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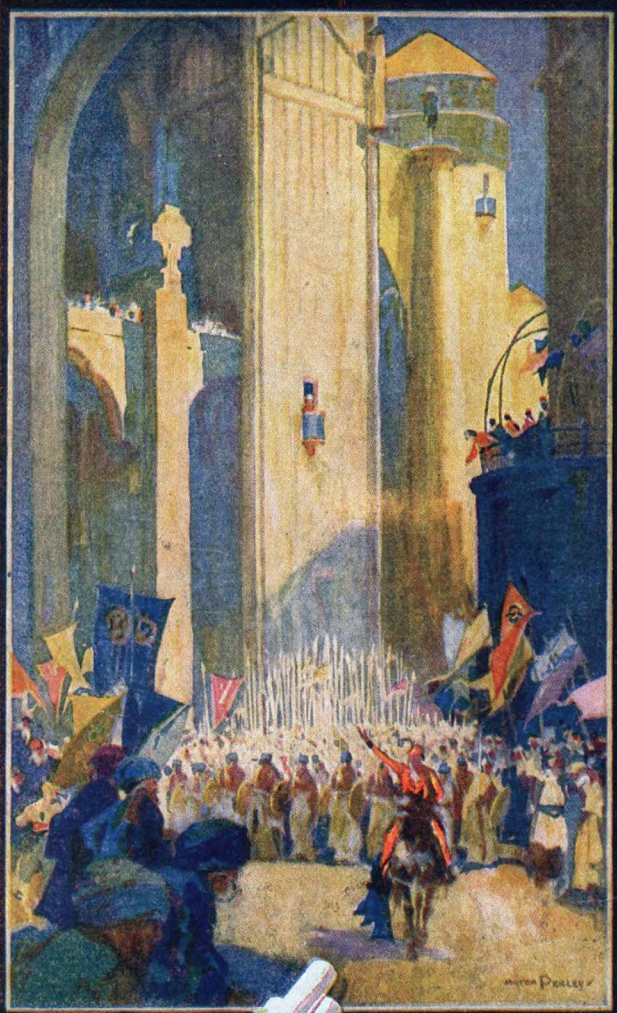
The SUNGAZERS

A Complete Novel by

H.H.KNIBBS



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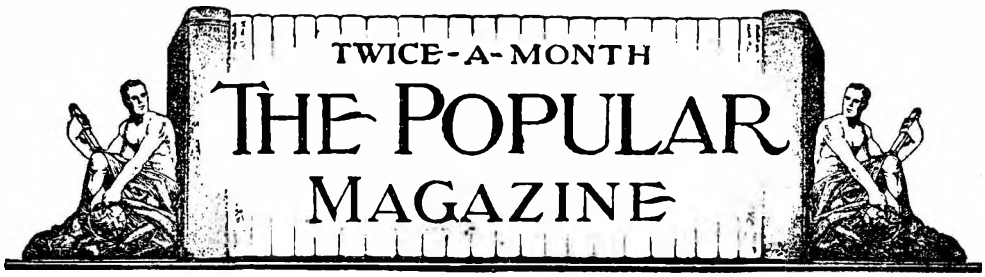
Vol. LXXVI MAY 20, 1925 No. 3



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Start May First

LAST year two and a half million babies were born in the United States—our future citizens—the men and women who are to be entrusted with the affairs of tomorrow. Precious as these little lives were, not only to their parents but to the country itself, *one* out of every *thirteen* died before its first birthday.

This tragic waste of human material must be checked. A plan is under way to bring this about. Every mother and father, everyone in America who loves children and his country, is asked to help.

May Day, which has always been one of the banner days of childhood with its picnics and its gayly-ribboned May-poles will hereafter be known as National Child Health Day.

May-Poles—Symbols of Health

When you see the May-poles, think of them as symbols of sound health for children.

All over the country members of religious, business, fraternal, patriotic, labor and other organizations are working to make Child Health Day a success.

There will be celebrations and festivals, public gatherings and speech making. Stores from coast to coast will have special window displays calling attention to Child Health Day. Business concerns, mills and factories will have important health demonstrations.

The men and women who are working for an improvement in child-health are taking steps to safeguard the right of every child to reach maturity in good condition physically, mentally and morally.

Find out what your community is doing to celebrate May Day. Let's not have a slacker town or city in all the country.

Herbert Hoover's Plea

The purpose of the May Day Celebration is to focus attention upon our most precious national asset—our children * * *

The ideal to which we should drive is that there should be no child in America that has not been born under proper conditions, that does not live in hygienic surroundings, that ever suffers from undernutrition, that does not have prompt and efficient medical attention and inspection, that does not receive primary instruction in the elements of hygiene and good health.

It is for the reiteration of this truth, for the celebration of it until it shall have become a living fact, that we urge all people of good will to join in the celebration of May Day as Child Health Day.

Herbert Hoover.

Every Home a Health Center

Have your boys and girls physically examined at least once a year. See that they eat the right body-building food. Make certain that they play every day in the fresh air, sleep long hours with open windows and establish healthy body-habits. Give them buoyant, joyous health. Endow them with strong, sturdy bodies.

But remember that the dreams you dream on May First and the plans you make must be carried out every day in the year to give your children the best possible chance in life.

There are upward of 35 million children in the United States who are subject to dangers in many communities by failure of community safeguards. In some sections of the country impure water and impure milk are supplied. In other communities inadequate provisions for health inspection are made. Again, too few playgrounds are opened or too many children are permitted by law to be at work in factories when they should be in school.

Six countries have lower infant mortality rates than the United States. There are many countries which lose fewer mothers in childbirth.

We need more prenatal and maternity care and instruction; closer supervision of health in schools; nutrition classes; more playgrounds and a wider system of public health measures.

The New May Day brings a plea for safeguarding the welfare of our children. The Metropolitan Life Insurance Company has published a booklet, "The Child", which is a guide and help to mothers. It will be mailed free, to anyone who asks for it, together with a Child Health Day program prepared by the American Child Health Association.

HALEY FISKE, *President.*

Published by

METROPOLITAN LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY—NEW YORK

Biggest in the World, More Assets, More Policyholders, More Insurance in force, More new Insurance each year

THE POPULAR MAGAZINE

VOL. LXXVI. MAY 20, 1925. No. 3

The Sungazers

By Henry Herbert Knibbs

Author of "Temescal," "The Snowbird and the Bull," Etc.

This story tells of the adventures that befell three men—a tramp royal, a word singer, and a pickle millionaire—on an extravagant quest after romance. The scene is Mexico and the American Southwest. The expedition, led by the inimitable Bill Morningstar, sets out to observe the world, at large and at length—sungazer fashion: It is delayed and diverted by the bandits of Captain Pedro Salazar Jabonera. The battle of Sandoval follows, and is succeeded by other perilous incidents, including the heavenly singing of Senorita Pepita, the mysterious murder of Don Cristobal, and the attempted usurpation of the pickle throne. Mr. Knibbs has achieved something distinctly notable in this story—the skillful blending of dramatic action with whimsical humor. ["The Sungazers" is a two-dollar book, complete and unabridged in this issue.—THE EDITOR.

(*A Complete Novel*)

CHAPTER I.

BILL MORNINGSTAR, SUNGAZER.

BILL MORNINGSTAR, smoking his stubby pipe and gazing from the window of the signal tower at Leoncita Junction, shrugged his shoulders as a passenger train slowed for the crossing, as though passenger trains were mere incidentals in his itinerant career.

He continued to gaze out across the New Mexico flats toward the distant San Andres Range. His blanket roll lay at his feet. He was ready to travel, and was at the time waiting for a train—almost any train that happened along, provided it were eastbound and not a passenger. He

had drifted in from the west that afternoon on a local freight.

He explained his disembarkation at the lone signal tower by stating that he had decided to change cars. At first the towerman had viewed Bill Morningstar with suspicion. Bill, black bearded, with rolling gait and bluff manner, to say nothing of his physical bulk and his peculiar attire, looked startlingly like certain pictures of Captain Kidd, vaguely recollected by the towerman as Bill sailed serenely into the room, dropped his bundle, and declared heartily that he liked the view from the "wheelhouse."

Yet a few minutes later the towerman had forgotten his first impression in listening to Bill's conversation, which was vivid, bold, and not without humor.

"I take it that you been around some," said the towerman. "Don't you ever get tired of rambling?"

Bill shook his head. "Me, I want to keep rambling till the bell rings. One time I used to think if I made it around the world easy, and takin' in all the sights, I would kind of settle down somewhere. But I ain't found the place yet, and I been around four times."

"Did you travel alone?" queried the towerman.

Bill Morningstar crammed a fresh load of tobacco into his stubby pipe, stretched out his legs, and began to talk. This is the story that he told the towerman.

I WAS alone on three of me trips. It was on me fourth that I met Bob—"Jinglebob," I used to call him—down in the desert between Indio and Yuma. He was a sungazer, but, mate, he weren't no common hobo. He was what you might call a specialist in scenery.

Seems he'd been up in Los Angeles all summer, and all of a sudden he lit out for the desert, where he could find some scenery that wasn't for sale and somebody standin' on it and tryin' to sell it to him. Anyhow, that's what he told me after I got acquainted with him.

When I run onto him down there in the desert he was standin' a piece from the road in a kind of open spot, and them cactuses all around, and talkin' to 'em just like he was makin' a speech to a regular audience. First, I thought he was crazy. He sees me but don't pay no attention—just kept right on talkin' to them cactuses. So I squats down and lights me pipe and listens. I noticed he had his bundle, same as me, and that he was a kind of good-lookin', slim young fella, with gray eyes and light-colored hair. He was shaved and had on a old blue-serge suit, and his shoes and his hat was in pretty good shape for a bo.

Well, he kept right on talkin' to the scenery, and pretty soon I could see that he was makin' up poetry. I heard him say the name of one or two places I'd been in, like Singapore and Colombo and Hongkong. Thinks I, mebby he ain't so crazy at that, havin' sense enough to work that poetry stuff off on the scenery instead of folks.

NOW I ain't got much use for them made-up yarns about things what never happened, or poetry about things what never could happen, but somehow, squattin' out there in the desert and listenin' to that slim guy, I got to believin' what he was sayin' just like I could see it all meself. Pretty soon he stops and looks my way and nods friendly.

"Don't mind me," says I.

"I don't," he says, and turns and looks me in the eye like he knowed all about me and what I was thinkin'. The sun was runnin' hot along the railroad tracks over by the road, and a little, white ranch house was twinklin' way down the valley. But at that there was a kind of edge to the air.

He kept on lookin' at me like I was a hundred miles away. I commences to feel queer. I had to say somethin', so I points to some sand cranes flyin' south down the valley. "The birds are flyin' south," says I. "The winter has begun."

He nodded and smiled. "The birds are flyin' south," he says, "the winter has begun." Only he said it just like a song. Then he laughed. "Perhaps you think

I'm crazy," he says, "but I'm not. How did you like my extemporary lyric?"

"You mean that poetry you was sayin'?" says I. "Why, it sounded all right the first time. Try her again and I'll listen. I got lots of time."

"Time?" says he, like it was a new idea. "You'll be mentioning money, next. But you have agreed to listen—a rare compliment. Whither are you bound, Ulysses?" says he.

"I'm Bill Morningstar," I tells him. "I'm headed east. If you keep goin' east long enough——" I says, but he stops me.

"Morningstar is a beautiful name," he says, serious. "My name is Bob."

"Like hell it is!" says I. And he nods and smiles and says, "'Like hell' is correct, Mr. Morningstar."

"Make it Bill," says I.

"That's a bargain!" he says, quick and cheerful. And then he turns away like I wasn't there and commences to talk poetry —all about wanderin' around the world, and a girl by the name of Penelope with rosebuds in her hair and kisses on her mouth, what lived somewhere south of anywhere I'd ever heard of.

And say, mate, he fair made my feet itch to be goin' somewhere and to be seein' sights and lookin' for somethin' what was just over the next hill. Pretty soon he quits and turns to me. "It's overland and overland and overseas to where?" says he.

Now, it kind of took my breath, him stoppin' sudden like that, just like I had to answer up right quick. His gray eyes was dancin' like sunshine on the water, and a little smile kept kind of twitchin' at the corners of his mouth.

"Most anywhere that ain't here," says I. And at that he looks at me seriouslike.

"Bill," he says, "that's the best answer yet. You're a philosopher."

"It ain't the first time I been called hard names," I tells him. "What's the lay? Got a pal, or are you wolfin' it? I'm gettin' tired of California. I been here two weeks. I'd like to see somethin' new. If you're goin' anywhere, come on. It's up to you."

At that he looks me over, grins, and sticks out his hand. The minute I gripped his hand I knowed he'd never done any hard work; that his line was that poetry stuff and nothin' else. I asks him if he had traveled far, and he said he'd traveled too far to ever go back. I asks him who wants to go back, anyhow. And he waves his hand to the scenery and then he says, slow and serious:

"The mountains are all hid in mist, the valley is like amethyst,
The poplar leaves they turn and twist, oh, silver, silver, green!
Out there somewhere along the sea a ship is waiting patiently,
While up the beach the bubbles slip with white afloat between."

Yes, he could catch holt of an idea like that, and make poetry of it as easy as rollin' out biscuit dough. Only they weren't no ship or no beach or no sea—just desert. And what he called poplar leaves was cottonwoods down by that ranch house.

Well, anyhow, he picks up his bed roll and swings into the rope and we cross over to the road and beat it down the valley till we come to where the Salton Sea is twinklin' blue in the sun, and one of them government water-hole signs pointin' back to a spring somewhere near the hills.

We camped early at the spring. Bob, he set there lookin' acrost to the other range, on the west. I picks up some wood for a fire and asks him how he is hooked up for grub. He unrolls his blanket and takes out some crackers and a couple of little boxes of sardines. That was all he had. He didn't even have a can to make coffee in.

I seen that hittin' the grit was new to him, with all his easy-goin' way of talkin' about travelin' out there somewhere and then some. "Jinglebob," says I, "you may be all right when it comes to manufacturin' poetry. So is a mockin' bird settin' on a pussy-willow perch. But when it comes to sungazin' you're kind of short on the commissary. Sardines *do* take the curse off dry crackers, but them little imitation fish won't carry you far when it comes to a long strut acrost this unfor-

givin' landscape. Coffee is what you need, and bread, and a couple of boiled eggs and some tomatoes."

"Then let's have 'em," says he, like I was the waiter and him dinin' at a swell club. I got kind of hot in the neck, but honest, mate, I couldn't get mad at him. And right on top of that he says, "I hope you didn't forget to fetch along the butter, also."

"Where was you raised?" says I, feelin' kind of sarcasticlike.

"In the Garden of Eden," says he. "And Lilith dwelt there also."

"Was Lily one of the help?" says I, 'or did she run the joint?"

"Bill," says he, lookin' at me solemn, "you're a wonder!"

I SEE it was no use tryin' to make him heave to by firin' a shot across his bows. He kept right on just like he hadn't noticed anything. So I sets to and boils the coffee, with the eggs boilin' in it at the same time. I spreads out a newspaper and slices some bread and opens a can of tomatoes with me jackknife.

He fetches over the sardines and crackers, and by the time the sun had touched the top of the San Jacinto Range we had tucked away all the grub in sight, except half a loaf of bread and the coffee for breakfast. Seems he could eat hearty, or go without eatin' much, and it didn't make much difference.

"Now," says I, after we had our grub, "I'm goin' to put you wise to a few hitches. First, you want to get yourself a can, like mine, with a balin'-wire handle on it, and another can what fits inside, and you can keep your coffee in that. When the coffee gets used down a bit you can pack three, four eggs in it and they won't break. And get yourself a strip of light canvas and bread will keep fresh, wrapped up in it, for quite a while.

"With eggs and bread and coffee and your bed roll, you can live anywhere and not have to go hungry or ask for a handout. I always keep a little salt in one of these here envelopes. It helps some, and is good for cuts, likewise. And I keep some extra matches in a bottle in case it rains."

And—would you believe it?—that there Jinglebob grins over the cigarette he is rollin' and says: "Very interesting and concise, Bill, but why should I take all that trouble when you can do it so much better than I can?"

"Goddlemighty!" says I. "Do you think I'm goin' to rustle grub for both of us and you settin' on your pants doin' nothin' but watch me work? Here I been and rustled wood for the fire and done the cookin' and everything but feed you with a spoon, and you set there gazin' at the scenery—until I told you to come and get it. You ain't turned a hand since we lit here," says I.

"But I turned this," says he. "Listen, Bill." And he waves his hand, and this is what he gives me:

"The tide hounds race far up the shore, the hunt is on: the breakers roar!
Her spars are tipped with gold, while o'er her deck the spray is flung:
The buoys that rollick in the bay, they nod the way, they nod the way!
The hunt is up; I am the prey! The hunter's bow is strung!"

And, mate, the way he said it made it seem like that there Salton Sea was the real thing, and the tide poundin' in, and an outbound ship heeled over, with the buoys noddin' like everything was all right, and the spray flyin' salt and strong in your face. You see, that there slim guy kind of had the knack of makin' you feel the words, instead of just hearin' 'em. It was kind of like bein' mesmerized, while it lasted.

"While you rustled wood for the fire, I rustled that," says he. "How do you like it?"

And I tells him I likes it fine.

BILL MORNINGSTAR turned and glanced out of the tower window as a westbound passenger moved slowly over the crossing. He gestured toward the passenger train with his huge red paw.

"They think they're seein' the country, but they ain't," he declared contemptu-

ously. "They're just goin' somewhere in a hurry."

"I been here five years," said the towerman, indicating the levers with a nod. "Right here—and only one trip—Petrified Forest—that chunk over there," and he gestured toward a piece of petrified wood serving as a paper weight.

"Married?" queried Bill Morningstar, taking up the chunk of petrified wood and glancing at it casually. The towerman nodded.

"Petrified," declared Bill. His meaning was a trifle obscure; and, observing the peculiar expression on the towerman's thin and sallow face, Bill hastened to obliterate any possible misinterpretation. "That's different!" he said heartily. "A married man belongs to home.

"But there was a married man once, and a millionaire at that, who tore loose from his moorin's and went driftin' around the country, seein' things. But he went back home, after a while, account of his family tryin' to make the lawyers think he was dead, and puttin' his business in the hands of a receiver, which same was his brother-in-law. But he got home in time to save the bacon—only in his case it was pickles. I know, because it was me started him to ramblin'."

Ignoring the real flavor of Bill Morningstar's desultory narrative, the towerman stated that he had a brother-in-law down in Mecca, in the Imperial Valley.

Bill, who had turned to gaze out of the window, seemed absorbed in watching the sunset hills of San Andres. The word "Mecca," however, seemed to recall him to himself. He went on with his yarn.

MECCA? I been there, too. I crossed the hot sands. And Algiers, and Samarkand. They ain't so wonderful when you get there. Goin' to 'em is the best—and what you see on the way. That's what ails us fellas with the nervous feet. We're always lookin' for something new—bigger and more interestin' than what we've seen.

That's what ailed Jinglebob—that, and liquor. Not that he drank a whole lot more than I did. But it worked different on him. Now I could take a couple of drinks and get lit up, and sing and feel like a million dollars, which is one way of gettin' rich quick. But when Bob got to drinkin' he took it serious and couldn't quit until it put him down for the count.

But everything he done was like that. He had to go the limit. I recollect one time down in the islands. He'd been over in one of them native huts all night, visitin' and singin' them mournful songs, and drinkin' some. Bein' young and good lookin' he made a hit with the natives.

I was settin' on the beach that mornin', kind of thinkin' things over, when he comes, walkin' slow and proud, like mebby he was a king out of a job, or somethin'. I see right away that he was fightin' his liquor hard.

He set down alongside of me with his knees drawed up and his head on his knees, like he was asleep. I just said nothin', waitin' for him to make up his mind what he was goin' to do next. After a while he sets up straight.

"Bill," he says, quiet and low, "catch holt of the rope." You see, when he felt he was slippin' he would always say, "Bill, catch holt of the rope," meanin' for me to stand by and heave him a line before he sunk clean out of sight.

"I'm listenin'," says I, knowin' that the only way he could get square with himself was to loosen up, and tell his Uncle Bill all about it. I guess mebby that was my job—listenin' and sayin' nothin', even if they was times I wanted to give him hell.

Anyhow, it kind of helped him to get over one of them black spells. Him bein' a college guy and mighty proud and independent, made me feel queer when he would let me in on them things what bothered him. Sometimes I didn't savvy what he was talkin' about—but I used to let on I did, by sayin' nothin'.

"Bill," he says, kind of smilin', and his face dead white and his gray eyes burnin', "Bill, I'm a dam' fool."

I says nothing.

"The liquor," says he, only mebby he said kava or wine or somethin', "was like

melted opals. We drank from coconut shells. We feasted and drank and talked, and Atu sang of the islands in the old days. Atu wore a red flower in her hair. It seemed that I had been here ages ago. The folly of a dream," says he.

And he sets lookin' at the sea, rollin' smooth and oily and slippin' up the sand, with the mornin' sun shootin' red streaks acrost, like silk veils wavin' and floatin' on the water.

"Listen, Bill," he says after a while, just as if I wasn't doin' that and nothin' else. Then he hands me this:

"The woven hut that fronted on the sand,
The crimson parrakeets, the languorous fronds,
The laughter of the maidens, hand in hand,
Who ran to bathe among the lily ponds:

The palms, the moon, the starlit melody,
Sweet indolence and dusky faces sweet,
The pallid bloom of stars upon the sea,
The cool of night, the calm, the dream complete."

He asks me with his eyes how I liked it and I tells him I liked it fine. You see, I used to learn them pieces of his just like he said 'em, by listenin' to him and askin' him to say 'em, 'cause sometimes I could get him out of a black spell by gettin' him to say his poetry. And it kind of interested him to think I would take the trouble to learn his stuff.

ANYHOW, he was goin' on, makin' up poetry about them islands, and that there dusky village girl, as he called her, when I says: "Lay off the dream stuff, Bob. Here comes the little lady herself."

And, sure enough, down the beach, smilin' in the mornin' sun, comes that little, slim, brown Atu girl, with a red flower behind her ear, and not havin' on more'n was necessary. She looks at Bob and says somethin' low and soft, and holds out her hand.

"Atu," says Bob, and gets up and bows, "this is my comrade, Bill Morningstar."

But that slim little trick—she weren't more than fourteen or fifteen years old—can't see nothin' but me pal with his white face and gray eyes, and hair gleamin' like gold in the sunlight. I was wishin' I was young and good lookin' and not an old walrus all nicked up from battin' around the world.

And, mate, even when her eyes was callin' to him, and her smile, and the way she moved her arms like seaweed floatin' on a wave, Bob says to me, whisperin': "Catch holt of the rope, Bill."

"Remember Penelope," says I. "Penelope is waitin' for you, out there somewhere."

And at that he turns on me and fair burns me with them gray eyes, and the lines commence to set at the corners of his mouth, and I know he is mad, but he's caught holt of the rope and ain't goin' to sink.

Well, the girl didn't get mad. Them island girls ain't built that way. They are just happy, or mournful. Anyhow, she stood lookin' kind of sad, and one hand on her breast and the other stretched out like she was beggin' him to change his mind.

But Bob was game. He turns and walks off down the beach, and seein' as there was nothin' for me to do but follow him, I do the same. And when I catch up with him, way down by the point, he swings round, smilin' and cheerful.

"Bill," he says, "you're certainly a wonder!"

CHAPTER II.

JINGLEBOB.

AN eastbound freight whistled for the block. The towerman glanced at his watch, which lay on the table, reached for a lever, and presently, after the rumble of the freight had subsided, turned to Bill Morningstar.

"But what did you fellas do before you got to those islands? You said you were down in the Imperial Valley——"

He paused, and Bill nodded reminiscently.

"You must have had a tough time of it down around Yuma and crossing the desert," said the towerman. "You being used to roughing it and him a tenderfoot,

I should think you could have made it faster alone."

Bill Morningstar raised his huge hands as though to expostulate, then dropped them to his sides as though he considered it a hopeless task to try to enlighten one so evidently unable to appreciate the freedom of unscheduled journeying, the joy of chance comradeship on the road, and the absolute indifference of a sungazer—Bill's name for an itinerant gentleman of the highways—to time or haste. So he went on with his yarn.

WELL, I didn't quit him, mostly because he didn't quit me. You see, Jinglebob, with all his fancy ideas of poetry and edducation and such, was just a sufferin' boob like me, or anybody. Only, he was more honest about it than most. And he had all kinds of nerve. He'd stick to the finish.

I recollect how down in Tucson, one night, we got into a tangle with some Mexicans. You see, after we hoofed it into Yuma, we held kind of a committee meetin' regardin' our financial standin', like.

I wasn't yearnin' to cross New Mexico and Texas on foot. It ain't good goin' for a bo, in them States. The towns act like they was scared of each other, bein' so far apart. Anyhow, we camped just over the river, acrost from Yuma.

It was gettin' along toward winter, and the weather down there was fine. We was settin' by our fire, that night, and I says to Bob: "Bob, what do you say to hittin' the plush to El Paso, southern route, Sunset Unlimited—and then mebby we can beat the cold weather to New York, and ship on a cattle boat acrost the pond?"

"Hittin' the plush?" he says, like he didn't understand ridin' in a passenger coach.

"Sure!" says I. "In a regular train with a ticket in your hatband and everything."

"Why," says he, kind of slow, "I don't object, if you don't."

"That ain't the main idea," says I. "The main idea is, I got about six dollars in me jeans. We couldn't more'n get out of town on that."

"Oh, it's money you mean!" he says, smilin' kind of funny. "How much would we need?"

"Well," says I, "it's a fair jump. Fifty would do it."

"Easy!" he says, and rolls a cigarette and sets lookin' at the fire. "However," he says, "I'll have to buy a new shirt, and get my clothes pressed and my shoes shined."

"Why not buy a silk hat and a Prince Albert, and spend the whole six?" says I, him takin' my idea so offhand.

"That won't be necessary," says he, like he meant it serious. "Call me at six, James."

"I got kind of hot in the neck, but, honest, I couldn't get mad at him. So we turn in, and I'm wonderin' how Bob is goin' to make fifty plunks, and I go to sleep wonderin'. Next mornin', after we had our coffee and somebody's chicken what got tangled up in me feet crossin' the road the evenin' before, Bob washes up the second time, and brushes his blue-serge suit the best he can, and tells me he'll be back at sundown. Him bein' so offhand and independent, I do the same. "So long," says I. "And don't take any wooden nickels."

BEFORE he went I gave him three of me six bucks, and, kind of suspectin' that liquor was his failin' and mebby he'd headed for the first saloon to get his clothes pressed and a shine, I headed for the same, but he wasn't there. I didn't locate him until about noon, when, sure enough, he comes out of the newspaper office, lookin' slick and full of business and walkin' brisk. You never would of took him for the same Bob.

He steps up to me and says: "Just the man I'm lookin' for!" like he never saw me before. "You're a tramp, ain't you?" he says. "I'm doin' a little feature stuff for the *Enterprise*," he says, "a story a day for six days at ten dollars a story. That's the contract. Tell me what you think of the climate of Yuma in winter,

and what is your opinion as to a rush of tourists this season?"

"The climate suits me fine," says I. "And the tourists most always rush."

Then he steps up closter. "I landed a job, Bill," says he. "I am doing feature stuff for the newspaper. Having recently arrived from the East, so to speak, and knowing nothing whatever about Yuma, I am telling the nation all about Yuma as a winter resort. Joke of it is the *Enterprise* has about five thousand subscribers, and they all live right around Yuma. But then," he says, "they will like to hear about their own town.

"When you read my first story, to-morrow morning, you will notice that I have taken a little bungalow on the outskirts, where it is quiet. Officially, I came here for a rest."

"If you get back to camp before I do," says I, "you'll find your little bungalow in that arroyo near the road where I cached it with mine, this mornin'. I savvy. I'll lay low while you do your stuff."

"Correct!" he says, and swings round and starts off down the street and stops a man in front of the hardware store and commences to talk to him like he knowed him all his life."

"A week in this burg," thinks I, "is too much. But mebby I can stand it."

But the second day, what with loafin' round camp, I got to feelin' nervous in me feet, so I hires out to a livery barn, and what with swingin' a fork and a shovel and pushin' a broom and cuffin' down horses, I managed to stick it out. Saturday night Bob comes into camp with about forty dollars in his pocket. I had six from workin' in the livery, so it looked like we would be gettin' on the move again.

"How did you do it?" I asks him, bein' curious, because if he could go out and nick forty or fifty bucks in a week, what was he doin' ramblin' with a hard-shell like me? Now he had a way of sometimes answerin' questions kind of backwardlike.

"Bill," he says, smilin', "do you know what M. A. stands for?"

Now I got kind of hot in the neck, him askin' a fool question like that when I ask him somethin' sensible. "Not bein' a edducated guy, like you," says I, "I don't, unless mebby it stands for puttin' on side when a pal asks you a straight question."

At that he got to lookin' mournful. "I beg your pardon," he says. Then he laughs. "M. A. stands for Miserable American," says he.

"Well, the woods are full of 'em," says I. "But, anyhow, you got the dough, and if you can't smile at that, I'll do the smilin' and you can cry in your coffee. Cheer up, old-timer!" says I. "For there is the road windin' mile after mile, and nothin' to do but go."

"Glory in excelsior!" says he. "Where did you get that line?" And he perked up and drunk his coffee, and gets all excited and says we can catch a train for El Paso that evenin', and for me to get ready, and I asks him what I got to get ready."

"That's so!" he says. "There's nothing to do but go." And we get busy and rope our bed rolls and mooch over to town. We was passin' that newspaper office when I asks him if he had them newspaper stories he'd been writin', seein' as I would like to read 'em while takin' me ease on the plush. He looked surprised.

"Oh, that stuff!" he says, scornful. "That literature I am leaving to posterity."

"You might of kept the papers to start a fire with, anyhow," says I.

"Perhaps I have started a fire," he says, smilin' peculiar. And then he says, quick, "I'll take that back."

"You're shootin' in the dark," says I, not gettin' him.

"In the dark," he says, kind of mournful. And then he laughs and says that the morning star is shinin' just the same.

"That's a switch light," I tells him. And by the same token we are at the station, and what do you think he done? He struts in and planks down the price of two tickets to El Paso and two berths on a Pullman before I could head him off.

"Number four and number six, George," says Bob to the porter, and at that the negro steps lively, mebby thinkin'

we are millionaires travelin' under consumed names, or somethin'.

Anyhow, Bob puts on a most amazin' front, breezin' down the aisle like he was born and raised in a Pullman. I tags along behind him, feelin' like all the swells are wonderin' why Bob hadn't sent me to the cleaners before he hired me for his valet. But Bob didn't put on no airs with me.

And what with there bein' no fresh air and no chance to smoke, or even talk natural, I got to feelin' hot in the neck. I was feelin' sore, account of Bob gettin' us into society instead of where we belonged, which was out with the coyotes and rabbits. I was sweatin' like a stoker, and pretty soon Bob says: "Take off your coat, Bill, and make yourself comfortable."

"Thanks," says I, "but only that flash guy up ahead, with the diamond cuff buttons and the silk shirt, has took off his coat in this here car, and seein' as how I always did hate to expose my jewelry in public, I keeps mine on. As you was sayin' the other day, a gent is known by his works—and I ain't figurin' to let the dust get into mine," says I.

AND then the young lady what was settin' acrost the aisle, readin' a magazine, smiled, and I seen her, and she looked away quick, and Bob he grins like a kid, and the young lady she looks right past me at Bob and smiles again, and I get hot in the neck and mooch back to the smokin' room and light me pipe, and things ain't so bad.

After a while Bob shows up and says to come on back and be introduced to the young lady, who is anxious to meet me. "She's a regular girl—no foolishness," says Bob. "She's Miss Penelope Armitage. Her father owns the *Enterprise*."

"So that's the answer to them looks she was givin' you?" says I.

"That's the answer," says Bob.

"Short and sweet," says I. "Now I know why I'm ridin' in a Pullman."

Bob, he kind of blushed and pulls one of them newspapers from his pocket and says to read the article called "A Wanderer's Notebook," which I done. And, sure enough, there was one of them stories about hobos and wanderin', and the desert, and camp fires, and all that stuff. And it was wrote just like I'd said it meself, includin' what I thought about the climate of Yuma in winter, and how tourists always rushed. And it was signed "Bill Morningstar."

Says I: "I'll have you pinched for forgery and conduct unbecomin' of a gentleman for institutin' these here incriminatin' intestimonials." And I reads her again, and she sure sounded good, but I didn't let on to Bob that I liked his yarn.

"Quit fooling," says Bob. "Come on, and meet Miss Armitage. She's interested in our—our manner of life," he says. "Be a sport, Bill!"

"All right," says I. "If she can stand it, I can."

And so we go on up forward, and Bob tells her this is me, and she bows and shakes hands like I was a regular society bug. Then she moves over in the other seat and says, "Won't you sit down, Mr. Morningstar?"

"And honest, mate, she done it all so smooth and natural that I was settin' alongside of her and talkin' before I knowed it. She had one of them newspapers in her hand and says as how my story is fresh and original, and did Mr. Andover write the stories, really, and was I the Bill Morningstar mentioned."

"It's me, all right," says I. "But Bob done it. You see, miss," says I, "he's a edducated guy, and, our finances bein' kind of weak, he hires out to this here paper so we can get enough cash to ride on the plush instead of a rattler, naturallike. We're sungazers, by rights," says I. "We ought to be hittin' the grit, instead of struttin' the velvet, but seein' as we're signed up for the voyage, we're makin' the best of what could be worse, but not much."

"Sungazers!" she says, like she was mighty interested. "Then sungazers hit the grit more often than they strut the velvet? I never, never heard those ex-

pressions before. I think they're charming!"

"Well," says I, "it ain't for me to brag, but me and Bob is pretty fair samples of sungazers. Course, they's a lot of them expressions you ain't heard, bein' as you are a lady. You see, on the road it is different. Most everything we say means somethin'. Bob was kind of green, at first, but he's catchin' on fast. Me, I been around four times."

"Around the world?" she says, like that was somethin' wonderful.

"And back again," says I.

She gives kind of a little sigh, and sets there, thinkin' about somethin'. Pretty soon she asks me what "sungazers" means and where the expression come from.

"Well," says I, "it means a guy what is always lookin' for the sun to come up in the mornin', bein' as how the sun is his stove, mostly, and his clock, and kind of friendly, bein' always on the move, same as he is.

"They ain't many folks ever see the sun," says I, by way of explainin' to her. "They know the sun is shinin' or it ain't. But they don't look at it, 'cause you can only look at it in the mornin' and the evenin' without hurtin' your eyes, and most folks ain't up at sunrise, and they are too tired at sunset to pay much attention to anything but gettin' home to supper.

"You see, miss," says I, "folks what ramble, like me and Bob, and ain't tied to any job, kind of tie to the sun and the weather and the moon and the stars, and hills and such. I don' know who was the first to call us sungazers. I guess the name kind of just growed up out of itself."

"Thank you," she said, smilin' friendly. After that she didn't say nothin'—just set there like she was happy and satisfied with everything. And I guess if she was thinkin' of sungazers, Bob was the one.

PRETTY soon the porter commences shiftin' scenery and haulin' out blankets and pillows from up aloft and riggin' up the bunks and hangin' them green curtains; so I mooches back to the smokin' room, seein' as how I never slept in one of them mummy cases. Thinks I, I can snore just as loud back here in the stern cabin as I can behind curtains.

After a while Bob shows up, and him not sayin' anything, I ask him, polite, did he know that young lady was goin' to El Paso when he bought our tickets on the Pullman. "Same train, same car, same newspaper," says I, by way of keepin' up the talk.

Bob kind of blushed, and said what difference did it make, and that he got the only berths left, and trains was public conveyances, and that if I didn't like the arrangement I could stick me head out of the window and get it knocked off by the first post that come along.

I seen he was kind of upset about somethin', so I says: "Now wait a minute! Actin' haughty ain't goin' to buy us no breakfast. I ain't no college guy and no poet," says I, "but there's nothin' wrong with me head, at that. Speakin' plain," says I, "that little lady has been lookin' at you, and tryin' not to, and you been doin' your hell-firedest not to look at her ever since we climbed aboard the yacht. And I noticed by the paper that Miss Penelope Armitage is leavin' Yuma this evenin' for a distended trip East.

"When I ask you did you know she was goin' back East before you bought our tickets, you turn your blow torch on me like you was goin' to peel all my paint off. Do you think my brains is ossified just because I ain't been to college?" says I.

And at that Bob reaches out his hand in that quick way of his and shakes me hand and says: "Bill, you're a wonder! But even if everything was as you think it is, I wouldn't have a chance in the whole, wide world."

Him dippin' his colors, handsome, like that, and signalin' friendly, I gets over feelin' sore and hails him hearty. "All is snug below and aloft," says I. "And don't you let your Uncle Bill bein' anchored in port interfere with your cruisin' around with any kind of a craft in tow. Mebby you *ain't* got a chance in the world,

but hope springs a turtle in the human nest."

And at that Bob looks at me like he was goin' to faint and says, "Say that again, Bill."

But before I could do it he commences to laugh just like I was jokin' instead of talkin' serious. But when he got through laughin', he went serious, lookin' mournful like he was thinkin' about somethin' a couple of thousand miles away.

IT was gettin' late, and we was zoomin' along at a pretty good clip, and pretty soon Bob says we better turn in. I told him all right and to go ahead. "Ain't you comin' to bed?" he says, and I tells him:

"No, but I'm goin' to bed." And he says: "All right. Finish your smoke," and goes out.

Nobody was in the smokin' room, so I stretches out on the long seat for a snooze. First thing I know, in comes the porter and commences shufflin' around puttin' up clean towels and dustin' and wipin' the machinery and singin' a little tune. When he gets through he tells me me berth is made up.

"So is me mind," I tells him. "This bunk suits me, and if you want to live till mornin', get out of me boodwar and stay out."

He says, "Yassah! Yassah!" and starts for the door. So I take a snooze for mebby a couple of hours and then wake up, and there is that porter kneelin' on the floor of the smokin' room and practicin' shootin' craps and makin' motions like a monkey playin' with a couple of walnuts he can't bust. First I think I'll give him the run, but next I think different. So I stretches and says: "Hello, George! What's the game you're playin'?"

"Craps, boss!" says he. "I'm tryin' 'em out, gettin' ready to give those dinin'-car niggers a pow'ful surprise. I show 'em!" says he, chucklin' like a leaky valve on a condenser.

"Show me how you do it," says I. "The game looks interestin'." At which he gets up and peeks around the curtain, and comes back, and I squat down and he shows me how he plays the game.

After a while I show him how I play the game, and in a couple of hours I got everything off him except his uniform. Then I tells him he can learn, mebby, if the tourist trade holds out, and that I lost a lot of sleep and want to catch up. But he didn't have brains enough to get mad. 'Stead of that he goes out and fetches in a pillow, and I tells him to go fetch another one for me other ear, to keep the cinders out, which he done, cheerful.

Then I hand him a dollar and tell him it will give him a start to clean out the dinin'-car crew. He thanks me polite, and that's the last I see of him till mornin'.

Bob comes in the smokin' room in the mornin' and washes up and asks me how I slept. I told him with me feet hangin' over the end of the seat, but, savin' that, pretty good. He whistles a tune and says nothin' for quite a spell. Then he says, sudden, "How about breakfast?"

"Fine!" says I. "But who's goin' to pay for it?"

"Are you broke, too?" says he.

"Well, it ain't your fault if I ain't," says I. "But while you been dreamin', I been speculatin' in ivory." And I hauls out a couple of handfuls of change and bills. "The porter and me had a game of craps," says I careless. And I let it go at that.

Bob he looks at me queer and whistles. "You're a wonder!" he says. "And the ravens have provided for Job."

"Ravens is right!" says I. "If that porter ain't ravin', he will be when he gets time to think about it."

"Were they his dice?" says Bob.

"They were," says I. "But they wouldn't been his if he'd played a little longer. Speakin' of dice, if doughnuts don't cost more'n ten dollars a pair on this here ramblin' Waldorf-Astoria, we might crack one between us, and then the ice water is free."

Knowin' I wasn't the kind to throw good money away, just because I had a handful of it, Bob steps kind of easy.

"Two and a half will see us through," says he.

"How much do they charge for a feed?" I asks him.

"A dollar, for breakfast. Fifty cents for the waiter, of course," says he, kind of offhandlike.

"Well," says I, "I'm willin' to try and eat a dollar's worth of grub, just to get even with the company, but I'll be keelhauled if I'll pay for the waiter's breakfast. Let the company feed him."

"It's customary," says Bob, grinnin' like a kid that knows what you mean, but don't want to let on he knows.

"That's what I thought," says I. "Waiters has got to eat, just the same as white folks."

SO we got up and started down the aisle and round a mahogany bend and acrost a platform and round another mahogany bend, and down another aisle, with shoes stickin' out, and valises, and curtains wigglin', and after walkin' a couple of miles we come to the dinin' car, with the white tablecloths, and the silver and glass shinin' bright, and windows what you could see out of.

And when I seen all them swells, I wisht I was out in the brush, with Bob settin' alongside, and us boilin' the billy, and nothin' in sight but road and sky. The seats was all filled up except two at a table where a kind of fat, important-lookin' gent and a lady was peckin' away at their grub. Right away I seen the dinin'-car boss hadn't fell in love with me at first sight, 'cause, when we first come in, the dinin'-car boss holds up his hand, with one finger stickin' up, and says, "One?" and smiles oily.

"Two," says Bob. The dinin'-car boss pretends he is surprised, but it don't do him no good.

The fat guy with the couple of chins and the stummick gives us a hard look and then goes to peckin' at his melon. We set down beside him and his lady. She is lookin' at us sideways and haughty, and pretty soon she turns to the fat guy.

"Tramps!" she kind of hisses, like she was pertendin' we couldn't hear it, and knowin' we could. "Aloisius," she says, "if you don't speak to the dining-car conductor, I will."

"Now, take it easy!" says the fat guy to her, kind of like he was scared she was goin' to throw a fit, or somethin' else. She give me a look like I was a bottle of poison, or a horn toad or somethin', and tells that there Aloisius that she wouldn't stand it. And at that the fat guy kind of shrugs his shoulders like he was licked and calls the dinin'-car boss.

"My wife objects to eating breakfast in such company," he says to the dinin'-car boss. "We consider it somewhat of an imposition. Can't you find us another table?"

Bob, he set there, readin' the bill of fare, but I see him get kind of white, like he's fightin' to keep from sayin' somethin'. I got hot in the neck, and seein' as I was payin' for the grub, and behavin' meself, I turns around to the fat guy and says:

"Pardner, if you weren't a bald-headed old porpoise and too useless with your hands to mess up, I'd take me foot off the safety valve and wreck somethin'. I been around the world three times," says I, "and I been what you might call a sort of prodigal son, feedin' on chicken when it was handy, and shucks when I couldn't get nothin' else. But this is the first time I ever set down to a table to eat with a hog who wanted the whole trough to himself. But, bein' a gent, I'm leavin' the whole works to you."

And at that I stands up, but Bob pulls me sleeve and tells me to sit down and order my breakfast.

"Mebby that's a good idea," says I. And I see that folks is lookin' at us and the eyes of the waiter is rollin' around loose, like marbles in a cup. The fat guy he swelled up just like one of them poison spiders, and his wife she starts to glarin' sideways at me and sniffin' and cockin' one of her chins. Pretty soon she says to this here Aloisius, "Aloisius Brandstatter, I'm going to leave the table!"

"Thanks for that," says I, "for we're goin' to need it."

And we stood up and let 'em squeeze out. The fat guy give the dinin'-car boss a talk, and then he and his wife went sailin' down the aisle like a couple of canal boats, with everybody lookin' at 'em what wasn't lookin' at us. Then a waiter glides up, soapy. "Clear away the garbage," says I, "and fetch us some ham and eggs and coffee."

BOB is lookin' kind of serious, but pretty soon he cheers up and says: "Bill, you're all right!" And I tells him that ain't no news, and seein' as how I kept me hands off the fat guy, mebby I am. Bob grins and says he is sorry.

"For what?" says I, feelin' kind of perked up after me first mug of coffe.

"Well, for everything—the embarrassment, the——" And he stops.

"If you're meanin' me," says I, "just forget it. We got our seats at this here table, and our grub, and we're rollin' down to El Paso, and that's what we got aboard the train for."

Bob looks at me friendly, and pretty soon the waiter fetches in a couple of finger bowls and I dips me flippers in like I was scared to get 'em wet and wipes 'em on me napkin, and tosses it careless on the table. "What's the damages?" says I to the waiter, puttin' on that high-tone stuff just to show Bob I knowed the ropes.

Then we struts down the aisle, and, seein' as some of the folks are lookin' at us, I nod and smile friendly, and honest, mate, some of 'em smiled back just like they was human.

CHAPTER III.

ALOISIUS JOINS UP.

WHEN we got back to our car, Bob was for takin' his regular seat, but I wanted to smoke, so Bob goes up forward and I go in the smokin' room. I guess that suited Bob all right, for it give him a chance to visit with that little lady he introduced me to.

You see, they got acquainted in Yuma when he was workin' for that newspaper what her dad owned. Mebby she would 'a' been interested in Bob, anyhow, but what with him bein' a ramblin' son with the nervous feet, like meself, only him bein' a poet and edducated and havin' brains, also, that little Penelope lady was took serious about savin' him from gettin' to be a regular down-and-outer.

Not that she was one of the arguin' kind. She was just that nice that if a guy knowed her well, he'd think of her, mebby, about the time he needed to think of somebody to keep him straight. I know, for many's the time I got to thinkin' of her. You see, they's some wimmen in this here world that mebby you see just once, or mebby they say "Good mornin'" to you by way of passin' a friendly word, and you know by just lookin' at 'em that they're about the finest God can make. Well, she was like that.

I been in most every port in the world, and I seen plenty of wimmen, yella and brown and black and white, and it ain't my fault or theirs if I ain't a pretty good judge of wimmen. I got to wonderin' what it all meant, anyhow, and pretty soon the train stopped at one of them lonely lookin' stations out on the flats, and the conductor comes hustlin' through our car with a train hand followin' him.

Then somebody asks the porter what is wrong, and he tells 'em somethin' has gone wrong with the engine, and everybody looks out of the windows, and one or two go walkin' up and down the aisle. I go out to the platform, and there is the fat guy talkin' to the porter, and pretty soon the fat guy hands him a bill and the porter opens the vestibule doors and lets down the steps and the fat guy gets out and goes over to the station.

Then two or three passengers get out and walk up and down in the sunshine, and I do the same. The fat guy is in the station talkin' to the agent. I get curious and mooch over and kind of stand in the doorway with me back to 'em, watchin' the passengers on the platform.

Pretty soon I see the conductor and the train hands signal to get aboard and the

passengers climb on. The porter looks over my way and hollers out somethin' and grabs up his little footstool and swings aboard, and I see Bob lookin' out of the window and wavin' like he is crazy. But I just stand there and wave back good-by and a pleasant voyage, and the train pulls out.

Somebody is poundin' me back and clawin' at me and tryin' to get out of the station, but I'm hard aground with a list to sta'board, what with bracin' myself in the doorway. And down the track is the Limited, zoomin' along, and me and the fat guy stranded in the middle of a couple of hundred square miles of the flattest scenery you ever looked at.

"Lay off buttin' me in the back, you old goat!" says I to the fat guy. "It was account of you I missed me train. Ain't that damages enough for one mornin'?" says I.

He is fair frothin' at the mouth and swearin' somethin' reckless. "Let me out!" he hollers.

"Oh, that's what you want?" says I, polite. "Excuse me. You ought to told me you wanted to catch that train. How'd I know?"

AND at that I thought he was goin' to blow up and sink with all hands aboard. He couldn't talk, but I see by his eyes he is gettin' ready to, so I says to myself, "Bill, keep your hands off of him, for he is soft and would tear easy." And, sure enough, when he gets his wind he sails into me and calls me most everything he can think of, and curses the agent and the station and the train, and then he takes to cursin' the porter and finishes up by workin' round to me again.

When he got through he sits down on the bench and pushes his hat back and says, "Whew!" and bites the end off a cigar and lights her. "You got the damnedest nerve of any man I ever met!" he says, and I see he is meanin' me. "You ought to be shot!" he says.

"Now you're talkin' sense," says I. "It's a warm day, ain't it?"

"What did you do it for?" says he, eyin' me curious, like he was mad and interested at the same time.

"I'm supprised at your lack of intelligence," says I, puttin' on some of Bob's stuff. "You ain't forgot the dinin' car, have you?"

"I have changed my mind about that," says he.

"You done well," I tells him. "You saved me the job of changin' your shape."

"You big fool!" says he, impudent. "You made me miss my train, and what do you get out of it? You're stranded yourself. You've made a nice mess of it!"

"You're wrong," says I. "I ain't stranded so long as I got a couple of legs to walk on. I can rustle a breakfast where you would have a hard time rustlin' a toothpick. But speakin' of toothpicks, and seein' as we're friends, you might pass over one of them good cigars."

"Friends!" he says. "My God, what next?"

"One of them cigars," says I. And, mate, he was so surprised he hands me over a cigar and keeps lookin' at me and sayin': "What a nerve! What a nerve!" just like he was mesmerized.

But after a while he kind of come to and tells the agent he wants to send a wire to Mrs. Aloisius Brandstatter, aboard the Limited, which he does, tellin' her he is detained in Cottonwoods and will arrive in Tucson on the next train. The agent sends the telegram and tells this here Aloisius that the next train don't go till two o'clock.

The fat guy has nothin' to do but stay right where he is, and no company except me and the agent and a yella cat with five kittens. And seein' as the agent was a kind of dried-up little wart what coughed twice every time he talked once, this Aloisius quit tryin' to visit with him and got up and walked up and down the platform, shakin' his head and chewin' his cigar fierce. Pretty soon he comes up to me and says:

"My gosh, but it's lonesome in this graveyard!" And I tells him it might be worse, and he says, "Just explain yourself."

And that's how I got acquainted with Aloisius Brandstatter, the pickle king. But it was later on that I found out he started life in Illinois, his father bein' a farmer. Seems Aloisius had worked his way up from bare feet and overalls to a couple of million dollars and his pickle signs all over the country. And I guess if his wife had let him alone he would 'a' stayed almost human. But she was afraid Aloisius would act natural if she didn't keep remindin' him he was a millionaire.

Anyhow, Aloisius and me got to walkin' up and down the station platform, just like a couple of friendly politicians, talkin' about the country and the folks and the laws and such, and pretty soon he asks me to have lunch with him, but there was nothin' to eat at that station except what the agent had, and we didn't want to eat with him. But Aloisius had a little silver flask on his hip, so we didn't suffer so much.

WE was walkin' up and down, and I was thinkin' that now Bob could go ahead and visit with that little Penelope lady, and mebby quit ramblin' around the country and go back to his folks, seein' as he was headed East and I had kind of dropped out of the game, when I saw somebody comin' down the track, 'way off, and limpin'. "Looks like a sungazer," says I.

"What is a sungazer?" says Aloisius.

"A gent that travels light," I tells him. "Same as me."

He didn't say nothin' to that, but kept watchin' down the track, and pretty soon he says: "I'll be blessed if it isn't the young fellow in the blue suit that was on the train with you this morning."

"The same," says I. "But what's worryin' me is he ain't got his bed roll with him."

"You don't seem surprised," says Aloisius.

"Why, not exactly," says I. "You see, me and him don't travel on schedule, regular, so we can change our ideas most any time."

"Well, I'll be hornswoggled!" says Aloisius as Bob come limpin' up and give me a hard eye. Then he looks at Aloisius and at the station and then down the track. "Our blankets are back there about a mile," he says, just like that explained everything.

"What's the idea?" I says.

"Dropped off the rear of the observation car," says Bob.

"Great Cæsar!" says Aloisius. "Did you get a hard fall?"

"Didn't notice," says Bob, offhand. "I was too busy rolling."

"Well, you fellows are the limit!" says Aloisius. "I thought I knew something about folks, but I don't. By the way, I want to apologize for what happened in the diner this morning."

"That's ancient history," says Bob. "We are marooned. Bill and I don't mind, but it's rather unpleasant for you. How did you happen to miss your train?" Which, considerin' everything, was right handsome of Bob.

"I was unexpectedly detained," says Aloisius, givin' me kind of a understandin' look.

Then Bob gives me kind of a understandin' look, like sayin', "Now what deviltry have you been up to?" And then we just stood there and looked around at the scenery. There was the station and the track shinin' in the sun clear down to the edge of nowhere. All this time Aloisius kept glancin' at us like he was tryin' to study out somethin'. Pretty soon he hauls out his little flask and hands her to Bob.

"Let bygones be bygones," he says.

Bob does right by the flask and then says: "Nectar and Ambrosius!" namin' a couple of them statues you see in the museum at Naples. Aloisius takes the flask and hands her to me.

"Here's to the cucumbers," says I.

Then Aloisius takes a drink, sayin' as how he drunk to a better understanding of his fellow man. "I had a quart of Hennessy in my grip," he says, kind of mournful.

And then the station agent comes out and hands a telegram to Aloisius, which

he scowls at and reads, and then he takes off his hat and shies it in the air and says, "Hock your razor!" or somethin' like that, and slaps me on the back and tries to shake hands with Bob, and acted like he was crazy.

"From my wife!" he says, standin' on one leg and turnin' around and pretty near fallin' down. "She's wired me," he says, "that she is going through to El Paso and she has had my grip put off at Tucson. She wired from Tucson. Whoop!"

AND honest, mate, I never seen a guy so glad that his wife was safe aboard a train as he was, and him stranded out in nowhere at that.

He grabs holt of us both at once, and says: "Listen, boys! I ain't been a free man for fifteen years—ever since I quit travelin' for the house. I haven't been out of her sight for fifteen years. Just think of it!

"Berlin, Paris, Vienna, Frisco, Chicago, Palm Beach—it was always the same. I haven't had a chance! I need a change! I'm tired of pickles."

And his eyes commences to water like he was goin' to cry. He was puffin' hard, and all excited about somethin'.

"You changed a whole lot since breakfast," says I. "Or mebby it was the liquor. That was flamin' stuff you handed us."

"The best," he says. "Boys, if you only knew what I put up with for the last fifteen years you'd make allowances. Did you ever have a wife that wouldn't let you order your own breakfast? Did you ever have a wife that wouldn't let you look sideways at anything she didn't want you to look at? Did you ever have a wife that wouldn't let you go fishing unless she came along, and complained all the time? Did you?" says he, shakin' his fist at us like he was mad.

"That makes four," says I. "How many wives you had, anyhow?"

At that he looks at me kind of pityin' and scornful and says: "My God, man! Ain't one enough?"

"A splendid example of conjuvenile fidelity," says Bob, kind of to himself.

"Conjuvenile hell!" says Aloisius, like he meant it.

Then Bob steps across the tracks and comes back with Aloisius' hat. "Here's your hat," says Bob.

Aloisius puts on his hat, sideways and cocky. "Gentlemen," he says, low and quiet, like it was goin' to be a secret session of a gang of bank trustees or somethin', "gentlemen. I'm for the open road!"

"Reaction," says Bob. "That's the astrology of it. Just natural reaction from domestic worries and cares."

"But I'm not crazy!" says Aloisius. "I'm just as insane as you are. I want to get out and see my beloved country. I want to sit alongside of a fire by the track and listen to old mother nature talkin' in her sleep. I want free life and I want fresh air. I want to visit with folks like you boys.

"You're human. I tell you I didn't realize what the Constitution of the United States meant until I met you. Ain't all men born free and equal and entitled to the pursuit of life, liberty, and happiness? And here we are, standin' on this God-forsaken platform, lookin' at each other and waitin'—for what? For another train? No, sir! You said you were going to El Paso. I'm going with you."

"Bully for you!" says I. "But, first, you might see if the agent has got a extra pair of crutches. It's a long strut, and you're carryin' a lot of misplaced ballast, right now."

"I'll reduce," says Aloisius, cheerful. "Just take me along with you. I've got money enough to see us through. I can buy a blanket or two and some food. And then we'll pursue happiness, or my name ain't Aloisius Brandstatter!"

"Happiness?" says Bob, smilin'. "There she is, 'way down the track."

At that Aloisius jumps round. "Where is who?" says he, like he was scared that mebby it was his wife comin' back afoot.

"Happiness—in the distance," says Bob. "Invisible, but absolute."

"That's her!" says Aloisius. "Invisi-

ble, but absolute." And it sounded like he wasn't meanin' happiness, either.

Then Bob, bein' a real sport, and not likin' the idea of Aloisius gettin' into something deeper than he could climb out of, tried to tell him that it was a hard grind, and that they wasn't no poetry in hikin' the tieway and sleepin' most anywhere and gettin' scorched by the sun, and rained on, and froze, and thawed out again, and siftin' cinders with your hair, and eatin' dust, and hoppin' freights and fallin' off limiteds. And Bob didn't leave out any of the grief, either. But Aloisius was set to go, and he done it.

First he sends a telegram to his wife, tellin' her he had decided to inspect some of the branch offices of the pickle business in New Mexico and Texas. Then he sends another to his Chicago office, and comes out of the station smilin' like a catfish.

"Now for the open road!" he says. "Lead on, Macduff, and damned be ye who follow."

So the three of us headed east down the cinders, lookin' for where Bob dumped our bed rolls off of the observation car before he took the brainless leap himself.

You see, Bob was uneasy when I didn't show up after the train left Cottonwoods, and when the porter tells him he seen me standin' in the station doorway and wavin' good-by, Bob tells the porter to pack our bed rolls back to the observation car and dump 'em off.

Then Bob tells that little Penelope lady he's got an idea I'm in trouble, and that he's goin' back to find out. I don't know what she says to him. But, anyhow, he hustles back to the observation car and pulls the emergency air, and gets excited and jumps before the train stops and gets rolled some till he comes to anchor against a telegraph pole. Bob was like that—he always had to go the limit.

WE was moochin' along, easy, with Bob limpin' ahead and Aloisius tryin' to walk the ties, which ain't so easy as it looks, and we had hiked mebby half a mile when the pickle king stops. I think he's got enough and is goin' to quit. But quittin' wasn't what got him all his money and pickles and such.

"It's hot!" says he, only he told what kind of hot it was.

"Ever been in the Panamints in summer?" says I.

"Panamints?" says Aloisius, and I see right away that he don't know them mountains. "No, I haven't," says he. "It has always been hot enough in my own factory, without visitin' around any of them chewin'-gum plants."

Thinks I, Aloisius has got his mints mixed, but I let it go at that, as he was sufferin' plenty, right then. Pretty soon he rips off his collar and chucks it away, and unbuttons his vest. "A man ought to wear a soft shirt for this work," he says.

"You'll be wearin' a soft one in another mile or two," I tells him, by way of cheerin' him up. "You'll get broke in before we hit El Paso."

"I'm going to stick," says he, shakin' his head like a horse with a bee in his ear. "I need the exercise." And off comes his coat and vest. "A vest," says he, "is an extravagance, under the circumstances," and he hangs her on the post of a culvert.

I see he didn't wear a belt—just suspenders—and what with his ballast bein' mostly in the bows, I told him he ought to get a belt so his ballast wouldn't shift so much when he got to rollin' along proper.

"How far is it to those blankets?" says he, payin' no attention to me advice.

"Oh, mebby half a mile," says I.

"I wish we were there," he says, wipin' his forehead with his elbow. And pretty soon we come to the bed rolls, and Bob settin' on his and inspectin' his shins, which had got skinned up some. Aloisius sets down on the other rolls and says, "Thank God, we're here!"

"But this ain't anywhere," says I, by way of cheerin' him up. "We only come a couple of miles, so far."

"That's all right," he says, wipin' the sweat off his neck with his finger. "That's all right," he says, kind of short, like he didn't want to argue about it.

And I see that his face was gettin' kind of white in streaks, and that he must have hired most of his walkin' done for him since he'd got rich. Bob he kind of signed to me that Aloisius wasn't goin' any too strong, so I unrolls me bed and takes out me can and the coffee and three-four eggs and a can of tomatoes and some bread.

ALOISIUS sizes up the layout, his blue eyes stickin' out like a couple of gooseberries. "A handy kit," he says. "Economical as to space and quite efficient."

Bob is lookin' around for some wood, but I tell him to sit down, seein' as he's kind of lame. And, spottin' a big signboard a piece down the track, I mooch over and rip a couple of boards off and fetch 'em back, and we make a fire and eat. Aloisius perks up wonderful after his feed and passes around his last cigars and we smoke. Pretty soon along comes a local, and when the dust settles, Aloisius cocks his hat over one eye and says:

"Boy, if it hadn't been for you, I'd 'a' been on that train, travelin' forty miles an hour toward El Paso—and her. Let her go!" he says, and he waves his hand, and I wondered if he was meanin' the train or somebody else.

"How do you like it, so far?" I asks him.

"Fine!" he says, gettin' up and groanin' and straightenin' out his legs. "I hope our next stop will be in the shade. The sun doesn't look hot, but it's working, all right."

"We got plenty shade right here," says I, pointin' to the shadow under his stummick. "Only it ain't much use to you."

"I'll reduce that!" he says, like it wasn't hitched onto him but could be handled separatelike. "Lead on, Macduff, and damned be ye who follow!" And he waves his arm, but he didn't start, right then.

You see, Aloisius was willin' inside, but outside he was kind of used up. Bob, he smiles.

"Once I saw a hobo, sitting by the tie trail, sitting by the red rail, rusty with the dew," he says. "And I heard the hobo singing, 'I'm going to hit the high trail; I don't know where I'm going, but I'm going to put it through.'"

And he said it just like he was talkin' to us guys regular, and not poetry at all.

Aloisius gives Bob a hard eye and says, "Young man, you have been to college," just like Bob had done somethin' wrong.

"But I wasn't to blame for that," says Bob, grinnin'. "I was sent. And now I'm out on parole."

Aloisius didn't say nothin', and we started down the track, Bob steppin' light and easy, with his limp gone, and Aloisius puffin' and watchin' his step and makin' hard work of it. And what with the dust, and no collar, and his white shirt wilted, and his hat cocked over his left eye, and his stummick rollin' like a hooker ridin' out a half gale, he was commencin' to look more like the king of the hobos than like a pickle millionaire. And when we come to the big signboard which said, "Brandstatter's Choice," with the "Pickles" gone where I took the boards, Aloisius stops and looks at the sign quite a while. Then he turns to us, serious.

"The hand of Providence!" he says, pointin' at the sign. "Brandstatter's Choice."

"Or the law of necessity?" says Bob.

"Are you a socialist?" says Aloisius, kind of sharp.

"Are you a tramp?" says Bob, smilin'.

And at that Aloisius grins and kind of comes to himself, and says, "By George, I guess I am!"

SO the storm signal comes down and it is fair weather right up to sunset, when we drift over to a little bunch of willows in a field near some low hills, mebby a mile this side of a town. Then we had a talk, agreein' as how we was all free and equal and no favorites, so we'll draw straws to see who'll go over to town and buy grub.

Aloisius gets the short straw, and is game, because, anyhow, he wanted to buy some blankets. So he puts on his coat, and him and Bob have a little talk while

I'm gettin' wood for the fire, and then Aloisius waddles off across the field, and we can hear him gettin' through the barbed-wire fence, and then it is dark and Bob and me settin' by our fire.

"That's the last you'll see of him," says I.

"Think so?" says Bob, dreamylike.

"Sure I think so," says I. "When Aloisius hits town he'll get shaved and washed up and a new shirt and a hotel feed, and mebby a drink or two, and then he'll hop the night train for El Paso. We're lucky if he don't send the town constable out here to pinch us. He acted like he was friendly, all right, but some of them millionaires is pretty good actors."

"The old boy is having the time of his life," says Bob. "If he'd been going to quit us, he could have taken the train at Salinas, this afternoon."

"That's all right," says I, "but it was daylight, and he was lookin' tough, and, besides, we was there to watch him. When he gets among white folks it will be different," says I.

"Think so?" says Bob. And with that he digs in his pocket and hauls out a shinin' gold watch and a wad of bills and some change and dumps it all in his hat and says, "Now what do you think?"

"So that is what you was doin' when you and Aloisius was talkin' confidential?" says I. "I can see how you lifted his watch, easy, it bein' dark. But I can't see how you touched him for them bills without his knowin' it."

"You do me proud!" says Bob, laughin'. "But I thought you knew me better than that. Mr. Brandstatter left his watch and his money with me for safe-keeping. He took only enough to buy blankets and provisions."

"And him a business man!" says I. "Well, all I got to say is that the heat must of softened his brains. They must be a couple of hundred in that roll, and the watch ain't made of tin."

"So I think he'll come back," says Bob. "He has shown that he trusts us."

"Trusts you, you mean," says I. "He didn't leave no hatful of money with me."

"If he doesn't come back," says Bob, like he didn't hear what I said, "I'll send the money and the watch to his Chicago office."

"Your head hurt you anywhere?" says I, feelin' hot in the neck at Bob's foolish ideas.

"No," says he.

"I thought mebby that fall off the Limited mebby hurt your head," says I. "Here a guy goes and hands you a couple of hundred dollars and you talk about sendin' it back to him."

"As sure as your name is Bill Morningstar!" says Bob.

"Mebby it ain't," says I.

"I'd be disappointed if it were not," says Bob. And at that he commences to whistle a little tune, and I say nothin'.

WE set around the fire quite a spell, and I'm gettin' hungry and the air is gettin' cool, and pretty soon the moon sticks one of her flukes over the hill, and a bird commences to sing mournful, and nobody sayin' a word. You see, Bob could 'a' made money at sayin' nothin'.

Well, I was thinkin' of our breakfast in the dinin' car that mornin' and the pickle king's wife, and how you could tell what kind of a dame she was by the way she handled her elbows. "Speakin' of women——" says I.

But Bob says: "Don't, please!"

So I figured that all the time he'd been thinkin' of that little Penelope lady he met in Yuma, and how mebby she might 'a' been thinkin' he was crazy to jump off the train just because his pal had turned up missin'. And then I got to thinkin' of that little lady; how she was quiet dressed and prettylike, and talked sensible and didn't put on airs.

And all of a sudden I hears a automobile coughin' up the road by the field, and it stops over by the fence. I hear somebody talkin' kind of low and suspicious. And then I see a couple of men headin' for our camp in the moonlight.

"What did I tell you!" I says to Bob. "The pickle king has sent a couple of constables out here to pinch us. That's how

he gets even for me makin' him miss his train. And you with his watch and his roll of bills! They've got the goods on us. Come on! Grab your lid. We can give 'em the slip if we step lively."

"Are you scared, Bill?" says Bob, without makin' a move.

And at that I got hot in the neck and told him I knowed they was somethin' wrong with his head, but seein' as he was clean crazy, I'd stand by, even if I did get sent down for a couple of years for highway robbery.

I could see them two men comin' acrost the field. And then I heard one of 'em say: "Easy, now. You go ahead and show me where they are."

Then I heard Aloisius say: "I know where they are, all right. Don't make so much noise. I want to give 'em a little surprise."

And then I knowed the bulls was after us, and that we would be pinched, with Bob havin' all Aloisius' money and his watch, and me in just as bad, account of bein' his accompianist. I could feel the chills crawlin' around me hair and up and down me back, and then Aloisius steps into the firelight and says:

"There they are!"

ALONGSIDE of him is another guy with a big hat and boots like one of them sheriffs, and the firelight shinin' on the two badges on his chest. "Give us a hand, Bill," says Aloisius. And at that I gets up and sticks out me hands and tells the constable to put on the bracelets. "But I'm tellin' you right now," says I, "that if it hadn't been for me pal, here, you wouldn't 'a' took Bill Morningstar without a fight. You're kind of a snake in the grass, ain't you?" says I to Aloisius.

"Why, what's the matter, Bill?" says Aloisius, kind of surprised. "I know I've been longer than I expected, but I had to wait until the hotel folks cooked the chickens and made the ice cream. Give this man a hand with the freezer, Bill."

"Chickens and ice cream!" says I. "Is everybody crazy?"

At that Aloisius laughs and drops six or seven bundles he is carryin', and the other guy goes back a piece and lugs one of them little ice-cream freezers into camp. And then I see that what I thought was a gun in his hand was the handle of the freezer, and them two badges on his chest was suspender buckles, and that he's just a kind of roustabout for the hotel. Aloisius gives him some dough, and he goes snortin' off in his automobile, and I feel like a couple of thousand dollars' worth of nothin' with a hole in it.

"What was the matter, Bill?" says Aloisius. And I tells him I was feelin' kind of spooky and that a new moon always made me feel kind of queer. And he says, "This is the life!" and commences to untie the bundles.

After I get my bearin's I see that Aloisius is dressed different, himself. He has on one of them big Stetson hats and a cotton shirt with checkers on it, and a red handkerchief tied round his neck, and a belt on. All he kept was his regular pants and his shoes.

Then I size up the layout, and it was the most amazin' lot of grub you ever seen. He has a couple of pies and a sack of doughnuts, and some bolognie sausage as big as a fire hose, and three chickens all cooked, and a couple of loaves of bread and some butter, and some buns and cookies and a glass jar of jam and another one which turned out to be Brandstatter's pickles with onions and chili and mustard on 'em.

"Brought the freezer along so the ice cream wouldn't melt," says Aloisius, wavin' at it. "Give her a couple of turns, Bill." And honest, mate, Aloisius looks like one of them bandit chiefs in a play. "Fall to, men!" he says, havin' spread out the grub. And we done it.

Now they are some feeds you never forget, and that was one of 'em. Sometimes you eat because you're hungry, and sometimes because it's eatin' time. But the best time is when your stummick is fair growlin' for grub and they ain't none in sight, and along comes somebody and leads you up to a feed that would make them statues, Nectar and Ambrosius,

jump right out of a museum tryin' to get to it.

Well, anyhow, after we got through, Bob said he'd made a regular gastronomer of himself, and it would 'a' took a chemist to tell what we had for supper that evenin'. Aloisius he rubs his stummick and says, "Boys, I'll pay for this." And I asks him if it ain't paid for, and he says somethin' about there was still some outstandin' obligations, and he rubs his stummick again.

So I had to finish up the ice cream and the pickles left in the jar and the pie, and honest, mate, them two guys looked at me like I'd done 'em a favor.

"Bill, you're a wonder!" says Bob. And then we put some more wood on the fire and smoked the cigars what Aloisius had fetched along, and he let out a couple of holes in his belt, and pushes his big hat back on his head, and leans against a tree, independent, like he never had a couple of million dollars or a wife waitin' for him in El Paso. Pretty soon he heaves a sigh and says, "Boys, I have a suggestion."

"The house is in session," says Bob.

"Then I rise to nominate our friend, Bill, chairman of the committee of ways and means," says Aloisius, but he didn't rise any. "Elected animusly!" he says.

"Bein' chairman," says I, "I elect Mr. Aloisius Brandstatter as the means, seein' as how he has got 'em. Me and Bob know more about the ways, anyhow."

"Fair enough!" says Aloisius. "I'll take care of the financial end of it."

"That reminds me," says Bob, and he digs down and fetches up all the cash and the watch and gives 'em back to Aloisius. And I see that I spoke without thinkin' when I elected Aloisius cashier. "And now," says Aloisius, "have you any further suggestions?"

"I have," says I. "Winter is comin' and we're headin' east. Bob and me figured as how we could beat the weather out by hoppin' freights whenever we got the chance. But seein' as you signed up for the voyage, we can't make it far before we'll hit cold weather and snow. You ain't built right to hop trains, regular. If you was to make a quick jump off a freight, somethin' might happen to the pickle business.

"Bob and me figured to make it to Boston or New York, and then take a cattle boat acrost, and mebby work our way from Portsmouth over to the Mediterranean. After we get there we can take a chance of makin' it through the Suez and East. When we get to Saigon we can try for a schooner for the islands. That's how we had framed it," says I.

"Great Scott!" says Aloisius. "Do you mean to tell me that you're going around the world?"

"Sure!" says I. "I been around three times."

Aloisius set lookin' at the fire for quite a spell. Bob winks at me and grins. "El Paso is only a signpost for us," says I. "We're goin' around and back again. If we was to hang out in El Paso we would have to work for a livin', and what's the use? Anybody can do that."

"You mean that you boys intend to tramp around the world?" says Aloisius, like he couldn't get used to the idea.

"Why not?" says I.

"Well, I'll be swamped!" says Aloisius.

"You sure will if you keep on layin' in port and takin' on cargo," says I. For I could see by the way he looked at us that he was gettin' some ideas that had nothin' to do with Mrs. Brandstatter or the pickle business.

You see, him havin' the cash set me to thinkin' as how some jumps could be made easier than we had figured before we met him. And his comin' along was kind of a joke, anyhow. If he made it to El Paso he would be doin' noble, considerin' his shape. So I try to discourage him by tellin' him he ain't in no shape to go, anyhow, and that she's a hard old grind, with the chances of gettin' knifed or drownded or shanghaied or shot, or froze, or the fever; and as how, him bein' a millionaire, we might get pinched for kidnapin' him or boycottin' him or somethin'.

And then I tells him he don't know anything about me and Bob, and that mebby

we're thugs, or crooks, like his wife thought we was. And that mebby he'd get interested in stickin' his pickle signs all over Europe, and that we wasn't interested in pickles, nohow, only around eatin' time.

"You see," says I, "this here ain't what you'd call a business trip. It's a sight-seein' trip de-looks, which is the French for seein' all you can without payin' any railroad fare."

AT that Aloisius nods his head, thoughtful, and asks Bob if he has any ideas. "Bill has had a lot of experience," says Bob. "I'm as green as you are, Mr. Brandstatter." And at that Aloisius kind of stiffened his neck, like Bob was referrin' to cucumbers or somethin'. "However," says Bob, "I should enjoy having you with us if I thought your family wouldn't worry."

"That's just the trouble," says Aloisius, mournful. "She'd worry if she didn't know where I was all the time, and I'd worry if she did. Let me think," he says, puttin' his hand on his stummick. "Around the world and back again! Free as a bird! Imagine a week in Paris without a chaperon! Imagine visiting all the ports in the world with no trunks and no females and no fuss!

"I'd like to see Port Said with the lid off, and Singapore, and the Southern islands, and the atolls, and go rolling down down to Rio with my helm hard aport!" he says like he had got his sea stories mixed.

"Was you ever seasick?" I asks him, but he didn't let on he heard me.

"Frisco, Vienna, Port Said, Hongkong, Yokohama!" he says, like he was tryin' to pick a winner from a bunch of race horses.

"You're namin' some live ones," says I. But he didn't let on he was listenin'.

Pretty soon he shakes his head and says: "By George, I'll do it! I'll do it for my health!" he says, shakin' his fist at us like he was used to arguin' about everything he wanted to do.

"You mean you're goin' around with us?" says I.

"I am!" says he, and he said it without cussin', so I knowed he meant it serious.

"Fine!" says I, and we all shook hands. And then we hunted our blankets, for it was gettin' kind of nippy.

Aloisius he paws around on his hands and knees, tryin' to fix his blankets right, just like a dog makin' a bed in a pile of leaves. You see, Aloisius had bought some blankets in town, and he had plenty of 'em, but I had to show him how to roll in comfortable.

Pretty soon Bob was asleep, and the moon shinin' through the willows and the stars twinklin', cold and bright, and everything still. After a while I heard Aloisius movin' around and gruntin'. Then he asks me if I am awake, and I tell him I am. "I'll have to change my name," he says, whisperin'.

"That's easy," says I. "I was thinkin' about that myself. Now supposin' we was to get in a tangle somewhere, and somebody was sneakin' up behind you to bean you with a jack, and I sees him and holler to you. By the time I could say even all of your first name you'd be in the morgue, with the newspapers printin' the story of your life. Aloisius ain't no good for our business."

"You're right," he says. "What would you suggest?"

"I was thinkin' we might call you Al, for short," says I.

"Then Al it is. But what about my family name?" says he.

"Leave it with your family, and let 'em use it till you get back," says I. "Most of us does that, only we don't always go back."

"I'm sick of seein' it," says Aloisius. "I'm sick of the brand. Every time I open my eyes I see 'Brandstatter's Pickles' on somethin', somewhere."

"Just plain Al is good enough for the job," I tells him. And pretty soon he commences to snore, and the fire sinks down, and first thing I know it is mornin', with a wind driftin' across the field and a cow lickin' the ice-cream freezer, account of the salt, mebby.

The air is keen, so I kicks back me

blankets and hops up and hollers, "Gangway!" and give Bob a poke in the ribs, and kick Aloisius' blanket where it sticks up highest.

He sits up sudden, lookin' kind of scared, and says: "All right, Minnie! What time is it?"

"Time to hit the grit," says I. "Rustle some wood, Al, and I'll see about makin' the coffee."

CHAPTER IV.

MEXICO AND TROUBLE.

AN eastbound freight whistled for the block at Leoncita Junction. Bill Morningstar, interrupted in his narrative, took occasion to fill his pipe and light it. The night operator pulled a lever and then returned to his desk.

Bill picked up his blanket roll and thrust his huge arm through the cord. The night operator gestured toward the window. "Refrigerators," he said. "California Fruit Express. I got a fried chicken in my lunch basket."

"A hint to the wise is defficient," said Bill, shrugging the cord from his shoulder and dropping the roll. "Tell me where you keep the coal for this here stove and I'll go down and get a hodful."

And presently Bill returned with a pail of coal and a few sticks of wood, with which he revived the all-but-extinct fire in the little pot-bellied stove. The operator produced a coffeepot and an extra cup.

A half hour later there was nothing left of the impromptu feast but a few chicken bones and some coffee grounds, which Bill dumped on a newspaper and thrust into the stove. The night operator lighted a corncob pipe, put his feet on the desk, and leaned back. "About that scrap in Tucson?" he said.

"Oh, that!" said Bill indifferently. "I'd forgot all about that." His indifference was effective.

"You and your pal and the pickle king were just going to eat breakfast, somewhere east of Salinas," said the night operator. "You must have been near Tucson. Did you fellows hoof it into Tucson?"

So Bill took up his story once more.

ME and Bob did. Aloisius, he kind of crippled in. And I guess he'd been glad to walk on his hands if he hadn't been scared that things would fall out of his pockets. I recollect he said that worms was in luck, not havin' any feet to hurt. And at that I asks Aloisius how about a centipede?

"That's different," says Aloisius, kind of shortlike. "If a centipede blows a tire, he's always got a couple of spares to run on."

Now Aloisius' feet was sore, all right, and he was stiffened up from sleepin' out, and his face was long enough for him to eat out of a churn, but he had grit and lots of steam, even if he was soft. He just wouldn't quit, after he had started anything.

Lots of poor folks, and anarchists and such, think them millionaires ain't got brains, or grit, or nothin' except money. But I'm tellin' you, mate, it takes grit to make a lot of money, and brains to hang onto it. And Aloisius had both.

Anyhow, when me and Bob and Aloisius hove in sight of Tucson it was gettin' dark. We was about a mile out of town. We all set down by the track to have a committee meetin' on the chances of Aloisius' wife mebby havin' changed her mind, and stoppin' over at Tucson to wait for him. We was talkin' about that when Aloisius waves his hand.

"In that case," he says, "the bun is on the floor.

"Cheer up!" says I. "Your valise is at the station and you got a bottle of Hennessy in it." Aloisius says that is all right, but it don't do him no good a mile away.

"Hang out your ridin' lights," says I, "and me and Bob will go ashore and fetch the contrabrand out to you."

"Will you?" says he.

"Watch us!" says I.

"That's the trouble, I can't," he says.

Then Bob takes a hand. "Mr. Brand-

statter," says Bob, "we'll go on into town. Bill can call at the station for your grip. I'll look in at the hotels and see who is registered. In case I find Mrs. Brandstatter's name, I'll let you know right away."

"Fetch back the Hennessy, anyhow," says Aloisius. And at that we leave him settin' there by the track, with his hands folded on his stummick like one of them Budda idols, and his legs crossed as near as he could ever cross 'em.

IT'S gettin' dark fast, and the switch lights is commencin' to blink, and the air is warm, and everything snug below and aloft, and me and Bob driftin' down the track, him admirin' the stars, and me thinkin' of that bottle in the pickle king's valise. When we get to the station I warp myself in easy and natural and ask for me valise. Bob he beats it acrost to the buildin's.

"What name?" says the station agent.

"Aloisius Brandstatter, of Chicago," says I. "Me wife had me valise put off here to be held in statues K. O. apprehendin' me approval," says I. "Hand her over."

"What kind of bag is it?" says the agent, eyin' me kind of hard.

I see I'm wastin' me time talkin' elegant to him. "Black bag," says I, "with me name on the label. I was detained at Cottonwoods. Me wife telegraphed that she put me kit off for me here, and I want it."

"Your description of the bag is all right," says the agent, "but how do I know that you are Mr. Brandstatter?"

"How do I know you are the agent?" says I.

"Why, I'm here, in charge of this station," he says, kind of sharp.

"And I'm here, in charge of your funeral arrangements, if you don't hand over me grip right now," says I, gettin' hot in the neck. "And if there's as much as a corkscrew missin' from me grip," I tells him, "the company'll be needin' a new agent in about two minutes."

At that he mooches back and fetches out a valise and says, "Is this yours, Mr. Grandstabber?"

"Brandstatter," I tells him. "No, this isn't mine. Try again. I'm givin' you one more chance."

At that he fetches out Aloisius' grip, which I had seen him fussin' with on the train, and I takes her and beats it down the track. Pretty soon I come to where Aloisius is settin' in the dark, and I hails him.

He gets up, groanin', and tells me I'm a angel of mercy in a weary land, and then he grabs the valise and opens her, and *plup* goes somethin', and he pushes a quart bottle into me hand. "Take a look at the heavenly consternations over that," he says, and I done it, sightin' over the bottle and aimin' high to allow for interjectory.

"Now," says Aloisius, clearin' his throat and slappin' his chest, and he takes a long look at the stars, and then puts the cork back in. "I'm ready to hear the worst," he says. "I am fortified. My stummick is full of sunshine and my feet are growing numb."

"I'm feelin' kind of fortified, myself," says I. "Only my stummick is gettin' numb and my feet are full of sunshine. All I need now is a feed, and I'm ready to cross the Rubiat."

"Didn't know there was a river around here," says Aloisius.

"I was speakin' poetical, like Bob," says I. "I guess the liquor done it. It is flamin' stuff. And I ain't eat nothin' since noon."

"I'm not interested in mere food," says Aloisius, kind of scornful. "What I want to know is, did my wife get off the train at Tucson or did she go on all the way to El Paso?"

"She didn't," says I, by way of cheerin' him up, "or she would 'a' took your grip on to El Paso."

"That's right!" he says, cheerful. Then he puts his arm around me shoulder and leans against me, takin' all the weight he could off his feet, and he says: "Bill, you're a wonder. You saved my life. I didn't know you had it in you," he says,

"or you and me wouldn't had any words in that dinin' car. I apologize.

"You are a diamond in the rough! You're true blue and a yard wide. You are better than defined gold! And as sure as I am a pore lonely cowboy," he says, "you'll never want for a bed or a meal or cigars as long as I live!

"Bill, I'd like to be a cowboy and ride the ranges with Lasky. You remember Lasky, down by the Rio Grande? Shoot your horse, crawl under his carcass, and if the steers in their maddened course don't trample you both to death," he says, "why, half of my heart lies buried there, in Texas, down by the Rio Grande."

AND at that Aloisius commences to cry, gentle, and lean against me harder than ever.

"You been a brother to me, Bill!" he says, weepin' on me shoulder. "A big, strong brother! I never had a big brother. They were all little skunks. Seven of 'em," says he, "and I'm the only millionaire left out of the bunch. It's a shame! Seven of 'em workin' in my factory, and here I am, a pore, lonely old man, trampin' the highways of my native land."

And at that he shifts his weight to the other foot. "I ain't got a roof to my head!" he says, kind of sobbin'.

"You won't have if you drink any more of that liquor," says I.

"Is there any more left?" he says.

"Shake her," says I, "and she'll tell you."

"What is a cork between friends?" he says, and he takes a long shot at the moon, and it looks like he'll be out of ammunition before he gets the range. Then he hands her to me. "Finish her, Bill," he says. "It's dangerous stuff to have around."

"I guess I'll save a little for Bob," says I. "He ought to be back, pretty soon."

"Let's go forth and meet him," says Aloisius, and at that he lets go me shoulder and starts down the track toward Salinas.

"Hold on!" says I. "You're headed for Los Angeles. Tucson is this way."

At that he tacks round and swings alongside me port bow. "Ain't those the lights of Tucson?" he says, pointin' at some stars in the west.

"Not this evenin'," I tells him. "Tucson has moved around back to her old berth since you seen her last. You kind of lost your bearin's, mate."

"Nope!" he says, kind of short. "Mebby I burned a couple of 'em on that last run, but I ain't lost any. By George, I have an idea!" he says, sudden. And he scratches his head like he's got somethin', anyhow.

"Listen, Bill," he says. "But let's set down, first. Listen, Bill. Did you ever drive a car?" And his voice commences to quiver like he was shakin' all over with a chill.

"Nothin' but a hand car," says I. "I can drive one of them if they's plenty Mexicans to pump her."

"I mean an automobile," says Aloisius. But just then Bob sings out down the track, and Aloisius gets up and hollers, "Is Minnie there?"

BOB comes up and tells him to the best of his knowledge and belief, and accordin' to the evidence of the hotel registers, she ain't. And Aloisius says, "Thank God, she's safe!" And he gives three cheers, all by himself, and then asks us why we didn't cheer, likewise. Then he hands the bottle to Bob and tells him virtue is a lone reward, and drink hearty.

"And the serpent dwelt there also," says Bob, and takes a drink and chucks the bottle away.

"You guys can stand there and talk poetry all night," says I, "but I'm goin' to eat. And at that Aloisius commences to sing somethin' about the Lily of the Alley bein' a bright and warnin' star, and he is doin' his best, but honest, mate, he couldn't carry a tune in a washtub.

Bob touches me on the arm and says, "Mr. Brandstatter seems to be illuminated a trifle."

"Yes, he's fortified, pretty bad," says I. "He was cryin' on me neck, just before you showed up."

"We'll have to get him to bed," says Bob. But he guessed wrong. Instead of commencin' to wilt, Aloisius kept on makin' steam. "My feet are numb clear to my knees," he says. "I could walk all night. I could hike to Chicago, and finish strong."

"Make it to Tucson, for a starter," says I. "And ain't you forgettin' to take along your bed roll?"

"My downy couch!" says he, pickin' up his blankets and handin' 'em to me. "Don't lose 'em, Bill," he says. "I'm gettin' fond of that little bed."

"You better watch your step," says I. "They's police in Tucson, and you don't look as much like a millionaire outside as you feel inside. Supposin' you was to get pinched, and your wife was to hear about it—Aloisius Brandstatter pinched along with a couple of tramps."

"Don't, Bill," says he. "Don't remind me of that painful subject. Lead on, Macduff, and damned be ye who follow!"

And what with bein' hungry, and wishin' to get a bed and kind of rest up, we done it.

ABOUT the time we hit Tucson, Aloisius was lit up like a side-wheeler comin' down the Sound, Sunday evenin'. He was for dockin' at the Alamo Hotel and gettin' a feed and a hot bath, but Bob says, kind of low and thoughtfullike: "How would it be to see a bit of old Tucson before we sleep, perchance to dream?"

"I don't want to sleep," says Aloisius, stubborn. He pushes back his big hat and waves his arm like he is leadin' a landin' party of marines. "I want action!" he says.

"I know where there is a Turkish bath, in this burg," says I. "If you won't sleep, mebby we can cruise around for a while, and then get a bath and a sleep without anybody sendin' for the police."

"Let's find a cantina and have a Mexican dinner," says Bob, who is tryin' to get Aloisius away from the lights and quiet him down.

"I don't want food!" says Aloisius. "I want action!"

"Then let's shuffle," says I. "There's a cop over on the corner, and he don't look friendly."

So we made a strut for the Old Town, and pretty soon we come to a street where the Mexicans was settin' in the doorways of them little adobes, and burros walkin' around the same as folks, and dogs runnin' out and growlin' and then backin' up, and a young Mexican playin' a guitar and singin', and the moon shinin' down and everything peaceful.

Aloisius spots a cantina and makes for it like he was catchin' a train. When we come up to him he was askin' the Mexican behind the bar for a high ball.

"Tequila," says I to the Mexican.

"What is tequila?" asks Aloisius.

"Same as a high ball," says I. "It's high voltage, and it'll ball you up wonderful."

"Then let's have some of it," says Aloisius.

So the Mexican sets out three glasses and a bottle, and I'm wonderin' what is goin' to happen to Aloisius when that Mexican fire water meets up with the United States brandy which Aloisius is carryin'. Aloisius takes his drink, and after he's got through his coughin' spell, he puts his hand to his eyes like he is pushin' 'em back where they belong, and says: "What was it, boys?" like somebody had hit him with a club and he was just comin' to.

"The native Mexican drink," says Bob, explainin' to Aloisius.

"Then plain muriatic is good enough for me," says Aloisius. "Is Mexican food like their liquor?"

"Some," says I. "Speakin' of food, I'm goin' to eat."

"Let's do it!" says Aloisius. "We must feed the flames."

"Flames?" says I. "Why you ain't got more'n a little kindling in you yet."

"I'm quite satisfied," says Aloisius. "Where is the café?"

At that I tells the fat Mexican behind the bar that we want to eat a regular Mexican dinner, and he says: *"Seguro Miguel! Mucho alimento, huevos fritos*

un pedaso de queso, chili con carne por dinero."

And Aloisius, who is short on Spanish, says: "You bet your life! Bring on your dinero and we'll try it once, anyhow."

"Dinero ain't grub," says I. "Dinero means money. He's kind of hintin' about who'll pay for the chuck."

At that Aloisius planks down a ten-dollar bill and says to keep the change. And you ought to seen that fat Mexican tell his wife in the back room to get a move on!

He went through enough motions tellin' her that he could have cooked a couple of dinners and washed the dishes, also. He got so polite that Aloisius looks kind of scared.

But when the Mexican leads us into a back room and waves us to our chairs and fetches a pitcher of water and three glasses, and Aloisius drinks about a quart of water, he smiles, and says, "This is the life!"

Bob he is settin' there, kind of dreamy-like, and I know he is enjoyin' himself. And pretty soon the Mexican woman hustles in, smilin' and noddin' polite, and she spreads the feed and we eat.

I am kind of hopin' that the feed will put Aloisius to sleep, for I seen by his eye he is lookin' for excitement, and that he's forgot all about a hot bath and his sore feet, and a bed, and everything. But it was just like pourin' turpentine into a fire box, him eatin' that Mexican grub. He is makin' steam fast.

SO after we got through eatin' I says how about a little cruise around town? And it would have been all right, at that, if the young Mexican with the guitar hadn't come strollin' into the saloon and started to play. The minute Aloisius hears the music he gets up, and we drift out to the bar, and there is a young, good-lookin' Mexican whangin' away at a guitar, and smilin', and the music sounds good.

"Can't we have a dance?" says Aloisius. I tell him we've had about enough exercise for one day. Then he says he was meanin' to let the Mexicans do the dancin' and we watch 'em.

I tells him some Mexicans will stand a lot of watchin', especially when you're American with a wad of money in your jeans.

"Then I'll watch the dancing and you watch me," says Aloisius. And I see that he's set on havin' his way, so I tell the proprietor to rustle up a couple of dancers and turn 'em loose, and that money ain't no object to me friend with the big stummick.

The Mexican goes into the back room, and pretty soon out comes a kind of slim, pretty Mexican girl, all dressed up in them fiesta clothes, and a red sash and red stockings, and everybody in the cantina gets excited, except Bob, who is over in the corner talkin' to a long American cowboy. Aloisius says she is a peach and that he ain't felt so young for fifteen years; and then the music starts, and the girl, whose name is Chiquita, and whose old man runs the joint, glides out to the middle of the floor and swings into one of them slow dances, just like waves rollin' up the beach easy, and curlin' back, playfullike, and Aloisius is wavin' time with his hand and grinnin' like he's forgot all about bein 'a millionaire.

I noticed that more folks kept oozin' into the cantina, and some of 'em looked kind of tough to me. What with the music and the dancin' and the excitement, the Mexican back of the bar was doin' a good business.

Aloisius buys drinks for the house, after the girl finished dancin' the first time, and pretty soon he has so many Mexican friends he could have run for mayor of Tucson and won in a trot. Then that little Chiquita does another dance, kind of round her sombrero, which she put on the floor. When she gets through, Aloisius shys a handful of dollars into the ring, and the girl tries to pick 'em up, but she misses one what rolls over to where Bob is talkin' to the long American cowboy.

Bob picks up the dollar and hands it to her and bows polite. She thanks him pretty and gives him a look which is worth

all of a dollar and a half. You see, Bob most always got his fun lookin' on at things, his real kick comin' later when he made 'em up into poetry, kind of leavin' out the parts which weren't so interestin' and puttin' in them that was, along with a couple of ideas of his own.

Anyhow, bein' a Mexican, Chiquita didn't mean nothin' when she looked at him like she done, seein' as how most Mexican girls' eyes is kind of flirty by nature. But the young Mexican with the guitar didn't see it that way. Mebby he figured on marryin' that little Chiquita some day.

I guess it was all kind of mixed up to Aloisius, who kept callin' for another dance and tellin' Bob he ought to get in and shake a leg himself. But I could see by the way the young Mexican kept glarin' at Bob that a couple of more looks from Chiquita and there would be trouble along the border.

"Mr. Brandstatter," says I, as I was standin' next to him by the bar to see that somebody didn't lift his watch or touch him for his roll, "Mr. Brandstatter, you lit a fuse when you shied that there money into the ring and Bob picked up the dollar for the girl. Let's drift along and hunt up the Turkish bath."

"Nonsense!" says Aloisius, like it was all his show, and everybody was welcome to step right into the big tent, free. "Let joy be unrefined!" says he. "There was a sound of deviltry by night, and all went merry as a marriage bell," says he.

BOB was talkin' to that little Chiquita girl, for he could savvy a little Spanish and she could savvy a little American, when the young fella with the guitar walks over and shoves in between the girl and Bob and starts tellin' the girl somethin'. Now if I had been Bob I would just walked back and set down, seein' as we were in Mexican territory, like. But Bob was a high-strung rooster, so he stood his ground, like he was waitin' for the young Mexican to get through with his talk.

Mebby everything would 'a' been all right, at that, if the girl hadn't told the young fella to go back and sit down and mind his own business. Then the girl's father sees that the young Mexican is spoilin' trade, so he tells him to lay off the talk and play some more music.

At that, the young fella, whose name is Manuel, turns round and hands Bob a notice to keep away from the girl. And right there Bob makes the big mistake. He smiles, polite, and reaches out slow and easy, and just kind of eases the young Mexican to one side and steps up and commences to talk to Chiquita. And right there that Manuel drops his guitar and pulls a knife.

Havin' one of them big beer schooners in me hand at the time, I swings her up and lets fly at the Mexican, and it takes him on the side of the head, and down he goes. I see the long American cowboy jump up and dive into the crowd, and first thing she's a free-for-all, with about twenty Mexicans to four Americans, and everybody goin' happy.

"Remember The Alamo!" sings out the long American cowboy, and he seems to be rememberin', all right, for he is mowin' 'em down like he is pitchin' hay.

Aloisius squeaks: "Stop! Stop!" but he ain't talkin' the right language. About then I wade in up to me neck, handin' out a right and a left, regular, to anybody wishin' to get acquainted, and pretty soon Bob and me and the cowboy is back to back and the gang tryin' to pull us to pieces.

I see Bob hand out a poke like he can use his dukes, and takin' it by and large, we didn't do so bad. We mowed a path to the door and busted through. And then the long American cowboy pulls his gun and hollers for us to beat it and he will entertain the Mexicans. And with that he commences to shoot out the lights, like he is havin' the time of his life.

Aloisius comes staggerin' out with the handle of the guitar in his hand. Later he said he used up the box part on the gang. The cowboy grabs the reins of his pony and hops aboard and hollers, "So long, friends!" and goes clatterin' down the street, givin' a whoop at every jump.

He acted like he was the happiest man in Arizona.

ALOISIUS and Bob and me made a dive for a alley and we scoot up it and down another street and pretty soon all is quiet along the Potomac except Aloisius' breathin'. We head for the Turkish bath, and come to find out, Aloisius has been there before and knows the proprietor, and what with a couple of bills and a little talk, we register as havin' lit in at seven o'clock that evenin' instead of at midnight, in case the police come snoopin' around lookin' for the American troops what damaged Mexico.

Then we get undressed and all stretch out on the cots like we been there four or five hours and are coolin' out. And we needed coolin' out, at that, and some court-plaster.

Next mornin', when we wake up, Aloisius is gone. So is the proprietor, and the day man don't know anything about Aloisius.

"He got cold feet, and quit us," says I to Bob.

"I can't believe it," says Bob, shakin' his head. Then he goes on to tell me how he's been havin' a wonderful time composin' one of them poems about a Mexican dancin' girl and her gringo lover, and trouble, and everything.

"That's great!" says I, "but it don't get us no breakfast, and our blanket rolls is down in that Mexican joint, and our clothes is in the lockers, and we ain't got the dough to pay for our night's lodgin', seein' as Aloisius is cashier, and we're a fine pair of birds to be ramblin' around the country without a nurse."

"But we're comfortable," says Bob, and he turns over and goes to sleep again, leavin' me to do the worryin'. I was thinkin' as how we could get our clothes, all right, but if we made a rush for the door without payin', the bathhouse guy would telephone the police, and then we'd sure have a lovely time explainin' who we wasn't.

And I got to thinkin' as how it was Aloisius what started the fireworks, anyhow, and mebby how he'd woke up and remembered who he was, and the pickle business, and had got up and dressed and beat it. Just about then the day man comes in and says, "Is Mr. Morningstar and Mr. Andover here?"

"That's us," says I.

"You're wanted, outside," says he. "Man in a car waiting for you."

So I wakes up Bob and tells him we're pinched and to get his clothes on.

"There's some mistake," says Bob.

"There is," says I. "And we made it last night when we let Aloisius get started. This is what comes of lookin' on the town when it is red," says I. "And it's just as good we didn't have no bath, for it would 'a' been wasted. Ever been in jail with a bunch of Mexicans?"

"Never," says Bob. "It would be interesting."

I see that it was no good talkin' to him, so I quit. I'm wonderin' what he would have to say when the bathhouse guy asked us to settle. But Bob gets dressed and sails right up to the desk and hands over his key, and I do the same, and nobody says a word and we walk out. Seems Aloisius had paid in advance, but I didn't know it, then.

WELL, we went upstairs and the first thing we see is a little automobile painted yellow, and Aloisius settin' in it and smilin' like a catfish. "Hop right in, boys!" he says, cheerful. "We'll run over to the Mesa Café and have breakfast."

"This is somethin' new, ain't it?" says I, after Bob and me climbed into the back seat, seein' as how Aloisius was kind of spread over most of the front seat.

"No, secondhand; but she's a daisy!" says Aloisius. "Bought her at a bargain. Man couldn't make his payments. New tires, two spares, shock absorbers, front and rear bumpers, and a new paint job."

And then we go over to the café and while we're eatin', Aloisius tells us how he couldn't sleep along toward mornin', so he puts in his time thinkin' how he can save his feet, and not quit ramblin' with us. Seems he prospected around town till

he finds the agency for the kind of car he is lookin' for, and buys her, pedigree and all. Then he loads her up with a lot of blankets and camp stuff, and a tent, and buys some grub and a extra can of oil, and then comes over for us.

"I thought you quit us," says I to Aloisius.

"I'm surprised at you, Bill," says Aloisius. "Didn't you stand by me last night when we battled for liberty and the right to pursue health, happiness and a long life? I may be a trifle overweight, but I'm no quitter."

"I guess that's right," says I. "But I thought you said you was goin' to reduce. Now you gone and bought a car."

"Did you ever ride in one of them?" he says, pointin' to where the machine stood alongside the curb.

I told him freights was always good enough for me, when I wasn't walkin'. And he said we might take one drink before we left town, but only one. So we done it.

Right away I seen that Aloisius knowed how to handle one of them machines, only he handled her too good when it come to makin' curves and takin' corners. Seems like speed didn't mean nothin' to him as long as the little buggy kept two wheels on the ground.

"She's a sweet little bus!" says he, as we hit the long road out of town, and headed east by south. "She runs like a scared cat on a back fence."

"Exactly!" says I, as we hit a curve and the front wheels sprayed sand all over the scenery. "What's botherin' me," says I, "is if she slips, will she land on her feet?"

"I've seen them do it," says Aloisius, and I didn't know if he meant cats or automobiles. But pretty soon I kind of got used to whizzin' along with the sun shinin' and the wind singin' in the riggin' and the little machine purrin' like a cat under a pail.

We was headed for a place where the mesa dropped off sudden and I was wonderin' if Aloisius was goin' to take the road or just fly acrost and light on the other side, when he says, "Boys, when we hit this grade I'll throw out the clutch, and you just watch her coast!"

I WAS wonderin' what was the use of throwin' anything overboard seein' as how we needed all the ballast we had, when we struck the edge of the mesa, and Aloisius does somethin' with his foot and the machine quits roarin' and all you could hear was the wind whistlin' by, and somethin' rattlin' underneath. There was a bend ahead, and it was comin' toward us mighty fast. Thinks I, here is where we take a short cut to Glory, and I was hangin' onto one of the uprights of the awning and hopin' it would be sand and not rocks when we lit, when Aloisius does somethin' with his other foot and the machine commences to groan like a bad case of cholera, and growl and kind of hold back like she didn't want to. And at that we hit the curve with the hind wheels jumpin' around like a horse standin' on his front feet and kickin' every way to once; but we made the turn, and I got time to fetch a breath and wipe the sweat off me face.

"How do you like it?" says Aloisius, settin' straight, and kind of proud, like he was handlin' a liner.

"Fine!" says I. "It beats hikin', all right, as long as you don't stop. I noticed your steam pressure run up to forty pounds, comin' down that last hill. The faster she goes the more steam she makes."

"That's miles per hour, not steam," says Aloisius. "But leave it to me. I have fifty-seven of these cars in service at the factory. I know 'em." And seein' as Bob and me didn't know the first thing about runnin' one of them machines, we left it to Aloisius.

And, mate, it was fine, after you got used to it. Aloisius kind of settled down and cooled off, and we hummed along easy, takin' in the scenery, and sometimes stoppin' to see what was wrong when a new rattle started up.

Every time we stopped Bob would get down and stretch his legs and look around and whistle a little tune like he was feelin' happy. And Aloisius he would go peekin'

around under the car and liftin' the cover in front, and feelin' of her chest. And sometimes he would get down and crawl under, and one time he got stuck under the axle and we had to give him a hand. And what with givin' her water, once in a while, and dodgin' rocks and chuck holes and navigatin' the desert, he was havin' the time of his life.

I guess that was why he didn't pay a whole lot of attention to where we was goin', for after we stopped to have some grub, along about two o'clock, I asks Aloisius if we wasn't headin' too much south to be makin' Bisbee. He says we ought to be on the right road and I says we ought to, but are we? And then Bob says, "Any road will do." You see Bob was kind of offhand about roads. He didn't care which way we was goin' so long as we kept goin'.

BUT Aloisius was wrong, at that. About sundown we come in sight of a town and I seen right away it wasn't Bisbee. And first thing we know, we are driftin' right into Nogales, on the border. "My mistake," says Aloisius. "We'll make it up to-morrow."

"If it's all the same to you," says I, "I'd rather camp outside of town to-night."

"Which we'll do," says Aloisius, "after I get some gas and oil for the old baby."

So after Aloisius fills up the tank and gets some extra oil, we fill the canteens and head east out of Nogales, with Aloisius takin' a longin' look at Mexico, like he wanted to start another dance, or somethin'.

"Remember The Animus," says I, by way of givin' him a hint.

"Alamo," says Bob.

"Or mebby you mean Chiquita?" says I. "Funny, how so many of them Mexican words mean trouble."

"Soft eyes looked love to eyes which spake again," says Bob, kind of dreamy-like.

"Some of them eyes are sewed up this mornin'," says I.

Aloisius laughs, and says: "Bill, if you hadn't stood by me, I don't believe I could have licked that crowd." And I was goin' to say somethin' to Aloisius when we hauled up alongside of a bunch of mesquite, and we was all glad to get out and make camp, so we could stretch our legs.

It was a good camp, for a while. We had lots of grub, and Aloisius had bought plenty of new blankets. Aloisius was strong for puttin' up the tent, just to see how it worked.

Now Bob and me didn't see no use in botherin' with a tent, but we stuck her up, just to please Aloisius. We staked her out good and I run a couple of guy lines so as to steady her, for the wind was teasin' around and I figured it might blow some, havin' started after sundown. Then we spread our blankets and made everything shipshape, followin' which we made a fire and ate a thunderin' big supper.

After supper we set in the door of the tent, Aloisius puffin' at a big cigar, and lookin' comfortable. Pretty soon he says: "Boys, are you armed?"

I tells him all the arms we got is what we used in that scrap in the Mexican joint.

"Well," says Aloisius, "I have provided for a possible emergency."

And with that he gets the new valise he bought in Tucson, and hauls out three of them big automatic pistols and some boxes of cartridges. Then he shows Bob and me how to load 'em, and all about the safety, and how you cocked 'em and then kept pullin' the trigger until they was empty, and then the action would stay open.

"No chance of an accident, if you're careful," says Aloisius. And with that he points his pistol out of the tent. "The safety is set," he says. But I guess it weren't set right, for *wham* goes the gun, and out goes one of the headlights on the car.

"My goodness!" says Aloisius, layin' the gun down careful and gettin' up and lookin' at the busted headlight. "I got her plumb center, anyhow," he says. Bob and me didn't say nothin', and I guess Aloisius felt kind of foolish. "You got

to give sausages to fortune once in a while," he says, like that explained everything.

About then, the wind commences to whine around the tent, and the air felt like it was goin' to blow. So Aloisius puts out the other headlight on the car and we all turn in snug, and I go to sleep.

I WOKE up sudden. I can hear a floppin' and a snappin' and along comes a big gust of wind that fills the tent, and pop goes the ropes and our tent sails off in the dark and we hang onto our blankets to keep 'em from followin'. Now instead of layin' snug, and lettin' her rave, Aloisius gets up and commences to do some of the ravin' himself. And first thing he knows his hat is gone.

And then he hollers, "Demmit! There goes one of my blankets!" Then he must 'a' stepped off his other blankets for somethin' goes whippin' up in the air, and the sand sifts around, and Aloisius is steppin' on everybody and sayin' things that would 'a' wilted all the pickles in his factory.

"Ain't you going to do anything?" he hollers.

"Sure!" says I. "I'm goin' to lay snug and hang onto what I got."

"Well, I ain't," he says, and he goes fumblin' around and pretty soon he turns on the headlight and starts to crank up the car. And if you never seen a fat man in his underwear, crankin' away at a car in a gale, you missed somethin'.

Pretty soon he gets the engine goin' and he hops in and hollers somethin' about recoverin' his blankets, and away he goes, down the wind. About the time he gets to where his blanket is snagged on a bush, and gets out of the car, away goes the blanket like a crow in a gale. And on goes the headlight, pokin' along, and shinin' from side to side, and I'm wonderin' if Aloisius can find his way back to camp or if he'll get stuck in the sand.

Now Bob hadn't made a move, but he must 'a' been watchin' the show, for pretty soon he says, "I'm going out to find Mr. Brandstatter. He may need help."

"He don't need no help to get lost," says I, but Bob he paid no attention. He just climbs into his pants and puts on his shoes, and says he'll be back right away. I tell him to rope his bed or he won't have any in the mornin'.

Well, Bob starts out, and after waitin' quite a spell, I go to sleep again. When I wake up, the wind has gone down and the sun is shinin', and there's a streak of ashes where our fire was, and the tent pegs and some busted ropes, and Aloisius' satchel half full of sand and Bob's bed roll, but no Bob and no Aloisius. So I hops up and takes a look around.

No machine in sight, and no folks on the sky line; just scenery, and mighty poor scenery at that. I make some coffee, but most of the grub was left in the car, account of the ants. Then I rope me bed and take Aloisius' valise and start down the road, followin' the tracks of the machine.

I see where Aloisius got out of the car, mebby to chase his pants or the blankets, and where he got in again. He done some wild navigatin'. Then I come to a place where I see a lot of horse tracks in the sand, but I don't pay much attention at the time, or mebby I wouldn't 'a' followed the tracks of the car.

ANYHOW, I kept on, followin' the wheel marks, and thinkin' as how every time I come to a dip I would see the car stuck in the sand. Pretty soon I seen where the car went down the road a piece and then backed and turned but instead of takin' the road to camp, it headed south, on another road which was all marked up with horse tracks.

"They got twisted in the dark," I says to myself. "They thought they was headin' back for camp and they've gone cantelopin' off into Mexico, and God knows how far they got before they found out they was wrong."

So I kept hikin' and lookin' ahead, expectin' to see 'em show up most any minute, what with the dips and hills hidin' the road half the time. But they didn't show up, so after makin' four or five miles I set down and did some figurin'.

Thinks I, "They wouldn't 'a' been rattled so bad they would keep on drivin' all night when they knowed they wasn't more'n a mile from camp at the start." But the more I tried to figure it out, the worse off I was. "Somebody in this outfit is crazy," says I to myself. "And I'm goin' to find out which one it is."

So I starts on again, thinkin' as how I'll hike to the first sand hill ahead, and if I don't see 'em somewhere the other side of it, I'll head back for camp and wait. But after I come to that hill and nobody in sight, I keep on to the next, just cheatin' myself into believin' that I got to see 'em pretty soon.

BEIN' used to walkin', I keep on followin' the tracks of the car, and the sun gets hot and I take a drink from me canteen, and I'm just screwin' the top on when I see somethin' shinin' in the road. It is one of them cartridges for a automatic pistol. Pretty soon I find another, and the cartridges is new, and I'm wonderin' who is goin' along leakin' ammunition when I see somethin' what looks like a town, 'way down the road.

When I got nearer, I could see a car standin' in front of one of the buildin's, and some horses in a bunch, and when I seen the horses, I commenced to do some thinkin'. I was standin' in the road, tryin' to make out if any of the folks movin' around was Aloisius or Bob, when I heard somethin' kind of patterin' behind me. I turned round, and there was a tough-lookin' Mexican on a big horse, headin' straight for me.

He was dressed fancy, and it looked like he had guns and cartridges all over him. Anyhow, I seen he weren't no farmer. He pulled up and asks me where I'm goin', and I tell him I'm lookin' for a couple of friends what got lost last night.

He says nothin', but looks at me valise and kind of makes a motion like he wants it, so I hand her up to him. He takes a look in the valise and then hangs her on his saddle horn and tells me to march ahead. I get to feelin' hot in the neck, but it don't do no good, so I mooch along, thinkin' as how Aloisius said we would make it up to-morrow.

AND sure enough, when we hit the town, there was the little car, and our grub in it and one of the headlights busted, but no Aloisius or Bob.

"Where's me friend the governor of Arizona, and his secretary?" says I to the Mexican on the big horse, but he only grunts, and another tough-lookin' Mexican comes out of a house and takes the horse and tells the fancy-dressed guy that a couple of gringos are inside, and is he to shoot 'em, or take their clothes and turn 'em loose.

"I'll attend to these gringos," says the fancy-dressed guy.

Then the other one says: "Si, captain!" and salutes him. "Shoot this one if he runs away," says the captain, and he goes into the house.

"Who is the boss?" I ask the man holdin' the horse.

"You don't know who he is, no?" says the Mexican. "Then I will tell you. He is Captain Pedro Salazar Jabonera, the great bandido!" says he. "Have you got any cigarettes?"

"Can you talk American?" says I, speakin' American myself to see if he savvied. But he didn't even say he couldn't, so I tells him in Mexican that if Pedro Soapdish as much as lays a finger on us, me stout friend who is the governor of Arizona will call out the rangers and wipe Pedro and his outfit off the map.

The Mexican grins and says that me friend the governor can't wipe out anything if he is dead. Thinks I, "He is right, at that. I better batten down me hatches, and get ready for rough weather." So I tells the Mexican I ain't got any cigarettes but I hand him me pipe tobacco and he digs up some papers and rolls a smoke.

He keeps the can of tobacco. And he says thanks, just like I give it to him. So I gets hot in the neck. "You cross-eyed swab!" says I, talkin' American. "If we was the other side of the line, I'd take you apart so even a coyote couldn't find

one of the pieces. You dirty-faced flea pasture," says I, smilin' like I was friendly, "a dog would be ashamed of hisself to be seen followin' your tracks down the road. Do you savvy that?" says I.

"Si! Si!" says he, grinnin' foolish.

"I was tellin' you how much I liked you," says I, speakin' Mexican. "And seein' as how I hoofed it all night to get here, I'm goin' over there in the shade and sit down."

He says it will be all right to go ahead but it will give him great pleasure to shoot me if I go beyond the corner of the adobe. So I mooch over and drop me roll and lay down, like I'm all in. When he ain't lookin' I reach in me bed roll and pull out the automatic and lay her in a little hollow and cover her up with sand, careful.

After a while somebody comes to the door of the house acrost the street and hails the Mexican holdin' the captain's horse and tells him to feed and water the horse and then fetch me in. I know there ain't no use makin' a break, so I rest up all I can, and try to think of a couple of prayers, but I can't get the words right, what with wonderin' how it feels to be stood up against a 'dobe wall and shot full of holes. And pretty soon the Mexican comes back and says for me to get up and march into the house, and I done it.

THE captain is settin' at a table, with a couple of pistols on it and a glass and a bottle of liquor. His hat is off, and honest, mate, they ain't enough room between his eyebrows and his hair to itch. The minute I see Aloisius, who is settin' on a bench in the corner, with nothin' on but his flannel shirt and his underwear, he perks up and says, "Thank God, you're here!"

"I don't know as I feel that way about it," says I, sizin' up the captain and the three-four thugs standin' around him.

But I salute Aloisius, like he is a big bug, and say, "Sorry to see you in this here state of dissolution, governor." And at that Bob, who is standin' by the only window, leanin' careless against the wall, and smilin', commences to laugh, like it was a picnic, and not a shootin' party. Then the captain says for one of his men to search me, but they don't find no automatic. Then the captain says in kind of crippled American, "Who these hombre?" and he points to Aloisius.

"He's the governor of Arizona," says I. "And the slim guy, over by the window, is his secretary," and I points to Bob.

"I think no," says the captain, grinnin' wolfish.

"Think what you dam' please," says I, knowin' that our only chance was to show 'em they couldn't scare us nohow. "If you frisk the governor you'll find a good fat roll of bills on him. He was travelin' for pleasure, it bein' a slack time in the senate. I come along to do the cookin'," says I, "me bein' a first-class cook."

"He say he is the pickle business," says the captain, eyin' me hard and hot.

"Oh, he always tells everybody that, him bein' the owner of a pickle factory, on the side," says I. "You see, when he ain't doin' a hitch in the State house, he is interested in makin' pickles. There's more money in it."

The captain tells one of his men to search Aloisius, but Aloisius ain't got much on to search. "Where is this money?" says the captain, scowlin' at his gang. They all said they didn't know, and I see that the captain is gettin' mad and kind of suspicious, so I tells him to look under the front seat of the car, up in the springs, and he'll find the money.

At that Aloisius groans and says I betrayed him into the hands of the enemy. The captain doesn't trust any of his men to search the car, so he goes out and looks himself. Pretty soon he comes back with a wallet stuffed full of bills, and he don't look so mad.

Then him and his gang have a powwow in Mexican, arguin' whether it would be better to shoot us or enlist us in the army. And seein' as how the outfit are figurin' to leave there quick, and don't want to be bothered with any excess baggage, and are votin' mostly to shoot us, I butt in and tell the captain that the governor can

handle a car like a professional, and that his secretary can talk Spanish and American and read and write and figure, and that I can cook to beat the band, and if it is all the same to him, we'll enlist in his army and won't ask no wages but our board and lodgin'.

"The governor," says I to the captain, "can drive you around in his car to beat hell, which you're tryin' to do. And his secretary can kind of keep your books and do your writin' for you, and when it comes to cookin' grub, I don't take off my hat to no man."

"We will not shoot them, yet," says the captain to his gang. "We will make them work."

THEN the captain tells a couple of his thugs to shoot us if we try to get away, and he goes into a back room to take a snooze, leavin' me and Bob and Aloisius settin' in that hot adobe, lookin' at each other. "Can we talk?" says Aloisius, kind of gurglin' in his throat.

"Mebby you can if you try hard," says I.

"What are they going to do with us?" says Aloisius.

"They was goin' to shoot us," I tells him. "But seein' as I talked up and told 'em you was a expert driver, and Bob was a first-class bookkeeper, and I was a thunderin' good cook, they're goin' to put us to work, instead of leavin' us for the coyotes to work on. All we are, right now, is bandits, servin' under Captain Pedro Jabonera."

"My goodness!" says Aloisius. "Was that Jabonera?"

"The same," says I. "And you are his shofer."

"But this is an outrage!" says Aloisius. "I am an American citizen. I shall appeal to the authorities. Do you mean to tell me that we are prisoners?"

"We are," says I, "until this here Jabonera gets mad at somethin' and plugs us. I told you not to go chasin' your pants all over the country. But you done it, and here you are."

"Yes, here we are," says Aloisius, mournful. "But, Bill, how did *you* get here?"

"By followin' the tracks of a couple of idiots," says I.

"Don't you think that Captain Salazar is picturesque?" says Bob, who had been lookin' out of the window. Now imagine him talkin' like that when I'd been fair sweatin' blood to keep them bandits from murderin' us! I got kind of hot in the neck.

"Mebby you can make up a poem about it," says I.

"That's what I have been doing," says Bob.

CHAPTER V.

THE CAPTURE OF SANDOVAL.

ALOISIUS and me and Bob had plenty of time to talk, for the captain, he was asleep in the back room, and a guard with a rifle standin' outside by the front door, and the rest of the gang spread around in the shade, snoozin', for it was hot, and they'd been up most all night ridin' home from a raid in Arizona. Seems that was how they run onto Aloisius and Bob and the car, and took 'em along into Mexico just like pickin' strawberries.

When Aloisius gets it through his head that he has been stuck up and robbed of everything he's got but his underwear and shirt, and that he can't do nothin' but what he is told to do by the captain of the gang, and that pretty soon we'll be headin' south into Mexico, and mebby fightin', and gettin' shot and everything, it changes him a whole lot.

Not that he wasn't friendly enough, before, but now he is a sufferin' guy just like me or Bob or anybody what ain't rich. He gets over bein' mad at me for tellin' where his cash was and gettin' him a job drivin' the car for the captain and says he sees the wisdom of my latitude toward the calamity. "You saved our lives," he says, "and if you will just keep on saving 'em, I hope to live to show my depreciation in a more substantial manner."

"That's all right," says I. "But I'm doin' a little life savin' for myself, at the

same time. If you and Bob are willin' to take a little advice from a guy what ain't been to college, I'm willin' to hand you some."

"We'll be mighty glad to hear it," says Aloisius.

"I'm askin' Bob, likewise," says I. At which Aloisius gets redder in the face than he is. He takes the hint, but he has to swallow hard to get it down without savin' somethin'.

"Shoot," says Bob, smilin'.

At which Aloisius jumps like a unexpected wasp had got under his shirt.

"I meant, proceed," says Bob, seein' as how "shoot" kind of made Aloisius nervous.

"All right," says I. "Here's the dope. You want to forget all about your folks and the United States and your money, and figure you are dead and come to life again and your job is to do your day's hitch in this here outfit, just like you was makin' your livin' at it, which same you are doin', at that. Captain Pedro Salazar Jabonera is a gent. He's treated us handsome, considerin'. Ammunition don't cost him much.

"A word to the wise is deficient. He is your commandin' officer. When he tells you to do anything, do it just like he says. Mebby some day he'll get to be a general. He looks like one, right now. And mebby then you guys'll get promoted and wear a uniform and such.

"If I was you I'd have a talk with the captain and tell him you're willin' to work for him, all right, but if he don't mind takin' a couple of thousand cash, and lettin' you go, some time, you'll be glad to dig up the ransom. Mebby he can use the cash better than he can you.

"Course, me and Bob, we figure to stick by the captain from now on. I told him I was a good cook but I didn't tell him I could sail a ship, yet. If he ever gets to where he's needin' a admiral, I'm goin' to ask him for the job."

AND when I quit talkin', you ought to see Bob and Aloisius look at me like I was crazy. But they was settin' with their back to the room where the captain was sleepin', and they didn't see the door open a couple of inches, like I did, which same give me a hint. So I made my talk, accordin', knowin' that he was listenin' to find out what we was up to.

I knowed the captain couldn't see through the door, so I tips the wink to Bob and Aloisius, and they caught on, and said as how they was glad to be taken prisoners by such a generous captain as Pedro Salazar Jabonera, and that they would fight for him to the finish.

"If I only had a pair of pants," says Aloisius, mournful.

"You *are* dressed kind of light for a shofer," says I, "but Captain Pedro ain't the kind to let you run around like a Christmas turkey, when you're his private hack driver. He'll dig up a pair of overalls for you, if you ask him polite."

And just about then out comes the captain, brisk, and pours himself a drink, and I stand up and salute and Bob and Aloisius does the same.

"It is for you to get the busy on," says the captain to Aloisius. "You make the machine go and take me to Sandoval, pronto!"

"Excuse me, captain," says I in Mexican, "but the governor might catch cold like he is. Anyhow, he could drive faster if he had a uniform."

"Santa Maria!" says the captain. "Am I a tailor, to find clothes for the fat one?"

"Hand-me-downs would do just as well," says I.

I knowed he wouldn't savvy hand-me-downs, and would hate to let on he didn't, so he calls in a guard and tells him to find a pair of pants for the fat Americano. And pretty soon in comes the guard with Aloisius' pants which one of the gang found hangin' on a bush, up where they grabbed Aloisius and Bob.

Aloisius, he grabs them pants like they was made of gold, and climbs into 'em, and it sure made a change in his looks. "Thank the captain," says I to Aloisius on the side. And he done it.

Almost before Aloisius could get his belt buckled, Captain Pedro gives the high

sign for everybody to get movin'; so the bandits, which he called his soldiers, all get busy pickin' up their stuff and saddlin' their horses and runnin' around like a lot of hens turned loose in a field full of grasshoppers.

The lieutenant is drunk, and Captain Pedro is handin' out language what would have paralyzed a New Castle coal heaver, and everybody is excited. So I mooch over to the corner of the adobe and start to unrope me blankets, so I can take one along, and me coffee can and matches and such. While I'm stoopin' over I dig up the automatic and stick it inside me shirt.

The lieutenant is standin' by his horse, kind of weavin' around like he was makin' up his mind to get aboard, when he sees me rollin' a blanket so I can carry it soldier fashion. Aloisius is settin' at the steerin' wheel of the car and the captain is beside him, and the back of the car is loaded up with the captain's blankets and grub and poncho and the boxes of canned stuff Aloisius had brought for us.

The lieutenant, a kind of black, beefy guy with a scar down his face, and a big mustache, comes bow-leggin' over to me and says he will take the blankets, and he reaches for the one I'm fixin' for myself.

"Back up!" says I. "You're in the wrong corral." Then he says things in Mexican, kind of hintin' that my family was dog fanciers, and such, which I let go by the board, seein' as he is drunk. Bob comes moochin' over, with his hands in his pockets and smilin' like he was enjoyin' himself. "You keep out of it," says I to Bob.

"I'm studying the Mexican idiom," says Bob, carelesslike.

"Mexican idiot is right!" says I. And then the lieutenant grabs holt of one end of me blanket and hauls on it. Instead of hangin' on, I let go sudden and the lieutenant sets down on the sand right solid.

AT that everybody laughs, includin' the captain. But I ain't laughin', or the drunk lieutenant, for when he climbed to his feet again he had his big revolver in his hand, and before I could duck he lets fly at me. I felt somethin' hit me in the chest, and it like to knocked me down. Thinks I, "I'm shot. This is the finish!"

So I hauls back and let drive and took the lieutenant between the eyes, and Bob said, later, you could 'a' heard that swat a quarter of a mile. Anyhow it like to busted my fist, and it sure busted the lieutenant. He dropped like a sack of coal when the tackle breaks, and if they'd been any brains in his head I guess that jolt would 'a' killed him.

Anyhow, everything is kind of quiet, includin' the lieutenant, when the captain says: "Leave the dog where he is! But first take his gun and his cartridges. You will not be the cook. You will take his horse. You are too grand a fighter to be a cook. You will be my lieutenant."

And when I kind of got my bearin's, and knowed that the bullet had hit the automatic inside my shirt and hadn't drilled me, I seen the captain was meanin' me. I was feelin' kind of sick to me stummick, what with the jolt from that shot, but I knowed that now was my chance to pull a strong bluff, Mexican style. Bob was so scared that I was shot that it took him a couple of minutes to ask me.

"Shot?" says I, speakin' Spanish. "If I was I didn't notice it. What the hell you fellas standin' around gapin' at, anyhow? Mount!" says I. "Form fours! Column advance!" And even if they didn't know what I was talkin' about, any more than I did, I got action.

And I could see that Captain Pedro wasn't feelin' sad about havin' made a quick change of lieutenants. "We will proceed to Sandoval," says he.

Now Bob was afoot, and it looked like the captain's new secretary was in for a long hike, with a spell of trottin', once in a while. And seein' as nobody was payin' any attention to him, I climbs aboard the lieutenant's horse and steered him over to where the captain and Aloisius was waitin'. "Your secretary," says I, "will be late gettin' into Sandoval if you don't give him a horse to ride."

"I do not want him," says the captain, wavin' his hands. "He is no good. I

can do all the writing I want with this," and he slaps the pistol in his belt.

"Bueno!" says I, salutin'. "Full steam ahead," says I to Aloisius. And Aloisius, bein' excited, starts the machine with a jerk that like to broke the captain's back. Then I calls the monkey-face Mexican what has got my can of tobacco and tells him he is sargento if he behaves himself, and if he don't he is mud. He takes a slant at me fist and says he is already sergeant.

"Then," says I, "why don't you see that your men are all mounted and equipped? Is my friend the Señor Roberto to walk while all these here low-brows ride? Get him a horse," says I, "or give him yours. And do it quick!"

Which was kind of passin' the buck to the sergeant, and he knowed it. But he got busy and dismounts a sick-lookin' Mexican and tells him to go and lay down in the shade and gives this hombre's horse to Bob.

THEN we set out, followin' the tracks of the machine, with the sergeant and Bob bringin' up the rear, and everybody ridin' as fast or as slow as they pleased. I drops back along the line and pairs 'em off and tells 'em to keep the formation or I'll take 'em apart one at a time. And by way of givin' 'em a hint, I tells 'em that bullets bounce off me back just the same as they do off me chest, and that I'm kind of touchy about gettin' shot, anyhow.

I'm fair sick to me stummick with the jolt I got, but it ain't no time to lay down on the job, so I take a reef in me feelin's, and a drink from me canteen, and ride along up to the head of the column. I unbutton me shirt and take a look at me stummick, and there is a black-and-blue lump as big as a soup plate. The holster of the automatic is chewed up some, and bein' wishful to see if the gun is damaged any, I pull her out and let fly at a rock to one side of the road.

Now, there was a yucca growin' just beyond the rock, which I miss clean, but hit the yucca and cut it in two. With that I hang the gun on me belt, account of it bumpin' the sore spot on me stummick, and act like I had just been pickin' my teeth after dinner.

I can hear the news travelin' down the column, and Bob said, later, that every livin' chola in the outfit took a look at that yucca stalk as he rode by. It was good advertisin', and better luck. Them troopers always moved around brisk when I as much as looked at 'em, after that.

But if I'd knowed what was comin' when we got to Sandoval I reckon I'd took a chance of breakin' back for America, instead of moochin' along with twenty of the toughest bandidos in Mexico. But as Aloisius used to say: "You got to give sausages to fortune, once in a while." And we come mighty near givin' all the sausages in our basket, all account of Aloisius and the captain speedin' up so far ahead of the company that we wasn't even the tail to the dog.

Along about sundown we hove in sight of this Sandoval, after crossin' so much desert that anything with a roof on it looked good. We weren't expectin' trouble, but trouble was expectin' us, all right. The sergeant, whose name was Antonio, rides up the line to where I'm leadin' me noble troops and says, "Soldiers in Sandoval, Señor Capitan."

Now I had been thinkin' mostly how stiff and sore I was gettin' from bein' on a horse, instead of keepin' me eye on what we was comin' to. "Is that so?" says I, offhand. "Then we'll halt and take soundin's." And I climbed down off me horse and took a little walk up and down like I was thinkin' hard. At the same time I was sizin' up the country; and seein' a bunch of green over along the hills, I told the sergeant we would camp over there until after dark, when we would prospect around a little.

The men were all wise to the soldiers bein' in town, account of the horses we could see in front of some of the houses, and they were willin' enough to play safe, so we drifted over to the hills and made camp. Havin' figured on eatin' in Sandoval, it wasn't what you'd call a cheerful camp, and after a couple of hours of doin'

nothin' but feel hungry the men commenced to get restless.

I HAD a talk with the sergeant, askin' him if he had a man he could trust to go into town and find out what had happened to the captain and Aloisius. Antonio says most any man he might send would get drunk and mebby give us away to the soldiers. So right there I give orders that no man was to leave camp without permission; and I called Bob over and asked him what he thought of takin' a little walk into town and sizin' up the situation.

Bob said he'd like to go, so I had one of the men lend him his sombrero and a old serape, and Bob set out along the hills, sayin' as how he would be back as soon as he found out where Aloisius was. Then I told Tony to post a couple of sentries and keep the men quiet until Bob come back.

Thinks I to myself, them soldiers in Sandoval is just about as much soldiers as we are. It's a case of dog eat dog. The other bunch beat Pedro Salazar Jabonera to it and he is a prisoner or else he'd be scootin' around the desert in Aloisius' car lookin' for his gang to show up.

I called Sergeant Tony over and asked him what he thought Captain Pedro's chances were. Tony didn't say much, but he made motions like Captain Pedro would get it in the neck and then it would be every man for himself.

"If the captain and me pal the governor are alive," says I to Tony, "we'll rescue 'em. We'll know more about it when Bob gets back. Rustle a bunch of wood if you can find any, and I'll show you some high-class maneuverin'."

Tony sent a couple of men to get some roots and brush, which same I had 'em pile up where a fire could be seen from town. Tony was kind of nervous about lightin' any fire till I told him me plan. We talked mebby a hour or two, figurin' out the fine points, and while we was talkin' in comes Bob, kind of excited, and says that Aloisius and the captain are prisoners and are to be executed at sunrise for bein' rebels.

Seems Bob kind of hung around the dark corners of town watchin' what was goin' on. The other gang was drinkin' and havin' a good time, all except a few sentries, and they paid no attention to Bob, him lookin' like a starvin' chola more'n anything else, and him not sayin' anything. But Bob got close enough to hear 'em talkin', and that give him a line on what had happened to the captain and Aloisius and where they were.

Seems the other gang had 'em cooped up in a shed back of the 'dobe in which the boss was makin' his headquarters. I got a line on the layout from Bob and then told Tony to touch off the pile of brush. Before the fire blazed up we all mounted and made for the hills, Tony leadin' the way along a trail that connected up with another back of Sandoval.

About a half a mile back of town we dismounted and watched to see if anything would happen. There wasn't much light, but what was left of the moon was doin' the best it could, and pretty soon we seen a bunch ride out from Sandoval and kind of split up in skirmish order and head toward our fire.

I ordered Tony to mount his men and follow me, quiet. We rode straight for Sandoval, takin' it easy. I had put Tony wise to my plan and he passed the word along to his men.

When we got a couple of hundred yards from the edge of town we divided into two troops, Tony leadin' one and me the other. It was Tony's job to engage all the soldiers in sight that was willin' to dance, and mine to make a quick jump for the shed where Aloisius and the captain was, and get the guards before they got a chance to fix Aloisius and the captain.

I kicked me horse in the ribs and hollers, "Viva Mexico! Remember The Animus!" and in we went.

A couple of streaks cut the dark about the time we hit the yard back of the shed, and some of the horses got tangled up in the fence, and we made noise enough for a real war. I remember ridin' down a

guy that kept shootin' at me, and I could hear some of our gang gruntin' and bustin' loose with their rifles at anything in sight. Some of the other bandits was firin' at us from the window of the adobe in front, but just about then Tony and his mine sweepers come tearin' down the road through town and they made noise enough for a regiment.

I jumped off me horse and kicked open the door of the shed and sings out to Aloisius that it was Bill Morningstar to the rescue. And out of the dark Aloisius pipes up and says his hands is tied and that he and the captain are settin' on the floor in the corner and for us please not to shoot.

"Get a move on," I tells Aloisius. "Tony is out in front shellin' the adobe and gettin' shelled, and mebby he'll need reënforcements."

With that I cut the rope off Aloisius and the captain, who does some first-class cussin' in Spanish, and we mooch out; and seein' as Tony is gettin' it hot and heavy, there bein' quite a bunch of the other gang, I give the captain a quick line on things and he takes one of his men's horses, and we made a dash for the other end of the town so as to surprise the enemy in the rear.

About then, the gang what went out to see if they could sneak up on us where our fire was, come tearin' back into Sandoval. Captain Pedro sure knew his business. Instead of lettin' them take us in the rear, he ordered us to right about and charge and we met 'em on the fly. The light was too bad to see what damage we done, but I recollect my automatic was hot when I went to load her the second time; and in that mix-up I hardly had room to swing me arm.

ANYHOW, the other gang surrendered, right there. Course, some of 'em took to the hills when they seen that the bun was off the stove, but them that didn't get a chance, the captain had lined up against a buildin', after makin' a big fire in the street. Then he told me to take a firin' squad and finish up the job. Seems the other gang hadn't give the captain or Aloisius anything to eat all day and that kind of made 'em both mad. Anyhow, after tellin' me to kill off them that was left, the captain goes into the cantina to get a drink and some supper.

I couldn't see Aloisius around anywhere, or Bob, and I couldn't take time to look for 'em, just then. But I got hold of Tony. That murderin' little wasp had been havin' the time of his life and the idea of shootin' down a few extra peons didn't bother him none. But I had a different idea. I picked me firin' squad and told 'em to fire two rounds apiece when I give the word. Then I went over to the prisoners and got a hold of one that wasn't too scared to talk and tells him that, when the firin' is over, he and his friends is to fall down and stay there till I tell 'em what to do.

Everything is all ready, when I tell Tony to take what men ain't in the cantina, drinkin', and get somethin' to eat and feed the horses, seein' as it is the captain's idea to leave Sandoval before another army comes bustin' along. Then I tells me firin' squad to fire straight up in the air, twice, and then beat it and get some supper.

"Fall down, you birds!" says I to the prisoners, and with that *wham wham* goes the firin' squad. The captain sticks his head out of the cantina doorway and sees a bunch of prisoners squirmin' around on the ground and says, "Bueno!" and goes back to his supper.

I mooch over to the prisoners and tell 'em to get up and that they are now soldiering under Captain Pedro Salazar Jabonera, and to say nothin' but saw wood, or the next firin' squad won't be so careless. And honest, mate, them poor guys grabbed me legs and prayed and said I was a saint, and a whole lot of stuff, and that they would do what I said to the finish.

"You will," says I to the bunch, "or it will be the finish."

And with that I hunt up Tony and tell him we got twelve new soldiers, and that we will need 'em, seein' as how we lost

five or six men ourselves, and a couple of horses, when we took Sandoval.

"But Captain Pedro will be mad, no?" says Tony.

"Leave him to me," says I. "Didn't I save him from gettin' the same medicine he was goin' to give them prisoners? Course, I got to tell him we shot a few prisoners, but that the recruits is what is left over account of a poor light for shootin'. Leave Captain Pedro to me."

Then I started in to hunt up Bob and Aloisius. I found Bob, all right. He was standin' in the doorway of a house near the end of the town, talkin' his kind of Mexican to a young Mexican woman, just like he had dropped in for a visit, instead of comin' right out of a lively scrap. He had a bundle under his arm, and there was a rifle leanin' against the wall by the door.

"Hello, Bill!" he says, cheerful. "Allow me to introduce my friend," he says to the young woman. Then he says as how they were having a talk about rural life in Mexico—goats and burros and beans and farmin' and such.

"That's fine," says I, "but have you seen anything of Aloisius? He has turned up missin'."

At that Bob looks serious and says, "By Jove! I had forgotten him for the time being." And he bows to the young woman and excuses himself and says we must find Aloisius right away.

"What you got in the bundle?" says I.

"Clothing," says Bob. "Spoils of war, Bill. My clothes were getting pretty thin."

"Melby Aloisius is spoils of war, likewise," says I. "You had your supper, yet?"

"Yes, indeed." he says. "Senora Carmelita was kind enough to offer me some food. She's an interesting type, Bill. And too young to be a widow. Her husband was killed in a former raid on Sandoval."

"I notice you always pick good-lookin' women for types," says I, kind of hot in the neck because Bob didn't seem to be worried much about Aloisius.

Just about then we run onto a Mexican with a lantern. He was goin' around lookin' for dead ones that he could strip. I takes the lantern and tells him to go back and sit down. Then me and Bob starts out, first goin' back to the shed where we found Aloisius' hat, but no Aloisius.

"I'll bet he's hidin' out, somewhere," says I. "He didn't have a horse or a gun, and it was no place for a fat man, anyhow."

"The fighting was heaviest down the street, there," says Bob, kind of mournful.

"Then let's take a look, and get it over with," says I, likewise feelin' mournful, for now that the excitement was over I was missin' the pickle king a whole lot. You see, Aloisius had been enjoyin' himself, travelin' with us, and you always kind of like a guy that's happy doin' your kind of stuff. And old Aloisius was game, accordin' to his lights, and if his lungs had been in trainin' he'd 'a' made a humdinger.

Anyhow, we mooched around and turned over two or three guys that was through with this here vale of steers, and pretty soon we come to the place where the town road crossed another road, and right along there they was piled up pretty thick. They was four of 'em, kind of heaped together, and I was walkin' around 'em, holdin' the lantern down close, and pretty soon I seen an extra pair of feet stickin' out.

Says I to Bob: "Ten feet and four men don't tally right. Gimme a hand and we'll see what's under this pile."

AND sure enough, after we heaved a couple of 'em to one side, there lay Aloisius, face down and the back of his shirt stained up a whole lot.

"Our pal is done for," says I. "The best we can do is to bury him and try and send a letter to his folks."

"What's this in his hand?" says Bob. "Fetch the lantern over here, Bill."

"A shovel," says I. "Now what do you think of that? Poor old Aloisius was all fixed to dig his own grave. It's kind of sad, at that, Bob," says I.

"I don't know," says Bob, kneelin' down and lookin' at the shovel. "There's more hair and blood on it than earth. It would seem that he went down fighting for his life."

And at that Aloisius moves, and Bob jumps back and knocks over the lantern and it goes out, and I jump back, and then Aloisius raises up in the moonlight and says: "Where is the son of a gun that kicked me in the stummick!" and swings the shovel reckless and like to brained me.

"Easy!" I sings out. "It's me and Bob. The fight is over, old-timer." And I picks up the lantern and lights her, and there is Aloisius, with his shirt all tore up in front and one of his eyes bunged up tight, and a gash on his head, and kind of shaky all over, and his brains workin' kind of slow.

"All over?" says Aloisius, like he was a kid talkin' in his sleep. Then he kind of come to and looks at me and Bob, and says, "Which side won?" And at that we let out a whoop and grabs him and steadies him down the road to the cantina, him hangin' onto the shovel like it was growed fast to his hand.

CAPTAIN PEDRO was in the back of the cantina, and you could see he had took plenty of liquor, and was feelin' pretty good, account of bein' alive and lickin' the other gang and such. "Report to the captain," says I to Aloisius, after he had took a couple of drinks and washed up some.

So Aloisius wabbles into the back room and salutes and says he's come to report for duty, and that he is awaitin' the pleasure of his commandin' officer. Captain Pedro sees me standin' back of Aloisius and calls me in. "I shall proceed to Casa Verdugo, leaving here at daybreak," he says to me in Mexican. "If we haven't enough horses, find more."

"Yes, captain," says I. "The governor just wanted to get a line on his job. He just finished off four of the enemy with a shovel, and it kind of detained him from reportin' sooner. He didn't know but what you intended to move out of town right away."

"Four?" says the captain. "And with a shovel! Magnificent! I did not know that the fat one was a fighter. I will not forget."

And at that we saluted and beat it back to the adobe where Bob had got acquainted, and if Aloisius was some light headed and walked kind of airy, he was able to eat. And when me and him had et our supper, with Bob visitin' with the young woman, mostly, Aloisius pulls some change out of his jeans and gives it to the lady. Money bein' scarce in our outfit, I asks Aloisius where he got it.

"Private fund," says Aloisius. "You don't suppose I keep all my resources in one place, do you?"

"You sure keep a few surprises up your sleeve," says I. "Now who'd 'a' thought you would grab up a shovel and jump into that scrap just for the fun of it?"

"Bill," says Aloisius, leanin' close and whisperin', "I didn't *kill* those men. After you released me I found the shovel and hurried out to dig a hole and hide what money I had left in the car. I didn't hide it all under the seat, as you thought.

"I had just begun to dig when I heard horses coming, and before I could get out of the way another troop came from the opposite direction. I was caught between them. Naturally I tried to protect myself with the shovel. I felt as though a house was falling on me. If any one received an injury at my hands it was because he fell against the shovel, which I held point up to protect my head.

"Suddenly I felt something strike me in the back. That is all I remember until I heard your voice. But perhaps it would be just as well not to disillusion the captain."

"All I got to say is that them fellas what run into your shovel fell hard," says I. "And if you was in better shape I'd say to crank up the car and beat it for the land of the free and the home of the brave."

"Can't be done!" says Aloisius. "They would hear us, and besides, Captain Pedro has placed a guard over the car. He

knows his business." And I guess Aloisius was right about that.

"I have *so* much to tell you," says Aloisius, and with that he kind of slumps in his chair and goes to sleep. I called Bob away from his visitin', and we got the old boy to bed, and me and Bob took our blankets and slept on the floor. Just before we turned in Bob smokes a cigarette and sits there on the edge of the bed, thinkin'. Pretty soon he goes over and unrolls his blanket.

"Kind of a pretty woman you was talkin' to," says I, kind of figurin' she was the one he was thinkin' about.

"She has eyes like a fawn!" says Bob.

"Some different from Aloisius," says I. And Aloisius sure looked tough, with one eye turnin' black and shut tighter than the one behind which he was sleepin' natural, and the bandage on his head, and needin' a shave, and such. But Bob didn't pay much attention. I got kind of hot in the neck. "Ain't you got any feelin's, at all?" says I.

"Feelings?" says Bob, lookin' at me like he just woke up. "Man, this is real living!"

"But it ain't our fault we are," says I, and with that I turned in. We had took the town of Sandoval, but I couldn't figure out who we took it from.

CHAPTER VI.

SENORITA PEPITA.

WHEN I woke up in the mornin' Aloisius was snoozin' peaceful, but Bob was gone. So I slipped into me clothes, cleaned and loaded me automatic proper, and stepped into the room where the señora was gettin' breakfast. She says good mornin', polite, and I do the same.

"Where is 'Slim Jim?'" says I. "I mean the young hombre with the gray eyes that belongs to our outfit."

"Señor Roberto is talking to the children," says she, makin' a motion toward the door. And sure enough, there was Bob settin' on the ground with his back against the 'dobe, and wavin' his hand and talkin' away to them kids like he was their uncle, only his kind of Spanish was kind of highbrow for them.

"I'm giving them 'Don Quixote' in the original," says Bob. "Youngsters always like a story, even if they don't understand what it's all about."

"Any more than havin' their faces washed," says I, wonderin' how Bob could set there and talk to them kids when he ought to been cleanin' his rifle and seein' that his horse was fed, and such.

"But they have beautiful eyes," says Bob. And I see there was no use talkin' to him. So I lit me pipe and mooched over to the cantina and asked Sergeant Tony if he had got horses for the new recruits, and how he was hooked up to travel. He said Captain Pedro was asleep and he hadn't got no orders to move.

"Horses fed and watered?" I asks him. "Men had their breakfast?" At which Tony said he'd find out. And at that I told him to find out mighty quick or hand over his rifle and cartridges for we needed 'em.

He took the hint and got busy. "We'll leave in half an hour—by my watch," says I, "and not by yours." And with that I drifted back to the adobe, got Aloisius out of bed, and we all had breakfast.

I noticed the señora was payin' a lot of attention to Bob, fetchin' him a second cup of coffee without his askin' for it, and treatin' him like he was a mighty likely prospect for a second husband. But Bob took it natural, just like he was used to havin' women fuss over him, and I guess he was.

Aloisius' face was so swelled up that all he did was try to see out of his good eye when he reached for anything. But his good eye sure had a glitter in it, and I see right away that if he ever got back to the United States it wouldn't be his family what would be tellin' him what he could do and what he couldn't. Like Bob would say, Aloisius had been munchin' the oats of freedom and was beginnin' to feel 'em. And he was likewise pickin' up a few Mexican words which he used kind of careless, but that didn't worry him none.

After we finished breakfast, Bob pulls

a piece of paper out of his pocket, and says as how he is writin' a poem about the raid of Sandoval. "Would you like to hear it?" he says, polite.

"Shoot!" says Aloisius, and he says it that sudden that it was me jumped, this time. And by the same token I see that Aloisius' nerve was gettin' stronger, and that he was kind of casehardenin' himself for anything that might turn up.

Bob unfolds the piece of paper, and says, just like talkin' to us:

"From valley trail below the pass he saw the dawn's bright legions mass,
And march across that desert land, their lances tipped with fire,
While following with lunge and leap, foam-breasted horses breathing deep,
Bore down the wild and winding steep their rider's hot desire."

"Lone, unbefriended, fugitive——" says he, and just then Tony shows up at the doorway and says Captain Pedro wants to see me. "It's hit the trail, for us," says I. "Get your stuff together and meet me at the cantina." And with that I take me rifle and blanket, and wishin' the señora a good day, I light out.

CAPTAIN PEDRO had a head on him and looked kind of ugly. His belt and gun was layin' on the table, and alongside of it was a bottle of liquor and a glass of the same which I figured he'd like to take, but his stummick kind of objected. "I ordered you to shoot those dogs, last night," says he, "and you did not."

"The light was bad, and the firin' squad was drunk," says I. "And mebby we did miss a couple, but I made recruits of 'em. If I'm goin' to be your lieutenant, I'm goin' to run my end of it. If I ain't," says I, pickin' up the captain's pistol like I was goin' to examine the carvin' on the handle, "why, I want to know it."

At which Captain Pedro laughs ugly and says: "I have but to lift my finger and you are a dead gringo."

At which I kind of let the gun sag over toward him and says: "All I got to do is wiggle mine and you are beef instead of bull."

Captain Pedro had nerve all right, but I see that he had some sense, likewise. "And what would you be if you pulled that trigger?" says he, curlin' one end of his big mustache.

"Captain of your troop," says I, quick. "And you know it."

"You are a brave man," says the captain. "I was joking with you."

"Same here," says I. "Only I figured to get my joke in first." And I reaches for the bottle with me left hand and pours another drink and says, "Here's to Mexico! Hop it into you quick!"

And sure enough, the captain, who was sufferin' for the same, grabs his glass and shoots the stuff into him, and coughs and rolls his eyes a couple of times and rubs his stummick, and gives kind of a seasick smile, and I know he's goin' to feel better in a couple of minutes. "We shall proceed to Casa Verdugo, at once," says he, straightenin' up and pourin' himself another drink. So I lay his pistol on the table, and salute and back out into the cantina.

"Get the captain some coffee and some frijoles and step lively!" says I to the Mexican behind the bar. Then I went out and hunted up Tony and told him to get his men together, and to fetch the captain's horse around to the cantina.

"But Captain Pedro will ride in the little car," says Tony.

"Tony," says I, and I looked him, in the eye hard, "somebody told the captain that the firin' squad didn't murder them prisoners. I ain't sayin' who told him, but I figure his clothes would fit you, all weazels bein' about the same size.

"I ain't used to givin' orders twice. Fetch the captain's horse around, and load all the provisions and plunder into the car and rope 'em in good. The horses are all carryin' too much weight to move lively. We're goin' to look like cavalry instead of like Injun squaws ridin' on pack horses."

Tony grins, him havin' more nerve than brains, and he digs down into his war bag and pulls out a can of smokin' tobacco, which he hands to me. "I return a full can of tobacco for the little which the lieu-

tenant gave me," says he. And that was goin' some for a Mexican to pay back anything he borrowed.

"Bueno!" says I. "Get a move on."

And just about then Aloisius comes wabblin' up the street, and without sayin' a word, climbs into the car. Thinks I, it's a good thing I switched loads on Aloisius, for judgin' by his eye, the captain would 'a' had a rough ride.

About the time the men got the grub and blankets loaded into the car, out steps the captain, lookin' shined up some. He eyes the load in the car and then his horse.

Now, I figured I could work it either way and win. If the captain took his horse, the exercise would be good for his liver, and Mexican livers has been the cause of murderin' more men than Mexican brains. If he rode in the car, I would take his horse, which was the fastest and strongest in the outfit, which would give me a chance to do any private maneuverin' that might come up sudden. I figured to have Bob use my horse, which was about the next best. Aloisius would have to stick to the car, for it was all he could do to ride in a Pullman with the doors locked, and not fall out.

While the captain was standin' there, eyin' the works, the men commenced to show up and form twos, and line up somethin' like they ought to. Tony was movin' right brisk, gettin' things stowed down in shape.

Most all the men was wearin' jackets and britches they had took off the other gang of bandits, and the outfit looked better than it did when I first seen it. I guess the captain thought so, for he turns to me and says: "Where did you learn soldiering?"

I tells him I was once connected with the British army in South Africa, cavalry detachment. Which I was, groomin' an officer's charger and listenin' to the other grooms tellin' how a cavalry outfit ought to be run.

"It is very good," says Captain Pedro. "My horse needs exercise. You will ride him to-day. I will ride in the car."

"Yes, sir!" says I, snappin' a salute. "Crank her up," says I to Aloisius. "The captain will proceed to Casa Verdugo."

"Dam' if I'll crank her," says Aloisius. "If he wants her cranked, let him crank her himself."

The captain could understand some American talk, and I see his eyebrows commence to tighten up, so I tells him the governor is meanin' for Tony to crank the machine, and that Aloisius is too stiff from killin' bandits to move a finger.

Then I tell Tony to get busy and play a tune on the car, and he done it. Seems he tried to turn the crank one way and all of a sudden the crank starts goin' the other way and knocks Tony for a loop. Then I gives him hell for tryin' to break the machine, and all is lovely along Main Street. The captain climbs in, Aloisius wiggles the handles, and off they go, with me leadin' the troop on the captain's horse, and Tony ridin' alongside, rubbin' his arm.

Along about noon we come to a ranch and watered the horses and I had Tony pass around some grub to the men instead of makin' 'em wait till evenin'. The captain kind of warmed up to Aloisius' account of his stunt with the shovel, and he asks Aloisius to go in the ranch house and eat with him.

THAT leaves Tony and Bob and me on the outside, where we could talk. So after we et we had a little visit and smoked and waited for the captain to come out. Says I to Tony: "What kind of a joint is this Casa Verdugo, anyhow?"

Tony, he winked his eye and said it was a big hacienda and that the captain's cousin was the patron and that once in a while the captain and his army went there to rest.

"Rest!" says I. "I thought you were out to lick Mexico?"

"After the big battle it is good to take the little rest," says Tony. "We make the big battle in Sandoval, and now I think it is that we take the rest."

"He calls that little shindig in Sandoval a battle," says I to Bob. "Accordin' to that, I been in a couple of wars, myself. Speakin' of battle, Tony, old sidewinder, is Captain Pedro married?" says I.

"Oh," says Tony, makin' a pass with his hands like that magician stuff, "sometimes he is married. Sometimes he get tired of the woman and go away."

"Fine!" says I. "He's got the right idea. Mebby Aloisius will get a pointer from him."

"Mr. Brandstatter shouldn't have come with us," says Bob. "It was a mistake."

"I dunno," says I. "If Aloisius don't get killed, and gets back to Chicago, his ramblin' down here ain't such a big mistake. Aloisius has got blood in his eye. A couple of more bumps and he's goin' to be boss of them relatives of his, includin' his wife."

"His eye is badly congested," says Bob, kind of dreamylike.

"Congested your grandmother!" says I. "I'm talkin' about his *good* eye. Did you look in it when he said he be dam'd if he crank up the machine?"

"I didn't notice," says Bob.

"Well, take a look at him. Here he comes with the captain."

But Aloisius had changed some since mornin'. Him and the captain come out of the ranch house arm in arm, and talkin' like a couple of Chinamen. I see right away that they had took somethin' more'n coffee with their dinner.

The captain waves his hand for us to get goin', and Aloisius walks over to the car and stoops down, holdin' the sore spot on his back and crankin' away with his other hand. And he sure had been makin' steam, for he like to lifted that little machine off her front feet, what with the twist he give to that crank.

"I didn't notice," says Bob, again, and he grins at me.

"You go to Casa Verdugo," says I. And then we mounted and followed the little car, which done some queer navigatin', seein' as how Aloisius was drivin' mostly with one hand and doin' part of his talkin' with the other.

Thinks I, Aloisius is a business man, and he knows what he is doin'. Instead of payin' ransom to the captain, most like he'll sell him some stock in the pickle business, before he gets through.

AFTER we crossed eight or ten miles of desert we turned toward the hills on the west and headed for a bunch of green about as big as a fern box on a window. And after headin' that way for a couple of hours the green turned out to be trees, and along the trees was a ditch of runnin' water and a fence, and down a road was the prettiest flower garden you ever seen, and back of the garden was a big house what looked like it had been there a hundred years and had more rooms than a hotel.

Aloisius drives the car up to the gate and a Mexican dressed like a regular bandit lets 'em in, and bows to the captain, and the car goes purrin' up the driveway and stops in front of the big portal, and the captain steps out.

Then his cousin, who has on a white-silk shirt and a pair of black breeches kind of tight, and smokin' a cigar, comes down the steps and they hug each other, and the captain points to us, waitin' down the driveway a piece, and then goes into the house. Then the bandit-lookin' fella, who is the major-domo, shows us round to the back where there are all kinds of stables and corrals and such, and houses enough for a little town.

The folks in them little adobe houses—mostly women and kids—stand and watch us while we ride in and put up the horses. And then the major-domo says to make ourselves to home, and we done it.

First thing I know, Bob is talkin' to a good-lookin' young woman in one of them adobes, and Aloisius has gone to sleep settin' in the machine which he drove around to the back of the big house, and the men are all visitin' with the folks, and it is kind of like a picnic, and takin' it by and large it looked like a pretty fair place to camp and stay camped all your life. They was goat's milk and tortillas and beans and wine and plenty tobacco, and runnin' water in the aceqtias, and shade, and all kinds of feed for the horses; and if you was a officer, all you had to do was to clap your hands and somebody would come runnin' to see what you wanted.

Thinks I, these folks what own this layout wouldn't be so rich if most of the folks in Mexico wasn't so dog poor. And with that a old man comes up to me and bows and says the lieutenant is to stay at his house, and me bein' the same, I follow him to his camp, and the way them folks waited on me, you think I was a general.

And Bob was havin' the time of his life. First thing I knowed he had traded his rifle and cartridges for one of them fancy suits like rurales wear, and a flamin' serape and everything. We hadn't been there an hour before he had changed his clothes and come struttin' out smokin' a cigarette and lookin' like a million dollars, in pesos.

"Found any more good-lookin' types?" says I, after he told me how he got hold of his new regalia.

"Several," says he, kind of offhand, "but not among the officers."

"Is that so?" says I. "Well, let me tell you somethin', Jinglebob. If you don't want to get a knife slipped into you, be kind of careful about talkin' to every good-lookin' girl you meet. Most of these here wimmen is married, even the young ones. Their men are out workin' on the ranch, chasin' cows and such. And some of them cow chasers are kind of quick on the trigger when it comes to their wimmenfolks. You'll have better luck studyin' them types with a spyglass, than close up."

"Oh," says Bob, wavin' his cigarette, "I can ask my mozo about that."

"Since when you gone and got you a mozo?" says I.

"Señorita Lolita's little brother is my mozo. He seems to like me. And, really, it is a very handy arrangement. Just now he is looking after my horse. He says he wants to go along with me and be a soldier."

"Them clothes done it," says I. "You just put it all over folks when you get dressed up and swell your chest. Now here I'm lieutenant of this gang, but no boys have come around askin' me for the job of doin' my errands for me. I guess bein' a dude has got to come natural."

"But, Bill," says Bob, "I'll be glad to play errand boy for you whenever you need me. You ought to know that."

"I guess you would," says I. "And you think you mean it. But I'm kind of used to doin' my own runnin' around. What do you say if we wake up Aloisius and get him into one of these here houses where he can get a good sleep. He's about wore out."

"Where is he?" says Bob.

"Right over there, settin' in the machine. He's asleep, right now."

"Phaëton sleeps, and his flaming chariot is at rest," says Bob, and with that he goes over and wakes up Aloisius and helps him down and carries his things into a house for him. Then he comes out and gets some water and takes it in to Aloisius, and fusses around like a regular nurse in a hospital.

THAT was Bob's way. When he was dreamin' about poetry and such, he didn't know they was anybody else on earth. But just give him a hint somebody needed somethin', and Bob was right there to help out all he could.

Now, good luck is like lightnin', it don't hit in the same place regular. When we was driftin' acrost Arizona, it was Aloisius who had the luck, gettin' shut of his wife, naturallike, and kind of runnin' things account of havin' the cash. Then when we got mixed up with Pedro Jabonero and his outfit, the luck kind of shifted around my way, and I was boss for a spell. But that kind of luck don't last long, and it don't do no good to figure on it. Not that I was thinkin' it was Bob's turn to draw four aces, but that night at Casa Verdugo down there in the mountains, old Lady Luck sure handed Bob a slice of cake.

Folks do a lot of visitin' around in Mexico. Almost everybody has got a cousin, livin' somewhere. Kind of like fleas, bein' willin' to visit with anybody that comes close enough to get hopped on.

Well, it seems Captain Pedro's cousin what owned the hacienda, had cousins most all over Mexico, poor ones and rich ones, and some of 'em in politics and some

of 'em in jail, and some in the army, and any of 'em apt to be in wrong, accordin' to who was boss of Mexico, every once in a while.

Captain Pedro belonged to the fightin' side of the family, and he was popular with Don Cristobal de Mendoza y Manrique de la Jabonera, who owned the ranch, because Pedro did the scrappin' for the family. Sergeant Tony told me a whole lot about it, that evenin' after supper, and what he didn't tell me was easy enough to guess.

Seems our Captain Pedro and Don Cristobal was like brothers, Pedro guardin' the hacienda with his bandits when necessary, and helpin' himself to beef and grub when he needed it, and Don Cris handin' out cash for ammunition when Pedro was short. It worked fine just as long as another cousin, who was the lady they both wanted to marry, kept in Mexico City where she lived in style, bein' a opera singer and popular with the society folks down that way.

Tony said the only time Pedro and Cris ever quarreled was when this here cousin, Señorita Pepita, came to visit at the hacienda when both men cousins was there. Accordin' to Tony, she liked 'em both, and nobody knowed which one she liked best.

Well, we was loafin' outside of the livin' quarters, the men visitin' around with the vaqueros what come in, and the wimmenfolks visitin' among themselves mostly, seein' as their husbands was there, and a big bonfire goin' in the little square, and somebody singin', when out comes the major-domo from the big house and orders a couple of peons to hustle around to the front and take care of the Señorita Pepita's horses and carriage, which has just arrived.

WHEN the peons heard the news they set up a buzzin' like a dynamo. Pretty soon round comes a carriage, and the horses steppin' high, and the harness shinin' with silver, and anybody could see that money was the least of Señorita Pepita's troubles. Even the coachman had a hard time actin' human, he was so dressed up and sufferin' from style.

Anyhow, when Bob, who was standin' next to me, seen the outfit, he whistled kind of low and says kind of to himself: "Maximillian! But where is the lady?"

"In the big house," says I. "Did you think she was goin' to drive round to the back just because you was here?"

Bob didn't say nothin' to that. He just give a flip to that flamin' serape he was wearin' and leans against the post of the portal, and blows a ring of smoke and waves his cigarette and says, "Your observation is an elephant," or somethin' like that.

"Mebby she's a type," says I, thinkin' to jar him out of his high-tonin' me that way

"I'll bet she is!" he says, joyful. "But who are we to dare lift our eyes to the favorites of kings and potentates?" says he, grinnin'.

"As for that," says I, "Tony was tellin' me that this here Señorita Pepita lady liked the poor folks of Mexico more'n she liked the other kind—that many's the time she stopped her carriage and sang for 'em in some little burg when they had the nerve to ask her to.

"Seems she's popular with everybody. And if she likes poor folks, it's a safe bet your wealth won't stand in the way of your gettin' a look at her. Funny, though, that the types you're interested in is always wimmen. Now I figure Sergeant Tony would make a pretty good type, if a fella was interested in he-scorpions or poison lizards. And Captain Pedro sure acts the part of one of them picture-book bandits. And you're kind of dressed up regardless, yourself, when it comes to that."

"Atmosphere," says Bob, puffin' away at his cigarette.

"It sure *is* a pleasant evenin'," says I. "I hope Captain Pedro will take a good long rest, here. I can stand a lot of this kind of restin' up."

And just about then this here Lolita, whose brother Bob had borrowed for his mozo, comes strollin' along and gives Bob a side look and he says somethin' to him-

self and walks over and talks to her. And his way of wearin' them fancy clothes! They set good on him, and you would take him for one of them Mexican dudes, a little piece away.

Thinks I, "I'll mooch over and see how Aloisius is makin' it. He's had a good sleep and mebby he'll wake up hungry and they won't be anybody around to ask for grub." And sure enough, Aloisius was settin' on the edge of his bunk, fumblin' with his clothes, when I come in.

"What time is it?" he says, yawnin' like a tunnel.

"About nine," says I. "Feel better?"

"I dunno," says Aloisius. "Where's the captain?"

"In the big house with his cousin," says I.

"What big house?" says Aloisius, and I see that he's been kind of in a trance ever since he tangled with them four gents what fell on his shovel. "Why, the Casa Verdugo," says I. "Don't you remember drivin' up with Captain Pedro this afternoon?"

"I have a dim recollection of a house," says Aloisius, "and flowers. I thought it was Lake Shore Drive. I must have been pretty sleepy."

"Some calls it that," says I. "But it was mostly hot weather and liquor. All you need now is a good feed and another sleep and you'll be fine as a fiddle."

"I've seen some dam' poor fiddles," says Aloisius. "Speaking of music, do you know where they keep the liquor?"

"I don't," says I. "But I'll get you some. And when you get to feelin' better, I want to talk to you about makin' our get-away. Accordin' to Sergeant Tony, we'll be loafin' here for a week or so. Durin' that time we ought to be able to rustle up a little scheme to vamose the rancho and get back safe to the United States."

"I should say so!" says Aloisius, climbin' into his britches. "Nice mess you got us into! I'll be lucky if I get out of it alive. Look at that!" And Aloisius takes up his belt five or six notches smaller than when he first bought it. "I've lost all of ten pounds!" he says. "I'll be a living skeleton if this keeps up."

"Easy, mate," says I. "What you need is food."

And with that I mooch out and find the old lady what lives in the adobe and tells her me friend is starvin' to death and to get him a couple of quarts of frijoles and some wine. Then I drift out and kind of look around to see that Bob is all right and the men ain't startin' a fight, or somethin', seein' as how the captain gave orders to shoot any of his men what started a row, and while I'm eyin' things, Don Cristobal steps out of the garden back of the casa, and with him is Captain Pedro and between 'em, with her hands on each of their arms, is the prettiest and stylishest little Spanish woman I ever seen.

I HAD seen pictures like her, in some of them art galleries, only she wasn't dressed fancy; but just like a rich American woman, lots of style, and no fussy things. She looked almost like a girl, between Don Cristobal and Captain Pedro, both of them bein' sizable men. She had a red flower in her hair, redder than any rose you ever seen.

Funny, but all the time I was lookin' at her, I wasn't thinkin' of her, but of Bob. Somehow it seemed like she was his kind, a regular swell, and good lookin' and pleasant to everybody. For as soon as she was close enough to our bonfire for everybody to see her, the talkin' and laughin' stopped and it was still, like early mornin' in the mountains.

Somebody in our crowd hollers out: "Sing for us the forbidden song, señorita!" And at that Captain Pedro and Don Cristobal stops sudden, mebby not likin' the idea of her singin' that song which the government said you couldn't sing in the northern states of Mexico.

But Señorita Pepita just let go of Captain Pedro and Don Cristobal, and steps out from them and smiles and holds out her arms like she would hug the whole crowd of us and says: "Ah, my soldiers! My people!"

Captain Pedro says somethin' to her, and she turns to him and laughs, and it is like the sound of a bird singing. Don Cristobal holds up his hand. "The señorita is weary from her journey," he says in Spanish. "You will excuse her that she does not sing the song."

Him bein' the boss, nobody says a word. The bonfire is cracklin' and the flames dancin' up in the night, and the faces of all the folks around like statues. Over in the corral a horse nickers, and at that the señorita stands like she is listenin' and didn't know they was a soul within a hundred miles of her.

Then somebody in our crowd starts to play a guitar, and it's that kind of music what makes you want to march, or fight, or do somethin'. And pretty soon you can feel the whole crowd gettin' restless; not movin' around or doin' anything, but you know they are feelin' restless inside.

Then, just like a rider swingin' up on a horse that has already started to run, the señorita's voice is floatin' out over our heads, and honest, mate, what with the tune, and the fire, and the swing of that song, which was somethin' like fire, at that, it was like soldiers marchin', and music, and lookin' at the Stars and Stripes, till I felt like grabbin' a rifle and bustin' into a fight just to kind of work off steam.

And I guess most everybody there felt somethin' like that, too. I know that when the señorita finished the song, the bandidos let out a yell—and it wasn't like applause, but just a yell with blood in it. It would give you a chill down the back to hear it.

Thinks I, I can see why the government don't want anybody to sing that song. And then, before Don Cristobal could say anything—and he stepped forward like he was goin' to—the señorita commences to sing one of them songs like poor folks sing to their kids, low and kind of soothin', and the fella with the guitar has moved around to where she is, and is playin' it, and lookin' up at the stars, and if anybody in that crowd wasn't lovin' the little señorita when she got through singin' that song it must of been some woman that was jealous of her looks. Somebody grabbed holt of my arm and I heard Bob's voice sayin': "Perilous seas, Bill."

BUT I couldn't see nothin' in him sayin' that. Anyhow, right there the señorita moves her hand like a bird flyin' and says to Captain Pedro: "Who is the big Americano with the beard, Pedro? I did not know there were Americanos among your soldados."

"Oh," says Captain Pedro, shruggin' his shoulders, "he is merely my lieutenant. It is true he is of great strength. He knocked down my former lieutenant with his fist, when the drunken one would have shot him."

And Captain Pedro waves his hands as if he would let it go at that. But the señorita looked kind of interested. "What is the big one's name, Pedrocito?"

Now the captain looked like he didn't fancy bein' called Little Pedro, even by her, but it was easy to see that she had him broke gentle. 'His name is Beel," says the captain. "Beel The-Star-of-the-Morning," he says.

"How beautiful!" she says, and I knowed it was my name and not my looks she was meanin'. "I would talk with this Beel," she says.

And at that I could feel Bob's hand on me arm, clutchin' tight. The captain wasn't dyin' to introduce anybody to her, but she had asked him, and he done it.

Bob and me was standin' a little piece back from the fire, and Captain Pedro gives me the high sign to step up, seein' as I wasn't supposed to know they had been talkin' about me. I takes off me hat and kind of shakes meself together, wishin' I had on a uniform instead of the hard-workin' clothes I was wearin'; but before I could swing me bow around and get to movin', the señorita floats up to me and says just like we was old friends: "I am glad to meet you, Señor Beel. I know many nice Americanos. I have sung in your big cities."

"Yes, mam," says I, bowin' a couple of times. "I was in Buenos Aires when the Spanish Nightingale sung in the plaza, durin' the riots. I recollec' how a bunch

of us sailors had to beat up a couple of hundred of them rioters before she could get to her carriage."

"But you are not the big Americano who ran up the steps and carried me through the crowd to my barouche!" says she, all excited. "That Americano had no beard."

"Neither did I, them days," says I. "And you was wearin' red slippers, that evenin'. One came off, and I got it—but I lost it in the scrimmage what followed."

At that Señorita Pepita looks down at her little feet and smiles and then looks up at me, and I can see she is rememberin' all that excitement, and fun and everything, and at the same time she is sizin' me up to kind of place me. Then all of a sudden she laughs and claps her hands, and says, "Of a truth, you are the man! I remember your shoulders." And at that I just naturally swell out me chest three-four inches, and say nothin'.

CAPTAIN PEDRO and Don Cristobal had kind of edged up and was standin' pretendin' not to listen. And seein' as the señorita is visitin' with me, the crowd commences to visit and talk about the singin' and act natural again. Even Mexicans can't stay keyed up to a fightin' pitch all the time.

Then the señorita turns to Captain Pedro and Don Cristobal and tells 'em about that time in Buenos Aires and how it was me ran up the steps of the capitol and got her into her carriage before the riotin' got to the shootin' stage, and how her slipper came off, and how I went down and out of sight in the general mix-up, and everything.

Don Cristobal smiles polite and gives me a kind of slidin' look, like he wasn't interested much. Captain Pedro he chews the end of his mustache and looks his blackest.

And if ever I see a woman what could keep a couple of men guessin', without her tryin' a little bit, it was the señorita.

And they wasn't the only ones that was guessin'. I was kind of guessin', myself; for pretty soon the señorita turns to me and pulls a ring off her finger and hands it to me, and says, "That you may remember The Nightingale, Señor Beel of the Morningstar."

Good Gosh! but I felt hot all over, and then kind of chilly. The ring sparkled like a splinter of white fire, and the faces of Don Cristobal and Captain Pedro was thunder black. I said thanks, and made me bow and was backin' away, when I see the señorita's eyes kind of drift from me to Bob, who was standin' alongside. And I could see her face change.

The excitement kind of faded, and then a new look commenced to show. "But another Americano!" she said, and she gave me a look which was like askin' a question—and a whole lot of a question at that. Thinks I, "Bob can do his own explainin' who he is," and with that I introduces him as me friend Roberto, who is goin' around the world writin' poetry.

The señorita didn't say much, in words. But if she didn't talk to Bob with her eyes, then I'm blinder than a dead fish. Bob does a low bow and mumbles somethin', and then stands mighty straight and proudlike, just as if the commandin' officer was inspectin' the troops and Bob was the whole regiment.

Then the señorita gives him her hand, like she was a queen on the stage, and Bob bends over and kisses it. And mate, I could almost see the sparks shootin' from the ends of Captain Pedro's big mustache. Don Cristobal smiles kind of smooth and says, "The air is getting cool, Pepita mia." And right around where we was, it *was* gettin' kind of chilly.

And then our little crowd kind of melted, and first thing I know Señorita Pepita and her cousins was gone, and Bob and me was strollin' around and over acrost the square. Aloisius was standin' leanin' against a post of the portal, smokin' a big cigar.

"What's the excitement?" he says, when we come up.

"It's all over," says Bob.

"You're wrong," says I. "It ain't begun yet."

CHAPTER VII.

IN A MEXICAN GARDEN.

NOW mebby folks move slow down in that easy-goin' country south of the border, but sometimes things happen fast. Seems Don Cristobal and Captain Pedro was both kind of on edge account of the look the señorita had given Bob and the way he had acted when he met her, which was polite and their way. But I guess they figured that Bob, bein' nothin' but a kind of American hobo, had no business to even touch the señorita's hand.

Anyhow, Captain Pedro and Don Cristobal had some words, after they went into the big house. The señorita told us about it, later. And because they had words, Captain Pedro comes out and walks around to the back and tells me that the outfit will be leavin' there in the mornin' and to see that the men are in the saddle by daybreak. Now this suits me fine, for I can smell trouble in the air, ever since Bob and the señorita has met.

Captain Pedro has got plenty of liquor under his belt, and he is carryin' it sullen, prowlin' over to the corrals and then prowlin' back like he doesn't know what he wants to do next. I kind of keep my eye on him and on Bob, who is settin' in the house where we are quartered, visitin' with Aloisius.

I'm standin' out under the portal, smokin' me pipe and watchin' all I can with two eyes and wishin' I had four. Not that everything ain't peaceful and quiet, but there's somethin' hangin' back in the air that bothers me.

First thing I know, one of the kitchen girls comes from the big house and over to where I'm standin' and she slips me a little piece of paper, and walks along past as smooth as you like. But she gives me a tip, sayin', "From the señorita," as she goes by.

It bein' too dark out there to see what's on the note, I look around and then make like I'm lightin' me pipe. On the paper is, "Tell the young Americano that a friend warns him of the danger of a quarrel." And that was all. But it was plenty.

Thinks I, "It means that Bob is to keep away from Captain Pedro this lovely evenin'." So I mooch in to where Bob and Aloisius are drinkin' coffee and smokin' and visitin' and I hand the note to Bob.

"Marching orders?" says Bob, [illegible].

"Something like that," says I. And he reads the note. Then he looks up at me, and then back at the little piece of paper, and hums a tune, and then sticks the note in his pocket.

"All right, Bill," he says, "and thanks."

"We're leavin' here in the mornin'," says I, and then I wish I had said nothin'. For at that Bob looks surprised and bites his lip and says he thought we was going to stay for a week, at least.

"Orders are to be ready to start at daybreak," says I.

ALOISIUS shakes his head and looks down at his stummick, kind of mournful. So I mooch out, and there, standin' where I was standin' a minute before, is Captain Pedro, only he is lookin' our way instead of out toward the bonfire. "What did you give to your friend?" he says right off the bat.

"Orders to march at daybreak," says I, quick and easy.

"Is he deaf, that you must write out the orders?" says the captain, curlin' his big mustache and grinnin' ugly.

"Oh, them cigarette papers!" says I. "He asked me for cigarette papers, which I give him."

"I will smoke a cigarette with your friend," says the captain. And at that I step back so he can come in, with me hands down, soldier fashion, and me right hand against the pistol on me hip.

The captain marches over to the table and asks Bob for a cigarette paper, sayin' as how he would like to smoke. Bob reaches in his pocket, cool as you like, and hands the captain a package of cigarette papers and a little bag of tobacco. The captain rolls a cigarette, Mexican fashion, lookin' hard at Bob all the time, and Bob smilin' easy.

I'm sweatin', and me hand is itchin', but I don't have to use the automatic, like

I figured I would. The captain takes a drag or two at his cigarette and turns round and marches out, and if he knowed how close he come to gettin' his brains blowed out, he never showed it.

Then Bob laughs and shrugs his shoulders. "Perilous seas, Bill," he says. And I'm sure admirin' his nerve and his quick way of catchin' on.

But as I was sayin', a while back, Bob always had to go the limit. He had come clear, this journey, and that ought to been good enough, even for a high-stepper like him. And mebby he ought to figured that if he took any chances he took 'em for me and Aloisius as well as himself. But as I was also sayin', when Bob got to dreamin' along his own line of ideas, it was like he forgot there was anybody else in the world.

I COULD see by his eye that he wasn't finished with that note business yet. So I step out and stand by the doorway, lookin' at the bonfire which is dyin' down, and wonderin' when our chance will come to make a break for home, when out comes Bob with his serape over his shoulder and his big hat over his eyes.

"Who gave you the note, Bill?" he says.

"A girl from the kitchen," says I.

"You seem to have met the Señorita Pepita before," says he. "I could not help hearing what you said about Buenos Aires and the riots."

"I was young, and foolish, them days," says I.

"About my age, perhaps?" he says, smilin'.

"What you gettin' at?" says I, not likin' the offhand way he was takin' things.

"I must thank the señorita," he says, and he said it cool and quiet, just like passin' the time of day.

"You could write her a note," says I.

"I could," he says. "But I prefer to thank her personally."

"We'll be leavin' at daybreak," says I.

"Quite so," says he, like I was a bushel of potatoes instead of his commandin' officer.

And with that he pulls his serape across his chest and starts toward the big house. "Where you goin'?" says I.

"Why, to present my compliments to the señorita and thank her," says he, like he was one of the family.

"Then I knowed I couldn't stop him by arguin' with him, so I tells him I am his superior officer and to get back into his quarters and stay there, or I would have to put him in irons—and I meant it.

But that slim, smilin' young rooster just laughs at me, and marches off toward the garden like he owns the place. Thinks I, "When old Mother Trouble has children they are always twins." And right on top of that along comes Captain Pedro, walkin' slow and haughty, and with him is that little poison spider, Sergeant Tony, and neither of 'em say a word, although they ain't three feet away from me as they stroll past.

Bob is out of sight in the garden south of the big house, and the captain and Sergeant Tony swing over that way. At that I step into the adobe and ask Aloisius, who is settin' at the table smokin', if he has got a gun anywhere.

"I am armed," he says. "What's the idea?"

"I dunno. Only I figure it will be the United States or bust, for us, before the sun comes up again."

"I didn't know there was anything wrong," says Aloisius, lookin' at me kind of surprised.

"Nothin', yet," says I. "Is there any gasoline in the car?"

"About half a tankful," says Aloisius.

"Well, keep your eye on the car. I'm goin' to take a walk. Mebby we'll be wantin' to leave here in a hurry."

"You are very mysterious," says Aloisius. "But I trust you, Bill. I'll be ready for anything." And with that, old Aloisius goes into his bedroom and paws around, and says, "Here it is," meanin' the gun I was askin' him about, but not sayin' the name of it account of the woman settin' in the kitchen.

"Fill a couple of canteens," says I, and with that I step out and take the trail of the captain and Tony. When I get to

where the bushes of the garden are high and the paths windin' around, and the smell of flowers in the air, I see somebody standin' in the shadow of the hedge near the edge of the garden, so I pull up and turn and walk back a couple of steps.

When I turn again there are two shadows by the hedge and one of 'em has on a sombrero and it looks like the two are clost together and talkin'. Thinks I, "Bob and the señorita! But where is the captain and Tony?"

Then, all of a sudden, from over to the right, *wham* goes a shot, and somebody screams, and a couple of men bust out of the bushes and go past on the run and I can hear a woman callin' for help, and pretty soon folks are runnin' in every direction and askin' questions, and somebody fetches a lantern.

At that I make for the place where I heard the woman scream, and a Mexican with a lantern comes up, and there is the señorita standin' and wringin' her hands; and layin' on the path at her feet is a man, and he is layin' on his face, and ain't movin' any.

"Who done it?" I ask the señorita.

"Oh, I don't know!" she says. Then she kneels down and takes holt of the man's shoulder. "Cristobal! Cristobal, my cousin!" she says. And I like to drop dead. I thought the man on the ground was Bob.

CHAPTER VIII.

ON THE TRACK OF TROUBLE.

"WAS there a quarrel?" I asks the señorita. She says there wasn't anybody around but her and her cousin and that they was talkin', havin' come out for a stroll in the garden after dinner.

"Did you see me friend Roberto around anywhere?" says I. And at that she looks up at me quick and shakes her head, but I can see by the way she looks at me that she wouldn't been surprised if he had been around. I can hear a lot of talkin' and noise over by the corrals, and I figure that pretty soon the whole outfit will be comin', so I take the señorita by the hand and she stands up.

"Lady," says I, "me friend Bob was on his way to thank you for that note you sent, when this happened. Captain Pedro and his sergeant was likewise walkin' this way just before that shot was fired. Just after, I seen two fellas runnin' out of the garden.

"Now most men don't run away when a woman screams for help. Bob didn't fire that shot, for he ain't got a gun on him. But Bob and me, bein' Americans, will get the blame for this. It ain't natural for you to suspect your own folks. But watch close and you'll see who done this killin' and who didn't."

And I was goin' to tell her that if she wanted to keep a couple of innocent men from bein' shot, now was her time to get busy, but just then up comes Captain Pedro, with Tony and a guard. "What's the guard for?" says I, whisperin' to the señorita, "if he don't know what's happened yet?"

Captain Pedro steps up, and pretendin' he is surprised to see the señorita there, looks down at the man on the ground and says, "What was the Americano doing in the garden when he was shot?"

Thinks I, if that ain't a cold one! The señorita is lookin' at Captain Pedro and lookin' hard, and she don't say a word. The captain turns to me and tells me to lend a hand and help carry the dead man back to the stables.

"Mebby he ought to be took to the house," says I. "It's his house."

At that the captain takes the lantern from the servant and holds it close to the dead man. "Not Cristobal?" he says, and then he turns Don Cristobal over, and the servants commence to whine and bawl, and carry on, and I see Sergeant Tony feel for the handle of his gun, and right there I know who done the shootin'.

THE captain straightens up and his face is yellow-white and he ain't sayin' a word. The señorita is lookin' at him and *she* ain't sayin' a word. Then the captain whirls on me.

"Where is the Americano who murdered my cousin?" he says. "Why are

you standing here like a fool? Arrest him!"

"If you're meanin' me friend Bob," says I, "he ain't here and he ain't been here. Ask the señorita."

But instead of askin' her, Captain Pedro tells Tony and the guard to arrest me. If it hadn't been for the señorita, standin' there, I guess I'd 'a' shot Tony and tried for the captain, but knowin' how most Mexican soldiers fire wild and get excited when somebody starts somethin', and knowin' that most like the señorita would 'a' been hit, I put up me hands.

Tony is right there to take me gun, and four of the bandidos close in, and pretty soon they got me tied and are goin' to take me back to the stables, when somebody comes acrost the garden in a hurry. It is Bob, and he marches right up, bows to the señorita, and then looks around kind of quick and says to me, "What's happened, Bill?"

"Everything," says I. "Don Cristobal has been murdered, and I'm under arrest, and the captain is looking for you."

"Don Cristobal murdered!" says Bob, and then he sees Don Cristobal, there on the ground, back of where we're all standin'. I'm watchin' the señorita and the señorita is watchin' Captain Pedro, and he commencin' to get uneasy. "But who would do this?" says Bob, and anybody could see he didn't even know it had happened till he come to where we was standin'.

"Do *you* ask?" says Captain Pedro. "Then what were you doing in the garden just before my cousin was shot? I, myself, saw you enter the garden. And now you pretend that you know nothing about the matter. You think to fool me, but I have been watching you."

"There's some mistake," says Bob, turnin' to me. "I was going to stroll through the garden when I saw two people talking over here. Not wishing to intrude, I took the path north of the house and walked down the driveway to the gate. I have just returned. Surely you do not imagine I had anything to do with this?"

"Sure you didn't," says I. "I know it, because I been here myself all the time," says I. "I was lookin' for you, when I heard somebody shoot, and I saw two fellas runnin' back toward the stables. One of 'em was a tall guy and the other was short. Neither of 'em was you, for neither of 'em had on the kind of hat you wear."

Then I tells the captain that he is barkin' up the wrong tree. "You're tryin' to fix this here killin' on us," says I, "but you're wrong. What would we want to be doin' for Don Cristobal for? We never had nothin' against him."

"That is all very well," says the captain. "But you are both under arrest. I shall investigate. Meanwhile, my cousin, we will go in."

The señorita acted kind of like she was goin' to say somethin', but she didn't. But I seen the look she give Bob, just before Captain Pedro offered his arm and took her to the big house. A couple of the bandidos grabbed holt of Bob and pretty soon Bob and me was cooped in a box stall in the stable where the rest of the outfit was quartered. Our hands was already tied, but they tied our feet with reatas, and tied the reatas to their arms.

Bob and me was settin' with our backs against the side of the stall, and we couldn't even smoke account of our hands bein' tied. Pretty soon Bob asks me what Captain Pedro is goin' to do to us.

"As for that," says I, "I'm bankin' on the señorita. She's been doin" a lot of thinkin' since Pedro and Tony give themselves away. What I'm wonderin' is, who gets all this property, now that Don Cristobal has crossed over? If Captain Pedro gets it, by law, it may make a difference. If the señorita gets it, Pedro is goin' to be sore. Course, if she is willin' to marry him, or even pretends she is, she can do a lot to get us out of this jack pot."

WHAT with havin' what you might call a full day, I goes to sleep and git to dreamin' about Africa and the jungles, and pythons and apes wearin' Mexican sombreros, and wishin' I had a drink of water, when I wake up and Bob is nudgin' me with his shoulder. Then I hear some-

body talkin' kind of low, and pretty soon I can see a light through a crack in the end of the stall. Then I see somethin' like a uniform and I wiggle over and stick me eye to the crack, and there is the señorita's coachman harnessin' up her team, and he's doin' it mighty quiet.

Then he leads the horses out and Bob says, "What do you think, Bill?" And I tell Bob I wish I *could* think, but that such maneuverin's is too much for me.

I can hear Bob kind of fussin' and wigglin' and I ask him if it is fleas and he says it ain't and goes on fussin'; and all of a sudden he gives me a jolt in me stummick with his elbow that like to knocked the wind out of me. I'm goin' to ask him what he's tryin' to do when he whispers, "I have worked my hands loose, Bill. Let me untie yours."

"Let you!" says I, catchin' me breath again. "Do you think I would stop you?" And pretty soon he has got the reata off my hands and feet, workin' easy, so as not to wake up the guard at the other end of the rope.

It took a long time gettin' them ropes off, havin' only one end to work with, but Bob done it. Then I tells him to sit steady and I'll take on the guards one at a time, and squeeze their necks so they won't make a row; but Bob says he's got a better idea, which is to tie the ends of the reatas to a ring he seen in the box stall. "You might squeeze their necks too hard," whispers Bob, "and there's been enough killing."

So we set there, me wonderin' what was goin' to happen when the sun come up, and if the señorita had drove off in her carriage, and where Captain Pedro was, and Aloisius, and wishin' I could get me hands on a gun, when somebody comes trampin' into the other side of the stable, where the tie stalls was. It's Sergeant Tony with a lantern and Captain Pedro followin', and cussin' somethin' fierce because the señorita's horses and carriage is gone, and nobody stopped 'em.

Thinks I, "Next, he'll come around to this side, mebby to get horses and follow the señorita, and he'll see that we're untied, and somebody will get hurt." But the captain didn't come around to our side. 'Stead of that he tells Tony to go wake up Aloisius and get the car ready quicker'n hell'll burn powder.

I was sweatin', and me hair was stiff, what with thinkin' of how close we come to bein' found with our ropes off, and how many of them bandidos I could get before they finished me. But Bob was as cool as a plate of salad. "We'll try and handle the situation without resorting to rough stuff." says he, like he was takin' charge of the show.

"Do it," says I, "and you'll be the first that ever got by with the Golden Rule, down this way."

"Leave it to me," says Bob, and I knowed that he was grinnin' in the dark. You see, Bob had his kind of nerve and I had mine, and they was a whole lot different.

And sure enough, pretty soon we can hear the car grumblin' and growlin' like animals in a zoo, that is hungry, and then we can hear her stutter and giggle, and snort, and off she goes, and one of our guards wakes up and says somethin', but the other guard is snorin'. "Just let me get me hands on those guards and then we'll get out of this," says I to Bob. "I'm feelin' cold and would like some exercise."

"Wait," says Bob.

So I took a chew of me smokin' tobacco, and waited. And daylight come slow. But when we could commence to see the guards plain, and where their rifles lay beside 'em, I didn't wait for further orders but crawled over and pulled a rifle back, easy, and then I pulled the other.

"Now," says I as I give Bob one of the rifles, "you got to forget you're president of The Humane Society, if anybody tries to stop us. What we want is horses. But it's daylight, and some of the gang will be up and lookin' for their coffee. We got to pull a good old American bluff.

"Seein' as Don Cristobal is dead and Captain Pedro is most like gone chasin' after the señorita, the major-domo is boss

of the works. It's him I'm goin' to have a talk with."

And with that I steps over the guard and out into the runway. Bob follows along, and we march out into the open and there is six or seven bandidos loafin' around and talkin'. Now walkin' over to them would 'a' been like makin' explanations, so I stop and call one of 'em over to me.

"The captain," says I, "has ordered a fiesta. But seein' that his cousin was killed, it won't be till to-morrow. You hombres can take it easy, to-day. If you want anything, I'll be over in the big house with the captain."

And with that I march toward the house while the bandido goes over to his mates and tells 'em what I said. Seems they can't figure how I'm walkin' around instead of bein' tied down in that box stall, so the hombre comes trailin' me, and says that Captain Pedro has gone away.

"Sure he has," says I. "He's gone over to Sandoval to get married to the señorita. They'll be back here this evenin'. It's none of your business, but mebby you don't know that Don Cristobal left the rancho and all his money to Señorita Pepita and the captain, with the understandin' they was to be married, or they couldn't have it. So they've gone to get married before the lawyers get here. Now go and peddle your papers and don't bother me."

AND with that I swing along, with Bob followin'. And before we get to the house, goin' round to the front way so as to get the major-domo away from the servants' end of the house where we could handle him, Bob asks me if I think the señorita and the captain really went away to get married.

"Not if I'm guessin' right," says I. "But I give those flea scratchers somethin' to talk about the rest of the mornin'." And that was my idea. Get 'em talkin' and arguin' and they won't have time to think of anything else.

"I see," says Bob, kind of slow. And then I step up to the portal and knock and the major-domo comes to the door, and he looks kind of scared and worried, and like he ain't slept all night. I don't make any talk, but just stick the muzzle of me rifle in his stummick and tell him to send a mozo round to the stables to have the captain's horse and mine saddled and fetched to the front driveway.

Then I back away and set down in a chair with me rifle on me knees, and Bob, he strolls around the room lookin' at the pictures and the big chandelier with the crystals and such. The major-domo is goin' to go back to the servants' quarters to call a mozo but I tell him to just clap his hands, right where he is. And he done it.

The mozo comes in and the major-domo speaks his piece, as ordered. Bob starts to tell the poor old major-domo that we ain't goin' to shoot nobody. "Ain't we!" says I. "Just make a wrong move, and see!"

And with that I draw back the bolt of me rifle and shove it forward, just to keep the major-domo interested. Pretty soon around comes the mozo with the horses. I tell Bob to step out and keep his eye on 'em, and then I kind of chaperon the major-domo back to the kitchen and tell him to have one of the help fill a sack with some grub and a couple bottles of wine. Then I asks him to take the sack and march ahead, which he done.

Just before we climbed onto the horses I told the old boy that it wasn't me or me friend what shot Don Cristobal, but that it was somebody what was goin' to shoot me friend and made a mistake. The major-domo nods his head but don't say a word. I guess he had done some thinkin' himself. "Will you see the Señorita Pepita?" says he.

"What if we do?" says I.

It is easy to see that the old boy is scared to talk much, but somethin' is on his mind. "My master left the entire estate to his cousin, Señorita Pepita Armigo," says the major-domo, "with the exception of ten thousand pesos in money which he left to Captain Pedro Jabonera. In the event of Captain Pedro Jabonera's

death, the money also is to go to the señorita." And the old boy kind of left it to me to say what I liked about it, in case I said anything to anybody.

"Good work!" says I. "And there's a couple of chances to nothin' that the lady will get the money," says I. "But you can't tell." And with that Bob and me lit out down the driveway, and pretty soon we was poundin' up the road north, follow'in the tracks of Aloisius' car.

CHAPTER IX.

THE ARREST OF CAPTAIN PEDRO.

NOW once or twice I had read in a story how mebby a couple of fellas would set off horseback, chasin' somebody or bein' chased, and while they was ridin' they was visitin' and talkin' and swappin' ideas like they was settin' under the awnin' on the after deck with the yacht anchored off some Mediterranean port on a summer evenin'. Well, me and Bob didn't talk much, havin' plenty to do tryin' to think and stay on top of the horses.

What was botherin' me most was that we had got away too easy. You see, as things go in this here world, you can't play in luck all the time, and when luck is handin' you bouquets and good poker hands and easy money is the time to look at the glass and see what the weather is goin' to be. Luck is a whole lot like weather—always changin', and sometimes it changes mighty sudden.

Well, anyhow, we pounded along north, with the sun workin' up to noon and our horses beginnin' to lather. We stopped once and give 'em water at a little ranch where we had stopped on the way down. Seein' as we didn't know what was ahead of us or what we was goin' to do, we didn't make any plans, only to get Aloisius separated from Captain Pedro and headed our way; and we figured that that would be a pretty fair day's work, even if we didn't get tangled up in some other deal.

I recollect that Bob said as how he didn't savvy the señorita's skippin' out when she knowed we was prisoners and mebby would be shot, instead of stayin' and usin' her influence with Captain Pedro.

"Mebby her skippin' out that way was her way of usin' her influence," says I. "Captain Pedro lit right out after her, didn't he?" says I. "Well, then, you don't think his men would 'a' dared finish us off without his bein' on the job to give orders for the same, do you?"

"There's something in that," says Bob. "I was wondering if her leaving was premeditated or merely the result of impulse."

"That's the trouble with you highbrows," says I. "You always got to take the clock apart to see what makes it go, instead of bein' satisfied with knowin' the old chronometer is givin' you the right time. As Aloisius was sayin'," says I, "results is what counts. And we're a couple of lucky results, ain't we?" says I.

"Accidents of chance," says Bob, smilin'. And after that we started to ride faster, havin' let our horses walk, seein' as they had just took on water for the next run.

It was along toward evenin' when we come in sight of Sandoval, not havin' met a soul on the road, and not wishful to. The sun was settin' pretty on the hills, and the whole desert was like a lake of mist that looks like it was on fire, and burnin' gentle.

Bob takes a long breath and kicks his feet out of the stirrups and stretches his legs. "It was worth it!" he says, kind of dreamylike. Darned if I know what he's talkin' about, but I know what I'm thinkin'. So we turn off the road and drift over to a kind of gully, south of the town, where we eat and give our horses a rest, wishin' we could feed and water 'em.

Then we tied the horses to a couple of slabs of rock, and we tied 'em good, and it bein' dark we set out for Sandoval, on foot and acrost the open. I was wishin' we had a couple of automatics instead of the rifles, but as it turned out, neither would 'a' been any use to us.

Rememberin' the woman that had been friendly to Bob when we lit in Sandoval the first time, we mooched around to the

back of the house and Bob slips up to the back door and after a while he comes out and tells me that Captain Pedro and Tony are in Sandoval, and a lady who is stayin' at the house of the jefe politico, which is the same as mayor and justice of the peace in the United States. Seems Aloisius is with the captain, accordin' to what the woman said to Bob, and that the car is standin' in front of the cantina where Pedro and Tony are.

"If we could get word to Aloisius——" says Bob, but I tells him if he wants to work it right to try and have a talk with the lady, for I'm thinkin' she is friendly and can give us a line on what's goin' on.

"That's easy," says Bob. "I'll just call on the señorita."

"And you'll have company," says I. "When you call, I call. This ain't no time for poetry and such. There's somethin' in the air that we don't savvy. Captain Pedro didn't come flyin' over here just for exercise, and the señorita didn't either."

And it turned out I was right, for we found out after, that she had come over to lodge a complaint against Captain Pedro for instigatin' the murder of her cousin, Don Cristobal, the jefe politico of Sandoval bein' the nearest law shark. Seems she and Captain Pedro had had words, him sayin' as how now that Cousin Cristobal was dead, he was boss of the rancho and things was goin' to be just as he wanted 'em. And one of the first things that was goin' to happen was to bump off a couple of gringos.

The señorita was wise enough to let on she didn't care about that part of it. But when everybody had gone to bed she sends her coachman out for the horses and gets two-three hours' start of Captain Pedro. Seems the horses come into Sandoval on the run and just about half an hour ahead of the captain. So that was the layout, only we didn't know it until later.

WELL, Bob and me slipped round to the back of the jefe politico's house and got one of the servants to take in word that we would like to see the Señorita Pepita. And after a while, out comes the señorita herself, lookin' pale, but her eyes burnin'.

She gives us her hands, and says, "Oh, my friends! You have escaped! It is good that you are here. The jefe politico is a coward. He is afraid of my Cousin Pedro. But I know that you are not afraid."

"Speakin' for myself, lady," says I, "I *am* kind of scared of him, for I figure he would shoot a man in the back. Bob here ain't got brains enough to be afraid of anybody."

The señorita give Bob a look, and the fire kind of died out of her eyes and she smiled, but I guess she couldn't forget what had happened right away, for she commenced to look kind of sad and kind of fierce, and she wasn't actin' it, neither. "You will come in," she says. "Perhaps your presence will give the jefe politico courage to do his duty."

"Mebby we can do it for him," says I. "We ain't got nothin' to lose, except Aloisius. We kind of like to keep him in one package so he can get back to his folks."

Then we went in, followin' the señorita, who took us to a room in the front of the house, where the jefe was settin' in a big chair, lookin' like somebody had been givin' him hell, his fat face scowlin' and scared and his cheeks twitchin'. She introduces us, and the jefe, seein' our rifles, says he is honored to meet us, and glad we are there, and all that mush, and then he says: "Whose men are these? Jabonera's?"

"They are my soldados!" says the señorita, and honest, mate, the way she said it would make anybody want to fight for her. Bob he stands straight and pulls a salute, and I can feel my chest kind of swell, for when a good-lookin' lady picks you special to do her fightin', it's kind of like a good stiff drink of liquor.

"We're on the job," says I. "But what is the job?"

"My cousin says I may not leave here without his permission," says the señorita. 'He says that now he is my guardian, and that I shall do that which he wishes me to do."

"That's easy," says I. "Just don't do it."

"He says that I must become his wife," said the señorita, glancin' at Bob, and blushin' just a little.

"That's different," says I.

But before I could finish, Bob says: "Unless you wish to marry him, Donna Pepita."

"Marry him!" says the señorita, her eyes flashin'. "I could kill him! Have I forgotten Cristobal?" she says, her mouth tremblin'.

With that I asks the jefe if he knows that Don Cristobal has been murdered, and who done it. The old porpoise tries to shy off the question by commencin' a long lingo about law and such, and investigations, and the danger of makin' a wrong move, till I get tired listenin', and tell him that the señorita's askin' him to have Tony and Pedro arrested ought to be enough.

Right there I get an idea. Says I, "Jefe, I figure it ain't handin' out the law you're scared of, but it's the risk of gettin' shot up while arrestin' Captain Pedro and his sergeant what is botherin' you. Am I right?" says I.

"Of course, if the captain was arrested ——" he says, and stops.

"I get you," says I. "Then put on your specs and look wise and you'll see him arrested, right here in this room. Bob and me'll do the job. But let me tell you, if you make a wrong move or back down after we do the job, or durin' the proceedin's, your relations will be singin' over your grave before you know it."

"But you can't do things that way," says Bob to me. "You're threatening the justice of the peace and coercing him. It will end in trouble, Bill."

"Trouble!" says I. "Ain't we in up to our ears, right now? You just quit stickin' your finger in the works, and listen to your uncle. And if the señorita is agreeable to my way of thinkin', all you got to do is look handsome, and keep your rifle handy."

And with that I tell 'em my plan, which is easy. The señorita is to send for the captain and say she is willin' to marry him, havin' changed her mind. And I tell her that havin' done actin' on the stage she ought to be able to do her part easy. The jefe is to get his marryin kit ready, like he means business, and when Captain Pedro comes in, and Tony—me figurin' that the captain wouldn't make a move without Tony right handy—why, Bob and me will step in from the next room and stop the proceedings and arrest 'em, they not suspectin' that we're within forty miles of Sandoval.

THE jefe ain't yearnin' to do his part, but he sees I'm gettin' nervous, fingerin' the bolt of my rifle, so he says he will marry the señorita and Captain Pedro if they desire it, which is good enough for me. The señorita don't say nothin' for a spell, then she speaks up sudden.

"You will not kill my cousin?" she says to me.

"Not if I can help doin' so," says I.

"Then I will send for him," she says, and with that she goes into another room, and pretty soon she comes out dressed for travelin', and lookin' mighty trim and pretty, and kind of sad. "I shame myself," she says, "that I should even pretend to do this, and Don Cristobal lying dead at the hacienda."

I see Bob is kind of nervous, all of a sudden, so I take him into the room what the señorita just come out of, which is a bedroom, and leave the door kind of half open, so if Captain Pedro is suspicious he can see into the bedroom, and nobody there. Then I open the bedroom window and leave it open, and Bob and me step to the corner behind the door and get settled to wait.

Seems like a week before we hear somebody come in, and the señorita's voice, talkin' to Captain Pedro, and she don't give herself away by sayin' she is willin' to get married the minute he shows up. Instead of that she asks him some questions about the killin' of her cousin. And Captain Pedro ain't lyin' any when he says he never had any idea of killin' his cousin, but he *is* lyin' when he tells her he don't know who done it. For it was

dead open and shut to me that Captain Pedro set Tony on to plug Bob, when Bob went into the garden to talk to the señorita, only it happened to be Don Cristobal talkin' to her, which was lucky for Bob.

Anyhow, the señorita took her time allowin' Captain Pedro to show her that the best thing they could do was to get married so there wouldn't be any law trouble about the will, and dividin' the estate and such. And then the captain calls Tony in and the old jefe gets out his papers and is all ready to marry 'em.

AT that I step from behind the door, easy, and holdin' me rifle on the captain, I tell him the bun is on the floor. The captain is standin' alongside of the señorita, with the jefe settin' at his desk. The captain is sure surprised, but he don't waste any time puttin' his hands up.

Now, I made a mistake in coverin' him. I ought to covered that wasp Tony, for he didn't have enough brains to be scared of anything. The minute he seen me he steps behind the señorita and pulls his gun and lets fly at me, but it was kind of awkward for him shootin' around her, and he misses.

I dassen't shoot for fear of hittin' her, so I drop me rifle and jump for him before he can pull down again. Then things get lively.

I didn't have time to notice, but I know Bob ain't asleep. And sure enough, the minute I went for Tony, Bob jumped for the captain and got holt of him before he could get his gun goin'. Grabbin' Tony was like grabbin' a snake, for he fought like a rattler you stepped on, and somehow he got his knife in his hand and kept me fair busy.

I could hear Bob and the captain gruntin' and smashin' around the room, for Bob was slim, but he was hell fire for quick, and a wicked goer when he got started. Tony got to me with his knife a couple of times, once in the arm and once acrost me chest, like strikin' a stick down a washboard, for he didn't miss a rib makin' that slash.

What with the burn of it I see red lightnin' and I wades in and gripped that little wasp and got his neck. Then I used me knee, and Tony went like a wet rag you're wringin' out. And I kept on wringin' till I heard Bob kind of choke. Then I tossed Tony into a corner and jumped in to help Bob.

The captain had him down and it seems he had hit him once with his gun. Bob's face was all bloody and the captain was chokin' him. Not havin' time to do any fancy stitches, I just used me boot on the captain's head; and the second time I gave him the heel, he flopped.

The señorita was wise. She didn't hang around and wring her hands and scream. Instead of that she just lit out of the room, figurin' mebby she might be in the way. I guess the old jefe was too scared to run. He got stepped on a couple of times, and when we got through shiftin' the scenery he was settin' in a corner feelin' of himself to see if he was still all there.

Bob was clean out. I dragged him up and carried him into the bedroom, and then I come back and tied up the captain and Tony and told the jefe to git some liquor and some bandages. Right there Señorita Pepita sailed in, and pretty soon she and a servant was in the bedroom workin' over Bob, and the old jefe and me each took a drink and he says, "Who is to pay for wreckin' the house?"

"Ask the captain," says I. "He started the row."

"But Captain Pedro is unconscious," says the jefe.

"So am I, when it comes to talkin' about money," says I.

Now I was feelin' kind of queer, like I needed fresh air. Likewise, I didn't trust the jefe any. Thinks I, "If Captain Pedro comes to and commences to cuss the jefe, most like the old porpoise'll turn the captain loose." And I wasn't in no shape to tackle him again.

So I mooched out to the front and there was the little yellow car, and Aloisius settin' in it smokin' a cigar. "Good evenin'," says I. And hearin' my voice, Aloisius

jumps like he was shot. "Why, Bill!" he says. *"You're alive!"*

"Mostly," says I. "But I'm feelin' kind of sick. Bob is in there, gettin' patched up. Captain Pedro and Tony are what you might call horses-de-combat, seein' as we got a horse on 'em, just recent.

"I reckon I got to lay down for a spell, and get my wind. What I'm askin' you to do is, to watch the captain and Tony till I can get my head workin' right again."

"I'll do anything in the world for you, Bill," says Aloisius. "I heard an awful racket in the house, but I thought it best that I should stay right here," says Aloisius. "What happened?"

"You thought right," says I. "Plenty happened. But come on in and if the old jefe starts any funny work while I'm restin', all you got to do is to shoot Captain Pedro and Tony. They ought to be killed, anyhow."

"I'll do anything but shoot a man in cold blood," says Aloisius, climbin' down out of the car. "What has happened since I left Casa Verdugo?"

"Wait till mornin'," says I. And as I was commencin' to feel kind of light headed I stepped into the house and told the jefe my friend would look after the prisoners until mornin'. The jefe was nervous and I could see by his eye he didn't like the layout, so I tells him we're goin' to stay there till mornin', and keep the prisoners there, and that we'll be leavin' at sunup, after which he can do as he likes about disposin' of Captain Pedro and his sergeant.

With that I get me rifle and hand her to Aloisius, and he sets down with the gun acrost his knees, in the jefe's big chair, and sizes up the room and the two prisoners on the floor and smokes his cigar like it was all old stuff to him.

I'm feelin' sick to me stummick, so I start for the back of the house, and just then Señorita Pepita comes out of the bedroom and sees me and says: "But the big man is wounded!" And she points at me, and then I just go blind and grab for somethin' to hold on by. And that was all I knowed for quite a spell.

CHAPTER X.

ACROSS THE BORDER.

WHEN I come to, the sun was shinin' in the window, and I seen I was in the bedroom, and when I kind of got my bearin's I see Bob settin' at the foot of the bed with a rag around his head, and lookin' kind of washed out.

"How's poetry this mornin'?" says I by way of cheerin' him up.

"Jove, old-timer!" says Bob, "but I'm glad to hear your voice!"

"Well," says I, "I guess I'll get up." And with that I commenced to raise up, but they was somethin' tight around me chest and me head commences to whirl.

"Take it easy, Bill," says Bob, comin' over. "You're cut up pretty bad. You lost a lot of blood, last night."

"How's everything?" says I, and I was kind of glad to lay back and rest a spell.

"Well," says Bob, "the captain is alive, and ugly." And then Bob looked at me, knowin'like, and shrugs his shoulders just like a Mexican.

"Meanin'?" says I.

"Bill," says Bob, serious, "you are naturally strong, but when you get mad you are a raving Hercules. While you were unconscious last night Donna Pepita called in the local medico to patch up the captain and Sergeant Tony. The captain came out of it, all right. But Tony—well, his neck is broken."

"Tony busted?" says I. "Well, now, I didn't figure to finish him. But he kept slashin' at me, and I had to do somethin'."

"And poor old Tony was just workin' accordin' to his lights," thinks I. "He was fightin' for his captain. But I ain't forgettin' he would likewise do murder if his captain told him to."

"Well, the matter is in the hands of a higher tribunal," says Bob, serious.

"For them that has crossed over," says I. "But we got to do some stirrin' around for ourselves. Where's Aloisius?"

"He's out tinkering with the car. There's something wrong with it," Bob tells me.

"Well, tell him to get it fixed as soon

as he can," says I. "It ain't so far to the border. We ought to make it by to-morrow evenin'."

"The local medico says you will be unable to travel for several days," announces Bob.

"Meanin' him and the old jefe has framed it to keep us here till the rurales get here, and then we get arrested for killin' Tony, and mebby for killin' Don Cristobal, or held as witnesses, anyhow. Whichever way the cat jumps she'll light on us. I'm leavin'."

"I'll speak to Aloisius," says Bob.

AND while Bob is out talkin' to Aloisius, in comes the Señorita Pepita and asks me if I would like a little wine, and I tell her I would, and she fetches some. Then she holds me head up so I can drink easy, and then takes the glass away, and after, she puts her cool hand on me head and says I am feverish and that I must keep quiet, and that I am a brave man and very strong; her cooin' away like a mammy to her kid. And first thing I know she bends over and kisses me on the forehead, and honest, mate, I could 'a' hugged her, only I didn't.

"Ah, when you carried me down the steps of the capitol, in Buenos Aires!" she says, and sighs hard.

Now it was funny that she would be thinkin' of that, considerin' all they was to think about right to home. Anyhow, we was gettin' acquainted fine, when in comes Bob and Aloisius, who had his sleeves rolled up and was all greasy and lookin' like a fat mechanic. "We're out of gas," says Aloisius. And if he'd said we was goin' to be shot at sunrise, it wouldn't sounded worse.

At that the señorita kind of signals to Bob and they step out to the other room, and I tell Aloisius that we got to get out of Sandoval somehow, and quick. When I give him a line on the chances against us, he scratches his ear and nods his head and says I'm right, and that we got to leave immediately. But he don't say how.

Aloisius is walkin' up and down by the bed, and all of a sudden he stops walkin' and leans over to me. "He kissed her!" whispers Aloisius.

And he ain't more'n said that when in comes Bob. "It is all arranged," he says, his gray eyes shinin'. "Señorita Pepita has put her carriage at our service. It's not far to the border. And if you can stand the journey, Bill, we'll get ready."

And without waitin' for me to tell him I could, he struts out, and Aloisius gets excited and he struts out, and I can hear 'em talkin' and the señorita givin' orders, and the old jefe fussin' around, and pretty soon in comes Bob and Aloisius and shut the door, and between us I get dressed, and bein' that wabbly I can't stand they give me a hand out to the carriage. "What about them two horses we left tied in the arroyo?" says I to Bob.

"Great Scott!" says Bob. "They might have starved to death!" And with that he excuses himself to the señorita and starts down the road to get the horses.

"The Señor Roberto is very kind and thoughtful," says the señorita to me.

"He is," says I, "when he ain't makin' up poetry or fallin' in love," says I. Then I tells her we're much obliged for her lendin' us her carriage and the driver, but she ain't payin' much attention to me. She is lookin' down the road where Bob is ridin' back, leadin' one of the horses.

Aloisius is fussin' around, loadin' some packages into the carriage, and I ask him if he has got our rifles and he ain't. So I tells him to get 'em, and he done it. Then up rides Bob, and asks me what he is to do with the horses; shall he turn 'em loose or give 'em to somebody.

"But no!" says the señorita. "Señor Roberto will ride one of them, and the Señor Aloisius the other. Thus the carriage will ride easier in the sand and we shall go faster. Señor Beel and I will ride in the carriage."

"You goin', too!" says I.

"But yes!" says the señorita. "It is that I do little enough for my good friends in conveying them to their own country."

"Suits me fine!" says I. But I can see that Bob ain't singin' any, and Aloisius looks like a July thunderstorm comin' up.

And then the señorita goes in the house and pretty soon she comes out all dressed for travelin', along with one of the jefe's servant girls, who is to be her maid. The old jefe is sputterin' and fumin' and tellin' her she'll regret everything, and that she is mad to risk her life with us, and what is he to do with Captain Pedro.

And then, the señorita, who has been smilin' and sweet, turns on the jefe, and what she doesn't tell him ain't in the books. When she gets through, finishin' up by tellin' him what her family will do to him if he lets Pedro loose, the jefe is licked, and says he is her most obedient servant and to have pity on his gray hairs and his poverty.

THE señorita turns her back and gets into the carriage alongside of me and she fixes the carriage robe over me and makes me comfortable and tells the maid where to stow the things; and pretty soon we are rollin' out of town like I was President of Mexico and she was the other half of the government.

Bob rides alongside, lookin' proud and haughty, and Aloisius he rides behind the carriage, so I can't see how he looks. But I know he is reducin', anyhow, for he ain't what you would call a rider, and the horse he is on is wanderin' off lookin' for somethin' to eat, havin' had no breakfast. One time I see Aloisius and his horse way off to one side, and the horse is standin' with his head down, eatin' dried grass or somethin', and Aloisius settin' there lookin' like he is mad.

In a couple of hours we come to a place where the road goes round the point of some low hills, and on the north side of the hills is some green trees, meanin' water. Aloisius ain't figured on goin' over there, but his horse takes him, and Bob he says he'll go over and the horses can drink.

So we keep joggin' along, the carriage bumpin' easy over the rough spots, and the señorita pattin' me hand and askin' me how I feel, and the sun shinin' and the coachman settin' straight and stiff, with the new maid settin' on the box alongside of him, so me and the señorita can be comfortable in the carriage.

We was visitin' and talkin', when I commences to feel sleepy, and pretty soon everything kind of fades out. When I wake up the sun is low in the west and the country has changed some. The coachman stops and lights down and helps the señorita out while the maid holds the horses.

"We will feed the horses, and make a fire and have supper," says the señorita. "Then we will continue until we reach Nogales."

"My God!" says Aloisius, who ain't particular what he says, just then. And he tried to get off his horse, and his foot catches on somethin' and first thing I know he is settin' in the sand. The coachman runs to help him up, but Aloisius waves his arm. "I'm quite comfortable as I am," he says. "And I could eat a dog, raw."

And then the coachman and the maid get busy and pretty soon we have coffee and some sandwiches, and a nip of wine, and the sun goes down. When we start again, the stars are shinin', and Bob is ridin' alongside the carriage visitin' with the señorita. Aloisius is settin' on the box with the coachman and the maid is ridin' Aloisius' horse, seein' as how he said he wouldn't get aboard that animal again if he never got back to the United States. And anyhow, the maid was half injun and could ride like a Yaqui.

Seein' as how the señorita wasn't payin' much attention to me, I kind of slept by spells, and woke up and went to sleep again, the red-hot streak acrost me ribs wakin' me up regular.

SOME time, that night, as we was driftin' along, the carriage stopped and I heard somebody talkin'. And they was talkin' good old United States. Pretty soon a kind of long, slim fella rides back to where the señorita and me are listenin', and he lights a match like he's goin' to light the cigarette in his mouth, and says "Good evenin'," pleasant. "Haven't I met you somewhere?" he says to me. And I tell

him I don't know about that, and how far are we from the border.

"Not far," he says, kind of offhand. "Were you ever in Tucson?" he asks me.

"I been there," says I, wonderin' what game he is playin'.

"Then you ought to remember me," he says. "It was a beautiful scrap."

And at that I get him. He is the long American cowboy what stood by when Aloisius and Bob and me licked the crowd in the cantina.

"Lookin' for smugglers?" says I.

"Just took a little ride down this way," says he.

"Well, we ain't smugglin' nothin'," says I. And with that I tells him, short, what has happened since I saw him last, and he nods and strikes another match and lights his cigarette.

"I'll slide you across," says he. "Some of the boys might not understand your side of it." And with that I get wise that he's a ranger, and the rangers are lookin' for somebody.

"Thanks," says I. "If you can fix it with the customs so we can get to a hotel, it would help. This lady has been ridin' all day and most all night, helpin' us to get back where we belong."

"All right," says the long American cowboy. "Is there any one here named Aloisius Brandstatter?"

"Sure. He's right there on the box, alongside the driver," says I.

"We've been looking for him," says the cowboy. "Your family has offered a big reward for information as to your whereabouts," he says to Aloisius.

"It's about time!" says Aloisius. And then we got to goin' again, and pretty soon we seen the lights of Nogales, and you can say all you like about the heavenly consternations, but, mate, them little lights shinin' out acrost the border looked better to me than all the stars what was ever raved about.

There was kind of a hitch with the customs officers gettin' the señorita's carriage acrost, but the long American cowboy spoke up, and they let us through and we made for a hotel. First thing we knew, a newspaper man was lookin' for us, and he managed to get to Aloisius, but not for long.

Aloisius just sends a telegram to his Chicago office, tellin' the manager he was all right, and to advise his wife. Not havin' any managers or wives, Bob and me turned in and went to sleep.

CHAPTER XI.

ALOISIUS GETS MAD.

IN the morning I was feelin' pretty good, only kind of weak, and when Aloisius comes into me room, him havin' a newspaper in his fist and lookin' mad, he asks me if I am able to travel. I asks him what is the rush. He hands me the newspaper and says: "Read that!"

Seems, accordin' to the paper, that a searchin' party had trailed somebody they thought was Aloisius, down to El Paso, and crossin' over into Mexico had found what they said was the remains of an American citizen what had been killed south of Juarez. And them remains, accordin' to Aloisius' nephew who was with the searchin' party, was what was left of Aloisius Brandstatter, the pickle king.

Seems likewise that the authorities had telegraphed to Mrs. Brandstatter, who had gone back to Chicago after not meetin' her husband in El Paso accordin' to schedule. The paper kind of hinted that there had been foul play somewhere and that it looked like a big legal battle for the estate of Aloisius, his widow fightin' for her rights and claimin' Aloisius wasn't dead, and the other side, which was mostly the nephew and one of Aloisius' brothers, claimin' Aloisius was dead, and the estate would have to be managed accordin' to the will, makin' the nephew and the brothers joint managers of the business, instead of on a salary; the idea bein', accordin' to what Aloisius told me later, that the business was to be carried on same as if he was alive, with them relations of his in trainin' to carry it on. Accordin' to the papers, Aloisius' widow was on her way back to El Paso to view them there remains along with her lawyer.

Now Aloisius was mad.

Mebby he wasn't so mad at the heirs battlin' for his money as he was because his nephew and the papers kind of hinted that he was dead when he wasn't. When I give him back the paper he stuck it in his pocket and commences to march up and down me bedroom till he had made about fifty laps, when he turns to me and says, "Bill, are you able to travel?"

"What's the idea of me goin' anywhere for a couple of days?" says I.

He didn't pay no attention to that, but waves his hand and says: "Bill, strange things happen when a large amount of money is revolved in legal proceedings. Lawyers got queer ways of provin' that a live man is dead, and vice verses. It ain't that I can't prove I am alive and kickin'," says Aloisius, "but in the meantime the lawyers will be alive and diggin' into the cash box, and pickles will fall off several points on 'Change, and my friends will suffer, to say nothing of poor Minnie.

"She has been a loyal wife, Bill. She refuses to believe that I have passed away. Now if she had set up a claim that I was dead, I might feel different about it. You have been with me practically every minute since I disappeared from society. I want you to run over to El Paso with me as a witness. I am going to make somebody dance."

"Remember The Animus," says I.

"I do," says he. "But that was a sideshow to what I intend to put on the boards. I not only want you as a witness, but I have become used to your society, Bill, and I shall feel a whole lot better if you are with me."

"Puttin' it that way, you do me proud," says I. "But why couldn't Bob go with you? He's a edducated guy, and he ought to make a first-rate witness."

"Bob is a nice boy," says Aloisius. "But you have a wonderful punch. Moreover," says Aloisius, "Bob is at present engaged in entertaining Señorita Pepita, and I doubt if he would be interested in my affairs."

"I noticed he hadn't showed up yet this mornin'," says I. "But as for bein' interested in your affairs, why, Bob won't see you get the worst of it. Anyhow, Bob and me kind of signed up for makin' the journey together, and I figure that ladies or no ladies he'll stick to the ship."

"You mean you will go with me, if Bob will go?"

"That's the idea," says I.

"Then I'll see Bob," says Aloisius. "It's half past ten, and he and the señorita have been sitting out on the hotel veranda, visiting, since nine this morning. Perhaps I can pry him loose for a minute or two."

At that I got holt of an idea. "Just ease up to him and if you can get him far enough away from the señorita so she can't hear you, just say, 'Remember Penelope.' If that don't get him, you might as well quit. He's a goner."

"A sort of secret code?" says Aloisius, lookin' kind of puzzled.

"Correct!" says I. "Just you try it on."

AND with that Aloisius goes out, after askin' me if there was anything I wanted. I tells him breakfast wouldn't hurt my feelin's any, so he goes down and has 'em send up some. Before I got through eatin' Aloisius was back again, tellin' me that Bob was comin' up pretty soon. And Aloisius was mad again, likewise. "Been over to the bank and they refuse to acknowledge my signature," he says. "I'll have to wire my Chicago office."

"For dough?" says I.

"Yes," says Aloisius, fearin' to say more account of wantin' to swear.

"Then forget it," says I. And with that I reaches down and takes off the money belt Captain Pedro had been wearin' when I landed him. "Here is your dough," says I. "Mebby there's enough left to see you through."

Aloisius takes the money belt, and looks at me, and says: "Bill, you're a wonder!"

Then he sees the bandages what the señorita and Bob fixed on me, and he scowls and says he's goin' to get a regular doctor to patch me up. I tell him I am O. K., but old Aloisius shakes his head, stubborn.

Just then Bob comes in, lookin' kind of

pale, but his gray eyes are shinin', and he is steppin' brisk. He comes over to the bed and shakes hands and looks at me kind of queer, and smiles, and says he has been kind of remiss but hopes the excuse will suffice, and that Aloisius said I wanted to see him.

Then I tells Bob what is in the air, and he looks serious, and walks up and down, and pretty soon he stops and says: "I could not love the less, Old Top, loved I not honor more," or something like that. And Aloisius looks kind of puzzled, so I tells him that it is Bob's way of sayin' that a man's a man for a' that, and the lugger sails to-day. And old Aloisius looked worse than ever till Bob said he was willing and anxious to be of any service he could to the outfit.

"Bully!" says Aloisius. "I'll charter a private car and we'll run, special, to El Paso. But don't let a single one of those mule-eared reporters know anything about it."

"And I'll hunt up a physician at once," says Aloisius. "I want Bill's wound properly attended to."

"The señorita will be leaving here to-morrow," says Bob. "I suppose we'll be leaving some time to-day?"

"Just as soon as they can hook onto a coach," says Aloisius.

And with that, out go Bob and Aloisius, so I finish eatin' me breakfast. And pretty soon in comes Aloisius and a doctor, and after the doc examines me he says he's got to take a few stitches before the wound will heal. So he telephones for an assistant to hand him the tools while he's workin', and Aloisius goes out to order up a private car, like he said, and Bob he don't show up until the doc has got his stitchin' done, and tapin' and bandagin' till I almost felt like takin' that slash serious.

The doc tells me I'll have to see another doctor and have the stitches pulled, later, and says I want to be careful and not exert myself or I'll get temperature, and gives me some medicine to take and then he and his helper beat it.

"I have said good-by to Donna Pepita," says Bob, just as soon as the doc was gone.

I didn't say nothin' to that.

"Donna Pepita says she will be up to say farewell to you," says Bob.

"That's mighty nice of her," says I. "Aloisius is orderin' a private car, and you're sayin' good-by to a lady, and I'm gettin' sewed up so I won't lose nothin'. What could be fairer than that?" says I.

"Bill, you're an iconoclast!" says Bob, grinnin', and walkin' over to the window.

"Mebby I am," says I. "But just what is one of them things?"

"One who shatters idols," says Bob.

"Well, mebby you're right," says I. "Aloisius is takin' me along because I got a good punch, so he says. Mebby he figured on havin' me bust a couple of idols for him, but I reckon I won't be much good at that till I can work me left wing better."

"Out there, somewhere along the sea, a ship is waiting patiently," says Bob, lookin' out of the window.

"Well, Aloisius ain't," says I.

"Mr. Brandstatter doesn't need us to prove his identity," says Bob, turnin' and comin' back to the bed. "Why, his wife will be in El Paso, and what other witness will be necessary?"

"Then what is he fussin' about?" says I.

"He doesn't want to give us up, or give up the life, but he knows he must," says Bob. "He is caught in the wheel. He'll go back to his business.

"As for us, we will go about our business, which will be a wandering from sea to sea, from port to port, from isle to isle, dreaming that golden days may be, wherein to dwell a little while."

"Different from making pickles," says I.

"Vinegar!" says Bob, kind of glarin' at me.

And just then somebody knocks on the door, and the señorita's maid says can the señorita come in, and Bob hustles over and bows and shows the Señorita Pepita in. And I see 'em give each other a look, and then the señorita comes flutterin' over

to me, and asks me how I'm feelin', and says good-by, and the tears are shinin' in her eyes, and one of 'em slips down her eyelashes and drops on me hand which she is holdin'.

SO I let on I know she is feelin' bad because old Bill Morningstar got hacked up some while actin' as her soldado, but I know it is leavin' Bob that has got her to feelin' like cryin'. You see, Bob was her kind of folks, with edducated ideas and a way of handlin' hisself, that nobody has got what ain't raised that way. And then, ladies always did like Bob, whether he liked 'em or not.

I dunno, but I guess it was because he was most always kind of dreamin' and thinkin' about things, and most women knowed it and wanted to make him think about them. I ain't much on society, but I noticed that bein' able to freeze up, polite, is one way of interestin' the ladies.

The señorita says she is goin' back to Casa Verdugo, takin' a lawyer what lived in Nogales and who can talk Mexican and United States, him bein' related to the governor of Lower California, and in politics. So I figure she ain't so foolish at that, drivin' all the way to the border to fetch us guys back to our own country.

Anyhow, she told us good-by and went. And mebby a couple of hours later, Aloisius come steamin' in, with a telegram in his fist and a fightin' glare in his eye. "We'll be ready to leave in fifteen minutes," says he. "I have a closed carriage to take you to the station. We'll help you to get dressed."

And when we got down to the station there was the doc what sewed me up, and he helped me into the car, and lighted up a cigar and looked like he was makin' himself to home.

"If you don't object, I'll take your temperature," says he.

"Shoot!" says I.

"Not so bad," he says after he took that there glass cigarette out of me mouth.

Then in comes Aloisius and a conductor and a train hand, and we pull out.

The doc stays right there in the car, and after a while Bob tells me Aloisius has hired the doc to accompany us to El Paso, not wishin' to take chances on me gettin' sick. Thinks I, if old Aloisius would hire a doctor, special, for me, what won't he do to that there nephew when he gets to where he can spread himself?

Now I was thinkin' that when we lit back in the United States, we wouldn't have any more fightin' for a spell. But I commenced to see that if you figure it all up, that there white Dove of Peace they talk about is a mighty uneasy bird. Seems somebody is fightin' somebody most all the time.

CHAPTER XII.

IN JUAREZ.

AS I was sayin', we was hooked on behind a special engine, and headin' for El Paso, and we had a whole Pullman car to ourselves. The doc had the porter make up one of the bunks for me, tellin' me I was to lay down and take it easy. But after we zoomed along three-four hours, I got tired of takin' it easy. So I climbed down and went over to where the doc and Aloisius was talkin' and tells Aloisius I got an idea.

The doc says I will have more'n that if I excite myself. "I ain't excited," says I. "But mebby you fellas will be when I spring my idea. But first, I want to ask a couple of questions. The newspaper says that Aloisius Brandstatter's remains is in the morgue at El Paso. Is that right?" says I.

Aloisius commences to get mad, but I wave me hand, gentle, and he nods and says that is what the dumfounded newspaper says.

"Fine!" says I. "And accordin' to the paper, your nephew and some of your relations, includin' your wife, will be there durin' the coroner's inquest. The idea will be to prove that the stiff in the morgue is you. Am I right?" says I.

Aloisius nods and kind of cusses to himself.

"Fine!" says I. "And the lawyers' idea is to keep things stirred up just as long as there is any money comin' their way.

Course if you show up, your wife will know you and that will settle everything. But from what you said, I take it you kind of suspect your nephew is only too willin' to believe the stiff in the morgue is you, without goin' any farther to look for another one."

"The scoundrel!" says Aloisius. "And after all that I have done for him!"

"But you ain't proved that your nephew is tryin' some funny work yet," says I. "Mebby he thinks you *are* dead. Now don't you go and get excited, but just listen to Uncle Bill.

"Here's the dope. When we get to El Paso, you want to get some regular clothes and go to the bank and draw out a roll of bills, and get 'em all sizes from five up. Then suppose you was to slip over to the morgue, without lettin' anybody know, and have a talk with the boss. Just tell him you want to hire a slab for a few minutes, about the time your nephew and the coroner and the lawyers will be comin' in to view the remains.

"The boss leads 'em to your slab and says to 'em, 'Is this the remains of Aloisius Brandstatter of Chicago?' And they say it is. Then all you got to do is to set up and say they are right. Course you will have to pay the superintendent of the morgue to keep the other remains out of sight. Now your nephew has swore that the other remains is yours. Do you get the idea?"

"But, Bill," says Bob, "that's horrible! Mrs. Brandstatter might not stand the shock."

"My idea is that Aloisius is to send word to his wife that he is in El Paso to help her fight for her rights," says I, "and for her to keep mum, and let on she don't know."

At that the doc give me a look, and Aloisius he give me a look, and Bob comes over and says, "You better get back to bed, Bill." And I see they think I ain't right in me head. The doc he makes me hold that there glass cigarette in me mouth for a spell then he takes it out and looks at it and says, "Thought so! You're running a hundred and four." And he takes me arm and eases me back to me bunk, and fetches me a glass of water.

Pretty soon Aloisius comes over and says that my scheme ain't so bad at that, but he doesn't think it will be necessary. While he is talkin' to me the doc is monkeyin' with some little bottles and pretty soon he fetches me a couple of pills and I take 'em, and after a while I kind of go to sleep, only I ain't asleep but not wishful to move around any.

I recollect our car stopped on a sidin' a couple of times and somethin' zoomed past like a bat out of an oven, and first thing I know it is dark, and we keep on hummin' along, and I go to sleep right, and when I wake up it is daylight and we are pullin' into El Paso. The doc comes and asks me how I feel, and I tell him kind of fuzzy, but comfortable.

Then we make it to a carriage what is waitin' and drive to a hotel. Aloisius takes a room for himself and one for Bob and me. Then he has breakfast fetched up and the three of us eat, only I can't taste nothin'.

After breakfast Bob acts kind of uneasy and pretty soon he tells Aloisius that he and Bill can't go on livin' on charity. Aloisius gets mad and says he guesses he knows what charity is when he sees it, and real folks likewise.

But Bob is stubborn, so Aloisius says, "All right, Bob, my boy! You are now my secretary, on a regular salary, and Bill is my personal bodyguard. And if either of you talk back, I'll fire you."

Bob laughs and says somethin' about it bein' a temporary arrangement. Aloisius says all arrangements, includin' ninety-nine-year leases, is temporary in this here unforgivin' world. And then he says Bob and him will go out and procure some clothing suitable to the occasion. "And it won't be mourning, either!" says Aloisius. "We'll be back in an hour or so."

THE doc is gone to see some folks he knows in town, and after a while I get nervous in me feet, so I wash up and mooch downstairs and stroll out in the sunshine. Somehow, my feet kind of take

me down toward the Mexican end of town, and pretty soon I am pokin' along over in Juarez, and feelin' kind of to home.

But my knees is shaky, after I've made a few blocks, so I step into a cantina and take a drink. And honest, mate, I couldn't taste that drink no more'n if it was water. So I hoists in another, and I can't taste that, so I get kind of mad, and I try her again.

All I got to say is, look out for liquor when you can't taste it. But I was feelin' all right, at that. So I starts in to talk to the bartender, and we swap Mexican talk, and I get to feelin' friendly, and I buy a couple more drinks, and ain't interested in politics or the weather or nothin'. Seems just like I'm floatin' on a feather pillow, and everything is lovely.

First thing I know, a kind of swell-dressed fella steps in and looks around, and then I see another high-tone-lookin' gent standin' near the door like he is waitin' for somebody. The first fella struts up to the bar and buys a drink, and drinks it slow, and I see he is kind of sizin' up the joint and the folks in it, what are tough-lookin', savin' myself.

Anyhow, the swell guy catches me eye and nods friendly, and pretty soon he is askin' me to have a drink, and we get to visitin'. He asks me if I savvy Spanish and I tell him I do. Mebby he talked for half an hour, but anyhow, after a while he says do I want a job that will make me some big money.

I guess my head ain't workin' any too good right then, but I think I am pretty smart and that he is one of them swell crooks and I'll just find out what he's up to. So I say to him I'm open for engagements if they suit my style.

He says: "Well, I have a job for you which requires nerve and the strong arm. You look as though you are both."

I tells him I'm a willin' worker, so long as no women is mixed up in a deal, and he says there ain't, and slips me a twenty to buy a drink with. I hand it back and tell him if he's lookin' for a cheap guy, to go hire a Mexican. And at that he laughs and says somethin' about tryin' me out, and digs into his pocket and hands me five of them twenties.

"Just to show you that I mean business," he says. And at that I tell him to go ahead and shoot. He says the place is too public and we would go where we could talk confidential.

So we mosey out, and the young fella at the door he steps out and goes up the street, but I see him and the guy I am with make a couple of signs like everything is understood. Anyhow, we go into another dump where there is a little room at the back and set down and the swell guy orders some drinks, but I tell him if I got a job to do I'm through drinkin' till the job is off the slate.

He says that is fine, and then he tells me what he wants. Seems, accordin' to his say, that politics is at the bottom of it and one gang is fixin' to get holt of the leader of the other gang and run him off south for a spell to get him out of the way. "But no killing," says the swell guy. "The man we want will be in Juarez, probably in a carriage, at eight thirty this evening. He will drive direct to the old Alameda House.

"When he steps out of the carriage, get him. The driver of his hack is fixed. Another hack will be waiting just around the corner. Load him into our hack and your job is done."

"Fine!" says I. "But who is the guy, and what does he look like? I might make a mistake."

The swell guy gives me a hard look, but I guess what with my whiskers and the liquor he couldn't get far. Anyhow he hauls a newspaper out of his pocket and shows me the picture of a gent on the front page. "That's the man," he says. And, mate, I almost fell off me chair. It was the picture of Aloisius Brandstatter, the pickle king!

"Do you think you'll know him when you see him?" says the swell guy, who turned out to be a shyster lawyer what Aloisius' nephew had hired.

"I guess I'll know him all right," says I, offhandlike. "But he looks hefty, and I

guess I'll have to get somebody to help me handle him."

"We don't want to take any chances," says the shyster. "It's a one-man job. The reason I spoke to you was that you looked competent to handle a heavy man."

"Oh, I can knock him out, easy enough," says I. "It's the luggin' him to the other hack that I'm thinkin' about."

"Well, I suppose you're after more money," says the shyster. "Here's twenty more. Get somebody that won't squeal. And you have another hundred coming when the job is done."

"And a hell of a fine time gettin' me money," says I, to make it strong. "Hand me the other hundred now, and I'll turn the trick for you."

"No," says he, scowlin'. "Not till you deliver the goods."

"Where do I get the other hundred, then?" I asks him.

"I'll be holding it for you in the other hack," he says.

And with that he gets up, and hands me a cigar and lights one himself, and tells me to stay there till he is gone. So I done it.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE ATTACK.

NOW I was sayin' look out for liquor when you can't taste it. And down there in Juarez was the first time I couldn't taste my liquor, even after tryin' three-four times. And seein' as how that there stuff they sell has an edge to it like it was made of iron filin's and chili pepper and ammonia, I guess I must of been off my feed pretty bad.

Seems like my head was full of ideas about gettin' up and goin' back to the hotel and givin' Aloisius a tip, so he could hire some detectives and plant 'em around the Alameda Hotel where they could do the most good, but the more I thought about it the easier it seemed to set right where I was and keep on thinkin'.

I was feelin' amazin' comfortable, just like I weighed a couple of tons, if them tons had been feathers. Says I to myself, "Bill, get up and mosey back to the hotel." But somehow, I didn't get no farther than tellin' myself to do it.

The bartender come in and wiped off the table like he was waitin' for me to order a drink, and then he goes out, and I set there kind of dreamin', and everything is lovely below and aloft. Thinks I, "Bill, get up and mosey back to the hotel. Bob and Aloisius will be wonderin' where you are." But I didn't even move me legs and try to get up.

And after a while I got to worryin' because I didn't get up, so the next time the bartender comes in, I tells him to fetch me some hot coffee and a tamale. He says he ain't runnin' a restaurant, but mebby he can get what I want next door. And he stands there like he is waitin' for me to do somethin', so I haul out a bill and tell him to get busy. He reaches for the bill, but I tell him to get the coffee and the tamale first, and I put the bill back in me pocket.

He goes out and pretty soon in comes a big, greasy-lookin' Mexican with his head shaved and a neck on him like a walrus, and he sets the coffee and the tamale down, and I hand him the twenty and he goes out. I drink the coffee quick, and I can't taste nothin' except it is hot. I guess that coffee must 'a' started the liquor to workin' or somethin', for I recollec' gettin' up and startin' to open the door.

JUST as I pushed it open I seen the bartender hand somethin' to the big Mexican, across the bar, and it looked to me more like a blackjack than the change for my twenty. So I kind of come to.

Says I to myself, "Bill, there's mutiny aboard this here ship, and you want to keep your eye on the fo'c's'le." And sure enough I seen the big Mexican turn and start to come toward the back room and he had one of his hands behind him. Seein' as there was four or five bums up forward, along the bar, and me rememberin' where I was, I reached back and picked up the chair I had been settin' in and stood to one side of the doorway, holdin' the chair over me head.

Sure enough, in comes the Mexican and

I let him get clear in before I swing me chair down. He never knowed what hit him. Then callin' to mind them military tactics which says "strike first and most," I started for the front, and all I'm sayin' is that they must of tried to stop me, for I was as busy mowin' down them lilies of sin as a Dutch farmer swingin' a scythe.

The exercise must 'a' done me good, and savin' a kind of burnin' in me side, I commenced to feel fine, like I was runnin' before a gale and every stitch set and drawin'. First thing I knowed I was out in the middle of the street lookin' for somebody to hit. But seemed like the folks along that street had got bashful all of a sudden.

So, havin' one leg of me chair left, I swings her round me head and starts down the street. First thing I recollec' I was acrost the railroad tracks and down by the river, and nobody in sight but a burro standin' on one of them sand hills, and lookin' at me like I was somethin' curious and unexpected. When I got me breath, I took a slant at the sun, and somethin' was wrong. Instead of bein' overhead, the sun was right clost to settin', and I thought it was about noon.

Thinks I, "It is like Bob says in that there poem of his: 'Wine that consumes the golden hours, till lost the courses of the sun!'" And with that I set down to take a rest.

Pretty soon somethin' commences to nip at me side, like a dog chewin' playful on your hand, bitin' a little stronger every once in a while. Then me side commences to burn and ache, and the dead feelin' wears off and I know I'm kind of comin' to life again.

It's gettin' cool, and the sun is about gone, so I stand up and get me bearin's, and keepin' to the railroad I start back for El Paso. As soon as I get acrost the line I hire a hack and tell the driver where to go, and I'm in a hurry.

But when I get to the hotel, the clerk tells me Mr. Brandstatter and Mr. Andover are out, and that they left word if I showed up for me to wait till they returned. Seems nobody knowed where they had gone, and the doc wasn't around anywhere, so I goes out and tells me hack driver to take me to the nearest police station.

THE captain, he called in the chief of detectives, and then I told 'em who I was and all about Aloisius, and the guy what had hired me to put Aloisius to sleep so he could be kidnaped easy, and when I got through the chief of detectives nods and says he has had several of his men out lookin' for me most all day, account of Mr. Brandstatter requestin' that they locate me, fearin' I am off me head and might get lost or somethin'.

Then the chief of detectives asks me if I am willin' to go through with my part of the deal, up to the point of hittin' Aloisius on the head, so they can get some evidence that will put the kidnapers where they belong. And I tell him I am game, only if anybody shows up along with me at the Alameda Hotel the gang will beat it, most like, and the bun will be on the floor.

"I'll take care of that," says the chief of detectives. "Who do you suspect hired you to kidnap Mr. Brandstatter?"

"I dunno," says I. "But most like, Mr. Brandstatter does."

"You're an old hand," says the chief of detectives. "How much did they give you to do the job?"

"Half as much as I figured to collect after I do it," says I.

The chief and the captain laughed and said to just tell 'em how I intended to collect the rest of the money, seein' as how the jig was up.

"Mebby *their* jig is up," says I. "But mine ain't. I know where that flash guy is goin' to be waitin'."

"Where?" says the chief and the captain together.

Now mebby them two man chasers was straight and mebby they wasn't. And not knowin' if the other gang had got to 'em first, with the cash, I hauled up in the wind and made like I was goin' to drop anchor.

"I've handed you some good dope," says I. "And you ought to know it's straight.

If you don't want to lay your course accordin' to my chart, you can work out your own. I'm through."

The captain and the chief of detectives looked at each other, and the chief lights a cigar and says, "We can hold you for vagrancy."

"Nope!" says I. "This mornin', Mr. Aloisius Brandstatter, the millionaire pickle king of Chicago, hired me as his chief bodyguard; on regular salary. Me name is registered at the Stockmans' Hotel, along with that of me private physician. Pinch me, and me friend Aloisius will sue you for damages, and I'll sue you for inflammation of character meself.

"And seein' as it's gettin' along toward eight o'clock, I'm goin' over to Juarez and pick a lily for me own true love. But first I got to have somethin' to eat. So I'm on me way."

And with that I get up and start for the door, but the chief of detectives says, "Hold on a minute! Just wait till I phone a party." And with that he takes the telephone and gets a number and asks for somebody and then turns to the captain and says, "That's funny. His wife says he left for Phoenix this afternoon; and I saw him in the Silver Dollar about six, this evening."

Then the chief turns to me and says he guesses my story is straight all right, and that he will go along with me, and keep in the background. So he calls four or five fellas from another room and gives 'em a line on the job, and we all get into a hack and drive over to Juarez. As soon as we get across the line we leave the hack and the chief says for me to go ahead and he and his men will be on the job, all right.

Now, as I was moochin' along, headin' for the Alameda, I got to thinkin' how it come Aloisius would be cantelopin' around Juarez, at night, and how the flash guy knowed about it. Then I remembered that the newspaper said the remains supposed to be Aloisius' was found south of the border, near Juarez. And I was wonderin', seein' as them remains was American remains, if they was still in Juarez or had been fetched across to the United States.

Thinks I, "Aloisius Brandstatter is too big a man to have to go prowlin' around attendin' to stuff he could hire done for him. But he might be settin' a trap for that there nephew, at that." And I was wonderin' what Bob was doin', and Aloisius' wife. And if I'd knowed half of what was framed for us, down there in Juarez, I guess I'd 'a' stopped Aloisius goin' over there, somehow, if I could 'a' located him. But I was too clost to the rocks to haul offshore, so I had to head straight in, hopin' to see the gate in time to make it through without pilin' her up with all hands.

So, comin' in sight of the Alameda, I slows up and mooches along, whistlin' a tune. And all of a sudden I could feel me back gettin' cold, for the old hotel was dark—not a light showin' anywhere. Seems it had been closed for over a month, but I didn't know that. I walked around to the east side of the hotel, and sure enough, there was a hack without any ridin' lights.

So I turns back, whistlin', and wishin' I had a gun handy, for I commenced to think that mebby the trap I was thinkin' was bein' set for Aloisius' nephew was goin' to catch me and Aloisius if I didn't watch out.

I WAS just about opposite the front door of the old hotel when I heard a hack comin', so I walks on a piece and then turns back. The hack pulled up in front of the hotel, and somebody says, "How's this? The place is dark." And sure enough it was Aloisius' voice.

I was just goin' to step over and tell him to stay in the hack, and then jump in meself and tell him to drive like hell for El Paso, when out he steps, and followin' him, out steps Bob. I knowed it was Bob, for he said for Aloisius to wait a minute and let him go and investigate.

Aloisius sees me and says, "Who are you?" kind of sharp, like he was suspicious of somethin' crooked.

"It's Bill," says I. And just then a cou-

ple of fellas raised up from the hotel veranda and started down the steps. I knowed they wasn't detectives or I'd 'a' seen them stow themselves there.

Then it come to me like a streak of lightnin'. I hauls off and hits Aloisius and knocks him down, and then I made a dive for Bob and grabs him and throws him and we roll off the sidewalk and under the hack. And we hadn't no more'n hit the ground when, *Whang! Whang!* goes a couple of shots, and Bob was beatin' me on the face, and I could hear feet poundin' down the sidewalk and then the boomin' of shotguns and a scream, and fellas cussin' and hollerin'. I felt a jolt on me leg and the hack goes rattlin' down the street, and then everything is quiet.

"Hey, over there!" hollers somebody.

"Don't shoot!" says I. And at that three-four fellas come down the sidewalk, and one of 'em sticks a flash light on us and the rest are coverin' us with them sawed-off shotguns.

"We got 'em!" says one of the fellas. And I let Bob up, and he was fightin' mad, but cooled down when one of the plain-clothes guys turns his flash light on Aloisius, who is stretched out and not movin' a finger.

"This is Brandstatter," says the chief, kneelin' down and feelin' of Aloisius to see if he is shot.

And Bob, he is bendin' over Aloisius, when the hackman comes drivin' back and says as how his horse got scared at the shootin'. Then the chief says as how we are on the wrong side of the line, and he's got the ringleader of the gang in the other hack round the corner, seein' as how the chief had put a couple of Mexican police wise to the layout, before he come over to the Alameda. And then he told us to get in and drive over to headquarters and he would follow after us with the prisoner.

We hoisted Aloisius into the hack. Aloisius hadn't come to, yet, seein' as how I'd poked him kind of hard.

Then we beat it for El Paso, with the other hack followin'. We was rattlin' along, when I hears Aloisius sayin' somethin'. So I says, "How do you feel, Mr. Brandstatter?"

"Is that you, Minnie?" says Aloisius, kind of weak. "What time is it?"

"It's Bill," says I. "Everything is all right."

"Why did you leave the hotel?" says Bob, like he was a cross-examinin' lawyer and I was in the dock.

"Why did you leave home and take to ramblin'?" says I. And Bob he didn't say a word.

"What are you fellows talkin about?" says Aloisius, kind of settin' up and gruntin'.

"Bob is sore because I throwed him down and saved him from gettin' plugged by them highbinders. Mebby you're sore, likewise?"

"What happened?" says Aloisius.

"Most everything?" I tells him. "Who sent for you to come over to the Alameda Hotel, anyhow?"

"Why, you did!" says he. "About half past seven a message came to our hotel, saying that you were sick, and wanted to see me. We'd been looking for you all day. You can imagine how Bob and I felt."

"All I got to say," says I, "is, don't you ever drink no liquor when you can't taste it."

"He's still out of his head," says Bob, kind of sarcastic.

And I was goin' to tell him somethin', when we hove in sight of police headquarters, and climbed out of the hack, and the other hack drove up and a detective climbed out with the prisoner handcuffed to him, and we all moseyed in. The chief of detectives tells his story, and I tell mine, and Aloisius tells his, and then they turn us loose, all except the shyster lawyer what hired me to kidnap Aloisius.

UP in the hotel room Aloisius and me and Bob set down and Aloisius passed the cigars, and we took a couple of drinks all around and then commenced to figure it all out. Seems Aloisius had been telegraphin' to his Chicago office and had found out more'n he expected.

While he had been ramblin' around the country, and the papers had been printin' the story about his bein' bumped off somewhere in Mexico, this here nephew had been dippin' into the cash box of the pickle factory kind of heavy, him bein' secretary of the works, which made it easy for him. But he didn't stop at that, because he couldn't without bustin' up against trouble.

So, sayin' he was goin' to El Paso to identify his uncle's remains, he draws a bunch of money for expenses and comes to El Paso. Then he gets a telegram from Chicago sayin' as how his uncle is alive in Nogales and comin' to El Paso. And at that this here nephew makes out a thunderin' big draft on the Chicago house and cashes it in El Paso and he is gettin' ready to head down into Mexico when Aloisius hits town, gettin' in six hours ahead of the regular schedule account of the special.

This here nephew is in so deep he can't pull out, so he commences to dig himself in deeper by hirin' a shyster and payin' him big money to get Aloisius out of the way. The shyster goes prowlin' around, keepin' his eye on our hotel, and when I mooch out, he follows me and seein' as how it is in the papers about me and Bob and Aloisius adventurin' in Mexico, and turnin' up when everybody thinks we are dead, and Aloisius bein' a millionaire, and everything, the shyster frames it for me to kidnap Aloisius, so as to get me over in Juarez that night, and to get Aloisius there likewise by sendin' word to him that I am sick and want to see him.

NOW, the shyster figured that I would go over to Juarez, and would give the deal away to Aloisius when he come over, but that didn't worry him any because he had hired a couple of Mexican gunmen to bump us both off the minute Aloisius steps out of the hack. And that there shyster was pretty smooth at that. He told them guys in the saloon not to let me out of that back room till eight o'clock, if they had to bean me. But they figured that quick money was better than a promise, so they framed it to roll me for what they thought I had on me.

But the shyster didn't take no chances he could help. He gets his clerk to hang around the hotel where Aloisius is stayin', to see if Aloisius and me get together during the day. The clerk is there when I come in, but he knows Aloisius ain't. If the clerk had followed me to the police station, the bun would have been on the floor. But seems he had orders to stay at the hotel, so he done it.

We didn't figure it all out that evenin', but we guess at what we don't know, and don't guess far off at that. It was a long session, and Aloisius was feelin' pretty bad about his nephew turnin' on him like he done, but the old boy cheered up considerable just before we got through talkin'.

And along about two o'clock that mornin' the telephone rings and they ask for Mr. Brandstatter, and it is the police and they tell him they caught his nephew leavin' on the midnight train for Mexico City. And Aloisius tells us, and says he is dam' sorry, and wishes the pup had got away, even if he was packin' somethin' like thirty thousand dollars of pickle money what didn't belong to him.

"I can't send him to jail," says Aloisius. "No, I can't, on account of Minnie, bless her heart! She stood by me, boys!" says Aloisius, gettin' up and brushin' the cigar ashes off his stummick. "She's a trump! I want you boys to come over to the hotel in the morning, and be introduced. Bill, get yourself a new suit. Bob will go with you, and pay for it."

And then Aloisius shakes hands and says good night, and goes out.

"You would think he was leavin' town," says I to Bob.

"No," says Bob, kind of scornful. "Mr. Brandstatter is going over to The Arlington. That is where Mrs. Brandstatter is stopping."

"Well, we don't have to eat breakfast with 'em, anyhow," says I.

And at that Bob grins, and forgets about the maulin' I give him when I throwed him in the ditch, over in Juarez. Bob was a queer kid. He could stand a whole

lot of gaff and never blink a weeper. And then, again, I've knowed him to get so mad he couldn't talk, just account of somebody bumpin' into him, accidental, on the sidewalk.

"Anyhow," says I, "this time Aloisius is through. No more ramblin' for him."

"I think you are right," says Bob, kind of mournful.

CHAPTER XIV.

TO THE ROAD AGAIN.

NOW, I ain't sayin' that Bob wouldn't 'a' stuck to his pal, Bill, till the last bell rung, and that there last bell come mighty near ringin' for both of us, more'n once durin' our ramblin'. But as somebody says, "Accident will happen," and they was one happened to Bob what he ain't got over yet.

You see, after Aloisius got everything straightened out down there in El Paso, includin' introducin' us to his wife, who cheered up wonderful when she seen us all dressed up in good clothes, and our hair cut and shaved and everything, he wouldn't listen to nothin' but what we should run over to Chicago with him and take a look at his pickle factory. Anyhow, that was the way he said it, only I seen by his eye that what he was up to was to try and get me and Bob to quit ramblin' and settle down to a job, which same he was glad to offer us, and which same he tried to talk us into all the way from El Paso to Chicago.

Seems his ideas of ramblin' had changed a whole lot since he had met his wife again, and she actin' like he was the king of most everything, instead of just a common American millionaire. It was amazin' to see the way she listened to everything he said, and never put up no argument, but just looked at him like he was somethin' new and wonderful, and said, "Yes, Aloisius," and "Of course, Aloisius," and fussed over him like a mother with her first baby.

And Aloisius, he was mighty nice to her, only they was a kind of glitter in the back of his eye what wasn't there when we had our first breakfast in that dinin' car. It wasn't that he had her licked, in a way of speakin', but I figure it was that she didn't want to get licked, and knowed if she started somethin' she was takin' a chance.

You see, Aloisius had been through a whole lot of stuff that wasn't in his regular line, and it sure put the steel into his frame. He walked different and he acted different, and Mrs. Aloisius wasn't what you would call blind.

Anyhow, we rolled into Chicago, and it was fierce with the wind off the lake and the rain, and the smoke and the crowd. Even Aloisius kind of looked surprised when he lit off the train, for he had been travelin' in fresh air, with a sky what you could see, for quite a spell.

And Bob and me stood it for a week, bein' entertained at Aloisius' house on Lakeside Drive, and livin' high, like we belonged to the family. And Aloisius kind of hinted that he didn't have no son, and they was a chance for somebody to grow up with the business, and another chance for somebody else to get a snug berth in the shippin' department, but the more we seen of high life and money, the worse off we felt.

And Aloisius, bein' a wise guy, didn't crowd us too hard, but it was easy to see that he hated for us to go back to the road. "Suppose you boys go ahead and make your trip around the world," says he, one evenin' when we was playin' billiards in his private billiard room. "And then," says he, "when you complete the circle, drop off here and tell us all about it."

I said nothin', but Bob speaks up. "We'll do that," says he. And then I seen by Aloisius' face that he knowed we *was* goin', and the bun was on the floor. Next mornin' Bob was up early and fussin' around in the shower bath, and all of a sudden he says, "Bill, what does the sun look like?"

"I get you," says I. "When do you want to start?"

"We can take a train for New York, almost any time to-day," says Bob.

"All right," says I. "Let's take the Twentieth Century and get it over with quick. I'd like to smell salt water, and feel her pitch and roll again."

So we gets dressed and goes down to breakfast, and tells Aloisius and the Mrs. that we was thinkin' of makin' a move. Now I seen Aloisius' eye get to shiftin' around like he was thinkin' hard of a couple of dozen things at once, and then he says, offhand: "I believe it would not be a bad plan for me to take a little run over to New York, and possibly to Paris, and straighten things out in our foreign office."

At that Mrs. Aloisius give him a look, and I expected to see the fireworks commence to buzz, but instead she puts her hands to her face and commences to cry, right in front of us and the butler. Aloisius jumps up and runs around to her end of the table and pats her shoulder and says, "But I hardly think it will be necessary this year." And then Mrs. Aloisius dabs her eyes with her handkerchief and says she hasn't quite recovered from the worry of the past few months, and she smiles and all is snug below and aloft.

You see, Aloisius' wife loved him, I guess, but seems like she didn't know how much until she heard he was dead. And when she seen how the rest of the relations started right in to get hold of the money and the business, I guess that settled it. And then, Aloisius not sendin' her nephew to jail, kind of helped. If it had been Aloisius' own nephew by blood, he'd 'a' been sent. Aloisius said so, and I reckon he meant it.

IT was goin' on two years after we left Chicago that we pulled into San Francisco, havin' stayed down in the islands quite a spell, account of Bob bein' took sick with the fever. Seein' as I carried the money belt, we had enough to pay for Bob's passage third class, and I worked me passage on the same steamer, one of the stokers droppin' dead when she was takin' on passengers at Honolulu.

It was cold and foggy in Frisco, and Bob wasn't feelin' any too good, so he says mebby we could make it down the coast to Los Angeles, and git warmed up and live like humans again. Anyhow, we left Frisco next day and drifted down the coast, walkin' slow and takin' in the scenery. That night we camped along the road, and next mornin' a fella in a car give us a lift as far as San José.

Then we hit the dusty again, and about the third day Bob commences to feel a whole lot better. There's nothin' like walkin' all day in the fresh air to get a man over bein' sick. Why, I knowed of a consumptive what cured himself just by walkin' across the United States and back. Took him about a year to make it, but a year ain't nothin' when you're walkin' away from the cemetery and not toward it.

Anyhow, when we hit the Tejon, and crossed it and got to where the sun was shinin' like it couldn't ever quit, and meadow larks chirpin' in the grass, and gophers scamperin' crisscross in the fields, Bob, who was peggin' along sayin' nothin', stops and sticks up his arms and stretches and says, "Bill, was it yesterday we left this land?"

Not gettin' his meanin', seein' as it was nigh onto two years, I tells him he ought to know better than that. And he says he don't want to know anything better, and at that I say nothin'.

But that ain't sayin' it weren't hot comin' down through Soledad Cañon, a couple of days later. I never did like them cañons, nohow, but it was the best way to go, so we done it.

We was hikin' along, sweatin', and stoppin' once in a while in the shade of a live oak, and seein' as how my canteen was empty, I dumps me bundle alongside of a gate leadin' to a kind of neat little ranch, with the house way back near the hill, and fruit trees all around. I was openin' the gate when a big collie dog come boilin' out and boundin' down the driveway. Seems he didn't figure to have anybody come up that driveway unless he knowed 'em.

"Let me take the canteen," says Bob. I tells him he better wait till we come to

a place what ain't afraid of strangers bustin' in. But Bob takes the canteen and opens the gate. The big collie barks and makes a run at him. Bob stands still, and the collie stops, and his neck is bristlin'.

BOB puts out his hand, slow and easy. The collie takes a step and stands with one paw drawed up, and smells of Bob's hand. Then all of a sudden the dog makes a jump for Bob, and I grab up a piece of rock and start through the gate.

But, mate, that dog is standin' with his paws on Bob's shoulder, lickin' his face. Bob laughs, and then turns to me and looks kind of ashamed, or somethin'. Anyhow he is lookin' queer and his face gits pale.

"What's the matter?" I asks him. But he don't say nothin', but just stands there pattin' the dog's head and lookin' out across the driveway like he could see a thousand miles. "You kind of like that dog, don't you?" says I, thinkin' to wake Bob up.

Bob pats the dog's head and turns around and comes back through the gate, and the dog tries to follow him. But Bob shuts the gate. Then the collie sticks his nose through the slats and whines and wags his tail. "I guess you put a spell on that hound," says I. Bob shakes his head.

"No. But it's a very strange coincidence," he says, like he is wakin' up from a dream.

"You mean because the dog acted like he knowed you?" says I, gettin' kind of curious.

"Because I know him," says Bob.

At that I commences to laugh, but I quit when I see the look on Bob's face. "Come on," he says, and he picks up his bed roll, and sticks his arm through the cord.

We was just about down to the end of the ranch fence, along the road, when somethin' comes tearin' across the yard, and I hear somebody callin', and we stop. "Now the boss is around, mebby we can get a drink of water," says I.

Somebody was comin' down through the fruit trees, walkin' fast, and I see the dog run back and then come tearin' up to the corner of the fence, and then out from the trees comes a girl, and the sun is shinin' on her hair, and she stops sudden, and the dog is standin' with his paws on the fence, whinin', and Bob lookin' like a wooden Indian.

Then the girl says, "Mr. Andover!" And that is all she says.

Bob he drops his roll and climbs over the fence, deliberate like. And he walks over to the girl and says, "Penelope!" And that is all he says, but, mate, there was more in that one word, the way he said it, than if he'd talked for a week.

I seen 'em shake hands, like a couple of kids that was kind of bashful, and then Bob calls me, and says: "You remember Bill Morningstar, Miss Armitage."

"Of course I do," she says, and gives me her hand, and we shake hands and get to talkin' about where we been, and Aloisius and everything, only Bob don't say much. It is that little Penelope lady and me what is doin' the visitin'.

And we go up to the house and she introduces me to her dad, and he is a regular guy, with a keen look, and white hair and a mustache and goatee like one of them Southern colonels. So we set down on the veranda and Miss Armitage she fetches out some lemonade with ice in it, and then we smoke and visit, with the dog layin' down at her feet, and then gettin' up every once in a while to come over and take a sniff of Bob. Seems that dog remembered Bob for two years, and Bob had only seen him three-four times in Yuma.

Mr. Armitage had sold out his newspaper and had retired and come to California to live, after boostin' the climate of Arizona most of his life. But then, anybody has a right to change his mind.

Mate, that evenin' was one I ain't forgettin'. Bob wouldn't talk much, and that little Penelope lady kind of sicked me on to tell her dad all about our ramblin' and Aloisius and everything, and seein' as how they had treated us fine, and made us

right to home, I done it. Course they was some things about the islands unnecessary to delaborate, as Bob would say.

Along about midnight, when the stars was shinin' down through the trees and the air like a piece of velvet what has been hangin' in the sun, Bob and me takes our blankets and bushes down over by a big oak tree a piece from the house. "Good night, old-timer," says Bob.

"Good night," says I. "I guess that there Penelope poem's finished, all right."

"Down where the clouds lie on the sea, he found that sweet Penelope, with buds of roses in her hair, and kisses on her mouth," says Bob.

"Only," says I, "you wrote that poem different at the end."

"How did I know what was going to happen?" says Bob.

"Which is what?" I asked him.

"Oh, go to sleep!" says he laughin', and then I know that me pal with the gray eyes and the smile kind of twitchin' at the corners of his mouth, occasional, is goin' to quit the road, and settle down respectable, like most everybody. Not that there was any love-makin' or soft stuff, but I could see that somethin' like a silent understandin' was floatin' around in the air of Soledad Cañon, just like light, which you can't see but what is.

And that was how me pal, Bob, who always played in luck, come home. It wasn't his folks' home, but he went there later, after he got a job writin' stuff for them magazines, and didn't have to ask nobody for help. I guess a lot of folks in the United States has read the stories and the poems he writes, but nobody knows what he went through gettin' them stories and such, like I know.

Course, I just mooched along, after a spell, thinkin' as how some folks want you to stay and settle down when you want to be ramblin'.

You see, real sungazers is scarce. Aloisius tried it on for a while, and Bob pretty near made the grade, but it seems like that there Penelope was waitin' for him, all the time we was battin' round the world, and I dunno whether it was her waitin', or him expectin' to quit, some day, or mebby account of the dog knowin' him, that settled it.

Anyhow, that's how it come out. Bob worked at his writin' for a year before he got married. Last time I come down through the Soledad, I stopped by. They said they had a surprise for me, and that they had called it William. I knowed that old man Armitage's name was William, but I guess *I* know the Bill they called the baby after.

BILL MORNINGSTAR, shrugging his huge shoulders, rose and stretched. The night man started, rubbed his eyes. He had been asleep; and Bill had not known it, as Bill, becoming reminiscent, had sat with his elbows on his knees and his gaze on the floor of the signal tower. A distant whistle sounded. The signal-tower operator rose and stepped over to the levers. Bill picked up his blanket roll, nodded casually and strode out.

A big star glowed on the eastern horizon. As the freight slowed down and clinked over the crossing, Bill swung aboard handily, and whether because of orders, or on his own initiative, the towerman closed the block. The freight stopped.

Immediately Bill slipped down and stepped along the train until he came to an empty box car. In went his roll and he followed it. He was headed toward Chicago, a significant mile post in his itinerant career, because he carried greetings from Robert Andover, of Soledad, California, to an erstwhile ambitious, but now retired sungazer, Aloisius Brandstatter of Lakeside Drive.

"And to think that guy was asleep!" said Bill. "But, anyhow, I got it out of my system. And it was just like livin through it all again."

The block lifted, the train rumbled, clanked, and moved away as the cold edge of dawn touched the far eastern hills.

"Radio Riches," a complete novel by J. H. Greene, in the next issue.

As Tested by Timmett Breed

By Holman Day

Author of "The Pied Pipess," "Resources in the Raw," Etc.

A North Woods chef discovers that good grub is more appreciated than good intentions.

MR. TIMMETT BREED was frying doughnuts and debating points of theology—tending to both jobs earnestly.

Mr. Breed was a good cook.

Athaniel Hobbs, itinerant preacher, woods-camps' evangelist for what he could get by passing the hat, ate a hot doughnut with appreciative zest but testily disputed Mr. Breed's ability as a theologian. Furthermore, Mr. Breed had the habit of cussing luridly in the heat of debate.

Secretly, Mr. Hobbs wanted to swear back at Mr. Breed, in order to overcome the disadvantage of sticking mildly to texts while the vociferous disputant beat upon the table with his big fork and hammered his points with profanity.

On the debate entered Jasper Wagg, owner of the Bald Knob timber camps, summoned by the hullabaloo from his work in the wangan, or office camp; he had been trying to add up columns of figures. "What in 'ell's this row about?"

"It ain't no row—we're talking religion," stated Mr. Breed. He gave his brother-in-law—Mr. Wagg was husband of Breed's sister in addition to being an employer—a penetrating stare which was both superior and significant. The look hinted at something; it suggested that Mr. Breed had won the upper hand in a certain matter of recent date and did not intend to have Mr. Wagg forget it.

On Mr. Wagg's part, to judge by the scowl he returned, it was evident that he had arrived at about the limit of endurance.

"The trouble is with you, A. Hobbs Ee-squire," declared Mr. Breed, continuing the discussion but keeping his gaze fixed on Wagg, "you only preach religion while I live it. I'm meek and lowly, forgive all slams, do good to them that hit me

a wallop. If I should come out with all the good I've done for folks, never asking for no reward, you'd use me as a text for a damn good sermon and make a hit for once in your life."

There was so much hideous menace in Wagg's expression that the cook discreetly offered a sop—he ringed a hot doughnut on his fork and extended the comestible to Wagg. The timber lord took it and bit into it savagely, as if he wanted to indulge his hankering to set his teeth into something, even a doughnut.

Then he turned on the lay preacher and made queer sounds, his mouth wadded with food. His enunciation was blurred but his gestures were emphatic and plain. Mr. Hobbs understood that he was to get out and keep going and waste no time about it.

He was quite accustomed to such rebuffs; timber barons were not kindly disposed to any manifestation of week-day religion which took men's minds off their regular jobs. On his way out of the cook camp he picked up a handful of doughnuts from the big pan on the table and walked away munching.

Mr. Wagg—whose sobriquet in all the Bald Knob region was "Stingy Jasper"—bawled recrimination of this display of grafting cheek, blowing crumbs from his stuffed mouth.

Mr. Hobbs, from a safe distance, sent back hot retort, also copiously spouting crumbs.

"That's a nice way to use my doughnuts, as if you two was shooting bird shot at each other!" jeered Mr. Breed acridly. "And it ain't no show of proper Christian spirit, either, that talk! It's gitting so there ain't no religion lived these days—it's only talked about on Sundays."

Wagg turned on his servitor. "Talk, hey? Don't try to hout somebody else for talking! I'll bet you twenty dollars against one of them doughnuts as how I got in here just in time to stop your blabbing your innerds out to that bird. And you know what it is you're aching to gabble! But stopping you in his case to-day only means that I've got to be on the job again to-morrow when you get to praising yourself up to somebody else."

"I'm entitled to be praised!" stated Mr. Breed with dogged conviction. "Where's your mem'ry? That's what I ask you! Where's your mem'ry?"

"I've still got it, but I'm a good mind to take laughing gas and have it yanked out," affirmed Wagg with ireful disgust. "Breed, I'm on to you! Just as sure as hell is shy on splash dams, this new sanctified brag spirit of yours is going to poke you up to blow on me. I see it coming!"

MR. BREED persisted doggedly. "You started it. You praised me. I wasn't thinking nothing special about how good and grand minded I was till you put it into my head. Where's your mem'ry?"

He waved his doughnut fork under Wagg's nose. "'Timmy,' says you, after I had done this job of saving you, 'Timmy, you're high minded and a hero.' You says, 'Timmy, I never knowed a man so forgiving and generous.' Your own words! And I'll be cussed if you didn't speak the truth for once.

"I've thought it over and I'm admitting that what you said about this is eggsactly the story. I tell you, you started it!"

"Yes, like a damn fool will start a fire in a peat bog. And when he thinks he's got it stamped out and drownded out, it blazes up again over yender. Cuss you, you don't give me a minute's peace o' mind. I can't even add figgers!"

Mr. Breed was incautiously loud when he retorted: "Howsomever, while you're ciphering you don't have to subtract twenty-five thousand dollars off'm your bank roll. That's what I saved for you from a gang o' blackmailers, didn't I?"

AT that moment Timber-lord Wagg glanced through a window and saw Dan Creamer approaching the door of the cook camp. Creamer certainly had heard Cook Breed's loud piping of self-glorification—there were no two ways about it.

"You've gone to work and blowed up, you cussed kag o' gunpowder," grated Wagg. "And in the hearing of another

old gabble chops! I'm coming back here and kill you when there ain't no witnesses."

He went stamping out.

Boss Creamer, at the door, stepped deferentially to one side. An aggravatingly demure expression masked his thoughts. Wagg found the smirk a taunt but he did not dare to trust himself in speech. He strode across the little clearing and banged the door of the office camp behind him.

Boss Creamer entered the cook camp and munched a doughnut till the slam of the wangan door signaled a clear field for a remark. "So that was the size of the check he handed over to the dear, little, wonderful lady, eh, to help her make more moving pitchers and be a star?"

"I ain't saying nothing about things that's strickly fam'ly matters," declared Cook Breed, poking up his fire.

"You don't have to," returned the boss. "It was already knowed well enough in camp that he was hooked ready to be landed by them motion-pitcher folks that tipped our real business upside down while they was here. It was only the size of the check we didn't know about.

"You done a good job, 'Old Beans,' gitting it back by sharp work. And that meant them actors out from underfoot here. You sure set yourself up a notch. Ain't you afraid you're only wasting your time, potwalloping as just a woods cook?"

"I know I am," stated Mr. Breed, loftily overlooking any hint of irony. "I've been giving the thing a whole lot of thought. I've come to a reelizing sense that I've got a call to go out and do good to my feller men in general—where it'll be appreciated. I want to help somebody who'll give me credit.

"Of course, nobody expects anything special in the way of thanks from relatives, but Jasp Wagg has been fairly curdling my blood for the last two weeks, by the way he's looking at me. My nerves won't stand it no longer. Not three minutes ago he threated me—said he'd come back here and kill me.

"I'm sp'iled as a good cook while my mind is in this state. Of course, he won't kill me. But he's killing off my high-minded thoughts. He ain't giving me no credit!"

"He's married to your sister—and I'll hope you will excuse me! But he didn't git that nickname o' his for nothing."

"The world needs a man like me more than this camp needs me as a cook," declared Mr. Breed oracularly. "Besides, I'm blasted tired of being a cook. Of course, everybody praises my vittles. And why not? But it ain't gitting me nothing in the way of reel reppytation."

THIS confession came out honestly. In his heart Mr. Breed was admitting to himself that the nomadic spirit was flaming in him—though he did not know exactly what name to give the queer uneasiness.

The motion-picture folks who had been domiciled at Bald Knob camps for a time had talked so much about the attractions of the world outside the woods!

But he needed some sort of an excuse for quitting his job and he had decided to work his apostle sentiments for all they were worth.

"You might drop a hint to Jasp," he suggested to the boss. "Him and me would most like git into a fight, feeling the way we do to'ards each other right now, if I bang into the subject with him before it's sort o' smoothed."

"Hint o' *what?*"

"That he'd better be looking for a new cook."

"Say, are you going daffy?"

"No! I'm simply going out to see the world while I can still walk without a cane."

He gave a sheet of dough a final spacking with his palm and dug in deftly with his doughnut die.

"Before Jasp come banging in here to spoil the session, me and Preacher Hobbs was having a elevating discussion on higher matters, bringing up the subject of Sam, who went on travels, too. Now that there was a——"

"Sam who?"

"Read your Bible more, boss! Read your Bible! Sam, I'm talking of, the feller that titrivated up the poor cuss that got hornswoggled by the robbers on the tote road to Jericho."

"That was the good Samaritan," objected the boss. "The name meant where he come from, not——"

"You can never feel sociable with a feller unless you call him by his first name. That's the trouble with most folks who read the Bible! They hold everybody in Holy Writ off at the end of a stick! They don't git acquainted!

"That's why I'm strong in religion talks —I git acquainted with the critters in the Bible what I'm talking about. Now this good feller Sam, as I was saying, didn't do such a devil of a lot, after all! I would have done more, being generous and high minded, as even Stingy Jasper told me at one time when he was jarred enough to forgit that I was his brother-in-law. It only cost Sam a little of his time and two cents, so it's said in Luke—but it sounds twisted—only two cents to pay for putting the robbed cuss up at a tavern.

"But lookit, Boss Creamer! Sam gits himself into the Bible forever and ever. It's plain enough as how this world needs another Sam to go out and do good to all men, as he comes acrost 'em in trouble. I've been testing out my thoughts on the thing and after doing what I've done for such a thankless cuss as Jasp Wagg, and feeling glad and proud for doing it, I've got my call to go out and tend to the Sam job—that's surer 'n Tophet!"

Boss Creamer took another doughnut and started for the door. He offered no comment. He was halted by a call from Mr Breed.

"Ain't you got nothing helpful to say about my plan? No advice?"

"Not specially about the plan! But I'm advising you to git a heat-proof hat to wear in the kitchen. Standing over a hot stove so much seems to be baking your brains."

"Gor-slam it!" exploded Mr. Breed. "Is that kind of slurring all I git about one of the grandest ideas ever thought up? Don't you think the world is going to holler for me when it sees me cutting all around that little job that Sam done?"

"You can't git away with the kind of stuff done in the Bible times—not in these days," declared the boss. "There ain't nobody doing nothing for nothing—not even doing good. There's a hitch or a hook somewhere.

"'T any rate, you won't find nobody who'll think anyways different from that. Then look out for yourself. Maybe you'll be lynched!"

That was a challenge. It was a hot goad in the flanks of pride. Till then Mr. Breed had not completely realized how much of an obsession his long-meditated plan was.

His world o' the woods had been a little one. Now Boss Creamer, skeptically speaking for that little world, voiced a sort of clarion call from all doubters everywhere. Cook Timmett Breed's shallow pot of emotions felt the heat, bubbled up and boiled over.

He ran out of the cook camp on the trail of the boss.

He stood in the open and beat his floury hands together and profanely railed at the doubter who dared to discourage the first real doer-good since Sam turned his trick on a job near Jericho. It was all very incoherent, what he stammered in his fury.

"What the blue hell's he raving about?" demanded Wagg, again leaving a row of figures and popping out of the door of the wangan.

BOSS CREAMER avoided any discussion of Mr. Breed's plans; as a matter of fact the boss had no very clear idea about the altruism professed by Breed. Therefore, Creamer adopted the easiest way. He winked and tapped his forehead.

"That's it!" eagerly agreed Stingy Jasper. "I've seen it coming on for some time. Wild talk about things that never happened, you know!"

He bored the boss with a sharp stare meant to be soul-searching, but Creamer allowed the lance look to shiver against another assumption of bland ignorance of what Wagg was driving at.

"That's it, sir!" he agreed, smoothing an employer. "Crazy men never know what they're talking about."

Therefore, in order to clinch that status of Mr. Breed in camp and to cast discredit on all past, present and future mouthings —feeling much easier in his mind all of a sudden—Wagg announced to Mr. Breed and the world in general that the cook was crazy.

Mr. Breed promptly countered by calling Wagg a liar—adding a liberal trimming of anathema.

Then the accumulated venom of the two erupted.

For a fortnight, while their fists had been itching for actual combat, they had been virulently jabbing at each other with eye thrusts.

They rushed into conflict now and Boss Creamer stepped nimbly out from between and looked on with a hearty man's relish for a good fight. "And it's all in the fambly, and so much the better," he soliloquized.

In the end Cook Breed was the victor.

After he had been knocked down and kicked about the clearing to a considerable extent he effected a masterly retreat to his domain of pans and kettles and made ammunition of his utensils. During the mêlée he managed to wedge an iron pot down over Wagg's head and then did about what he wanted to do to his antagonist.

Creamer, by the way, later relating the affair to the men that evening, suggested that Stingy Jasper gave up licked in order to save the rest of his dishes; Cook Breed was using them for bombardment purposes.

The boss intervened when the pot-hoodwinked timber lord was thrashing aimlessly around the clearing, bumping his iron headgear against trees. Creamer led the employer into the wangan and spent some time in prying off the pot in a way to avoid taking Wagg's ears along with it.

Mr. Breed, feeling that his usefulness in that pent-up Utica was ended, forbore from patching up his bleeding scars, feeling the stress of other business.

IN his lean-to he packed his few belongings into an extension canvas valise, locally known as "a Kennebecker." He cursed soulfully all the time. He snapped at the cookee when his helper asked some questions.

From a shelf at the foot of his bunk Breed took down his faithful clock—its alarm hand rusted permanently at four, his perennial hour for routing out o' mornings. The packing of the clock in the Kennebecker was certain evidence that the cook of Bald Knob camps was leaving definitely and decisively and was not coming back. In fact, grunting a good-by, he said as much to the cookee.

With his valise sagging in one hand, a six-foot staff in the other, Mr. Breed defiantly strode past the open door of the wangan where Creamer was still struggling with the pot.

The boss left his job and rushed out. He was fairly aghast, beholding this defection of the most important man in the crew.

"Look a' here, Beans, you can't leave this way."

"Stand there and watch me out of sight, and see if I can't." Mr. Breed did not even hesitate in his stride.

"But you're leaving fifty men in the lurch and they've got to eat!"

"Cook up what you've got in that pot! It'll p'isen you, but that's your own lookout."

"Where the hell you going?" yawled the boss, obliged to shout because Mr. Breed was rapidly increasing his distance.

"Out to do good to the whole world," called back the new apostle of the Samaritan creed.

The desperate boss grabbed a cant dog leaning against the log wall and exhibited symptoms of a determination to chase the apostle and bring him back to his job in camp.

But rather frightful sounds from under the pot called Creamer to resume his task of liberation.

"What did he say he was going to do?" rasped Wagg, when he was freed.

"Go out and do good to the whole

world," growled the boss. He surveyed the raw surfaces on Wagg's face. "I must say he's made a dam' funny beginning, considering what he's done to you, Mr. Wagg!"

"I know what he's going to do, the blastnation liar," stormed the timber lord. "He's going to swing around down country and tell my wife a pack o' lies about me.

"Git my hosses into the jumper, Creamer! Do me good, will he? I'll be waiting on the front doorstep with a double-barreled shotgun. Which way did he go?"

"By the ridge trail, sir."

Wagg looked his disappointment. He could not chase his brother-in-law along a trail with the horses. "Cussed if I wouldn't wing him up here in the woods, if he was on the tote ro'd. But I'll git him all right down country and the law will back me up."

A few minutes later Wagg went bouncing away down the tote road on his jumper, his gun swinging from a strap across his shoulder.

"I hope I shan't ever git crazy over religion," said the boss to the cookee, setting that young fellow to do the best he could in the culinary line. "There's Breed, after I warned him, starting out to do the Bible stuff. And his first go is to git a man on the dead skitter after him with a shotgun! .The Bible is good stuff to read, son, but it don't seem to work well when you try to act it out in these days."

"Guess there wouldn't be much of a Bible writ up if the old sirs had went round shooting them as had done 'em a big favor," agreed the cookee. "Overlooking the fight jest now, I don't know of any bigger favor that was ever done a man than what Mr. Breed done in gitting back that check after Mr. Wagg was fool enough to fall for them actor folks.

"That Samaritan story has sounded good to me, the way Mr. Breed has read it out loud and has preached on it to me. But——" He wagged his head despondently.

"That's what I say, son! Good to read and to preach about! But it don't git nobody nowhere in these days when a man tries to act it out."

AND later that day even Preacher Hobbs, who should have had more faith in the exhortations and examples of Holy Writ, strove to break down Mr. Breed's resolve with pessimism which matched that of Boss Creamer.

Mr. Breed, going strong and covering ground fleetly, not knowing what sort of pursuit might be contrived to bring such a necessary functionary back to his job, overtook Evangelist Hobbs on the snaky ridge trail.

The new apostle of Do Good passed the plodding preacher, after bumping him out of the narrow trail.

Replying to anxious queries, Mr. Breed tersely bulletined over his shoulder recent developments and issued a statement of his high-minded intentions, not slackening his stride.

In order to deliver his pessimistic protests Mr. Hobbs was compelled to break into a trot to keep within earshot.

When the apostle resorted to dreadful profanity to discourage the pursuer, Mr. Hobbs bleated something about such a man as Breed being unfit to go forth and preach the gospel.

"Dod-jigger ye, how many more times have I got to tell ye I ain't going to preach religion? I'm going to live it. I lived it in the case of doing good to Jasp Wagg."

In order to set himself right definitely with this perambulatory news bureau, the apostle halted and turned on Hobbs who came up puffing.

"I want you to so report in every camp you go into. The way Jasp Wagg has acted toward me, after being done good to like he has been, it don't discourage me a single mite. On that one point alone is where I'm cutting circles all round Sam they speak so highly of in the Bible. I'm going to start and travel all over the world, and here you be, making me lose vallyble time."

Preacher Hobbs was pricked in a tender point of his curiosity. He was amazed by the news of this proposed apostolic world trip. He had been having a tough time to make both ends meet, confining himself to the rounds of the timber camps, footing it and getting the most of his food free. And Mr. Breed was so loftily cocksure in his declaration!

Being pricked, Mr. Hobbs allowed himself sarcasm. "How do you cal'late you'll get along—travel on an Elijah chariot and have three meals of manna passed out to you every day?"

Mr. Breed, incensed by such a doubter, threw down his staff and got busy with his hands while he kept his tongue occupied with telling Hobbs how many kinds of an old fool the latter was—exhausting the resources of his profanity.

Out of his Kennebecker he produced a coil of gold-plated wire and a pair of pincers. He bent the wire with considerable deftness into a monogram of the word "Hobbs."

"When I practice more I'll do better work," said Breed. "But that's good enough for a critter like you! Pin it onto your coat and later you can brag about how it was given to you by one that the whole world is talking about.

"That's the way I'm going to earn my living and git enough money on the side to do good to all, A. Hobbs, Ee-squire! Them things will go like hot cakes for a dollar—person's name and the motto of Do Good.

"Now I'm going, and going fast and going a long ways—and I don't want no more tagging along and trigging me with fool questions. I'll bang you over the bean with this stick o' mine if you make me any more bother."

He straddled away and disappeared around a turn of the trail.

Preacher Hobbs watched him out of sight and then inspected the souvenir in his palm. He found one of Cook Breed's doughnuts in his pocket.

He went along munching the food. His contented expression gave testimony to the excellence of the doughnut. But the doleful wagging of his head was eloquent evidence as to his opinion of Mr. Breed's prospects as a practical theologian.

II.

On his own part, Jasper Wagg overtook a man and had converse with him.

The meeting took place on the tote road.

Wagg passed the pedestrian and swung his jumper across the way, blocking the road. He scowled at the halted man. "I thought you was dead, Cless McCarty!"

"Reckon you've been hoping so," retorted the other, making up a face at the timber baron. McCarty continued, pointing at the shotgun slung across Wagg's shoulder, "If it'll ease your feelings to have your hopes come true you might shoot me and give yourself a real good time."

"I'm tempted to, you condemned howlafeereenus of a trouble stirrer. Where've you been since you got kicked out of every timber camp between Oquossoc and the Carratunk?"

"None of your damn business," replied Mr. McCarty smartly. "And let me ask you a question, Stingy Jasper! Are you still begretching the air that Cook Breed uses in his doughnut holes?"

In a sudden flurry of ire Wagg raised his whip.

"Go ahead and whack," advised the big woodsman with a grimace made of grin and grouch. "Now that we're off'm your land I'd like a good excuse to pull you down from that jumper and maul that tough old hide of yours till it's tender! I'll admit I raise hell when I'm drunk—and I done it in your camp, like I've done it to others. But these new times in the timber camps is too cussed tame."

He was on a subject close and dear to him and, though Wagg raved, the old-timer persisted in freeing his mind.

"The real life is being all killed out. No more vim and wham in it! Them Canucks and foreigners ain't got innerds enough only to take care of the grub they call on for reg'lar, three times a day. Somebody's got to keep up the spirit of

the old days. I reckon I'm about the last one of the old-style Busters!"

"Thank gord for that!" retorted Wagg soulfully. "But if you ever come around to my camps again, full of licker and that other spirit you're bragging of, I'll heave you off'm the top of Bald Knob."

He whirled his horses and whipped them on their way.

"Much obliged for the chance to pass the time o' day with you and swap best wishes," called "Buster" McCarty. "The only thing that'll ever fetch me to your camp is the grub that Cook Breed sets out. I'll resk being heaved off'm Bald Knob for another whack at his vittles."

The first mention of Cook Breed had merely made a dent in Stingy Jasper's shell.

This second reference jabbed an idea into him. Again he pulled his horses to a halt.

"I s'pose you're dreened down to hard pan as usual, McCarty. You never could keep a dollar unless it was lost somewheres in your clothes!"

"Correct you are, old rooster!"

Wagg curbed his rancor and wrestled with his idea.

His dominating emotion was fear of what Breed would do, now that the latter was abroad with his new notions. Figuring the matter from his own standpoint of malevolence, Wagg felt sure that the brother-in-law would include in his scheme of doing good to all a visit to Mrs. Wagg in order to relate to that inflammable lady the story of how her husband had succumbed to the flatteries of a motion-picture actress.

Certainly the self-praising Breed would not refrain from that opportunity to vaunt himself! After that fight in the camp one could expect almost anything from Breed, modern Samaritan though he claimed to be!

"You come here, McCarty! I've had one damnation of a row with Breed! Fam'ly matters, you know, and all that! I'm afeard he's heading toward my wife to tell her a pack o' lies about me. I'm cal'lating to git home ahead of him, and I'll be on the front doorstep with this shotgun. But even at that, the cussed weasel may slip in by the back door.

"I want Breed held up before he can git nigh the house. He has gone by the ridge trail." He squinted up at the sun. "He'll most like hit Smyrna Mills for the night. You go there and snarl him up somehow and I'll pay you for the job."

"How'll I snarl him up?"

"I don't care! Maybe the best plan is to knock enough stuffing out of him so he'll have to stay at the Mills till I can git around and settle his hash finally—somehow! I've got to think up a way. But you go and bat his old brains till he don't know north from south or which way my house lays."

Mr. McCarty waited a reasonable time, peering at Wagg's right hand, giving it time to go hunting for the timber lord's wallet. But the hand did not unclinch from the whip handle.

"I won't lay a finger on Tim Breed for you nor nobody else! I've et too much of his good cooking. And furdermore, I don't see no money in sight, anyway!"

"I'll pay you ten dollars for every day you hold him at Smyrna Mills."

Mr. McCarty brightened. "That sounds reasonable. I'll crate him and keep him peaceful and contented by singing him come-all-ye's. All set! I'm good for five days, easy. Hand me fifty dollars."

"I won't give you a blasted cent," raged Wagg. "It ain't safe. You'll git drunker'n a bear and make it a blamed sight worse 'n it is now."

"But nobody sells licker no more!" wheedled McCarty. "Don't you know what the laws of your own country are?"

"I tell you, I won't advance you a cent."

"All ri-hi-hi-ight!" trolled McCarty in singsong. He flapped his hand and started away. "Crate your own critters!"

In the old days Jasper Wagg never would have pulled his wallet. But his need was pretty desperate, he felt. He was wholesomely afraid of his wife's temper. He was inclined to take a chance on McCarty. The latter noted the indecision.

"I'm telling you right, Mr. Wagg, sir! If my tongue was hanging out and was stretched down so low I had to sidestep so as not to tread on it, I wouldn't know where to get the stuff to pucker it back to where it belongs. And I've been so long away from licker I guess I'm weaned, anyway!"

EVENTUALLY, they compromised on an advance of thirty dollars.

Wagg had been won by a pledge which did not jibe well with McCarty's first emphatic refusal to use any violence. "I'll tell you, Mr. Wagg! I ain't married, myself, but I carry a natural grudge against any man who tries to bust up a happy fambly. I'll stick up for Tim Breed as a cook but I'll raise Tophet with him as a fambly buster. You ain't paying me simply to hold him for future reference. Dammit, I'll turn him back to you all tamed down and broke to harness like he ought to be!"

Wagg hurried along on his way in order to get on guard at his home and build up ahead a defense against a brother-in-law who, to satisfy a grudge after a fight, intended to come to a wife and tell her lies; Wagg was working out his story for defense as he rode along; and he was convinced that he was right in his suspicions regarding Breed's intentions.

Mr. McCarty, plunging into the forest to cross into the trail leading to Smyrna Mills, let out a few cautious whoops of hilarity and hoped he had not forgotten any of the come-all-ye's of conviviality. And he also devoutly hoped that a certain "Gus of the Gulch," as the initiated called him, still had the fire going under the molasses mash in the old tin wash boiler.

The boiler, as the thirsty McCarty knew, was discreetly hidden in a gorge not far from the hamlet toward which the last of the Busters was heading.

III.

BY ten o'clock that night Mr. Breed had succeeded in working up a complete feeling of general skepticism in the minds of the guests who were gathered in the foreroom of Gil Runnion's tavern at Smyrna Mills.

He had read aloud out of his pocket Testament the story of a certain Samaritan and had preached on the text, walking around the room and sticking the open book under the noses of the listeners and banging his fist on the crumpled page and cursing out the state of unbelief in these modern days. Men mumbled together and canvassed the situation and agreed that Mr. Breed was making a nuisance of himself, besides keeping them guessing.

Old Zeck Tute, a head guide for selfish and overbearing city folks, and therefore a settled cynic, when it came to estimating human qualities, finally asked in behalf of the puzzled gathering: "Wa-a-all, Tim, what's the big scheme behind all this toot-al-loo of yourn?"

"Meaning which and what by that remark?" questioned Mr. Breed balefully. "You don't stand there and tell me, do you, as how I ain't made myself all clear?"

"When you claim you're going out and do good to all the world, for nothing, there's a ketch in it, like there is in these city fellers selling off stock to make everybody rich what buys of 'em. I've heard 'em gabble round the camp fire, when they're lickered up. Now where's the ketch in your scheme?"

The infuriated apostle of new Samaritanism let out a yell, unable to relieve his surcharged emotions by mere words.

Like an echo, from somewhere in the distance, sounded another yell.

Mr. Breed, astonished and in doubt, tested what seemed to be an echo; he yelled again.

He was answered promptly by a horrific howl from the outside.

"Better git up on a chair and flap your wings, Timmy," suggested old Zeck. "That other rooster, jest now, crowed louder than you did."

Mr. Breed scratched his head, plainly wondering what sort of a rival he had evoked.

The silence of suspense settled over all in the big room. The men stared at the door, waiting for what was coming. The

yells increased in volume, showing that the source of the clamor was headed toward the tavern and was making rapid progress.

Suddenly the door flew open. A kick from the outside did the job. Both latch and catch clattered on the floor.

The tempestuous arrival was Cless McCarty; he was obliged to use his foot in making his entrance; both his hands were occupied, he carried a big jug in each fist.

"Must be one o' my kind here!" he shouted. "One o' the good old sort. Hi, Buster! Whoop again! Whichever one you are! Let 'er out for old-times' sake! They're gitting too blasted tame these days."

No one accommodated him with the desired whoop.

"Never mind!" he roared. "I guess I'm the last of 'em! Hope I am. I know how to tend to the job as it ought to be done."

He marched around the room, swinging the jugs and whooping.

When Landlord Runnion ventured to protest, McCarty banged down one of the jugs on the office counter, under Runnion's nose. The jug was smashed and the odorous contents slopped over counter and floor.

"Never mind!" howled McCarty. "Gus is still a-rocking the old tin cradle in the gulch! Git down on your hands and knees and lap it up, you tame pups! There ain't no real men no more up here in the woods. Only pups! Lap, pups, lap!"

There was a puddle of the liquor on the grimy register opened for names of guests. With rude hilarity McCarty set hand upon the landlord's head and rammed the latter's mouth and nose down into the puddle.

"Sample it, old toodle roodle!"

There was an inkwell on the counter; the spilling liquor had filled it to the brim.

The roisterer tipped back Runnion's head, hand clutched in the landlord's hair, and tried to make him drink the contents of the inkwell. But Runnion's face was merely smeared with the mingled ink and liquor.

"Now come and dance with me, you cussed old Injun," invited the tormentor. "Whoop it out! You've got your war paint on."

BUT when Runnion ducked behind the counter McCarty whirled away, another idea occupying his errant mind. He pulled the plug out of his jug, horsed the vessel across his elbow and took a mighty swig. Then he began to stamp around the room, bawling one of his favorite come-all-ye's:

"Come all ye good white-water men
And lis-sun to my song!
I'll sing ye of the old days when
The lads and rum was strong.
Foo loo ri lay, foo loo ray lah,
The drive is in the boom.
We'll hit the trail for the big town's bar,
Where there's rum enough and room."

He encored himself and kept on marching, singing the verse over and over. He called on the others to join in and parade with him. He summoned them for the sake of the old times. He jeered at them for letting the good old doings die out for lack of practice.

They hung to the sides of the room and surveyed him with much disfavor. The grouch turned to apprehensiveness when he began to work up his temper and cursed them for a set of hang-back sneaks who were lettin' the last of the Busters do a good job all alone.

"Here's a chance for you to practice some of the stuff you've been preaching," old Zeck sourly advised Mr. Breed. "Here's a critter as is calling on for help. Better do some good to him in his own line. Fall in and dance the fanny dang with him!"

But the apostle perceived an opportunity to exhort a sinner and lift him from the mire of iniquity.

He stepped out into the path of the minstrel and held up a palm with the confidence and dignity of a traffic officer. Mr. McCarty paid no attention and went stamping past and on his circle of the

room. He was not seeing very clearly, anyway. He had paid no special attention to faces in the place.

But when Mr. Breed confronted the singer again, holding up both hands, Mr. McCarty halted, squinted, closed one eye to make sure that only one man and not twins confronted him and then yelled: "By Judassusskatahoop, if it ain't the damnation pirut I'm after. Don't try to fool me! I'm knowing to what you're out in the world to do!"

Zeck Tute and the others gave attentive ears; they had not believed a word of the new apostle's professions; it looked as if the mystery would now be solved.

"I'm out to do good to them that's in trouble," declared Mr. Breed stoutly. "Like I've been telling these damnation fools in this room——"

"Whatever it is you've been telling 'em, it's all a lie, and I'll bet ye on it! You're a soft-footin' old whelp but you can't cover your tracks from me. You're out to bust up homes and lie to innercent wimmen and bring sorrer onto husbands, that's what you're out to do."

Old Zeck and his companions swapped knowing glances and jerked sagacious nods. Timmett Breed had never been known as a Lothario, but anything sounded to them more reasonable than his own amazing declaration of intentions.

McCarty derricked up the jug and took another drink and then began to lash himself into a state of fury in order to get into the spirit of the job he had undertaken.

Mr. Breed was manifestly flabbergasted. It never had been in his thoughts to wound his sister's feelings by any mention of Jasper Wagg's flurry of foolishness. Therefore, when McCarty raved about "home busting" Mr. Breed did not in the least understand what it was all about.

The protesting altruist summoned the resources of his treasury of profanity until he was choked off in a summary fashion; McCarty suddenly upended the jug and poured liquor into Breed's open mouth. When the Buster could not get any more of the stuff into the mouth he chased Breed, who was choking, coughing and gasping for breath, around the room and doused jets of the fluid over the fugitive.

"Soak it in! Get it through your hide!" clamored McCarty. "It'll burn some of that home-busting hellishness out of you."

His potations, now that he was torched up by excitement and the heat of the room, were making a dangerous maniac of him. He was menacing the dodging quarry with the uplifted jug.

"I was cal'lating to go kind of easy with you because I've enj'yed your vittles in past times. But I'm death on a home buster! Stand still while I kill you!"

It was well known in that section that old Zeck Tute was not afraid of anything on two legs or four.

"Look a' here a minit, Cless!" he called. "You ain't fit to be jedge, jury, high sheriff and execoo-tingatee, all at a single time! And right now you're picking on one man a leetle speck too much. That ain't old-woods style, the kind you claim to know so much about."

"Do you dare to tell me I don't know everything that's to be known about the woods?"

"I'll dare to tell you a whole lot more about yourself unless you lay off tommy-whacking one man."

THIS temerity affected McCarty with stupid wonderment. He canted up his jug and took another big drink. He swung the jug down and stared long at old Zeck, lifted the vessel and again imbibed.

"Wouldn't 'a' believed there was a man left in the world who could dare to talk back to the last of the Busters. Prob'ly there's only this one and he's old and don't count," he mumbled, talking to himself.

Then he shook himself out of what was becoming a sort of petrified drunkenness and blinked around the circle of faces. "Of course, there ain't nobody else here, any able man, I'll venture to remark, who has a word to say about what I do!"

"We ain't going to let you pick any more on one man, no matter what he's

cal'lating to do to husbands and wives out in the world," averred a husky fellow.

"Wa-a-all, I'll be cussed durned!" stuttered McCarty, with the air of one making a marvelous discovery. "Here's another one talking back to the last of the Busters!" He looked at himself in a warped mirror as if to make sure of his own identity. "Yes, I'm Cless McCarty, all right! And there ain't no respect being showed me at a time when I'm putting on how 'twas done in the old days. Dammit, it's sort of a sacred thing that's on here. And no respect showed! It'll have to be tended to! Yessir! It'll sure have to be tended to!"

There was a silence while McCarty meditated briefly on dire measures to be taken.

Mr. Breed, posted behind the counter, took advantage of an opportunity.

"So as to announce myself, as being out to do good to all in the world, I'll say that I'm overlooking anything you've done to me, McCarty! That Sam," he explained to the other listeners, "the one I've been telling you about this evening, he didn't match up to me because he didn't have to overlook being strangled with licker-sculch and he didn't git threated with a jug. Now, McCarty, you go to bed and I'll wait and tend on you."

"So you think you're going to come it over me that way, do you?" bellowed McCarty. "You know why I'm after you all right! Going to throw dust in my eyes and then come up on my blind side, hey? I've got some announcing of my own to do.

"First of all, I'm telling this gang that Tim Breed cal'lates to do me up, some way, somehow, knowing as how I know what I do about him." His drunken gravity was impressive. "But that's all right! I'll take care of him after I've tended to other business."

He stumbled to a corner and set his jug carefully on a high shelf.

"And that other business," he proclaimed, facing them and rolling up his sleeves, "is showing the rest of this gang, one and all, how it was done in the old days when a Buster got any kind of lip that he didn't like."

In his mood numbers didn't count. It was his settled conviction that they were all against him. They had shown no comradeship, had merely scowled at him when he had tried to stir them up to his brand of festivity.

He lunged across the room toward the group in which old Zeck stood.

The men stepped nimbly aside and McCarty butted against the wall with stunning force. He fell, picked himself up with some trouble and made another sortie, unable to see anything very clearly. He tripped on a protruding leg of the barrel stove and fell down and rooted his nose along the floor.

"That's twice you've knocked me down," he yelled, rolling and thrashing with arms and legs. "It ain't no wonder—with a thousand of you fighting one man. But I'll lick all of you yet!"

He scrambled up, blinded by the blood which oozed down from his lacerated forehead. The stove opposed him and he hit it savagely with both fists.

His knuckles were scarified and scorched. "So you've called the devil himself in to take a hand with you!" screeched the maniac. "With hell fire under his tough old hide, hey? Never mind! The last of the Busters will polish off him and the whole of ye!"

From then on it was a peculiar fight and well worth waiting to see. Buster McCarty was battling specters; in his erratic sorties he did not encounter any one of the men in the room. They were too spry for him. He could not see them, anyway.

He banged himself against the wall over and over again. He fell, he rose, he fought on.

Runnion, beholding the wreck of chairs, frenziedly called on for volunteers to down the lunatic and tie him up.

The observers were not interested. They ducked out of the room and left McCarty to fight himself to a finish. He did himself up as completely as if he had been hammered by the fists of a dozen men.

Eventually he succumbed. He slumped into a corner. "I give up!" he muttered. "I'm licked, I guess! But it took the devil and two thousand men to do it!"

FOR some moments Breed and Runnion, the only spectators on the field of battle, remained behind the counter in order to make sure that McCarty did not change his mind about being licked and attempt to resume hostilities.

At last his stertorous snores manifestly proclaimed his profound conviction on that point.

"You lend me a little help, Breed," invited the landlord vengefully. "I want to lug that hellion out and heave him into the middle of the ro'd."

"Is that all the good my preaching of to-night has done you, you condemned, hardshell old turkle?" queried the apostle with ire. "Can't you see that here's my first chance to begin practicing what I preach? Of course, he ain't fell among thieves nor nothing like how it was on the Jericho ro'd, but he's in just as bad a case as that other critter." Wholly absorbed, Mr. Breed prattled on.

Landlord Runnion, inspecting details of damage, was leaning over the counter. He saw something on the floor and was interested. It was a little wad of paper money, evidently shaken out of the Buster's pocket during his tumbling about on the floor.

While the absorbed Mr. Breed had more to say about how lucky it was that McCarty had not been robbed, as the fellow in the Bible had been, Runnion under pretense of picking up fragments of furniture secured the wad of money. He had no appetite for an argument on the morrow about the pay for damages. It was in his mind that McCarty would not have much of a memory on the subject. Runnion was merely collecting his pay while the collecting was good.

Later, when he and Breed were toilsomely, by stages, lugging the unconscious battler to a bed, Landlord Runnion was able to pick McCarty's pockets and secured small change down to the last penny. Even at that, the tavern man told himself, he was illy reimbursed for wear and tear.

Mr. Breed, feeling very high minded and efficient and thankful for this early opportunity to put his practice to the test, did the best he could in preliminary patching of the Buster's hurts and then sat beside the bed, keeping vigil.

In order to pass the time he studied all over again the story of the good Samaritan.

IV.

MR. McCARTY unclosed one eye to greet the slanting sunshine of the morn; the other eye was under a bandage.

Through the narrow crack of permitted vision he perceived Mr. Breed sitting in a hard chair beside the bed.

But McCarty withheld remarks while he slowly tested himself out as to physical condition. He was quite sure that every bone in him was broken; it certainly felt like that. "It must have been a bee," he quavered.

Mr. Breed, not at once aware that McCarty was using the old-fashioned colloquial term for a gathering of men for a special task, thought his patient was still out of his mind. "Oh, no! It wa'n't no bee. And it wa'n't no elephant, neither!"

"Still crazy, be ye, hey?" retorted the sufferer. "I tell you it must have been a bee, to do me up this way, and if there wa'n't fifty men in the bee, I'm a liar!"

"You done it all yourself."

"Then you're a liar."

"I tell you, you banged yourself round and——"

"I wouldn't believe you now, Breed, if you added so many Bibles to that one on your knee that you'd have to climb on a stepladder to git to the top o' the stack and swear on it! No, sir! The truth ain't in you about nothing!"

Mr. Breed shouted protests but McCarty broke in relentlessly on them. 'Where's my clothes!"

"On the foot of the bed!"

"Hand 'em to me."

Sitting up with great effort and hav-

ing a hard time of it in managing his bruised hands, he pawed through his pockets, found them empty and pulled them all wrong side out. Then he began to howl for somebody to come and to hurry about it!

Landlord Runnion, having his ear cocked for just such a rumpus, came hastening in.

"Look at them pockets! What kind of a house are you running? You let a damnation do-gooder have full swing in my room and he's done me good and plenty."

"Gawddlemighty! Will ye listen to that!" shouted Mr. Breed.

"I had thutty dollars. I only paid Gus one-fifty for each o' them jugs. I remember that. Some other things I can't remember. But I ain't been spending money round here, not by a dum sight!"

"You never showed the color o' none in my place," replied Runnion with lofty innocence. He had been figuring up breakage and estimated that his dealings with Mr. McCarty constituted a commercial transaction in which the books balanced fairly well. Seeing no good way of dealing with the subject, he had made up his mind to keep discreetly silent in addition to keeping the money.

"How many was there in the gang that licked me?" pressed the Buster.

"I don't know nothing about no fight," declared Runnion. "I went to bed early."

"Good giddlesooferus!" bawled Breed. "I like liars but you suit me too well."

"There ain't but one liar around here, and you're him," declared McCarty. "Runnion, you go call in the deppity sheriff. If I was feeling anyways able I'd git off'm this bed and whale Tim Breed into telling the truth to me. As it is, I've got to look to the law. And I've been paid——"

But McCarty choked himself off there. The illuminating thought had come to him that he was still in a way to earn wages of ten dollars a day by keeping Tim Breed away from Jasper Wagg's home. There had been no definite understanding about ways and means.

The battered and indignant Buster McCarty determined to make his story a good one! He had a vision of a six months' jail sentence for Breed and felt that ordinary gratitude on Wagg's part would move even Stingy Jasper to come across handsomely with a lump sum.

Therefore, the deputy sheriff was called in and arrested a clamorous victim of calculated accusation.

AT the jail they took from Mr. Breed his modest hoard of paper money. They paid little attention to his insistent claim that it was his own cash. They put him in a cell and locked the door pitilessly.

In the afternoon, previous to a hearing in the local court, McCarty came and gloated on the prisoner through the bars. In order to further his own ends the accuser patronizingly advised Breed to take his medicine and keep still about his project of traveling around the world, doing good to all.

"It's going to damn you out of your own mouth, Tim! If they don't send you down to the county jail on account of it, they'll ram you into the State cookoo cage. Keep your mouth shet, take your month or two for stealing my money and I won't bring charges that you pounded me with a club. I'm offering you a fair trade."

The apostle wrestled with speech but could manage only incoherences.

"You see! You can't even talk sense!" said McCarty. "Once again, I advise you to keep your yap shet in court."

Mr. Breed leaped and gibbered behind the bars.

In his own interests McCarty called the attention of the deputy sheriff to the prisoner's mental state.

"You've been talking sense to him, like a forgiving friend," agreed the officer. "I've been advising him, too, trying to make him lay off'm that crazy notion he's got of doing good. Gad, if he spouts that stuff to Jedge Guthrie there ain't no telling what the old hornbeam will soak Tim with. The jedge sure does hate a liar in his court."

HOWEVER, Mr. Breed refused to be directed by advice of any sort.

He marched defiantly to his hearing in court.

He harangued about his policy of Samaritanism in the presence of Trial Justice Guthrie until that venerable and hidebound skeptic bellowed the apostle into silence.

"It's all out of reason, what you say, Breed. It isn't human nature. I guess there's only one man who ever did what you claim to be trying to do—and that's why he got his doings into the Bible. But all I can see in your case is that I'll have to bind you over for trial at the shire town. By that time I hope you'll be supple enough in your mind to tell me honestly what it is you're trying to cover up by this do-good talk."

Mr. Breed looked helplessly around the little courtroom. The wayfarers who understood what had happened in the tavern the night before had either gone on their various ways or had discreetly decided to keep out of the tangle.

He gave up!

Down the line of advisers, from Boss Creamer to this sour-visaged old country justice who glared his utter disbelief through steel-bowed spectacles, they all had practically the same comment to offer regarding his noble and disinterested attempt to show the world something for its benefit.

Mr. Breed became brimming full of an acrid disgust for all humankind. His face revealed his feelings. Now that he showed emotions characteristic of men, not angels, Justice Guthrie felt impelled to test the suppleness he had spoken of as desirable.

"If you've got anything sensible to say, outside that crazy nonsense you've been handing to the court, I'll give you a chance to say it, Breed."

"I'll say this," announced the apostle, "that after this, so fur's I'm concerned, the whole world can go to hell with pants' pockets filled chock-full with red-hot doorknobs."

"Including me, I suppose!" suggested his honor, disliking the malignant scowl he was getting from the prisoner.

"Yessir! Including you! And I hope you don't find a vacant room left on the shady side."

"Take him down to the county jail," the judge commanded the deputy sheriff. "I did intend to allow you to get bail bonds, Breed. But now I hold you guilty of contempt of court, and you can't be bailed on that offense."

"Good!" cried McCarty, jarred into an ejaculation of complacency.

"McCarty, I'll give you five minutes to be on your way out of this town," said the court. "I hear rumors that you came toting liquor into the village. You're better out than in, like a bad tooth!"

"Thank you for the five minutes, jedge, but I won't need 'em," called the Buster from the doorway. "Was headed out of here, anyway! Business calls me!"

VI.

McCARTY'S business was with Jasper Wagg. He rustled down country to the home of the timber lord.

This unexpected appearance of the appointed guardian, bearing frank marks of the fray, hinted that he had been worsted in combat and was only about two jumps ahead of vengeful pursuit by Timmett Breed.

Wagg looked worried.

"Smooth off your face, Lord Gull," admonished McCarty with cheerful heartiness. He tossed a reassuring hand. "All took care of to the queen's taste. I had to use a lot of headwork on the thing but you needn't worry nothing about Tim Breed for a long time to come."

"What's happened?" gasped Wagg.

"Wa-a-all, right now Tim's in the county jail and can't git no bail because he has contempted the court. Then later he'll be fetched up for robbing me of that thutty dollars you paid over to me. Then —le's see—oh, yes! I'll accuse him of trying to murder me and with a leetle extry good lying I expect to put him into State's prison for life.

"Or, if you'd ruther have the cuss of a

jailbird off'm the fambly name, I'll swear him into the dotty dungeon. I guess it can be proved that his brains is clean gone!"

"Good gad!" gasped Wagg. "There's his sister's feelings to be considered, you damnation rampager!"

"Nothing was said about feelings when you made your dicker with me. All is, I don't ask you to pay me ten dollars a day for life, like the bargain would make it. Count me off a thousand plasters, and we'll call the thing square and hooray for a good job well done."

Noting from the bandages that McCarty was pretty well done up and no match for a savage antagonist, Wagg picked up a chair and drove his discredited agent out of the house. In the yard the timber lord secured an ax and routed McCarty still more effectually.

"You're well called Stingy Jasper," railed McCarty as he fled. "Ruther than pay a man you'd kill him and run the resk o' being hung, any day. That's why I ain't taking no chances with you," he added, trying to save his face as a skedaddler.

While Wagg was harnessing his horses his wife made inquiries.

"Timmy has got into some kind of a scrape and I'm starting for the county seat to git him out of it."

"You're a good, kind man, Jasp," she was moved to say. "And nobody could make me believe anyways different, or listen to any mean talk about you."

"You stick always to that idee," he called back to her as he drove away. And he said to himself, as he whipped along his horses, "I reckon that now I've got something to trade off with Tim Breed, taking it by and large. And he's too good a cook to let loose of, at the wages I'm paying him, keeping him al'ays reminded that he's in my fam'ly."

Swinging around by the way of Smyrna Mills, the timber lord fixed matters with Justice Guthrie. And following that bit of diplomacy the other matter was taken care of nicely—at the county jail—after there had been a heart-to-heart talk in Mr. Breed's cell—a strictly family conference with which nobody has any business to deal.

Mr. Breed, riding back to Bald Knob with his brother-in-law, delivered himself of some of his sentiments. And he summed all up by saying: "I hate to be distrusting anything that's writ down in the Bible. But after what I've been through by copying Sam, and remembering how it's stated, f'r instance, that he settled a hotel bill for two cents, I've nighabout come to the p'int, Jasp', of figgering that something derned important was left out of the yarn in gen'ral.

"It must have been a angel that run the tavern. And it must have been a angel that Sam done good to—a angel testing Sam out, the way that used to be done in Bible times. Sam wa'n't dealing with no human critter. Look at my case! After this I'm going to tend to my cooking job till I'm sure that there are angels back on earth."

"Guess you cal'late on cooking for some time, then," observed Stingy Jasper.

"Hoped you'd git that idee from my way of putting it," said Mr. Breed.

Another story by Mr. Day will appear in the next POPULAR.

A UNIQUE DISTINCTION

LYNN J. FRAZIER, United States senator from North Dakota, has the edge on the statesmen who brag about having been born in a log cabin—"just like Lincoln!" Frazier goes them one better by having lived in a sod hut when his parents had gone pioneering all the way from Maine to North Dakota. What's more, when he was six years old, he was an expert driver of an old prairie schooner, and could make the crack of his whip heard half a mile away.

Storm Child

By Harwood Steele

Author of "Loony Comes Back," "Rufus, the Outlaw," Etc.

This is the chronicle of an Indian outlaw. It is told directly, with vivid, vigorous strokes that carry with them the power of a driving, vital narrative. Storm Child, the Blackfoot warrior, is not the only hero of the tale. There are other heroes—the men of the Northwest Mounted who brought the magnificent marauder to bay.

OUT in Alberta, in spite of the years that have passed since the living man defied them with his reckless challenge, they still remember Storm Child. Awe and admiration fill their voices as they speak of the Indian; they hold no hatred against him, though he led them single-handed by the nose for seven terrible weeks and left a red splash across the records of the Royal Northwest Mounted Police which not even the dust of time has hidden.

For Storm Child was a great and gallant warrior, last of the Blackfoot chivalry, last of the fighting Indian outlaws and, thanks to this, his most brilliant exploit, he, with his keen, disdainful face and tall, steel-sinewed figure—naked except for a loin cloth and a gay Hudson's Bay blanket—looms up gigantic, more than fit to represent the red man among the Arthurs, Saladins, Charlemagnes and Siegfrieds of the human race.

Seeking to find just where the business which so distinguished him had its root, one goes back to Victoria Day that year, when the Mounted Police at Fort French held their annual sports. Before a great crowd of settlers, ranchers, citizens from near-by cow towns, half-breeds and Indians—all the picturesque potpourri of the frontier—the red coats and their friends went through a long program of mounted jumping, tent pegging, racing and other competitions common to such affairs.

Among the Indians, looking on, during the first part of this program, was Storm Child.

Storm Child, at that moment, was worth observing. He squatted on the ground in the forefront of the crowd. His long

black hair, beautiful enough to have aroused the envy of even Bella Donna, hung over his shoulders in two thick plaits ornamented with bright brass rings, while an eagle feather adorned his head. The blanket enwrapped him closely.

Over one arm he carried his stainless Winchester. Not the ghost of an expression of any emotion showed for one instant on his iron features. Only one who knew him intimately could have guessed, with any accuracy, at what he was thinking.

There were present several who knew him intimately. Not least of these were the Mounted Police themselves, from Superintendent Cavanagh, who commanded the Fort French Division, down.

Storm Child was no friend of the police. He was not a "bad Indian," as the force counted such. But he was known to have been concerned in the mysterious disappearance of cattle and horses on more than one occasion, and once, for his share in an incident of the kind, he had seen the interior of Fort French jail. Moreover, he was suspected of having taken a hand in several other questionable adventures for which the police had not been able to secure convictions.

However, he was not a "bad Indian." Rather was he one of those young bucks who could not bear to relinquish the heroic pastimes of their ancestors in favor of those pertaining to a newer order in which skill as a scout, horsemanship and gallantry in battle counted for nothing. To Storm Child and his associates, horse stealing and cattle rustling were not crimes. They were the only recreations fit for an Indian warrior.

Try to see his viewpoint. It is important, because of what happened afterward. Did not the knights of the Middle Ages have their hunting and their tournaments, their raids and forays?

AMONG those at the sports who knew Storm Child intimately was Charlie Nobbs, scout and interpreter attached to the police. The greatest plainsman of any age, Superintendent Cavanagh called him, and the designation was seconded by every one in Alberta—which, considering what Alberta could produce in the way of tried and tempered plainsmen, was saying something.

Charlie was a half-breed. A more unprepossessing creature and one less like the ideal conception of a scout, never followed a trail. He was short, ugly, bowlegged, grumpy and inclined to be dirty. The contrast he made with the gallant, spectacular Storm Child was painfully unfavorable to Charlie.

That this man could possibly rival Storm Child as a scout seemed incredible. But it was true, all the same. That the same blood could possibly run in their veins also seemed incredible. Yet these men, on the maternal side, were second cousins.

Thanks to their rivalry and their relationship, they almost hated each other. Storm Child looked down on Charlie as a half-breed relative, fruit of a union in which the pure blood of a long line of chiefs had been tainted by that of white nonentities. He also regarded him as a renegade, one who had gone over to an alien race to help them in their campaign against the legitimate activities of Blackfoot gentlemen.

Charlie considered Storm Child a savage, an untutored clod who could only speak one tongue, a heathen who prayed to the lightning, and what he would bluntly have called "a sneakin' Injun skunk," to be arrested at will by the stalwart representatives of a superior people with whom he served and was one.

Each considered the other's prowess exaggerated and believed that there was not an achievement to the other's credit that he could not surpass. Together, they longed with consummate desire for an opportunity to demonstrate, brilliantly and beyond all further question, their individual ascendancy. It followed that, if Chance ever pitted these mighties against each other in a battle of wits and endurance, the result would be such as only a Homer could treat with justice.

And Chance?—but that is premature.

CHARLIE, unobserved by Storm Child, had been standing close to him and watching him with one eye that Victoria Day afternoon. The other eye had devoted itself to absorbing the incidents of the sports. Together, they gave Charlie a very fair insight into Storm Child's inmost thoughts.

Storm Child, Charlie's eyes told him, was not impressed by the display he saw before him, but, on the contrary, regarded it, or affected to regard it, with scorn. Even when the musical ride was in progress and thirty-two splendidly mounted constables, in the brilliance of full uniform, were skillfully wheeling and cantering around the arena through amazingly intricate figures, Charlie could tell that Storm Child's soul was nothing more than one huge sneer.

Charlie was desperately proud of the police and fearfully jealous of their good name. Storm Child's silent contempt angered him. At last he could no longer restrain himself. Burning with passion, he made his way over to his cousin's side.

"How, Mutch-e-manitou!"—Greetings, Evil Spirit!—he said, affecting an affability which carried with it the cutting familiarity adopted toward each other by cousins who are intimate but unfriendly. Then, unable to restrain his resentment, he added, still speaking the Indian tongue: "The mighty chief seems scornful of the efforts made to amuse him by the humble Shagalasha!"—Mounted Police.

Storm Child looked at Charlie quickly, his steel-hard eyes flashing.

"Who are these people, to assert authority over us?" he asked grandly, waving his hand in lordly fashion toward the swirling scarlet horsemen. "Why, they can't even ride! They call *that* riding! They think *that* difficult! They think it is something to break a broncho. These men and their woman's creed: Wah!

"Presently," he declared haughtily, "there will be a display by the Indians. *I* shall be in it! Then you will see what riding really is! And, more than that, the day will come, you turncoat, when I will teach these self-satisfied Shagalasha, yes, and you, too, proud one, what scouting and strength and courage really mean!"

It was a virtual throwing down of the gauntlet, a challenge to the battle of wits and nerve for which Charlie had always thirsted. True, the date was not fixed, but the war shield was hanging outside the champion's tent. Charlie answered eagerly.

"May the Great Spirit send the day quickly!" he declared sternly. "You have only to break the law but once, my little friend, and you shall see who rule this country, you or the Shagalasha, and who is the better man, you or I!"

LATER in the day the Indians gave the display of which Storm Child had spoken. It was a remarkable spectacle, such as it is impossible to see now.

At full gallop, yelling their terrible war cries, the braves went through a series of most wonderful feats. Among them there was one—a tall, straight warrior, naked but for a breechclout, an Apollo cast in living bronze—whose skill and daring put all others in the shade.

He stood up on his pony's back, while traveling at top speed, letting his scarlet blanket stream out behind him like a raging flame. He trailed alongside the animal like a dead man, one foot in the girth; he fired his rifle from under the horse's belly, neck or tail, he balanced himself along one flank so that, from the opposite side, the horse seemed riderless—all at full gallop.

Charlie, watching, knew just why he did these things, surpassing even himself. This was Storm Child's method of showing Charlie, the police and the crowd generally the full extent of the Indian's superiority as a horseman over the white. Charlie felt, somewhere within himself, a realization, for the first time, of what his cousin could accomplish were he ever put to the test.

II.

THE hunt began when Storm Child killed George Leach, the rancher.

From the outset, lest belief to the contrary tarnish Storm Child's knighthood, it

should be understood that the murder was not murder in the eyes of Storm Child or even of many others. For it was justified, as far as the taking of human life can be justified, by the "unwritten law."

All over the world, in every age, that law has been absolute, or, if not, has exerted a tremendous influence on the decisions of judges, juries and public opinion. With the chivalry of Europe a man dishonored had once the right to avenge himself by a fight "à l'outrance," or mortal combat. With the chivalry of primitive America, the same rule applied.

Whatever the white man's precepts might say, by those of the red man Storm Child had a right to avenge himself on Leach in a similar fashion. Leach had laid himself open to the chastisement of the "unwritten law." And Storm Child, riding over to the ranch, had challenged him, given him a sporting chance and, in fair fight, killed him.

IT was night when an excited settler, dispatched by Corporal Mendenhall, of the Coyote Creek post, which stood on the border of Leach's ranch, galloped madly into Fort French to report the killing and to say that the corporal, who had set off on the track of the criminal, had been told positively by witnesses that the deed was Storm Child's.

Superintendent Cavanagh, hastily summoned from mess to the orderly room, listened long enough to get the bare facts. And instantly, recalling what he knew of Storm Child, he recognized that he was "in for something."

Quickly he acted. A patrol of five men, under Inspector Passmore, was ordered out immediately. Couriers carrying orders to all detachments were sent in every direction and the telegraph was called into service. Thus, within half an hour, the ever-ready Mounted Police net was cast over the whole area of possible operations. Then the best scout in the division —Charlie—was summoned and told to accompany Inspector Passmore.

Outside headquarters, in the starlight, the horses of Passmore's patrol were waiting. Into the saddle Charlie leaped with the policemen. The drum of the galloping hoofs died away as the party dashed out into the great night, wherein, somewhere, Storm Child was lurking.

They found Corporal Mendenhall, one of his men and some punchers of the ranch, a little less than a mile from the spot where the shooting had occurred. The corporal, tracking Storm Child, by slow and painful effort, carrying a lantern, had worked his way to the point where Passmore discovered him.

Instantly Charlie took charge—not because Corporal Mendenhall or the other whites were incapable, for the policemen, at least, had been well taught, but because Charlie was immeasurably superior.

Followed a truly marvelous exhibition of tracking. The ground was hard, as the month was October, and the marks left by the hoofs of Storm Child's horse were barely visible, even in the daytime. But Charlie found them.

On hands and knees, with the lantern held so that it would cast strong shadows from every dent in the grass, he progressed slowly forward, finding, mainly by sense of touch, partly with the microscopic power of his eyes, the smallest depression betraying Storm Child's trail. Frequently he made great gains by rising and circling widely from the last mark found until he struck the trail again many yards beyond.

Never a sound, except for an occasional grunt of grim satisfaction, came from his tight lips. The accompanying posse also was silent, walking beside him and watching his every movement with awe and admiration.

So they came to the boundary of Leach's ranch, crossed it and progressed some distance farther. Then Charlie rose up quickly and resolutely, with the air of a man who is definitely convinced.

"Humph!" he ejaculated. "He gone to reserve—ridden straight d'ere from here. No need for track any more. We ride d'ere mighty quick right away. No argue with me! Me sure!"

Inspector Passmore was satisfied. Swiftly they flung themselves into the sad-

dle and, Charlie at their head, tore off across the open prairie toward the reserve.

There was great excitement in camp when the police made their spectacular appearance. Men called excitedly to one another, caught up their rifles and came running. Charlie guessed at once that the Indians expected them and had a mind to oppose them. They dismounted outside the tepee of the head chief.

"Send for White Eagle!" he advised Inspector Passmore. "Tell heem you after Storm Child. Tell heem you sure he cache heemself here. Tell heem you wanta search—search everyt'ing, everywhere!"

SO the police combed the camp thoroughly, like wolfhounds checked, while the angry crowd jostled them and growled.

Many facts were instantly made plain. Storm Child had been there. His tepee was in the wildest confusion, showing innumerable traces of a hasty gathering together of essential belongings. Other tepees betrayed the hurried levying of contributions of food and ammunition for his service.

Where his ponies had been picketed not one animal remained. His two children, a boy and a girl in the 'teen age, were not to be found in camp. One of his brothers, Barks-like-a-dog, was also absent. Everything pointed to his having rapidly assembled those who could be most useful to him, together with spare mounts and supplies, and taken flight into the screening expanses of the unfenced plains.

Inspector Passmore turned to White Eagle, who had unwillingly accompanied him as he made his round.

"I see you have helped Storm Child," he said, with Charlie interpreting. "For that you must answer to The Sleepless One"—Superintendent Cavanagh—"at Fort French.

"It is against the law to assist one who has taken life to get away. But in the meantime I shall leave some one here to watch lest Storm Child return, and others to see that none of you leaves camp. And I will track down Storm Child, in spite of you!"

By the flickering light of a fire, with the defiant yells of daring young bucks ringing in his ears, the inspector scribbled a note to the superintendent, telling him what he had discovered and what he planned to do. One of the constables raced off with the message, and, leaving the rest of the posse to guard the camp, Passmore, Charlie and Constable Brenon rode on once more in pursuit.

Here again Charlie showed an astuteness which proved him to be the great scout he really was. Outside the camp, the three men held a powwow. The inspector was positive that Storm Child, like nearly all criminals of that day, had headed for the United States and that nothing remained but to make a desperate effort to overtake him before he crossed the boundary. But Charlie recollected the boast made by Storm Child months before at the Victoria Day sports, when he had vowed, in time, to prove his superiority over the white man as a scout and warrior.

"He no head for States," he declared positively. "He stay in Canny-da"—Canada. "For why? Coz he wanta show you-all he big mans, great brave, great everyt'ing. He goin' to run all round here, just like leetle boys playin' in de barracks, saying to de rest, 'You can't catch me!'"

"Stay here?" the inspector laughed incredulously. "Not him! I don't believe it!"

"Look, I betcha me take you right to him! You come with me!" said Charlie.

For two minutes they argued. Passmore was very certain of himself. But Charlie was more so. Once more the half-breed had seen into the depths of the Indian mind. It was necessary for Storm Child to have a secret retreat, he argued, as a base from which to carry out his game of hide and seek.

What more likely a place than somewhere within the maze of countless gorges and deep pine woods wherein lay the sources of the West Peigan River, in the lower levels of the Rockies? Much against his will, Passmore agreed to go there.

DAWN found them, chilled by a long night in the saddle, on the edge of a deep-cut valley, half filled with morning mist. Beneath them, a blur of brown in the white, was a rude shelter—Storm Child's retreat.

Thus far, the Indian had been singularly stupid, in comparison with Charlie. He had not even a scout on guard. Overweening confidence, it seemed, had persuaded him that no one could possibly guess where he was hidden and hence that sentries were unnecessary. But it remained to be seen whether the taking of him, apparently so easy to accomplish, would be as simple a matter as it looked.

Something must have warned Passmore to be on the lookout for a trap. He ordered his men to take off their boots and draw their revolvers, so as to make the least possible noise and to be ready for instant action. Further to reduce the chances of failure, he arranged that they were to converge on the shelter from different points.

Into the little valley the trio crept. The screening mist was thinning rapidly. They could now see plainly for perhaps a hundred yards. Their hearts beat madly with suppressed excitement.

Suddenly Brenon stepped on a dead stick, which cracked like a whip. The face of Storm Child's daughter, wild with alarm, flashed out at the door of the shelter and as rapidly disappeared.

Shouts of warning and an indescribable commotion broke out within. Concealment was no longer feasible. The three men made a combined dash for the tent, reached the door together, flung it open and——

The grins of Barks-like-a-dog and Storm Child's children alone met them. The outlaw himself obviously had cleared out some time before. Or perhaps, using the tent only as a decoy, he had not slept in it at all.

A sickly dread of unforeseen and deadly peril about to unmask itself clutched Passmore's heart. What fools they had been to believe Storm Child so stupid! He sprang back into the open, Charlie and Brenon, the former cursing fluently in broken English, at his heels.

From the pines at the head of the valley a rifle crashed. There was Storm Child, with his horses. He waved an arm at them mockingly, then, shrieking mad peals of reckless laughter, exposed himself one moment on the sky line to a storm of bullets and, like some taunting demon, disappeared.

"He was watching all the time!" Passmore cried, shakily.

Realization of the grim humor of the trick Storm Child had played them struck him.

With a hand that somehow was not quite steady, he removed his Stetson hat.

There was a bullet hole in the crown.

First round to Storm Child!

III.

WITHIN twelve hours of Charlie's first clash with Storm Child, a hue and cry was raised against him through all the southern country. Within twenty-four hours every policeman, sheriff, magistrate and law-abiding citizen in a hundred-mile-wide belt astride the international boundary line was on the lookout for the Indian.

Forty-eight hours saw the eyes of all Canada upon the arena in which the hunt progressed. Before a week had passed, the entire countryside was terrorized and the Mounted Police knew that they had upon their hands the greatest man hunt in history, against the finest and most daring scout and horseman with whom they had ever measured themselves.

At first it was the Mounted Police versus Storm Child and half the Blackfoot Nation, his sympathizers. Then, as the difficulties of catching the quarry became more apparent, it was the Mounted Police reënforced by posses of stockmen and cowboys versus Storm Child and his friends.

Soon Superintendent Cavanagh, realizing the necessity for stern measures, isolated Storm Child by arresting and jailing all who helped him, or were suspected of helping him, and thereafter

none dared lend their aid except by stealth, at the risk of severe punishment, which is to say, none but those who loved him best.

Presently the balance shifted still farther in favor of the police, when the Indians, believing that God is with the big battalions, came out in force to assist the hunt. Thus the ultimate situation was that on one side were two hundred Mounted Police, cattlemen, punchers and Indians, on the other a single desperate warrior, playing a terrible game, a lone hand, with the cards stacked against him.

Still another weight on the adverse side of the scales wherein Fate was trying Storm Child, was the hostility, not only of the hunters but of all the district. Very shortly after Superintendent Cavanagh called out his last reserve to run the Indian down, there was not a camp, a village, a town, a shack, a tepee, which Storm Child could visit in safety

Had he entered a single street, a hundred men would have seen to it that he left it only in a coffin or in irons. Did he show the tip of his nose on a reserve, the war whoop of questing braves drove him off with his very kinsmen in pursuit.

Every isolated settler, man and woman, worked, ate and slept with weapon ready to hand against his coming. He was like a bull beset by matadors, with every gateway closed, wherever he turned.

BUT, though the cards were stacked, the law did not hold all the aces. Certain grave disadvantages hampered it. For one thing, the police and their associates, who were under their orders, were handicapped by the deeply cherished tradition of never firing first and by the superintendent's determination that Storm Child was to be taken alive.

Also, the immensity of the field of action was against them. It was impossible to cover it adequately with two hundred men. A bedstead cannot be blanketed with a lady's handkerchief! Besides, it is comparatively easy for one man in a large area to keep track of the whereabouts of many, but not for many to keep track of one. Witness the invariably futile efforts of a wildly swatting party to deal with a particularly active mosquito! If there is good cover, the task is ten times worse. A hairy dog seeking a flea illustrates this truth.

Nevertheless, Storm Child's position was frightful. It was made more so by the relentless, tireless enmity of Charlie. The war, strictly speaking, was a war between Storm Child and his half-breed cousin. Through all the mazes of the incessant struggle, these two whirled like eagles "battling in the central blue."

Storm Child's defense as he flashed in and out among the host endeavoring to cut him off was truly wonderful. His movements were so swift that the more superstitious of his pursuers began to fear him an ally of the devil, by whom he had been lent a flying horse or the Seven League Boots. To-night he was seen in Tom-tom Valley. To-morrow he was at Medicine Bluff, over sixty miles away. Sometimes, indeed, he was in a dozen places at once.

This marvelous ability to cover the ground he owed to his magnificent horsemanship, fortified by countless mounts which he begged, borrowed or stole on all sides and rode to the point of death. But he also owed much to the vivid imaginations of the trembling spectators of the hunt, and occasionally, even, to the fears of the hunters themselves, from which sprang constant reports that Storm Child had shown himself simultaneously to a hundred widely separated pairs of eyes.

This embarrassed the hunt, committing urgently needed men to the pursuit of shadows, and leaving great gaps in Superintendent Cavanagh's cordon through which Storm Child slipped, laughing. Thus matters dragged on, while the Indian left behind him long strings of exhausted horses and cursing patrols, who knew not where to turn.

Yet sometimes Storm Child actually did expose himself to capture. Frequently he risked his neck because he was in dire need of food or horses, and often, also, from sheer wanton bravado.

One day he rode like a whirlwind into the yard of a ranch where stood the horses of a posse. The men were snatching a hasty meal indoors. Their attention was called to a noise outside; they rushed to the window just in time to see Storm Child gallop triumphantly off, leading with him horses enough to serve him for a week or more—the posse's horses.

Often he thrilled the country with a tremendous gesture of defiance, which was as if he spat in the very faces of his pursuers. For example, at Spider Lake post he put a bullet through Sergeant Kean's mirror when that worthy N. C. O. was shaving at the window by lamplight. Thereafter darkness veiled the eyes of every house and tepee in the district after nightfall, and Sergeant Kean did his shaving elsewhere.

Nor did Storm Child fail to resort to a thousand stratagems, sometimes to get himself out of a tight corner, sometimes to put the hunters into such a corner in his stead. Often he slipped from the very noose encircling him by the comparatively simple method of doubling on his tracks and himself trailing the party which had been trailing him. Once he lured an impetuous young cowboy into a deserted house, ran in at the front door, out at the back door, in at the front again and, catching the bewildered lad in the cellar, shut him up and left him to his own devices.

As the days went by and the chase grew hotter, Storm Child became more and more dangerous. Desperation made him apparently invincible.

Meanwhile the police, in their turn, pressed Storm Child with grim and merciless tenacity. They blocked every conceivable loophole. They searched every nook and cranny, followed every scent, true or false, exhausted every resource.

They, also, used stratagems, leaving unattempted nothing that the cunning of either white men or red could devise. Charlie felt that his reputation was at stake, and he never rested. Again and again the chase resolved itself into a direct conflict between these two implacable enemies.

FOR example, there was the affair at the ranch house of the O. K. outfit. Charlie knew that Storm Child was somewhere in the vicinity. He knew, also, that he was seriously short of horses. Again, he knew that the outlaw had attempted several times to get mounts by breaking into stables.

So Charlie, having taken Superintendent Cavanagh into his confidence and obtained his approval, arranged that a batch of fresh horses should be driven ostentatiously into the O. K. stables just before sunset. Two stockmen were posted among the horses, in the darkness, to seize Storm Child when he entered.

Charlie and the rest of that particular party took post in the house, ready to rush out as soon as the men in the stable shouted that Storm Child had arrived. Another man by the yard entrance watched for the Indian's coming.

Charlie had calculated that Storm Child, observing while he himself was unobserved, would see the horses taken into the stables from his hiding place and would try to get them later. His theory proved correct. Storm Child made the attempt.

But there was no warning from the scout and no yell from the stockmen. Rather was there unbroken and extremely ominous silence, which drove Charlie at last to make investigations, uneasy forebodings in his soul.

He stole cautiously into the yard. No sign of life there! A moment later, however, his heart stood still. The door of the stable was wide open. He had left that door unlocked to facilitate Storm Child's entry into the trap; but not—wide open.

Creeping stealthily into the building, at infinite pains to avoid offering a target to the outlaw were he hidden within, he slowly took the candle he carried from his pocket, and, sheltering behind a bin, swiftly lighted it. He expected to find the appearance of the flame the signal for a rifle shot. Nothing happened.

Still, there was need for further caution. Storm Child was never more dangerous than when his whereabouts were

unknown; and Charlie's continued advance was made with great care.

Ultimately, he learned all. Not one horse remained in the stable. The two stockmen, bound and gagged, he found in the saddle room.

"He covered us from the window!" was the gist of their explanation, gasped out between fervent curses, as Charlie released them.

"He came on us like a ghost, without a sound. We couldn't move or shout, I tell you! Gone? You bet, an' all the horses with him!"

But why had the outside scout not warned them? With the furious cattlemen, Charlie went out to find an answer to that question. They came upon their sentry at the precise spot where he had been placed, firmly fixed to his post—to the gatepost—bound and gagged. Of Storm Child there was nothing to be seen.

"He come up like a blank-blank shadow, so he did!" spluttered the scout, when they tore the gag off. "First thing I knew his gun was in me ribs. What c'u'd I do?"

And at that instant—a shriek of diabolical laughter, rising from a point not ten paces distant, paralyzed them. The voice of Storm Child called out mockingly to Charlie in his own tongue:

"Why don't you and your Shagalasha catch me, brother? You are all so clever! See, I am here!"

Charlie whipped a hand to his hip. But Storm Child's bullet, singing past them, was quicker.

The moon, sailing out of a cloud, gave them a momentary glimpse of the outlaw, mounted among the horses. Before they could return his fire, another yell of reckless mirth arose; Storm Child, a vague shape in the semidarkness, waved his hand; the mass of horses moved away in a storm of hoofbeats, a demon herd with Satan in their midst, and in an instant were but a diminishing tattoo as the outlaw raced triumphantly away.

Charlie said nothing. But the knowledge that he had been completely tricked aroused impotent fury that seethed within him.

IV.

SO the weeks went by. The district wherein the hunt dragged on became utterly unnerved, and saw Storm Child in every bush and every tuft of grass, while it screamed hysterically for the Indian's head; Superintendent Cavanagh's hair turned from iron gray to snowy white at the temples; and Charlie waxed as snappy as a chained dog too long denied a chance at the neighbor's cat.

The shadow of Storm Child lay like that of an immense cloud upon the country, the sound of his horse's hoofs as he fled through the night like a spirit pursued by devils beat in the ears of isolated settlers like the voice of doom.

Men wondered with amazement why Storm Child did not run out of the district altogether when an occasional opening for such an escape presented itself. But Charlie understood why he did not and explained to Superintendent Cavanagh, who thenceforth understood also.

Storm Child's aim, ridiculous as it might seem, was to prolong the hunt to the limit. Why? Because of that boast he had made to Charlie, that he would prove beyond all possible doubt, when the time came, the superiority of the red man over the white as scout, warrior and horseman; because, also, he intended to make such a fight of it that his name would live forever in history and his manhood be invested with eternal splendor.

Such a game, of course, would end only in one way—his capture or death. Storm Child himself knew this perfectly well. None the less, he did not care. Death, according to his reasoning, would matter nothing so long as it found him made immortal by his deeds.

This creed, strange as it is, was once fairly common among the Indians of western Canada. Ask old plainsmen for the story of Almighty Voice. Incidentally, it is not so strange a creed as it seems at first glance. Did it not have its almost exact equivalent in the days of European chivalry, when men chose deliberately to "live dangerously" and die gloriously?

As time passed, it appeared certain that,

unless Storm Child wriggled through a wormhole in the wall at the last moment, death would indeed end the chase, so closely had Superintendent Cavanagh ringed him with his slowly contracting cordon. Just how and where death would find Storm Child was another matter.

The superintendent meant it to be on the gallows at Fort French. Storm Child preferred a bullet from an enemy in the open. There was always a chance, however, that he might get away entirely in the end. This was Charlie's dread. For Charlie felt that his great reputation was at stake and that only in laying Storm Child by the heels could he save it. He did not want Storm Child's life, but only to prove that the Indian was no match for him.

The climax could not be much longer delayed, since the pace was too fierce to last. When it came, it came suddenly.

THE first snow was falling heavily, from a sky of blanket gray, when Storm Child was seen at Sunset Creek by Charlie and a patrol, which instantly set off in chase. When they first sighted the Indian he was almost half a mile distant, a black speck in the white vastness, like a fly on a monster tablecloth. He rode a fast horse, but Charlie's was as fast or faster and soon they were far ahead of the rest, scurrying through the drifts at their utmost speed.

Very gradually Charlie reduced the space that separated them. Storm Child was making for the black pines fringing the bases of the Rockies, the only cover in many miles. These, however, were still a long way off, and Charlie, pressing his mount to the limit, felt confident that he would be up with the outlaw before they reached the pines.

His relentless heart rejoiced as he noted that he was closing and saw that his comrades had been hopelessly outdistanced. This was just what he most desired—the opportunity to capture Storm Child single-handed and thus to force the proud boast of that haughty warrior down his throat. So sure was he of success and so exultant in the prospect of impending victory that he found himself lapsing momentarily into the savage which was half his nature and letting loose a war whoop of delighted triumph.

THAT wild, fierce cry rang far and wide over the waste and reached the ears of Storm Child, who answered it with a yell equally fierce and wild. The whole spirit underlying that long, stern chase was in that first shriek of joy and the defiant howl answering it.

Charlie was very close now—not more than two hundred yards behind. But the mountains were nearer than he had thought. He loosed his carbine and prepared to shoot.

Storm Child, unfortunately, was too quick for him. Charlie's order to halt was strangled in his throat as the outlaw's rifle cracked and the pursuer's mount sank to its knees, stone dead.

Charlie saw all his hopes die with the stricken horse. Thinking only of vengeance, he fired a series of shots after Storm Child. But the Indian rode on, screaming his reckless laughter, and disappeared among the pines.

Charlie, however, lost hope only for an instant. He was no quitter. Alone and on foot he struggled after Storm Child. And presently his persistency was rewarded. He saw blood on the snow beside the fading tracks of the outlaw's horse.

Some shot must have told, after all. Perhaps he might even find Storm Child exhausted in a not far distant valley. So he redoubled his efforts.

In time the other members of the patrol caught up to Charlie. He was then in the midst of the pines and the red trail still lay before him, marking the outlaw's course in letters the veriest tenderfoot could read. Swiftly the whole party pressed onward through the trees, expecting at any moment to discover Storm Child's body.

Three miles from the point where the trail entered the woods, they emerged again upon the open prairie. And there

they saw a sight which awoke in Charlie's soul indescribable sensations.

Through the first dim screen of gathering twilight far away on the plains, a riderless horse was staggering drunkenly to its doom. The horse, not the outlaw, had been wounded by Charlie's bullets. Once more Storm Child had tricked the greatest scout ever associated with the police, abandoning the useless horse in the pines at some point now behind the patrol and leaving them to follow it while he made good his escape in some other direction.

But why had they failed to see his tracks? Charlie's keen brain saw the reason now. Storm Child must have swung off into a tree, direct from the horse's back, thus avoiding telltale footprints, and remained there until the pursuit had passed.

Though outwardly cool, Charlie was inwardly boiling with rage and chagrin. Going back over the old ground, he set himself and his men to the hopeless task of finding Storm Child's new trail in the fast-falling snow and the closing dusk.

Superintendent Cavanagh and half a dozen men joined them at nightfall, having learned of the new scent and followed with all speed. To him Charlie reported. At the same time, the scout told Cavanagh: "You go on, look for heem all round here. Me? I go over d'ere all alone, t'ink out what de matter. Best way, that! Me catch heem yet, I tell you! But must t'ink, t'ink hard! You go ahead. Let me alone!"

The superintendent, knowing enough to do just as Charlie asked, joined in the hunt through the pines. And his great servant went away to pace to and fro alone, slowly and sullenly, in a last desperate effort to find the key to the problem confronting him.

HAD there been light to see by, the men might have found watching Charlie at that crisis a far more interesting business than floundering in the deep snow in quest of tracks that were no longer there.

His face was set and stern, his eyes glowering. As he paced up and down, he tossed his arms about, apparently in a frenzy of agitation. His lips moved rapidly, but whether he was cursing, praying or muttering divers enchantments it was impossible to say. One thing, however, was certain: all his uncanny intuitive powers, his marvelous ability to put himself in the place of his quarry and foresee what Storm Child would do, were in full play.

At last the inspiration came to him. The veil obscuring the solution he sought dropped suddenly and he beheld, or fancied he beheld, his way clear.

To the superintendent he hastened. Swiftly and with as much excitement as his stoic nature permitted, he explained his theory.

Said Charlie:

"You know leetle house, belong to Storm Child, fifteen, mebbe twenty miles, from here?"

The house in question was a tiny two-roomed shack built by Storm Child a year or so before, standing alone on the prairie.

Superintendent Cavanagh nodded. He knew the place well and had long ago mounted a guard to watch it lest Storm Child should make use of it.

"Yes, yes," he said. "What of it?"

"You know, when wolf, fox, bear, any animal almost, all in, with hunter mighty close behind, where he make for? Always, always he make for his home, eh, his leetle hole? I speak true?"

"Yes!" Cavanagh repeated, impatiently.

"Me ready to bet you all I have—you know I pretty well guess right what Indian always do—me ready bet you Storm Child make for d'ere! He just like hunted bear, all in, mebbe ready now to pass out! Blizzard comin' on, no place to go! So he run straight for leetle house. Now, if you take men away, so he no guess you keep your eye on d'ere, me bet you bottom dollar, he go in, for rest, mebbe for die!"

Charlie's theory was indisputably sound. Over and over again it has been proved that hunted men, when pressed to desperation, will seek refuge in some familiar

spot, just as a wounded or hard-pressed animal will struggle home.

Hitherto the hunt had not touched the neighborhood of Storm Child's little shack. It was possible, therefore, that he did not know it was guarded, and that, believing the police would never suspect him of hiding in so obvious a place, he would obey his primitive instinct and go there.

Cavanagh looked thoughtful.

"Suppose you are right," he asked, "why should we remove the guard? Let them stay there and he'll walk straight into their arms!"

"You crazy, I t'ink!" was Charlie's uncomplimentary comment—the man was so full of his theory and so eager to put it to the test that he cared not what he said.

"You don' know Storm Child. You bet he take damn good care for see nobody d'ere before ever he go in! But if he no see nobody, den he go in! An' we watch from long way off an' when we see heem go in, we follow and—crack! We got heem, sure!"

"Well, what do you want me to do now?" demanded the superintendent.

"Now? Waste no more time here!" replied Charlie emphatically. "Ride, all of us, right away quick, for d'ere. Tell guard: 'Come away.' Take post all round, hut far away an'—wait!"

So positive was Charlie that his chief was at least partially convinced. But, to take no chances, he decided to leave two men in the woods where Storm Child had disappeared, to carry on the search. These having received their instructions, the remainder mounted and, with Charlie at their head, rode for Storm Child's shack through the night at the best speed possible.

CHARLIE, on fire with inspiration, certain he was at last on the proper trail, was magnificent in that ride. The snow, now falling thickly, combined with the darkness to enwrap the great spaces in impenetrable gloom.

Not a man could see his horse's ears. There was not a single landmark visible. Yet Charlie, constantly urging his companions onward, rode for the objective with the unwavering steadfastness, the positive instinct, of a homer pigeon. Never once did he halt, never once did he show the slightest indecision.

And sure enough, in due course the shack loomed out of the night in their very faces and Charlie announced: "Here! We got here!" while they heard at their elbow the click of a breech bolt as the invisible sentry watching the place prepared for action against the intruders.

A busy five minutes followed. Superintendent Cavanagh called into his presence the detachment at the shack. Had Storm Child been there? No. Had any one been there? No. Then let them clear the building of their equipment, mount their horses and accompany him.

The men obeyed, and Cavanagh posted the entire party in a circle at some distance from the place to await Storm Child's coming.

The night dragged on. The snow continued to fall more heavily than ever and it grew steadily colder. The superintendent, hidden behind some bushes and slowly freezing in his saddle, began to doubt Charlie's theory.

What if Storm Child did not come after all? Or had come and gone again? Or slipped through the trap? Or taken any of a dozen other courses open to him?

Curse the thrice-damned fellow, anyway! When on earth would the dawn come, so that they could at least see a little?

Charlie had at last anticipated the Indian correctly. Dawn came. With it came Storm Child.

Plowing his way slowly and heavily through the deep drifts on foot, totally unsuspecting—for he looked neither to right nor left—and evidently very weary after his twenty-mile walk, Storm Child passed through the cordon and strode straight into the little shack, like a cow into the slaughter pen.

The door slammed. The watchers closed in.

V.

THEY found him sleeping on the floor, so exhausted that he did not waken even when the party was almost upon him. But something warned him of his danger before the first hand touched him. Worn out though he was, it took the united strength of four men, including the superintendent, who was a Samson, to pin him down and get the handcuffs on him.

He was in a terrible state, poor devil, they discovered. Ceaseless activity and privation had noticeably hollowed his cheeks. The inner sides of his legs were like raw beef from incessant riding.

Yet, even when they had him overpowered, writhing in helpless fury at their feet, as a pinioned animal twists and rolls, they held themselves in constant readiness to pounce on him again, so fearful were they that, even now, he might contrive to escape them.

Charlie, meanwhile, had gone quite mad. This was his hour of triumph and he made the most of it. Jibe after jibe, each jibe the thrust of a red-hot goad to the outlaw's tortured soul, he flung at Storm Child.

What price the Shagalasha now? Who was the brainier scout, the better man? Had he not said all along that to jest with the Shagalasha was to jest with death?

He had a mind to continue his taunts indefinitely. But Superintendent Cavanagh, in pity for the unfortunate wretch, put the lid on his enthusiasm and clamped it down.

The superintendent had other matters to deal with, also. It was necessary to do what was possible to ease Storm Child of the pain in his lacerated legs.

They forced him to drink brandy so that his strength might be maintained. Obviously, he could not be expected to ride to Fort French with his legs in such a condition. Therefore a cart had to be summoned. All this kept Cavanagh's hands full.

The cart business, however, they soon found to be a temporary washout. When the superintendent went to the door to send off his messenger he saw that the threatened blizzard was fast developing. Charlie declared it would not last more than a few hours but that in the meantime it would be murder to send a dispatch rider to Fort French.

Accordingly, there was nothing for it but to wait in the shack for the storm to expend itself.

So the police party made itself snug. The antiquated stove was set going and all hands disposed themselves as comfortably as might be. Storm Child was securely bound, with his hands behind him, and seated in a corner. A man was placed opposite, with orders to watch the prisoner's every move.

The superintendent planned to relieve this sentry every half hour, thus giving the rest of his command a chance to snatch a much-needed wink of sleep. They flung themselves down here and there about the shack.

Storm Child, all this time, said not a word. Caged eagles, newly caught, are apt to sulk, and the superintendent therefore thought nothing of his silence. Had he observed, however, that the prisoner was smiling quietly to himself he might have realized that the drama which had held the boards for seven terrible weeks was not yet over.

The blizzard developed. Soon it was raging furiously about the little shack, buffeting it, shaking it, and seeming to glory in its immeasurable power. The full orchestra of its music was terrifying.

It brought home to the superintendent the insignificance and futility of men as compared with nature. Thrust forth into its enormous arms, Cavanagh reflected, no human being could possibly survive more than half an hour. He found himself wondering whether such a tempest as this had heralded Storm Child's entry into the world, giving that warrior's mother the inspiration which moved her to call him by that singular name, and he thought it peculiarly appropriate that the day which brought to a close the greatest event of the Indian's life should also be dominated by a blizzard.

Storm Child's career, he told himself,

well merited such a climax. For, now that the hunt was over, the superintendent's sporting, manly soul bore no ill will toward Storm Child, but only admiration for his marvelous fight against tremendous odds.

It was extremely hot in the room and this combined with the howling of the storm, which was like a lullaby, to bury the superintendent in deep slumber. Soon he was dreaming all sorts of extraordinary things. Presently his wandering fancy transformed the wind's wild keening into the singing of a man, a mournful, wailing song, which was, at one and the same time, triumphant and funereal.

HE might have lain long asleep, hearing through darkness this ghostly music, had not the sound penetrated the deadening curtains enwrapped about his conscious self until it reached that far-distant entity and suddenly brought to it, in the mysterious fashion with which every one is familiar, a conviction not only that the singing was the crying of the blizzard but also that it really did come partly from the lips of a man.

Hard upon this conviction followed equally suddenly a bloodcurdling apprehension. Panic, born of his foreboding, shrieked to him: "Wake up! Wake up! You've guessed the truth! Wake up! Before it's too late!"

Another instant and, flung violently back by his alarm into the world of cold reality, he knew himself sitting up and staring wildly toward the corner of the room where Storm Child lay.

These facts sprang at him: Charlie, also roused from slumber, was glaring with equal horror toward Storm Child's corner; the sentry whom Cavanagh had posted, overcome by the heat and by fatigue, had fallen fast asleep; Storm Child sprawled in a huge pool of blood; and the singing that had reached the superintendent in his dreams was actually the singing of a man —for Storm Child was crooning his death song.

Afterward they had time to put two and two together. They found that Storm Child, discovering a jagged nail protruding from the wall at the point where he sat, had conceived the idea of severing an artery at his wrists upon it, had waited till the sentry's lapse into semiconsciousness gave him the chance he desired, and, when the fatal flow had developed to such a stage that the end was imminent, had begun his death song, without which no true Indian warrior ever went to a doom foreseen.

Joining in one fierce shout, Cavanagh and Charlie sprang to their feet together and rushed at Storm Child, evidently in some wild hope of snatching their prisoner back from the edge of the grave. Charlie was beside himself with fury, for he saw in this catastrophe his irretrievable defeat.

BUT they were too late. Already Storm Child's once glittering eyes were clouded and his proud head was sinking on his breast. Only for a moment, as his two enemies bent over him, was he able to rally himself sufficiently to fling his last defiance in their faces.

"So you see, I have beaten you, after all!" he whispered in Blackfoot, meeting Charlie's venomous glare with a sardonic and disdainful smile. "You have my—body, you—and your—Shagalasha! But me myself you shall never—prison—never hang! Keep my—body! *I* am—free!"

Then that strange, wild spirit, last of the great scouts, last of the Blackfoot chivalry, last of the fighting Indian warriors, to whom the thought of confinement or a shameful death was insufferable, on whom, according to his code of honor, there was no stain, passed back into the storm which gave him birth—victorious, unconquerable, and radiant with the glory of his manhood and his courage.

More stories by Mr. Steele will appear in future issues.

The Last of the Arenenos

By Ernest Douglas

Author of "The Black Stone from Heaven," "The Wooden Leg of Destiny," Etc.

Panchita, the Indian pony, executes the will of Iitoi, the Creator.

THE world seemed very beautiful to Pablo that June morning as he left his dome-shaped hut of mud-plastered brush and made his way up the stony bed of Chivo Cañon. Not so beautiful as it had been before Juana went away with Carlos, the one-eyed hunter from Fresnal, to become one of the Desert People, but a splendid and glorious world nevertheless.

Over the jagged shoulder of Pinacate rose the sun, sending gorgeous pencils of prismatic flame streaming across the tawny desert and over the still more arid sand dunes that billowed away in serried monotony to the west and the Gulf of California. Reverently Pablo faced toward the peak; for in a vast cave on its northeastern slope dwelt Iitoi, Creator and Big Brother of all the Papago people, of which the dying tribe of the Arenenos was a branch.

Had Iitoi forgotten his children? He had once saved the world from inundation and surely it would be a simple matter for him to extend his divine assistance to the Sand Papagos in this, their hour of greatest need.

Perhaps after all there was something in what Father Novatus, the priest at Quitovaquita, had said. Long ago Father Novatus had told him that Iitoi was only a legend, a myth; that help and guidance could come only from the true God whose image smiled benignly from above the altar in the little adobe church. Perhaps this was so.

The priest was very good and very wise, so once a year Pablo made a pilgrimage to Quitovaquita and prayed humbly that he might be the instrument through whom the strength and prestige of the unfortunate Arenenos should be restored. Yet always he hurried from there to lay a colored prayer stick and an eagle plume on the altar of Iitoi and repeat the same petition. For the ancient medicine men of the Papagos had also been very wise, and *they*

had said that Big Brother was omnipotent.

Pablo would take no chances. He would propitiate all gods and perhaps one of them would hear his prayers and grant his supplication.

THE cañon widened, became a little glen crowded with feathery mesquite trees from which depended long green bean pods that a month later would be white and sweet. He climbed over a rude fence of poles thrown across the chasm between sheer walls of rubescent porphyry. After emitting a keen yell that reverberated eerily from cliff to cliff, he paused to listen for hoofbeats. Panchita had been trained to answer that call.

But there was no answering whinny from the sleek, glossy sorrel mare, abandoned as a helpless colt by a passing American prospector, rescued by Pablo and reared tenderly to a magnificent maturity. Puzzled, he examined the fence, thinking that she might have broken through. No; it was intact at this end of the pasture. Perhaps at the other——

Dread clutched at his heart as he hurried forward through the thicket of thorny mesquites. Carlos! The Papago who had enticed Juana away from the last surviving remnant of her people had returned two days before with several of his tribesmen, hunting mountain sheep.

At sight of Panchita his single eye had glittered covetously and he had tried to buy her. He had offered money, much money; two silk shirts, purple and green; but to all his overtures Pablo had replied that the mare was not for sale.

He did not attempt to tell his unwelcome visitors how much she meant to him; they would not have understood. They treated their lean, undersized nags with barbarous cruelty, not as Father Novatus had taught him to treat Panchita.

The night before they had set out toward the southwest, explaining that they were going to Tjutjaka, on the gulf, for salt. But they could have circled in the darkness and come down the cañon to his pasture.

HIS worst misgivings were realized. In the farther fence was a gap where the poles had been torn away. Through that gap led the tracks of Panchita, to join the smaller tracks of the Papago ponies outside the inclosure.

Pablo's whole body shook with the violence of his anger. Swiftly he sped up the cañon, then along a steep trail that led to the open mesa above.

From the edge of the cliff he could see for miles and miles across a desolate waste of black lava, sparsely sentineled with cholla and organ-pipe cactus. No horsemen were in sight. Doubtless the thieves had been gone for hours.

Not content with taking his promised bride, Carlos had robbed him of his saddle horse. And of the two, this last was the most grievous affront. For foolish Juana, her head turned by dazzling stories of the wonders that she would behold and the life of ease that she would lead on the reservation in the shadow of Baboquivari, far up there in the land of the Americanos, had at least gone of her own free will. Panchita had been treacherously spirited away from him in the middle of the night.

Immediate pursuit was impossible. The Arenenos owned no horses save Panchita, only a few scrawny burros. Besides, certain preparations must be made before he could leave the seven or eight old men and women who, with himself, were the only surviving members of that once mighty tribe.

He returned thoughtfully to the village. Entering the council hut, the one that was covered with deerskins instead of brush, he pounded briskly upon a drum of rawhide stretched over the hollow trunk of an ironwood tree.

His story, quickly told, brought from his hearers many an exclamation of indignation, many a heartfelt malediction upon the head of the deceitful Carlos.

"Iitoi will punish him," predicted devout old José with a wise shake of his tremulous white head. "Stealing from other Papagos is forbidden, and we are Papagos the same as the Tóono Ootam, the Desert

People. You must go after the mare, Pablo."

"Go after the mare!" cackled Chona the Wasp, sarcastic and spiteful as always. "Juana, you mean."

"Hold your tongue, woman," José reproved sternly.

Pablo had never liked Chona. She it was who had brought him Juana's farewell message the night the girl ran away with Carlos. He suspected that Chona, a Yuma who had hated the dunes ever since she had been captured and brought home by an Areneno warrior, had encouraged Juana in her defection.

There was much fretful scolding from the women when it was decided that the village should be moved to the gulf, where fish were plentiful and easily caught, for the period of Pablo's absence.

"These hags have forgotten that they are only squaws," grumbled José. "When I was a young man a squaw knew her place. You should beat them, Pablo. I am no longer able."

Pablo merely grunted and went on loading the burros with the scanty possessions of the Arenenos.

For the old ones it was a long and bitter journey down to the big water. Pablo, though he was burning with impatience, did not hurry them. Frequently the party stopped to dig for camotes de los médanos, those starchy roots that grow only in the dunes of the Areneno country. When they arrived at the beach all were laden with enough camotes to relieve for a long time the diet of sea food that was in prospect until their hunter should return.

HIS withered dependents settled where they would be secure from hunger, Pablo took the trail that wound away northeastward through drifting sands, rugged mountains and blistered mesas toward Fresnal. He was armed with his precious rifle, but in order to conserve his meager supply of cartridges he carried a light bow and a quiver of arrows with which he killed quail, rabbits and other small game for food.

Resolutely he put Juana out of his thoughts. He would see her, most likely, and she would ask him for news of their homeland; but if Pablo had his way about it the conversation would be short. She belonged to Carlos and that was the end of that; Panchita did not belong to Carlos, and Pablo meant to have her at any cost.

That it did not occur to him to lie in wait on the outskirts of the Papago settlement, and murder Carlos the first time that he ventured forth alone, is but another evidence of the influence that Father Novatus had gained over his fierce and vengeful nature. No; he would appeal to the good Chief Santiago, famous for his wisdom and justice, who would see that his property was restored to him and the offender duly punished.

On the fourth morning he came to the cluster of adobe dwellings, garlanded with long strings of red peppers, which sprawls across the international border between Mexico and the United States and is known as Quitovaquita. A dismal and forlorn hamlet indeed, but a great and marvelous city in the eyes of the Areneno. Most magnificent of all the buildings was the church, for it was dazzlingly whitewashed outside and surmounted impressively by a gilded cross.

Father Novatus made him welcome and invited him to breakfast in the tiny rectory. As he ate the beans and porridge he explained his mission in the Papago tongue, which the grizzled padre well understood.

"Quite right! Quite right!" the priest approved, casting back his coarse brown robe for the sake of coolness and exposing a hairy, muscular chest. "Chief Santiago will see that justice is done. You are going about it in the right way, Pablo.

"I know that one-eyed Carlos. He is a trouble maker, dishonest and quarrelsome. I suppose you know that his other eye was gouged out in a fight while he was drunk.

"Why, he did not even bring Juana here for a Christian wedding. I was very sorry for that."

"He will not feed Panchita and will ride her to death," mourned Pablo, unwilling

to discuss Juana even with Father Novatus.

"That's right. You must get to Fresnal as quickly as possible, and you ought to have a horse. Let's see if the sergeant of rurales now stationed here will lend you one."

YES, I will lend you a horse, since Father Novatus says that you are trustworthy," assented Sergeant Abril. "Take either of those out there in the corral, and the spare saddle you will find in the jacal. I would go with you only those Americanos would make all kinds of trouble if they found a Mexican officer north of the border.

"Before you return, tell those Papagos for me that they must stay in their own country. They have done enough thieving down here in Sonora and hereafter I am going to turn back any that I see.

"They come looking for saguaro fruit, for salt, to hunt deer and sheep, but too often they go back with our cattle, our horses, or some other plunder. I have complained to the American line riders and they have promised to help me keep the Indians where they belong."

So, with a good horse under him, Pablo journeyed on toward Fresnal. His way lay along the border to Sonoita, another desert station even larger and more wonderful than Quitovaquita. Thence he angled northeastward once more, toward the majestic crags of empurpled Baboquivari, the holy mount upon which Iitoi has a second home.

The region through which he now forged as rapidly as he dared to push the sergeant's mettlesome bay was still a desert but a little less grim and forbidding than that around Pinacate. It had more of vivid color, more of life. For many miles he rode through great forests of giant saguaro cactus, so evenly spaced that they seemed to have been planted by the hand of man.

Birds darted about, pecking busily at the redly luscious fruits on the high cactus crowns. Whenever he paused to rest his horse, Pablo would find a long rib of some fallen saguaro, punch down a few of those fruits, and enjoy a feast fit for Iitoi himself.

At length the brownish-green greasewood gave way to grayish-green sagebrush. Far away, between himself and Baboquivari, a ribbon of darker green marked the course of the arroyo beside which lay the Papago *temporal*—settlement occupied only part of the year—called Fresnal.

He crossed an irrigation ditch, now dry, and jogged along a narrow lane between fences of mesquite posts that inclosed patches of rudely cultivated watermelons, pumpkins, maize and wheat. A girl of sixteen or so, balancing on her head a reed basket filled with saguaro figs and on one shoulder the long pole with which they had been brought to earth, eyed him curiously and invitingly. Pablo mumbled *"Pahp tu heh?"*—the universal Papago greeting that means "Where are you going?"—and pressed on without waiting for an answer.

IN the gathering dusk he made out half a dozen horsemen about a log corral full of milling broncbos, and he rode straight toward them. His heart leaped at sight of Panchita. The noble sorrel stood just outside the inclosure; upon her sat Carlos in indolent attitude, one leg hooked carelessly over the horn of his saddle.

Panchita, her attention caught by the approaching hoofbeats, tiredly lifted her graceful head. Pablo hallooed softly, the call that he had taught her to answer. With a joyful neigh she wheeled, ran to him and nuzzled his knee.

Carlos, his single eye blazing malevolently, hauled her away with a vicious yank on the cruel Spanish bit and brought the blood from her flanks with long-shanked, needle-sharp spurs.

Pablo quivered with indignation. With deep concern he noted that Panchita was thin, that her once shiny coat was rough and caked with sweat and grime. Plainly she had had much hard usage, little feed, and no care.

"Have you told Chief Santiago how you came by your new horse?" Pablo demanded.

The other Papagos were crowding around; among them were the young men who had accompanied Carlos on his trip into Mexico. These began to laugh mockingly and Carlos' features were overspread with a sly, triumphant grin.

"Where is Chief Santiago's *ki?*" the Areneno went on. "I would speak with him at once."

"Santiago has been dead since Oám Marsat, the month of the yellow moon," said a Papago whom he did not know. "Carlos' father, Victorio, was elected chief only yesterday."

Pablo was stunned by this news. All his carefully considered plans gone for naught! The friend upon whom he had counted was with Iitoi and in his stead reigned the father of the very thief he had traveled so far to denounce. Better if he had killed Carlos from ambush and taken by stealth that which belonged to him, as his father and grandfather would have done under similar circumstances. Yes; the old Indian ways were the best ways, after all.

His head went up suddenly. "Listen! This mare which Carlos, the one-eyed one, claims as his own was stolen from me. I go to lay my case before Victorio. If he is a true chief he will see that justice is done, even though his own son is the thief."

THERE were plenty to show him to the house of the new chief. A few steps brought him to a brush jacal, or open shed, under which the aged but still vigorous Victorio sat enthroned in a rough chair of mesquite boughs and rawhide. Word of his coming had been carried ahead and the chief signaled him to dismount.

Pablo stood with reins in hand and voiced his complaint in brief but forceful language.

"What of this, Carlos?" queried Victorio at the close of the recital.

"He lies," Carlos replied sullenly. "I gave him two silk shirts, one purple and one green, for the mare."

"Does she look like a mare that one would exchange for a pair of shirts?" Pablo asked hotly.

"It is well known that the Arenenos are liars," the chief interjected. "It was for lying and stealing that Iitoi banished them to the médanos."

A general laugh arose at this. Pablo flushed under the insult.

"The rurales tell a different story," he countered. "I am charged to tell you that the Papagos are no longer to cross the border because *you* are thieves. That is the word I bring from Sergeant Abril, at Quitovaquita, who lent me this horse."

"He lies again," Carlos asserted uneasily. Victorio said nothing at all. The crowd was sobered, for it was true that the big bay belonged to Abril. Loss of their ancient privilege of crossing and recrossing the international line at will would be a serious matter.

"Come on over and let the rurales' bullets show you whether I lie," Pablo challenged. "But am I to have no chance to prove that the sorrel mare was stolen from my pasture?"

"Of course," responded the chief. "Be at the *ki* of Castillo, the medicine man, an hour from now. He shall weave a spell and Iitoi shall tell us the truth."

Filled with despair, the Areneno turned away. He had no faith whatever that Big Brother would speak through Castillo, for he knew that Victorio and the medicine man had long been bosom friends. For decades the primitive system of settling disputes through the divinations of native priests had been practically abandoned and it was plainly being revived by Victorio for the purpose of evading the issue. Justice, if it came at all, must come in some manner that Pablo could not yet foresee.

Although in conformity with the expressed opinion of their leader the Papagos regarded him with more or less hostility and suspicion, they are naturally a hospitable race and he received invitations to spend the night from several families.

One of these he accepted. He unsaddled his horse, watered him at the pond formed by damming the near-by arroyo, and tied him to a post beside a stack of wheat hay.

Throughout the meal of parched corn and boiled jack rabbit, Pablo was anything but a talkative guest. His thoughts were on his own troubles, trying to devise some plan to meet the new emergency.

The rambling conversation of his host was mainly of the great San Juan Day fiesta that Indians from all over that vast desert empire called Papagueria were to hold at Fresnal on the morrow. There would be many games and races; the saguaro wine was ready for a great sacramental debauch in the evening; but as usual the principal event would be the chicken pulling."

"Carlos will win," the Papago forecast confidently. "He is stronger than the other young men and has won for two years now. This time he will ride the swift mare that he brought home from Sonora, so no one will be able to take the rooster away from him."

"That is true," Pablo agreed. "As long as he rides my mare, no one will catch him."

They made their way to the medicine lodge. Victorio, Carlos, Carlos' friends and a hundred others were there ahead of them.

A lane was opened; the Areneno bent low and entered the smoky interior. There he faced the medicine man, whose countenance had been grotesquely tattooed with a needle that left great blue ridges radiating from the nose.

"This is the Sand Papago," stated the chief, making no effort to conceal his scorn.

Castillo stirred on his pile of blankets, opened wide his piercing black eyes and regarded Pablo steadily.

"You claim the mare that Carlos, the son of our mighty chief, is riding?"

"She was stolen from my pasture, at night."

"And you, Carlos; you say that you bought her?"

"I gave him two silk shirts for her."

"She is worth twenty shirts," Pablo declared.

A murmur went up from the assemblage. The Areneno must indeed have been very foolish to exchange such an animal for *kok camisas,* even though they were most entrancingly beautiful purple and green ones. Carlos was not popular and sentiment was swinging in favor of his accuser.

"Silence!" thundered the chief.

"I shall ask Iitoi," Castillo stated. "Iitoi, who knows everything and never lies."

Whereupon he removed from a box several colored clay images of various animals—a horse, a deer, a mule, a cow, a mountain sheep—and arranged them before him. The horse, which was of a deep orange hue, was in the center of the group.

OVER them he waved an eagle plume, and chanted a pæan in praise of Big Brother. After a quarter of an hour he laid aside the feather and sprinkled his effigies with sacred *tuña* seed meal. He faced toward Baboquivari, then toward Pinacate, and intoned:

"O Iitoi, Big Brother of the Papagos, to which of these young men does the sorrel mare belong?"

To his ear he pressed the orange horse and listened intently to the words of the god, inaudible to all but himself.

"Big Brother says that the mare belongs to the man who wins the chicken pull tomorrow," announced the medicine man.

Carlos and his cronies laughed triumphantly. They were positive that this was tantamount to a verdict in the Papago's favor. Victorio frowned at them but did not appear greatly displeased. Pablo turned to the chief.

"Will I be allowed to contest in the chicken-pulling match?" he asked.

"Certainly. It is open to all the young men of our tribe, and though you are only an Areneno you are not barred."

"And will Carlos be allowed to ride the stolen mare?"

"Take care what you say. Until you prove by winning the chicken pull that the

mare really was stolen, he does with her as he likes."

THE gathering dispersed, most of the Papagos going to complete preparations for the coming festivities. Pablo went home with his host, more troubled and despondent than before. He declined to sleep in the house on the blanket that was offered him, but threw himself upon the straw beside the haystack, near the bay horse.

There he lay under the golden moon and tossed with seething brain until his attention was attracted by the cracking of a dry stick among the fragrant desert willows beyond the fence.

"Pablo!" came a soft, entreating voice. Then again: "Pablo!"

His heart gave a great bound. It was Juana!

He arose and approached the fence. She stood just outside, her slender and graceful form half within the shadow of the willows. By the brilliant glow of the moon he could see that her face, once so smooth and round, was thin and saddened. He did not need the light of day to know that the merry glint had vanished from the dark depths of her eyes.

She was dressed just as any other Papago squaw—shirt waist fashioned of muslin flour bags and a shapeless calico skirt almost long enough to hide her bare feet. So this was the costly and lovely raiment that Carlos, according to Chona's report, had promised the Areneno maid.

"I could not wait until to-morrow to see you, Pablo. Even though he will beat me if he learns that I have come to you. He is now drinking mescal with his friends; but he may come home at any time, so I must hurry."

"Does he beat you often, Juana?"

"He—he treats me like one of his horses. But tell me of the old ones, Pablo. How are Chona and José and the others?"

"All are well except Cuca, who died of chills in the spring. They miss you, Juana."

"I hope that I can go back to see them some time, but he becomes very angry whenever I mention it and says that I only want to see you."

"Have you heard what brings me to Fresnal?"

"Yes. I—I hope you win."

With that whispered confession she turned and fled. Pablo sought his place in the straw with something more to think about.

SAN JUAN Day dawned hot and cloudless, but the atmosphere was heavy with a sultriness that presaged the summer rains now almost due. From a sky blue as lupine blossoms the sun glared pitilessly upon Fresnal.

Oppressive weather, however, had no effect upon the spirits of the Papagos, who were early astir. While the women cooked beef and baked tortillas of corn meal, wheat or mesquite-bean flour that they had been grinding in stone metates for a week before, the men welcomed arrivals from Santa Rosa, San Xavier, Comobabi, Komalik, La Nariz, and even more distant rancherias. Everywhere were brown children, breechclouted or completely naked, comparing cheap toys and other holiday gifts from their elders. Children, and dogs—big dogs, little dogs, hairless dogs and woolly dogs, all very lean and very hungry.

There was much talk of the chicken pulling, but the virtual certainty that Carlos would again be winner detracted largely from public interest in that contest. Carlos himself helped to keep the dust of the village thoroughfares flying by galloping furiously hither and yon, not on Panchita but on one of his ratlike ponies. The mare was being saved for the afternoon and, it was understood, would not even be entered in the running races.

Pablo wandered among the crowds and moved with them to the sandy race track that lay in the sagebrush just out of Fresnal on the north. He gave scant heed to the sly glances cast in his direction by Papago maidens. Juana he saw at a distance several times, always scurrying about in obedience to some peremptory order of her haughty and impatient hus-

band. She was decked out in no rainbow-hued serape, no gaudy glass jewelry, no yellow or lavender Mother Hubbard such as the other matrons flaunted so proudly.

In his present anxious state the horse-racing, foot-racing, cockfighting and óla games were insufficient to engage Pablo's serious attention. After observing them perfunctorily for a time he slipped back to the town.

Midafternoon saw him again at the fiesta grounds, this time astride Sergeant Abril's bay gelding.

"Ah! The Areneno has a fine big horse himself," he heard some one remark. "Perhaps he will win after all."

But Pablo knew better. In neither speed nor stamina was the bay the equal of Panchita. If he won it would be over a man better mounted, more experienced in the game, perhaps with greater physical strength.

Carlos had changed off to the mare and from her back he leered defiantly at his foe. They knew, those two, that for them the chicken pull was to be a titanic struggle.

All the other contests were over and the entrants in the closing event of the daylight program were called to the front. Nearly a hundred responded—vigorous, lusty, hard-riding, reckless young men who in a previous generation would have been fierce, painted warriors. Above them all towered Pablo and Carlos, not because there were no others taller but because they had horses that overtopped the spiritless, half-starved, overladen Papago cayuses.

Those who had guns deposited them with a representative of the chief. Then a hush fell over the spectators, lounging about under sheds of green cottonwood boughs, as Victorio explained the rules of the chicken pull. Those rules were changed slightly from year to year at Fresnal, thus adding a spice of novelty to the pastime that from time immemorial has been the favorite sport of the Papagos.

"I do not have to tell you to battle fairly for the fowl," began Victorio. "You all know that the use of stones, reatas or weapons is forbidden. Only your own skill and strength, the speed and strength of your horses, may you use.

"You see the big house that we have built down there by the arroyo. The first man to carry the chicken in at its door will be counted winner."

"I shall carry the *gallo* to my own house," boasted Carlos.

"That is allowed, if you can do it. Anybody else may do the same; but you will probably find this *ki* far enough away."

"Not for me. I carry the bird where I choose. No one can stop me."

Carlos wantonly raked Panchita from rump to shoulder with his spurs and as she pirouetted madly in her pain Pablo gritted his teeth with rage almost uncontainable.

"Nihónik!" Carlos called, waving commandingly to Juana. "Go to my house and be there ready to cook the chicken for my supper. Go now, for I will follow soon with the bird."

Without protest Juana left the throng and trudged wearily toward a hut on a low hill half a mile or so west of the main settlement.

THIRTY yards along the track a black rooster had been buried loosely in the sand, only its head and neck sticking out. Victorio signaled to a youth, who galloped his horse by the cock, bent low in an attempt to seize the tormented chanticleer by the head and drag it free. He missed by a foot and a great shout of derisive laughter went up.

A dozen others similarly failed. Pablo was pressing forward, eager for his chance, but Victorio ignored him.

Finally the chief motioned to his son. Carlos swept up the track at terrific speed. The Papagos gasped with admiration when it was seen that his hand trailed in the dust forty feet before he reached the rooster. No circus performer could have done a more magnificent bit of riding. Surely he could not miss the target of that bobbing head.

But when she was almost upon the chicken, Panchita suddenly snorted and

shied sharply to the left. Her rider rolled ignominiously upon the earth.

Pablo was the only one not surprised at this mishap. He remembered that on his pilgrimages into Quitovaquita Panchita had betrayed a deep-rooted aversion, amounting to an insane fear, toward all feathered creatures. Once she had bolted in terror when a hen clucked by the roadside, and Pablo had foreseen what would happen when she saw this fowl half buried in her path.

Volunteers quickly rounded up Panchita and returned her to Carlos, who was unhurt but frantic with rage. He jerked savagely on the torturing bit until crimson spume dripped from her lips, and fell to lashing the mare with a quirt.

This display of brutality was cut short, however, for the very next attempt to disinter the miserable victim of this Papago holiday was successful. A young man from Sauceda careered madly across the mesa, triumphantly whirling the black cock aloft by its now broken neck.

After him tore the other contestants in a whooping, yelling mass. Ere he could manage to point his pony's head eastward toward the *ki* that was the goal of this savage competition, he was cut off and surrounded by antagonists who sought to wrench the bedraggled carcass from his grasp. He was seized around the middle, almost unhorsed, and lost the gory trophy to another.

From hand to hand passed the chicken until only a few feathers, some shreds of flesh and the two legs remained. Pablo, at first on the edge of the heaving, milling circle of bewildered horses and straining men, was now working toward the center. The bay, once he recovered from his initial uneasiness, shouldered the ponies aside and moved steadily ahead.

Swift as the wind a lone rider broke out of the circle and dashed westward. It was Carlos—Carlos on Panchita—and in his upraised hand he bore the frayed remnant of the rooster.

But he had only a moment's start in advance of Pablo, who had perceived that Carlos was about to wrest the cock from its latest possessor. Right at the heels of the sorrel pounded the bay, and being in better condition he was almost as fleet as she. In less than a minute the others were left far behind.

Slowly the mare drew ahead. For all the abuse that she had endured, she was still a trifle faster than Pablo's borrowed mount. He would have to try a stratagem that he had planned out in his sleepless hours of the night before.

Loud and clear rang the call, the caressing summons that in colthood Panchita had been taught meant for her a camote, an ear of corn, or some other dainty. She stuck out her forefeet and Carlos shot over her head. Before he could rise, Pablo had swept by and snatched the chicken from his fingers.

Superb horseman that he was, Carlos did not relinquish the reins. He was back in the saddle almost instantly and in hot pursuit of the Areneno, now far to the south and bending his course to the east.

Roweled mercilessly by those lacerating spurs, Panchita plunged ahead with a burst of speed such as had never before been seen nor dreamed of on the field of Fresnal. In only a few seconds she carried Carlos even with Pablo, beyond him.

The Areneno swung southward; again he was headed. Another instant and Carlos would grapple with him, would at least hold him there until the other contestants came up. The chance of victory that for a moment had been his was gone, gone because of the unbelievable swiftness and endurance of his own mare.

PABLO resolved that if he could not have Panchita Carlos should not have her. He would toss the chicken to another and wrestle with his enemy until it had been carried into the *ki* by the arroyo. He would fight Carlos with his fists as the white men fight and be avenged at least in some measure for the wrongs that the one-eyed Papago had heaped upon him, upon Panchita—upon Juana.

Something swished through the air and struck Pablo's right wrist, the wrist of the hand with which he held the fowl. It was

the heavy honda at the end of Carlos' rawhide reata.

A stream of red-hot lead seared the whole arm, to be succeeded by a deadly numbness. His nerveless fingers relinquished the cock. He grasped at it with his left hand but in the intensity of his pain he was too slow.

While Pablo was still wondering dully whether his arm was broken, Carlos retrieved the chicken's fragments and darted on toward his own house with no one to hinder. He had flagrantly violated the rules by using his reata; but no one except Pablo had seen and even if the Areneno complained he would not be credited.

Pablo followed, hot with the lust to kill. New life was tingling down into his paralyzed hand; he could already move the thumb.

With his fists, with stones, with anything that he could reach he would slay this blustering cheat who had robbed him of Juana, robbed him of Panchita, and won the chicken pull by the foulest of treachery.

He would leave of him less than was now left of the black cock. The lying, strutting bully should not live to boast of his victory around the ollas of saguaro wine that night.

As Carlos whirled up to the door of his hut his figure was silhouetted sharply against the rose and gold sky line of the dying day. Juana was obediently standing there to greet him. She would boil the remnant of fowl and with the whole tribe applauding the champion would drink the resulting broth, for such was the custom.

Drunk with triumph, Carlos threw himself off Panchita. As he did so he waved the reeking rooster in the air; with it he brushed her nose.

Startled, terrified at this horrible thing being thrust almost into her foaming mouth, Panchita reared and struck out blindly. One hoof caught Carlos upon the temple and crushed in the skull like a rotten pumpkin.

He sank to earth, writhed spasmodically, lay still. A trickle of dark blood was sucked down by the thirsty sand.

WHEN Pablo came up Juana was standing over her dead husband. Her face was gray, but immobile, expressionless.

"She did it," Juana said, indicating the still quivering Panchita.

"Yes, I saw."

"I am glad. He was a wicked man. I shall not even wail for him."

Not wail for her *nikún!* Could she mean what she said? It was unthinkable that a Papago widow should not wail loud and long for her departed spouse.

"They will blame you, Pablo. I shall tell them the truth but Victorio will not believe and he will kill you anyway. They will be here in a moment. Fly! Take Panchita and go."

"And what of you?"

"I chose my path, Pablo. I left you, our people, to come away with one who tired of me, lied to me, beat me and shamed me. I heard Castillo say that Iitoi will not break the long drought because the Papagos have not offered up a human sacrifice in more than two hundred moons. I shall be that sacrifice."

"You shall not. You shall come with me back to the old ones, back to Pinacate and the great sea. We shall be married by Father Novatus in the white man's way. Our children and their children shall people the *médanos* as they were peopled before the black plague came upon our tribe. If Iitoi requires a sacrifice, let them kill a calf.

"They can never overtake these horses and after we reach Quitovaquita we shall be safe, for the rurales and the Americanos will turn them back. Come!"

Without waiting for the joyful consent that trembled on her lips he bent low, seized her around the waist and swept her into Carlos' saddle.

And so the last of the Arenenos rode side by side into the sunset, a vast caldron of iridescent flame that for them symbolized the joy and the glory of the new life that lay before them.

More stories by Mr. Douglas in early issues.

Cain

By Frederick F. Van de Water

Author of "Lo, the Tough Indian," and other stories.

A diary of doom in the Northern snows.

MARVIN MacROY bets Hugh MacRoy the best dinner to be bought in the city of Seattle that this is October 28th. Hugh MacRoy bets Marvin MacRoy that to-day is October 29th.

Until Marvin's leg improves and we can push on through the pass to the Mounted's station on Black River, I shall keep record of the days for the sake of that dinner and the confusion of Marvin. Self-justification is his chief deadly sin. He never whimpered when I packed him up the slope and into this cabin, though I fell down twice with him on my back and must have hurt his ankle hideously. He grinned when I cut his boot and sock away. There was pluck in that grin but there was triumph, too.

He swore steadily while I bandaged the ankle, but, when it was over, he said: "I told you so!" and seemed almost glad it had happened.

And there you have him. He wanted to wait for the government mail team. I was sure we could get across and down to the Black River substation before the first heavy snowfall.

I said we could do it in two days and thereby save a week getting outside. He said we couldn't, but he came along with me, partly because we are brothers and he would not let me go alone; partly, I think, just to prove his point. We would have made it, too, if he hadn't tripped and hurt his ankle. I'm not at all sure he doesn't think it a lucky spill, since it proved his contention.

In a way, luck was with us, for on the hillside, just where the dark firs meet the raw slope of shale, stood this cabin. Marvin was pointing it out to me when he stumbled and fell.

If the snowshoes he was carrying on his back hadn't dug their ends into the ground and checked him, he would have gone avalanching down into the rapids of the Potlatch. As it was, we all but went in

together while I tried to pull him back to safety. Then, when he found he couldn't stand, I packed him up here.

This is evidently a way house for the mail-team drivers. It is a solid little log cabin, with a big bunk along each wall and a sheet-iron stove at the end away from the door. Things could be worse. There is plenty firewood stacked beside the stove, a sack of flour, another of beans, a whole side of bacon and a tin of tea. I found a box of candles and a can of sirup on the shelf and, under the bunk I'm using, this battered old account book with half the pages torn out and the rest blank. All the comforts of home.

Marvin has been asleep for at least an hour. His breathing and the quarreling waters of the Potlatch are the only sounds. It is growing colder and I have just spread one of my blankets over him. I shan't need it. Besides, if I get chilly it will wake me up to stoke the fire again. I shall be a sort of human thermostat.

If the weather holds fair, the mail team should be along in forty-eight hours. We'll go out the rest of the way with it. So ends this day, according to my reckoning October 29th.

OCTOBER 30th.—We're in for it. It snowed all night. It is still snowing and the temperature must be well below zero. The wind pushes against the cabin until the logs creak and snap.

Twice to-day, the door has rattled as though some one were struggling to get in. Both times, I have opened it and found nothing except flying snow that stings like a sand blast. The world is a gray whirlpool and noon was only a dim twilight.

Marvin's ankle seems more swollen. It hurts him tremendously when he moves. I think it needs cold compresses, but he insists that hot applications will help more.

This morning, while we were arguing, the fire died down. When I built it again, it wouldn't burn. The place filled with smoke and made us both cough. This hurt Marvin's ankle. I was too busy to mind the things he called me.

I finally discovered the cause of the trouble. The upper end of the stovepipe was clogged with snow. I managed to climb upon the roof of the cabin where it sets in against the slope, and clear the vent, a terrific job.

This is like no storm I have ever seen. There is animosity in it. It catches you, wrestles with you, trips you, flogs you with gusts of snow, tries to smother you with the force of its wind. Everything is swirling white. You can't even see the firs behind the cabin.

I was shaking and almost all in when I got back, but the fire drew and I boiled snow water and, when it had cooled a little, bathed Marvin's ankle. I had no energy left to argue the superior merits of ice packs for inflammation. He was feverish to-night, probably the result of the self-prescribed treatment.

For breakfast, flapjacks, bacon and tea; for dinner, tea, flapjacks and bacon; for supper, bacon, tea and flapjacks. Marvin ate heartily and I saw that he got plenty. I can get along on a little. It is best to be economical until we are sure how long we will be held here.

OCTOBER 31st.—The snow stopped in the night. Clear to-day but fearfully cold. The Potlatch has frozen over and is buried beneath the snow. Outdoors is all one vast, austere stretch of white with blue streaks and pools of shadow and fir trees that stand like black pagodas.

Marvin's ankle is worse and I have been using cold compresses upon it, over his protest. It may be that bones are broken, but it is too swollen for either of us to determine. The pain has made him nervous and impatient. I have found it hard not to swear at him in return. He complains about the food. I suppose he expects salads and chicken en casserole. I've put on a pot of beans. That will vary our diet a little.

NOVEMBER 1st.—It is snowing again this morning. The drifts have doubled in size since last night. I think the cold compresses have reduced the

swelling on Marvin's ankle a little, though he swears they haven't. It hurts more, he says. That is just his stubbornness.

Our boredom is enormous. Men cannot live by bread alone—nor by bacon, beans and flapjacks. I cook the meals, which breaks the monotony for me a little. Marvin's only recreation is to eat. I let the poor guy have all he wants, for the rest of the time he is flat on his back in his bunk. He has no escape from his boredom. Hence, we squabble. There is some excitement in quarrels, at least.

I broke off here and played the silly ticktacktoo game with Marvin until we both lost our tempers. We have sung duets until our throats grew hoarse. I have made a checkerboard on the back of this book and we have had a tournament with beans for men. I won and Marvin said he was too tired to play any more.

He also grew rather poisonous about my appearance. He said I needed a shave and a bath. I retorted that he needed a mirror. Then he lay and whistled. I think he whistles because he knows it gets my goat, but I paid no attention.

NOVEMBER 2nd.—We played ticktacktoo again to-day. It amused Marvin but when I had beaten him five times in a row, he sat up angrily and accused me of cheating. We had it hot and heavy for a few minutes. Then he gulped and begged my pardon.

Poor old buddy! His nerves are pretty well shot to pieces. This burial alive is hard on both of us. If one could sleep three fourths of the time, it would be easier, but hours of absolute inactivity stretch out until they are days in length.

It is harder on Marvin than it is on me. I should remember that and hold my patience and my tongue. The trouble is that squabbling has become to us an indulgence, a dissipation. We turn from infinite boredom to the only vice within reach. Blackguarding each other is all in our present situation that guarantees a thrill.

Marvin just asked me what I was doing. I read my entries aloud, omitting anything but the most complimentary references to himself. I don't want another scene as humiliating as that we had this morning.

When I had finished, he cleared his throat and after stammering a little, proposed that if it is clear to-morrow, I should get on my snowshoes and try to make the substation at Black River. I refused to leave him, though he urged me.

"You're a good guy, Hughie," he said at last.

He was evidently touched and I was ashamed. It is not fraternal affection that keeps me from trying to get through. Daily, Marvin grows more exasperating and difficult to handle. I might go if it weren't for the fear of what men would say if any accident should happen to him: "Hugh MacRoy? Oh, yes, the chap who saved his hide and left his brother to freeze!" No. I stick.

Death could not be stiller or colder. I heard wolves just now, very far away, giving tongue across the snow: "Ooo! Woo! Awoo!" I shall change the compress on Marvin's foot and turn in. His beard is growing rapidly. It is amazing how it coarsens his face.

NOVEMBER 3rd.—I was too numb and shaken yesterday to make any entry here. It is snowing again and it is luck alone that has kept me from lying out there in the black void where the hissing flakes are swelling the drifts. That might not have been unmixed misfortune for either of us.

Marvin began it. He grumbled about his breakfast. We quarreled violently and he relapsed into sullen silence. He has a maddening habit of lying in his bunk, hands above his head, whistling and grinning sardonically at the ceiling by turns. If his ankle were well, that scornful grin would come off his face. I don't let him see how it irritates me. That would please him.

When I opened the door to throw out the breakfast scraps, a deer went galloping down the slope, belly deep through the drifts, throwing waves of snow aside like a speed boat. I grabbed my snowshoes and picked up the rifle.

Marvin asked me what I was doing. I was in a hurry and paid him back for some of the things he had said a half hour before by snapping: "None of your damned business," and slamming the door. I heard him call as I started off. I did not answer. It was cold but still, and the sun shone feebly in a milky sky.

I made good speed on the trail. Twice I caught sight of him, floundering along, and the second time, fired. From the way he went zigzagging off through the snow, his tail clamped tight, I knew I had wounded him.

I tried to run, tripped and fell. I had a hideous time getting to my feet, for the snow was soft as feathers. When I was erect once more, I searched for my rifle. It was gone; buried deep somewhere in the drift.

It began to snow gently as I dug for it. Then it grew dark. I heard a roar coming down through the firs like a railway train approaching. I had not taken five steps back along my trail when the storm struck.

The back track endured only a few minutes. Then the wind rubbed it out completely. If the blast had not been behind me, I shouldn't be writing this. It drove me uphill, rather like a scrap of newspaper in a gale. I remember lying relaxed after I had fallen for perhaps the tenth time and crying bitterly at the thought of getting up and going on.

Yet, eventually, I did, more because of a queer deep-rooted feeling that it was the thing to do than for any active fear of death. If I had fallen again, I should probably have stayed there. As it was, I blundered into an obstacle in the noise and blackness and putting out my mitten, I felt the cabin eaves.

The next thing I recall clearly is sitting panting on the edge of my bunk while Marvin screamed at me.

"I was chasing a deer," I explained.

He called me things for which I should have killed another man.

"You were going to leave me here, you yellow swine," he stammered hysterically. "You were trying to get away and save your own filthy hide and the storm drove you back. It would have served you damn well right if you were out there now, stiff and cold."

I was all in. I heard him hopping about the cabin on one leg, whimpering and cursing, but it didn't seem worth while to open my eyes or raise my head. Then I heard him chopping something with my ax.

"There," he said at last, "we'll play this out even from now on. There'll be no more deer chasing."

I found later that he had broken both pairs of snowshoes. I have tried to explain to him, but he still insists that I intended to desert him.

He got his own supper. I was too tired to try and cook and he offered me no food. Before I turned in I took my blanket I had given him from his bunk. I shall do him no favors. I rather hoped he would protest but he said nothing. This morning when I woke, I found he had been up and had divided the food into two piles.

"We'll feed ourselves," he said. "I'm tired of getting only a third of all you cook."

I am certain now that he has been shirking. He seems able to get around with little difficulty, despite his ankle. He dresses it himself, now. We have not spoken to-day since early morning. The storm continues.

EARLY in November.—I lost my watch falling down in the storm. Marvin's has run down. Neither of us has any clear idea of time, now. The hellish snow keeps pouring down. You sleep with the witch cries of the storm in your ears, and waking, go to the door to find the outside inky or a gray whirl.

It is queer and disturbing not to know whether this is to-day or to-morrow, last night or to-night. My stomach has been bothering me. So has Marvin's so my earlier suspicion that he had put something in my share of the food is probably wrong. We have not exchanged a word for ages. He is whistling as he lies in his bunk. I have been snuffling deliberately. I know he hates that sound.

EARLY in November.—This morning Marvin broke down and cried. Said I kept staring at him and he could stand it no longer. I found myself bawling too. It was a silly performance, but we shook hands and apologized.

The truth of the matter is that this continual association at close quarters has worked on the nerves of each of us. I shall never trust my brother again, but until this storm lets up and the mail team comes through, it is better to conceal my feelings for the sake of peace. His ankle certainly is better though he insists it isn't.

We had a dinner of reconciliation together. His table manners have grown atrocious. He has the effrontery to object because, he says, I smack my lips when eating.

LATER.—Indigestion roused me and I lay and listened to the wolves howling like Jeremiahs out in the darkness. Marvin woke too and we talked for a while in the darkness. We seem to get on more amicably when we can't see each other.

LATER.—I took a nap after dinner and woke to find Marvin sitting up with this book open on his lap. He had stolen it from under my pillow while I slept. I did not strike him as he insists I did, but only pushed his head back when he hugged the book to his chest.

He should be thankful, considering what he called me, that I did not kill him. He has a foul tongue. If we ever get out of this place, there will be a settlement, so help me God.

LATER.—Discovered that Marvin's pistol, our only weapon, now that the rifle is gone, no longer hangs in the holster beside his bunk. I think he keeps it under his pillow. At first, this did not startle me, but second thought showed me how serious it was. Of course, I have not shown that I notice its absence. I must be careful.

After I blew out the candle, I picked up the ax quietly and carried it to bed with me. For a long time I lay there, hardly daring to move. Each time he stirred, I was afraid. The night was still. I became certain he was awake, sitting up in the blackness, holding the gun in his hand.

Later, when he began to snore, I felt relief for a while, but then I was deviled by the thought that perhaps I could get the gun away if I crept across and jumped him suddenly. I had almost made up my mind to try when I realized the snore was probably a trap he has set for me. He obviously is going crazy. Any one who could see him would believe that.

Marvin MacRoy who spent the summer of 1923 on the government Stone Range survey is five feet eleven inches in height, weight, when in condition, one hundred and sixty-five pounds; age, twenty-eight. His complexion is fair; hair, brown; beard, at present, reddish and stringy; eyes, gray. There is a dark mole on his left cheek, near the nostril. His manner is sometimes pleasant but he is subject to violent fits of temper and sullenness. His home address is Woodhurst, New Jersey, U. S. A.

I shall hide this book and tell him I have burned it. If it is found hereafter, I charge the finder to accuse my brother of my murder. I, Hugh MacRoy, solemnly declare that Marvin MacRoy intends to kill me and has been plotting for some time against my life.

LATER.—It is difficult to write, for I am still shaky and sick. It may be that this will steady me a little. Besides, it will be better to set down everything that occurred so that I can report the matter coherently to the troopers at Black River. Marvin MacRoy is dead. He shot himself by accident. God rest his soul.

For a long time I had been watching him carefully. I had been afraid he was going insane. Somewhere in his bunk he had hidden his pistol and I knew he was planning to kill me. I pretended not to notice and went about the cabin as usual, though several times my nerve was close to breaking.

At length the strain became unbearable and I deliberately put my life in my poor brother's hands. I sat down on the edge of his bunk and talked to him, slowly and gently. I told him quite simply that I knew he intended to kill me. I begged him to remember that we were, after all, brothers. I adjured him, by all he loved, to throw the gun away.

He wept. I patted his shoulder and begged him to trust me. He clung to my hand like a frightened child.

"We've been through hell together, Hugh," he said. "We've both been at fault. We'll begin all over again. To show I'm in earnest, I'll give you the——"

I don't believe he finished that sentence. As well as I can remember, those were his last words. This happened just after I had risen. I do not know the time or the date. It was daylight, some time in early November, and the cabin was cold because I had only just stirred up the fire.

He reached down below the blankets and started to pull out the revolver. He held it by the muzzle. The hammer must have caught in the folds of a blanket.

I heard the explosion and thought he had tried to shoot me. His body contracted suddenly and then relaxed. He turned his head. There was a look of astonishment in his eyes. That was all. The bullet penetrated his throat, just below the chin point, and ranged upward. He died almost instantly.

I shall now pack up sufficient grub to carry me through, contrive a pair of snowshoes out of the four that poor Marvin smashed and try to get across the pass to the Black River substation.

I have pulled the blanket up over Marvin's face. Otherwise, I have not touched the body. The pistol is on the floor, where it fell when it went off. There it will remain until the police arrive to investigate. Once the fire is out, the cold will preserve the body.

It has been clear to-day. If the weather holds, I should have no difficulty in getting through to Black River, always providing the snowshoes are not hopelessly smashed.

LATER.—When poor Marvin broke the snowshoes, he did a complete and thorough job. I doubt whether I can reconstruct a pair out of the four. My hands tremble so that it is hard to work surely. To complicate matters further, it has begun to snow again, very quietly, very steadily. The stillness is so deep that my ears ring like dynamos.

There is a strange serenity in the cabin to-night, though a dead man lies in the bunk across from where I write. For the first time in I don't know how many days, peace is here, a sad, solemn tranquillity. Outside, the snow pours down through the blackness in silence. The sound of my pencil seems the only noise in the world. Strange that with a dead man in the opposite bunk, I should look forward with confidence to dreamless sleep to-night.

LATER.—I have worked for hours on the snowshoes. The task is hopeless, due to the fact that I'm jumpy and nervous. I have had a bad night, with little sleep and that filled with dreams.

The wind came up just after I blew out the candle and turned in. I heard it rushing down on us from the hills, a far-away murmur that swelled to a roar and broke like surf about the cabin in screams and eerie whistlings.

It must have been the noise of the storm that made me dream some one was calling my name. I woke myself crying "What's the matter?" and found only utter blackness and the horrible tumult of the storm.

After that, I couldn't get to sleep again and, lying there in the darkness, I thought I heard Marvin stir in his bunk. It was some time before I could summon up enough courage to light a match and my hands shook so that I dropped several before I got one to burn.

Loneliness and the noise of a storm and overstrained nerves can do strange things to a sane man. Now, my terrors seem laughable, but last night they were real. The storm increases. I'll try to mend those infernal snowshoes again. I must leave here as soon as possible.

LATER.—The wind, which has been out of the east all day, has swept away the drift that was banked against the cabin wall, and the withered grass shows through. There, if worse comes to worse, I shall bury Marvin's body. If the storm lets up before nightfall, I shall leave the cabin. Otherwise, I am resolved that we shan't spend another night together here.

I thought last night I heard him again, there in the darkness. The noise of the storm played upon my imagination until, at length, I lighted the candle. I could stand the darkness no longer. It was bad enough to watch the shadows crawl and flicker over his bunk as though he were breathing and stirring stealthily beneath the blanket. It must have been well below freezing in the cabin, in spite of the stove, but I found myself dripping with sweat.

LATER.—I can't bury him. The earth won't take him. I never considered in my plans that the ground is hard as steel. I have no shovel, no pick; nothing but the ax and this I have broken, trying to hack a grave out of the wind-blown, adamant little stretch of ground.

Dusk was falling when I gave up. I was cold and badly frightened. I'm ashamed to think how completely I broke down. There is a big drift the storm has built before the cabin door. I threw away the broken ax in a shameful fit of hysteria, ran into the cabin, and tugged Marvin's body from the bunk. It was as hard to handle as an immense log, but I carried it out and thrust it into the drift, with the blankets wrapped about it.

The wind helped me heap the snow over Marvin. I buried his body deep. I should have said a prayer above it, but I was sobbing too hard to do more than stand against the wind and snow.

I am more myself now. I have boiled some tea and that has warmed and calmed me. I am still too shaken to want food. After I have slept a little my appetite probably will return. I need sleep.

It seems to me, now that I am calmer, that I have done the proper thing. If I am to be held here indefinitely, it is obvious that the body must have been moved. Of course, it would have been better if it could have been left as it was when he killed himself, but I am sure the police will believe me.

LATER.—He was in his bunk again last night. I heard him. I felt him. I know he was there. I was wakened by a rapping on the door. I should not have opened it. There was nothing to see but blackness and I felt the snow sting my face.

That must have been when he got in, for after I had gone back to my bunk, I could feel him there. I lay trembling and gasping and heard him sigh, but by the time I had got sufficient control of myself to light the candle, he had gone. There are only a few candles left, but the storm surely will cease before they are gone.

I have forced myself to eat a little. I am sane again. These night terrors are sure to wear off in time, if I can keep from going to pieces. All day long, until an hour ago, I have been afraid to open the door. I got back my courage, finally, by saying the multiplication table over, slowly and carefully.

The wind must have changed during the night. That was what I heard, of course. It had blown away the drift before the door and there the body lay on a bier of snow, packed down by its weight. I held fast to the door and said the twelve times twice before I had strength to move.

It was fairly clear, with only flurries of snow running across the gray void, though the sky was still heavy with clouds. I forced myself out into the wind and went over and looked at him.

The blanket had blown back from his face. It was like marble, for hair, beard and even his eyebrows were white with rime. The lips were twisted into a grin. That does not mean anything, I know. It is what physicians call the rictus something or other.

I couldn't leave his body there. I can't bury it in the earth. The snow won't take it. I carried the heaviest chunks of wood from the pile in the cabin and heaped them

over it, like a cairn. That will keep the body safe until I bring or send the police back to give it decent burial.

The wolves are running again to-night. That is usually a sign that it is clearing.

LATER.—I woke to hear some one calling my name. It startled me but I appreciated at once that it was only the wolf pack wailing "Ooo" out there in the darkness. I turned over to go to sleep again. That proves that I am sane. And then, I heard him rattle the door.

I lay and held my breath. He came into the cabin. I know he did. I heard him walking to and fro and felt him stand above me and look down at me. This time I didn't light the candle. I couldn't. I only lay as if paralyzed.

Even now, when I have eaten and should be most nearly normal, I do not know what to believe. I have a dread that perhaps, after all, the wind did not blow away the drift above him. Maybe he rose out of it, himself.

I have opened the door a crack and looked out at the cairn of cordwood I raised over his body. It seems smaller. Perhaps the body is no longer there.

All this, I know, is utterly insane. There was a light fall of snow over the wood and about the cairn. There were no tracks upon it.

But perhaps he would leave no tracks, now.

LATER.—My wood is low. I never thought when I piled it up above him that I might need it to keep from freezing. And now, God help me, I do not dare touch the heap outside. I should go mad if I picked up a billet and felt him stir beneath. Suppose I were to take away the wood and find no body there at all.

It would be easy to-day, while the wind is down and the snow is sifting instead of steaming by in clouds, to go out and chop some wood, but I broke my ax trying to dig a grave for him. I wonder how long I have been here—two weeks? a month? two months? I have no idea. I do not even know how long he has been dead.

There are only four candles left. There is little food. I can break up the bunks and table for fuel, and after that——

I thought I heard him laugh just outside the door. It was only the wind, of course.

LATER.—It can't be the wolves. It is my name some one is calling in a strange, mellow voice. Perhaps it is he, wailing and trying to tempt me outside. Perhaps it is God.

I am afraid to answer. I am afraid to move from the cabin. There is something waiting for me just outside the door; something that knocks and fumbles at the latch in the darkness. I have not slept for ages. I have broken up my bunk for fuel. I do not dare touch his.

LATER.—He has trapped me. The fire is out. I can't light it. The cabin fills with smoke and the flames die. Some one is calling me outside in the storm. He has stopped the stovepipe. He is waiting for me to come out and try to fix it. And the Voice keeps crying, "Hugh, Hugh, Hugh!"

TO Whom It May Concern.—I, Hugh MacRoy, a dying man, do hereby confess that I am guilty of the murder of Marvin MacRoy, my brother, whose body I have buried directly before the cabin in which this is written, beneath a pile of billets. I took his pistol which had slipped from his holster and fallen beneath his bunk and while he slept, I——

"You Will Die Sitting Down"

By Paul Suter

Author of "A Change in the Contract," and other stories.

Fear is like most bullies. Flee from it and it will pursue you; face it and it will take to flight. Mr. Sid Whitten was mortally afraid of the electric chair until he defied it. Then it lost its terrors.

THERE was nothing much the matter with Mr. Sid Whitten as he mounted the broad flight of stone steps which led to his apartments in the Bramster; nothing which his high-priced personal physician would have considered worth more than an innocuous prescription and a twenty-five-dollar fee.

Yet one symptom, if it might be called that, of his trifling disorder showed when he inserted his latchkey. The key balked a little; and Sid swore. He was out of sorts—that was it—nothing to worry about.

The door opened with the heavy smoothness of a well-oiled and balanced piece of machinery. He snapped on the light in the luxurious little hall, and, passing briskly through that pleasant prelude to his apartments, touched another button, which shed the mellow glow of indirect lighting over the library.

And there, sitting upright and very stiff before the unlighted gas log, in the deeply cushioned armchair which was Mr. Sid Whitten's favorite place to read the sporting page, was "Bud" Connors!

Not an inexplicable spectacle, perhaps, since Sid had seen Bud Connors before; except for two circumstances. The first of these had to do with a kind of halo or wreath of queerly transparent blue flame which rested upon Connors' head; the second, with the surroundings in which Sid Whitten had last seen the same phenomenon.

The flame had been upon Connors' head then, as now. Connors had been sitting upright, too, and very stiffly, until he had suddenly sagged down. It had been a week before, when Sid, as one of a small group of witnesses, had seen Bud die in the electric chair.

In the same instant when Whitten, stop-

ping in outraged horror on the threshold of his library, saw the figure in his armchair, Bud Connors was gone. There was nothing in the armchair.

After a moment of very natural hesitation, Sid Whitten concluded that there never had been anything in the armchair, except such persons and objects as properly and normally had a right to occupy it. He continued into the library, and, partly to demonstrate for his own satisfaction his entire freedom from superstition, threw himself into that chair.

The telephone being near at hand, concealed under a beautiful lady on the library table, he did the next obvious and proper thing for one situated as he was: he called in the high-priced physician.

Whitten liked to be alone at night. For years he had made a point of telling Boggs to get out of the apartment at six p. m., or thereabouts, and not return before morning.

So it was Sid himself, and not his valet, who admitted Doctor Gorham; and it was Sid who pulled up a Turkish rocker for the fat and sympathetic doctor, where it could share the glow of the gas log with his own chair—the chair of special interest.

SID narrated the bald facts in the case, then proceeded to etch in the accessory details.

"It's all the fault of that damned johnnie, Reggie Harris. You know Reggie, don't you, doc?" he inquired, languidly.

Reggie, he was informed, was a valued patient of the doctor's. Most of the men in Sid's set were Doctor Gorham's patients; and they were all valued. Sid nodded his confirmation of the doctor's brief but flattering tribute to Reggie's qualities.

"Oh, he's all right. I run around with him more than with any one else. But, hang him, he's got low tastes. Low tastes!" he repeated.

"Yes?" Doctor Gorham's lift of the eyebrows was at once receptive and noncommittal.

"He knows the detectives, and reads up on the murders, and all that sort of thing, you know. Probably gets it from his pater. Old Harris is a high-class crook if there ever was one, but too rich to put in jail. It might work out that way in the old man's son, don't you think?"

This time, the doctor, though exceedingly noncommittal, was not at all receptive. He pursed his lips and looked shrewdly out of two narrowed gray eyes, but offered no interpretation of his expression. Reggie's father was another of his valued patients.

"Well, anyway, he's thick with the murderers. This fellow, Connors, killed his wife or something, so naturally he became a pal of Reggie's. Invited Reg to be one of the official witnesses, you know. And Reg thought I might like to come along—never having seen an electrocution. So he got me a pass."

There was a pause. The doctor, apparently not liking to take too much for granted where he was skating on thin ice, merely ventured an inquiring, "Yes?"

"Well, like a fool, I went. And I couldn't take my eyes off the johnnie in the chair. What's more, I've not been able to get him out of my mind since.

"Reggie says that's usual with the first one you see. After a while, you get used to it. I shan't, because you couldn't hire me to see any more of them. I don't want to see the one I've already seen, you know."

"Of course, your experience of to-night was entirely subjective," soothed the doctor.

"I know. I'm not one of these Sir Oliver Lodge johnnies. What's worrying me is, shall I see him again? How can I be sure that when I take you out to the door, I shan't come back and find him here waiting for me?"

"We can avoid that possibility," the doctor promised. "It's your stomach, of course. I shall telephone in a prescription for you, and wait until it arrives. And you might get word to your man to spend the night here, in case you need anything. If you would like me to remain here for the night, myself——"

He glanced appraisingly at a leather couch in Sid's den, visible through a silken-hung archway, but Mr. Whitten shook his head.

"I'll get along. I'll make Boggs sleep in this chair, and that'll keep the other johnnie out. Anyway, if it's my stomach, and you fix that, he won't come back."

"And you must try to forget this—this incident of a week ago."

"I'll try," Sid Whitten promised, doubtfully. "It's going to take some forgetting, though."

It did; more, apparently, than he had available. By an effort of will, a man can sometimes force himself to remember; but the more one tries to forget, the less likely he is to succeed in that endeavor.

Mr. Sid Whitten, thanks possibly to the prescription, saw no more of Bud Connors. But he remembered Bud. What was worse, he remembered the chair.

Even that recollection, had it been merely a recollection, might not have been so painful. One can view the most distressing events with equanimity when they concern some one else. The trouble with Sid was imagination. The figure of Bud Connors began to fade from his mind, but the chair did not; and he began, in spite of earnest efforts to the contrary, to paint mental pictures of Mr. Sid Whitten occupying that sinister seat.

Legal process is not infallible. Every now and then, proof comes to light that some one has died for a crime he did not commit. Probably many such cases never are cleared up—the truth is simply buried. Wealth, of course, is a powerful argument even in a courtroom; but when the charge is murder, even wealth is not a sure defense.

Having nothing else in particular to do, Sid thrashed the subject out thoroughly, and easily arrived at the conclusion that some event of tragic import was about to enter his hitherto placid life. Not without reason had he been granted a vision of Bud Connors, sitting in the chair. That vision was symbolic. At some time, possibly in the far future as yet, his name was to be added to the growing roll of innocent men whose reputations had been cleared—too late. Of course, he would not be guilty—but—and the mental circle of possibilities would begin the merry-go-round again.

ONE evening he confided his trouble to Reggie Harris. It was in front of the very gas log which had looked upon the grim figure of Bud Connors.

Reggie reclined on his spine in the chair which Bud's wraith had occupied—Sid rather preferred the rocker, now. Reggie's intertwined legs were stretched to their greatest length upon the lion-skin rug before the fire. His head was thrown back, with that expression of innocent vacuity which only his type of blue-eyed and very light-haired young men can achieve. He was making good progress with his second box of cigarettes for the day.

If Sid Whitten's story, beginning with the apparition of Bud and working down to the hero's own distressing state of mind, shocked Mr. Harris, he bore up bravely. His only indication of interest was to lower the angle of his jaw slightly, so that he might speak without too much danger of asphyxiation. Even then, there was a pause of nearly half a cigarette, after Sid had finished and while he waited anxiously for some expression from his friend, before Reggie found the words of wisdom he was groping for.

"A hothouse flower," he said, at last, and went on with his smoking.

This was a correct characterization of the white bud in Sid's buttonhole. He gazed at it, reflectively; but Reggie, it seemed was dealing in figures of speech.

"You're a hothouse flower," he elaborated. "You never go anywhere. You never see anything. Then when I take you to something worth while, it gives you the willies."

Sid Whitten, groping for a suitable rejoinder, did not find it. His friend was moved to a degree of earnestness.

"What do you know about life?" he demanded, rhetorically. "I'm no Lincoln, myself, but I do a few things. I mix

with the detectives, and learn all sorts of interesting stuff. I take in the executions.

"You go to the club and you play golf. You eat and you sleep. Maybe you drag some girl to the opera. But you don't do anything that really counts. The only execution you ever saw in your life makes you woozy. What you need——"

"Well, *what* do I need?" demanded Mr. Sid Whitten, with a touch of indignation in his manner; but the touch was lost upon Mr. Harris, for an idea had smitten him between the eyes.

"Shall I tell you what you need? Shall I tell you that I've got the very thing for you?" he inquired, with real enthusiasm.

This had been his tone when he had brought up the subject of the electrocution, some weeks before. Mr. Whitten, being a burned child, came reluctantly to the fire.

"Go ahead; tell me," he said, but not encouragingly.

"You're just drifting along. You don't know where you're going. You need to find out. Now, I know a woman——"

"If she's going to be electrocuted, I won't trouble her," Sid Whitten put in, quickly.

"She isn't. Her name is Madame Maronge. She'll tell you!"

"She'll tell me what?"

"Your future life—what's going to become of you, you know, and all that sort of thing."

Mr. Sid Whitten suddenly found himself fearfully interested. He leaned forward in the Turkish rocker. His round brown eyes, rather spaniellike and trusting, became liquid with secret emotion. He temporized before speaking what was on his mind.

"You mean she's a fortune teller?" he suggested.

Mr. Harris met the implication frankly.

"Vulgarly speaking, yes. The police know her. They could run her out of town whenever they wish, just as they have all the others. What *do* they do? They go to her, themselves!"

Still, Sid had not asked his question. He tried now to put it carelessly, as if the thought had paused a moment in flitting across his mind.

"Does she tell you everything? Even how you're going to die, for instance?"

"She can, if you want to know it. Most people don't. I haven't the least curiosity on that subject, myself. It's too damned unpleasant."

"The idea just occurred to me," Sid observed, lightly. "Maybe I'll go with you."

"Not with me," Reggie corrected him. "You'll go alone. That's one of her rules. I'll give you her card, and mine, and you won't have any difficulty. She may be just what you need."

Sid was careful to conceal the secret eagerness with which he accepted the cards. In some way, they lifted a weight from his mind. He was blindly confident that Madame Maronge would help him; so much so, that he was able to finish the evening without once again referring to his mental troubles.

Indeed, when Reggie Harris, departing, expressed polite regret that the execution of Bud Connors had affected his friend unpleasantly, Sid assured him that all that was over, really; he had merely mentioned it because it was a curious thing!

Queerest thing he'd ever heard of, agreed Mr. Harris; and eased himself down the stone steps, with the aid of his cane.

With his friend, Sid, he had left not only two cards—one of them rather soiled—but also a dynamic idea. The idea exploded into action. Under cover of the next evening's darkness and of his least conspicuous walking suit, Mr. Whitten sought Madame Maronge.

THE madame dwelt in one of those quarters where children cease to be numbered among the rarer fauna, and where people may or may not own bathtubs. Her apartments were on the ground floor back—back of a narrow-chested hall, through which seekers after light, passing between a cheap furniture store and an emporium where soft drinks appeared to be wonderfully popular, came to the madame's door.

Sid's peculiar brand of hard luck was faithfully with him. A striking window display in the furniture store lured him to an interested glance in passing. In the rear of the window was a straight-backed armchair, of mission design.

He paused a moment. Fire surged through his brain. He remembered that shape of chair, and found it difficult to take his eyes from the accursed thing.

When able to do so, at length, he fairly trotted down the corridor to Madame Maronge's apartments.

The stage settings here were good. Mr. Whitten stepped forward upon a rug nearly as deep as that in his own domicile. Though promptly admitted after one hesitant knock, he found himself mysteriously alone, and a subject for somber reflections.

Purple, it seemed, was the hue of the madame's mood. Hangings, concealing all four walls, were of that color. So was the rug. So, too, appeared the ceiling, which, through a trick of lighting or the lack of it, achieved the effect of false height. Sid Whitten had come to be impressed, and he was impressed; also startled, when Madame Maronge materialized from nowhere and stood before him.

Save for a certain unspiritual stoutness, the madame might have been called petite. She was brunette and dignified. Sid registered the uncomfortable conviction that her small, bright eyes were X ray in quality, and able to look upon his inward parts. Her first words did nothing to dissipate that feeling.

"And what may Mr. Sidney Whitten desire of me?" she inquired, with just a trace of Irish accent.

Now, Sid Whitten, a wealthy young bachelor, presumably might have been known without the aid of black art by a lady whose business it was to recognize her patrons. That fact, however, did not occur to him. It passed over his head by a rather wide margin and left him speechless. It was in order for the madame to make any conversation that was going to be made; and she seemed equal to the burden.

Sid found himself seated on the near side of a fantastic table which resembled a piece of furniture from an opium dream. Madame Maronge was on the other side, talking rapidly. Many of her words were a trifle beyond his grasp. But he felt very clear on the main issue, which was that she was predicting his future life with wonderful exactness.

When she paused, and demanded, flutily, "Are you convinced?" he awakened to realize that one point had been omitted from her eloquence.

"I say—I say——" he stumbled.

"Yes?" she encouraged him.

"Could you tell me how—that is, in what way, you know—I mean, how I'm going to die, don't you see? Reggie Harris said you could."

The madame appeared to sustain a shock. She could not completely conceal a Celtic twinkle. It may be that Mr. Sidney Whitten, reclining limply in her operating chair, his brown eyes regarding her with rounded anxiety, hardly seemed enough alive to rise very far above that attitude at any time in his future. She wrinkled her arching brows a moment, and arrived at a speedy answer.

"You wish to know how you will die? Very peacefully. You will die, I should say, sitting down."

A SIMPLE statement; but the effect on Mr. Whitten was nothing short of astounding. He rose from his chair and stared at her, with blank horror; mechanically placed a bank note on the fantastic table; suddenly overflowed into a hoarse cry, and rushed from the house. His first words were uttered when, pale and out of breath, he crumpled into a chair in the privacy of his own apartments.

"Sitting down!" he repeated. "Sitting down!"

With his mental eye he saw very distinctly a vision of Bud Connors, who had died sitting down.

Some things one keeps from one's friends, however intimate. In response to Reggie Harris' inquiries, at subsequent visits, as to the nature of the madame's revelations, Sid Whitten was garrulous.

Apparently, Madame Maronge had offered many predictions. Her client seemed to be repeating them all, without reservation.

But her last prophecy, the one which she had made half laughingly just before he had rushed from her presence, he did not divulge.

He kept that for his private meditation, which became more and more a mental experience of queer twists and turns. He was not a murderer. He never could be a murderer. That was always his starting point. But suppose——

And from there he would go on through a maze of sinister possibilities, reënforced every day or two by a previously unthought-of idea, having to do with the many ways by which an innocent man might reach the electric chair. Some of his imaginings were distinctly original. Not one of them, however, touched on the unperceived path whereby his fate really approached.

HE sat one winter's evening before the glowing gas log, gazing sleepily at the vacant armchair facing him, when the electric buzzer announced a visitor. As usual, Boggs was gone for the night. Sid himself, therefore, admitted Reggie Harris.

Sid was not astonished to find his friend in a state of mysterious excitement, indicated chiefly by sundry odd twists of his usual poker face. Reggie was a creature of moods. Waves of emotion from various causes washed over him from time to time with the regularity of economic cycles.

Finding no sympathy for such in his own formal abode, he invariably chose Sid's apartments for his more intimate displays of temperament. But there is a rational limit to all things. Sid felt that this limit was slightly exceeded when Reggie, flinging himself into the armchair, extracted from his pocket a murderous-looking revolver with an odd contrivance near the muzzle.

"I got it," Reggie exclaimed, darkly.

Sid Whitten eyed the firearm with disfavor.

"If you can feel just as happy pointing it the other way, you might start now," he suggested.

Reggie laughed.

"Do you know what it is? I don't believe any one else in town could have got it away from the police collection. It cost me a hundred, but twice that wouldn't have taken it if I hadn't known where to place my bribes. Pull counts. This is the gun Bud Connors killed his wife with."

Sid Whitten started as if stung.

"You needn't have brought the damned thing here!" he exclaimed, hotly.

"Not bring it here?" Reggie stared at him with amazement. "I thought you'd be interested. This is a real rarity. Why, it even has a Maxim silencer on it. You could shoot a man with this gun, and the sound wouldn't travel beyond the walls of this room."

"Are you going to shoot me with it?" Mr. Whitten's manner was cold and ironical.

"I'm tempted to, just to make you appreciate a genuine curio when you see it."

He fondled the weapon; placed it to his left temple and laughed; looked at Mr. Sid Whitten, eying him curiously, and laughed again.

"A bona-fide murder gun! They don't often come into the possession of private parties. The police department nails 'em down tight. Know what I'm going to do with it?"

Sid slowly shook his head. He could not solve the puzzle of Reggie Harris' manner. Something in it struck Sid as overdone. His friend's gayety was forced. This addition to Reggie's collection of weapons could not account for all of his oddity.

Why should his voice be loud and harsh one moment and almost inaudible the next? Why——

"Do you know what I'm going to do with it? Do you know?"

Reggie's tones trilled like a penny whistle. Suddenly, Sid understood. He sprang for the armchair. He was just too late to keep Mr. Reggie Harris from placing the revolver to his own breast and pulling the trigger.

Mr. Harris crumpled forward, but managed a wry smile.

"Couldn't get up nerve to do it at the pater's—feel more at home here——"

He looked down ruefully at the reddening blotch on his white vest.

"Awfully sorry, old chap—muss up your place like this. You see, the pater's broke—not a damned cent left—disgraced, too—what's the use of living—when you're broke?"

Still smiling, he lurched over the arm of the chair; but the blotch caught his eye once more.

"Bad way to die. But—it—will—do."

THE revolver slid down his knee, and struck the rug with as little noise as it had made in killing Reggie Harris.

Sid Whitten stood with his hands in his trousers pockets, staring at his friend; not thoughtfully, but in a mental haze. After a time, he roused enough to glance over his shoulder at a side window of the library, which looked out upon a corner of his private front porch. Any one standing on that porch would have a clear view of the interior.

Sid walked to the window. No one was there.

The thing to do, of course, was to call Doctor Gorham. But, with the telephone receiver actually in his hand, a tremendous consideration occurred to him. He put the receiver back. Turning, he stared again at Reggie Harris. This time, he stared thoughtfully.

After Doctor Gorham—who could do nothing but pronounce Reggie dead—the police; after the police——

"You will die, I should say, sitting down."

In one leap, Sid Whitten's mind crossed all the intervening events: his arrest; indictment for the murder of his friend; the trial, at which his protestations of innocence would go for nothing; his conviction; the electric chair.

What was it people did under such circumstances? Of course—they hid themselves. He must hide.

It would mean a change in all his habits of life. But that was better than—the other thing. He found himself making cool plans and calculations. The nonchalant, carefree, irresponsible Sid Whitten of former days bowed farewell; in his place, a keen-minded fugitive, who had never before been given a chance to assert himself, assumed charge.

BLOOD counts. Sid's family had not always been carefree. His ancestors, the old boys who had made the money, of whom he was the one remaining descendant, had been thoroughbreds.

This new, keen-minded Sid wrote a note to Boggs, announcing his intention of being absent for a time, and instructing that the apartments be maintained. With the note was a check ample to pay all expenses for a year.

Sid always kept a sizable bank balance. It saved annoyance. He did not take the trouble to explain that Reggie Harris had committed suicide. What would be the use?

He would have to worry along with what money was in his pockets; for Boggs would be around before the banks opened in the morning—and he must not trust even Boggs. The police would expect him to leave town; well, he wouldn't. Where should he go?

There popped into his mind the picture of a man he and Reggie had met on the street a few days before. Reggie had laughed and remarked that it would take a good detective to recognize that johnnie.

That was it. There was the natural disguise. A little change in one's manner of speaking—bad grammar and more profanity—and dirty clothes. Well, one's clothes would get dirty soon enough where that johnnie worked.

An hour after Reggie Harris' death, Sid left his apartments. He was wearing an old and rather ill-fitting suit and overcoat belonging to Boggs, into the pockets of which he had transferred the key to the front door and something over a hundred dollars in bills.

Two blocks away, he discovered Bud Connors' revolver, with its Maxim si-

lencer, in the overcoat pocket. He could not remember having picked it up.

The following evening, he bought a newspaper, and read of Mr. Reggie Harris' death. Boggs had found the body. The police regarded it as murder, and were looking for Mr. Sidney Whitten, a well-known clubman.

Meanwhile, the man they sought had found a place to sleep and a job. Just then, men were scarce. For a day or two, he opened the paper each evening with apprehension, and breathed again when he learned that the chase was going farther afield.

Then aching muscles and unaccustomed exhaustion got him. He staggered home at night, ate ravenously, disregarded the newspaper altogether, and collapsed into bed.

Here he was, cut off from his bank balance and working like a horse, just to retain the privilege of going on living. A few days before, Reggie Harris had killed himself because his pater was broke! It was a queer old world, as Reggie might have said.

ON a spring evening, some three months later, Sam Smith walked home to his boarding house from the mills, carrying an empty dinner bucket. He was tired, but not exhausted.

His face, covered with more than one day's accumulation .of soot and grease, might or might not have been that of a white man. Even his eyelids were black, though the eyes beneath them might have seemed subtly different from those of the other laborers in the tramping mob which moved in the same direction.

Sam Smith bolted his food at the long table, in competition with twenty others, and spoke little. Conversation interfered with eating. A less intelligent man might have shown more refinement in table etiquette; but Smith had observed to some purpose. The keenness of certain bright old boys among Sidney Whitten's ancestors was serving Sam well.

He ate with his knife, shoveling huge portions into a mouth which gaped wide to receive them; poured his coffee into a saucer and blew upon it; inhaled his soup with deep gulps of satisfaction. In the slack time between active operations he laughed uproariously at whatever stories were told. When he slapped the man next him on the back, his hand landed with a hearty smack, and the blow did not sting his palm.

One luxury he had managed to allow himself: a private room, such as it was. After supper, he retired to it, and threw himself upon the bed. He had found it hard at first to turn in without washing, but that was merely one of many sacrifices he had learned to make.

He had not forgotten Madame Maronge. Successfully eluding the police for three months, he still felt that in the end they would get him. Down a long vista of the future, he saw at the end an armchair with straps and wires, in which he would some day sit down. He was trying to avoid that chair.

"A policeman to see you, Mr. Smith." The fat landlady grinned with sly enjoyment as she opened the door to the malodorous hall. "He's talking to some of the other men now."

Mr. Sid Whitten, no longer Sam Smith, changed instantaneously into a hunted animal. His movements had the swiftness and precision of instinct. With a quick lunge he secured something from under his pillow and slipped it furtively into his pocket.

His window stuck a little, but he forced it up. To one with the fingers of steel which the past three months had given him, the descent from that second-story window to the ground was difficult, but not impossible. Even before his feet touched the ground of the narrow back yard, he had a plan.

He would double cross the police. They no longer expected him to return to his apartments. He would go back, therefore, change into clean clothes, get his bearings. If Boggs was there—well, this time he would trust Boggs; or, if that seemed unwise, Boggs would be no match for him now.

NO one challenged him. He won away in the darkness, over back fences and through yards, to another street. The traffic there swallowed him up. For all the attention paid him, he might have been the honest laborer he seemed, instead of a hunted animal.

He gained confidence. Perhaps he might have been wiser to have taken the key to the rear door of the apartments, instead of the front-door key—but the one he had would serve.

It did serve. Though the key stuck a little, Sid did not swear. His nerves were in good shape. He snapped on the hall light. A risky thing to do, but he felt certain that this move of his cut deeper than the plans of the police.

After all, the police were stupid. They might blunder into him in the end, but, even then—— His mouth tightened. He had thought that out, too.

Just as he flooded the library with its indirect light, he remembered Bud Connors; but the recollection amused him rather than otherwise.

What a shaky chap he had been! Reg had called it a queer experience. It was. And there was the armchair poor Reg had died in. Boggs had not changed things. Boggs was a good valet.

Luxuriating in the sense of at-homeness, he felt for the moment careless of the future. He explored the various rooms of the apartment. Everything as it had been. Good old Boggs!

Probably Boggs beat it out at six, too, just as he always had done. Train a valet in the way he should go, and when you are a fugitive from the police he will not depart from it.

The greatest luxury was a bath. Fortified with this, he stepped into clean clothes, and was a man again. He returned to the library.

There, on the table, lay Bud Connors' revolver, where he had thrown it upon entering. And there was the armchair; the chair in which his crazy fancy had seen Bud; in which Reggie Harris had died. To demonstrate his mastery of the situation, he sat down in that chair.

He lounged in it for a long time, pondering, planning, questioning lazily of the future. His mind was at ease. Even Madame Maronge's prophetic words grew dim.

THE buzzer of the front door vibrated.

He started violently, stepped to the window facing on the porch, and glanced out. It was a policeman in uniform.

Mr. Sid Whitten walked slowly backward, still facing the window. He dropped into the armchair. His brain raced and whirled. The thought of the rear door, all the other windows, the possibilities of escape, did not occur to him. There was room in his mind for only one thing—the thing he had planned to do in the event of imminent capture.

The buzzer sounded again. A fat, red face was looking in at the window. Sid Whitten stared at the little eyes, curious, questioning, between rolls of fat.

Bud Connors' pistol, the one Reg had used for his little job, lay on the table. Sid Whitten stretched his long hand and picked up the pistol. Still acting in accordance with the plan he had had in mind in case of capture, he pressed it deliberately to his temple.

The cold, round impress on his skin shocked him a little. The plan wavered. He deferred pulling the trigger a moment while he looked at something which had appeared suddenly in his mind's eye.

It was the face of Madame Maronge. She was laughing at him. She was saying, mockingly:

"You will die sitting down."

Then Mr. Sid Whitten did a curious thing—a thing he could not have done three months before. With a little flick of the hand, he impulsively tossed Bud Connors' pistol straight through the window in front of him, shattering the glass in the chubby face of Officer Murphy, who had been flattening his nose against it for a better view. Following that, Sid stood up and shook his fist—not at Officer Murphy, but in the imaginary countenance of Madame Maronge.

"I'll be damned if I will!" he told her defiantly. "Why should I? I didn't kill him. I'll fight them to a finish. If I can work, I can fight!"

As he strode to the door to let in society's legal representative, he had with him the combative spirit of the old boys who had made the money; also the strength bred of three months' hard labor in the mills.

He flung back the door.

"Here I am, policeman," he said, standing very erect in the doorway.

Officer Murphy, whose only hurt had been to his sensibilities and his curiosity, suddenly forgot those painful injuries.

"It's Mr. Whitten!" he exclaimed, with awed amazement.

"Will you permit me a minute to get my overcoat?" Sid requested, stiffly.

But Officer Murphy ignored the question. His face was breaking into the garrulous smile of a fat man.

"You'll remember me, Mr. Whitten? I had this beat for going on two years. I didn't know you were back, sir—but that's how it goes. When Mr. Harris died, and some of 'em thought you done it, your name was in all the papers. Then when they found the note he'd left at home, and knew he'd croaked himself—begging your pardon, sir—and your valet said you'd gone off on a trip and would be back after a while—why, there was no more about you, sir. I came with the tickets, and thought maybe I could sell some to your valet, sir, never dreaming——"

Sid caught at one of the words. Officer Murphy's loquacity was helping to clear his mind.

"The tickets?" he repeated.

"For the Policemen's Carnival, sir—benefit of our pension fund. We're making a whirlwind canvass to-day—covering the whole city in one day, sir. Could I sell you some, perhaps, sir?"

"You came to my door—to sell me some tickets?" He had not quite grasped the truth, but it was coming fast.

"It would be an honor, Mr. Whitten," Officer Murphy returned, diffidently.

Sid put a hand mechanically into his trousers pocket, and pulled therefrom a ten-dollar bill. He stared at it. The sight of it completed what the policeman's words had begun. His mind was clear, and he looked at Officer Murphy as one man looks at another—as one workingman looks at another.

"This is the first ten dollars I ever earned," he said, with dignity. "I had meant to keep it. Perhaps, though, I would rather have the tickets. Yes, I think I should. Let me have some tickets—I'll keep them."

As the successful salesman was descending the broad stone steps, Mr. Bud Connors' pistol caught Sid's eye, lying still and ugly on his porch. He picked it up between finger and thumb.

"Here—take this with you," he called to Officer Murphy. "It belongs in the police collection."

WITH the passing of the years, which shift and reshift the scenes on this stage we tread, we find before us a clipping from a newspaper. It has to do with the death of a prominent citizen, consequently it is far too long to quote verbatim.

The deceased, it seems, was a steel magnate, noted especially for his personal interest in the workers and his gifts for their betterment; also—curiously—for his zeal for the abolition of the death penalty, and for his generous annual donations to the Policemen's Pension Fund, extending back over many years. One short paragraph we give as it appears:

"Mr. Whitten was taking his morning ride through the park near his home, when he was seen to topple from his horse. A bystander propped him in a sitting position against a tree, as he seemed to be struggling for breath. Just as the end came, he recovered consciousness for a moment, and smiled. He tried to speak, but the words were not audible. The coroner's verdict was heart disease."

Had the words been audible, would they have been concerned, we wonder, with the hopefully ironic fact that a man may die sitting down, and still have his boots on?

By

CHARLES NEVILLE BUCK

Author of "The Rogue's Badge," "Off Side in Scrimmage," Etc.

All the

CHAPTER XXII.

CAL SPENCER "SUSPICIONS."

CAL SPENCER was grayer than he had been eighteen months ago, but he still carried himself with the rude dignity of a strong leader among wild men. It was in the town that Kenneth met him as he stepped down from the day coach in the gray fog of dawn, and it was with him that he went over to the shacklike hotel where lay the body of the dead prosecutor. The eyes of the murdered man were closed, of course, and it was only with his eyes that he ordinarily smiled. Yet on the straight lips, there was just the suggestion of one-sided twist, as if, in death, some thought sardonically amusing had come to him and stayed with him to the end.

A face wearing that look, Kenneth thought, would have something interesting to say if it could speak, and he turned to his old friend, Cal Spencer.

"Did he make any sort of statement?"

Spencer shook his head.

"He didn't skeercely hev no chanst ter mek no give-out of facks," came the slow response. "Thar wa'n't but one shoot shot—but thet one war a deadener. When folks got ter him he'd done already died."

"What's been done?"

Again, the clan leader shook his head.

"Thar's done been numerous posses out, they're jest sort of runnin' wild. Ther man-dawgs got here some siv'ral hours ago an' Sheriff Cawley straightway sot out with 'em—but ther ground's master dry fer a dog's nose ter work over. Ther last I heered, they was jest circlin' round an' yappin'." He paused. "Ye kin heer 'em off thar now ef ye listens sharp—but that ain't no trailin' bay, hit's jest triflin'."

"Have the officers any theory?"

"Every man's got his own notion," declared Cal Spencer dryly. "Most folks 'lows hit war some feller thet he sought ter hamper in ther jail house, but no man ain't outspoken in namin' nobody."

"This term of court," said Kenneth gravely, "was being held at the insistence of yourself and Mr. McDonough. In effect, Willis Blake came here at your invitation and it cost him his life. What are you going to do?"

The old leader gazed pensively up the

A story of Kentucky feud and sport, in five parts—Part V.

King's Horses

side of the mountain, where the fog was lifting and the color livening into the gorgeousness of frost-painted forests.

"Let's you an' me git away from hyar," he suggested, "an' ride a whoop an' a holler off into ther woods. I aims ter let 'em projeck around hyar ter suit theirselves, but me, I aims ter do my own studyin' an' I'd love right well ter hev speech with ye erbout hit."

THIS time Kenneth filed his story—a story containing more generalization than news—before he mounted to leave the town behind, and it was only when the two drew rein, knee to knee, a mile or so beyond the end of the street, that Spencer spoke again.

"Sometimes," said the mountaineer, "a man gits ter s'archin' round inter a troublous thing like this here matter, an' he comes up spang on suspicions thet he don't delight none ter entertain."

Cal Spencer's eyes were grave and searching as they met those of his younger companion, and he shot out an abrupt question:

"What would you counsel a man ter do, son, if so be he started out ter run down a murderer—an' ther trail led him up on a friend?"

Kenneth shook his head resolutely.

"If the trail ran straight," he declared, "I don't think friendships ought to enter into it."

Spencer nodded.

"I jest wondered," he observed, "how ye mout feel—if ye stood in my shoes."

The eyes of the younger man widened.

"Do you mean you know who this man is?"

"I don't ter say jedgmatically know hit—not p'int-blank, but I suspicions." Again there was a pause followed by a long breath not unlike a sigh, and after that, came the statement: "Ther man thet I believes lay-wayed Lawyer Blake is kin ter Don McDonough—an' ther man thet hired hit done, he's distant kin of mine."

Kenneth looked into the sternly sober face of his guide, and inquired steadily: "Are you going to tell me those names or would you rather keep your secret? I warn you I'm after facts and I can't shield anybody."

"When a man's done been tried out an'

proved hisself once," Spencer assured him gravely, "I reckon he kin be trusted twice. Ther man I suspicions of killin' Willis Blake is Tom Monk."

Kenneth nodded. This statement fell in with his own intuitions.

"And the other—your own kinsman?" he demanded. "Who is he?"

Cal Spencer studied his companion for a full minute out of straight-gazing eyes, then he said in a low voice:

"He's goin' by a false name jest now, but his rightful one, hit's Major Jerry Shane."

They were standing where they had dismounted in the splendor of the autumnal woods; woods that were painted to a gorgeousness that almost blistered the eye. But Kenneth Applefield's face was bleak and stricken. The accusation, summarized in the name, had struck him like the blow of a mace. Under it, his powers of coherent thought seemed to reel and stagger. He felt vaguely that a sincere and honest man had been led into a cruel and bizarre falseness of belief, and that somehow he must deny, disprove the monstrous misconception.

"You say, sir," he began, when his mastery over words came tardily back to him, "that you don't know—that you only suspect. You say Major Shane is your kinsman—and that you hate to entertain such suspicions."

"An' *you* said," the hillsman reminded him tersely, "that friendships hadn't ought ter count fer naught ef so be ther trail ran straight."

"I still say that. But I know Major Shane. I've known him from my childhood up. He has his faults—vanity, overbearing arrogance and others besides. But I'd stake my life on my conviction—Major Shane couldn't be a hirer of assassins. Major Shane couldn't be a craven. Some things are against nature."

"I'd love ter believe thet," came the sober but unconvinced reply. "But I've done told ye how hit looks ter me, an' I ain't breathed no word ter nairy another mortal. I'm heavy-hearted, but none the less I kain't see hit no other fashion."

"You're not a man to make light accusations, Mr. Spencer," went on Kenneth earnestly. "If you think this thing, you have your own strong reasons, but any man may draw a false conclusion. For God's sake tell me what you base it on. I'm ready to face any truth—and I'm sure the truth will vindicate this man you suspect."

"Yes," came the serious agreement, "I've need ter expound my reasons, fer ef they ain't four square an' sound. I'm dealin' in a sorry slander an' I'm right backward ter credit hit myself."

CHAPTER XXIII.

AT TOM MONK'S HOUSE.

SPENCER took off his dusty hat and ran a calloused palm across his forehead.

His words seemed to come slowly and out of a burdened spirit, broken by frequent and thoughtful pauses.

"One Thursday, 'twas four-five months ago," he began, "I fared me down ter Cincinnati ter talk timber with a man. I heered he'd done gone acrost ther river ter ther hoss races, so I fared over thar, too. I met up with Jerry Shane an' we made our manners an' hed some speech.

"While we war a-standin' tergither, a man come on by us, an' hit war this same Willis Blake. Him an' Shane kinderly glared on one another like a pair of game roosters, but no word didn't pass betwixt 'em."

"They weren't friendly," commented Kenneth. "I know that."

Spencer nodded his head. "I noted thet some disgust stood betwixt 'em," he said, "but I didn't proffer no word. Hit wa'n't none of my business nohow. Atter Blake hed done sa'ntered off, though, Shane, he turned ter me an' cussed ther feller plumb scornful. He said, 'Thet man's belittlin' me ter each an' every person thet'll hearken, an' some day ef he ain't heedful, hit'll be me or him'—I ain't quotin' him word fer word, but he said somethin' ter thet amount. I didn't give ther matter no other thought till yistiddy when Lawyer Blake war lay-wayed."

"That incident in itself," Kenneth entered objection, "doesn't signify much to me. I know the men were enemies, but they didn't fight from ambush."

"No, thet's what I thought, too, but I ain't quite finished my story yit."

Again he paused and let his eyes wander over the painted leagues of steepness.

"Two-three days ago I fared me inter Hemlock Town fer ther openin' of ther high co'te. Me an' Don, we kinderly had hit in head thet some bumptious, feisty bodies mout seek ter mek trouble an' we wanted ter hev an eye on matters in gin'ral. I seed this feller, Tom Monk, loaferin' round town drinkin' licker, an' I knowed Tom war a-goin' ter be tried later on fer disturbin' public worship—so I kep' an eye on him."

"I don't find any trouble," interjected Kenneth, "in believing that Monk is an assassin."

"Waal, long to'rds dusk thet evenin', I follered Tom as he brogued down ter ther deepo at train time. A feller got offen ther cars an' Tom went straight up ter him. Fust off I didn't think master much of thet. Hit was a big, spacious-shouldered feller, an' he wore right pore, shoddy sort of clothes. He had his hat brim pulled down low an' his face was kinderly stobbly with new whiskers, like as if ther feller hed jest commenced turnin' out a beard.

"Hit war comin' on ter be dark by thet time, but Tom an' this stranger sa'ntered over past ther station agent's winder—an' I seed straight off thet ther feller war either Jerry Shane or his own spit an' image."

Spencer broke off again, and resumed in a troubled tone:

"I misdoubted I must be wrong. Hit didn't stand ter reason nohow, so I jest disgusted myself fer fool notions, but I watched them two mount up on a couple of mule critters an' ride away to'rds Mad Dog Mounting, whar Tom lives at—on ther headwaters of Pick-yore-way."

"It must have been a coincidence of resemblance," Kenneth argued, but Spencer's eyes wore a sober dubiousness.

"Thet's what I 'lowed—twell Blake war kilt, despite what my own eyes hed done seed. Thar ain't no fashion I kin go on 'lowin' hit no longer. Hyar war this man Blake up hyar in Hemlock Town. Hyar war ther feller thet was either Shane or his own double—rigged up like a scurvy tramp. Ther more I turns hit over in my mind an' studies hit back'ards an' for'ards, ther more sartain sure I gits ter be thet hit *was* Shane."

"Is that all?" inquired Kenneth.

"Not quite. I disremembered ter tell ye one thing. Next day after ther man hed done got offen ther railroad train, I met up with Tom ergin at ther co'te-house. I named hit ter him keerlesslike thet I'd done seed him palaverin' with a furriner, an' his eyes kinderly scrouged up baleful fer a minute. Then he laughed hit off an' said ther feller war a cattle trader thet giv' ther name of Aaron Wilkes. He war travelin' through ther mountings, Tom 'lowed, aimin' ter buy him some live stock cheap an' fatten 'em up down below. Thet 'peared reasonable an' I asked Tom ef he seed ther person again ter broach hit ter him thet I'd love ter sell him a few head of heifer calves."

KENNETH drew a deep breath of relief, and something like a smile loosened the stiffness of his lips.

"I'm glad you told me this, sir," he said. "It makes me understand two things. First, I can see what a strong case of circumstantial evidence it seems to you, and secondly, I think I can see just where it falls down."

"Then, son, I'd love right well fer ye ter make me see hit, too."

"The thing hinges on a remarkable resemblance—but such resemblances sometimes happen," began the reporter. "But the cornerstone of your theory is the motive of bad blood between these men—and that motive is too weak."

"I've done said afore," announced Spencer with a dogged shake of his head, "thet hit didn't pleasure me none ter suspicion my own kith an' kin. I'd done always esteemed Jerry Shane. I'd done 'lowed he

war a bold, upstandin' man thet didn't hev nothin' ter hide from nobody.

"But thet jedge an' thet lawyer war fotched on hyar by me an' Don ter compel law-abidin'—not ter bring on fresh abominations. Ef a furriner sought ter do murder an' ter hide behind ther ill repute of our mounting folks—then, afore God A'mighty we don't aim ter suffer him ter walk free—not though he be my kinsman—not though he be yore friend—not though he be Jerry Shane!"

"Then you still hold to your suspicion?"

"I kain't do no other till sich time as I scans thet man's features ergin' an' looks him straight inter his eye."

"By now he's probably hundreds of miles away—and still running."

"Onlessen I'm bodaciously misguided," observed Spencer dryly, "he's still a-layin' hid at Tom Monk's dwellin' house at ther headwaters of Pick-yore-way."

"Why would he stay there?"

"I 'lows thet Tom Monk didn't do ther killin' fer nothin'," came the prompt response. "An' I 'lows thet ther man thet hired hit done didn't pay over no master sum twell he knowed ther job hed done been compassed.

"Furthermore, I 'lows thet atter ther hue an' cry was raised, any stranger with a guilty conscience would be right apt ter lay low an' hide out, twell hit war safer ter show a strange face an' suffer ther scrutiny of each an' every."

For a space the two men stood with their eyes engaged, and the expression of each bespoke a stubborn and undeviating conviction that clashed in contradiction. At last Kenneth spoke slowly.

"I know you. I respect you. Your spirit of fairness is beyond question, and yet I believe you are letting yourself be led into a gross injustice. You say you think the man who's responsible for this murder is hiding over there at Tom Monk's house. You believe he's Shane. I don't believe it. I'm ready to gamble my life on my disbelief.

"There's only one way to settle the question, once for all. You and I must go over there and see." He paused a moment, then added sharply: "Then whether he be Shane or not—you and I must bring him back."

The old feudal chieftain stood staring incredulously at his younger companion. Finally, he spoke.

"Ef I'd 'lowed hit war a possible thing ter git thar alive, I'd hev done gone afore now. Hit wouldn't do no good ter take no posse. They'd jest come up on an empty house."

"I'm not suggesting a posse," Kenneth reminded him crisply. "Two men—if one of them were you—might make it. This is our secret. I'm proposing that you and I go, and go now. Perhaps it hasn't occurred to Monk yet that any one suspects him."

"Thar's jest one chanst in a score," mused Cal thoughtfully, "thet we mout compass hit—an' come back alive. Thar's a score of chances ter one we'd both be shot dead afore we got ter ther door. Like es not ther way's gyarded with rifle guns.

"Mebby ye disremembers, son, thet Tom Monk grudged ye an' sought ter kill ye once afore with less cause. He ain't ergoin' ter feel non kindlier to'rds ye now."

"I said I was ready to gamble my life on my conviction," Kenneth reminded him with unwavering eyes, though some of the color had left his face. "I know that you aren't holding back for fear of any man or any number of men.

"I'm not overlooking the danger. I think it's even greater than you picture it. I believe this murder was plotted by more than two. I think probably a group of men who were being prosecuted conspired together. It's more than possible that we may find them all over there—but not Major Shane. I want to go and see, and I'm going. Will you come with me, or do I go alone?"

"Afore God A'mighty!" exclaimed Spencer under his breath. "I didn't misjudge ye none! Two men mout do hit. A crowd couldn't—an' yit I didn't skeercely hev ther heart ter ask ye."

"Then you're willing to go and see?"

"Eygad, son! I'm plum' willin' albeit

I misdoubts hit's ther last journey either of us ever sots out on. We mout es well move right on now. A soon start's better then a tardy one."

"Very well, sir, take command."

WITH crisp briefness, the guide explained his rapidly formulated plan and his strategy. The lay of the land favored them, since they could hitch their mounts unseen in the woods not far from the main road and cut across country through Mad Dog Notch on foot. This would enable them to come almost to the rear of the house, where Tom usually dwelt alone, before they were seen.

The highway, where they would leave their horses, was also that which Cal would ride in going home, and so the use of the short cut need not be questioned as suspicious in itself. On the other hand, were they to ride to the door of Tom's house, they must take the trail that followed the creek bed of Pick-yore-way, and must leave their horses in sight, as an advertisement and warning, should the householder be out on their arrival and come back while they were still waiting. In that event, he might not show himself nor his guest—though he might speak from the laurel in the voice of gunfire. The natural topography, however, made it possible to approach with an actual effect of surprise which was yet explainable in a fashion that made it seem innocent of stealth.

All this was predicated, of course, on the hope that Monk was not yet expecting attack and that his house had not become a fortress.

"Hev ye got a pistol gun?" questioned the older man, and the younger shook his head.

"I came armed with nothing but a lead pencil," he admitted. His guide took from his saddlebag a heavy revolver in an armpit holster.

"Strop thet on yoreself," he directed. "We don't aim ter use no weepins ef so be we kin help hit—but ef matters falls out porely, we're liable ter be hurtin' fer 'em right bad."

The two dismounted after a while, and started plodding up the mountainside toward the notch.

From here on, they were traversing a thicketed territory of possible ambuscade, and they knew it. Any laurel clump might belch death at any moment, and caution was futile. They would come through alive only if Tom Monk had not yet awakened to a fear of discovery and pursuit and if he had not begun to picket the approaches.

The only way they could protect themselves was to turn back, and they trudged forward instead.

When a bird or a squirrel rustled the foliage they looked at each other and smiled grimly. Their best security was a manner of artless innocence. Kenneth Applefield went with a set face and nerves at high tension. Cal swung along with the expressionlessness of a stoic's fatalism.

At length, the almost unrecognizable footpath topped the ridge through a steep-sided gorge and began descending.

A few minutes later, Kenneth found himself approaching, from its rear, a dejected hovel of small logs from whose chinking the plaster had fallen away, leaving wide apertures. The place stood with a seeming of desertion save that from its low chimney, fashioned of crossed sticks, clay-daubed inside and out, there drifted a thin thread of smoke.

But as the men emerged from the tangle into the narrow opening at the back, Cal Spencer shouted out in amiable self-announcement: "Hit's Cal Spencer. Ain't thar nobody home?"

AS they rounded the corner of the house to its front, they had no response, but at the door, itself, when they had reached it, appeared a disheveled figure, whose tousled hair and heavy eyes told that this householder had been suddenly awakened from a heavy sleep.

Coming to the brilliant afternoon light from the murk of the cabin, Tom Monk seemed partly blinded, and he stood blinking with an inhospitable scowl on his face. He was unarmed and in his shirt sleeves,

but he did not step outside, nor did he open the door wide.

Palpably, his senses were not yet fully cleared to wakefulness, and palpably, too, he had until now been beguiling himself with a false security. The heavy torpor of a man who has been sleeping off a drinking bout still clouded his perceptions.

There was no welcome in that face for any uninvited visitor, yet neither was there, at the moment, the quickness of wit to repel men who came with friendly salutations. Cal Spencer was swift to gauge the situation, and his voice rang heartily as he said: "I 'lowed I'd take ther short cut over ther notch, Tom, an' see did ye hev any tidings erbout cattle tradin'."

"Who's thet with ye?" demanded the other sullenly, as he still blinked into the sun.

"Hit's jest a furriner thet's ridin' long with me ter my house," came the reassurance, and it was couched in such a disarming tone of candor that Tom Monk stepped back and ceased to bar the door as Cal Spencer, followed by Kenneth, walked on and crossed the threshold. It was Spencer's strategy to keep moving so unhesitantly, yet so casually that he should be inside the walls before the unwilling host awakened to his full senses or bethought himself of any defensive artifice.

Now inside the house, Kenneth saw that a rifle stood leaning against the opposite wall, and that as he entered Cal Spencer so moved that he stood, by seeming chance, between it and its owner.

A swift survey of the place showed that it consisted of one miserable room and a sort of cock loft. Seemingly, the whole house was empty now, save for Monk himself and his two unexpected visitors.

"What mout yore name be, stranger?" demanded Tom suspiciously, and Kenneth realized with a sense of surprised relief that he had not yet been recognized. Even when he introduced himself, no chord of memory seemed to be struck in the mind of the host—a mind that was palpably somewhat befogged, just now. Monk turned churlishly toward Spencer.

"I ain't seekin' ter buy no cattle," he said. "I'm sellin' what few lean critters I've got."

Cal nodded. "I 'lowed mebby thet stranger ye told me erbout mout like ter trade with me," he volunteered hopefully. "Aaron Wilkes—wasn't thet ther name ye giv' me? I've got some siv'ral right nice heifer calves—albeit they're hurtin' ter be fatted."

Tom Monk scowled vindictively. His senses were gathering into a better functioning now, and his suspicions were uneasily rising, though it was still hard to shake off the headache and the giddiness that troubled his eyes.

"I don't know wharabouts ther stranger is," came the slow answer in churlish tones. "I reckon he's done fared on ter some distant place by now. I ain't his keeper nohow."

Cal's face fell with a convincingly simulated disappointment. "I'd love right well ter trade with him—or somebody," he lamented.

Monk had remained standing in the attitude of one anxious to terminate an unwished-for interview, but Cal lounged in the place he had taken and gave no promise of hasty departure.

Kenneth Applefield stood leaning at one side of the door with his arms folded. It occurred to him that this posture disposed his hands well in case the need arose to reach quickly under his vest toward his armpit.

FOR an interval conversation languished, and the falcon-keen eyes of the Spencer leader, while they seemed to be empty of any specific concern beyond his heifers, were observantly ranging. The heavy bed, with its disordered "shuck" mattress and rumpled quilt, had been slept in recently, and, hanging from a head post, swung the pistol holster which the suddenly wakened Monk had not found time to buckle on and cover with a coat. On a rough deal table, still littered from the midday meal, the collection of dirty pans, cups, forks and knives told the story of a meal to which two men instead of one had sat down.

The anxiety of Tom to be rid of his invaders was mounting feverishly, yet his native shrewdness forced him to a masking of it while Cal rambled on, making inconsequential talk.

Conversation lagged into painful pauses. Three men stood about carefully casual, and Kenneth knew that by each one of them a life-and-death valuation was being placed on the possible hazards of any moment.

Cal was playing the waiting game, gambling on his hope that the man of whom he had come in search would shortly show in the frame of the open door. Tom was probably thinking of that, too, and racking his brain for a means of clearing the premises without displaying too pregnant an anxiety. Also, when the door was shadowed, it might not be by a solitary figure but by several, and the two investigators could not guess till that moment brought its development whether they themselves would prove to be the baiters of the trap or its victims.

Monk, when he spoke, raised his voice to the pitch of a shout, and Kenneth divined his purpose. It was that any one approaching might know of the presence of arrivals before showing himself in the door, and with a smile Cal Spencer suggested mildly: "Ye ain't beholden ter holler at me, Tom. I ain't hard o' heerin'."

Sullenly, the host fell silent, and for what seemed to Kenneth an eternity of time the interior of the filthy cabin became a tableau held by the growing, insufferable suspense of silence.

Then both Tom and Cal looked up. A shadow had fallen across the door, and a tall, broad-shouldered figure stood there. With one foot across the threshold and momentarily blinded by the inner murk, the figure halted as if a clenched fist struck it in the face. Then, instinctively, it drew back as if for flight, but Cal Spencer stretched out an imperious hand.

"Come in, Major Shane," he commanded sharply. "We've done been waitin' fer ye quite a spell."

The figure hesitated irresolutely for a half moment, then stepped boldly across the threshold and into the house. It came with a sort of swagger and with its chin lifted.

"I don't know who you are," the newcomer made aggressive assertion, "and you don't seem to know who I am. My name is Aaron Wilkes."

But as he spoke, he turned and his eyes met those of Kenneth Applefield. The tall body seemed to congeal as if some sorcery had, at a breath, frozen it.

Under the black-and-gray stubble of beard, the face turned livid and the eyes dulled to despair.

Recovery of self-command came quickly —yet not quite quickly enough to cover that self-betrayal.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE COWARD.

CAL SPENCER stood with his level and penetrating gaze boring into the face of the new arrival. A tilting shaft of sunlight, spilling in through the opening, made every detail of lineament and color unmistakably and mercilessly clear. Under the narrow shadow of its dilapidated hat brim and the disfigurement of its bristle of beard, it was still the arrestingly handsome face of Jerry Shane—in caricature. Its disguise failed it and its inherent individuality so betrayed it, that Kenneth knew, with a nauseating certainty, he could and must swear that Spencer had fallen into no error of identification.

"Mr. Applefield, ye've done seed this man now," said Spencer almost softly. "Ye 'lowed my notion wouldn't hold water because what things I charged was things thet Major Jerry Shane couldn't bring hisself ter countenance. Ye said I'd done mistook my man. Ye proffered ter come an' see. I wants thet ye should look at him clost now, son. He says he ain't Jerry Shane. He says he's Aaron Wilkes. Scan him feature by feature an' tell him does he lie or not."

Kenneth turned his face almost beseechingly to the accused.

"Major Shane," he began painfully, "I

don't know what your purpose is in this pretense of false names, but if you can explain it—for God's sake do."

Tom Monk had been standing by with the makings of murder in his glowering eyes. He had been caught napping and unarmed, but now he was edging step by step toward the head of the bed where his pistol hung. His movements were so gradual and wary as to escape the semblance of real movement at all. There was only the shifting of his weight from foot to foot as he stood, each shift hitching him a little closer.

SUDDENLY Spencer's hand shot out grasping a leveled pistol. The weapon had been so swiftly drawn that to Kenneth it seemed to leap out of space into the hand that now nursed its grip.

"Stand whar ye're at, Tom," ordered Spencer with a sting of tone that declared its deadliness. "Back up erginst thet wall an' keep yore arms stretched high."

The scowling hillsman obeyed with an oath of futile anger, and Spencer, still holding his weapon ready, went on, level-toned:

"I noted, son, thet ye called him Major Shane. I reckon ye're satisfied now who he is."

"What's the meaning of all this, Spencer?" blustered the subject of the inquisition noisily. "What gives you the right to catechize me and flourish guns at me, whatever name I choose to use?"

"Thet's a fa'r question," replied the mountain man seriously. "An' I'll suffer Tom Monk ter answer hit fer ye. Tom, how much did ye 'low this furriner paid ye ter layway Willis Blake?"

The question was shot out so abruptly, yet in such matter-of-fact fashion, that the stupefied Monk stood for a moment dumb, with blankly staring eyes that seemed to bulge in their sockets.

Once more the self-declared Aaron Wilkes went ash gray of cheek and lip. As when he had seen Kenneth, so now, again, his morale appeared to totter and collapse.

Major Shane drew a long, agonized breath, and dropping his pretense of disguise, whirled on the man who stood helpless with his hands raised. His eyes were frenzied and his face convulsed with the rage of his fancied betrayal.

"You damned yellow rat!" he yelled. "So you took my money and then sold me out! You led these men here, when I thought I could trust you! You damned, double-dealing traitor!"

"I ain't told nuther of these men nuthin'," protested Monk doggedly. "An' onlessen ye're a plum' disable fool, ye'd better hold *yore* peace, too. Don't ye see they're jest settin' fer to lay deadfalls fer ye?"

"Damn you to hell!" shrieked Shane madly, "I might have known you'd ditch me. It's you who've laid a trap for me and brought these men here to identify me. Now, so help me God, I'm going to kill you."

His hand flashed back to his hip pocket—instead of to his armpit—and came out with an automatic pistol grasped in its trembling fingers.

Kenneth remembered that a part of the Jerry Shane legend had dealt with his repute for a positive sleight of hand on the draw.

Certainly now, he had lived up to that storied ability. The gun had come into sight as lightning flashes, but the reporter, sick at heart and utterly reckless, had thrown himself at the other's front before the weapon barked—before Cal Spencer, who was already standing guard over one prisoner, had time to interfere.

"For Heaven's sake, major!" he exclaimed. "Haven't you done enough? I came here confident that you wouldn't be here—and I find you——" The boy broke off, and Shane's white face worked a moment. His lips snarled.

"Stand aside," he commanded huskily. "I don't want to kill you, too, but I will if you interfere."

"Shoot then," Kenneth invited. "You've already killed a part of me. You're right damned welcome to the rest. Shoot me or give me that gun."

For a moment the major stood pallidly

trembling and indecisive. It was a mood which might take, with equal likelihood, the turning toward abandoned maniacal homicide or that toward complete and abject submissiveness.

Then the spasmodic and half-mad twitching of his features subsided to a quiet despair—and tamely he surrendered his weapon.

The captive knew that he had lost his game.

"I'm through with violence, gentlemen," he said quietly. "You have my parole for the present—but I mean to pay Tom Monk out."

He paused, and into his eyes came the crafty light of a man thinking hard and resourcefully—devising new lies to take the place of discarded failures.

"Monk murdered Blake," he declared brazenly. "He killed him to escape prosecution. I knew nothing of it until it was over. I was an accomplice only in that I agreed to keep his secret and loaned him a few dollars.

"Now he's seeking to involve me. You see me in disreputable clothes and wearing a false name because I've been drinking. I was ashamed to have my identity known."

Tom Monk, from his position against the wall, bent forward with his lips drawn up over his yellow teeth. His hands came down clenched—but at the persuasive suggestion of Spencer's pistol they went up again, and he flattened himself against the wall once more.

"Ef we're goin' ter tattle on one another, let's tell hit all," he shouted defiantly. "I lay-wayed Lawyer Blake—but I done hit because this man hired hit done. He paid me a thousand dollars fer ther job. Lift up ther top tick on thet thar bed an' ye'll see ther money thar wropped up in a newspaper."

The disreputable mercenary broke off, panting with the vindictive heat of his recital, and then, catching his breath again, demanded stridently: "Ef I'm lyin' whar did a pore man like me git a thousand dollars from ter stick betwixt ther tickin's of his bed?"

THERE was a pause during which the panting, stressful breathing of the two prisoners sounded stertorous, like the snore of disturbed sleepers.

"Mr. Applefield," suggested Spencer quietly, "s'posin' ye looks under thet thar shuck mattress they're talkin' erbout. These men thet went pardners a few days back, they don't skeercely seem ter agree."

Heavy-heartedly, Kenneth obeyed, and presently he spilled out on the littered table, between tin cups and pans, bank notes to the exact total mentioned.

"Now, Jerry Shane," commented Spencer bitingly, "I'm goin' ter tell ye somethin'. Tom Monk didn't betray ye ter us. He didn't tell us nothin' whatever—but *you* did. Ye flared up too quick an' gabgled erbout payin' out money. Thet's p'intedly what I sought ter hev ye do, an' yit I hoped erginst hope ye could, some fashion, squar' yoreself. I reckon both of ye kin tell ther rest in ther high c'ote."

With his left hand, Spencer swung round a low, hickory-withered chair, and dropped upon it straddling its seat, while his right hand, holding the pistol, rested easily on its back.

Shane stood with shoulders that had hunched, and with a face out of which the little residue of boldness was fast ebbing.

It had come home to the ruined man how clumsily and ineptly he had played into the hands of his accusers; how absolutely and prematurely and needlessly he had convicted himself; into what a blind alley of destruction his panic had stampeded his demoralized wits.

To Kenneth Applefield it seemed that he was seeing, in the foreshortening of moments, the whole lifetime deterioration of a man going from high self-pride to abjectness and ruin. The bronzed cheeks took on a greenish ashen texture, and in the eyes was the craven despair of a collapsed actor abandoning his part.

THE man licked his lips, opened his mouth, closed it again, then shambled forward and collapsed into the second chair of the place, burying his face in

spread and shaken hands. His shoulders heaved to an agonized spasm, and at length he looked up.

"I'm ready to tell it," he said bleakly. "I was afraid of Blake—that's all. I knew he would ruin me—and if I struck back, I knew he'd kill me. I thought that if —if he died up here where he was making enemies—and where enemies hit back—it would seem natural."

They let him have his interval of silence after that without questioning, and after a space a ghost of the old pride sought to fight its way back through overpowering shame and despair. Major Jerry Shane, the reputed fire eater and confessed craven, raised his head and lifted his hands.

"Gentlemen," he said, "there's no escape from this—but the name's been decent heretofore. My daughter still wears it. I'm not known here. Can't I go—to the end of this thing—as Aaron Wilkes?"

Kenneth turned away and stood gazing out of the single window. It seemed indecent to look at this wreck of the man who had been his youth's pattern of courage and high-headed self-sufficiency.

"I don't skeercely reckon hit's feasible," responded Cal Spencer dubiously. "Albeit I wishes hit war. I misdoubts me we couldn't persuade Tom Monk, over thar, ter hold his tongue."

Again, silence fell on the place, and then Kenneth heard Cal's voice as it announced musingly:

"I told ye, son, thet ther end of a trail sometimes left a man heavy-hearted."

For once the eagle eyes of the old mountaineer lapsed in their vigilance, and in that instant Tom Monk made an eruptive dash for the open door. He did it as quickly and startlingly as quail flush from cover, and as he went, Spencer's gun rose, flashed and bellowed, but the figure hurtled through the frame and cut wildly for the road.

Instantly both Cal and Kenneth were in pursuit, but they had gone only a few steps when they saw that the chase was ended. Monk lay across the fence he had sought to vault. The pistol that had barked inside had bitten deep as well, and as the two pursuers came up, they knew that the last breath was running out between the parted lips.

"I reckon," mused Cal in a low voice, 'Tom will hold his peace after all."

That reminded them that they had left another prisoner unguarded, and when they turned back they saw that the door of the house had been closed against them.

Spencer went and rapped sternly on its heavy slabs.

"Shane," he called peremptorily, "I reckon ye'll hev ter open up. I knows ye've got a pistol an' thar's a rifle gun in thar, too, but we kin sot fire ter ther house an' ye kaint nowise escape."

"Gentlemen," came a collected voice from within, "I'm not seeking to escape. It's too late for that. I'll unbar the door —but I ask you to give me five minutes before you open it. I want to write a letter."

Spencer turned to Kenneth. "Mayhap he's lyin' erbout ther letter, son," he said. "But let's pleasure him. Hev ye got a watch?"

With awkward and dazed obedience, the young man took out his timepiece and held it in unsteady fingers. He watched its second hand travel around its minute disk three times—and four, then he started violently, for through the chinks of the cabin filtered a muffled report—not sharply loud but low and dull.

"I kinderly bethought me," said Cal Spencer with quiet grimness, "thet was what he hed hit in head ter do with them five minutes."

"Suicide," gasped the younger man. "And you let him?"

Slowly the other nodded. "Hit seemed kinderly a charity not ter balk him," he answered. "We couldn't skeercely let him go—an' yit a prideful man don't love ter hang."

There was a crude bench fashioned from a split log beside the door, and upon it Kenneth sank and sat staring.

Cal Spencer laid an unshaken hand on his shoulder.

"I heers them houn' dawgs comin' up Pick-yore-way," he said. "An' this time hit sounds like they knows what they're doin'. Belikes hit's luckier fer 'em both we got hyar fust."

"WILL the coroner need me?" Kenneth Applefield put that question in a dull voice an hour later as he and Cal Spencer mounted, and as two mild-eyed dogs with long, flapping ears strained at their leashes in a friendly effort to follow.

"Of course some sort of account must be published. I'd like to be there before his daughter hears of it—from any other source."

The elder man looked at him out of the eyes that held a strange blending of fierce dignity and gentleness.

"Son," he said, "I don't covet none ther task that lays ahead of ye." After a moment he spoke again, this time guardedly. "I don't know what brand of religion ye follers—I was wonderin' ef ye holds thet hit's ever Godly ter tell a lie."

"What do you mean, sir?"

"I means thet Jerry Shane kilt hisself ter escape a full measure of shame. He wanted ter go on bein' Aaron Wilkes—an' thar don't nobody but you an' me know ther contrary—so fur."

The younger man's stunned eyes kindled with a flash of impermanent hopefulness.

"But the coroner!" he objected. "The coroner will ask us who Aaron Wilkes was. The law is awkwardly explicit, and we'll be under oath."

Cal Spencer smiled.

"Ef hit hedn't been fer you," he said curtly, "Don an' me, we wouldn't never hev got tergither thet time, an' ef Don an' me hedn't got tergither thar wouldn't be much law hyarabouts nohow. Don an' me, we kinderly *is* ther law in these parts—an' hit's mostly yore doin'."

"Then you mean——"

"I mean thet ther coroner, he'll do what Don bids him. Don can bid him not ter ask us if we ever seed Wilkes afore.

"Tom Monk an' this stranger hev done confessed thet they plotted tergither ter kill Blake. What matters hit who ther stranger was? Them thet's guilty hes done paid a lavish price. I reckon thet's enough ter satisfy ther law."

TOM BRISTOLL, sitting at the telegraph key, was writing fast. At his shoulder stood the city editor and the news editor and the Old Man. Paragraph by paragraph, as the story ran, the operator tore off the typed report and handed it back. The bits of paper passed from hand to hand to be rushed back to the composing room by waiting copy boys with a hastily penciled notation, "add Blake murder," scribbled on each take.

It was a story that would carry a four-column head, and it told how the blood-hounds had circled, failed, then struck a breast-high scent and lost it again. It told how eventually the man-trailing dogs had led their followers by detour after detour, broken here and there by water courses, to the wretched cabin of Tom Monk on Pick-yore-way Creek at the foot of Mad Dog Mountain.

It gave graphic recital of how, when they got there, they found the game already played out; how Cal Spencer with an unnamed deputy had already slipped in on the two conspirators, set the one against the other and obtained a confession. Finally, it pictured the fashion in which Monk had died as he made his last desperate break for freedom, and that in which his accomplice, a trader by the name of Aaron Wilkes, had seized a moment's opportunity to end his own life.

It was a story of lawless men who had bucked the law and failed; of a former feud leader who had stood solidly back of the law and won, and besides being a news story it was almost literature. No one who read it as it came hot over the wire knew that the essential drama was not being told.

CHAPTER XXV.

MAKE-BELIEVE.

AS Kenneth stepped from the train at Louisville he braced himself in the night air and shivered. So soon as a taxi could carry him to the house of Dorothy

Shane, he faced an ordeal which, even in the parallel of other ordeals, loomed formidable and soul trying.

The secret of identity had been religiously kept, and it would be kept. Weeks later, if need be, Jerry Shane could be ostensibly taken ill and die in the mountains, and his body could be brought home. The law there would prove elastic enough to meet such requirements as were involved in death certificates and the like. He could be buried without the taint of public dishonor—but there was no living Jerry Shane and his death must be announced to his daughter. At least, she must be prepared to face the fact of his disappearance, and to-night Kenneth could delegate that duty to no other than himself.

He dismissed the taxi at the door of Major Shane's town house and his hand shook violently as he paid the driver. Dorothy would probably be alone except for the servants, and how he was to begin or what course he was to take remained a stupefying problem.

On the sidewalk he had to stop again and conscript anew every element of resolve. It seemed to him that ghosts lined the way along the short path from curb to threshold—then he went doggedly forward and rang the bell.

It was Dorothy herself who opened the door, and when Kenneth tried to smile at her, he felt that he must have grimaced horribly.

"Come in, Ken," she said in a still voice. "It was good of you to come at once."

He stood inside the narrow entrance hall, looking at her and wondering what could be the meaning of that manner and tone—the manner and tone of one who already knew something of his purpose in coming. He saw that her face, under the dark crown of hair, was pallidly white, but her eyes were composed with a desperate sort of courage. He questioned for a moment whether some intuition had already borne the news ahead of him. He had heard that some women had an almost clairvoyant sense of that sort.

She led him past the old-fashioned parlor of the house and into the library at its back, then she turned, with her back to a heavy table and both her hands resting on it. Her eyes were quiet, but it seemed that the composure was almost that of death, either that or of a courage that approached the supreme.

"You didn't come to call, Ken," she said in a voice that hardly rose above a whisper, though it was resolutely level. "You came to tell me something. What is it?"

"What should it be, Doctor Dot?" he began defensively, and she shook her head.

"Don't try to make it easy by preambles, Ken," she commanded. "Who was—Aaron Wilkes?"

Kenneth saw afternoon papers lying on the table, and he answered steadily enough: "They said he was a cattle trader, Doctor Dot."

"But you were there. You saw him. Who was he?"

The man sought to answer, and his lips refused to shape words.

How suspicion had come to her, he could not guess, but that it had come was unmistakably clear and dissembling became futile.

"Yes, I was there," he found himself acknowledging at last.

"Was he—my father, Ken?"

The boy stepped forward and stood close. She was supporting herself by her hands pressed on the table top. Her whole face looked dead except for the eyes that unfalteringly, insistently questioned him. He thought he had never seen such dauntlessness standing against such a background of silent torture.

"Cal Spencer thought he'd recognized him, Dot," he told her, forcing his words. "I went with him—to disprove it. I would have staked my life on the result."

She nodded and for a moment stood there looking straight ahead. A long, low moan ran between her lips, and she pressed one hand to her forehead. To her, this news was plainly no surprise—only the hideous confirmation of a fear already born. Kenneth slipped an arm around her, thinking she would fall, but

she straightened again and walked slowly to a chair.

"I guessed it," she said in an agonized whisper. "I guessed it when I read this paper. I guessed it because he went away so mysteriously—and I hadn't heard since."

She looked up and then, for once, her voice shot up wildly as she added: "But I guessed it most of all because I knew him—poor father! Dear, pathetic—weakling!"

"I thought I knew your father," said Kenneth Applefield gently. "And it was because I thought I knew him that even when Cal Spencer was sure of his man I went with him, certain that we'd find a mistake—anxious to correct it. He was my pattern of courage—and of honor."

He broke off, doubting whether or not she heard him. She was sitting with her gaze going straight to the front out of wide eyes. It was as if her head were a symbol of tragic suffering sculptured in ivory and ebony.

"Perhaps," went on Kenneth, "I oughtn't to come to you. I was one of the two men that ran him down—but I didn't realize. I was so sure."

"Stay with me a while," she commanded. "I know why you went—and I want, just once, to talk about it, Ken—and then never to speak of it again. I want to try to make you understand him, if I can."

"God knows, Doctor Dot," he broke out, "I have only sympathy."

"I know, but I don't think any one in the world understood him except me." She paused and her words came slowly. "I was his daughter but I felt more like his mother. He was a big, vain boy, Ken. He lived in a world of fantasy. He was always playing at being a king among men. Deep in his heart he knew that he had none of the qualities that he was famous for—and he couldn't bear to be unmasked."

"You mean, you saw through those—those pretenses?"

"I mean I knew him and he didn't know himself. He had built up and lived in a world of self-glorification. It was the part. He had played it until it seemed real to himself—but deep down he knew that the real self was utterly different."

She paused and then went on again as if her voice were coming from underground, or from some deep catacomb of dead emotions.

"I don't know how it started, all this worship for the tinsel of making a shallow show, all this vanity at being considered the man of supercourage, but it grew to be actual with him. It came to be so much his life that to have his bubble punctured would have been death. It was punctured and it *did* mean death—for three."

"You knew him, Doctor Dot," said the young man, "and I can't contradict you. But from childhood I'd held him up as my model. If his courage was flimsy, if his bravery was counterfeit, where in God's world can a fellow look for the real thing?"

THE girl was sitting straight, rigidly straight, with her hands lying with a waxen stillness in her lap. She was slender and she seemed transfigured into a beauty which was not saintlike only because it was too finely human.

"You may look for it among simple people," she said. "People who are no braver when the drums beat than when they're dying alone in the desert—and I doubt if you can find it anywhere else." She paused, and then the slow syllables of her voice quickened. "Please understand me, Ken. I'm talking to you because you know the worst there is to know, and maybe you'll understand it—with more sympathy—for knowing the rest.

"I'm talking to you, too, because he was an idol of yours and he's been—broken. Unless you understand all that, and understand that I loved him—and love him still—of course, I can't talk about it—even to you."

"I do understand, Doctor Dot."

"Father postured so absurdly because he was weak," she said, "but, at heart, he was never vicious. He must have gone

down into a very hell of terror—to have come to this."

"It must have been a sort of—of insanity," suggested the would-be comforter weakly, and the daughter nodded her dark head.

"Yes," she agreed. "But he'd gone almost to the age of sixty without ever encountering any one who set deliberately about attacking his harmless little hypocrisies. Then he met that man."

SUDDENLY her quiet, almost unnaturally controlled manner snapped and a blaze of wrath spurted in her deep eyes.

"If the man had had any deep motive," she declared, "it might have been worthier. He pretended that he had the good of the turf at heart, but he lied. He was not a breeder of blood horses. He was a professional gambler—hardly better than a gentleman card sharp. He hated my father because my father had snubbed him.

"He set out implacably to dog him to a show-down—and I knew father would never actually face him. I knew that at last the time had come when his pretense would have to give way—but I thought that Blake was only indulging himself in a rather beastly practical joke. I thought he'd let up when he'd humiliated his victim enough, and that it would end there."

"I thought it would mean a—sort of duel," confessed Kenneth.

"No," said Dorothy. "That would have taken two, and I knew one of them wouldn't go through with it. What I didn't suspect was that even a mock hero could be driven to such desperation."

Again she paused, and Kenneth, realizing that she was setting free the dammed-up distress of years, waited and said nothing.

"There are two kinds of bullies," went on the girl with a cold passionateness. "Those who are cowards at heart and those who aren't—but who are cruel to the core. If father was a bully, it was only as a small boy is—for the pleasure of self-glorifying.

"This—this thing called Blake—was just plain cruel. He was as cool, as merciless and as totally devoid of fear as Satan. My poor father, who men thought was fearless too, was shudderingly afraid of him. He knew the part he had played all his life well enough to recognize the real thing when it came his way. Blake was the real thing. Then this—this horror happened."

"The picture you paint," Kenneth told her soberly, "is a portrait I wouldn't have known—and yet I recognize it now."

"Why," Dorothy cried, "I've seen poor father put into positions so humiliating that my ears burned for him, and I've seen him pretend that he neither saw nor heard the deliberate affront. In five minutes after it had happened I've seen him unruffled, complacent, posing and posturing before a fresh audience as though nothing disturbing had happened."

"I know what you mean now, Doctor Dot, when you say you felt yourself more his mother than his daughter."

"And yet though I had to mother him, I couldn't influence him as I might have influenced a son. He was devoted to me and was dear—but he was always a bit ashamed of me. You see, there was nothing dashing or showy about me."

"I begin to think," admitted Kenneth, "that there have been others of us who have known you all your life—and yet never known you at all."

There was a brief silence, then the voice of the girl came again in slow words, low pitched.

"This thing may hit me in a different way—when I lie in bed to-night, thinking. I may go to pieces. Perhaps now—while I can, we'd better talk over the details that I must know."

Her visitor nodded, and told her how Cal Spencer had arranged to guard the secret as her father had sought to have it guarded.

"Of course, though," he said, "it couldn't be kept from you. He couldn't just—just drop out without explanation. So I came to try to prepare you—and you seemed to know already."

"I did know it in my heart, Ken, when I read that paper, or I had a feeling that

was almost knowledge. He had been away for several days and I'd had no word. I called up the farm at once and found he'd bought a railroad ticket to Winchester several days ago. At Winchester you can change for Hemlock Town. I guessed the rest."

Again she paused, and then she said with an effort: "We will bring him home and people will never know. They mustn't ever know. He shall still be the gallant Major Shane."

"And you, Doctor Dot?" demanded the boy. "What will you do."

For a little while she didn't answer, then she looked at him with eyes that seemed inordinately dark in the ivory pallor of her face.

"You answered the question in the name you call me," she told him. "I'm Doctor Dot. I can't stay here and my family owes the mountains something. They need medicine there as well as law."

When Kenneth rose to leave her, Dorothy stood by her chair, still steady.

"What he did was enough," she said, and for the first time her voice faltered. "But I don't believe—in my heart, I can't believe—that he ever ran a crooked race; that he ever had a horse pulled to make a price."

"I don't believe it either, Doctor Dot." He gave her sober assurance, and after the door closed he wondered, and was not sure, whether he had spoken the truth or lied. Whichever it was, he was glad he had said it.

BACK across the Atlantic went the horses that had run for the pride of England and France. With them went retinues of owners, trainers and grooms, all shouting with undaunted ardor that next year, either on this or the other side of the water, they were ready to saddle again and run anew.

Back to a rich man's plant in Jersey went Comet Light, a little tarnished of glory but still a colt whose place was within reach of the top and whose star of promise burned bright.

Back to the rich pasturage of the blue grass and to the limestone water that makes bone, went The Bolt and Kenneth.

Next spring would bring a fresh crop of three year olds to do battle in the Derby, the Preakness and the Belmont, but in the handicap division would be older horses of such established glory that the youngsters would claim only a secondary interest.

"If he winters well," Joe Applefield assured his nephew, "and if he keeps sound, Kenneth will be better as a four year old than he was in the International."

"As it is, sir," Kenneth reminded him, anxious to make amends for his wet blanket of skepticism in the past, "he stands as an earner of a cool hundred thousand, and if he never faced the flag again, he'd be worth as much more in the stud."

"I've been offered seventy-five thousand for him," the turfman admitted. "But twice that money wouldn't buy him. I want to see his sons and daughters carrying the sky blue and polka dots."

Scattered by a dispersal sale into various hands, the colts and fillies, the stallions and the matrons, that had made up the breeding and racing establishment of Jerry Shane, had ceased to be a unit. St. Francis raced now in the colors of an owner whose reputation was rather picturesque than savory. In the form-sheet reports from the winter tracks of Tia Juana and Havana his name frequently appeared among the also rans—and now and then it burst to the head of the column and stood in the brackets of a cheap victory.

Kenneth Applefield, seeing those records, wished that the fate of St. Francis had been otherwise. Only in hands of incontestible honesty could the question ever be conclusively answered as to whether the horse was an in-and-outer by temperament or by wily manipulation.

Another spring had come around, and once more the Derby had been run, but among this season's three year olds nothing stood out to fire men's enthusiasms as Comet Light and Kenneth had fired them a year ago. That sort of interest now centered on the proven champions of the older division, and it was the Clarke

Handicap at Churchill Downs that first promised to call together a field including these great names.

An impatient public awaited, in that race, the first measuring in four-year-old form of the powers of Kenneth and The Bolt and Comet Light. Old partisanships refurbished their intensities.

Heretofore they had raced on the even terms of weight for age. Hereafter each must take up such imposts of freight as the handicappers allotted—and new elements of unknown quantity entered the equation.

But an epidemic of coughing struck the Downs and the Eastern tracks late in the season and interrupted many plans. From the list for the Clarke were stricken the names of Comet Light and The Bolt.

Kenneth responded to the bugle, carrying top weight in the lead pockets of his saddle cloth, and with him went five others.

Jimmy Earle rode the Applefield horse—since Violett's first call on his services was not exercised that day—and when he broke with his mount at the front he breezed him all the way home under wraps. Nothing struck close enough to cause the jockey to raise his whip or loosen a reef, and the public went away feeling that Kenneth was fit, but that it had been a tame triumph.

Only to Kenneth and his uncle was the thing significant.

As the jockey turned his mount over to a groom, after weighing out, and walked back to the paddock between the owner and his nephew, he said briefly: "I've ridden your horse and I've ridden against him. Unless I'm badly mistaken he's the best colt I ever had the leg-up on. I'll be piloting The Bolt again this season and I hope he's a winner, but I'm afraid you've got a better horse."

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE MOUNTAIN CALL.

OFFICES, like individuals and young dogs, form habits easily. Because, last year, Kenneth had asked for his vacation in June, he was notified this year that the same two weeks of leave had been allotted him. The office supposed he had chosen that time in order that he might be in New York for a part of the Belmont Park meeting, and it assumed, logically enough, that this year, too, with his great namesake flaunting silks at the "American Newmarket," his interest would be setting that way with tidal force. But Kenneth was not yet ready to renew the memories and tear open the wounds that stood linked in his mind with those surroundings.

Now he had a vacation at his disposal, and he had taken no thought of how to use it.

He could not see that he had made much of a success of his life, but as he reviewed it, it seemed that he had come nearer feeling the satisfaction of meeting a man's requirements back there in the wooded hills than elsewhere. There had been some stark tragedy there, but also there had been some glorious moments.

On impulse, he wrote a brief letter to Cal Spencer:

> I look back on the times when I was thrown with you as the occasions that stand out most strongly in my life. The last was one of horror, but we did what seemed necessary. I'd like to see you once more and talk to you when we weren't obliged to face problems.

As promptly as broken mails from isolated places would permit, the answer came back.

> Right often when I'm sitting in studyment by my door, I casts back in my mind over the times when me and you met up and it pleasures me that you haven't disremembered them. We've got peace now and we recollect who brought it to pass. We're kinderly pore folks and we ain't got much qualities but if you can put up with what we have to put up with I'd be right glad to enjoy you. Back me a letter saying when you can come. I'll be at the deepo to meet you with a riding critter. Respectfully,
>
> CAL SPENCER.

THAT was how it came about that while Joe Applefield was at Belmont Park confidently pointing his great thoroughbred for the Brooklyn Handicap, his nephew

and heir sat before the door of Cal Spencer's house, listening to the whisper of the creek called Viper with eyes lazily gazing on blue peaks that rose abrupt against a sunset sky.

"Thar's so much I've got hit in head ter talk ter ye erbout," began his host as he loaded his cob pipe with crumbs of "natural leaf," "thet I don't skeercely know which eend ter make a start at."

"Don't bother with either end just yet," laughed Kenneth. "There's time enough. It's good just to sit here and look at the hills against the sky—without hurrying or thinking at all."

Cal Spencer nodded an understanding head.

"Yes," he agreed. "Thar ain't no tormint of haste this time, I reckon. Hit's a kinderly relief, fer once, not ter be in no swivet."

FOR long and languid minutes they smoked in companionable ease. One by one the sons came in, gravely welcomed the visitor, and disappeared about evening tasks.

From the kitchen there drifted an appetizing fragrance of frying "side meat," and from the timber came the call of the evening's first whippoorwill.

But eventually Cal rose and looked away, listening. "Thar comes some feller thet ain't takin' things so easy, though," he observed. "He's ridin' his critter at a lope—this a way—like es ef he war in some dire haste."

Kenneth strained his ears and finally made out the low thud of hoofs on a sandy road. The sound, that had some time ago declared itself to the acuter ears of the mountain man, did not become audible to those of the lowlander until a few moments before the horse itself appeared and halted by the stile.

It was a woman who threw herself down from an ancient sidesaddle and tossed her reins hurriedly across the pickets. She came at a run across the stile, still gripping the long hickory branch with which she had been belaboring her roan mare.

THE two men rose and the elder went forward, but the newcomer began her breathless recital without pausing for greeting.

"Come right over ter Mis' Pritchett's, quick," she commanded excitedly. "She's got a pistol-gun bullet inside her an' she's in a manner stone dead."

Cal Spencer pivoted on his heels to bellow: "Joe, saddle up a couple of ridin' critters, and make ye severe haste." Then he turned back to demand:

"What's come ter pass, Mavis? Give us ther which an' whether of hit."

"Tom Ike Pritchett's done been carryin' on with Molly Spears fer a full y'ar now, come grass," announced the woman in shrill accusation of tone. "Hit's done been a p'int-blank open scandal."

"I've done heered thet norated," agreed Spencer quietly. "Tom Ike, he's an ornery, disable feller anyhow, but what's thet got ter do with his wife's bein' wounded?"

"He fotched thet other woman—thet ain't got no shame—over thar ter his house las' night an' sought ter run Molly out," went on the ugly recital. "Leastways thet's what must of come ter pass, because folks seed ther two of 'em goin' over thet a way tergither. 'Pears like Molly wouldn't be runned outen her own house—so he up an' shot her. Then him an' ther other woman went off tergither an' lef' her a-layin' thar."

"Did ye 'low she war stone dead?" demanded Spencer, with a sudden dangerous flash of the eyes.

"I said in a manner," amended the bearer of news. "Thar's still some leetle bitty life lef' kinderly flickerin' in her."

"An' she's done laid thar alone—from sundown ter sundown?"

"She ain't alone now," the messenger told him. "Ther diplomy doctor's thar now—but nobody didn't know nothin' erbout hit till noontime ter-day."

"Joe, hasten ye with them ridin' critters," shouted the old hillsman. His jaws snapped, and as the son appeared with two led mules he spoke in the sharply clipped syllables of hurried authority.

"Git all my boys, an' whoso else ye kin gather tergither," he commanded briskly. "An' scour ther hills fer Tom Ike Pritchett. Git him—dead or alive, an' ef he kain't be handily tuck alive don't suffer hit ter worrit ye none—but *git* him!"

He turned then to Kenneth. "Air ye goin' along?" he asked briefly, and his guest responded on the instant with a decisive nod.

THE cabin, where the domestic life of the Pritchetts had come to grief, was a wretched weed-choked place on a gulched hillside, about which hung the miasma of degeneracy and indolence. After a forced ride the two men and the woman guide reached it just before dusk. Through the door of the house itself came a yellow light from a single lamp with a cracked chimney.

Already a few neighbors had arrived, and now they stood among the ragweed and mullein stalks of the ragged yard shrilling lugubrious hymns in a high-pitched falsetto. They were singing out the passing life with the stoic cheerlessness of fatalists.

On the male members of this group Spencer cast a glance of fierce contempt. "Ain't you men-persons got nothin' better ter do then ter squat on yore hunkers an' yap?" he demanded contemptuously. "Git ye hence speedily an' jine up with my boys ter hunt this woman-killer. They womenfolks kin tend ter ther psalm singin'."

Kenneth walked behind Cal Spencer, who strode to the door, and from its threshold he saw an interior as sordidly squalid as a pigsty, filthy and unventilated save that the two doors had been flung wide. The strong smell of a smokehouse hung round the place through which pierced, like olfactory needle points, the clean pungency of amyl nitrite.

On the dilapidated bed in one corner lay the sheet-covered figure of the wounded woman. The single lamp stood on a chair near it to light the work that was going forward there, making a circle of visibility in an obscure frame.

WITH back turned to the door, the slight figure of a woman bent over the bed. It was a woman with sleeves rolled high, and it seemed to stand out as a note of clean power in an environment of stagnant mire.

"I thought," whispered Kenneth, "there was a doctor here."

"Thet's her," came the low-voiced answer. "Jerry Shane's gal."

The busy figure took no immediate account of their coming. It was bending low over its work, but soon it drew the sheet up—over the face on the place where the pillow should have been—and rose wearily to face them.

Kenneth's glance met the dark eyes of Dorothy Shane, but if she recognized it, she gave no sign.

"I came too late," she said wearily. "It's over." Then after a moment, she added: "It mightn't have made any real difference. There were too many enemies here—the wound itself, and the filth, and the lack of help."

Kenneth pushed his way over to her side.

"Dorothy!" he exclaimed, and seeming to realize his presence for the first time, she nodded with a wan smile.

"There's nothing more for me to do here," she said to Spencer. "And other calls are waiting."

A small boy pushed his way eruptively into the room and demanded: "Whar's ther diplomy doctor at?" He was told, and he rushed on in a freshet of excitement: "Pa said ter bid ye come d'reckly an' give ma some easin' powder fer ther misery in her chist. Looks like she mout drap off any time."

Dorothy nodded, and in spite of the weariness that ringed her eyes, she looked at Kenneth and smiled. "I don't lose all my cases, Ken," she told him. "I'd be glad to see you when I have time—if I ever do."

There was little opportunity for talk, but as he swung her saddle pockets to the cantle and gave her a lift into the saddle, she said: "You see how it goes—and tonight there's a diphtheria case—and I un-

derstand Uncle Justus Gray's 'got a pone come up on his side.'"

He saw that, as she settled herself in her saddle, her shoulders sagged a little forward as if under the weight of an insuperable weariness, but she straightened them and her voice, as she called "Farewell," was almost humorously cheerful.

"How can she stand it?" he demanded of Cal as they sat once more in the house on Viper after a belated supper—waiting for tidings from the posse that was raking the thicketed slopes for Tom Ike Pritchett. "She looked ready to drop."

"However she contrives ter endure ther work she does," Cal answered soberly, "hit p'int-blank beats me ter fathom. Folks hyar roundabout, they thinks ther Lord A'mighty sont her straight down from up above."

He drew a long draft of smoke through the reed stem of his pipe and went on: "Hit's kinderly easin' up on her now thet summer's done come an' ther roads ain't so almighty slavish ter travel, but endurin' of ther winter——" He broke off and laughed grimly. "Endurin' of ther wintertime," he went on, "when ther flu hit us an' folks commenced dyin' off like flies, along every creek an' branch water, I didn't skeercely look ter see thet gal last out twell ther snow quit flyin'."

THE speaker's eyes became reminiscent, and he gazed into the black cavern of the empty hearth.

"She rid, mile on mile, night an' day, them times, over roads thet wa'n't fitten fer a hog ter wallow in. She journeyed over quicksand an' freshet—she went places whar ther trees lay wind-throwed an' busted an' whar ther ground was all spewed up with frost so thet a hoss couldn't skeercely keep his feet under him. Eyegad, son, hell ner hail couldn't stop thet gal when she sot out ter go—an' she was always a-goin'. I've done seed some siv'ral bold human bodies in my day an' time, but I sometimes misdoubts me if ever I seed man, woman or beast as hell-fired brave es thet thar gal, ner yet one es quiet spoke."

IT was black dark, between midnight and dawn, when the woman doctor, who had been to the diphtheria patient in Wishbone Cove and to Uncle Justus on Turkey-tail Branch, clambered wearily out of her saddle in a wretched hamlet called Eversoll.

The house, where she was expected, showed among its dark neighbors by a sickly light through a single window.

A gawky hobbledehoy of a girl in her teens, barefooted and frowsy, shambled shyly up to accost Dorothy when she entered.

"I ain't much," she made doleful assertion. "Right sensibly I've got a misery all over me an' seems like I'm a-burnin' up inside me. What ye reckon ails me?"

Dorothy, feeling as if she must drop in her tracks, passed her hand wearily across her eyes. This last visit had seemed a task lying at the outer edge of endurance. After it she must rest. But it would not take long to ease this girl's mind and to prescribe some simple remedy. She forced the overtaxed smile again and directed briskly: "Come over here to the light where I can see."

Five minutes later, the doctor straightened up with lips that had tightened and a face that had paled a little.

"Go to bed," she commanded, "and I'll see you in a minute.

When the girl, whose face was eruptively red, had closed the door behind her, Dorothy Shane turned to her mother and issued a rapid sequence of orders; orders that she knew would not be obeyed because they imposed the hardships of disinfection and quarantine.

"She has smallpox," announced the doctor grimly. "And I want my orders carried out strictly and fully—or there'll be a fresh plague in Eversoll."

When she left the cabin much later and mounted her horse again, she rode out of the hamlet and drew rein on a hilltop. She took off her hat and let the cold fog of early morning blow across her face.

"Smallpox," she groaned, "though this is June. Smallpox in a settlement as congested and as unclean as a cattle car!"

DRAWING rein on a hilltop the next afternoon, Kenneth Applefield looked down. The view of a valley pocket had come suddenly as the road twisted, and it was a view to give one pause. There, about a new house from which the smoke went up in a blue thread, was no raggedness. Trimness and self-respect, efficiency and even art seemed written over the place, and he knew he was looking down on the "medical settlemint" of the "diplomy doctor"—aptly named because she was the only school-taught physician in a radius of more than a score of miles.

At the door he paused, stricken with a sort of awe, and then on the threshold he saw a woman's figure in the immaculate uniform of a nurse. It was the figure of a stranger, and beyond her, Kenneth could see into an airy room peopled by a motley crowd of waiting patients.

"I'm the nurse," said the woman at the door, and her voice welcomed him as a recognized pilgrim from the world she had left behind her. "I suppose you want to see the doctor."

Kenneth nodded.

"I'm not a patient," he told her. "Just an old friend of Dor—of Doctor Shane's."

"The doctor isn't in, now," said the woman a little anxiously. "She hasn't been in for twenty-four hours, and I have an idea that unless she has slept in the saddle her eyes haven't been closed in that time either."

It was assumed that the guest would remain overnight, and Miss Calloway conducted him to a guest room and left him there.

"So this is what they call easing up on her," muttered the man as he cast his eyes about a small apartment, scrupulously tidy and charmingly attractive. He strode to the window and looked out. Everywhere was trim tidiness set in the midst of a rugged almost ferocious wildness.

He left the house and paced the gravel road, waiting impatiently. One could see along that highway, not continuously but in patches as it looped into and out of green curtains of forest—and at length he made out a horse coming slowly, with a limp in one leg. He knew that he himself had not yet been observed by the rider of that wearied beast, and he knew, too, that the rider was Doctor Dorothy Shane.

Thinking herself as yet unobserved, she rode with a relaxation that made no useless effort, and he saw that she rode with the sagged shoulders and the bent head of bitter exhaustion.

Then a turn in the road hid her, and when she came into view again she had been transformed in the manner of an actress who steps from the wings onto the stage. Here she would be seen, and now she rode with chin held high and a forced erectness.

He was standing by the stile as she drew rein, and she smiled out of eyes that were black-ringed and with lips that were sleeplessly stiff. For just a moment, she swayed a little in her saddle, and the young man held out his arms. "Slide," he commanded. "I'll catch you."

But Dorothy shook her head and her voice was sharp with warning.

"Don't come too close, Ken. Keep your distance. I'm fresh from a sizzling nest of smallpox."

Kenneth, with a smiling disregard for orders, caught her as she swung from the saddle, and he saw that had he not done so her tired knees would not have held her straight.

"Damn the smallpox," he exclaimed hotly. "If you can stand it for hours, I guess I can risk it for minutes." And he held her elbow as they went up the trim path between the grass plots.

CHAPTER XXVII.

WHAT KENNETH WON.

KENNETH APPLEFIELD had written to the *Leader* that he must overstay his leave because he had been exposed to smallpox and was quarantined. He did not regard it necessary to add that he was living in a tent pitched on a hillside, overlooking a paltry and stricken hamlet where life and death grappled in a warfare that took ugly shapes.

It seemed equally needless to add that he was maintaining, at the point of a rifle, the martial law of quarantine enforcement decreed by two feud leaders and a woman doctor. Neither did he confide to his colleagues that he was acting as a general "roustabout" and helper to the one physician and the one nurse, who were battling desperately to hold the plague in confinement at its center of infection, and to prevent its spread like a creeping brush fire along other waterways and into other coves.

He was learning the sickening discouragement of combat with stolid inertia and the nerve strain of standing against panic. For these people either refused, with a backwoods fatalism, to admit that any precaution was other than "fotched on tomfoolery," or else they sought by day and by night to escape his viligance and slip away from this purgatorial shoulder brushing with death, and to carry the virulence into other neighborhoods.

He had, at the outset, fought a hard battle with Dorothy who had refused to permit his participation in what she said was her job.

"You came for a vacation—not for filth and peril," she argued stoutly. "This isn't your affair."

"The best thing I do in these hills," he made impudent response, "is to mix in and meddle. I got started that way and it's what I might call my mountain technique."

"And you've done enough, Ken," she asserted. "You laid the foundation without which I couldn't have begun building. You don't see suspicion and hatred here any longer—where once there was little else. You don't find men lying in a creek bed with bullets in their backs any more—and that came about because of what you did. It's enough. This particular sort of fight belongs to us doctors. Leave it to us."

HE had finally pretended to accept her edict because he had thought of a better way than argument. She had reached the stricken hamlet one day to find him waiting there with a sheepish grin on his face and a rifle crotched in his elbow.

"I just caught that tow-headed boy doing a sneak," he gave amiable information. "I had to fire a couple of warning shots across his bow before he would heave to. He's anchored now on his front step, but I'm afraid he'll never love me again."

Cal Spencer sent a deputy sheriff with warnings of legal verbiage to be tacked on tree trunks, and set watchers at a safe distance to assist in holding the cordon, which sought to confine the menace within bounds as a "splash dam" holds a gathering flood.

But these sentries, too, were either afraid or utterly apathetic. They either fled from one who sought to pass their lines, or they fraternized recklessly with infection.

"La, ef a man's time has done come ter die," they philosophized, "he'll die, an' ef hit ain't, he'll go on livin' an' ter hell with all this newfangled palaver erbout germs an' sich like."

It was Kenneth's task to hold secure these unstable lines about the hamlet which had become a concentration camp, and he slept when he could and worked all the time.

Uncle Clif Mackard, a self-ordained evangelist who was also reputed to be "fitified," slipped past the sentries one day and appeared on the single street of the village. With a long-tailed coat flapping about his gangling legs, an ancient high hat on his straggling locks, a bow of red ribbon tied about his collarless neck and with a light of half-mad fervor in his eyes, he lifted his arms to the high heavens and trumpeted his challenge to science.

"Ye of leetle faith!" he bellowed in tones of throbbing and castigating accusation. "Oh, ye of leetle faith, thet ye sots yore store by cures outen bottles an' healers in petticoats! Ther Lord God A'mighty visited ther plagues on Egypt—an' ther Lord God A'mighty sends plagues at His pleasure ter-day. Ther Lord God A'mighty, He elects whosoever is ripe for punishment an' death—an' whoso He spares, they kin walk in ther lion's den

like Dan'l—an' no fotched-on germs kain't harm no ha'r of thar heads.

"I calls on ye in ther name of Jehovah ter rise up from yore beds an' ter come outen yore houses, an' ter foller me an' go down inter ther waters an' be baptized. I calls on ye ter spew outen yore mouths ther blasphemies thet pins a hell-spawned faith in physickin' an' nursin' an' kindred abominations! From hyar I'm goin' on wha'rsoever God sends me—an' him thet seeks ter stop me, he raises up his hand erginst God's messenger!"

Dorothy Shane heard the commotion out in the narrow street and came to the door of the cabin where she was busy. Credulous listeners were wagging heads in agreement. She leaned against the frame, and for a weak moment she felt that against such forces of benighted ignorance her fight was a vain one.

Kenneth Applefield heard the din from his hillside tent where he was catching a brief and much-needed nap. He saw a little group gathering about the exhorter and he caught the insidious spirit of that harangue spreading and kindling.

He came to the center of disturbance at a run.

With howls of tricky anger and indignation falling about him in a verbal stoning, he caught the lunatic and hustled him to an empty cabin, while on the ears of all beat the curses of Jehovah which were being called down upon his impious head by this self-proclaimed prophet crying in the wilderness.

Uncle Clif, whom it became necessary to hold in quarantine because he had rankly exposed himself, took the malady in the cabin of his imprisonment, and Kenneth, who did not know whether the aches in his own bones were from dog weariness or from the thing that was striking with its fatal sting here and there, had his bitter moments of feeling himself a potential murderer—until the old man had passed his crisis.

BUT all things end, and reactions come. Old people, who remembered other plagues, became ardent propagandists and spread abroad the comparison of those devastating times of the past with this one that had been held in check.

"Hit's right sensibly like a fire thet's done burned over one acre," they announced. "'Stid of blackenin' an' charrin' ther hillsides an' coves es fur es a man kin see from a hilltop."

Then, with the danger and exhaustion of the thing put behind them, the corporal's guard of three that had borne the brunt of the fight, fagged to the bone but triumphant, rode back to the medical settlement.

Miss Calloway, the nurse, made the journey in a "jolt wagon," but Kenneth and Doctor Shane rode horseback, and as they went, their talk fell upon topics that seemed far away, separated from their present by the wide chasm which the immediate past had dredged into their experience.

"If you're going on here," suggested the man, "you've absolutely got to have a rest. I want you to come back to Louisville for the fall races."

Dorothy nodded her head.

"I want to," she answered slowly. "I'm not going to be a hermit—just because there are memories in the way of going back."

The young man looked at her with thoughtful eyes.

"Do you mean," he asked almost eagerly, "that you have to force yourself to face things sometimes, too? Do you mean that *your* courage ever has to be whipped up to the sticking point?"

She smiled, and in spite of her fagged weariness there was a glint of quiet amusement in her dark eyes.

"Don't you think, Ken," she asked gently, "that it's about time some one introduced you to yourself? Don't you think that life would be a better thing if you got to know yourself."

"I'm afraid I know myself too well," he told her. "I know myself so well that I can't get away from the weaknesses under the false front."

"Tell me about it," she suggested, and as once before he had made self-confes-

sions to Mary Lee, he now made them to her.

"And so," he summarized at the end of his story with an uncomfortable laugh, "my ancestors gave me a pair of eyes that didn't belong to me. They are bold eyes, it seems, and I am timid—but men have insisted on judging me by those eyes and giving me jobs that I had no stomach for."

"And did you fail in those jobs?" she inquired soberly.

He paused reflectively and then laughed bitterly.

"As a matter of fact," he answered, "I don't believe I did. But I approached every one quaking in my boots, and it was always something outside myself that carried me over the riffle." He paused and looked away at the green slopes.

"It almost seemed," he said whimsically, "as if the ghosts of the bold Applefields intervened—and as if, from their graves, they manipulated me as a ventriloquist in vaudeville manipulates the puppet he holds on his knee. The doll has no volition—but it does as the ventriloquist wishes—and seems to be alive."

"And you think," she inquired, "that these ancestors never knew any fear in their own times?"

"The record seems to show that they didn't," he said with a touch of vicarious pride. "It seems to have been a fearless breed—until I came along."

"They were brave," she answered. "But it was the bravery that met fear—that sometimes went down before it, perhaps—but that always came back with a face turned to the danger. Cal Spencer and Don McDonough and Basil Haycroft thought they saw that same courage in you."

"Yes, that's what I was saying. The something in the eyes—that belonged to the ancestors—fooled them."

"No, Ken," she declared with a conviction that did not cause her voice to rise. "You never fooled them. They couldn't be fooled. They didn't think. They *knew*. You have fooled nobody but yourself, Kenneth. You've compared your type of bravery with that of sham-battle heroes—and that's not the sort you have."

The man's eyes remained fixed on those of the girl for a while, and in them was the perplexity of a gaze seeking to focus itself. At last, he demanded almost eagerly.

"You mean that the inward quakings—don't spell essential cowardice?"

"I mean that a man who has never failed under fire doesn't have to trouble himself because there was sweat on his brow before the charge sounded. Look at these hills." The "diplomy doctor" drew herself straighter and her gauntleted hand swept out in indicated radius over the vast spread of the mountainous panorama.

"Here is a people at peace. Here is a people welcoming schools and doctors. A little while ago it stood on the brink of bloodshed. I think you might read your answer there, Ken—and be satisfied."

THAT evening Kenneth sat before the door of the "medical settlemint."

The sun had set, and though the west was dyed with an amber afterglow, the east was paling and a single star was hanging there like a pallid lantern. The whippoorwills were beginning to call, and the shaggy humps of ridges were darkening into solid embankments of inky purple.

Dorothy was inside. Kenneth had seen her rise from the supper table in the rough travel-stained clothes of her work and go to her room, and he had been left alone with the little accumulation of letters and papers that had come while he had been away. Now he waited for her with thoughts that had seemed to smooth into peace as the minor voices of the twilight hills came into being like a lullaby.

There had been letters and clippings there from the east, and as Kenneth sat in the luxury of rest after effort, he closed his eyes and seemed to see enacted over again the events of which they spoke. One from Uncle Joe said:

In the Brooklyn we met them all again—that is, those on this side of the water. What we did

last year was fine enough, but it came at the fag end of the season, and there was no time then to answer the charges that we couldn't do it over again. People said one victory didn't make a career—even such a race as fell to us in the International. Of course the Clarke was a race with lesser class and added little to the evidence. But The Bolt was at his best in the Brooklyn and Comet Light seemed an improved horse. As last season, Violett's starter accounted for his old rival Comet Light. He found him no contemptible rival, but the margin was sufficient. These two fought it out ding-dong and stride for stride from start to finish, and it was The Bolt that led by a half length, that is to say, that led Comet Light in the duel—for the place. As for Kenneth he wasn't in that scrap. He was breezing along two lengths ahead of them both. He's sound this year, and though he may be beaten, he's sure of his share of the glory, and there will be plenty of glory.

Kenneth felt a stir of his pulses. It was a far cry from the sort of fight he had come out of to this other sort. Then he read on:

We have still some wrangling to do about business. You have let me pay to you only the sums that appeared due in notes to your father, but there are other settlements to be made. Your father stood always behind me. I was really his agent, and now I am really your trustee—or if you prefer the other words, we are partners in this game. What victories come to our colors belong to us both.

Then he heard Dorothy coming, and rose from his seat. He looked, rubbed his eyes and looked again.

THE doctor was gone. On the threshold of the "medical settlemint" stood a woman all feminine and all young. Her hair was dark and soft and her eyes were night deep. Kenneth Applefield felt his heart leap as he looked at her. Here was beauty; not an electrical, disquieting beauty, but the tranquil loveliness of night and song. Here was a freshness that had come up phœnixlike from ashes of exhaustion—the freshness of an invincible spirit.

"Doctor Dot!" he stammered. "You are glorious!"

"Thank you," she laughed. "To-night I feel like hearing silly things of that sort."

A silence fell—a silence through which both of them were looking back. At last he said:

"Is it every one that goes along through life blindfolded until it's too late to make use of sight—or is it only some of us?"

"What do you mean, Ken?"

"I mean that I've known you always. I've recognized your splendid bravery and your fine mind—but until just now I never knew that you were the most beautiful woman I've ever seen."

"I?" she laughed. "It's the force of contrast. I've just tidied up again after being muddy and dusty. I've just indulged in a woman's vanity and gotten into soft clothes again."

"Cal Spencer," he told her irrelevantly, "says that people here think God sent you straight from heaven."

"Cal Spencer," she laughed, "is a dear soul, and he's good enough to think well of me."

"He doesn't think. He *knows*," announced the young man. "You can't fool men like Cal Spencer. You can only fool yourself. Dorothy, don't you think it's time that some one introduced you to yourself?"

She laughed, and in the music of her voice was no trace of weary, soul-rusting days and nights.

"I'd be very glad to meet myself," she said mockingly.

Kenneth was leaning against a post of the porch, and his eyes were fixed on the velvet darkness of the mountain against the sky across which the stars had begun trooping.

"You're an ideal," he said quietly, "that I can set up in my temple where other deities have fallen down. You're a deity that I can know it's good to worship—know it beyond doubt even after others have failed." He broke off, and stood silent with a face into which crept lines of suffering.

"But a man," he went on steadily, forcing his words out of a burdened spirit, "can't offer a temple full of scrapped idols—to a goddess that ought to have an undefiled shrine. I'm going back to-morrow. When I shake hands with you, it's going

to be with a comrade that I've known on the firing line—with a heroic comrade, but——"

"But what, Ken?" she asked gently.

"But I'm carrying away something else, Doctor Dot. If it hadn't been too late—if you hadn't seen me in the ruins because I was a fool—if I weren't a threadbare thing—I'd still make one fight more. I'd fight for your love."

He paused, and she stood silent, too, looking away as he was, but saying nothing. After all, he knew there was nothing she could say, so he straightened his shoulders and sought to banish that note from his voice which might seem an undue appeal for sympathy.

"As it is, we part good comrades—Doctor Dot and her roustabout—don't we? And you're coming to the fall races for a vacation?"

She nodded her dark head in silence.

After a pause she seemed to rouse herself out of a deep preoccupation and said:

"I'm coming for a while. But I can't stay away from my job long. I want to build a small hospital here. I want——" She broke off and her voice fell. She had never mentioned her father's name before since the night when Kenneth had been a messenger of tragedy. Now, she said almost in a whisper: "I want to call it the Jerry Shane Memorial."

He came over and took both her hands.

"I can help in that," he declared. "There's a horse named after me that's earning money. Some of it will be mine—some day."

SHE turned her head and nodded. The moon was coming up above the ridges. Its silver found her soft mass of dark hair and made a nimbus around it. There was a silvery gleam of moisture in the dark eyes, too. She was transfigured, lovely, slim, and for once Kenneth did not feel the weaker of the two.

"You fell in love up here once, Kenneth—with a girl you lost," she said slowly.

"Yes," he admitted. "You know what came of it. It was a love that made me blind and kept me blind—until too late."

Her voice was scarcely audible. "I did the same thing, Ken, at the same time."

"You? With whom?"

"With a man who was looking at such a bright beauty—that he couldn't see me at all."

Something, half gasp of amazement and half groan of despair, broke from Kenneth's lips.

"Great God, what I lost!" he exclaimed. "And now I can see nothing else in life but you—and it's too late!"

She looked up and the moonlight fell full on her face.

"I've never changed, Ken," she said.

THE END.

NO FIGHT

JUDGE CAMERON McRAE, of Asheville, North Carolina, was trying a case in which half a dozen mountaineers were charged with having staged a free-for-all and bloody fight in a lunch room in the city, having presumably imbibed corn liquor too generously. To get some real light on the battle, the judge called for the story of the gaunt and gray-haired wife of one of the bruised and bleeding defendants.

"'Deed, judge," she said, with an air of unconcern, "it wasn't no fight ertall. Leastways, you couldn't call it no real fight in partickler. Fust thing I seen of it, Sam Breathley called John Frader a liar, an' John up an' hit Sam Breathley with the back of a cheer. Two of Sam's friends drawed a knife an' cut John a slash jos' above his collar. Then Bill Wightly, who is a friend of John Frader, begin to shoot, mostly in the air. An' theer wus some more shootin' an' maybe one or two of the boys took a pass at one another with a knife. Then a real fight wus erbout to start when your policemen come in an' bust it up."

Popular Contest Winners

The prize winners in the contest as to which was the best number of THE POPULAR are announced below. It has been a hard task selecting them. Many readers who wrote remarkable letters failed to comply with the conditions of the contest—that is to say, they failed to select one number of the magazine that they considered the best. We wish that there were more prizes. There are so many contestants who came so near winning that it is hard to see them lose. However, those who have won have fought their way through a heavy field and deserve the prize. Their names are:

Ben H. Fowler

He is nineteen years of age. He lives in Jacksonville, Florida. He gets the first prize of one hundred dollars. We send it to him with every good wish and shake his hand. You will read his letter in some later issue.

The second prize of fifty dollars goes to

Clarence O. Fitch

He is a veteran reader of the magazine, a newspaper man. He lives in Fairfield, Idaho.

The other six prizes of twenty-five dollars each go as follows:

W. M. BLAKE, ***Ronceverts, West Virginia***

VENNETTE S. MOLLER, ***240 West End Ave., New York City***

M. G. VAIR, ***Toronto, Canada***

LARRY O'CONNOR, ***Ketchiken, Alaska***

CHARLES F. DISTELHURST, ***Omaha, Nebraska***

JOHN H. TYREE, ***Richmond, Virginia***

We congratulate all the winners. We also congratulate a thousand other competitors and wish them better luck next time.

"Some Busy Little Guy"

By Patterson McNutt

Author of "The Champion," and other stories.

A young "Eye-talian" must start hustling early and keep at it late to win the open golf championship, the sweetest girl in the world, and thirty thousand a year. The competition for these three prizes kept Tony's hands pretty full throughout his early youth.

HE was born the son of an Italian emigrant—but he didn't stay that. If he hadn't been so dumb he would probably have come one day to command a bootblack stand and to annoy people by banging them with brooms until nickels dropped out. But Tony d'Angelo was dumb enough to believe that certain early American gentlemen weren't kidding the public when they broadcast the information that all Americans were born free and equal and entitled to the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of golf balls. Believing this, Tony——

Well, anyway, he didn't choose bootblacking as a career.

It is set down here that Tony was dumb because, some years after he first came to the Stony Brook Golf Club as a caddie, certain people who claimed to know all about such matters said so.

"He doesn't know how hard the game of golf is," these exasperated folk complained. "He's so dumb he figures it's just as easy to drop a forty-foot putt as it is to sink the little ones. If he ever finds out how hard it is to play this game, he'll blow."

All this may be true, but it is equally true that Tony had that will-o'-the-wisp of character known as class. Streaks of it showed plainly against the drab background, such streaks as indicated that at some distant time a Garibaldi or a Napoleon had generously saved a drop or two of class blood to pass along through the generations so that it would one day come to leaven plain everyday Tony d'Angelo.

Class was revealed by the sensitive nose, the firmly modeled chin and a certain clear quality of fearlessness in the brown eyes. His fingers were the lean, completely com-

petent fingers of the artist. The barrel chest and the bowed and stumpy legs, the results of early walking tours when Mamma d'Angelo was too busy with suds and washing board to guard her son against such youthful indiscretions, were plain Italian immigrant.

It was Tony's liking for class which caused him some minor difficulties when he first came to Stony Brook to caddie. His trouble developed the first time he caddied for Elsie Blair. Elsie was just Tony's age and she had class that showed from her trim little ankles to the unruly strands of her corn-silk hair. Tony liked the class in Elsie Blair.

Elsie was the daughter of Stephen Blair, a gentleman who was worth somewhere around a million dollars and a golf fiend who would have given most of this sum to any magician who could teach him how to break ninety-five. But no one could do that.

Condemned to the sufferings of a hopeless duffer, Blair had decided that Elsie, by beginning early, should acquire the marvelous thing he had missed when he had unfortunately decided to devote his early life to the establishment of a string of department stores instead of to the really difficult worth-while business of beating par.

To this end Stephen Blair saw to it that Elsie played golf. So that she might learn from the beginning to play good golf he also saw to it that she played frequently with young Cesare Laschi.

CESARE, due probably to his Scotch ancestry, was Stony Brook's boy wonder of golf. He was fifteen when Tony first came to the club, and shooting around the early eighties. He occasionally broke into the late seventies and it was confidently predicted by Stony Brook members that he would one day be a national champion.

These predictions sounded pleasantly on the ears of Cesare Laschi, senior. The house of Laschi had known what it was to be plain "Eye-talian," but the members of that house devoted a certain number of hours each day to the business of forgetting that fact.

The younger Laschi was going to be an amateur golf star. Yes, sir! That was going to be his business.

He was going to be one of those amateurs who won't take a check. He was going to play amateur golf three hundred and sixty-five days a year and his business slogan was going to be: "Gather ye bond salesman's commissions while ye may."

Somewhere along the route he was probably going to marry some feminine golf nut with plenty of money and no sense. And who could tell? Elsie Blair might be the nut who would fall from the tree when the junior Laschi shook it with an amateur champion's maschie.

It was pleasing, therefore, for the elder Laschi to note that Stephen Blair approved when Elsie played around with Cesare. He spoke to Cesare about it and advised him to watch his step and polish up his short game.

Cesare Laschi was Elsie Blair's partner on that day when Tony first caddied for Elsie, and Tony made the mistake of stepping on the Laschi toes.

The accident occurred at the close of the round, when Elsie thanked Tony for finding so many wild-hit balls—balls that had seemed hopelessly lost.

"You were a very good caddie to-day, Tony," she said. Elsie had received certain instructions from her father concerning the proper treatment of caddies. Stephen Blair hoped that Elsie might make a golf champion. He was determined that she should be a regular person.

Tony took a divot with a wriggling toe before responding to this appreciation.

"I like to caddie for you," he said finally. "You got class. You're nice."

It was at this point that the toes of the junior Laschi began to pain him. He yelled immediately.

"You keep your place," he ordered sharply. "Don't you know that you're nothing but a caddie? What do you mean, speaking to Miss Blair that way?"

"He just said I was nice," Elsie pro-

tested, reasonably enough. "I think it was nice of him to say that I was nice."

"You leave him to me," Cesare advised angrily. "He ought to know enough to keep his place. I'll show him."

There seemed to be little doubt about the matter. Judging from early tendencies Cesare was going to make a great amateur-champion bond salesman. Even at fifteen he worried about matters affecting social position.

IT was Stephen Blair who first declared that Tony was the best caddie at Stony Brook. He arrived at this conclusion after noting that Tony generally scanned the ground when looking for lost balls, whereas the usual method of Stony Brook caddies was to peer dreamily into the pretty summer skies.

Blair later made the discovery that this first-class ball hawk of his also possessed the imitative genius of a monkey. This was after Tony had rounded out four summers of service at Stony Brook.

The discovery came at the end of a round during which Blair had suffered more than was usual to him. As a member of a foursome he had been on the three-way losing end of a sizable Nassau bet and to add to his sorrows he had tossed away a considerable sum in side wagers. At the moment he thought very little of the game of golf and declared heatedly that knitting seemed to be the only appropriate pastime left to a man of his meager athletic abilities.

"I can show you what's the matter," Tony informed Blair.

"You can show me?"

"Sure. Gimme your driver."

Blair, clutching desperately at straws, obeyed.

"First," Tony offered, "I show you how you swing."

Stephen Blair was an impressive sight as he swung a golf club. He would grip the club as if it were the bit of driftwood that was keeping him afloat in a raging sea. He threatened the ball with interminable waggles and then when he started his back swing he would dip his left knee toward the ground and poise his left toe after the manner of the most demure of the ballet dancers. He glared at the ball ferociously and saw to it that his left arm was as straight and stiff as the shaft of the club in his hands.

He swore by all that was unholy that Mike Fitzgerald, the club pro, and the other professional specialists who had been called in on the case, told him to do all these things. Perhaps he was right, but such was his terror of a golf club that at the top of his swing palsy and other ills possessed him.

There would be a sudden agonized twitching of his body, a wild glare would come into his eyes and then, as if he had suddenly discovered that the ball intended to run out on him, he would hurl his body at the ball in one convulsive lunge. Any one present when Stephen Blair played a golf shot knew that a horrible deed had been done.

Tony imitated that swing. He imitated it so perfectly that the members of the foursome collapsed and rolled on the green, weak and hysterical with an unholy joy.

Then he showed them the right swing, a swing that started back lazily, but one that gathered speed on the down sweep until it sent the club head whistling just over the edge of the grass and on through until the force of the swing snapped Tony's head erect and jerked his eyes away from the spot at which he had aimed.

IT was after this demonstration that Blair sought Mike Fitzgerald. Mike was hidden behind the counter of the professional's shop as Blair entered.

"Stop laughing at me," Blair commanded. "I want to talk to you."

Fitzgerald composed himself."

"Did you see that imitation of me?" Blair demanded.

"I did, sir."

"Every last painful detail of it?"

"Yes, sir. Even to the 'boy-stood-on-the-burning-deck' look you have at the end of the swing."

"Wasn't it perfect?"

Fitzgerald responded to this with a new fit of hysterics.

"I gather," Blair commented dryly, "that you do think it was perfect. Mike, that little fool is a monkey. He can imitate anything. You say yourself that the best way to learn this game is to imitate the best players. Why don't you work with Tony? Seriously, now, he might have the makings of a great pro."

"I'm already working with him," Fitzgerald replied, "but I'm working with him chiefly by letting him alone. Many a lad's been ruined by being told too much. He caddies for me whenever I go around, and I've noticed he watches me like a hawk.

"He's picked up some old clubs and before the members get here in the morning and after they leave late in the afternoon, Tony's generally banging a ball or two up to the twelfth green.

"I've watched him a couple of times and he does very well, except that he don't seem to understand it when he doesn't stick them all up there within a foot or so of the pin. He's the same on the green. He really expects them all to go in, no matter what the distance is."

Blair moaned piteously.

"Good Lord," he said, "what I wouldn't give to have confidence like that! I could get under ninety if I did have it, but whenever I have a chance to break ninety with only a few holes to go I begin to think of all the terrible things that can happen. Then I'm through. Don't rob Tony of that confidence, Mike."

"Rob him of it!" Fitzgerald scoffed. 'You might as well try to run off with the Woolworth Building some night when nobody's looking. Sometimes Tony seems to have so much confidence I think he's kinda dumb. He don't seem to know how hard this game is."

IT was the following spring that Tony's passionate love of class caused the trouble that made it necessary for him to leave the Stony Brook Club. He was sixteen then and the most sought-after caddie around the club. Added to his ability as a ball hawk he knew the game. He knew distances and the club to advise for the different shots.

Cesare Laschi was playing that year in the State championship, and Tony, their early feud forgotten, was caddying for him. Cesare wanted the benefit of Tony's advice and he wanted Tony along to give him "the old confidence."

Tony was a good caddie to have around when you wanted the old confidence. He always knew the right club to use and he always told you to use it.

"Just sock it right up there," Tony would advise his man. "Don't hold back on it. Just sock it right up there."

Socking it right up there seemed to Tony to be the easiest and most practical way out of any golf difficulty.

In spite of Tony's help, however, Cesare had rough going when he got to the final round of the State championship. He was one down and three to go when he drove into the rough at the thirty-fourth hole of the match, just after his opponent had pasted one far, far away and straight down the middle.

There was some delay in locating the ball, but suddenly Cesare saw it nestling deep in a bad lie just at the edge of the rough. At the same moment he made the interesting discovery that almost nobody in his neighborhood was looking his way.

A deft dig with his right foot scooped the ball out of its bad lie and left it sitting pretty, still in the rough but sitting up so that any sort of a decent shot would land it on the green.

"Oh," Cesare exclaimed with just the proper note of surprise. "Here it is!"

It was at this moment that Tony's love of class caused his exit from Stony Brook. In the process of observing and acquiring class Tony had noted that the Stony Brook members who really possessed that elusive quality generally marked eights and nines on their score cards when it so happened that they were unfortunate enough to use eight or nine strokes in coaxing a golf ball from the tee to the bottom of the cup.

Tony worshiped class and through observation he had come to know that those

who had class religiously obeyed the laws of golf, obeyed these laws because they realized this obeyance to be one of the great fascinations of the game.

Tony wasn't sure about Cesare Laschi. He could play great golf, but Tony wasn't certain that he had class, and when he noted from the corner of a suddenly lifted eye that Cesare had kicked his ball into a good lie Tony began to have his doubts. At first they were only doubts.

"You touched your ball with your foot," he whispered to Cesare as that young man reached for a mid-iron with which to play his second shot.

Cesare regarded Tony with cold hostility.

"You're a damn liar," he said as he took his stance to play his ball up to the green.

When some one is hitting you on the chin it is very difficult to play a good second shot to a golf green. Cesare Laschi didn't play that particular second shot at all. He didn't play any more shots that day. He defaulted his match.

Some indignant folk grabbed Tony and took him away from there and others surrounded Cesare and consoled with him as he nursed his chin on the march back to the clubhouse. Cesare needed consolation even more than he needed liniment, for as he had picked himself up from where Tony had left him he had looked first into the blazing eyes of Elsie Blair.

"I saw it, too," she informed him coldly. Then she went away from there to see to it that Tony didn't spend the night on the inside looking out just because he had disrespectfully socked a coming amateur bond salesman.

She sent for her father and between them they got Tony out of the clutches of those who felt that there ought to be a law prohibiting any one from socking amateur bond salesmen who played championship golf and that this and that should be done to those who did so sock.

It was Stephen Blair who advised Tony that it would be wise for him to leave Stony Brook.

"I might fix it for you to stay," he told him, "but it would be uncomfortable for you. Cesare Laschi is the fair-haired boy here.

"I can get you a good job as an assistant pro at the Swan Lake Club in Maine. You'll make good money there and be away from all this trouble."

"All right," Tony finally agreed. "But I want to tell you something, Mr. Blair. I'm coming back here and when I do come back I won't have to punch Cesare Laschi on the chin to get even with him. I'll hurt him worse than that."

TONY went to Swan Lake. He wrote Blair that he liked it there.

"I like it fine here," the letter read. "I got lots of work to do and am making plenty of jack. I am working on my game. I practice early in the morning and then I make jack all day teaching and fixing clubs and then I practice maybe an hour every afternoon. And they have nice people here. I like them and watch them so that I can learn to act like they act. They got class. They are swell. Some busy little guy is Tony."

Blair chuckled as he read that letter.

"I wonder if that kid's got something," he mused. "I wonder if you put some decent clothes on him and taught him decent English if he'd do. I wonder."

It was five years before Tony did come back to Stony Brook and when he arrived he was entered as a competitor in the open championship that was played there that year. In five years there had been changes, at Stony Brook and at Swan Lake.

Most important of the changes at Stony Brook had been the change in the attitude of Elsie Blair as her attitude affected her feelings for Cesare Laschi. After Tony's departure there had been explanations.

It had really been an accident, kicking the ball that time in the State championship. She didn't really think he would deliberately do so utterly an unsportsmanlike thing as that, did she? It just happened that he was walking along in the rough looking for his ball and his foot had accidentally kicked the ball into a good

lie. There was no doubt now that he had kicked the ball, but it was all an accident.

He was sorry now for the way he had treated that caddie, but you could understand how tightly a man's nerves are drawn in a championship match and it did seem at just that moment as if that caddie was being mighty fresh.

Well, Cesare did play wonderful golf and he was a hero at Stony Brook. After explanations, persuasions and pleadings Elsie Blair had allowed Cesare Laschi to announce their engagement. After all, how can you resist the man who holds the course record?

There had been changes at Swan Lake, changes that concerned Tony d'Angelo. When he returned to Stony Brook there was no plain "Eye-talian" visible in the make-up of Tony d'Angelo.

His clothes fitted him snugly. He was softly and correctly spoken. He was keen, competent and assured as he went deftly about his work.

He had won and held that intangible thing known as class. He was a living example of the miracle that is being performed every day in a golf-crazed world as roughneck caddies are planted and allowed to grow in the hothouse surroundings of American country clubs.

They were glad to see Tony when he returned to Stony Brook. Stephen Blair was at first curious and then amazed as he regarded this dapper young American who had been his caddie.

Cesare Laschi was glad to see him. Oh, yes, indeed! Cesare had been memorizing from the copy book on sportsmanship and he was one of the first to shake Tony's hand and laugh heartily over the amusing fight that had sent Tony away from Stony Brook.

Boys would be boys. Bygones should be bygones. Put 'er there! Sure! Forget it!

Elsie Blair was glad to welcome Tony, but she couldn't understand why she felt uncomfortable as she told Tony of her engagement to Cesare Laschi! It was ridiculous that she should feel on the defensive in offering this information. This was irritating. What difference did it make, anyhow, what Tony thought about the matter?

"You know it was all an accident," she told Tony. "That day Cesare kicked his ball into a good lie, I mean."

"I guess so," Tony replied. "That's what he told me."

"It couldn't have been any other way," Elsie insisted. "Cesare explained it all to me."

"Sure." Tony agreed again. "I've got a little hook on my long irons. Will you excuse me, please? I want to straighten it out."

Elsie's irritation grew. Tony was so impersonal, so completely sure of himself. He shouldn't have been that way. What right did he have to imply by the way he looked at her that he still thought that Cesare was a——

"Well, of all the silly things," Elsie told herself irritably. "To think that I should feel apologetic to a boy who used to be my caddie."

THE oldest members are still talking about it at Stony Brook, about the play-off for the open championship played over that course and of the climax fate arranged on the eighteenth hole of the play-off.

"You see," Stony Brook members will tell the interested visitor, "our eighteenth hole here is a dog leg. You remember that Laschi and d'Angelo were tied at the end of the seventy-two holes of championship play at two hundred and ninety-six.

"Well, sir, they were still tied, if you remember, when they went to the eighteenth tee of the play-off. Now those trees over to the left there call for a carry of——"

They were still tied when they went to the eighteenth tee and as they climbed the steep hill that leads from the seventeenth green to the eighteenth tee a crowd of ten thousand temporarily crazed golfers swarmed over the eighteenth fairway to be in on the death of a classic fight. As they neared the eighteenth tee Tony d'Angelo chuckled and turned to his caddie, his eyes dancing with the joy of conflict.

"Driver, son," he said quietly. "I think it's about time I broke his heart."

The caddie gasped.

"Don't do that, Tony," he whispered. "Take your iron and play out safe for the half. It's a hell of a carry over them trees. Don't try that."

Go by way of the fairway to the eighteenth hole at Stony Brook and the hole is three hundred and twenty yards long, a hole that calls for a smart drive of two hundred and forty yards down the sloping fairway and a steep pitch over traps guarding the green.

Take the route that leads straight through the air from the tee to the green and a drive that carries a full two hundred and sixty yards is needed to carry the dense grove of trees that guards that route to the hole. This drive must have both the speed and the accuracy of a bullet, for to the left there is out of bounds and complete disaster for the drive through that territory that wanders a foot off the line.

In the play-off Cesare Laschi drove first from the eighteenth tee, drove a cagy ball that followed the fairway. His ball hit the top edge of the slope that drops off down to the green and rolled until it was sitting pretty in the middle of the fairway with the hole opened up and only eighty yards away.

Both men had been playing machine-like golf and here was another hole that was going to be halved as each took a methodical pair of shots to get to the green and a pair of putts to get down. Tony would follow that drive with its twin, both would pitch on, and both——

Suddenly the crowd banked along the right edge of the fairway gasped. They could see the figure of Tony d'Angelo on the tee and they saw that he had taken his stance so that the ball must go straight for the trees guarding the green on the left.

They saw the brief waggle as he addressed the ball, they saw the club go back in a smooth sweep, they saw it flash downward with beautifully controlled speed, and then they heard the clean click as the face of the club head met the ball squarely.

The ball climbed steeply, a white streak lined against the dark background of the trees. Then it was lost for a moment in the blue haze of the sky, but a viciously joyous buzz from above came to the crowd to tell them that the ball was still in flight.

Then, just above the trees guarding the green, they saw it again. Its speed was spent and it was beginning to drift lazily downward, fading gently off to the right, fading away from the wire fence that marked the treacherous out-of-bounds territory to the left of the green.

The ball dropped from sight beyond the trees, but suddenly the story of what had finally happened came to the crowd along the fairway in a deep-throated roar from those who had banked themselves behind the green. Further proof that Tony's daring thrust had found its mark came from Tony himself as he came running wildly from the eighteenth tee.

"Did I get there?" he screamed. "Did I get home?"

Cesare Laschi was able to answer that question a moment later, for as he crouched over his ball to play his second shot he saw a spot of white on the left edge of the green.

That spot of white was Tony's ball. He knew that he had to lay his next one dead to stay in the fight, and this knowledge depressed him.

He started his swing and then he attempted what thousands of golfers have attempted without success. He attempted to see where his ball had gone before it had gone there. He lifted his head and his mashie niblick swept through to graze the top of the ball and send it skidding miserably into a lurking trap in front of the green.

Topping an easy pitch shot into a waiting trap is always a painful experience. The experience annoyed Cesare and, as he broke his mashie niblick over his knee in a fury of rage, his reason followed his ball into the sand trap.

"I protest," he shouted wildly as he ran

toward the green. He grabbed the referee and shook him savagely.

"I saw it from the tee," he raved. "Through the trees. His ball didn't reach the green. It went into the trees. The fore caddie threw it out. I saw it, I tell you."

"You're a liar, Cesare."

Laschi turned to meet the cruel cut of Stephen Blair's voice.

"I was standing just at the edge of the trees," Blair continued. "Not even a leaf touched Tony's ball on its way to the green."

TONY liked the surroundings, the atmosphere of the place. There was nothing quite like class to give you that keen, sleek thrill of well-being.

"It's a great game," he mused. "Ten years ago I'm nothing but a caddie. Now I'm only twenty-one, but I'm the open champion and I rate at least thirty thousand dollars this next year. I wear good clothes and I'm not afraid of a fork.

"Dad and mom came over steerage, but I'm going back first class to play in the British open. I'm known all over the world and I can give the sweetest girl in the world a honeymoon in Europe. It's a great game."

A soft, wet wind slapped gently at their faces as they stretched lazily in the deck chairs and looked out over the deck rail at the moon-streaked sea. The grip of his arm tightened about her waist.

"Happy?" he inquired.

Elsie giggled.

"What are you laughing at?" Tony inquired suspiciously.

"I was just thinking of a letter you wrote once to dad," Elsie replied. "I mean the one you wrote from Swan Lake."

"Forget it, will you," Tony pleaded. "You know I'll never write another one as bad as that. I didn't know anything then."

She giggled again and rested her head on his shoulder.

"I was just thinking about the last line of that letter," she said. "'Some busy little guy is Tony.'"

WHAT THE ECHO ANSWERED

DURING the last national campaign Franklin D. Roosevelt, manager of the recent Al Smith presidential boom, spoke one night in a town in up-State New York on the subject of Republican misgovernment. He was in rare form. He juggled the verbal bludgeon, wielded the linguistic snickersnee and rolled out the vocabulary juggernaut. The longer he talked the wilder his hearers got. He neared the end with a crescendo of abuse, rebuke and denunciation. He ridiculed, jeered and held up to scorn the whole Republican gang, declaring it had overlooked opportunities, disregarded openings and blinked chances to serve the people and enrich the country.

"And now, my fellow citizens," he thundered, smiting the speaker's table such a blow that the glass of water jumped to the floor and broke unregarded, "what, I ask, are the Republicans bringing our country to? And echo answers, 'What?'"

"Beg pardon," interrupted a frenzied Democrat, rising to his feet far back in the hall; "but did I understand you to ask, 'What are the Republicans bringing our country to?'"

"Yes, sir; I did!" Roosevelt replied.

"And you say echo answers, 'What?'"

"Yes, sir!"

"Then all I got to say," declared the man, "is that there's something mighty funny about the acoustics of this hall."

UPON the streets of Tokio
Life throbs and beats; and to and fro
The ricksha boys trot-trot along
Mid motor cars and bullock carts.
An eddying and swirling throng
Boils through kaleidoscopic marts;
You watch an ever-shifting show
In Tokio,
In Tokio.

Canals and streams gas Tokio
Where traffic teems. Junks come and go,
Trig launches chug, fat sampans creep,
And on the broad Sumedi's tide,
Tugs, ships and fishing dories sweep,
And pleasure barges daily ride,
And spice boats bearing lateen sails
Drift by squat freighters filled with rails,
And waters with strange cargoes flow,
In Tokio,
In Tokio.

At night, at night, in Tokio,
The streets with light are all aglow,
Electric signs above you blaze
And glare against the firmament,
But paper lanterns line the ways
With glamour of the Orient,
And still, as in the long ago,
The merchants squat amid their wares,
The horns of sweet-meat peddlers blow,
And through the narrow thoroughfares
Moves a procession, swift or slow,
Much as it moved in days gone by,
Of Shogun and of Samurai.
The sights, the sounds, the very smells
Upon your memory shall grow.
Not soon shall you escape the spells
That set your senses all aglow,
In Tokio,
In Tokio.

The Projection of Signor Penelli

By Robert H. Rohde

Author of "Macumber Combs the Air," "The Lion's Mouth," Etc.

The Great Macumber yokes the fourth dimension to the science of criminology.

AS with the majority of men of his race, though it seem not so to those who know him only in the theater and the club lounge, there are limits to the loquacity of the Great Macumber.

When he stands behind the footlights, it cannot be denied, the man would sometimes seem as fondly enamored of the sound of his voice as the average juvenile lead. There he shines—as your professional magician must—as the nimblest of conversationalists. From the curtain's rise until its fall his tongue runs on like Mother Shipton's own. He talks rapidly, nonsensically, endlessly; chatters away until people out front might well be wondering if his heart were not more wholly in the word than in the deed.

At odd times I have heard lesser and possibly envious performers remark that the Great One talks his audiences' ears off. That may be; the more important fact is that he talks their eyes closed.

Rattling along, cannily candid, disarmingly plausible, unconquerably gay, he holds his people in a species of mesmeric thrall while miracles come to pass before them. Truly may it be said, palaver is handmaiden to prestidigitation.

Often enough, too, Macumber has his expansive moods outside the theater. I cannot maintain that in private life he is not one to waste words. On certain favored subjects he fairly lavishes them. Refer to rugs, mention music, speak of crime, and the Great One may be counted on for a lecture to last the night.

Yet free as he ordinarily is of speech, there are many matters regarding which Macumber preserves a singular and paradoxical reticence. Where his personal affairs are concerned, some all-powerful native reserve rules.

For these eight years and more our association has been of the closest sort possible, both offstage and on. In all current matters I have his confidence abso-

lutely; the treasured secrets of his magic are mine; even his bank book is an open book to me. But Macumber, after these years, remains by and large a man without a past.

Except as I have gathered a little glimpse here and there from players who knew him casually in the days before we were thrown together, the old Macumber —or should I say the younger Macumber? —is a stranger to me. Between what was with the Great One, and what has come to be, a curtain has been dropped. It seems Macumber's will that it shall never again be lifted; yet there have been times, twice or thrice, when there have been flutterings at the corners and I have been permitted despite him a peep at the stage behind—as, in most noteworthy example, during that altogether remarkable episode culminating in Signor Ignacio Penelli's "projection."

You who read will remember Penelli, I think; if you do not, there is none of the merit in broadside publicity which practitioners of the craft so confidently claim for it.

Even into those hinterlands where Macumber and I were playing when the signor arrived in New York, the rumble of the press agent's tom-tom carried. For many days the columns of the mid-Western newspapers were stuffed with fat reading notices proclaiming the glory of Penelli the Peerless.

"Conjurer of Kings and King of Conjurers," the man unblushingly proclaimed himself—and over that blatant phrase, solemnly reiterated in the journals of the half dozen towns toward the close of our tour, I chewed bitterly.

REGARDING the identity of the true king of conjurers I have a definite and unalterable conviction of my own. I was shocked and hurt that the press of America, having been brought to concede the supremacy of the Great Macumber, should permit itself to be beguiled by the pretensions of this newest of mountebanks to come gold hunting from abroad.

Macumber, I must say, scarcely shared my indignation. As usual, he took a tolerant view.

"Showmanship," said he, "is an art of superlatives, and as a showman Penelli is proving himself a really great artist. Don't forget, lad, that though he and I may be rivals before the public we're brothers behind the scenes."

Failing of better support from the Great One, I nursed my resentment against Penelli the Peerless in silence after a time. The sight of his name sprawled across a huge double billboard as we were crossing the Jersey meadows on the last stretch of our homeward journey caused me to speak of him again.

"The One-and-only still holds the fort," said I, directing Macumber's attention to the sign. "A two-month run so far, isn't it?"

"Aye," acquiesced the Great One amiably. "And he should be good at the Niagara for the balance of the season.

"Don't vex yourself, youngster. His success will make next year's business only the better for us. Prosperity for one magician is a promise of prosperity for all."

His complacence roiled me; I turned on him.

"Wake up, maestro!" I cried. "Can't you see the fellow's undermining *your* reputation while he's making his own? What if he decides to chase dollars back and forth across the country indefinitely? Who the devil is he, with his hired space grabbers, to steal away the leadership that rightfully——"

The ice came into Macumber's eyes.

"It reflects no credit on you, lad," said he, "that you must ask the question. Penelli is no less than he calls himself—the king of conjurers, the master of masters. I bow to him!"

There was something startling in the Great One's vehemence. I sat abashed before his scorn.

"You—you know him?" I stammered. "I didn't realize he might be a friend, maestro. You've never once mentioned his——"

Macumber's face clouded. He averted

it quickly, and for a moment gazed out the window of the racing train. When he looked toward me again he was smiling.

"Don't worry, doughty squire," said he. "I've no mind to make you suffer for a disrespect that was no more, after all, than an expression of blind loyalty. To be sure I'm acquainted with Ignacio Penelli. I knew him long years ago. He'll be an old man now."

"You call him king of conjurers—*you,* maestro! Tell me about him."

The Great One reloaded the pipe whose lusty vapors had won us smoking-compartment privacy a hundred miles back. Again he gazed out the window, though now there was no more than the blank wall of the tunnel dip to see.

"Penelli," he said, "is certainly the greatest magician living—perhaps the greatest who ever lived. Greater even than Robert-Houdin, I think. But Penelli is before your time, lad, as Houdin was before mine. Not for close to twenty years has he attempted any such tour as this.

"He has built up a fortune; his entertainments nowadays are confined to the drawing-room—and the Court. Conjurer to kings he is."

"Why, if he has money and is well along in years—why this trip to America?"

Macumber shrugged.

"John Tempest is managing the tour," he said. "He has a gift for coaxing Continental celebrities to the States—to his own great profit and theirs. You remember he brought over Trenchini to the opera last year—and Solano before her? Another grand art, that of Tempest's!"

"Stuff! They may love the dear Old World, and all that; but people know where the cash is and they'll break their necks to get over after it. He *coaxes* his talent, did you say?"

"Just so," nodded the Great One. "For most artists, youngster, the Continent holds even larger rewards than the States. Few realize it, but it is the fact.

"In Penelli's case, I dare say he'd have come out at least as well financially—and with far less effort—if he'd stayed at home. He'll be carrying a big company, as usual; and the high rates for transportation and the fixed charges of the unionized theater will bite deeply into his box office."

Macumber thrust his long legs out before him and stared at the reflections in the Pullman glaze on his shoes.

"By the measure of his better love for the art," he resumed after a little, "Ignacio Penelli is a better magician than I shall ever be. I am interested in other things; Penelli is not. He lives for magic. When he is not performing, he is teaching.

"Aye, even to this day, lads like yourself will be going to him in Rome to sit at his feet—as other lads go to study other arts. His studio is the Mecca of the aspiring young magician.

"But unlike the masters of the brush and chisel, he'll have no big classes. Two at a time he trains them, holding them in an apprenticeship that lasts for years. I could name you a dozen men here and abroad—and their's would be names you'd know—who are products of the Penelli school.

"There's Robertson, for instance—who calls himself Rajah Rhembo, you know. A great-grandson of the earlier Robertson, who also found his magic learning on the Seven Hills. Then there's Gorsman, Mondulet, Franey, Harry Hansen, the Marvelous Minor, Emilio Molinelli—Peter Scanlan, too."

"Great Cæsar!" I gasped, and at that moment came our porter to whisk away the great with the dust.

II.

WE dined in the Rawley grill that evening for the first time in many weeks; and Macumber's mood mellowed to such a degree over a second cup of the coffee which he declares the best in the world that I ventured to put forward again a suggestion previously offered and frowned upon.

In the afternoon the Great One's lack of enthusiasm over the project of getting seats for Penelli's performance had been marked; now he merely looked bored.

"Suppose you go alone, youngster," he said. "I'm fagged. Too much railroading lately."

I caught his eyes and held them.

"Why don't you want to see Signor Peerless?" I demanded. "What's the real reason?"

Macumber regarded me dourly. He started to reply, and checked himself. I waited a little, and then asked:

"Aren't you going to answer me, maestro?"

The Great One lifted himself abruptly out of his chair.

"Yes—by phoning MacMasters' for tickets!" he snapped. "We'll see Penelli together!"

It was close to eight then; at a few minutes after a taxi dropped us a full half block from the Niagara doors. That had been as near as our driver could get without joining the crawling line of motors depositing their passengers beneath the canopy, so before we were in the crowded, noisy lobby we had ample evidence that Penelli the Peerless was drawing beautifully. Not a half dozen houses in the city, I knew, would be playing to such business.

And the performance, to myself at least, represented by far the best show in town—the best, in truth, that I had ever seen. I saw it, of course, through technically trained eyes; and I am tempted here to treat of it from the technical standpoint. But that temptation is one which I must and will resist. Those of my readers who would be interested in the Penelli technique, I can safely assume, will be readers as well of the journals of the magical profession, and they will have had their reviews from more practiced writing hands than I.

AN old man Ignacio Penelli was. Age was betrayed not only by his shock of snowy hair, his bent figure and the deep wrinkles which no make-up could conceal, but was visible in his every movement.

Only the man's hands were young. His legerdemain was marvelous to behold. His fingers moved so swiftly, on my word, that they were downright invisible in their flutterings.

Watching him, I was alternately exultant in his skill and heavy of heart—not so much because his fine display marked so clearly the weary road between me and real proficiency as because I felt that even Macumber had not his amazing dexterity. Master of masters, the Great One had called him; master of masters—at least of all masters whom I had been privileged to watch—he was.

But I am speaking here of the pure and classic magical art, of legerdemain. Penelli was showy as a master of the pianoforte or a virtuoso of the violin is showy when he flashes through the pyrotechnics which mean so much to the musician and so little to the average listener.

It was to the adept, to the cognoscenti of magic that Ignacio Penelli played; whereas Macumber's appeal is to the casual theatergoer—to children in particular.

So, in the matter of mechanical illusions, I was a little pleased to observe that this conjurer king fell below the Great One's standard. At least in that regard our own show was notably the better of the two.

I took what comfort I could from the thought. But the crumb was a small one; in my heart of hearts, before the first curtain had fallen on Penelli's entertainment, dwelt the crushing conviction that as a craftsman he was Macumber's superior.

And so, admiring the man, I hated him cordially. Advisedly I use the word. A primitive rage against Penelli the Peerless surged within me even as I pounded palm on palm to bring him back for a third curtain call. Surpassing merit he had—but he had snatched an eye from my idol!

The Great One turned toward me in his seat on the aisle as the venerable conjurer bowed back into the wings for the last time and the theater filled with the bustle and murmur of departure.

"Well, lad?"

"He's extremely clever," said I, and wondered how much more my face told.

A thin smile came to Macumber's lips.

"Is that all?"

I searched for a word.

"Superb."

"And *that's* all?"

A small matter after all, you may imagine, for a fellow to choke up over; but the Great One's gaze was on me, and his eyes demanded truth. Equivocation could not be.

"Peerless," said I, but the voice was not mine. "Peerless is right!"

I contrived a difficulty with my chair which spared me the sight of the Great One's face. It was his voice which assured me of his characteristically philosophical acceptance of the verdict, and when I looked up his expression was serene.

"Aye," said Macumber, "it is as I told you, lad. I would not say that Penelli always has chosen the right word—but at least his selection of a nom de theatre was felicitous." He smiled wanly. "I'd not care mysel' to be called upon to reproduce his performance of this evening."

"I don't believe the man lives who could reproduce it," I said with conviction.

The Great One chuckled.

"Ignacio will be pleased to hear you say that, youngster. Like all true artists, he delights——"

"To hear *me* say it?"

"Precisely. Since you were bound to bring me here, I'm going the rest of the way. In the last entr'acte I sent around my card with a note saying I'd call on Penelli in his dressing room after the show. Come, my boy, and meet the greatest of us all!"

THROUGH the door behind the boxes Macumber led the way. A stage mechanic jerked a thumb without turning from his switches to see who had asked the question, and then we stood at another door opening off a chilly, cement-floored corridor. A high voice from beyond it responded to the Great One's rap.

"*Ay-ya!* Walk in!"

I could have thought that Macumber suffered a moment of irresolution. He seemed to be gathering himself, as if the mere turning of the knob called for something more from him than a twist of the wrist.

Yet when the door was open there was nothing more fearsome on the other side than an old gentleman plastering cold cream onto his face—an old gentleman seated before a mirror in his shirt sleeves, with a towel pinned biblike about his corded neck.

The dressing room occupants did not turn as we entered; nor did his slender hands cease their massaging during the several minutes of our stay. We met, the three of us, in the mirror.

Through the specked glass, eyes peering up under bushy white brows glanced from Macumber to me and back again before a word was spoken; and the silence was somehow electric. Intuitively I knew the materials of crisis were here. Without a faintest thought of how it could be, I knew these were two men of two minds and that the ghost of some ancient and heroic struggle now walked the narrow place between them.

The quickstep of the orchestra, hurrying the patrons of Penelli on their way, straggled to a dispirited conclusion in the middle of a bar. Instrument cases began to slam. Another night of theater was gone—and breathless in the little bare room behind the stage I wondered what drama was beginning, or renewing, with me alone for audience.

Before me in the looking-glass the cold-cream mask warped grotesquely into a caricature of a smile.

"Do I disappoint you, Alessandro?" asked the Peerless Penelli.

I recognized a note of mockery in his voice, but when Macumber had spoken the tension appeared to have vanished.

"Long since," he said, "I thought you the most wonderful man in the world. More than ever I think so to-night. The years have made no difference in your art —*maestro!*"

I thrilled to hear the Great One use the word; was astounded by his unaccustomed humility. He caught my quick look and rightly interpreted it.

"When you have spread your wings,

lad," he said, "I hope you will look back upon Macumber as—as I look back to Penelli."

The sharp black eyes in the mirror moved swiftly back to mine.

"Ah! It is not a son! But of course it would not be. Forgive me, Alessandro, if I gather your years too closely to my own.

"It has been such a time. Looking at you I see Penelli in his prime. I forget you were a boy then. And you—you are settled and married, Alessandro? I have read much of you, of your career; but of *that,* nothing!"

Later I wondered that Penelli's tone had been so casual. And Macumber's. But then there was only a slant of the white head and a little thrust of the Great One's chin to mark the spading of old earth.

"Marriage," said Macumber lightly, "is something I do not think of often. I look to the lad for my slippers."

And then, hesitatingly, groping as if for words mislaid, he spoke a sentence whose inflection denoted a question. Penelli's reply was in kind; and thenceforward the talk proceeded in the tongue native to the elder.

Now and again I caught a name—one or another of the names Macumber had mentioned on the train. Robertson—Mondulet—Minor——

But that was all. For the rest I was in the cold, and when the Great One broke contritely back into English and formally presented me our time with Penelli was close to an end.

After that the conversation was confined to commonplaces. Signor Penelli was glad that Macumber had come. It gave him inexpressible pleasure to know that Macumber had witnessed the performance and approved. Greater pleasure it would be to enjoy an exhibition of Macumber. One could expect marvels—after so vast time—no?

Only that. Not a gesture on either side toward another meeting. Years had rolled since they had met; years might roll again—hail and vale!

Through the mirror Penelli the Peerless waved us farewell and in the same movement swabbed at his cheek with his towel. The door closed behind us; and Macumber, who seemed to have known the Niagara of old, threaded dim cold passages to the stage door.

It was in the tiny greenroom there that we met the woman. She might have been waiting for us; I think, indeed, she was. An air of expectancy was in the quick and birdlike upthrust of her small head at our approach.

SHE was perhaps thirty. But what odds age? There are rare women who are the same except only in their wisdom from the years when they are girls until the time when they are gray.

This was such a one. There was only the reflection of a shadow to tell she was not twenty. Life had its say in her eyes. The shadow lay behind them, and almost before I was conscious of it was whipped away in their sudden brightness.

She and Macumber were no strangers. His name, as Penelli had spoken it, burst in a glad cry from her lips. If his coming were not a surprise, she simulated well.

"Alessandro!"

The Great One stood rooted, staring at her. I told myself that this was a night of ghosts. Again that sense of having encountered the solid in the realm of the unsubstantial, of stumbling on the real where only make-believe belonged, took hold of me.

The thing was like meeting a tiger in a toy shop. Characters without strings to them, situations not built of midnight pipe smoke, had no business rising here. Raw life, life not patterned to the happy ending, would better stay out of the theater; yet now behind a darkened stage in an empty house, with the purveyors of incidental music scattered hopelessly into the night, it had come crashing in again.

I found myself wishing—again not knowing why—that I had not been the instrument in bringing the Great One to Penelli. Macumber's face had gone bleak. For once I saw him destitute of the grand manner.

The woman spoke again.

"You have seen him, Alessandro?"

The Great One was silent. He nodded.

"He told you——"

"He told me you had gone," said Macumber. "That I would not see you. I didn't know that I—that I——"

Her picking up of the thread was as deft as his had been. She finished accusingly:

"That you wished to?"

And then, with a quick glance at me, and an "Excuse!" she stormed into a passionate torrent of Italian.

Was she pleading, berating, explaining—or passing merely the time of evening? Not knowing any language of the Latins, but only the tempestuous address of them all, how should I say?

I could only watch Macumber. He was a time recovering a balance. His face was grayer before he had done so.

He spoke less haltingly than with Penelli. The earlier conversation seemed to have aided him to a more than passable facility in a tongue of which, so far as he had let me know, he had only a smattering.

With the girl, too—at least after the first few minutes—he exhibited less of constraint. Judging as I could only by the expressions of the faces, it appeared to me that whereas he and Penelli had indulged merely in polite banalities, the Great One and the girl of the greenroom were conducting a more vital interchange.

They talked with animation, finally altogether forgetful of me. Once or twice the woman smiled tremulously. More often Macumber frowned; there was a moment when I observed that he doubled his fists and came forward on his toes. Then his voice was a growl.

Again there was a name I caught. It kept recurring—Mondulet, Mondulet. And still I was no wiser.

AT length, though, I was listening suddenly to what I could understand. The conversation had come back into English; and neither of the two, I could have sworn, was conscious of the change.

It was Macumber who had initiated the reversion.

"Ignacio in danger!" he cried. "What sort of danger, Rita?"

She had been standing close to him, looking up from the height of his shoulder into his face. One of her small hands lay lightly on his lapel, as if by the weight of a finger she would chain him there.

"The danger I do not know," she said. "But there have been letters—threats. I wished him to go to the police. He would not hear of it. He is proud and stubborn, as you know. I thought to appeal to you, Alessandro, you who know so much of the ways of——"

"I returned only to-day."

"I know. I looked for you. I—I wanted to see you, even if it were not for this. I prayed that you would come to-night."

"What are the threats, Rita? What's behind them? You read the letters?"

"No. He would not permit. He pulled them to pieces and threw them into the fire."

"'Tell me all you know. What makes you think——"

"It is intuition. You may trust it. He has told me little—but I know.

"Thus far there have been three of the letters, all addressed by a cunning hand that did not write, but printed. The first came about two weeks ago. I saw it on his dressing table in the theater here. He had just read it, and was in a towering passion.

"'The dogs!' he cried when he saw me. 'They think they can deal with me as with some child of a shopkeeper!'

"When I asked a question, he waved me from him. That night, when we were home, I saw him destroy the letter.

"In a few days another came. This one too I saw torn and burned.

"'There must be a reply,' he said. 'I have had this trouble before, in Italy. I know how to contend with it.'

"He sat at his desk and wrote, guarding the paper with his hands so I might not see if I came near."

The Great One touched her shoulder

with a hand that both comforted and caressed.

"The business can't be so altogether bad then, Rita," he said. "His writing of the letter is proof that he knows his enemy and thus can be on guard against him. Were you fortunate enough to see the name on the envelope—the address?"

She shook her head.

"There was no name. Nothing. The letter was not mailed."

"It was dispatched by hand, you mean?"

"In a way—yes. But not in the way you think. Let me tell you what happened. When he had finished his writing, he began to pace the room, muttering angrily to himself. Often he consulted his watch.

"He came to me finally and put his arms about me.

"'We are beset by devils, Rita,' he said. 'They have proposed, and I have deigned to answer. It is the better way.'

"I begged him to explain, and he would not. When I spoke of the police his face clouded.

"'I can protect myself,' he said curtly. 'Come, it is nearing twelve. You may as well be with me, for my rendezvous is in a region of shops.'

"From the apartment which we have taken for the season, we went by motor to the part of the city where the great stores are. We walked for several blocks along your—is it Fifth Avenue, that marvelous boulevard? Never have I seen so many humans abroad. We were bumped and buffeted, and somewhere in the crowds the letter left his hand. I thought it had slipped from his fingers.

"'You have lost it!' I exclaimed.

"'It has been delivered,' he smiled. 'This was the appointed way.'"

Macumber smiled grimly.

"Clever enough. At least the enemy is worthy of Penelli steel. There was another letter, Rita?"

"It arrived this morning. He was in a greater rage over it than over the others. Since he read it he has not been himself; and I have been frantic with fear. There is a sword over us, and the thread is at the point of parting. I know it, Alessandro, I know it!"

A voice came to us, high and querulous.

"Rita! Rita!"

Between her two little hands the woman of the greenroom pressed one of Macumber's, impulsively, tenderly.

"He calls," she whispered. "We shall meet again, Alessandro. Ah, we must! You will help him—help *me!*"

Then she vanished back into the windy corridor out of which we had lately come.

Until her steps could be heard no more the Great One stood looking moodily into the darkness that had swallowed her. I thought I could read his mind.

"There's a tragedy of sorts," said I.

"Eh?" I had startled Macumber.

"That she should be tied, I mean, to a man of Penelli's age."

The Great One eyed me with amazement.

"What a quality gillie you are, lad!" he observed. "She's his daughter—Signora Mondulet."

"Raoul Mondulet's wife?"

"Aye; she married in magic, as Ignacio wished."

"Then you know Mondulet too, maestro. I saw him perform once in——"

"I know him," said Macumber. "A good magician, a great favorite of Penelli's upon a time—and a greater scoundrel."

He spilled a little pile of tobacco from his palm into his pipe bowl. "It will be well after what I've heard this night," he added softly, with such a look on his face as I had never seen there before; "it will be well if we never meet!"

We walked to the Rawley, the Great One keeping to his thoughts and I to mine. It was not until just before we turned in that I ventured to speak again of the Penellis; and then it was to bring up the strange business of the letters.

The Great One glanced at me and shrugged impatiently.

"I've told you Ignacio is a rich man," he said. "Isn't the rest obvious? Dream over it. Let your subconscious wrestle with the terrific problem while you sleep!"

III.

I HAD had a feeling before we left the theater that night that I should see the greenroom girl—for girl more than woman she seemed—at another time. And I saw her, indeed, before I thought to.

It was on the second morning after we had paid our respects to the Peerless Penelli that she came to us. She did not look twenty now. She was distrait, wraith-white. Agonizing worry and a night without sleep had put faint but telling lines into her face; and yet, singularly, she appeared to me no less beautiful than when I had seen her first.

Macumber, just up from breakfast, took a message from her eyes at the moment of her entrance—before she had spoken.

"Rita!" he cried, going quickly to her and seizing up her hands. "What's happened?"

She sank—all but collapsed—into the chair to which the Great One had led her.

"Father!" she gasped. "They have killed him!"

"He's not dead! No, no, Rita!"

"He must be. He is gone. If he lives he would not suffer me——"

A great relief dawned in Macumber's ashy face.

"Hold yourself together, *carissima,*" he begged. "You gave me a jolt. This is not so bad, I think. Let us say only that Ignacio has dropped from sight. Is that it?

"Tell me the circumstances—quickly. When did you last see him?"

"At the theater."

"Ah—last night?"

"Yes. He would not have me wait for him. He had an appointment, he said. I left him alone in his dressing room, writing."

"That would have been before midnight?"

"At half after eleven."

"Did he say what the appointment was—where?"

"Alas, no. I should not have gone from him. Something told me. But he insisted he must be alone. He said he would be home by one o'clock at the latest.

"I did not retire, for I was filled with forebodings. At one o'clock exactly, when he had not come, I telephoned to the theater. I knew that in the back of the house he would be alone—and there is no place so lonely, so ghastly, when the lights are dimmed and the players gone. I shuddered to think of him there, with death perhaps stalking among the shadows.

"Nearly a half hour had passed before my call was answered. It was a watchman who came upon the line. He explained he had been making his rounds through the theater. There was no one else in the place. Father had left at twelve. The man remembered him having something in his hand; what looked to be a letter."

"The one you saw him writing, eh? Have you any thought, Rita, of what he was——"

"Wait! I have something here, Alessandro. Early this morning, after waiting in vain through the night, I went to the theater. The watchman with whom I had talked admitted me.

"I went to father's dressing room; and there, tossed into a corner, I found—this!"

SHE passed to Macumber a bit of paper that had once been crumpled, then smoothed and folded. It was a note, without salutation, written in the Italian language; or rather the beginning of a note.

Something in it had dissatisfied the writer. He had discarded this sheet and begun anew on another, obviously. The original now occupies a very special place in the Great One's files. It is the rough but sufficient translation which he made for me that I offer:

I will pay you not fifty thousand dollars, nor five thousand, nor five. Nor so much as five cents.

That is my answer to your ultimatum, and now I give you mine.

Know you that the magic of the stage is child's play with me. I have powers greater than you know. They are sufficient to safeguard me from your designs.

Until now I have kept my patience. By the

lighting of a little fire, the burning of a powder, the speaking of a word in a tongue that the living do not know, it is given to me——

On the paper recovered by Signora Mondulet, Penelli had written no more.

The Great One, deciphering the script with an effort, nodded over it.

"I knew," he said. "The Mafia, the Camorra, the Black Hand—call it what you will! Extortion!"

Again he read the fragment of Penelli's defiance, now with a rising admiration apparent in his eyes.

"Aye," he murmured, "there's but one Ignacio. See how cleverly he has countered, Rita. He knows criminals, understands the superstitious nature of the beast. He'll have been through this experience before, I'll wager.

"Depend on it, he'll not be harmed. Penelli the Peerless, captive or no, will not be long convincing these people of his supernatural powers. By now they'll be thinking they've taken the devil himself—and their scheming will be how to let go of his tail. For many a day, believe me, the commercialized Camorra will walk in terror of the dark!"

Thus, and otherwise, Macumber buoyed the spirits of Signora Mondulet during the half hour she remained with us. His confidence was convincing. I believed myself that he had no great fears for Penelli's safety; but before he went forth with our all-but-reassured visitor he made opportunity for a word alone with me.

"Police headquarters will be our first stop, lad," he said. "I'll have the whole of the Black Hand Squad on Penelli's trail within the hour—aye, the whole department!"

"Then your faith in his wits——"

"Wits he has in plenty; it is his stubbornness that would stand to cost Ignacio his life—the vile temper he carries about him. The angry brain is a poor one to depend on. Mark that, lad. One can't both see red and see clearly."

"Do you think they may already have killed him? Lord, maestro, what if they have? Don't you recall the case of the Domasso boy?"

"No," said Macumber. "For a day or two, anyhow, we may count on it that Penelli will be spared. They will wait at least so long for evidence of a break. And then, failing capitulation—he'll pay for not paying.

"God grant the police get somewhere in the matter before night. He's all Rita has in the world. Mondulet left her within a year of her marriage, she tells me. At his first taste of success in Paris, his affections lightly transferred themselves to a lovely lady of the opera. And she was glad, youngster—Rita was very glad, I tell you.

"She does not lie. She'd never loved him. It was Ignacio who put her in Raoul's arms. As I knew—always knew!"

And this was the great and only unbosoming of the Great Macumber. He said no more, nor was it necessary. His shrinking from the meeting with Penelli, his emotion at the meeting with the girl of the shadowed eyes, his moodiness since the night at the Niagara, his eager springing up at each tinkle of the telephone, his blank and cold responses to voices that were not hers—all was explained in these few husky sentences.

Explained, too, was the fierce and driving energy of the Macumber I had known; the craving to ride at problems of the present with a mind that recoiled from retrospect. It was not needful that the curtain lift higher, or stay aloft.

In stark outline, at the least, I had glimpsed what lay behind. Vividly his words to Penelli came back to me; there had been teeth in them:

"Marriage is something I do not think of often. I look to the lad for my slippers!"

Now he looked to me for something more—for understanding. I think he saw it in my eyes. Abruptly he turned away. When he walked out into the room where the Roman lady sat he was smiling.

"We'll be going, Rita," he said cheerfully. "It will do no harm to have the police helping a bit, well though Ignacio can look out for himself. Then luncheon at a place where they hoard real Capri!"

IV.

MACUMBER left me a last whisper at the door. If I did not hear from him by eight in the evening I was to go to the Niagara, where he would probably be at that hour.

No word came, nor was the Great One in evidence when I appeared at the theater. I had feared to find the house dark, and my heart gave a lift when I turned a corner out of Times Square to see the lights blazing in front.

Already the lobby was well filled, and there was a lengthening queue stringing from the box office. I inquired there for Macumber. He had not been seen anywhere about.

A stout man in evening dress, who had been pointed out to me as Tempest, the company manager, stood off by himself in a corner of the lobby. His eyes eagerly scanned the faces of the inflowing throng, and now and again he waved at his glistening high forehead with a handkerchief of silk that had lost all its freshness. I went to him, asking first for the Great One and then for Penelli.

Tempest appeared to know my connection with Macumber. He drew me behind a tall lithograph stand.

"My God!" he groaned, and dabbed his brow again. "What a mess!"

I regarded him in bewilderment.

"Hasn't Penelli——"

"Not a sign of him. This'll kill him with the public if he doesn't show up. People don't relish being told a performance is off once they're comfortably settled in their seats. The place to tell 'em is at the door. I wanted to post a notice. Better to lose a night's receipts than take a chance."

"I agree," said I. "Why did you light up, man?"

"Orders," replied Tempest briefly. "Miss Penelli—that's Mrs. Mondulet, you know—seems to be running the show. Says her father's never skipped a date in his life. She insists on business as usual until curtain time—absolute curtain time. Yes; and even beyond that, to the last minute and the last second."

"You mean you're going to raise the curtain—show the audience that stunning Herod's Palace set and then send them away cold?"

"Orders," repeated the entrepreneur. "There's a leeway of three minutes before Penelli's entrance, and the lady's bound to give him that, too."

It was as a showman, patently, that the situation struck Tempest with full tragedy. His next words showed his state of mind.

"It's damned inconsiderate of a man who can't be understudied," said he, "to get himself kidnaped. No one but Penelli can do Penelli's stuff. I guess you know that. If we were on the rocks, now, if we needed this kind of publicity——"

He shook his head dubiously; then, catching a signal from the box office, hurried off.

The overture was beginning. The crowd in the lobby thinned. Tempest came back to me puffing.

"News?"

"News, hell! I've just phoned back to Miss Penelli to beg her for the last time not to lift the curtain."

"And?"

"It's going up in exactly thirty seconds—and Heaven help us with no Peerless Penelli. Come in with me and see the massacre!"

I hesitated. My instructions were to be considered. I had my appointment with Macumber. But he was already a quarter hour overdue, and the thought of the fatefully rising curtain within had an irresistible pull.

As it was, the stage was exposed with all its exotic trappings of the old Orient when I followed Tempest through the door. He lingered with me only a few seconds after pushing me into a stage box.

"Got to be back there, ready with my little speech," he whispered. "This is terrible. I'd donate a century to anybody's charity to have the next five minutes over with."

In the orchestra pit barbaric cymbals were crashing in triumphant entrance

pæan for the Peerless Penelli; and creature of the theater that I am, there was a dismal overtone in their clangor to me. A second tragedy was being piled on a first—unnecessarily, wantonly, it seemed to me.

In a moment, while I waited with clenched hands for catastrophe, came a turmoil of applause. It flashed on my mind that Tempest, coming with apologies, had been mistaken for Penelli with miracles.

That was worse. The let down would be the harder. Now for the first time the comic-and-tragic sisters were walking hand in hand.

I felt no envy for Tempest. I leaned forward the earlier to see how he was taking his reception, for the entrance had been made from my side of the stage and the proscenium column hid a great wedge of it from me.

A tight grip on the rail saved me from descending precipitously and painfully onto the heads of the occupants of the orchestra stalls below. It wasn't Tempest for whom the applause had been. Some eleventh-hour reprieve had come to him. The figure advancing to the footlights was the tall, tightly buttoned, snow-capped figure of Penelli the Peerless himself.

FOR an instant after my first amazement doubt assailed me—a question of whether the daughter might have embarked on some mad enterprise of impersonation. That wouldn't go for a minute, I knew. Always in a magician's audience are amateurs having high places in the professional and business world, men with eyes quite as sharp as the eyes of those who take their livelihood from magic. An imposture would be immediately detected. Penelli would have no assistant who would not make a fool of himself in attempting the master's routine.

But quickly doubt vanished. By some art greater than he would show on the stage, here was the Peerless Penelli himself. I knew that, after Baptist John had been duly decapitated and then, more fortuitously than history records, neatly and safely reassembled. The head-severing stunt was mechanical, cabinet stuff—hokum. But what followed was not.

In the legerdemain, as I stood ready to swear after his first bit of sleight of hand, Penelli was Penelli. I marveled that the adventure through which he had passed had not shaken him. He was steady as a rock, steady and deft and precise as he had been that other night. All the technique of brilliant prestidigitation was with him.

It was only his voice which might have betrayed the excitement that would have attended his race against time for the theater. There was a hoarseness apparent in it now and again, a crackle.

Again I was held spellbound by perfection. Indeed, I was too deeply absorbed in the magician's craftsmanship to wonder what part Macumber might have played in his deliverance—or, at the moment, to care. You have studied the piano, have you? And you have heard Rachmaninoff? Or the violin, and gone to a concert of Kreisler? This was sheer art; and I, apprenticed to it, reveled in it.

Yes, and I reveled guiltily. Let this be the time of confession. This man was nothing to me—but because of him my veneration for the Great Macumber could never be the same again. I knew it. Peerless, peerless *was* right!

But presently, when the legerdemain was done with, there came a sudden and unannounced turn in the performance. A new trick was being introduced.

ON a table in the center of the stage, a vast bowl of clear glass, half filled with water, had been placed.

The white-haired magician stepped forward and lifted a hand.

"I am about to present," he said, and there was something in the snapping shrillness of his voice that silenced the last rustling in the back of the house, "I am about to present an experiment which is neither of the program nor exactly of the earth. It will take a word of explanation. I hope you will be patient with me.

"In my own country, in Italy, I have

been credited with the gift of black magic, so called. There are people in Rome, in Naples, who will swear they have seen Ignacio Penelli in a certain place when others will make oath he has been elsewhere.

"Here in this theater to-night is one who can tell you that Penelli can be here and be there at the same time. You! *You!*"

The tall figure had leaned forward dramatically over the orchestra pit and was shaking a finger.

"You! *You!*"

Below me there was a craning of necks. It was a man in the end seat of the third row in the aisle nearest me at whom the conjurer's finger was pointing. His face went pale as he found himself the center of attention and the little curled scar which I observed on his cheek stood out scarlet.

I had noticed him before. His restlessness had disturbed me. Indeed, I was sure that the master himself had been annoyed by his twistings and turnings—sure that the eyes under the thick cottony brows had dwelt sharply on the fellow more than once.

With a crack of his fingers that rang like a pistol shot the magician commanded the eyes of the audience again to himself.

"He will not speak," he said. "No matter. I shall proceed.

"But how shall I tell you? What is the simple way? Can I explain to you the phenomenon of the fourth dimension—the miracle of projection?

"I think not. There are only three men in the world who would understand. I am one. Another is in India—a man of incredible age. The third is a prisoner in a bolshevist dungeon; and were he an adept, instead of one who merely comprehends a principle, he would not be there.

"So I think I will tell you only of the nature of projection, and *you* may think as you will. I, Ignacio Penelli, cast a shadow that is myself. I am one, and I am two. From my body I can project—*me!*

"This I have done to-night. This I can prove. Do not call me mad, or a charlatan. Ten thousand years from now the world will know the secret, and the world as we know it will be no more!"

Some one across from me giggled, and a laugh ran through the theater. But it was, I thought, a nervous laugh.

In his deadly earnestness the old magician seemed to have grown taller, gaunter. And the lights were dimming on the stage. In a moment all the light left was a little splash spilling from a spot onto the great bowl.

To the bowl the lean and shaking finger pointed.

"Man," sang the high voice, "man in these last few years has blundered into a miracle—he has touched the hem of the Cloak of Knowledge. He knows to-day that the ether will transmit waves of sound to vast distances. He knows the air about us for a carrier of the impalpable.

"I shall show you that the ether can sustain and deliver more than sound. I shall show you blood. There are those who have put too much upon me. I shall bring what is their life to me—here!"

Except for the beam on the bowl the rectangle of the proscenium was a black pit. Beside the bowl, murkily illuminated, bent like a witch's, crouched the figure of the mad magician.

It had been dawning on me for minutes past that Penelli had gone daft—had broken there before his audience. What he had had the bowl brought on for I could only surmise. Certainly not this.

Out of the darkness of the stage came a quavering and creepy chant. I shuddered in spite of myself, found myself wishing that I had company in my box, longed for Macumber. When would the people back stage realize what had happened to Penelli?

The weird monody broke off.

"Look! It comes! Drop by drop, drop by drop! They will not feel it going! Oh, they will live the night, they will live to-morrow. But—*drop, drop, drop!*"

I looked at the lighted bowl. The surface of the water in it was rippling as to the first sprawling splashes of a shower. But the drops that were falling were red; the liquid was going to crimson.

Shriller rose the crazy voice.

"I am here—and I am—there—and they are coming—coming to me!"

Through the house there was a stirring as of a tidal wave on the rise. A woman laughed hysterically. Another screamed. A seat slammed. Some one, groping along the dark aisle, started out of the theater. Here and there others followed suit.

I glanced into the orchestra pit. Under the glimmer from the little lamp on his music stand, the face of a fiddler showed pale.

The red drops for a moment continued to fall; then with them fell the curtain. Lights flashed on. A sharp tap-tap brought music. A hard pair of palms came together somewhere in the rear.

Like most audiences, not quite sure of itself, not knowing the why or wherefore of its enthusiasm but only that it had been moved, the crowd below me responded to suggestion. The applause was a thunder roll. A new kind of thrill had come to Broadway.

Before the tumult had subsided I felt a touch on my shoulder. A page from the back of the house stood behind me.

"I guess you're him. Box C, ain't it? Mr. Penelli wants to see you!"

V.

I THOUGHT surely that I would find the Great One in Penelli's dressing room, and so my first feeling when I walked in was one of disappointment.

The man whom I had thought mad—of whom I now knew not what to think—sat in the chair at the dressing table, staring thoughtfully into the wrinkly mirror. He ran his fingers through the white thatch at my entrance, but kept his back to me.

"Make yourself comfortable," he invited. "Try the trunk. I sometimes sit on it myself. It's not so hard as it looks."

I waited a little, but he did not speak again.

"Do you happen to know what's become of Professor Macumber?" I asked presently, too ill at ease in the room to be conscious of any further curiosity.

My host was tugging at the cover of a cosmetic tin.

"Macumber! Macumber!" he repeated with a touch of asperity. "What the devil about Macumber, young man?"

I was tempted to make a sharp reply, as well I might have—but Penelli was Penelli. The great may have their foibles.

"I was to have met him here at eight," I said.

There was another silence, and then I was confronted with the brusque demand:

"What did you think of to-night's performance—the legerdemain, of course?"

"You know what it was, and what my opinion as a student must be, signor."

"I suppose you think Alessandro could have——"

There was a sneer in his voice that I couldn't stomach. I cut him short.

"Professor Macumber," said I stiffly, "has the utmost of consideration for his audiences. He does not assume that the theater is a lecture hall or the stage a laboratory. He seeks only to entertain. And no man in magic, I think the public will tell you, is a better entertainer."

It was a long speech for me. I finished it a little out of breath. It was bold talk for a tyro to offer to a Penelli, but it seemed not to be taken amiss.

The movement of the man's shoulders might have indicated the suppression of a chuckle. In a moment, though, he was at me again.

"Be truthful," he said. "Am I not Macumber's superior as an artist?"

"Macumber," said I, "would say so."

He pondered the reply for an instant, and again there was that rise of the shoulders.

"Ah, now, that's not an answer. I've given you a question. Am I not his superior? Tell me that!"

I got onto my feet. A resurgence of faith in the old god swept me, and the faith was in my voice.

"The Great Macumber," said I, "has *no* superiors!"

The man wheeled on me. Clearly the reply had shot home. He was pulling his hair—pulling it literally, pulling it hard.

It was a familiar close-cropped head that bowed before me, stripped of the shaggy wig; a familiar voice that spoke.

"Lad," said my own Macumber, "thy middle name is Loyal!"

I SPENT a precious minute of the ten that remained of intermission gathering my wits. Macumber was talking, but I was in too great an upset to follow him coherently. I got only essentials.

The impersonation of Penelli had been decided on as a last resort in midafternoon, when the police had failed to pick up any clew to the vanished magician's whereabouts. There had been hours of intensive rehearsing with Penelli's two chief assistants, and the Great One was prepared to see the show through.

"And to-morrow night?" I asked, coming to at last.

"To-morrow night," said Macumber, "we'll not worry about now. Before that Ignacio will be turning up sound as a dollar. The little game of bowl and blood, to say nothing of the fourth-dimension folderol, should see to that. Show me the crook with so little superstition that he'd stand for long the thought of black art emptying his veins!"

"You really think that——"

"Of course the crowd that has Penelli would be represented in the audience, lad. They'd be watching the theater as a matter of course to see what would be doing with Ignacio gone.

"I knew I could bank on that, and that any one of them who saw the theater lighted would inevitably be drawn in. What I didn't hope for was that luck would put him where I could spot him. Aye; he was on pins and needles before I'd pointed him out, and he was off like a shot when the house went dark."

"You may be right," said I. "But what if none of the crew had come near?"

"In the morning," smiled the Great One, "they'll find interesting reading in the news. I did a bit of phoning and there are a half dozen young gentlemen in the house who will give a full report of the Peerless Penelli's 'projection' with elaborations ad lib. 'Twill be the grandest of publicity that Ignacio comes back to."

THERE were rapid steps in the corridor. The door was pushed in with no preliminary of a tap, and the real but not peerless Penelli was with us. He talked breathlessly, peeling off his street clothes the while. A showman was Ignacio, first of all.

"Rush! Six minutes! We must talk later, Alessandro. Held prisoner in a house not far away. They fell on me as I was leaving the theater. Wanted ransom. I would not pay. One came a little ago with orders to release me—a man with a scar. I had threatened them—I think they feared me; they begged me to forgive. It was ludicrous at the last."

At the end of the broken locution Ignacio Penelli stood before us arrayed for the stage.

A bell tinkled. Three minutes were left before the rising of the curtain on the second divertissement of the Peerless Penelli show. The old man touched Macumber's shoulder and seated himself in the chair from which the Great One hastily had risen. Make-up jars flew.

The king of conjurers looked at himself in the mirror, and then through the mirror he looked at us.

"I have seen Rita, Alessandro," he said slowly. "She is here. I know what you have done. You must see more of us. It shall be as the old days."

The looking-glass had betrayed a high light where high light should not be. Penelli the Peerless, leaning forward, painstakingly erased it. Still more slowly—doubtfully—he asked a question.

"You—you accomplished my legerdemain? You were successful, Alessandro? You did well?"

"Only my unworthy best—maestro!" said the Great Macumber.

He, too, had had a look in the mirror. He reached a hand behind him toward the partly opened door. Another, smaller hand reached in.

A Western story by Mr. Rohde in the next issue.

A Chat With You

WHAT is the most romantic, alluring, appealing sound you have ever heard? A mother will at once say that it is a cry from an infant. A man in love might say that it was the sound of his sweetheart's voice. But let us set these intensely human and intimate things aside. They don't belong on this page. We are talking about the ordinary things men talk about before an open fire in a home or club. What is the most thrilling sound you ever heard?

* * * *

FOR us there are two. We do not know which has the stronger appeal. They both catch us and drag at us and ask us to go follow them. One is the whistle of a locomotive—a passenger-car, express-train locomotive. The other is the bass diapason, the bull-mouthed roar of a liner outward bound.

Sounds are just like writing. It is not what they say that matters so much. It is what they hint at, what they rouse in the imagination—the overtones, the inexpressible things.

* * * *

TO be alone in a country house at midnight in midwinter! Under the moon the lawn gleams white with snow and every branch on every tree is frosted with silver. You look out the window into the cool, still, mysterious night. Far, far off you hear the train whistle at some distant crossing. And then, if you stay at the window long enough, it flashes into your view. That strange Frankenstein of a locomotive, endowed with superhuman energy, breathing in snorts of white vapor, is hauling it along at the rate of fifty miles an hour. You see the train of gleaming lights, the windows of the Pullmans and day coaches. The only dark break is when the baggage car flashes by.

And inside those coaches and Pullmans whose windows gleam so brightly against the cold, blue night without? There are all manner of people there. There are traveling salesmen reading magazines or playing cards. There are brides and grooms, glad to be rid of the fuss of the wedding and not quite sure yet that they have gotten rid of all the rice. They are starting life all over again—by themselves—and like most beginnings it is nice and sweet and simple and hopeful. Then there are older people. Perhaps they are going to Florida or California to get away from the cold. And there are other younger people—not quite so happy and hopeful as the brides and grooms. Perhaps one man in a Pullman chair has forged a check and is trying to beat the thing that cannot be beaten and to fly from the thing that cannot be escaped—the inevitable law of retribution. Perhaps a woman in some other chair is flying back to a dying husband, as fast as steam will take her, and she counts the pulsations of the driving energy that bears her on and the steady click of the rail ends wishing she could make them beat faster. And so the train moves round the turn and disappears. And its next whistle is fainter and farther away. And you drop the curtain and go back to bed. You may shiver a little and think how comfortable it is in the house—but still the train has been calling you and half of you would like to go with it.

IT is much the same with the great steamer that noses her way out of port into the great fogs. Her mien is more deliberate. There is no great display of energy in the quiet and sedate churning of her screw. Her voice is deeper—and stronger. But one, snug-sheltered in a seaport town may know the drag she puts on the heartstrings. Where is she bound for? Southampton, Liverpool, Cherbourg, even Italy! Or perhaps it is some "Arabian Nights" place like Smyrna or Cairo, or farther still on some long, long cruise to places where the wind stirs in the palm trees and the temple bells say all manner of things. We are all at heart nomads and wanderers. We are pilgrims and strangers and can tarry but a day. Only the harsh necessity of making a living or staying around with the folks prevents us from picking up sticks and following the swallow or any other bird that happens to be flying in a reasonable direction.

* * * *

OF course it can't be done—that is, in the flesh. But there are other ways of doing it. A railroad ticket to Chicago, or Omaha or Los Angeles, or Miami costs a lot of money. So does a steamship ticket to almost anywhere. And then actual travel is not always all that it is cracked up to be. There is seasickness on the one hand and upper berths on the other. And then there is a melancholy fact that the closer you get to most places the worse they look. Sometimes you can do it just as well for a quarter without going any farther from the house than the nearest news stand.

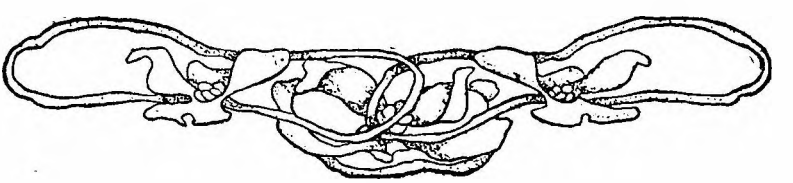
* * * *

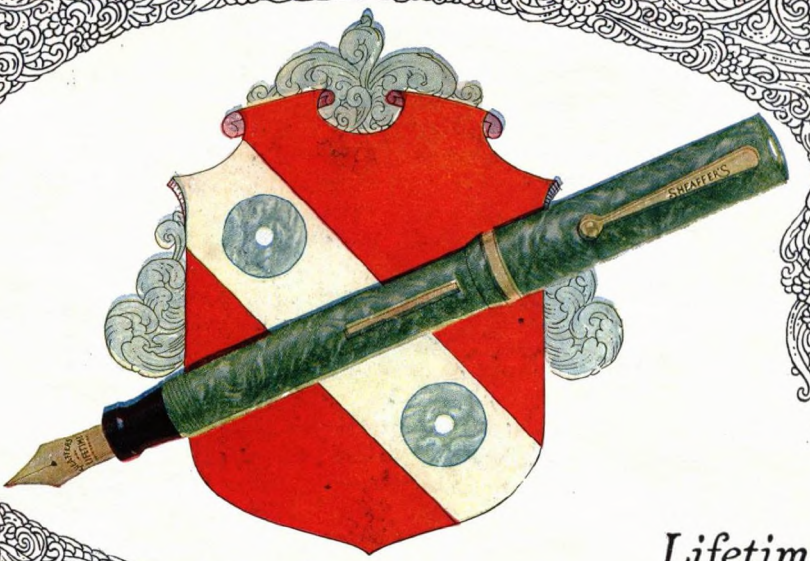
YOU have guessed it! We mean the next issue of THE POPULAR. The complete book-length novel with which it opens is called "Radio Riches." Do you run a radio? Read this tale of northeast Canada—the best story about a radio—and human beings, incidentally—that has ever been written.

All right! We are through with that. And now we have traveled two thousand miles on the C. P. R. and are out in the West with the Mounted Police and Harwood Steele. Now, by airplane, for a turn down to New Mexico, where Ernest Douglas gives us a touch of stirring adventure. Back by the K. T., the Pennsylvania and the Boston and Maine to the lumber country where Holman Day alternates thrills with laughter. Then out to Wyoming with Caroline Lockhart, still farther west with Rohde, and as a final wind-up before we snap the light out, up to Alaska with Robert Russell Strang.

This is what we call traveling—and traveling de luxe. No discomfort, no trouble, just an easy-chair and a good light.

So whenever you hear either of those romantic sounds, the whistle of a passenger train or the blast of an ocean liner, think of that other romantic thing—the June 7th number of THE POPULAR. And it is just as well, as in making Pullman reservations, to order it well in advance.





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