changes were being made. He was a big man, who fussed much; but he effaced himself in the presence of his clever mechanics. They knew more about what they were doing than he did. And he realized this. So he forbore to inject himself into the process of grooming the plane until Norris announced that it was ready.

"Take your time and get it right, boys," was all he said then.

"Everything's in good shape," replied Norris. "Shall we make a flight, sir?"

"Go on," assented the boss, "I want to see how that muffler works."

Norris and little Dixon took their places, and the propeller was turned to start the engine. *Sh-sh-sh-sh-sh* it went.

"Fine!" cried the boss. "Now get in the air."

"All right," said Norris. He gave the word, and the aëroplane was released. Over the ground it rolled, then sprang into the atmosphere, powerfully, easily.

Norris speeded up the motor, and guided the machine toward the lake. They rushed along through the air at a fast clip, proceeded out over the water, turning then and mounting higher, higher. The ground under them sank farther away; the wind whisked coldly between the planes. On and up they climbed. Two miles of the wild, maddening sensation that the mechanics knew and loved, and then a turn toward the lake.

"Now," snarled Norris suddenly, "I've got you."

Litle Dixon stared at him.

"I've got you," repeated the aviator; "and I ain't goin' to miss my chance."

"What you talkin' about?" little Dixon asked. There was no fear in his voice.

"Didn't I tell you I'd 'tend to you for swattin' me before all them men?"

"Yes."

"Well, I don't forget."

Little Dixon was silent. They were a thousand feet in the air, and the earth below was but a map. Yonder, the lake lay flat, like metal. Roads and houses were toy things—streaks and blocks. Norris began to slide the plane downward on a long incline.

"I remember what you done, Dixon," he growled; "and I'm goin' to get even. You're goin' to tumble out of this plane."

"I guess I ain't!" exclaimed little Dixon. "I got a wife to home."

"That don't make no difference," insisted Norris wickedly. "You're goin' to fall, just the same, because I'm goin' to push you out—throw you out, you little, sawed-off——"

He suddenly reached over with a swift movement, and before little Dixon could make a motion to protect himself, a hand had clutched his neck at the back. He felt himself pushed forward at the depths of space beneath the plane. He struck an upright, and the machine trembled. But still that awful force behind lunged him at eternity. He saw the earth far, far below; and he flung out madly with his arms. They went into nothing. He was going——

His right hand struck something, and closed upon it. Desperately he gripped. The plane was wabbling dangerously out of balance. Dixon's left hand shot to the side of his right, and clutched that something. He closed his eyes. His body was swinging clear of the aëroplane; but he was not falling. Slowly he threw back his head and looked up; and then he understood. He had caught the support of the forward altitude planes, and was suspended under the fore part of the lower main plane.

Although the disturbed machine was yawing crazily, Norris was managing to control it. He was descending rapidly. And little Dixon realized that if he could hold on until the craft reached the lake, he could probably save himself. At the downward angle on which the plane was traveling, it would be over deep water fifty feet up. And then little Dixon could drop and swim ashore. He gritted his teeth determinedly, and hung to the slim, strong timber with all his strength. Instinctively he edged backward until he could catch the forward end of the lower main plane. He wanted to place his weight as near his old position as possible, so that the machine would be in better balance.

Suddenly he realized that he was endangering himself yet more by so doing. Norris might stamp his foot against the clutching white fingers. And then his grip would be broken. There was now about two hundred feet of space between the earth and the aëroplane. Norris would think of that sort of thing pretty soon——

"Dixon!" It was Norris' voice, and there was intense terror in it.

"What?" shouted little Dixon.

"Can you hold on till we get to the lake?"

"I'm tryin' to."

"Hold on, Dixon—hold on!" The fright in the voice was increasing. "If you don't hang on, I'll be a mur-der-er!" The last word was drawn out in a creepy shrillness that was blood-curdling. And at last little Dixon realized that Norris had repented, and would do everything in his power to undo his act. The aëroplane was rapidly approaching the lake now. There were only a few hundred yards separating the machine from the water. Lower and lower soared the great bird. At the edge of the lake it was perhaps fifty feet up, and dropping.

"Hang on, Dixon!" came the voice again. The terror was going out of it. The water was underneath now.

"Hang on!"

A hundred yards out—a hundred and fifty. The water was deep there. Again came Norris' voice, this time ringing joyously:

"Let go!"

Little Dixon's hands loosened their

grip, and he dropped. An upward glance showed him the aëroplane, swaying and pitching wildly, completely unbalanced by the sudden loss of his weight. He experienced a soothing, comfortable sensation——

Splash!

Feet first he had struck the water. It closed over him, and down, down he sank, until it seemed that there never would be any coming up again. Then his body floated, still in the depths, and the water pressure began to shoot it toward the surface. He commenced to swim to accelerate the ascent, and in another minute his head was bobbing above the waves, and he was puffing loudly and shaking the moisture out of his eyes.

As he turned to strike out for the shore, he saw the aëroplane settling on the wide, level beach. It landed easily, and Norris leaped out. He gave one look at the swimmer, and then plunged into the water, waded furiously through the shallows, and began to swim with a strong, overhand stroke toward little Dixon.

"You all right, Dixon?" he demanded, as they met.

"Uh-huh," was the reply; "but I'm goin' to give you the gol-darndest lickin' you ever got in your life for this."

"Well," mused Norris, "I guess mebby you're right. Something ought to happen to me."

"You tried to make a widow lady out of my wife," complained little Dixon; "and me not able to get insured owin' to this business bein' dangerous. You tried to put her on the bum."

"No," asserted Norris, "it was you I was after. I didn't think about her. You had me goin', beatin' me up——"

"Well," said Dixon, "if that's all there was to it, mebby I won't do nothin' to you. I'm too tired to fight now, anyway." The shallow water had been reached, and the two waded to the shore. Dripping, they stood regarding the aëroplane.

"I thought I wasn't goin' to control her up there—when it was happenin'," began Norris.

Little Dixon walked over to the propeller.

"Let's get in and go back," he said, ready to start the motor by turning the big fan. "The boss'll think somethin' happened to us."

"That's so," agreed Norris.

He took his seat, and throttled down the motor until little Dixon could climb aboard. Then he opened the throttle, and soon they had darted along the beach, and were in the air. Out over the water they went in a wide circle, and in a few minutes were sailing toward the big field. Norris landed almost in the spot where he had started.

"That's good work," commented the boss, as the two workers left the machine; "but what happened up there? We saw one of you hanging below the plane, and it pretty near turned over."

Little Dixon was prompt.

"I was tryin' to get at somethin'," he said indefinitely, "and I slipped and tumbled out. Norris steered out over the lake so I could drop in the water. He was afraid to land with me where I was."

"Well, I'm glad you weren't hurt," said the boss. "Let these fellows"—indicating the other workmen—"put the plane away, and you come with me. I'll drive you home in my car, and you can get dry clothes on."

"Norris jumped in the lake after me," continued Dixon, "as soon as he landed."

"Good," commented the boss. "I like to see you men work together—teamwork's good to have in any business." They entered the car, and proceeded toward the city. At little Dixon's door he got out.

"Say, Norris," he invited, "you come around and eat supper with me and the missus this evenin'. I'd—I'd kinda like to have you."

Norris looked squarely into little Dixon's eyes.

"I'll do it," he said. Then, impulsively extending his hand, he exclaimed:

"Thanks!"

And almost any one would know, right away, that the gratitude was not inspired by the supper invitation.

An Advertising Campaign

By Edward Freiberger

You never know what you can do till you try. Here is Abie Stonehill, just learning how to sell neckties, suddenly spurred to "do something," and by a really astounding performance becoming famous in a night

WHEN Rachel Solomon replied to Abie Stonehill's proposal with the declaration that she would never, never, no never marry a man who hadn't made a name for himself, Abie thought she was merely jesting, and retorted rather haughtily: "Oh, is that so?"

He walked up and down the parlor of the little Harlem flat a moment, whistling atrociously.

"Don't whistle like that! It hurts!" Rachel cried.

He ceased whistling, and turned on her with: "Say, what y' mean by making a name for myself? D'you expect a man of twenty-five to be famous already? Yes? D'you expect a feller what's just beginning to learn how to sell men's neckties 'n' notions at wholesale on twenty-five per to be a millionaire? I ask you, do you?"

"You know what I mean, all right, Abie. When I marry I won't take any chances. It'll have to be a real man, with enough money laid aside to take care of me for whole years of rainy days, a man that the world will admire, who's done something, so that when we go into a restaurant after the show people'll say: 'There's Mr. So-and-so, who did so-and-so—a real self-made man!'"

"Oh!" shouted Abie, "in the restaurants y'want people to stop eating, just to look at your husband? Say, you won't have the only husband what's done something! Besides, people go to restaurants to eat, not to admire a stenographer's husband—a stenographer with big idees in her head!"

"That's just it," quietly added Rachel, "as long as I'm a stenographer in a wholesale neckties and notion house, I'm going to be a good one, and earn my twenty per. See? But—if I'm to be a married woman, I'll be one that's worth while. You know, Abie, I like you lots; you know that, don't you? But when a working girl marries it's got to be to the right man, and if she doesn't get the right one she'd better take notes in shorthand, and be sure of her little envelope at the end of the week. See?"

"You 'n' your big idees!" exclaimed Abie, with scorn.

"Another thing, Abie," continued Rachel, "the man I marry must be able and willing to settle a nice little income on mother for the rest of her life, so if anything should happen to me—you understand? And he'd have to stop chewing gum and toothpicks in the presence of ladies. And he'd have to go to night school for a while, to learn a few things——"

"Oh, is that so?" shouted Abie.

"Yes, that's so," replied Rachel calmly, "and he'd have to be able to eat soup without disturbing everybody in the room. You know, you've got a whole lot to learn, Abie!"

Abie paid no attention to the last remark, but said: "I suppose you'd rather earn that twenty per, 'n' be your own boss at home, than marry a nice, respectable young feller who in a year or two—perhaps three, y' never can tell—will be earning his five or six thousand a year? Yes? Ain't it?"

"Abie, please let's talk of something else!"

"No!" insisted Abie. "You're a good girl, the best I've ever known, 'n' if

there's a chance to win you, so help me, I'll do it. I can wait three months, or six, or perhaps a year. I don't love a different girl every week——" He stopped suddenly, and then asked with unexpected gentleness: "Say, anyhow, what d'you want me to do? Tell me!"

"Make a name for yourself! Be a bit more gentle, more considerate of others—and get on better terms with the English language. Russians and Poles ought to be good linguists."

"There you go again! Make a name for myself! Say, y' don't expect me to be one of them old-fashioned heroes overnight, do you? I can't fight no battles, because I'm not a soldier; besides, we ain't got no war just now."

"Get a reputation as a business man! Make the firm you and I are working for now, work for *you!* Be your own boss! Do something that'll make all New York and Newark, too, sit up and take notice! Make the newspapers and magazines talk about Abraham Stonehill's business methods, his shrewdness, his original schemes to make money! Make them print your pictures in the financial column! Make your old father and mother up in the Bronx think their name's the greatest in the world!"

"Hold on, Rachel!" remonstrated Abie. "Take care with that name business. How often have I told you the family name wasn't Stonehill at all, but Korsosky, that I'm the son of Rabbi Ephraim Korsosky? Even your name nowadays has got to be fashionable!"

"Korsosky or Stonehill's all the same to little Rachel. Abie, I want you to get busy, be a real business man, think out ideas. And, with your big ideas, make big money. The man I marry's got to be talked about. People must say you're a wonder! Understand?"

Abie understood, and when he took his departure for the Bronx he gradually came to the conclusion that Rachel was right, and that it was time for him to make good.

"Make good! Make good! Yes! But how?" he muttered to himself as he neared the house where one generation called itself Korsosky and the other Stonehill.

II.

When Rachel said "Good morning, Abie!" at the store the next morning he seemed to have grown five years older overnight. He had acquired a new and becoming seriousness. There was something on his mind. Rachel noticed it; but she asked no questions. She was willing to await developments.

Three days elapsed. Whenever Rachel caught a glimpse of Abie he seemed preoccupied, and said little or nothing. At the end of the third day he walked quietly into the Heimerdinger & Callman office, just as she was closing her typewriter desk, and asked: "Say, Rachel, I want to ask a question, just so we understand each other. Is it understood if I make good you'll say yes? Is it?"

Rachel, very much pleased, but without betraying herself, answered simply: "Yes!"

"Good!" said Abie, more to himself than to her; and left the office.

Rachel did not see him again for three more days. It seemed to her that he was doing very little work for Heimerdinger & Callman, wholesale dealers in neckties and men's notions.

The next day was Sunday, and every paper in Greater New York contained a new advertisement measuring fifty lines, double column. All it said was:

KEEP YOUR EYE ON
METZGER'S TOILET SOAP

At the same time the public was startled when it found the following advertisement repeated on several pages of every newspaper published in New York, Boston, and Philadelphia:

MONEY GIVEN AWAY!

Would you like to see a man give away

ONE HUNDRED THOUSAND DOLLARS

in dollar bills?

Would you care to receive one or more dollars? If you are interested, meet me at the corner of BROADWAY AND FORTY-SECOND STREET, SATURDAY AFTERNOON, MARCH 11.

The public's servant,
ABRAHAM STONEHILL.

At the same time every paper contained the following three-line advertisement:

WANTED: One thousand live wires to solicit orders for useful household articles. Heimerdinger & Callman, 119 Leonard Street.

The first two advertisements appeared every morning and afternoon for the remainder of the week. Meanwhile, a thousand men and women secured positions at the office of Heimerdinger & Callman to solicit orders for Metzger's Toilet Soap in every part of New York, the firm allowing an extremely liberal commission.

Inasmuch as the great public knew absolutely nothing of Abraham Stonehill, no one thought of associating him and his promise to give away one hundred thousand dollars with Metzger's Toilet Soap.

As for Rachel, she did some thinking on her own account, but said nothing.

By Monday morning everybody within a radius of five hundred miles of Times Square knew that some one intended giving away one hundred thousand dollar bills. And everybody promised himself the pleasure of attending the performance. And everybody asked everybody else regarding the identity of the unknown, but much-advertised, Abraham Stonehill. No one out in the Bronx dreamed of the possibility of the prospective philanthropist being the young son of Rabbi and Mrs. Ephraim Korsosky. By Tuesday the name of Abraham Stonehill had become a household word, and by Wednesday excitement was at fever heat.

Meanwhile, it was whispered out in the Bronx that Abraham Korsosky had mysteriously disappeared from his home, and had not been seen in several days, but it was not known that at about the same time a young man who might easily have answered to a description of the aforesaid Abraham, had registered at a small downtown hotel never patronized by his acquaintances, under the name of A. Israel Cohen.

Thursday one of the afternoon papers called attention to the tremendous excitement that had been aroused by Stonehill's strange announcement, and added that proprietors of stores and shops in the vicinity of Broadway and Forty-second Street had become so alarmed at the prospect of a huge and unruly mob gathering there early on Saturday morning, that they had decided to board up all show windows for at least a block in every direction from the intersection of the two thoroughfares.

Then followed an interview with the police commissioner, who declared that any attempt to give away money in the manner mentioned would immediately be stopped, not because such an act was contrary to law, but because of the congestion of traffic and consequent danger.

The police estimated that at least half a million people would be attracted to the corner mentioned, so that the scheme, while possibly perfectly innocent, was still a menace to human life. But the police could do nothing with Abraham Stonehill until the time announced. Not knowing him, they could neither find him, argue with him, nor arrest him.

When the papers commented on the police commissioner's statement, several of them added that as Stonehill had paid for all his advertisements in advance, they were bound by contract to print them.

The public's interest grew from hour to hour. Early in the week every table at every hotel and restaurant in Times Square had been reserved for Saturday noon, and in many instances large premiums were unsuccessfully offered for tables. At the same time, there was hardly any demand for seats for the Saturday matinées at any of the many theaters in the vicinity of Times Square. Several Park Row newspapers, with commendable enterprise, erected special telephone booths in the neighborhood in order to secure better and quicker service for their afternoon editions.

And all this time Rachel said little, but did a great deal of thinking. She saw absolutely nothing of her Abie, and had no idea what had become of him.

Meanwhile, the thousand solicitors had succeeded in prevailing upon nearly every retail shop in Greater New York

to lay in a stock of Metzger's Toilet Soap, and every newspaper reader was twice a day confronted by the injunction to keep his eye on the aforesaid soap.

III.

"Who is Abraham Stonehill? And why does he want to give away a hundred thousand dollars? What do you suppose is behind it all?" These and similar questions were asked everywhere. But no one knew the answer.

All the larger newspapers outside of New York issued special instructions to their New York correspondents to find and interview the aforesaid Abraham Stonehill, and ascertain his motives for giving away money. Were they philanthropic, charitable, or commercial? Or were they the whims of insanity? Was he doing this to help the poor, or to gain notoriety? Of course, no one knew.

Saturday morning's papers again announced that the police would not permit Abraham Stonehill, or any one else, to give away money in Times Square at one o'clock that afternoon, and that any attempt to do so would be immediately stopped.

At the very moment that the manager of the little downtown hotel at which Stonehill had registered as A. Israel Cohen was reading the above announcement, Abie appeared at the cashier's window and calmly asked if he could have a check for one hundred thousand dollars cashed. The cashier was startled out of his wits. The check, made payable to the order of A. Israel Cohen, was signed by Abraham Stonehill!

As the cashier refused the request—for obvious reasons—Abie shouted: "All right! If any one should ask you something, just tell 'em that you saw me!"

By the time the cashier had told the manager of Stonehill's presence, the latter was on his way to Times Square, with just a little over one hundred dollars in new bills in his pockets. The manager immediately telephoned the police.

"On what bank was the check made out?" phoned the officer at headquarters.

The manager asked the cashier; but that gentleman had been too much startled to notice the name of the bank.

Neither the manager nor the cashier seemed to realize that their guest, A. Israel Cohen, was something of a humorist.

IV.

Times Square on New Year's Eve was like a quiet Sunday in a country town compared to the scene that made history on that memorable Saturday afternoon. There were as many people east and west of Broadway as there were north and south of Forty-second Street. Unlike the average New Year's Eve crowd, this one sought something besides mere fun. It sought one hundred thousand dollars in single bills! And while there is absolutely no traffic at the corner of Broadway and Forty-second Street on New Year's Eve, all sorts of automobiles, cabs, wagons, and trucks managed to crowd by the famous Four Corners on this strenuous day.

Few knew Abraham Stonehill. No one knew which particular corner he would select as the scene of his eccentric philanthropy. The police managed to keep the crowd moving, but only at a snail's pace. The throng was feverish in its excitement, for every individual in that hungry-for-money, anxious, eager mob hoped that he would be close to the public benefactor when he made his presence known. But there was no standing still; no opportunity to select a good location and hold it.

The police had even found it necessary to enforce the same rules for pedestrians that prevailed on New Year's Eve or Election Night. Any one wishing to go south on Broadway had to use the west side of the street. Those going in a northerly direction had to proceed as far as Forty-seventh Street on the east side of Broadway before being permitted to cross the street. A similar rule prevailed on Forty-second Street on either side of Broadway.

Unfortunately, but fortunately for Abie, the police had not thought of restricting teams, that is, so long as they observed the customary traffic rules.

Suddenly a dark, nervous young man, some twenty-five years of age, a stranger to all, was seen to stand up on the front seat of a large automobile. In his right hand were a number of new one-dollar bills. He clamored for attention, and immediately secured it, for in New York the man with money in his hands is ever welcome.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he shouted at the top of his voice, "I'm Abraham Stone——"

When Abie remonstrated with the policeman who made him sit down in his machine, he was told that unless he drove on he would be immediately arrested for disorderly conduct.

"But what will I do with my money?" he demanded, with assumed anger.

The policeman smiled. "Well, I needn't be afther tellin' you that this is the Gay Whoite Way. Perhaps you moight lose it—if you troid har-rd enough!"

With that, Stonehill allowed about fifty new single bills to flutter away from him, as if by accident. When he told the chauffeur to drive in a southerly direction, the policeman kept him company, but made no attempt to arrest him. The crowd behind him fought like demons for the one-dollar bills, which were flying hither and thither. Naturally, every one surmised that Stonehill had defied the police, and had thrown away a great many more than fifty bills. At Thirty-fourth Street Stonehill told the policeman he would get out and walk.

"Have you any children at home?" he asked of the officer.

The policeman laughed. "Did y' iver see a policeman wid the name av Patrick O'Sullivan that didn't? I've been married noine years! An' the twins wuz bor-rn on St. Pathrick's Day —both of thim!"

Stonehill smiled knowingly. "Well, y' understand if I should lose any money, you needn't make no holler about it. Ain't it?"

The policeman smiled, but said nothing. When Abie jumped from the car, some fifty new one-dollar bills fell, apparently by accident, under the seat. The policeman smiled again.

All this time pandemonium reigned in Times Square. There was even more noise than if the Giants had won the pennant. Hundreds of thousands of men, women, and children of all ages and types and nationalities were doing their utmost to get to the actual intersection of the two streets. An inquisitive, greedy, frenzied mob was eager to do what millions had tried to do before —get something for nothing.

While the police did all in their power to keep the mob "moving on," word was passed from mouth to mouth that Stonehill had begun his good work. The fifty who were sufficiently fortunate to secure a dollar each, or even a torn portion of a bill, told their fellows that they had seen hundreds and hundreds of bills picked up by delighted men and crazed women. This all helped to add to the general frenzy of the occasion. Of course, no one really knew whether Abie had thrown away fifty or a hundred thousand dollars.

The mob was too large, too confused, too feverish, to be capable of judging what was actually happening. It was like a fierce battle, during the actual course of which no private soldier could estimate the real result and say which side had been or would be victorious. Rich and poor, black and white, old and young, fought alike for dollar bills, which in most instances were torn to shreds by the avaricious, maddened contestants, who came to blows and thus lost what they had already secured.

So anxious was each and every member of that vast throbbing, crazy throng to add life, energy, noise, and tumult to the scene, that those who had secured absolutely nothing found delight in telling their fellows that they had been richly successful, and were retiring from the scene intensely pleased with the result. The American sense of humor was again in evidence.

Then, as usual, the unexpected hap-

pened. The police, doing all in their power to keep the crowd moving, were confronted not only by an army of pedestrians, but by another that came rushing by in automobiles or moved more slowly on huge trucks. Suddenly, at the very intersection of the two streets, a strange, in fact, a unique, accident happened.

Four huge trucks, approaching from the north, south, east, and west respectively, and each drawn by four handsome white horses, broke down almost simultaneously. In each case the right forward wheel slipped away from its axle. As the trucks looked alike, and were all loaded with small wooden boxes whose resemblance to each other was most striking, it did not take the crowd long to conclude that this was not an accident, but a prearranged affair.

But, if it was premeditated, did it not require a tremendous and unusual amount of planning, forethought, and deliberation to make each of these four trucks break down within a few feet of each other, when they were going in opposite directions on different streets, through the most densely populated thoroughfares in the world?

Immediately all traffic for at least half a mile in every direction came to a standstill. The drivers of the four trucks made a pretense of fixing the broken wheels, naturally without results. The blockade was perfect. What is more, it continued so for several hours. When the police finally realized that the trucks would have to be unloaded before the broken wheels could be fixed, orders were issued that all traffic should turn around and retrace its steps, thus gradually relieving the distress in the congested district. Thus, at the end of several hours, it was found possible for traffic to start for its destination by first going out of its way in an opposite direction.

By this time the four trucks had been slowly unloaded. It was then discovered that the wooden boxes were not securely closed, and that they fell open the moment they were thrown from the truck to the street. Then the further discovery was made that the boxes contained small, tastefully wrapped packages, more or less fragrant.

Just as the crowd started in to help itself to the fragrant packages, Abraham Stonehill appeared upon the scene again, and was recognized. It did not take him long to make his presence felt. He was cheered to the echo, and not one in that vast mob imagined that only fifty dollars had been thrown away. Every individual imagined that his neighbor had secured one or more bills.

Then still another discovery was made! The small packages, when opened, proved to be samples of Metzger's Toilet Soap!

Tens of thousands of these samples were carried away. On every tongue was heard the name of Abraham Stonehill. Then the crowd asked itself: "Did Abraham Stonehill have anything to do with Metzger's Toilet Soap?" And the crowd good-naturedly answered itself in the affirmative!

So effective was the advertisement that before the shades of night had fallen not a piece of Metzger's Toilet Soap was to be had at any of the many shops where the thousand solicitors had had it placed on sale. All New York talked of Metzger's Toilet Soap. Like the name of Abraham Stonehill, it had suddenly become a household word. Some people actually used it!

And then everybody asked: "Who is this Abraham Stonehill?"

All the Sunday papers throughout the country told the story of Stonehill's triumph. Abie had won fame in a single day, and his soap had become known from ocean to ocean, for, as Abie had been shrewd enough to insert big advertisements in hundreds of papers proclaiming the merits of the soap he represented, only a few papers refrained from mentioning the name of this necessary household article.

Both the public and the police knew they had been taken in, and again the American sense of humor prevailed. And nothing could be done to Stonehill, for the giving away of money is not yet considered a crime—at least, not in the great city of New York.

V.

When Abie went to his home in the Bronx Saturday night he was still in the employ of Heimerdinger & Callman at a salary of twenty-five dollars a week. By Monday noon he had received half a dozen offers from wholesale and retail clothing establishments, and one from a long-established advertising agency. One offer was for twenty-five thousand dollars a year! But Abie declined them all.

Monday noon, when Rachel returned from lunch, she noticed, with intense astonishment, that some men were taking down the big sign in front of the store, and she wondered what it meant. Abie appeared in the office, but seemed too busy to talk to her; in fact, he was closeted with Ike Heimerdinger and Dave Callman nearly all afternoon.

At about five o'clock he passed Rachel's desk and said quite casually, and with a strange formality that almost chilled the girl: "Oh, by the way, Miss Solomon, I'm coming out to see you 'n' your mother to-night. Will you be home? Yes?"

Rachel replied in the affirmative, and Abie calmly said, "All right!" and left the office.

Ike Heimerdinger and Dave Callman had suddenly got into a heated argument about something, and Rachel was obliged to overhear what was said.

"I tell you, Dave, I haven't got the heart to do it!" said Ike.

"Anyhow, Ike, as a favor—you hear me—as a favor, *you* do it. I tell you what it is, I've never done such a thing in my life. Go ahead! *You* do it! I'll wait till you get through with it," replied Dave.

"I hate to do it," said Ike. Then slowly and with much embarrassment, he approached Rachel, who was about to lock up her desk. "Miss Solomon, before you lock up I want you to take down just one more letter. A short one. Please!"

To Rachel's intense astonishment, she listened to the following dictation, and took it down in shorthand:

"Miss Rachel Solomon,
"Care Heimerdinger & Callman,
"119 Leonard Street, New York.

"Dear Miss Solomon: Please take notice that on and after Saturday, March 25, your services will no longer be required by this firm, as the copartnership heretofore existing between Isaac Heimerdinger and David Callman has this day been dissolved by mutual consent.

"Wherever you may be in the future you will always have our respect and good will, as your services during the past three years and over have always been O. K. and A1. Should you need any further recommendation it will be our pleasure to help you."

It was no easy matter for Rachel to take down such an unexpected letter, but coming from a race that had long been misunderstood, oppressed, and maligned, she listened in silence.

Ike continued: "Better write it out now, and me and Mr. Callman will both sign it to show our good will. Ain't it, Dave?"

Dave nodded his head to give embarrassed assent. Rachel dropped a few tears, however, as she wrote the letter. When she handed it to Ike she asked timidly: "Why should I be discharged like this? You know I've been a faithful worker, and you can't close out the business in two weeks——"

Ike Heimerdinger interrupted with: "I think I heard Abie Stonehill say something about seeing you at your house to-night. Yes? Well, he'll explain it better than we could. Ain't it, Dave?"

"You better go home, Rach—I mean, Miss Solomon," was Dave's reply. "Abie'll explain it better than we could, and, take it from me, Abie's the dandiest little explainer in the business."

He winked at his partner, and smiled knowingly. Both partners then signed the letter with their individual names. Rachel put it in an envelope, and sealed it from force of habit.

"Say, you needn't waste a two-cent stamp on it!" shouted Dave, with unnecessary alarm.

Rachel put the letter in her hand bag, said "Good night!" rather timidly, and walked out of the office completely mystified and bewildered.

The two partners watched her close-

ly. "I tell you what it is, Dave," volunteered Ike, "it's a shame to fool a nice girl like that!"

"Sure, 'n' such a smart girl, too!" Dave agreed.

VI.

When Abie called at the little flat in Harlem that evening he found Rachel glad to see him, but strangely reserved. Suddenly she asked: "Abie, did you do all that funny business day before yesterday?"

"What funny business, Rachel?"

"Jamming Times Square, giving away money and soap?"

"Sure, that was me!" answered Abie proudly.

"You mean to say 'It was I!'"

"Why?"

"Grammar!"

"Grammar? *Ach noch* in business!" with a characteristic gesture of the right hand.

"Where did you get all the money?"

"I sold something!"

"Why, Abie, what could *you* sell?"

"Myself!" said Abie quietly but pompously.

"Yourself?" questioned the girl, with intense amazement.

"Sure! Say, Rachel, you might as well know it now already as later. When you said as how I had to make a name for myself, y' remember, I began to think. Then all of a sudden, you wouldn't believe it, one big idee came to me quick after another idee. All of a sudden I remember an immense stock of toilet soap that was going to waste because no one knew how to put it on the market. No fake, y' understand; but real stuff! Then I remembered how one of our bosses, Ike Heimerdinger, was my own mother's first cousin, 'n' how his rich brother, Isadore, had always said as how he had his eye on me. I remembered as how he was an old bach, with nothing on earth but a whole lot of money and a big bass voice, y' know. So I told him a few things, 'n' sold myself to him for five thousand dollars!

"'Twas agreed if I didn't make good I'd work for his brother Ike free till the debt was paid—something of a load, Rachel, on twenty-five a week, if I didn't make good already. I bought all the old soap, had new labels printed, put on the name of Metzger—why Metzger I couldn't tell you myself—'n' then I got busy. Well, Rachel, tell me, was I busy? I guess yes! Am I a business man? I guess yes! Did I make good? Well, I guess yes! The stock of soap's all cleaned out already! Such a business! An' to-day I've had all sorts of offers, 'n' big money, too, I tell you! But I turned 'em all down."

"You did? But why?"

"Why—I thought the firm needed me."

"The firm? Haven't you heard?"

"Heard? Heard what, Rachel?"

"Why, aren't they going out of business?"

"Well, yes—'n' no!"

"What d'you mean, Abie? Yes, and no?"

"Say, Rachel, you're such a stupid! Ain't you got no business idees at all? Some one's got to manufacture Metzger's Toilet Soap, ain't it?"

"Then why did they give me my two weeks' notice?"

"Well, Rachel, you see, it wouldn't exactly look well for a nice young married woman like you——"

"Married woman like me? What d'you mean?" demanded Rachel, with some slight show of temper.

"I mean as how it wouldn't look so well for a nice young married woman like Mrs. Abraham Stonehill to be just a plain, everyday twenty-dollar-a-week stenographer in her own husband's office, y' understand," answered Abie, as he carelessly drew from his pocket a diamond engagement ring that immediately fascinated Rachel.

"Understand? No! Why, what d' you, mean, Abie?"

"Beginning to-morrow the firm will not only sell wholesale notions 'n' men's neckties, but it will also manufacture Metzger's Toilet Soap to supply the big demand started Saturday. The firm's name's going to be Stonehill, Heimerdinger & Callman! Y' understand?"

Rachel understood.

A Chat With You

DID you ever consider the Tariff as an especially interesting topic for discussion and debate? Of course it is interesting, but even "Schedule K" and the woes of the American wool growers pall after a time. We are continually seeking after some new thing. Even so in Congress, our lawmakers, after discussing the Tariff and kindred subjects for years, off and on, began to weary of its charms and the sound of their own voices. Their strained and jaded eyes fell on the Post Office. It was big, and it looked interesting. There might be food for thought and entertainment there. Also, the magazines. They were interesting. Every one reads magazines, even Congressmen and Senators. And so a postal commission, headed by Justice Hughes, was appointed to find out whether or not the magazines should be carried through the mail as magazines, or whether they ought to be charged to make up various deficits in our mail service.

BOOKKEEPING, save to the bookkeeper or expert accountant, is difficult, and we must confess that the various statements as to where the money went in the Post Office have confused rather than enlightened us. One fact, though, has caused us to sit up and take notice. The government submitted a table of "twenty representative American magazines." In that table we observe that THE POPULAR is the only fiction magazine. Also, from the same table we notice the fact that THE POPULAR gives more for the money, more actual pages of reading matter per number than any other magazine in America. It is the only representative fiction magazine, and it is the biggest magazine of all. We may have mentioned this fact before, but we trust we may be pardoned for reminding you of it again.

AND now we want to say a word about the next issue of this magazine, out on the news stands October tenth, two weeks from to-day. We believe that we have some justification in thinking that we know what a good fiction magazine ought to be like. We have never sent to press a number of THE POPULAR that wasn't just as good as was humanly possible for us to make it. Sometimes, however, we ourselves have not been quite satisfied with the results. Some numbers have not realized our ideals and hopes for them. But this next issue *is* what we want it to be. We don't see how it could be improved. We are more pleased and satisfied with it than any we have sent to press in some time. We are confident that you will feel the same way about it, and we want you to write us about it and tell us what you think of it.

IN the first place, there is a big installment of a new serial. It is called "The Buhl Cabinet," and was written by Burton Stevenson. Burton Stevenson is the author of "The Marathon Mys-

tery" and "The Holladay Case," both of which had wide success in book form. We regard him as one of the most promising writers of tales of mystery and adventure living to-day, and for a long time we have been hoping to give you in serial form a book of his better than anything he had ever written. "The Buhl Cabinet" came to us with the assurance that the author regarded it as "the best thing he had ever done." Strange to say this news acted as a damper on the enthusiasm with which we received the manuscript. Sad and bitter experience has taught us to accept as very questionable opinions offered by authors in regard to the comparative merits of their own books. An author can no more see his own work as we see it than we can "see ourselves as others see us." Kipling thought his "Recessional" scarce worthy of type. Milton thought "Paradise Regained" a better epic than "Paradise Lost." Consequently, as we turned the first pages of "The Buhl Cabinet," we had an uneasy feeling, and were uncomfortably aware of a slight prejudice.

WE were agreeably disappointed. Of its kind it is one of the best stories we have ever read—and we have read a good many. For once the author was right. "The Buhl Cabinet" is unquestionably the greatest story Mr. Stevenson has ever written. It is a mystery story, but there are no tangled threads difficult to hold in the mind, no dry explanations which must be read to its proper understanding. We never publish a story in the magazine without feeling assured that the great majority will like it. Seldom, however, do we feel as sure that all will like it and read it with constantly growing interest as we do in the case of this new serial.

THERE are two complete novels in the next issue of THE POPULAR. One, "The Reincarnation of Montague Smith," is by Francis Lynde, and is just such a stirring, charming, stimulating tale of modern business and the romance of the industry of to-day as we are used to expect from his pen. The other, "Under Strange Stars," is the work of Robert Welles Ritchie and Grant M. Overton. It is a story of the South Seas, vigorous, real, and compelling in its interest, strong in its characterization. We have said that we dislike indiscriminate praise, and we are not dealing in it—but all three of these big features of the next number of THE POPULAR are good enough for commendation anywhere; strong enough in their charm and fascination to distinguish them as being exceptional in the fiction field.

THERE'S a splendid story of the American Navy, by Clarence L. Cullen, and there's another baseball story by C. E. Van Loan. Then there's a great story of modern warfare, "A Matter of Tactics," by Donal Hamilton Haines. There is one of the best stories of college life we have read in years, "The Prodigy," by Ralph D. Paine, and there's another great Western story by George Pattullo. These are only a few features of a notable number of THE POPULAR. Altogether, we are going on record as saying that it's about as good a magazine as we have ever published. We'd like to hear your opinion about it. Won't you write us when you get it in two weeks and let us know?

Fighting the Trust

READ! A Watch Offer Without Parallel

Write for our FREE book on watches; a book that posts you on "selling systems," and explains the reasons for our most remarkable rock-bottom-price offer DIRECT TO YOU on the highest grade Burlington.

IF YOU WANT a highest grade watch (ladies' or gentlemen's), or if you ever expect to own such a watch, write NOW for the free Burlington book. See coupon below.

We **won't** "knuckle down" to selling systems among dealers, so we have decided to make such a tremendous and wonderful offer direct to the public on a first-class time piece, that no trust, no dealers under contract will or can stop us. **You too** will seize this opportunity to get the "Burlington Special" direct on this wonderful offer.

You should not buy a worthless watch just because it is cheap. Nor need you pay trust prices now for a top-notch watch. The free Burlington book explains.

$2.50 A Month At An Anti-Trust Price

$2.50 a month for the world's most superb time piece! The easiest payments at the rock-bottom—the **Anti-Trust** price. *To assure us that* **everybody** *will quickly accept this introductory direct offer, we allow cash or easy payments just as you prefer.*

No Money Down

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.

Get the FREE Burlington Book

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. 9147, 19th and Marshall Blvd., Chicago, Ill.

CUT OR TEAR ALONG THIS LINE

BURLINGTON WATCH CO
Dept. 9147, 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.....

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A FORTUNE

The man with I. C. S. training has a backing of inestimable value. It is better than "pull," because "push" is always better than "pull."

I. C. S. training is a booster. It gives you confidence in yourself and gives your employer confidence in you. It represents everywhere the right and title to a better salary.

The most surprising thing about I. C. S. training is its simplicity—the ease with which it is acquired, and how quickly you can turn it into actual earning power.

A college education requires years of application and costs a lot of money. I. C. S. training requires only part of your spare time and raises no question about your circumstances. There are no classes to keep up with—you can go as slow or as fast as you like. It is as private and personal as a parent's relation to a child.

Read the other page carefully and act on it today. Every minute you lose is money out of your pocket.

IN BACKING

May Come to the Man Who Signs This Coupon

A fortune in position and power has come to many a man as the direct result of marking the I. C. S. coupon.

First: The man who signs the Coupon takes the first step towards realizing his ambition for improvement. Unless this first step is taken success cannot be achieved.

Second: In marking the Coupon he makes a definite selection of the line of work which he wishes to follow.

Third: The Coupon brings to him complete information as to how he may obtain the training necessary to achieve success notwithstanding he may not have had the time to attend school nor the money to pay for an expensive course of instruction.

All of this information has been gathered by the I. C. S. for the benefit of the worker who wants to change his occupation, or seeks promotion and a higher salary.

Remember that in marking the coupon you are simply asking how you can equal the success of thousands who had no better prospects or opportunity than you, but who are today occupying high positions.

INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS
Box 821, SCRANTON, PA.
Explain, without further obligation on my part, how I can qualify for the position before which I mark X.

Automobile Running	Civil Service
Mine Superintendent	Architect
Mine Foreman	Chemist
Plumbing, Steam Fitting	Languages (Spanish, French, German, Italian)
Concrete Construction	Commercial English
Civil Engineer	Building Contractor
Textile Manufacturing	Architectural Draftsman
Stationary Engineer	Industrial Designing
Telephone Expert	Commercial Illustrating
Mechan. Engineer	Window Trimming
Mechanical Draftsman	Show Card Writing
Electrical Engineer	Advertising Man
Elec. Lighting Supt.	Stenographer
Agriculture	Bookkeeper
Electric Railways	Cotton Manufacturing
Structural Engineer	Woolen Manufacturing
R. R. Construction	Toolmaking
Metal Mining	Foundry Work
English Branches	Pattern Making
Gas Engineer	Blacksmithing
Foreman Plumber	Surveyor
	Poultry Farming

Name _____
Present Occupation _____
Street and No. _____
City _____ State _____

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Back cover