TWICE-A-MONTH 20 CENTS

The Popular Magazine

"PICAROONS"
A Two Part Sea Story
by
H. DE VERE STACPOOLE

—

A Mystery Serial
by
GEORGE BRONSON-HOWARD

And Stories by
KNIBBS HINDS
CULLEN DAVIS
AND OTHERS

—

OCTOBER TWENTIETH 1920

TWICE-A-MONTH

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The news stands will have the next POPULAR Nov. 7th

THE POPULAR M.

VOL. LVIII. OCTOBER 20, 1920.

Picaroons

By H. de Vere Stacpoole

Author of "The Iron Man," "The Beach of Dreams," Etc.

The dictionary tells us that a picaroon is a distinctly piratical sort of person, or ship, as the case may be. The shrewd "Satan," and his impish young sister, Jude, are not as bad as all that, though, even if they did work their wits pretty hard. The sinister Carquinez fits the definition better. There is something appealingly pathetic, as well as highly amusing, about the wild little Jude, which will grip you, as quickly as it did that adventurous young Croesus, Ratcliffe. In this sea romance of lost treasure, in the Bahamas, Mr. Stacpoole has done magnificent work.

(A Two-Part Story—Part I)

CHAPTER I.

PALM ISLAND.

THE sky from sea line to sea line was crusted with stars, a triumphant, cloudless, tropic night sky, beneath which the *Dryad* rode at her anchor, lifting lazily to the swell flowing up from beyond the great Bahama bank. She was Skelton's boat, a six-hundred tonner, turbine engined, rigged with everything new in the way of sea valves and patent gaskets, and she had anchored at sundown off Palm Island, a tiny spot gull-haunted and due west of Andros.

Skelton was a Christ Church man, Bobby Ratcliffe a Brazenose, and Bobby, to-night, as he leaned on the starboard rail, smoking and listening to the wash of the waves on the island beach, was thinking of Skelton, who was down below, writing up his diary. Before coming on this "winter cruise to the West Indies in my yacht" Bobby did not know that Skelton kept a diary, that Skelton was so awfully Anglican, so precise, so stuffed with the convenances that he dined in dress clothes even in a hurricane, that he had a very nasty, naggling temper, that he had prayers every Sunday morning in the cabin, at which the chief steward, the under stewards, and the officers off watch were expected to attend—also Bobby. Two other men were booked for the cruise, but they cried off at the last moment. If they had come, things might have been different. As it was, Bobby, to use his own language, was pretty much fed up.

Skelton was a right good sort, but he was not the man with whom to share loneliness, and Bobby, who had plenty of money of his own, was thinking how jolly this winter cruise would have been if he had only taken it on board a passenger liner, with girls and deck quoits and cards in the evening, instead of Skelton.

Bobby was only twenty-two, a good-looking, clean youth, well-balanced enough, but desirous of fun. Oxford had not spoiled him a bit; he had no "manner," just his own naturalness, and he had shocked Skelton at Barbadoes by getting a great negro washingwoman on board—she had come alongside in a blue boat—and giving her rum—for the fun of the thing. "Debauching a native woman with alcohol," Skelton had called it.

Skelton vetoed shark fishing. It messed his decks; he was like an old woman about his decks. "I tell you what you ought to do, Skelly," Bobby had said. "You ought to start a blessed laundry." They had

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Skelton.

And there was still two months of this blessed cruise to be worked out. He was thinking of this when Skelton came on deck, his white shirt front shining in the starlight. He was in an amiable mood tonight and, ranging up beside Bobby, spoke about the beauty of the stars.

It was chiefly on Bobby's initiative that they had dropped the anchor so that they might prospect the island on the morrow, and as they smoked and talked the conversation passed from stars to desert islands and from desert islands to the old Spaniards of the West Indies, buccaneers, filibusters, pirates, and brethren of the coast.

Perhaps it was the starlight, or the tepid wind blowing up from the straits of Florida, or the distant star-lit palms of Palm Island that set Skelton off and touched a vein in his nature hitherto unsuspected. Whatever it was, he warmed to his subject, and for the first time on the voyage became interesting. He could talk. Nombre de Dios, Carthagena, and Porto Bello—he touched them alive again, set the old plate ships sailing and the pirates overhauling them, sacked cathedrals of gold and jewels, showed Bobby Tortuga, the great rendezvous of the buccaneers, and the Spaniards attacking it; men marooned on desolate places like Palm Island, treasure buried, and then, all of a sudden, closed up and became uninteresting again. The remnants of the boy in him had spoken, the old pirate that lives in most men's hearts shown his head. Perhaps he was ashamed of his warmth and enthusiasm over these old, romantic things—who knows? At all events, he retired into himself and then went below to find a book he was reading, leaving the deck to Bobby and the anchor watch.

Then the moon began to rise from beyond the Bahamas, a vast, full moon, with the sea seeming to cling to her lower limb as she freed herself. Dusky, at first, she paled as she rose, and now, in her light, the palms of the island and the coral beach showed clear. Palm Island is a scrub of cactus and bay cedar bushes, half a mile long and quarter of a mile broad, with not more than forty trees; crabs and turtles and gulls are its only visitors, and desolation sits there, visible and naked. But in the moonlight, on a night like this and seen from the sea, it is fairyland—story land.

Ratcliffe, his mind full of pirates and buccaneers, Spaniards and plate ships, found himself wondering if men had ever been marooned here, if Morgan and Van Horn and all that crowd had ever had dealings on that beach, and what the moon could tell about it all if she could remember and speak. He was thinking this when the creak of block and cordage struck his ear, and past the stern of the *Dryad* came gliding the fore canvas of a small vessel, a thing that seemed no larger than a fishing boat. She had been creeping in from the sea unnoticed by them as they talked, and Skelton had gone below without sighting her, and she was so close that the slap of her bow wash came clearly as she passed. Ratcliffe watched her gliding shoreward like a phantom, and then across the water came a voice, shrill as the voice of a bird:

"Seven fathom." And on top of that another voice: "Let go."

The rumble—tumble—tumble of an anchor chain followed, and then the silence of the night closed in, broken only by the far-off wash of the waves on the beach. This ghost of the sea fascinated Ratcliffe. He could see her now, riding at anchor against the palms and bay cedars of the island.

She was shedding her canvas, and now a glow-worm spark, golden in the silver of the moonlight, climbed up and became stationary but for the lift and fall of the swell as she rode at her moorings. It was her anchor light. Ratcliffe listened for voices. None came. Then he saw a lantern being carried along her deck; it vanished, probably through a hatch.

Then he went below, and, dropping asleep the instant he turned in, dreamed that he was marooned on Palm Island with Skelton, and Skelton was trying to hang him on a tree for a pirate, and the gulls were shouting, "Seven fathom—seven fathom—seven fathom;" then came oblivion and the sleep of youth that defies dreams.

CHAPTER II.

A FLOATING CARAVAN.

Next morning, an hour after sunrise, Ratcliffe came on deck in his pajamas, gorgeous blue-and-crimson-striped pajamas, a sight for the gods. The sky was cloudless. The wind of the night before had fallen to a tepid breathing scarcely sufficient to stir the flag at the jackstaff; and from all that world of new-born blue and mirror-calm sea not a sound but the sound of the gulls crying and quarreling about the reef spurs of the island.

Amidst the glory of light and color and against the palms and white beach lay the ghost of the night before, a frowzy-looking, yawl-rigged boat of fifty feet or so, a true hobo of the sea, with wear and weather written all over her and an indescribable something that marked her down, even to Ratcliffe, as disreputable.

Simmons, the second officer, was on deck.

"She must have come in last night," said Simmons; "some sea scraper or another working between the islands—Spanish, most likely."

"No, she's not Spanish," said Ratcliffe. "I saw her come in, and I heard them shouting the soundings in English—look, there's a chap fishing from her." The flash of a fish being hauled on board had caught his eye and fired his passion for sport. They had done no fishing from the *Dryad*. He borrowed the dinghy from Simmons and, just as he was, put off.

"Ask them to sell some of their fish if they've any to spare," cried Simmons, as the dinghy got away.

"Aye-aye," replied Ratcliffe. The sea blaze almost blinded him as he rowed, with the gulls flying round and shouting at him. As he drew up to the yawl the fisherman lugged another fish on board. The fisherman was a boy, a dirty-faced boy, in a guernsey, and as the dinghy came alongside he stared at the pajama-clad one as at an apparition.

"Hullo there!" cried Ratcliffe, clawing on with the boat hook.

"Hullo, yourself!" replied the other.

"Any fish for sale?"

The boy disappeared. Then came his voice, evidently shouting down a hatch: "Satan, below there!"

"Hullo!"

"Here's
wants to kn
Show a leg."

"One minit!" r

The boy reappea
burning sunlight. "T
a minute," said he. "W
are you got up like that fo

"What?"

"Them things."

Ratcliffe laughed.

"I forgot I was in my pajamas. I apologize."

"What's pajamas?"

"My sleeping suit."

"Well, I'm damned," said the boy. Then he gave a sudden yell of laughter and vanished, sitting down on the deck, evidently, while another form appeared at the rail—a lantern-jawed, long-haired, youthful figure, rubbing the sleep out of its eyes. It stared at the occupant of the dinghy. Then it opened its mouth and uttered one word:

"Moses!"

"He sleeps in them things," came a half-strangled voice from the deck. "Satan, hold me up; I'm dyin'."

"Shut your beastly head!" said Satan. Then, to Ratcliffe, "Don't be minding Jude; Jude's cracked—but you sure are gotten up—say, you from that hooker over there?"

"Yes."

"What are you?"

"Nothing."

Another explosion from the deck stifled by a kick from Satan.

"But what are you doing here, anyway?"

Ratcliffe explained, Satan leaning comfortably on the rail and listening.

"A yacht? Well, we're the *Sarah Tyler*. Pap and me and Jude used to run the boat. He died last fall. Tyler was his name and Satan Tyler's mine. He said I yelled like Satan when a pup, and he put the name on me—say, that's a dandy boat. I'm wanting a boat like that. Will you trade?"

"She's not mine."

"That don't matter," said Tyler with a laugh; "but I forgot you aren't in our way of business."

"What's your way of business?"

"Lord! Shut up, Satan," came the voice from the deck.

"Well, pap was one thing or another, but we're respectable. Ain't we, Jude?"

"Passons to what pap was," agreed the

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...now itself after

...ana and we scratch
...iving," went on Tyler;
...eing ours, we make out.
... be had on these seas for

... work the boat alone?"
..., we had a nigger to help since pap
He skipped at Pine Island a fortni't
... Since then we've made out. Jude's worth a man and don't drink——"

"Who says I don't drink?" Two grimy hands seized the rail, and the body and face of Jude raised themselves. Then the whole apparition hung, resting midriff high across the rail, just balanced, so that a tip from behind would have sent it over.

"Who says I don't drink? How about Havana harbor last trip?"

"They gave her rum," said Satan gloomily; "gave her rum in a doggery down by the water side—curse the swabs. I laid two of them flat and then got her aboard."

"Her?" said Ratcliffe.

"Blind, wasn't I?" cut in Jude hurriedly.

"Blind you were," said Tyler.

Jude grinned. Ratcliffe thought he had never met with a stranger couple than these two, especially Jude. Hanging on with the boat hook, he contemplated the dirty, daring face whose fine, gray, long-lashed eyes were the best features.

"How old are you?" asked he, addressing it.

"Hundred an' one," said Jude; "ask me another."

"She's fifteen and a bit," said Tyler, "and as strong as a grown man."

"I thought she was a boy," said Ratcliffe.

"So I am," said Jude. "Girls is trash. I'm not never goin' to be a girl." As if to prove her boyhood, she hung over the rail, so that he feared any moment she might tumble.

"She's a girl, right enough," said Tyler, as if they were discussing an animal; "but God help the skirts she ever gets into."

"I'd pull them over me head and run down the street if any one ever stuck skirts on me," said Jude. "I'd as soon go about in them pajamas of yours."

Ratcliffe was silent for a moment. It amazed him, the familiarity that had suddenly sprung up between himself and these two.

"Won't you come aboard and have a look 'round?" asked Tyler, as though suddenly stricken with the sense of his own inhospitality.

"But the boat?"

"Stream her on a line—over with a line, Jude."

A line came smack into the dinghy, and Ratcliffe tied it to the painter ring. Next moment he was on board, and the dinghy, taking the current, drifted astern. No sooner had his feet touched the deck of the *Sarah Tyler* than he felt himself encircled by a charm. It seemed to him that he had never been on board a real ship before this. The *Dryad* was a structure of steel and iron, safe and sure as a railway train, a conveyance, a mechanism made to pound along against wind and sea; as different from this as an aëroplane from a bird.

This little deck, these high bulwarks, spars, and weather-worn canvas, all them collectively were the real thing. Daring and distance and freedom and the power to wander at will, the inconsequence of the gulls, all these were hinted at here. Old man Tyler had built the boat, but the sea had worked on her and made her what she was, a thing part of the sea as a puffin.

Frowzy looking at a distance, on deck the *Sarah Tyler* showed no sign of disorder; the old planking was scrubbed clean and the brass of the little wheel shone. There was no raffle about, nothing to cumber the deck but a boat, the funniest-looking boat in the world.

"Canvas built," said Tyler, laying his hand on her. "Pap's invention; no more weight than an umbrella. No, she ain't a collapsible; just canvas and hickory and cane. That's another of pap's dodges over there, that sea anchor, and there's 'nuther, that jigger for raising the mud hook. Takes a bit of time, but half a man could work it; and I reckon it would raise a battleship. There's the spare, same as the one that's in the mud—ever see an anchor like that before? Pap's. It's a patent, but he was diddled over the patentin' of it by a shark in Boston."

"He must have been a clever man," said Ratcliffe.

"He was," said Tyler. "Come below."

The cabin of the *Sarah Tyler* showed a table in the middle, a hanging bunch of bananas, seats upholstered in some sort of leather, a telltale compass fixed in the ceiling, racks for guns and nautical instruments, and a bookcase holding a couple of dozen books. A sleeping cabin, guarded by a curtain, opened aft. Nailed to the bulkhead by the bookcase was an old photograph in a frame, the photograph of a man with a goatee beard, shaggy eyebrows, and a face that seemed stamped out of determination—or obstinacy.

"That's him," said Jude.

"Your father?"

"Yep."

"It was took after mother bolted," said Tyler.

"She took off with a 'longshore Baptis' minister," said Jude. "Said she couldn't stand pap's unbelievin' ways."

"He made her work for him in a laundry," said Tyler. "It was at Pensacola, up the gulf, and a year after, when we fetched up there again, she came aboard and died. Pap went for the Baptis' man."

"He wasn't any more use for a Baptis' minister when pap had done with him," said Jude. "That's his books—pap's. There's dead loads more in the spare bunk in there."

Ratcliffe looked at the books. Old man Tyler's mentality interested him almost as much as the history of the Tyler family. "Ben Hur," Paine's "Age of Reason" and "Rights of Man," Browne's "Popular Mechanics," "The Mechanism of the Watch," "Martin Chuzzlewit," and some moderns, including an American edition of "Jude, the Obscure."

"Some of those came off a wreck he had the pickin' of," said Tyler; "a thousand tonner that went ashore off Cat Island."

"That was before Jude was born," said Ratcliffe.

"Lord! How did you know that?" said Jude.

Ratcliffe laughed and pointed to the book. "It's the name on that book," said he. "I didn't know; I just guessed."

"I reckon you're right," said Tyler, opening a locker and fetching out cups and saucers and plates and dumping them on the table. "Not that it matters much where it come from, but you've got eyes in your head—that's sure. Say, you'll stay to breakfast, now you're aboard?"

"I'd lik
to be getting
become of me-

"That's easy
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hooker and say the g
breakfast, an' 'll be ba
I'll fix him for clothes."
and Tyler, going into the
rousted out an old white-drill s
and a pair of number-nine canvas

"They're new washed since he wore
said Tyler. "Slip 'em on over your wh
his-names and come along and lend me
hand in the galley. Can you cook?"

Eased in his mind as to the *Dryad*, the boy in him rose to this little adventure, delightful after weeks of routine and twenty years of ordered life and high respectability. He had caravaned, yachted in a small way, fancied that he had, at all events, touched the fringe of the free life—he had never been near it. These sea gypsies in their grubby old boat were it. A grim suspicion that this remains of the Tyler family sailed sometimes pretty close to the law and that their sea pickings were, to put it mildly, various, did not detract in the least from their charm. He guessed instinctively they were not rogues of a bad sort. The lantern-jawed Satan had not the face of a saint; there were indications in it, indeed, of the possibility of a devilish temper no less than a desperate daring, but not a trace of meanness. Jude was astonishingly and patently honest, while old man Tyler, whose presence still seemed to linger on in this floating caravan, had evident titles, of a sort, to respect.

He was helping to fry fish over the oil stove in the little galley when Jude returned with the information, delivered through the shouting of the frying pan, that everything was all right and the message had been delivered to a "guy" in a white coat who was hanging his fat head over the starboard rail of the *Dryad*. That he had told her to mind his paint; that she had told him not to drop his teeth overboard, and he had "sassed" her back; that the *Dryad* was a dandy ship, but would be a lot dandier if she were hove up on some beach convenient for pickin' her.

Then she started to make the coffee over an auxiliary stove, mixing her industry with criticisms of the cookery and instructions as to how fish should be fried.

stly," said
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condition of Jude's
cliffe wasn't sorry.

CHAPTER III.

BREAKFAST.

amount of food those two put away a revelation to Ratcliffe, and from start to finish of the meal they never stopped talking. One being silent, the other took up the ball. They had cottoned to Ratcliffe, evidently, from the very first moment, for at the very first moment Tyler had been communicative about himself and his ship and his way of life. An ordinary ship's officer coming alongside would have got fish at a price, if he had been civil, or a fish flung at his head if he had given "sass." Ratcliffe got friendship.

It was maybe his youth and the fact that all young people are free masons that did the business. The humor of the gorgeous pajamas may have helped; anyhow, the fact remained. He had secured something that knowledge or position or fortune could not have bought: the good will and conversation of this pair, the history of the Tylers, and more than a hint of their life on these seas. They had four thousand dollars in the bank at Havana, left by pap, not to be touched unless the *Sarah Tyler* came to smash; they had no house rent or rates, no expenses but harbor dues, food, oil, and tobacco, and not much expense for food, at least just at present.

Tyler winked across the table at Jude and Jude grinned.

"Shut your head," said Jude, "and don't be givin' shows away." Then suddenly to Ratcliffe, "We've got a cache."

"Who's giving shows away now?" asked Tyler.

"Oh, he won't split," said Jude.

"It's on the island here," said Tyler; "near a ton of stuff, canned. A brig went ashore south of Mariguana. We picked up the crew and heard their yarn and got the location; then a big freighter came along and took the men off us. The wreck was only a hundred and fifty miles from our position and we reckoned the salvage men wouldn't be on the spot for a fortnight or more and something was due to us for savin' that crew, so we lit out for the wreck. We had four days' work on her. She was straddled on a reef with twenty fathoms under her counter and a flat calm, all but a breathin' of wind. We made fast to her, same as if she'd been a wharf; we had the nigger to help and we took enough grub to last us two years, an' fourteen boxes of Havana cigars and a live cat that was most a skeleton."

"She croaked," put in Jude. "Satan fed her half a can of beef cut small, and then she scoffed half a bucket of water—that bust her."

"We wouldn't have been so free in taking the things but for the lie of the hooker on the reef and the weather that was sure coming," said Tyler. "We knew all about the weather and the chances, and we didn't cast off from that hooker an hour too soon. We were ridin' out that gale three days, and when we passed the reef again, making west, the brig was gone."

"And you cached the stuff here."

"Yep."

"But we hadn't to make no cache hole," put in Jude. "Pap had one here. It's among the bushes, and he didn't make it, neither."

"It's all coral rock a foot under the bushes," said Tyler, "and there's a hole you drop down six foot, that leads to a cave as cool as a r'frigerator, so the goods would keep to the last trumpet. The old Spaniards must have cut it to hide their stuff in. Pap dropped on it by chance. Said they'd used it for hidin' gold and such, not that he believed in the buried treasure business—sunk ships is different——"

Jude, who was haggling open a can of peaches, suddenly made an awful face at Satan. It had the effect of cutting him short. Ratcliffe refused the peaches. He sat watching this pair of cormorants and thinking that the cache must be pretty big if it held two years' provisions for them.

Then, suddenly, he said so, laughing, and without giving the least offense, Tyler explaining that the cache was not their only larder. There was fish and turtle and turtle eggs, birds sometimes, fruit to be had for next to nothing, often for nothing. The only expense was for tobacco, and he had not paid ten cents for tobacco since last fall, and wouldn't want to for a year to come; they didn't want much clothes, Jude did the mend-

ing and patching; paint. The *Sarah Tyler* had ways and means of getting paint and all such, spars and so on. He gave a wonderful instance:

Before Christmas last they had chummed up with a big yacht on the Florida coast, near Cedar Cays. Thelusson was the owner, a man from New York. He took a fancy to the *Sarah* and her way of life, and he and his crew helped to careen her in a lagoon back of the reefs, cleaned her copper, gave her a new main boom and foresail, and some spare canvas, and all for nix. He had no paint or he would have painted her. He drank champagne by the bucket, and he wanted to quit the yacht and go for a cruise with them, only his missus, who was on board, wouldn't let him.

Ratcliffe thought he could visualize Thelusson.

"She was a mutt," put in Jude, "with a voice like a musketeer."

"She wanted to 'dopt Jude and stick a skirt on her," said Tyler.

"Handed me out a lot of sick stuff about sayin' prayers and such," hurriedly cut in Jude.

"And put the night cap on it by kissin' her," finished Tyler.

Jude's face blazed red like a peony.

"If you chaps have had enough, I'm goin' to clear," said Jude.

"Right!" said Satan, rising, and she cleared, vanishing with the swiftness of a rabbit up the companionway. Tyler fetched out a box of cigars. They were Ramon Alones.

"She won't speak to me now for half a day," said Tyler. "If you want to guy Jude, tell her she's a girl. I wouldn't 'a' told you, only you're not in our way of life and so can't make trouble. No one knows, there's not a man in any of the ports knows; she goes as me brother. But the Thelusson woman spotted her on sight; come on deck."

Jude was emptying a bucket of refuse overboard, then she vanished into the galley, and Ratcliffe, well-fed, lazy, and smoking his cigar, leaned for a moment over the rail before taking his departure, talking to Tyler.

To starboard lay Palm Island, with the sea quietly creaming on the coral beach, and the palms stirring to the morning wind. To port the white *Dryad*, riding to her anchor on the near-shore blue, and beyond the *Dryad* the
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was a dealer with the sea and t.
that came out of the sea, or were ever
met with floating on the waves. Rat.
was one of these things.

"You've never had no call to work?" said Satan tentatively. "You've lots of money, I s'pect, and can take things easy."

"Yes, I suppose so."

"Like fishin'?"

"You bet."

"Well, if you ever wants to see good fishin' and more than ordinary folk see of the islands here, drop me a word to Havana. Hellerman, marine-store dealer, Havana, will get me. He's a pal of mine. I fetch up in Havana every six months or so—and there's more than fishin'——" Tyler stopped short, then he spat overboard, and began to fill his pipe. He had no use for cigars, much.

"How do you mean more than fishing?"

"Well, I don't know. We're underhanded a bit for any big job, and I wouldn't trust most men. They don't grow trustable parties in Havana, nor the coast towns, not much. I've taken a likin' to you somehow or 'nuther, and if ever we come together again, I'll tell you maybe somethin' that's in my mind. You see, between pap and me and the old *Sarah* we've seen close on thirty years of these waters right from Caicos to N'y Orleans and down to Trinidad. Turtle egg huntin' and fishin' and tradin', there's not a reef or cay we don't know. The old *Sarah* could find her way round blind. Put her before the wind with the wheel half a spoke weather helm and leave her, and she'd sniff the reefs on her own."

"You were saying about something more than fishing," persisted Ratcliffe, whose curiosity had been, somehow, aroused.

"I was," said Tyler, "but I'm not free to speak about private affairs without Jude, and there's no use in tacklin' her when she's snorty. Listen to that."

Sounds were coming from the galley as of a person banging pots and pans about. Tyler chuckled.

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atcliffe, "I'd like to come
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ng going ashore to-day to have
und, that's why we anchored here."
aybe I'll see you ashore then," said
er, "but if I'm not there, mind and say
othin' of the cache."
"Right."

CHAPTER IV.

PAP'S SUIT.

Jude having been fetched out of the galley, the canvas boat was got overboard. Ratcliffe had offered to shed pap's suit and return in his pajamas as he had come, but Tyler vetoed the idea. The far-seeing Satan, who had snaffled a career and clean-up, not to speak of a main boom and spare canvas out of Thelusson, had an object in view.

"It's no trouble," said he. "You take the dinghy and we'll take the boat and fetch the duds back. It's late in the mornin' for you to be boarding your ship in them colored things."

One of the big fish caught that morning was dropped into the boat as a "present for the yacht," and they started.

The accommodation ladder was down, and Simmons and a quartermaster received him. As he went up the side he heard Tyler shouting to Simmons something about the fish. There was no sign of Skelton on deck, for which he was thankful. Then he dived below to change.

Now, pap's suit had been constructed for a man of over six feet, and broad in proportion, and a man, moreover, who liked his clothes loose and easy. On Ratcliffe they recalled the vesture of Doctor Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. The saloon door was closed. He opened it and found himself face to face with Skelton, who was sitting at one end of the saloon table reading from a book, while Strangways, the captain, Norton, the first officer, Prosser, the steward, and sundry others ranged according to their degree, sat at attention.

It was Sunday morning. He had forgotten that fact, and there was no drawing back. He reached his cabin, mumbling apologies to the dead silence that seemed crystallized round Skelton, closed the door, and stuffed his head among the pillows of his bunk to stifle his laughter; then he undressed and dressed.

As he dressed he could hear through the open port the voice of Tyler from alongside; the voice was pitched in a conversational key; it was saying something about a lick of white paint. He was talking evidently to Simmons. Then, fully dressed, with the bundle of clothes and the canvas shoes under his arm, Ratcliffe peeped into the saloon. The service was over and the saloon was empty. He reached the deck. It was deserted save for a few hands forward and Simmons. Then he came down the accommodation ladder to the stage, and handed the clothes over to Satan.

A drum of white paint and a coil of spare rope were in the boat close to Jude, and Satan was saying to Simmons something about a spare ax.

"Well, if you haven't got one, there's no more to be said," finished Satan. Then to Ratcliffe: "See you ashore, maybe."

Jude grinned kindly, and they pushed off, the boat a strake lower in the water with their loot. The fat-faced Simmons watched them with the appearance of a man just released from mesmerism.

"That chap would talk the hat off one's head," said he. "I'll have h—l to pay with Norton over that paint. Most likely I'll have to put my hand in my own pocket for it, but he's a decent chap, that fellow. Sharp, though—the way he landed me with that fish for a bait."

"He's all there," said Ratcliffe.

"So's the boy," said Simmons. "Come alongside after you'd gone to say you were staying to breakfast with them. Told him to mind and not damage the paint. Let out like a bargee at me, and Sir William Skelton listening."

"Where's Sir William now, Simmons? He wasn't in the saloon when I'd finished dressing."

"I expect he's in his cabin," said Simmons.

Ratcliffe got a book and, taking his seat under the double awning sheltering the quarter-deck, tried to read. He had chosen a history of the West Indies, the same book most likely from which Skelton had "cadged" his information of the night before. The

printed page was dull, however, compared to the spoken word, and he found himself wondering how it was that "Skelly" could have warmed him up so to all this stuff, and yet be such an angular stick in the mud in ordinary life. What made him such a superior person? What made him at thirty look forty—sometimes fifty, and what made him—Ratcliffe—fear Skelly sometimes, just as a schoolboy fears a master?

He guessed he was in for a wigging now for cutting breakfast and appearing like a guy before the officers, and he knew instinctively the form the wigging would take—a chilly manner and studious avoidance of the subject, that would be all.

At this moment Sir William Skelton, Bart., came on deck. A tall, thin man, clean shaved, like a serious-minded butler in a yachting suit of immaculate white drill. His breeding lay chiefly in his eyes, half veiled by heavy lids. He had an open mother-of-pearl-handled penknife in his hand. Free of the saloon hatch and, not seeing Ratcliffe, he stopped dead like a pointer before game and called out "Quartermaster." A quartermaster came running aft.

Some raffle had been left on the scupper by the companionway, a fathom or so of old rope rejected by Tyler as "not beein' the quality he was wantin'." He ordered it to be taken forrard, then he saw Ratcliffe and nodded.

" 'Morning," said Skelton.

He walked to the rail and stood with his hand on it for a moment looking at the island and the *Sarah Tyler*. Jude and Satan were at work on something aft. In a minute it became apparent what they were doing. They were rigging an awning in imitation of the *Dryad's*, an impudent affair made out of old canvas, brown with weather and patched from wear. It was like seeing a beggar woman raising a parasol.

Skelton sniffed. Then he turned and, leaning with his back against the bulwarks, began attending to his left little finger nail with the penknife.

"Ratcliffe," said Skelton suddenly and apparently addressing his little finger, "I *wish* you wouldn't." He spoke mildly, in a vaguely pained voice. It was as though Ratcliffe had acted in some way like a bounder. More, he actually made Ratcliffe feel as though he had acted in some way like a bounder. He was Ratcliffe's host, that gave an extra weight to the words.

"Wouldn
Skelton had
ties by a man g
and remaining awa
a thing like the *Sar*
cause of offense was
appearing at Sunday-morn
chief steward had grinned.

Skelton, though a good sailor,
ship master and as brave as a ma
was a highly nervous individual. A
service on deck for the whole crew wa
yond him; he compromised by conductin
short service in the saloon. Even that wa
a tax on him. The entrance of Ratcliffe in that extraordinary get-up had joggled his nervous system.

"If you can't understand I can't explain," said Skelton. "If our cases had been reversed I would have apologized—however, it doesn't matter."

"Look here, Skelly," said Ratcliffe. "I'm most awfully sorry if I have jumped on your corns and I'll apologize as much as you want, but the fact of the matter is we don't seem to hit it off exactly, do we? You are the best of good people, but we have different temperaments, if those other fellows had come along on the cruise it would have mixed matters more. We want to be mixed up in a big party more, you and I, if we want to get on together."

"I told you before we started I disliked crowds," said Skelton, "and that only Satherthwaite and Magnus were coming. Then, when they failed, you said it didn't matter, that we would be freer and more comfortable alone."

"I know," said Ratcliffe. "It was my mistake, and, besides, I didn't want to put you off the cruise."

"Oh, you would not have put me off. I would have started alone. I am dependent on no one for society."

"I believe you would have been happier alone."

"Perhaps," said Skelton with tight lips.

"Well, then, shove me ashore, somewhere."

"That is talking nonsense," said Skelton.

Ratcliffe had risen and was leaning over the rail beside the other. His eyes were fixed on the *Sarah Tyler*, the disreputable *Sarah*, and, as he looked at her, Jude and Satan suddenly seemed to him real, live, free, human beings, and Skelton as being not entirely alive nor, for all his wealth, free. It was Skelton who gave the Tylers a nimbus,

cially Jude.
on about Jude,
ad of Skelton.
ense a bit," said he,
adle along the rest of
drop you here."
this island?"
e to go for a cruise with those
an that chap in the mud barge
He asked me, any time I wanted

re you in earnest?"

Of course I am. It would be no end of a picnic, and I want to shove round these seas. I can get a boat back from Havana."

Skelton felt that this was the washerwoman of Barbadoes over again. Irresponsibility—bad form. He was, under his courteousness as a host, heartily sick of Ratcliffe and his ways and outlook. A solitary by inclination, he would not at all have objected to finishing this cruise by himself; all the same, he strongly objected to the idea just put before him.

What made him object? Was he insulted that the *Dryad* should be turned down in favor of the frowzy, disreputable-looking *Sarah Tyler?* That the companionship of the Tylerites should be preferred to his? Did some vague instinct tell him they were the better people to be with if one wanted to have a good time? Was high conventionality outraged, as though walking down Piccadilly with Ratcliffe, the latter were to seize the arm of a dust man? Who knows, but he bitterly and strongly objected. And how and in what words did he show his objection and anger?

"Then go, my dear fellow, go!" said he as though with all the good will in the world.

"Right!" said Ratcliffe; "but are you sure you don't mind?"

"Mind! Why should I mind?"

"One portmanteau full of stuff will do me," said Ratcliffe, "and I have nearly a hundred and fifty in ready money and a letter of credit on the Lyonnaise at Havana for five hundred. I'll trundle my stuff over if you'll lend me a boat, and be back for luncheon. You'll be off this evening, I suppose, and I can stay aboard here till you get the anchor up. It's possible I might pick you up at Havana on the way back, but don't worry about that. Of course, all this depends on whether that fellow will take me. I'll take the portmanteau with me and ask."

He did not in the least see what was going on in Skelton's mind.

"You will take your things with you in a boat, and if this—gentleman refuses to take you, what then?"

"I'll come back."

"Now, I want to be quite clear with you, Ratcliffe," said Skelton. "If you leave my ship like that—for nothing—at a whim and for disreputable chance acquaintances—absolute scow bankers—the worst sort—I want to be clear with you—quite, absolutely—I must ask you not to come back."

"Well, I'm hanged," said Ratcliffe suddenly blazing out, "first you say go and then you say don't. Of course, that's enough. You've practically fired me off your boat."

"Do not twist my words," said the other. "That is a subtle form of prevarication I can't stand."

"I think we had better stop this," said Ratcliffe. "I'm going—if I don't see you again I'll say good-by."

"And please understand," said the other who was rather white about the mouth. "Please understand——"

"Oh, I know," said Ratcliffe. "Good-by." He dived below to the saloon and rang for his bedroom steward.

Burning with anger and irritation and a feeling that he has been sat upon by Skelton, snubbed, sneered at, and altogether outrageously used, he could not trust himself to do his own packing. He sat on his bunk side while the steward stuffed a portmanteau with necessaries and, as he sat, the thought came to him of what would happen were Tyler to refuse to take him. He would have to take refuge on Palm Island. It was a comic opera sort of idea, yet, such was the state of his mind, he actually entertained it.

Skelton was no longer Skelly, but "that beast Skelton." Then he tipped the steward and the chief steward, telling them that he was going for a cruise in that "yawl over there." On deck he met Norton and Simmons and told them the same tale. Skelton had vanished to his cabin. He told the first and second officers that he had said good-by to his host and asked for a boat to be lowered.

"I'll pick you up most likely at Havana," said he to glaze the matter over. "I expect I'll have a good time, but rather rough. I want to do some fishing."

The whole thing seemed like a dream and

not a particularly pleasant one. Embarked on this business, now, he almost wished himself done with it. The yacht was comfortable, the cooking splendid. To satisfy any want one had only to touch a bell. There were no bells on board the *Sarah Tyler;* a lavatory and a sort of bathroom invented by pap were the only conveniences, and the bath was impracticable. It was pap's only failure, for the sea cock connecting it with the outer ocean was so arranged or constituted that, as likely as not, it would let in the Carribean before you could "stop it off."

If Skelton, now, at the last moment, had asked Ratcliffe to come down and have an interview things might have been smoothed over, but Skelton was not the sort of man to make advances—neither, in his way, was Ratcliffe. Meanwhile, Simmons was directing the lowering of a boat. The companionway was still down, the luggage was put in and Simmons, seated by Ratcliffe in the stern seats, took the yoke lines. Not a sign of Skelton, not even a face at a porthole.

"Give way!" shouted Simmons.

As they drew up to the *Sarah Tyler* Ratcliffe saw Satan leaning over the rail and watching them. Jude was nowhere visible.

"Hullo!" said Ratcliffe as they came alongside. "I've come back."

"I was half expectin' you," said Satan with a grin.

"Will you take me for that cruise right off?"

"Sure! That your dunnage?"

"Yes."

Satan stepped to the cabin companionway and shouted down it.

"Jude!"

"Hullo!" came Jude's voice.

"He's come back."

CHAPTER V.

THE PORTMANTEAU.

As Jude came on deck the portmanteau was being hoisted on board. Ratcliffe passed down a five-pound note to the boat's crew, and then stood, waving to Simmons as the boat put away. Then turning to Satan, he tried to discuss terms, but was instantly silenced by Jude and Satan. They would hear nothing of money. Used to sea changes and strange happenings, they seemed to think nothing of the business, and, after the first words, fell to talking together, the trend of their talk inducing in Ratcliffe a vaguely uncanny feeling. [illegible] already discussed [illegible] the storage of himself [illegible] though they had known [illegible] would return. The size of [illegible] affected Jude.

"You can't keep that," said Jude, giving the portmanteau a slight kick, "it's a sight too big—say, what have you got in it?"

"Clothes."

Jude tilted back the old panama she was wearing and took her seat on the portmanteau. Her feet were bare, and she twisted her toes in thought as she sat for a moment turning matters over in her mind.

"You can stick the things in the spare locker," said she, at last. "You gonna have a gay old time if you keep this in the cabin, tumblin' over it. Better empty her here an' cart the stuff below."

"Right," said Ratcliffe, "but what will I do with the portmanteau when it's empty?"

"Heave her overboard," said Jude.

"Shut your head," said Tyler, suddenly cutting in. "What you talkin' about? Heave yourself overboard." Then to Ratcliffe, "She's right all the same, there's no room for luggage; if you'll help Jude to get the things below I'll look after the trunk; when you've done with the cruise you can get a bag to hold your things."

Ratcliffe opened the portmanteau. The steward of the *Dryad* was an expert; in a past existence he had probably been a pack rat. In any given space he could have tucked away half as much again as any other ordinary mortal. But he certainly had no imagination, or perhaps he had been too busy to cast his eye overboard and see the manner of craft Ratcliffe was joining, and Ratcliffe had been far too much exercised in his mind about Skelton to notice what was being packed.

Jude on her knees helped. "What's this?" she asked, coming on a black satin lining.

"Confound the fool," said Ratcliffe, "he needn't have packed that; it's a dinner jacket."

"Mean to say you sit down to your dinner in a jacket——" Jude choked and snorted while Ratcliffe, hurriedly on his knees, hauled out the trousers and waistcoats that went with the garments.

"That's the lining, it's worn the other way about—I know it's tomfoolery. Stick 'em all in one bundle—— Lord! look at the shirts he's packed."

...em," said Jude,
...nts.
with that tomfool din-
...'t knock sense into the
...m steward—come along and
... down below."

...ey were carting the stuff down, ... the hatch cover cut himself a chew ...acco—he sometimes chewed—and, with lantern jaws working regularly like the jaws of a cow chewing the cud, contemplated the steadily emptying portmanteau.

He had a plan about that portmanteau, a plan to turn it to profit. Satan's plans generally had profit for their object. He had taken a genuine liking for Ratcliffe, but it was a curious thing with Satan that even his likings generally helped him along toward profit, perhaps because they were the outcome of a keen intelligence that had been sharpened by knocking about among rascals, beach combers, wharf rats, as well as honest folk.

When Ratcliffe had fetched down the last load and come up again he found Satan and the portmanteau gone. The canvas boat had not been brought on board but streamed astern on a line. He looked over the side. Satan was in the boat with the portmanteau and in the act of pushing off.

"I'm takin' her back to the yacht," said Satan. Ratcliffe nodded.

At that moment Jude came on deck blinking and hitching up her trousers. She had washed her face and made herself a bit more tidy, perhaps because she had remembered it was Sunday or perhaps because company had come on board. She had evidently put her whole head into the water, it was dripping, and, as she stood with the old panama in her hand and her cropped hair drying in the sun, Ratcliffe observed her anew and thought that he had never seen a more likable figure. Jude would never be pretty, but she was better than pretty; healthy, honest, and capable, trusting and fearless, easily reflecting laughter and with a trace of the irresponsibility of youth. It was a face entirely original and distinctive. Dirty, it was the face of a larrikin; washed, a face such as I have attempted to describe; and the eyes were extraordinary; liquid-gray, with a look of distance, when she was serious, a look acquired perhaps from life among vast sea spaces.

"Where's Satan?" asked Jude.

Ratcliffe pointed. Jude shading her eyes looked. Then she laughed.

"Thought he was up to somethin'," said she. "He's gone to kid that officer man out of some more truck."

In a flash Ratcliffe saw the reason of Satan's activities and in another flash he saw again, or seemed to see, in Satan and Jude, a pair of gypsies of the sea. A gypsies' caravan camped close to a neat villa, that was the relationship between the *Sarah Tyler* and the *Dryad*. And Satan was the caravan man gone round to the villa's back door to return an empty portmanteau and blarney the servants out of scraps and old odds and ends not wanted—maybe to commandeer a chicken or nick a doormat—Heaven only knew. He remembered the fancy Satan had taken to the dinghy. And he, Ratcliffe, had thrown in his lot with these people. Fishing cruise! Rubbish! Gypsy patter, sea thimblerigging, wreck picking and maybe petty larceny from Guadaloupe to dry Tortugas that was what he had signed on for. Why—the *Sarah Tyler*, could she have been hauled into any law court would have stood convicted on her very appearance. Jude was honest enough in her way, but her way was Satan's way, and she had owned up with steadfast, honest eyes to the plundering of a brig and the caching of the plunder. They were "passons to what pap had been," but they were his offspring, and the law to them was, no doubt, what it had been to him; a something to be avoided, or outwitted, like a dangerous animal.

All these thoughts running through his head did not disturb him in the least. Far from that, the reckless in him had expanded since he had cut the cable connecting him with the *Dryad*, and not for worlds would he have changed the *Sarah* into a vessel of more conventional form, or altered Satan from whatever he might be into a figure of definite respectability.

He reckoned that if Satan broke the law he would be clever enough to avoid the consequences. His tongue alone would get him out of most fixes, and just this touch of gypsyness in the business gave a new flavor to life, the flavor boys seek when they raid orchards and hen roosts and go pirating with corked faces and lath swords.

"He's goin' aboard her," said Jude.

The portmanteau had been taken up by one of the crew and now Satan, evidently at the invitation of one of the white clad figures

leaning over the rail of the *Dryad* was going up the accommodation ladder, leaving the boat to wash about in the blue water by the stage. Ratcliffe guessed that one of the white-clad figures was Skelton and that it was on Skelton's invitation he had gone on board. He felt vaguely uneasy. What did Skelton mean by that? Was he up to any dodge to "crab" the cruise. However, he had no time to bother over this, for Jude, who had him now to herself without fear of interruption, had opened her batteries.

"Say," said Jude, hanging over the rail where the awning cast its shadow, speaking without looking at him and spitting into the water, "what are you when you're ashore, anyway?"

"I'm one of the idle rich," said Ratcliffe, lighting his pipe.

"Well, you won't be idle aboard here," said Jude definitely. "What was your dad, was your dad an idle rich——"

"No, he was a shipowner."

"How many ships did he own?"

"About forty."

"What sort?"

"Steamers."

"What sizes?"

"Oh, anything from two to five thousand tons."

She turned to see if he were guying her.

"There was another man in the business," said Ratcliffe, "a partner, Ratcliffe & Holt was the name of the firm. The governor died intestate."

"Somethin' wrong with his inside?"

"No, he died of a stroke; he was found in his office chair dead. He died at his work."

"Did they get the chap that did him in?"

"No, it wasn't a man that struck him—it was apoplexy—a disease—and, dying without a will, all his money was divided up between me and my two brothers."

"How much did you get?"

"Over a hundred thousand."

"Dollars?"

"No pounds—four hundred thousand dollars."

"Got 'em still?"

"Yes."

"In the bank?"

"Some—the rest is invested."

She seemed to lose interest in the money business and hung for a moment over the rail, whistling almost noiselessly between her teeth and kicking up a bare heel. Then she said:

"Who's the chap?"

"Skelton is his name."

"He owns that hooker."

"Yes."

"Well," said Jude suddenly, from a reverie. "This won't boil. I've got to get dinner ready. Come help if you're willin'."

There was half a sack of potatoes in the galley. She set the stove going, and then on her knees before the open sack, she sent him to fetch half a bucket of water from overboard. He found the bucket with a rope attached, brought the water, and filled the potato kettle, then he brought more water for the washing of the potatoes. She did the washing, squatting on her heels before the bucket.

"Where did you get them from?" asked Ratcliffe.

"Get which?"

"The potatoes."

"Bought them," said Jude, then, as though suddenly smitten by rectitude: "No, we didn't, nuther, we kidooled them out of a fruiter."

"What's a fruiter?"

"Fruit steamer. Satan fixed her."

"How did he fix her?"

"Well," said Jude, "it's no harm to hold up a packet if you don't throw her off her course—much. It's the owners pays, and they can stand the racket. The crew likes it, and if there's passengers aboard they just love it."

"Do you mean to say you hold up steamers?" asked Ratcliffe.

"Yep."

"But how do you do it?"

"Oh, it's only now and then. What's easier than to lay in her course with the flag half mast. Then she heaves to."

"And you board her and ask for potatoes, or whatever you want?"

"Not much," said Jude. "They'd boot you off the ship. Water's what you ask for, pretendin' you're dying of thirst; then you drink till you're near bustin' and fill the breaker you've brought with you. It's all on the square. Satan would never hold a ship unless he had some fish to offer them for whatever he wants, potatoes or fruit or tobacco. He's got the fish in the boat and hands it up. They're always glad of fresh fish, and they offer to buy it, but he won't take money. He says, 'If you've got a few potatoes handy I don't mind takin' them for

fruit he wants or
a push off—and if it's
the passengers, thinkin'
from dyin' of thirst, line
It's no end of fun."
g do you sail under?"
ican, what else? You see," went
as she put the potatoes into the ket-
fish costs nothing to us, and they're
ghty glad of it, but I reckon they'd bat
our heads off if they knew about the dyin'
of thirst business."

"But, suppose you struck the same ship twice?"

"It's not a job one does every day," said Jude with a trace of contempt in her tone, "and Satan don't wear blinkers. And it's not a job you could do at all if you didn't know the lie of the fishin' banks by where the ship tracks run. I reckon you've got to learn something about things."

"I reckon I have," said Ratcliffe, laughing, "and I bet you'll teach me."

"Well, shy that over to begin with," said Jude, giving him the pail of dirty water.

He flung the water over the side and, as he did so, he took a glance at the *Dryad*. Satan was in the boat just pushing off. When he returned to the galley with the news, Jude was preparing to fry fish. Then he went to the rail again just as Satan was coming alongside.

Satan had a cargo of sorts. His insatiable appetite for canvas and rope was evidenced by the bundle in the stern and there were parcels. The return of the empty portmanteau had not been waste labor.

"That's coffee," said he to Ratcliffe, handing up the goods. "We were runnin' short, and here's biscuits—catch a holt—and here's some fancy muck in cans and c'ndensed milk —I told the chap our cow died yesterday. 'Take everything you want,' says he. 'Don't mind me, I'm only the owner.' Offered me the mainsail as I was puttin' off an' told me to come back for the dinghy. I'd told him I was sweet on her—full of fun he was—and maybe I will. Claw hold of this bundle of matches, they're a livin' God-send—and here's a case of canned t'marters—and that's all."

Skelton's irony was evidently quite lost on Satan, or put down to his "fun," but Ratcliffe could appreciate it, and the fact that its real target was himself. The canned t'marters appeared with the food at dinner and, during the meal, more of Skelton came out. He had offered Satan vinous liquors, hoping, so Ratcliffe dimly suspected, to send him back a trouble to the *Sarah Tyler* and an object lesson on the keeping of disreputable company. But the wily Satan had no use for liquor. He was on the water wagon.

"I leave all them sorts of things to Jude," said he with a grin. He was referring to Jude's boasted drunk at Havana, and Ratcliffe, who was placed opposite to the pair of them across the table, saw Jude's chin project. Why she should boast of a thing one moment and fire up at the mention of it at another was beyond him.

For a moment it seemed as if she were going to empty the dish of tomatoes over Satan, but she held herself in, all but her tongue. "You'd have been doin' better work on board here, mendin' the goose neck of that spare gaff, than wangling old canvas an' rope out of that chap," said she. "We're full up of old truck that's no more use to us than Solomon's aunt. It's in the family, I suppose, seein' what gran'f'er was——"

"Oh, put a potato in your mouth," said Satan.

"He used to peddle truck on the Canada border," said she to Ratcliffe. "Hams——"

"Close up," said Satan.

"Made out o' birchwood, and wooden nutmegs——"

"That was pap's joke," said Satan; "another word out of you and I'll turn you over me knee and take down your——"

"Then what do you want flingin' old things in my face," cried Jude, wabbling between anger and tears. "Some day I'll take me hook, same as mother did."

"There's not a Baptis' minister would look at you," said Satan, winking at Ratcliffe.

"Damn Baptis' ministers, you may work your old hooker yourself. Two thousand of them dollars is mine and, next time we touch Havana, I'll skip."

"And where'll you skip to?"

"I'll start a la'ndry."

"Then you'll have to black your face and wear a turban, same as the others—and marry a nigger. I can see you comin' off for the ship's washin'."

Jude began to laugh in a crazy sort of way; then, all at once, she sobered down and went on with her dinner. One could never tell how her anger would end: in tears, laughter of a wild sort, or just nothing. Not another word was said about the family history of the Tylers, at least at that meal.

And after it was over Jude made Ratcliffe help to wash up the plates and things in the galley.

"Satan's cap," said Jude. "He never helps in the washin' or swillin'. Not cold water! Land's sake! Where did you learn washin' up? Hot! I've left some in that billy on the stove."

She had taken off her old coat and rolled her guernsey sleeves up to the shoulders, nearly, and it came to Ratcliffe as he helped that, without a word of remonstrance, naturally, and as a part adapts itself to the economy of a whole, he had sunk into the position of kitchen maid and general help to the Tyler family. Taken the place of the nigger that had skipped. Furthermore, that Satan was less a person than a subtle influence. Satan seemed to obtain his ends more by wishing than by willing. He wanted an extra hand, and he had somehow put the spell of his wish on him, Ratcliffe. He had wished a drum of paint out of Simmons; and look at Skelton, the cynical and superior Skelton sending off doles of coffee and "t'marters" to the dingy and disreputable *Sarah Tyler,* offering his mainsail to the rapacious Satan as a gibe, what had he been but a marionette dancing on the string of Satan's wish.

Only for Jude and the *Sarah* and the queer new sense of freedom from all the associations he had ever known, only for something likable about Satan, the something that gave him power to wangle things out of people and bend them to his wishes, Ratcliffe might have reacted against the Tyler hypnotism. As it was the whole business seemed as jolly as a pantomime, as exciting as a new form of novel in which the folk were real and himself a character.

Leaving Satan and the old *Sarah* aside and the extraordinary fascination of spars, sails, narrow deck and close sea, catching one's own fish, cooking one's own food, and dickering with winds, waves, reefs, and lee shores for a living—leaving all these aside, Jude alone would have held him. For Jude gave him what he possessed when he was nine, the power of playing again, of seeing everything new and fresh. Washing up dishes with Jude was a game. To the wholesouled Jude all this business was a game, hauling on the halyards, fishing, cooking, hanging on to the beard of a storm by the sea anchor, wreck picking and so on. And she had infected him. Already they were good companions a
same age, about nine—
and he over twenty.

"Stick them on that s
"Oh, Lord! butter fingers—
the gadget to keep them from s
ship rolls. Now stick the knive
locker—you don't mind my tellin' y
you?"

"Not a bit."

"Well, that's all."

They found Satan under the awning, attending to the goose neck of the spare gaff. Jude sat down on the deck clasping her knees, criticized Satan's handiwork, received instructions to hold her tongue, and then collapsed lying on her back with knees up and the back of her hand across her eyes. She could sleep at any odd moment. The horizon had vanished in haze, the crying of the gulls had died down and the washing of the lazy swell on the island beach sounded like a lullaby.

A trace of smoke was rising from the yellow funnel of the *Dryad* as she lay like a white-painted ship on a blue-painted ocean. They were firing up.

"How about getting ashore?" asked Ratcliffe. "I want to see that cache of yours; care to come?"

"I'd just as soon leave it till they're away," said Satan, jerking his hand toward the *Dryad*. "There's no tellin'. They might be spottin' us on the location with a glass, and they'll be off to-night—so the chap told me. You leave it to me and I'll show you a cache better nor that, in a day or two."

"Shut up, Satan," came a drowsy voice from the deck.

"Shut up yourself," said Satan. "I'm not talkin' of what you mean, I'm talkin' of the abalone reef—lyin' there like a lazy dog and lippin' your betters!"

"Where's me betters?" cried Jude sitting bang-up suddenly.

"I'm your betters."

"You!"

Jude broke into a cracked laugh.

"Listen to him talkin'!" cried she to the universe in general. "Ain't fit to bile potatoes." She was on her feet and he was after her with a rope's end dodging her round the mast. "Touch me and I'll tell him"—a flick of the rope's end caught her, and next moment she was clinging to Ratcliffe and using him as her shield. "It's an old ship sunk south o' Rum Cay," cried Jude. "South

I'd tell him if you

e rope and resumed the
ss.
done it," said he.
I would," said Jude. She sat
he deck again as though nothing
pened and nursed her knees.
ou needn't mind me," said Ratcliffe. "I
n't tell."

"Oh, it's not that," said Satan. "But pap was mighty particular about keepin' close. He located that hooker only three months before the fever took him, and he didn't come on it by chance nuther—and now Jude's given the show away."

"I told you I'd tell him," said Jude broodily.

"Told me you'd tell him! Why, ever since last fall you've been at me to keep my tongue in my head about it, and then you bring it out, blam, first thing, yourself—that's a woman all over."

"Who are you callin' a woman?"

"Me aunt—shut your head and give over handlin' that ball of yarn. Clutch hold of the gaff and keep it steady while I fix this ring on her."

He worked away in silence while Ratcliffe sat watching, vaguely intrigued by what had just passed. It was less the words than the place and circumstance; the little deck of the *Sarah Tyler,* the blue, lazy sea, the voice of the surf on Palm Island, the figures of Jude and Satan. He had seen Rum Cay; they had passed it in a pink and pearly dawn. The steward had called him up to look at it; south of that lonely and fascinating place old man Tyler had located a sunk ship. What sort of ship? He knew instinctively that the Tylers were not the people to halloo over nothing. The gulls did not know these seas better than they. He said nothing, however. It was Satan who spoke next.

"Pap had reckoned to lay for it this spring," said Satan; "but the fever took him. Then we were underhanded. Jude and me can make out to work the boat and get a livin', but we're too underhanded for a big job. Why, talkin' that truck off the brig I told you near laid us out, and we had the nigger to help, and she was hove up so that it was like takin' cargo off a wharf side."

"Look here," said Ratcliffe, "I'll help, if you care to go for it. I don't want any share, just the fun. What's in her?"

"Well," said Satan in a half-hearted way, "maybe we'll have a look at her, but it's a job that wants more than three by rights. Pap was three men in himself. He'd 'a' done it. It's a dynamite job. She's got to be blasted open."

"I've heard stories about buried treasure in these seas," began Ratcliffe. Jude turned her head.

"That's bilge," said she.

"Yarns," said Satan. "Pap used to turn any man down that talked of stuff bein' buried. First he said that chaps didn't bury stuff; second, if they did, you couldn't find it, what with earthquakes and sand siltin' and such; and, third, that never an ounce of silver, or gold, for the matter of that, has ever been dug up by the tomfools huntin' for it. Havana is full of tall stories of buried treasure; chaps make a livin' sellin' locations and faked charts and the like of that.

"It's a Spanish game, and it takes good American money every year. You see pap was a book-readin' man. Taught himself to read, too, and didn't start the job till he was near forty. So he had a head on him. But somehow or 'nuther he never made the money he ought. If he'd stuck in towns and places he'd have been a Rockefeller, but he liked beatin' about free; said God's good air was better than dollars; but it stuck in him that he hadn't made out, somehow. Then he turned into unbelievin' ways; said he was a soci—what was it, Jude?"

"Somethin' or 'nuther," said Jude.

"Socialist?" suggested Ratcliffe.

"That's it; said the time was coming when all the guys that were down under would be on top of the chaps that were on top, and that there'd be such a hell of a rough-house money'd be no use, anyway—said the time was comin' when eggs would be a dollar a piece and no dollars to buy them with, and me and Jude would be safest without money, gettin' our livin' out of the sea.

"He was a proper dirge when he got on that tack. But, all the same, it stuck in him that he wasn't on top, and one night when he was in Diego's saloon he heard three Spanish chaps layin' their heads together. He knew the lingo well enough to make out their meanin'. Pap wasn't on the water wagon, but he was no boozer. He was sittin' there that night just dead beat, as any man might be after the day's work he'd done, runnin' the customs——"

"Luff," said Jude in a warning voice.

"Oh, close your head—think I am talkin' to a customs officer—he don't care."

"Not a bit," said Ratcliffe. "Heave ahead."

"Well, he was sittin' with his eyes shut, and he heard these guys colludin' together. He didn't get more than half they said, but he got enough to make him want to hear more. Then they quit the bar and went into a back room with their lemon juice and cigarettes. Ten minutes after hell broke loose in that back room, and when pap and the bartender got the door open there was the chaps, one on the floor shot through the head and the other two near done in. Two of them had set on the guy that was dead, but they hadn't knocked him out before he began to shoot and he'd pretty well riddled them with a Colt automatic pistol——"

"Them's the things," said Jude. "I'm savin' up to buy one of them things on my own—twenty-five dollars——"

"Shut your head. Then they must have knocked it out of his hand and used the last shot on him."

"His brains were all over the floor," said Jude with relish. "Pap said they looked like white of egg beat up and enough to fill a puddin' basin."

"Pap spotted somethin' else on the floor," went on Satan. "A piece of paper folded double; he put it in his pocket while the chaps were bein' lifted to the hospital where they died that same night. He was on the square all right takin' that paper and I'll tell you why: Six months before that, we'd spotted a wreck comin' up from Guadeloupe. She's so placed, as maybe you'll see yourself one day, that a hundred ships might have passed her without spottin' her. And bein' out of trade tracks made her all the safer. These guys had been talkin' about a wreck before they left the bar for the back room, and he reckoned it was our find they were on to. The piece of paper made him sure of that, and, takin' it with the talk he'd heard, he reckoned he had got the biggest thing that ever humped itself in these waters. He said there was a hundred thousand dollars aboard her."

It was a fascinating story, yet it seemed to Ratcliffe that Satan showed little enthusiasm over the business.

"You don't seem very keen about it," said he.

"Well," said Satan, "it seems a bit too big, and that's the truth. The hooker's there right enough, bu
stuff aboard of her.

"It's there right en

"Then there's the get
Satan. "That's a toug
Months of work, no pay, and
bein' let down at the end of it."

"Satan'd sooner be grubbin' ro
abalones," said Jude. "Bone lazy,
what he is. I know the stuff's there,
I'm goin' to get it if I have to howk it o
myself."

"Well, off with you, then," said the other; "and a good riddance you'd be." Then to Ratcliffe, "We'll run you down there some day and you can see for yourself. If you've any money to burn you might like to put it in the spec'. We'd want extra help. We can't tackle that business alone, even pap saw that, though he was mighty set on doin' it single-handed. And that's where the bother comes in, for the island where she's lyin' is Spanish and the dagoes would claim what we got if they knew."

"We'd have to get half a dozen men and give them a share," said Ratcliffe. "That would make them hold their tongues. But I see an awful lot of difficulties. Suppose you got the stuff, how are you to get rid of it?"

"We'd have to get it down to a Brazil port," said Satan, "or run it into Caracas. That's handier. Them Venezuelans are the handiest chaps when it comes to loose dealin'."

"For the matter of that," said Ratcliffe, "one could run it straight to England. There's lots of places there where we could get it ashore—but we've got to get it first."

"That's so," said Satan. "Look!—she's puttin' a boat off." He pointed to the *Dryad*.

A quarter boat had been lowered and was pulling away from the yacht. As she drew closer Ratcliffe saw that the man in the stern sheets, steering, was Skelton. Skelton coming either to make trouble or to make friends. The oars rose up and fell with a crash as the bow oar hooked on to the dingy old *Sarah*.

"Hulloo!" said Ratcliffe.

"Hulloo!" said Skelton.

"Won't you come on board?"

"I just came over to say that we are starting."

Ratcliffe saw that he wanted to say a lot, but was tongue-tied before the boat's crew and the Tylers.

said Ratcliffe,
cabin before you're

a moment, then he came.
nod, utterly ignored Jude,
by Ratcliffe, passed below.
his manner changed. Standing
ig a seat, as though fearing to con-
e his lily-white ducks, he began to
s as if addressing the portrait of old
an Tyler.

"I can't believe you absolutely mean to do this," said he. "I can understand a moment's temper—but—but—this is a joke carried too far."

"My dear Skelton," said the other, "what's the good? I have the greatest respect for you, but we are dead opposites in temperament, and we make each other unhappy—what's the good of carrying it on? It's not as if you minded being alone. I like this old tub and her crew. Let's each carry out our likings."

"I'm not thinking of your happiness but of the situation. You were a guest on my yacht, and you leave me like this. I need not embroider on the bare fact."

"Do you want me to go back?"

"Not in the least," said Skelton. "You are a free agent, I hope."

Ratcliffe's blood was beginning to rise in temperature. He knew quite well Skelton wanted him to go back, but was too proud to say so. And he knew quite well that Skelton wanted him back not for any love of him, but simply because the situation was irregular, and people, if they heard of all this, might talk.

"Well, then, if you don't specially want me back I'll stay," said he.

"Very well," said Skelton. "As you please. I wash my hands of the affair, and if you come to grief it is your own lookout. I will have the remainder of your baggage forwarded home to you when I reach England."

"I'll maybe see you at Havana when this cruise is over," said Ratcliffe vaguely.

"I doubt it," said Skelton. "It is quite possible I may not call there." He turned and began to climb the companionway. On deck he nodded frigidly to Satan and got over the side.

Satan leaning across the rail looked down. "How about that mains'l?" he asked jocularly.

"I'm afraid I have no more spare canvas available," said Skelton with a veiled dig at the rapacity of the lantern-jawed one, "or provisions. Anything else I shall be delighted to let you have."

"Well, then," said Satan, "you might send us a loan of the dinghy. We're short of boats."

"You shall have her," said Skelton with a glance at Ratcliffe, who was also leaning over, as though to say "this is the sort of man you have thrown your lot in with."

The boat pushed off.

"Good-by," cried Ratcliffe, half laughing, half angry with Satan, but quite unable to veto the promised gift.

" 'By," replied the other, raising a hand.

Jude, who had said not one word, suddenly began to giggle.

"What's wrong with you?" asked Satan.

"I dunno," replied Jude; "but there's somethin' about that guy that makes me want to laugh."

CHAPTER VI.

SKELTON SAILS.

The breeze had risen with the declining sun, and the water round the *Dryad* looked like a spread of smashed sapphires. They watched Skelton getting on board, and then they saw the dinghy lowered and the quarter boat taking her in tow. In five minutes, like a white duckling behind a moor hen, she was streaming on a line behind the *Sarah* and the quarter boat was pulling back for the yacht.

Satan had got his wish, and Ratcliffe was feeling just as Skelton wanted him to feel, under an obligation and rather a beast. Then they saw the boat taken on board and the hands laying aloft and the canvas shaking out to the favoring breeze.

"He'll have the wind right aft, and that'll save his coal," said Satan. "I reckon if his engines give out he wouldn't bother much with all that canvas to carry him."

"They're handlin' it smart," said Jude. "There's the anchor goin' up."

The flurried sound of the steam winch raising the anchor came across the water. Then it ceased, and Jude, running to the flag locker, fetched out a dingy old American flag, bent it on, and ran it up, dipping it as the *Dryad* began to move. She returned the compliment, gliding away with the bow wash beginning to show and the wake creaming behind her. As she passed the southern reefs

and shifted her helm, squaring her yards to the following wind, a blast from her siren raised a blanket of shouting gulls. Then the island cut her off and the sea lay desolate.

The sense of his loneliness came on Ratcliffe, sudden as the clap of a door. He had cut the painter with civilization. The deck of the *Sarah Tyler* seemed smaller than ever, Jude and Satan more irresponsible and unaccountable, and his own daring a new thing, somewhat dubious. He had renounced services and delicacies and surety of passage and safety, letters and newspapers, everything he had known. The shock scarcely lasted a minute, and then, with the breeze across the pansy-blue evening sea, came blowing the wind of adventure and freedom.

Suddenly some spirit explained to him what life really meant. Life as the Argonauts knew it, as the gulls know it. Freedom in the intense and living moment without a thought of yesterday, with scarcely a care for the morrow. He took his seat in an old chair that Satan had placed under the rag of awning and lit his pipe. That delightful smoke seemed the culmination of everything, in these first moments in this new world. As he smoked he watched the Tylers haul the dinghy alongside. They got into her and were lost to sight, but he could hear their voices, Jude's shrill with pleasure and excitement.

"My, ain't she a beauty! Ain't she a dinky boat! My! For the love of Mike look at the cushions—*cushions* in a boat! Heave 'em on deck!" The cushions came flying over the rail together with the voice of Satan, evidently bending.

"Leave them alone or I'll bat y' with the bailer—well, let them lay on deck if they're there. She's a duck, new-built, too—teak, copper fastenin's, all the best that money could buy. Stop rockin' her and over you get after the cushions."

Jude came clambering on board, beaming in the sunset; then she got one of the boat's cushions and took her seat on it on the deck beside Ratcliffe.

"I reckon old Popplecock's as soft as his cushions to be wangled out of a boat like that," said Jude examining the sole of her bare right foot for a fancied splinter. "Satan said he was goin' to try it on him when you were down below with him. Didn't believe he'd do it. That chap looked as stiff as his own mainmast—
I heard what you s.
down below."

"Oh, did you."

"I wasn't listenin'. I ju.
the skylight. I heard you s..
us and the old *Sarah* better'n .
boat. What makes likin's?"

"I don't know."

"Nuther do I, but we took to you .
off, same as you to us. Ever done abalo..
fishin'?"

"No."

"Well, I reckon you won't want to do it again once you've tried. There'll be a big, low tide to-morrow after sunup, and you'll have a chance of seein' what it is. Finished your pipe? Well, come along and help us to get supper."

For all the work Ratcliffe did she might have got the supper herself. But it was the companionship that helped. Brothers aren't much good as companions. Ratcliffe was a new thing, absolutely new, from his striped pajamas and dandy clothes to his condition of mind, just as she was a new thing to Ratcliffe. Never did two beings come together so well or create more rapidly a little world of mutual interests out of the little things of life, or a weaker being dominate more completely the stronger.

"Can you make bread?" asked Jude after he had filled the tin kettle for her. "Well, you'll have to learn. That's the bakin' powder in that big tin and the flour's in the starboard locker. What're you doin' with the tin? Land's sake! You don't think I'm goin' to make bread for supper, same as you make tea? Where was you born?"

"Hampshire."

"I thought it was somewhere like that," said Jude. She instructed him in the primitive method of bread making as conducted on board the *Sarah Tyler*, finishing up with the information that hard tack would be their portion at supper that night and breakfast next morning as she was "up to the gunnel" in other business, among other things having to put a patch on her trousers. Not the ones she was wearing, which were her next best, but her worst. The old guernsey she was wearing was her second best. Coats! Oh, coats were good enough on Sunday or for going ashore, but no use much in a ship—except an oilskin for dirty weather. Boots the same; stockings the same. You had to

ocks and through
on the island.
d be bully things to
hey'd frighten the fish.
such things, she'd just as
ms of Morpheus in a top hat.
ne wear a nighty like her and
ap's eyes would have bugged out
seen those things. He was "offle old-
oned." Used to make her and Satan put
ton between their teeth every night. They
did it still. She exhibited a set of dazzling white teeth to prove the fact. You just pulled a cotton thread between them and then they never went rotten. Also he made them brush their teeth every morning.

"Kettle's boilin'," suddenly finished Jude. "Now start in an' let's see you make the tea—said you could do it—there's the canister. Ain't you goin' to heat the pot first? Let me have a hold. Now fling the water out. A spoonful a head and one for the pot and another one for Satan—he likes it strong, and if you'll take it along to the cabin without spillin' it I'll be after you in a minit with the plates and things."

Satan, who never put his hand to menial work, maintaining, without the least offense, his position as captain and owner, came down to supper flushed with the good qualities of the dinghy. He had taken her for a row, and it was like hearing a man talking of a stroll with a sweetheart—if men ever talk of such things. Before going on deck to smoke he pointed out Ratcliffe's quarters for the night. He was to have pap's cabin, the space divided off with a curtain. Jude and he always slept in hammocks swung in the "saloon." Before going on deck he fetched an old canister out of a locker and, emptying some dried herbs into a saucer, set fire to them and left them smoldering on the table. It was to keep the mosquitoes away, pap had got the receipt from a Seminole Indian up near Cedar Cay.

Then, just as the moon was rising, and after the things were washed up, they sat on deck, smoking, listening to the waves on the beach and watching fish jumping in the track of the moon. They talked of fish and to Ratcliffe's mind two things became apparent: Satan's profound, awful knowledge of the sea and all that lived therein, and his absolute indifference to sport. Satan fished for food. Tarpon and tarpon fishermen filled him with disgust and disdain. You can't eat tarpon, and the chaps that came from New York and such places and spent their days fighting tarpon with a ten-ounce rod and a twenty-one-thread line seemed to him guys bereft of reason.

Jude, sitting on the deck and mending her pants by the light of the moon, concurred.

"But it's the fun of the thing," said Ratcliffe. "It's the matching of ones skill and strength against the fish." He talked of the joys of salmon fishing.

"What bait do you use for them?" asked Satan.

"Flies."

Jude shrieked.

"Not live flies," he explained. "Imitation ones." He tried to describe artificial fly making and finished with a sense of failure as of one who had entered the lists in defense of a niggling form of business that had, yet, a touch of humor in it. Then as they talked, suddenly through the night came a sound like the boom of a big gun. Ratcliffe nearly dropped his pipe.

"That's a fish," said Satan.

"Sea bat," said Jude indifferently.

"That noise?"

"Sea bat jumping. There they go again. Must be a cirkiss of them playin' about beyond the reefs—big, flat fish, weigh all of a ton."

"Tails as long as themselves and eyes like dinner plates," said Jude. "Husky brutes; tow a ship after them if they foul the anchor—won't they, Satan?"

"They're loudenin'," said Satan. "They'll be comin' this way with the current." Leaning over the rail they watched the moonshot water. The sounds had ceased.

"They've stopped playin'," said Satan as though he knew exactly what they were doing.

"It's too shallow for them here," said Jude.

"Shallow! It's fifty foot of water and a sandy bottom. What are you talkin' about? Told you."

The depths of the sea suddenly became lit. Down below vast forms came drifting like the mainsails of ships ablaze with phosphorescent light, drifting and turning over as they drifted like Gargantuan leaves blown by the wind. The whiplike tails could be seen as streaks of flame. Glimpses of devilish faces and lambent eyes showed as they turned, the fins waving like frills of fire. Then they were gone.

The Tylers showed little concern over the

marvelous sight, allowing, however, that it was the biggest school of "bats" they had ever struck. But to Ratcliffe it was as though the sea had disclosed a peep of its true heart and real mystery.

Then they went to rest, and as he lay in pap's cabin, listening to the occasional trickle of the water against the planking and the groan of the rudder moved by the lilt of the swell, it seemed to him that daring, in its everyday and cold-blooded form, could not have carried a man much further than it had carried him. The sea bats had underscored the business, as far as the mystery of the ocean and danger of cruising in such a small boat were concerned. The hardness of pap's bunk bedding told of comforts renounced, while the morals of the Tylers, though good enough, no doubt, had, as disclosed in their conversation, a touch of the free lance and a threat of port authority troubles and differences of opinion with the customs.

Absolute respect for the rights of man, partial respect for the rights of shipping companies and steamer lines, no respect at all for governments and customs, that was an outline of the Tyler morality. What had made him renounce the *Dryad* for the *Sarah?* What, lying in his hard bunk made him contented with the exchange? The main reason he felt to be the Tylers, Satan with his strange mentality and queer methods; Jude, unlike any other being he had ever met. Then, as he lay considering all this, came muted voices from the "saloon." Satan's voice:

"Have you put the cotton between your teeth?"

Then Jude's drowsily:

"Naw. Leave a body alone."

"Get out o' your hammock, you lazy dog, an' fix your teeth or I'll let you down by the head."

Then Jude's voice, dolorous and muffled: "Shut up or you'll be wakin' him. Cuss my teeth! Cayn't find the cotton. Tell you I'm *lookin'* for it. Got it!"

Ensued a long silence, during which Ratcliffe dropped off, to be awakened, an hour later, by the lamentations of Jude and the sounds of Satan prodding her out of a nightmare; a gastric nightmare, in which it appeared to her troubled soul that she *had* to fry a sea bat, *totum terres atque rotundum,* in the small galley frying pan for breakfast.

CHAPTER

The tide had begun to
setting stars, and the tune
the beach had sunk to the n
sound. Then, through the sile
far reefs to southward, came the
mentable cry of a gull. Then a cho
away against the vague blue of the east,
and there, like leaves blown about a dim
lit window, showed the wings of the birds
already putting out to sea for the fishing.
Ratcliffe was awakened by Jude calling on
him to show a leg.

"Satan's on deck," she said, "and if you believe in washin' he'll give you a swill with a bucket. Hurry up and come down again, for I want a swill myself. Swim? Not on your life. Sharks, that's why."

The voice came from a hammock, which he blundered against in the semidarkness. Then on deck, after his swill, drying himself with an old towel provided by Satan, he stood for a moment watching the sun break up through the water, and the great sea flashing to life, and the white gulls flying.

The island was sending a faint breeze to them, a tepid breeze flavored with earth and cactus and bay cedar scents, perfumes that mixed with the tang of the ocean and the tar-oakum scent of the *Sarah Tyler*. And all these scents and sounds and sights, from the sun flash on the sea to the trembling palm fronds on the shore, seemed like a great bouquet presented by youth and morning. Oh, the splendor of being alive, free, happy, without a single care, and the deck of the wandering *Sarah* under foot!

From below, through the skylight, came a sleep-heavy voice. "Ain't you done yet?"

"Coming," said Ratcliffe. He dived into his pajamas and came below.

"Get into your cabin an' shut the door," commanded the voice from the hammock.

"There's no door."

"Well, draw the curtain. Oh, Lord! what's the good o' gettin' up! I'm near dead asleep."

Then the voice of Satan descending the companion ladder: "Ain't you up! Well, you wait one minit."

A thump on the floor, a scurry up the companion ladder, and then shuddery lamentations and the sounds of swilling from the deck above, mixed with the admonitions of Satan from below.

Oh, my, ain't it

ıd turkle! You ain't
ılashing the water on the
ıver you."
ıg it."
ı don't know! Why, you ain't
ı et. Give a gasp, or I'll be up to
ıth a rope end. That's more like it."
ıas.

The sun was high when Ratcliffe got on deck, and a light, steady breeze was blowing up from the straits of Florida. The gulls looked like snow flakes blowing round the far reefs and against the morning blue of the sea. Jude had put the kettle on. She had dressed on deck, having carried her "togs" with her, and she was now preparing a line for fishing. As she bent over it, Satan appeared, rising from the cabin hatch with a toothbrush in his hand.

"You've forgot your teeth," said Satan.

"No, I haven't," said Jude. "I've been fillin' the kettle. I'll fix them when I've done with the fishin'."

"Fishin' will wait." He fetched a pannikin of water. "You're more trouble than a dozen. What'd pap say if he saw you?"

"I'll fix them when I've done with the fishin'."

"You'll fix them now."

"No, I won't."

Satan put down the pannikin and the brush. She evaded him like a flash and skimmed up the mast to the crosstrees. Scarcely had she got up than she came sliding down, seized the toothbrush and pannikin, and began to brush her teeth, over the scupper, with a fire, speed, and fury that seemed born of dementia.

"Sardines comin'," explained Jude, between mouthfuls. "Look alive and get a bucket."

Ratcliffe looked over the sea, where her birdlike sight had spotted the sardine shoal being driven, like a gray cloud under the water, by pursuing fish. A fringe of dancing silver showed the leaping sardines. And the great fish, driving the shoal, broke up, now and then, in sword flashes. They were coming from south to north, and the left wing of the shoal would pass the island beach by a cable length. While Satan stood by, with a bucket at the end of a rope, Ratcliffe hung over the side, watching.

The driven sardines had no eyes for the *Sarah*. They struck her like the blow of a great silvery hand, boiled around her, and passed and vanished, leaving the water clear, and Satan with a dipped-up bucket full of quivering silver. The Tylers, absolutely blind to the wonder of the business, fried the sardines, just as they were, tossed out of the blue sea into the frying pan. Breakfast over, Satan and Ratcliffe took the dinghy to hunt for abalones on the uncovered reef.

The reefs to southward formed two spurs, divided by a creek of blue water, and, having got the dinghy into this creek, Ratcliffe tended the boat while Satan hunted for the abalones. Satan in search of pearls was a sight. Heart, soul, and mind bound up in the business, like a dog hunting for truffles, every find was announced by a yell or a whoop, like the whoop of a red Indian.

Ratcliffe could see squiggly, wiggly, cuttlefish tendrils running up Satan's arms, as he delved in some of the rock clefts, and Satan disengaging them and flinging the "mushy brutes" away. The big abalones were nearly always deep down under the rock ledges, and had to be chiseled off. As Satan wallowed in the water, at these times, Ratcliffe might have fancied the vanished one lost or drowned, but for the profane language that rose and floated away on the breeze. All the same, it was dull work for the boat tender. Having nothing else to think of, he thought of Jude. Her figure chased away dullness.

A man in the bright and early morning is quite a different person from the same man at noon, and coming across Jude, after a long course of Skelton, was like stepping from a gray afternoon to dawn. Was it possible that Skelton and Jude were vertebrates of the same species?

Then, there was what women would have called the pity of it. Ratcliffe did not deal much with the conventions, as a rule. Still he could not but perceive that all life has an aim and ending, and that the end of an old sailor was not what life and the fitness of things had destined for Jude. What would she grow up into? He thought of all the girls he had ever known. There was not one as jolly as Jude. Yet it was terrible, somehow—monstrous. He remembered her threat to pull her skirts over her head and run down the street, if skirts were ever imposed upon her; her contempt for the feminine rose up before him and, against all that, her housewifely instincts, and the fact that, despite Satan's rope-end and mock

bluster, she ruled the *Sarah Tyler* just as a woman rules a house.

Still, it was deplorable. What would become of her? Vague and fatherly ideas of getting her away from this life, and having her brought up properly, and educated, came to him, only to be dispelled by Jude. Imagine Jude in a girls' school, at a tea party!

He was aroused from these meditations by Satan, with an armful of abalones; Satan scratched and bleeding and soused in sea water, but triumphant. He reckoned they were the biggest "fish" ever got on these reefs. There were a dozen and six all told, and when they were collected and put on board, the dinghy put back. Coming round the western spur of the reef, they found that Jude had left the *Sarah*—a high crime—and rowed herself ashore.

The canvas boat was on the beach, and away amid the bay cedars and cactus toward the trees could be seen the head and shoulders of the deserter moving about. She seemed in search of something.

"Lord love me!" cried Satan. He beached the dinghy, helped Ratcliffe to run her up, and then started, followed by the other, running and shouting as he ran.

"Hi! chucklehead! Whatcha leave the ship for? Whatcha huntin' for—turkles' eggs?"

"Whatch you done with your eyes?" retorted the other. "Cayn't you see?"

Instantly, and by her tone and by some sixth sense, Satan was appeased. He seemed suddenly to scent danger. He saw the work she had been on, camouflaging the cache more effectively. He cast his glance over the island, the western sea, turned, and then stood stock-still shading his eyes. Away beyond the *Sarah Tyler,* across the purple blue, stood a sail. The land wind had died off and the stranger was bringing the sea wind with her. A small topsail schooner, she showed, now, with all sail set, making dead for the island.

"That's him," said Satan.

"Spotted him half an hour ago," said Jude. "He was steering nor'-nor'west and shifted his helm, when he saw us."

The bay cedar bushes sighed suddenly to the new-risen wind, and, as Ratcliffe glanced about him, the feeling of the desolation of the place, where he stood, came to him strong; strong in the scent of cactus and herbage, the tune of the water on the beach and the rustle of the wind in the bushes.

"He's been h
"Curse him!"

"Who is he?" aske

"Friend of pap's, he w

"Pretended to be," put

"Spanish," continued Sata
since pap gave out he's been
on our heels. Jude and me worke
out, and we came to conclude he'd
from pap about the hooker I spoke of.

"The wreck?"

"Yep. Pap was keen on gettin' extra money into the business of savin' her, and I b'lieve he sounded Carquinez. That's his name. How much he let out takin' his soundin's the Lord only knows. 'Cark's' in the tobacco line; does a bit of everythin'; has a shop in the Calle Pedro in Havana and a gamblin' joint on the front, owns ships. That's one of them, and Matt Sellers runs her for him. He don't trouble handlin' her; sits in the cabin, all day, smokin' cigarettes."

"He's been after us ever since pap died," said Jude. "On and off."

"It was one of his chaps got Jude in that doggery down by the wharf, and filled her up with rum," said Satan, turning the brim of his Panama down. "Remember I told you? What she let out the Lord only knows."

"I didn't let out nuthin'," said Jude. "Only that we were goin' east this trip. I owns to that."

"Well, there's the result of your jaw," said Satan. "East was good enough for Cark. He'd hunt hell for a red cent. And don't you be sayin' you didn't let out nuthin'. Why I heard you jawin' about all the money you had, when I come in and collared you. Cark believes pap found that stuff and cached it; that's what he believes, or my name's not Tyler."

"Well, let's get aboard," said Jude. "If they see us squattering about here, they'll maybe think the stuff's hid here."

"They've seen us by this, though it's too far for them to make out who we are," said Satan, pushing his Panama farther forward to hide his face. He led the way to where the boats were, on the sand, and they reembarked. The abalones were got on board, and then they stood watching the approach of the stranger.

The white had gone out of her sails. Close in, now, they showed dingy and patched. As she dropped anchor and swung to her moorings, broadside on to the *Sarah,* the rake of

ɹc, and her whole
ɯd.
ɹe old *Sarah* were all
w crowd, and that ratty
ɹelt to be all wrong. The
ɹehow did not add honesty or
ɹity to the appearance of the
ɹr did the half-disclosed character
ɹvities of Cark shed luster on old man
ɹc or his present representatives.

However, Ratcliffe had gone into this business open-eyed, and it was not for him to grumble at the friends or relationships of his hosts. Besides, he had trust in Satan and the wit of Satan to preserve them from the law.

The latter had covered the heap of abalones with some sail cloth, and he was standing, working his lantern jaws on a bit of chewing gum, his eyes fixed on the stranger as though she were made of glass and he could see Carquinez sitting smoking his cigarettes in the cabin.

"They haven't shown a sign," said Jude.

"They're bluffin' us to believe they haven't spotted who we are," said Satan. "Cark doesn't want us to twig he's been lookin' for us."

"Well," said Jude, "let's get the mud hook up and put out right away. They won't have the face to chase us."

"Yes," said Satan, "and leave them to hunt the island and find the cache. They'd lift the stuff to the last tin of beef. They've seen us ashore among the bushes. You shouldn't have gone ashore."

"I went to see we hadn't left no traces"

"Traces be blowed! Cark wants no traces. Once he starts to hunt he'll turn the durned island upside down and shake it. He'll say to himself, 'what were they doin' here, anyway; what were they pokin' about among them bushes for?' No, we've got to sit here till he goes, and that'll be this time next year, maybe."

"What's the name of his schooner?" asked Ratcliffe.

"The *Juan Bango,*" replied Satan. "Named after the tobacco company people. Look, they're gettin' a boat off. That's Sellers, and he's comin' aboard." Then he collapsed, squatting under the bulwarks. "Guy them," said he to Jude. "Tell them I'm down with smallpox. That'll make them shove."

It was Matt Sellers right enough, a big, wheezy man suggestive of Tammany Hall, but a sure-enough sailor in practice. "The biggest blackguard on the coast," was his subsidiary title. He was the henchman of Carquinez. His career was not without interest and romance of a sort. It was he who had bought, with the money of Carquinez, the bones of the *Isidore,* wrecked against the sheer cliffs, by the black strand of Martinique. Ten thousand dollars in gold coin she had on board her, and he salved them. That was a straight job, and a wonderful bit of work, taking it all together. It was a curiosity, too, because it was straight. The crooked jobs of Matt Sellers would have filled a book.

Like old man Tyler, Sellers had no use for people who talked of buried treasure. He knew the Carribean and the gulf too well. If he was keen on the wreck business, then it was because he had excellent reasons for his keenness. As the boat drew near, Ratcliffe noticed the villainous-looking crew; Spaniards, some of them with red handkerchiefs tied round their heads.

CHAPTER VIII.

JUDE OVERDOES IT.

"Hullo, kid!" cried Sellers, as the boat came alongside the *Sarah.*

"Hullo, yourself!" replied Jude. "Where've you blown in from?"

"What's become of Satan? Ain't he aboard?" asked Sellers, ignoring the question.

"Satan's dead," said Jude.

"Satan's which?"

"Died of the smallpox."

"Well, I'm d——d!" said Sellers, casting his eyes over the *Sarah* and then resting them on Ratcliffe. "When was it?"

"A week ago."

Sellers gave a word to the bow oar, and the boat pushed off a bit, the fellows hanging on their oars.

"I thought I saw three of you on deck," he shouted.

"The other chap's gone below," replied Jude. The boat of the *Juan* hung, for a moment, as if in meditation; she made a striking picture, the blue water paling to green under her, and the sun blaze on the red topknots of the oarsmen. Then, without a word more, she turned back to the *Juan.* Satan, in the scupper, seemed preparing to have a fit.

"What's the matter now?" asked Jude.

"What's the matter? What did you say I was dead for? Didn't I tell you to say I was down with smallpox."

"Well, what's the difference?"

"Why, you mutt, wouldn't you have been snivelin' and cryin' if I was dead? You handed that yarn out to him as ca'm as if you were talking of a tom cat. I didn't believe you myself."

"Why, I told him you was dead a week," cried Jude. "D'you think I'd be snivelin' and cryin' a week, if you was dead? Lord! what you do think of yourself!"

Satan did not reply. He was thinking that he had made a false move, and that Jude had put the cap on the business. Cark would be certain, now, that there was something hidden on the island. Satan was on the horns of a dilemma. One horn was the cache of provisions containing a couple of thousand dollars' worth of stuff; the other horn was the old wreck that might contain nothing. To hang on here was useless; for Cark would hang on, too; even if Cark went away, he would be sure to come back to hunt.

He sat with his back to the bulwarks, chewing and thinking. Then, heedless whether he was seen or not from the *Juan Bango,* he rose to his feet and leaned with his back against the rail. He had come to a decision. Jude, watching him, said nothing, and Ratcliffe waited without a word; this little sea comedy interested him intensely, and all the more for its setting of loneliness and its background of blue sea and quarreling gulls. It was to Ratcliffe that Satan spoke first.

"Look here," he said, "you're standin' out of this, aren't you?"

"Which? The wreck business?"

"Yep. You're not keen upon puttin' money into it and havin' a share?"

"Oh, no. If you wanted me to, I'd be glad enough. But if you'd rather I stood out, I'll do so. I'm not keen about money, anyway. Only I'd like to see the fun."

"You'll see fun enough," said Satan. "I'm goin' to drag Cark in. First of all, if I don't he'll keep hangin' round here and sniff the cache; second, he'll work the job for us with his crew."

"He'll gobble every cent," said Jude.

"Which way?" asked Satan. "We'll give him half shares, and we'll split on him if he doesn't play fair. If we found stuff there, and once it was known, d'you think we'd be let keep it? We've got to [illegible] he as good as another? If [illegible] there, he'll have all his work for

"The thing I can't make out," cliffe, "is how did he ever expect [illegible] across you?"

"Well, it's this way," said Satan. "Be in with pap he knew the lines we worked on; f'r instance, he knew we worked this place for abalones. If he hadn't sighted us here, he'd have tried Little Pine Island, which is lonesomer than this place. You see, he's got it in his noddle, as far as I can make out, that pap lifted the stuff and cached it. And Pine Island or here would have been the likeliest places. He reckoned, when we put out of Havana this time, we were out to lift it for good. Well, he'll do the liftin', if it's to be done. Come on, I'm going over to see him right off. Jude, you stick here and clean up them abalones." He got into the dinghy, followed by Ratcliffe, and they pushed off.

As they drew closer, the *Juan Bango* showed up more distinctly for what she was. One of the old schooners that used to run in the carrying trade between Havana and the Gulf ports, she had fallen from commercial honesty, anyhow in appearance. You could not have damaged her paint if you had tried; it was sun blistered and gone green, but her copper showed sharp and clear, through the amazing brilliancy of the water, without trace of weeds or barnacles.

Sellers was hanging over the rail as they came alongside. If he felt surprise at this resurrection, he did not show it much.

"Hullo, Satan!" cried Sellers. "Thought you was dead?"

"Cark on board?" asked Satan, without wasting time on explanations.

"He's down below," said Sellers, accepting the attitude of the other. "Who's your friend?"

"Oh, just a gentleman that's come along for a cruise," said Satan. "So you've found me."

"Seems so," said Sellers. "But tie up and come aboard."

Satan tied the painter to a channel plate, and got over the side, followed by Ratcliffe.

The deck of the *Juan* sagged, and plank and dowel were indistinguishable, one from the other, by reason of dirt. Forward, some of the crew were scraping a spare boom, and others, collected round the fo'c's'le head, were smoking cigarettes. The wind had

warm breathing, setting aft, with it a faint odor like the etylene. It was garlic. From the came the muffled thrumming of a

It was Ratcliffe's first experience of a paniard. He followed Satan, who followed Sellers down a steep companionway and then into a cabin, where a great shaft of sunlight from the skylight above, struck down through a haze of cigarette smoke.

The place was paneled with bird's-eye maple; the seats were upholstered in thick-ribbed silk, worn and stained. The carpet was of the best, but threadbare in spots and burned with cigar droppings. The metal fittings were far too good for a trading schooner of the *Juan* type. Everywhere lay evidence of splendor that had seen better days. All these fittings had, in fact, been torn out of a yacht bought by Carquinez for an old song; and, at the end of the saloon table, going over some papers, with a cigarette in his mouth, sat Carquinez himself, a figure to give one pause.

The whole of the left side of this gentleman's face was covered by a green patch. It was said that he had no left side to his face, that it was eaten away by disease, and that, were he to unveil himself, the sight would frighten the beholder; however, that may have been, what remained visible was enough to frighten any honest man with eyes to behold the nose of a vulture above the peaked chin of a money changer.

"Hullo, Cark!" said Satan.

"Come in," said Cark.

"Bring yourself to an anchor," said Sellers, pointing out two of the fixed seats on either side of the table, and taking another close to the owner of the *Juan*. "What'll you have?"

"Oh, I don't know," said Satan. "Something soft will suit us, and long."

Carquinez raised a bird-shrill voice:

"Antonio!"

"*Si, señor,*" came a response from outside. and with the voice a dusky form at the cabin door.

"Bring me two Zin and Zinzibeers for these two zentlemen, please."

"No gin!" cried Satan, Ratcliffe concurring. "Ginger beer will do."

"Zinzibeers," said Carquinez. It was nearly all that he said at this interview, the trusty Sellers doing the talking.

Said Sellers to Satan: "Well, it's funny us hittin' on you like this, durned funny. We'd been down to Acklin, looking up a location Cark was keen about, and, comin' back, I shifted the helm, seein' you lying here, and not recognizin' the old *Sarah*. I thought it was Gundyman's boat."

Said Satan, taking up the drink just presented by Antonio. "Here's our respects to you both. Thought I was Gundyman, did you? Well, I spotted you on sight; didn't want to see you neither. This gentleman will tell you I was squattin' in the scuppers while Jude was handing you that lie about the smallpox."

"Oh, was you!" said Sellers, with an open and hearty laugh.

"I was so. Let's cut pretendin' and play on the square. Are you willin'?"

"None better."

"Well, I'll put my cards out; you and Cark, here, have been after me pretty near since last fall. Reason why; that wreck pap told Cark of."

"Which was that?"

"I said, let's cut pretendin' and play fair," said Satan sternly.

Cark wilted and raised his fingers in deprecation, and Sellers cut in. "Yes, we'll play fair. There was talk of a wreck between your dad and us, and I'm not denying we had an eye after it. Heave ahead!"

"I'm comin' to the point," said Satan. "And the point is, you and Cark, between you, have got it in your heads that you've only to follow me, find out where she's located, and claim shares for not tellin'."

"Heave ahead," said Sellers.

"Well, you've got it wrong," went on Satan. "You may follow me till the old *Juan* rots to pieces, and you'll never know. Not if I don't want you to know. Got that clear?"

"Clear as day," said Sellers.

"Well, then, here's something else. If that wreck is what she's taken to be, it's more than one man's job to shift the boodle and bank it. I've got to have help, and if we can arrange a deal, I'd just as soon have you two in the show, as any one else."

"Now you're talking," said Sellers.

Carquinez said nothing, but his hand shook, and Ratcliffe, watching him, received a shock. A wreath of cigarette smoke was stealing out from beneath the patch on his cheek. He wished the conference over and himself back on board the healthy *Sarah*. It came to him, all at once, that he had been

drawn into a web of which Carquinez was the spider. He could do nothing, however, at least for the moment, but watch and wait; and Satan's face was worth watching, as that wily diplomatist sat facing Sellers.

"Not that I don't believe you'd kidoodle me over the business, if you had a chance," continued Satan. "You would, sure, but you see I've got the weather gauge of you, knowing what I do of you. And that's more'n I'd have with strangers."

"Sure," said Sellers.

"Well, then," said Satan, "we've got that far, and it comes to terms. What's your share to be for helpin' to collar the stuff and dispose of it in Havana?"

"Two dollars out of every three that we make," said Sellers promptly. "There's the salving; you can't do that alone, or your dad would have done it prompt; then there's the cashing of it. You're lost men, if you try that job on by yourselves. Why there's not another man in Havana could do it; only Cark; and even he couldn't bring the stuff into Havana harbor. It'll have to be landed back of the island, north of Santiago. Lord knows what he'll have to pay."

Satan cogitated for a moment.

"I'll meet you," said he at last. "I'm not set on big money. Anything more?"

"No, that's all," said Sellers.

Carquinez nodded approval and, lighting another cigarette, leaned back in his chair.

"And what's this gentleman doing in the business?" asked Sellers, referring to Ratcliffe.

"Oh, he's standing out," said Satan. "He's just on a cruise with us."

"Yes, I'm standing out," said Ratcliffe. "I'm only in it for the fun of the thing, though I'm willing to help."

"Well, I reckon you'll have fun enough," said Sellers, "if we get foul of the customs, or if some other hooker comes poking along, while we're salving. You're British, aren't you?"

"I am."

"Come out for a spree?"

"You may put it like that."

"Did you, by any chance, come off a big white yacht that went west yesterday."

"What made you guess that?"

"Well," said Sellers, "it's easy to be seen you aren't one of us, and your clothes give you away. It's easy to be seen you haven't been dough dishing long, in the old *Sarah*. I didn't get your name?"

"Ratcliffe."

"No trade or business?"

"None. My father was Ratcli. owner. Holt & Ratcliffe."

"Lord—love—a—duck!" said "You're not wanting for money, I re Well, this gets me, it do, indeed. Holt Ratcliffe—should think I *did* know them."

"Antonio!" suddenly piped Carquinez.

"*Si, señor.*" Antonio appeared

"Pedro Murias," said Carquinez. Antonio vanished and reappeared with a box of cigars, colossal cigars, worth twenty-five guineas a hundred, in the London market. They were placed on the table and pushed toward Ratcliffe.

Satan grinned.

"Well," said he, "we've fixed things so far. Two out of every three dollars to you and no deductions."

"That's it," said Sellers.

"And now we've fixed terms," said Satan, "I want to know all about this hooker."

"Which was you meaning?" asked Sellers.

"The wreck."

"Listen to him," cried Sellers. "Mean to say you don't know all about her?"

"N'more than Adam. I've heard from pap she was called the *Nombre de Dios*, and was full of gold plate got from churches. But that's not much more than a name and a yarn. I've never banked much on the yarn. Seems too much of the New Jerusalem touch about it, for me."

"Well, maybe you're wrong," said Sellers.

"Spit it out," said Satan. "Tell us what you know about her. You've got the contrac'; give us the news."

"Well, I'll tell you," said Sellers. "She weren't no ship with gold plates. Your dad got that wrong. She was a big Spanish ship out of Vera Cruz, making for Spain. She had a cargo of timber, some of them heavy, foreign timbers that don't float. She'd got aboard her, besides the timber, more'n a million dollars' worth of gold; Mexican gold most of it, Spanish coin, some of it. Lopez was the name of the skipper, and he layed to bank that gold for himself. He'd been forty years in these seas, and knew every key and sand bank, same as the insides of his own pockets.

"Him and the mate were the only men in the know, about that gold, beside a supercargo by name of Perez.

"Well, he colluded together with them two guys to sink the hooker in six-fathom water

cks, give out that she'd sunk
come back, in a year or two,
the boodle. They had her bored
gged for the game, and when they
r to the location, they pulled out the
s, and she went down without a sneeze,
tural as a dyin' christian.

"They got the boats away in order, and the crew was got off, to a man. But that crew never got ashore. Maybe it was something wrong with the grub or the water. There's no saying. But the grub and water was all right in the dinghy. Them three guys had taken the dinghy, and they were picked up and landed somewhere on the Gulf, fat and well."

All through Sellers' recitation, Carquinez had sat nodding his head; he glanced now at Satan and Ratcliffe, as if measuring its effect upon them; then he half closed his eyes again, and retired into himself like a tortoise.

"They slung their yarn," went on Sellers, "and made all good, and it was only left for them to wait a while and hire or steal a likely boat to pick up the stuff, when the yellow fever took the supercargo and the mate, leaving Lopez to fish for himself. He got back to Havana, which was his natural home, and there he put up with his son, who was a trader in tobacco, got a bit of a factory not bigger than a hen h'us', and turned out a brand of cigars made out of leavin's and brown paper mostly.

"He put the son wise about the wreck, but he wouldn't give the location away till it was time to go and pick up the stuff, which wouldn't be for a year yet. Then he up and died, and the son started to hunt for the chart, and couldn't find it. The old chap had given him everything but the chart with the location marked on it. It wasn't a proper chart, neither; just a piece of paper with the thing done rough, but giving the bearings. It was never found, not by the son. The grandson found it, and where do you think? Pasted into the lining of an old hat.

"That wasn't so long ago, neither, and what do you think that fool of a grandson did? Well, I'll tell you what he did. First of all he comes to Cark, here, and tries to get him onto the job, on a ten per cent basis; Cark to risk his money and reputation, for a lousy ten per cent, on what might be only the bones of an old ship. He let out her name and history, and everything but the location.

"Cark wasn't having any on those terms, was you, Cark? And he told the chap to go to Medicine Hat and pick bilberries. The chap goes off, and what does he do but tries to get up a syndicate between himself and two yeggmen without a keel to their names. Perrira was the name of one and Da Silva was the name of the other, and they held a board meeting in Diego's saloon, one night, and shot holes in one another, in the back parlor.

"Silva and Perrira had fixed it to lay the grandson out and collar the chart for themselves. And they'd have done it, only he wasn't backward with the shooting. Your dad was in the bar, that night, and he twigged something from what they let drop before they went to the back parlor to hold their meeting. Then, when the shooting began, he was first into the room, and collared the chart, which was lying on the floor. He was always quick on the uptake, was your dad. Being a knowledgable man, he reckoned Cark was the only chap in Havana to help him take the stuff and clear it. He knew the stuff was there, by what he's heard going on in the bar before the three chaps had left it for the back room, but, before he could conclude business with Cark, he up and died."

Cark nodded.

"That was so," said he.

"Well," said Satan, "we've got the whole yarn now, and I'm wishing to be done with the business. I'm pretty near sick of you two chaps trailing after me, and I'll hand you out my belief for what it's worth. It don't seem natural to me to find gold in a hooker like that, just for the picking up, and I'd sell any man my chances for a thousand dollars. I've no knowledge of what's there. I'm just talkin' out of my head.

"You know what I am. I make my livin', and I'm content to run small. It's maybe that that puts me against big ventures. Anyhow, we've got to push this thing through. We've made the contrack. I'm only sayin' that if you play me crooked I'll split. Got that in your heads?"

The high contracting parties on the other side nodded assent.

"That bein' settled," said Satan, "here's the chart."

He produced a metal tobacco box and took from it a folded piece of paper which he laid on the table before Sellers. The effect was magical.

Carquinez sprang from his chair like a young man, came behind Sellers and, bending over his shoulders, looked. Ratcliffe, though out of the business, was as excited as the others. Satan alone was calm.

Sellers stared at the chart before him without speaking. Rum Cay was shown, and then, southwest of Rum Cay, a line of reef marked "Lone Reef." In red ink, connected to the reef by a red line, the name "Nombre de Dios" could be made out, the "Dios" very indistinct at the frayed edge of the paper. In the top right-hand corner the latitude and longitude was written, but so faintly that it would have required close study, in a strong light, to make the figures out. Nobody bothered about them. Lone reef was on all the charts and the name was enough.

"I've been by there," said Sellers at last, "and I've never seen signs of a wreck."

"You wouldn't," said Satan. "She lies flush with the coral in a crik between two arms of reef, not a stump of a mast on her. The hull of that reef must have raised itself since she was sunk, for the water in the crik doesn't cover her at high tire, and low tides it's pretty near empty. But she's been under right enough, years ago, for the decks are coraled over, hatches and all, and the stuff's turned to iron cement with the sun and weather. We've got to dynamite her open."

"Sure," said Sellers. Then, after a moment's pause, "it'll be a big job, if it's what you say. I had it in my mind that she was a diving job in shallow water, never thought of the blasted coral."

Carquinez said nothing. He withdrew to his seat at the end of the table and lit another cigarette. To Ratcliffe the silence of Carquinez approached the weird, and the way Sellers, without consulting him, did all the talking as though the pair were telepathic.

One thing certain was gradually being borne in upon him. They were a most atrocious pair of rogues, and the marvel to him was the simplicity of Satan in having any dealings at all with them. They would surely swindle him, take what precautions he might. They would never give him a third share of any treasure. They would, most likely, murder him before he could split on them if treasure were found. Of this Ratcliffe felt certain. He tried to telegraph a warning across the table, but Satan seemed blind to winks and frowns.

"Well, it's there," said Satan. "Near a foot thick. You've got to u
dynamite cartridges in the d
fire them. Got any dynamite ab

"Not an ounce."

"We might make out with blasting
der."

"Yes, if we'd got it," said Sellers. "The
ain't no use worrying; we've got to shin out of this back to Havana and get the explosives. Question is who'll go for them?"

"Not me," said Satan. "Not if she was to lie there till the last trumpet; we're underhanded for one thing, and, f'r another, I'm gettin' little enough out of the job as it stands, without fetchin' and carryin' for you."

"Then we'll go," said Sellers. "'Twon't take us more than a week to get there and back. Give us ten days, counting accidents; and we'll pick you up here."

"Why not at the reef?" asked Satan.

"Don't matter," said Sellers. "Here or there it's all the same to us, ain't it, Cark?"

Cark nodded assent, and Satan, recapturing the chart, folded it up and put it back in the tobacco box.

"Right," said he, placing the box in his pocket. "Here you'll find us."

CHAPTER IX.

THE "JUAN" SAILS.

They rose from the conference table, and Carquinez stood holding his coat together with a veined and knotted hand, while the visitors were making their adieux.

"You haven't a few feet of galvanized wire aboard?" asked Satan as he passed out, following Sellers.

"Come on deck," said Sellers.

On deck he stood, listening, while the other passed from galvanized wire to the question of spare ring bolts and other trifles he stood desperately in need of. Like a hypnotized fowl, in the hands of Satan, he made scarcely any resistance. He had no ring bolts, but the galvanized wire was forthcoming, also a little barrel for use as a buoy; some Burgundy pitch, an old paint brush, a small can of turpentine, and a couple of pounds of twine. Blessed if Satan wouldn't be asking for his back teeth, yet.

They rowed off with the spoil, Sellers leaning on the rail and lovingly pressing on them the acceptance of other trifles, including a guitar. Alongside the *Sarah* they found Jude waiting to receive them. She had been clean-

...es, was dissatisfied with the ... of a match box full of seed ... said so. When her eye lighted ...tuff in the boat that Satan had ...d out of Sellers, she laughed, in a ...ry fashion.

"Whach you laughin' at?" demanded Satan.

"Nothing," said Jude. She sat down on an upturned keg, while they brought the truck on board. Then, nursing her knee and wiggling her bare toes to the warmth of the sun, she sat without a word, waiting for explanations.

It seemed to Ratcliffe, all at once, that a critic had come on the scene; he had forgotten Jude in relation to the deal over the wreck and he was wondering, now, how she would take it. The female does not always see eye to eye with the male, as many a business man has discovered on revealing a transaction to the wife of his bosom.

Leaning against the rail, he filled his pipe and awaited the revelation with interest, but Satan, the revealer, seemed in no hurry for the business. He was bustling about disposing of the new-gotten "stores." Then he came aft again, and, lighting a pipe, stood beside Ratcliffe.

"Well, whach you been doing, anyway?" asked Jude, suddenly opening her batteries.

"Doing—which?" asked Satan. "Oh, you mean with Cark. Well, I've settled things with him; fixed it up so's he's goin' to help."

"Which way?" asked Jude.

"Why, to get the stuff, if it's there. What else?"

"What's he askin'?" said Jude.

"Well, it's this way; he'll have to do the wreckin' business, and then, if the stuff's got, he'll have to run it ashore; and after that he'll have to get rid of it. I'm givin' him two dollars out of every three."

"Oh, Lord!" said Jude.

"What's the matter with you?"

"Why didn't you give him the lot!"

"Now, look you here," cried Satan. "I don't want no sass. Who's runnin' this show, you or me? How do you know what I've got up my sleeve? Have you ever known me done on a deal yet? Now you take my orders where Cark's concerned and take them smart, with no questions; if you don't, well, then, trade with him yourself, take charge of the *Sarah* and run her yourself. Lippin' your betters!"

Jude took off her old hat and looked into it as if for inspiration; then she clapped it on her head again, drew up both feet, clasped her arms round her knees and sat on the keg top, speechless and brooding, her eyes fixed on the *Juan*.

Satan turned and went below.

"Jude," said Ratcliffe.

"Whach you want?" said Jude, without shifting her gaze.

"Suppose you had all the money off that old wreck, if the money is there, what would you do with it?"

"What's the good of askin' me things like that," said Jude. "I'd precious soon do something with it."

"No, you wouldn't. You'd put it in the bank, and then your trouble would begin."

"Which way?"

"Well, you'd have it in the bank or invested, and it would bring you in, say, twenty thousand dollars a year; well, you couldn't spend that on the dock side, could you? You wouldn't be able to spend it at all, unless you gave up the *Sarah* and lived ashore in a fine house, with a carriage and horses and servants, and to do that you'd have to become a lady—or gentleman"—hastily put in Ratcliffe, the figure on the keg sudddenly threatening to turn on him. "You'd have to do more than that. You'd have to learn all sorts of things."

"Which sort?"

"Oh, lots—can you write, Jude?"

"You bet."

"Told me the other day you couldn't."

"Well, I've most forgot. Pap started to learn me, then he said he reckoned I was more cut out for makin' puddin's. But he learned me to write my name."

"Well, if you ever grow rich, you'll have to do a lot more than write your name."

"Which way?"

"You'll have to write checks and letters, and, what's more, you'll have to be able to read them."

"Well, I reckon," said the philosophical Jude, "it'll be time enough to bother about that when I'm rich; and seems to me I'll never be rich, with them two barny coots diddling Satan same as they've done."

"Oh, yes, you will; you are going to be rich as I am, some day. I'm a fortune teller. Show us your hand."

Jude held out a hand, and Ratcliffe examined the palm where the lines were few, but straight and clear cut. It was a beautiful little hand, despite the hard work it had

done; full of character and vigor, and expressing kindliness and honesty and capability. Ratcliffe had an instinct for hands; a hand could attract or repulse him just as powerfully as a face; more so, perhaps, for a hand never lies.

"Oh, yes," said he. "You are going to be rich; you can't escape it; and you are going to learn reading and writing and arithmetic, and you are going to live to be a hundred."

"Cut me throat first," said Jude. "Heave ahead."

"And you are going to England, some day, and you'll turn into a Britisher."

"Damned if I do—Satan!"

"Hullo!" came a faint voice from below.

"'Rat' says I'm goin' to turn into a Britisher."

"They wouldn't own you. Quit foolin' and get the dinner ready."

Jude uncurled herself, came down from the keg with a thud, ran to the open skylight, and was about to reply in kind, when her eye caught sight of something that brought her to a halt. They were handling the canvas on the *Juan*.

"Cark's off!" she cried.

Satan came on deck. Across the blue blaze of the sea they could hear now the clank of the windlass pawls; the *Juan's* anchor was coming up.

"I thought Sellers would have come on board before they started," said Ratcliffe. "They're in a big hurry."

"You bet," said Satan with a grin. "He'll crack on everything to get to Havana for that dynamite; won't stop to eat their dinners till they're back. That's what they'd have us believe—swabs!"

"Why, don't you think they are going to Havana?"

"Oh, they're *goin'* to Havana right enough," said Satan. "You watch and you'll see them headin' that way. Look, she's fillin' to the wind."

The anchor was home now, and they watched the sails filling, as she headed on the same course the *Dryad* had taken. She dipped her flag and they returned the compliment; then she drew past the southern reefs, the hull vanished, and nothing remained but the topsails far against the western blue.

Ten minutes later, down below at dinner, Jude, who had said no word about the departure of the *Juan*, but who
thinking a lot, suddenly spoke.

"You never told me that chap
to Havana for dynamite," said Jude.
for? To bust the wreck open?"

"That's it," replied Satan. "Did
think he wanted it to eat?"

"There's no knowing what a chap may swallow seeing you've swallowed that yarn," said Jude. "He's gone to Havana to sell us, that's my 'pinion."

"Which way?"

"Lord! there's many a way of sellin' fools."

Ratcliffe himself felt an uneasy conviction that they had been done. He looked at Satan, expecting an explosion, but Satan was quite calm and helping himself to canned ox tongue.

"Seein' I have the chart," said he, "where's the sellin' to come in?"

"But you've give him the location," said Jude. "You said yourself that the place was fixed on every chart, and a chap had only to have Lone Reef in his head, to put his claws on the wreck."

"That's so," said Satan. "But the location is no use without the chart."

"What are you gettin' at?"

"I'm tryin' to get at your intellects. How often have you seen that chart?"

"Dozens of times."

"Ever noticed anything queer about it? Not you. Giving sass to your betters is your lay in life instead of usin' your eyes." He pushed his plate away, produced the tobacco box and, taking the chart from it, laid it on the table. Jude got up and came behind him to look, while Ratcliffe leaned forward.

"There's the chart," said Satan. "There's the reef, and there's the name of the hooker pointin' at the reef, and there's the latitude and longitude wrote up in the corner. Plain, ain't it?"

"That's plain enough," said Ratcliffe. Jude, munching a biscuit, concurred.

"Give a chap the name of Lone Reef," went on Satan, "and with any old admiralty chart he'll get there; and he has only to land on the reef to find the hooker stuck there in that crik between them two arms. Jude has seen her, and I've walked over her and 'xamined her; and she'd have been broke open maybe by this, only chaps don't land on reefs like that, not unless a storm lands them. We struck it huntin' for aba-

.ell you the whole business
.ıy man who hasn't that chart
, and who can't read what's writ-
. secret. Here you are. Take a
ong look, and I'll give you ten dol-
.f you spot what I mean. It's as clear
simple."

Ratcliffe spread the thing before him on the table.

"I can't see anything in it," said he at last, "except what's written plain enough. There's Rum Cay, there's the reef, the name of the wreck with a pointer to the reef, and the latitude and longitude up in the corner. No, I can't see anything but that; it all seems plain as a pike staff. I take an interest in cryptograms, too."

"What's that?"

"Cryptograms? Hidden writing."

"Well, that's what's before you," said Satan. "Pap never twigged it, nor any of the crowd that had the handlin' of it. It's only a month ago I spotted it."

"You never said a word to me," cut in Jude.

"Get back to your place and don't be chewin' in my ear," said Satan, reaching for the chart and pocketing it again. "Tell you! Likely! Why, if I had, you'd have let it out, same as you did the lie of the reef to Rat here, the other day. Get on with your dinner—why haven't we any potatoes?"

"No time to boil them," said Jude.

"No time, and you yarnin' and havin' your future told. I heard you."

"My fault," said Ratcliffe. "I began the business."

"Not you," said Satan. "I heard her start in on it, sayin' what she'd do with a fortune if she had it, and finishin' up by mistrustin' me."

"Lord love you for a liar! I only said them two guys had done you in over the wreck," cried Jude. "Don't be sticking words in my mouth."

"How was it you came to spot the cryptogram?" asked Ratcliffe, anxious to cut the dissension short.

"The which?" asked Satan. "Oh, aye. Well, it come natural for me to say to myself: 'Here's a thing that's been hid up and kept secret, yet it's all wrote out as plain as my palm;' I said to myself: 'It's too blame simple; a chap who knows where money is hid doesn't write the location on a bit of paper to be lost, maybe, and picked up by God knows who.'

"Why, drop that chart in the streets of Havana, and the first chap, with any knowledge in his head, that picks it up will turn it into dollars right off. It's a sure bait for fools, anyhow, and a wreckin' expedition would be out before the end of the week. They'd only have to look up any chart that's been printed the last hundred years, to find Lone Reef as easy as the Swimmer Rocks.

"Then I said to myself: 'What in the nation did the chap want makin' a chart at all for—why couldn't he have written on a piece of paper: "The Nombre de Dios lies on Lone Reef, sou'west of Rum Cay?"' That's all the chart says, and yet the chap must go and make drawin's. Must have taken him an hour's pen scraping to make that chart.

"Puttin' the two things together, I says to myself: 'The chap concerned must have been a fool in two ways, if this thing's genuine. A fool to leave the fac's as plain as an ad for liver pills, and a fool to waste his time drawin' his advertisement instead of writin' it.' But I reckon he was no fool. Dad was always quotin' some damn ass who said the world was most made up of fools. Well, in my 'xperience, that don't hold. So I says to myself: 'Let's try and see what the chap was drivin' at!'"

"And you won't tell us how you did it?"

"I'd just as soon not."

"Why?"

"Because," said Satan, "I may be wrong, though I'm pretty sure I'm right—and I believe in a shut head."

"You opened your head to Cark, anyhow," said Jude.

"I'll tell you once, and I won't tell you twice, if I have any more chat out of you I'll lay into you with a slipper. O' course, I opened my head to him; did you want him hanging round here and sniffin' out the cache? Haven't we got rid of him? I don't want any more talkin'; I've my plan laid out, and you've got to take my orders right from now, without questions." He turned to Ratcliffe. "You don't mind helpin' to work the boat, leavin' sailing directions to me?"

"Not I," said Ratcliffe. "I'm quite content to help and look on, leaving things to you. What's your first move?"

"I'm goin' to clear out of this to-morrow."

"Why, I thought you was going to wait for Cark to come back," said Jude.

"Never you mind what you thought. I'm goin' to clear out of this to-morrow. Mean-

time, I want more stuff from the cache, and you'd better take the dinghy and get it right off. I want provisions for a month, for the three of us."

CHAPTER X.

CUSS WORDS.

When they had washed up and put the plates in their rack, Jude commandeered Ratcliffe to help with the dinghy. Satan, having given his orders, had retired into himself and the business of patching an old sail. He was seated at the work under the awning, and he seemed scarcely to notice the others as they got the boat away.

"Satan's got something up his sleeve," said Jude, as they pulled for the beach. "I reckon he's laying how to get the better of Cark."

"Well, if you ask me," said Ratcliffe, "I think he *has* got the better of him in some way or another. I don't know how, and I don't want to. I'd sooner wait and see. It's as interesting as a game of chess."

"What's that?"

"Chess—oh, it's a game. I'll show you some day. Don't you ever play games, Jude?"

"You bet—why I won five dollars, day before we put out, buckin' against the red, at Chinese Charlie's. Y'know, Havana? They play faro, but mostly r'lette."

"Oh, I didn't mean those sort of games!"

"Which sort did you mean?" asked Jude, as the nose of the boat beached on the sand and they scrambled out. "Did you mean whisky drinkin' and cuttin' and carryin' on?"

"Oh, Lord no! I meant games. Just ordinary games."

Jude, the boat well beached, sat down on the blazing sands. It was two hours past noon, and the heat of the day had lifted under the freshening wind from the east; the tide was on the turn, and the far-off lamentations of the gulls, around the southern reef spurs, came mixed with the fall of the waves; waves scarce a foot high, crystal clear —less waves than giant ripples.

Beyond the *Sarah Tyler*, and her reflection on the water, lay the violet-colored sea, infinitely, and the blue of sky, broken only by a gull, spar white in the dazzle. Ratcliffe sat down beside his companion. Jude like any old salt, had her moments of dead laziness. Active as a kitten, as a rule, she would suddenly knock off, when the fancy took her, "let go all holts," expression, and laze. You coul out of it, Satan said.

She had brought an old pair o for going through the bay cedar bushe wasn't good to walk among the bushes shod; there were tarantulas there an scorpions, to say nothing of stump cacti. The boots were lying beside her on the sand, only to be put on at the last moment.

"Whach you mean by ordinary games?" asked Jude suddenly, finishing the inspection of a new variety of soft-shell crab she had just caught, and flinging it into the sea.

"Oh, the games people play," said Ratcliffe, who had almost forgotten what they had been talking about. He tried to explain and found it singularly hard, especially when cross-examined.

"I used to play ma'bles with Dutch Mike's kids when we were at Pensacola," said Jude. "Mike ran a whisky joint, and the kids were pretty ornery. When we'd done playin' marbles, they'd have a cussin' bee."

"What on earth's that?"

"Well, you've heard of a spellin' bee—you get a prize for spellin' the best. Well, a cussin' bee you start cussin' each other, and the one that cusses hardest gets the prize. Pap never knew, till one day he let into me with a strap, for somethin' or 'nuther, and I let fly at him. Then he found it was Mike's children who'd been learnin' me, and he had a dust up with Mike, on the wharf, and left him limpin' for the rest of his natural. Used you to cuss when you was young?"

"No," said Ratcliffe. "I learned that later."

"R'you any good at it?"

"Upon my word, I don't know."

"Have a try," said Jude, losing her languor. "Clench your fists to it and have a go at me, and then I'll have a go at you. There's no one listenin'. Pretend you're the skipper, and I'm a hand that's been haulin' on the wrong rope."

"No," said Ratcliffe. "I'd sooner play at something else."

Jude sniffed. She evidently felt snubbed. "I'm not a babby to be playing games," said she. "You can go and play by yourself, if you want to." She collapsed on her back, with her knees up, and her old hat covering her face; then, from under the hat: "You'll hear all the swearin' you want to, in a minute, from the old hooker."

ɔatan?"

ɔ minute he turns his eye ashore ɔ lazin' here, instead of working." ɹ, come on."

ɹt me," said Jude; "not till Satan be- .. I'm too comfortable. I been working ɹrd, all the morning, while you two chaps was aboard the *Juan,* clackin' with Sellers, and havin' drinks, I bet. I'm going to rest myself. What did you have?"

"Ginger beer and a cigar."

"Did you take notice of Cark's face?"

"Rather."

"They say he hasn't any one side to his face where the patch is. I'd like to see him with the patch off; wouldn't you?"

"Lord, no! I saw quite enough of him with it on. Come, get up, and let's get to work."

"I'm not goin' to work no more," mumbled Jude drowsily. "I'm dead sick of fetchin' and carryin'. Let Satan go and fetch and carry for himself. I'm going to stick here."

"On the island."

"Yep."

"And give up Satan and the *Sarah?"*

"Yep."

"But what will you do for a living?"

"Start a la'ndry."

"But there's no one here to give you washing to do."

"Then I'll have all the easier time."

"That's true. It's a bright idea, and I'll stay with you, and carry the laundry basket."

"No, you won't. I'll stick here alone."

Suddenly, across the water from the *Sarah,* shattering this fantasy, came a voice. It was Satan's voice, borne on the breeze. Ratcliffe thought he could make out the words "lazy dog." He got up. Jude, with the old Panama over her face, had stiffened out as if dead. He tried to turn her over with his foot. Then he felt half frightened. Had the sun got to her head, and was all that nonsense talk delirium? He knelt down beside her and shook her.

"Jude, what's the matter with you?"

No reply. He took the Panama from the face; the eyes were closed and the features were in repose. Now, really alarmed, he jumped up, ran down to the boat, seized the baling tin, and filled it with sea water. He had never seen a case of sunstroke, but he had heard cold water to the head was a remedy. As he turned back, with the tin, the corpse was sitting up, putting on its boots.

"What're you doing with that baling tin?" said Jude.

"I'll jolly soon show you," said he making toward her. "Shamming dead!"

But before he could reach her, she was gone among the bushes, one boot on, the other off. Then, flinging the baling tin away, he joined her, helped her on with the boot, and they started. Jude, as if to make up, put her hand in his, in a trusting manner. Then, near their destination, she flung his hand away and made off, hunting like a dog among the bushes, till she found what she was in search of; a long, knotted rope:

"What's that for?" asked he.

"You wait and see," replied Jude. "Here's the cache. *Mind* where you're walking, or you'll be into it."

The cache was well hidden among the bay cedars. The opening, eight feet long by six broad, was covered over with short poles, spread with cut branches withered with the sun. When they had got the covering off, Jude tied one end of the rope to a tree close by, and dropped the other end into the cache. She swung herself down by it and Ratcliffe followed. From the floor of this place a step, two feet high, gave entrance to the cave.

"You see," said Jude, "it may rain till it's black, but it never floods the cave. The water drains off before it can rise the height of the step."

There was a candle and some matches inside the cave entrance. She lit the candle and led the way. Ratcliffe was astounded, less by the size of the place, than the stacks of goods, canned peaches, condensed milk, corned beef, tomatoes, ox tongues, Heinz's pickles, Nabisco wafers. The old brig, making for some Gulf port, must have been a floating Italian warehouse, as far as cargo was concerned.

"I don't wonder at Satan not wanting Sellers and Carquinez to spot all this," said he. "Why there must be five hundred pounds' worth of stuff here. Aren't you afraid that nigger who skipped from you at Pine Island may split?"

"Sakes! no—he was too much afeared of Satan. Besides, he doesn't know. We told him this place was Turtle Island, and that's a hundred and fifty miles to s'uth'ard. You trust Satan to keep a thing dark. Here, catch hold of the candle, while I collect."

There were two sacks folded up on the floor. She started collecting things, and when the sacks were half filled, Jude, clambering out of the pit, hauled them up by the rope.

"Anything more?" asked Ratcliffe from below.

"I reckon that will be enough," said Jude, looking down at him. "It'll take us all our time to carry them to the boat. And if Satan's not satisfied, he can come and fetch some more himself."

"Then drop the rope, I want to get out."

Jude, kneeling at the cache edge, lowered the rope gingerly. He reached up and was just about to seize the loose end, when it eluded him.

"Why don't you catch hold?" asked Jude.

"I can't. How could I when you pulled it up again. Go on, drop it and don't play the fool."

The rope, instead of descending again, was hauled right out of the cache. Then a face appeared, looking down and framed against the sky. He had forgotten the snub he had given her on the beach, but she hadn't.

"D'y'r'member what you said down there on the beach?" asked Jude.

"No, what about?"

"Cussin'."

"Oh, yes."

"Said I wanted you to play games that wasn't nice."

"I never said any such thing."

"Didn't yer? Well, whether you did or you didn't, you've got to swear before I let you out."

"Well, then, I'll stay in. Go on, Jude, don't be silly. It's cold down here."

The rope came down, and he was just seizing the end, when it was whipped out of his hand. "Damn!" said Ratcliffe wholeheartedly.

"Now, you're talkin'," said Jude.

Like a boy fishing for pollywoggs, she lowered the rope again, and snatched it up suddenly, bringing with it another oath. But the third time he was too quick for her. Then as he came swarming up, with skinned knuckles and rage in his heart, she bolted. He chased her, dodging here and there among the bushes. Then he chased her round a tree, caught her, and, in his anger and irritation, somehow, kissed her.

The perfectly amazing smack on the face that followed was a revelation. It also knocked him off his balance, so that he sat down as though cut off at the knees.

CHAPTER X.

CLEARY.

She stood for a moment, frightened at her handiwork. Then, as he pulled himself together, she drew away a step.

"What ails you?" asked she.

Ratcliffe, sitting up with his hand to the top of his head, groaned. She drew a step closer. Then she saw that he was laughing, and drew a step back. "Get up, and don't be fooling," she said.

"Fooling! And who started it?" asked he. Jude made no reply. She turned and went off to the cache, lugged the sacks a bit more from the opening, and started to put the poles across. When he joined her on the work, she couldn't speak. She was evidently mortally offended.

He knew at once, and by some fine instinct, what was the matter with her. He had trod on her dignity, like the Thelusson woman. Treated her like a child, that is to say, like a girl. For the two things were synonymous with Jude, who seemed to have no more idea of the realities of sex than a pumpkin. When she did speak at last, it was to give jeering orders.

"Lord! did you never have to use your hands? Which way is that to be sticking the poles. Why, it'd take twenty dozen to cover it the way you're doing. Leave a foot and a half between them."

"Right," said Ratcliffe humbly.

"I didn't say two foot."

"Sorry."

"Now the branches an' stuff."

She had reserved one of the poles, for what reason soon became apparent. Each sack was too heavy to be carried by one person, so she slung one to the middle of the pole, and they started for the beach, Caleb and Joshua fashion, Ratcliffe in front.

It was horrible work. They had to keep step, which was difficult, owing to the bushes, and the going was bad. The sack kept slipping toward Jude, owing to the inequality in their heights, and the pressure of the pole on his shoulder was galling; also the wind had changed and was coming from the direction of the Gulf, warm and moist, like the breath from a great mouth. When they reached the beach, he sat down. Unused to hard work and unused to the climate, he was sweating and exhausted. Jude looked comparatively cool and fresh.

"Now, then, lazybones," said Jude. Then

also, sitting down, with her
d her arms round them. She
have forgotten the sack, Ratcliffe,
ng, as she sat whistling dreamily be-
her teeth and staring across the water
ard the *Sarah*. She had kicked off her
oots, and her toes were playing with the sand. Uncramped by boots, her feet were as expressive as her hands.

"You'll have Satan begin to holler in a minute," said Jude.

"Let him," said the other, "I'm not going to stir another foot till I've rested myself."

"Oh, he won't holler at you. It's me he'll go for. You're the first-class passenger."

"No, I'm not. I'm one of the crew."

Jude laughed in a mirthless manner.

"Well, I reckon myself one, anyhow," said he. "I wouldn't have come on board unless I was to help in working the boat."

"Oh, Satan won't mind you helpin' to work her," replied Jude. "But he didn't bring you aboard for that."

"I know. And it was awfully decent of him. He just thought I'd like the cruise."

Jude sniffed.

"I reckon you don't know Satan," said she.

"How?"

"Satan never does nothing for nothing."

"Well, what *did* he bring me aboard for?"

"Lord knows," said Jude. "But he's got something up his sleeve. Mind you, Satan's as straight as they make them, unless he's dealin' with law chaps and such. And you'd be safe with him if you was blind and dumb and covered with diamonds only waitin' to be picked off you. You see you're straight, and, any one that's straight with Satan, he's straight with them. It's different with law chaps, or guys like Cark and Sellers, who'd best their own gran'mothers out of their store teeth. All the same, you look out with Satan. He's got some plan about you, sure."

"What sort of plan is it, do you think, Jude?"

"Nothing to harm you, anyway. Maybe it's to go shares in some deal. I dunno."

"Well, I'm up for any deal he likes to propose that would benefit him. As much money as he wants."

"Satan's not set on money," said Jude. "Not in a big way. I reckon he's something like pap. Pap would take no end of trouble making a few dollars, but he was never really set on bein' rich. I reckon he took up that old wreck business more for the fun of the thing than the dollars. He used to say great riches was only trouble to a man, an' that he only wanted God's good air and nuff to live on."

"Well, maybe he was right," said Ratcliffe.

"I reckon Satan cottoned to you because he thought you was honest," said Jude.

"Well, I hope I am."

"He said to me, right off, after you'd gone back to the yacht, 'I reckon that chap's honest,' he said."

Ratcliffe laughed.

"You see," went on Jude, "you don't pick up honest parties round these parts—not by the bushel. You might rake Havana with a tooth comb lookin' for chaps that wouldn't chisel you, but you wouldn't find none. It's the same all round the Gulf, from N'Orleans to Campeche. You can't stick your nose in anywhere without being stung—if you're a soft."

"So he liked me because he thought I was straight. What did you like me for, Jude?"

"Lord! if you don't fancy yourself! Who told you I liked you?"

"You did last night. You said you and Satan took to me right off."

"Oh, did I? Well, maybe it was them pajamas—— Hullo!" The shrill notes of a bos'n's whistle came over the water. She sprang to her feet. Satan's form appeared at the rail of the *Sarah*. He was making movements with his arms, as though signaling, and Jude flung up an arm in answer. Then, shading her eyes, she looked seaward.

"What's up?" asked Ratcliffe.

"Come on," said Jude. She seized the sack, called on him to help her, and between them they ran it down to the water's edge. Then they got the dinghy afloat, the sack on board, and started.

"What's up?" again asked Ratcliffe, as they rowed.

"Sail," said Jude.

He had seen nothing, perhaps because of the sun dazzle on the water, or because he had not looked in the right direction. The sensitiveness of the Tylers to the approach of strangers, and their hawklike vision, struck him as belonging almost to the uncanny.

Satan had rigged a tackle, and, without a word uttered, the sack was got aboard and below. Then, and not till then, did Satan speak.

"It's Cleary," said he.

Jude took the old glass he had been using, and examined the stranger, then handed it to Ratcliffe. He turned it on the fleck of sail,

which sprang gigantic into the form of a big fore-and-aft rigged boat, beating up for the island, the late afternoon sunlight flashing back from the foam at the fore foot and her foam-wet bows.

"Who is Cleary?" asked he, handing back the glass.

"Cark's partner," said Satan. "Sort of haff-and-haff partner. They're always bestin' one another. Cleary is by way of bein' a ship breaker and dealer in odds and ends; owns a couple of ratty old schooners besides that old ketch. Wonder what he's doin' down here?"

"He's after Cark, most likely," said Jude. "Maybe he's got a smell of the wreck."

"Maybe," replied Satan. "He's always spyin' on Cark, and if he got wind that Cark's on a likely job, he'd put out after him."

It seemed to Ratcliffe, all at once, that the old wreck lying on that unseen reef might have been likened to a carcass in the desert, and that he was watching the gathering of the vultures to a feast. First Carquinez, now Cleary. How many more would come circling out of the blue? He said so, and Satan concurred.

"It's got out somehow or 'nuther," said Satan, "and Lord only knows there may be haff a dozen other chaps on the hunt. You see the very fac' of Cark's puttin' to sea himself would give suspicions to haff Havana; but Cleary is the only man, beside Cark, that knows my ports of call. He knows I come here for abalones, and he knows I hunt round Pine Island, not to say other places."

Satan fell into meditation for a moment. Then he resumed:

"That's what the blighter has been doin'. He's been on the search for me, same as Cark was, only for different reasons. Now you wait and see. Jude, did you cover the cache?"

"You bet! But there's a sack of stuff we didn't manage to bring off. It's among the bushes."

"It'll have to lay there."

"What's the name of Cleary's boat?" asked Ratcliffe as he watched the approaching ketch.

"The *Natchez*," said Satan; "an old cod boat, built at Martha's Vineyard. Lord, ain't they crackin' on! Cleary's in a hurry."

He whistled contentedly, as he leaned on the rail, and Ratcliffe, watching his hatchet-sharp profile, wondered wh
next. Of one thing he was
feel certain. Cleary, Carquinez,
anything else that might come ou
vana, on the long trail for plunder,
find a match in Satan.

CHAPTER XII.

AN HONEST MAN.

The ketch carried on, heading straight for the *Sarah;* then, spilling the wind from her sails, she came round, presenting a full view of her dirty old hull, and dropping her anchor two cable lengths away. Almost on the last rasp of the anchor chain, she dropped a boat, which shoved off for the *Sarah.*

"That's Cleary," said Satan, shading his eyes.

It was, and as Cleary came on board, leg over rail, saluting Satan with the affability of old acquaintanceship and the quarter-deck with a squirt of tobacco juice, Ratcliffe fell to wondering what sort of place Havana might be, and what else it might give up, in the way of detrimentals.

Carquinez was bad and Sellers was bad, but Cleary was Cleary. Against the gold and blue of afternoon, the sight of this faded man, who looked as though he had seen better days, who suggested a broken down schoolmaster, with a slung shot in his pocket, struck Ratcliffe with astonishment and depression. It was as though the dazzling air had suddenly split, to disclose a London slum.

"Hullo! Hullo!" said Cleary. "Thought I recognized the old hooker. Whach you doin' down here away?"

Jude made a dive for the galley, and Ratcliffe could hear her choking. The sound banished the feeling of depression and repulsion created by the newcomer, and brightened him somehow. Here was the comic man of the pantomime come aboard.

"What am I doin'?" said Satan. "I'm fishin' for chair backs. What are you doin' yourself?"

Cleary turned, spat his quid overboard, and then, leaning on the rail, looking seaward, with his back to the others, and, just as easy as though he were aboard his own ship, laughed.

"Fishin' for chair backs——" Then sluing his head half round: "How's the abalone fishin' gone?"

"Jude!" cried Satan.

them pearls."

turned, and, leaning with his back the rail, began to fill an old pipe in guid and leisurely manner. Then, when pearls were produced, he turned them rom the match box into the palm of his hand.

"How much?" asked Cleary.

"Forty dollars," said Satan.

"Ain't worth forty cents."

"Well, who's askin' you to deal?"

Cleary carefully poured the pearls into the match box, closed the match box, and put it in his pocket.

Satan did not seem to mind. "Jude," said Satan.

"What?"

"Bring up them cigars."

"Who's the gentleman?" asked Cleary.

"Gentleman came aboard for a cruise off a yacht. You needn't mind him, he's only out for pleasure.'

Cleary nodded to Ratcliffe, who nodded in return. Then things hung for a moment, till Jude appeared with the cigar box, and the newcomer, having tapped the tobacco out of his pipe, chose a cigar, lit it, and, leaning with his back against the rail and his thumbs in the armholes of his old waistcoat, blew clouds. He seemed, for a moment, far away in thought, and Ratcliffe, watching him and Satan—Jude having vanished again, attacked with another fit of choking—puzzled his head in vain to find out the inner meaning of what was going on. The wretched pearls were scarcely worth five dollars. He had heard Satan say so, and Cleary, evidently an expert, was not the man to pay eight times their worth, nor was Satan the man to allow the other to pocket them.

"Cark's a clever man, don't you think?"

"Well, seein' he's your partner you're a better judge than me," replied Satan.

"Well, maybe that's so," said Cleary. "Partners we were and partners we are, till I ketch him and bust him."

"Why, what's he been doin' to you?"

"Now, I'll tell you," said Cleary. "I'm an honest man. I don't say, in trade, I'm not above shavin' the barber, but, between man an' man, I'm honest, and I'm goin' to tell you straight out, Cark and me has been layin' for you ever since your dad was fool enough to give Cark the office about that treasure business. I wasn't keen on it, same as he was. I allowed there might be somethin' in it, but that don't matter. What gets my monkey is, Cark he gets fearful thick with Sellers, then he cools off on the business of the treasure gettin'. A matter of a fortnight ago he rigs up a job for me to see after at Pensacola that'd have taken me two months and more. I says to myself there's somethin' in this. Says nothin' to Cark. Off I goes, taking the old *Natchez*. Hadn't reached the latitood of Key West, when back I puts and finds Cark gone with the *Juan* and Sellers.

"Then I knew he's started to hunt for you again, leavin' me in the lonely cold. He's been huntin' you ever since last fall—that's straight; but he'd never let me down before. He'd always told me the results. I tell you he's huntin' for you now, and the surprisin' thing is he hasn't found you, knowing as he does this is one of your grounds."

"How do you know he hasn't found me?"

"What you mean?"

"Why he was here this morning, and off not four hours ago."

"Crustopher!"

"Him and Sellers."

"Holy Mike!"

"You was comin' up from west. You ought to have sighted him."

"Sighted nothin' but a tank and her nearly hull down."

"Well, if you'd been here a few hours earlier, you'd have smelled the old *Juan,* as well as sightin' her."

"Was he here on business?"

"He was. He was after that wreck pap told him of. You just told me he's been after me since last fall, spyin' on me. I know it, and I'm pretty sick of the business. B'sides he's as good to help in it as any one else; so I've made a contrac' with him."

"*Sufferin'* Moses—a contrac' with Cark?" Cleary stood, for a moment, as though absorbing this news. Then he laughed, the funniest laugh Ratcliffe had ever heard. It was like the whinny of a pony. He saw Jude's head at the cabin hatch, and the head suddenly duck and vanish.

"A contrac' with Cark!"

"Well, what are you laffin' at?"

"Nothin'. May I ask what terms?"

"We go shares."

"In the pickin's?"

"What else?"

"Have you give him the location?"

"I have."

"You've give him the location and let him slip his cable—him and Sellers?"

"What odds? It'll take a month to bust her open and hunt for the stuff. I'll be after him to-morrow."

Cleary crossed his arms and stood, with the half cigar stuck in the corner of his mouth and pointing skyward, his eyes fixed on the deck and his left eye half closed. Jude's face had reappeared at the cabin hatch, and the grin on it spread to Ratcliffe's. Satan alone was unmoved, half sitting on the keg, and cutting up some tobacco.

"Well," said Cleary at last, "you've made your bargain, there's no gainsayin' that. *I'm* not wishin' to poke my nose in your business, nor to ask what your share is to be. But I'm partners with Cark, and you see how he's let me down. Cayn't you give me a lead?"

"Which way?"

"Give me a lead to the location. It won't make a cent difference to you."

"How's that?"

"Clear enough. I don't want none of your share; Cark's the man I want to tap, having a right to—being partners."

Satan seemed to turn this matter over in his mind, for a moment. Then he said. "Suppose we come back to them pearls?"

"Right," said Cleary in a lively voice. "What's this you was askin'? Forty? Well, forty you shall have." He produced an old brown pocketbook, counted out four ten-dollar notes, and handed them over. Satan examined each note, back and front, folded them, and placed them in his pocket.

"Now," said Cleary, "out with the lead."

"You'll have it to-morrow," said Satan. "I'm pickin' up my anchor to-morrow mornin'. You've only to follow me."

"I'd rayther have the indications on paper."

"Maybe you would, but you won't. I've made my bargain with Cark, and there's nothin' in the contrac' about givin' the location away to third parties. I can't help you followin' me."

CHAPTER XIII.

PROBLEMS.

The sun was nearly touching the horizon, when he dropped into his boat and rowed off.

"Look here," said Ratcliffe, "are you in earnest with that chap?"

"I sure am," said Satan.

"Goin to take him down to Lo.

"Yep."

"But how about Carquinez? We . to wait for him here till he gets back Havana with the dynamite."

"Yes," said Satan. "We'd got to wai here one week, or maybe ten days allowin' for weather. Where was you born?"

"How?"

"Cark's tried to sell me a pup, that's how. He's gone to no Havana! He's crackin' on for the wreck with every stitch he can carry; reckons to bust her open and scoop the boodle, while we're layin' here rubbin' our noses and waitin' for him. Mind you," said Satan, "I may be wrong, but that's my 'pinion."

"But he sailed off toward Havana."

"Lord! Hasn't he a rudder?"

"All the same, would it pay him?"

"How?"

"Well, if he played a dirty trick on you like that, wouldn't he be afraid you'd split?"

"Who to?"

"To the authorities at Cuba."

"D'you remember Sellers talkin' about landin' the stuff?" asked Satan. "Sayin' they'd have to take it round to Santiago way? They thought I was drinkin' all that in. If there were any dollars in the business, d'you think they'd touch Cuba? Not they! They'd either cache the stuff or run it to some likely port. I was laughin' in my hat all the time.

"Now, you may think me a suspicious chap. I'm not. But a chap has to run by compass in this world or go off his course, and my compass, in this turn out, is Cark. I say he's gone down to Lone Reef and given me the left leg over the business; and my compass is the fac' that he can't run straight. Not if he tried to, he couldn't run straight; nor could Sellers nor Cleary.

"If them chaps were straight chaps, I'd match them and give them a fair deal. As it is, they're like a lot of blind bally-hoolys, playin' blind man's buff, runnin' round and round, with me in the middle, tryin' to kidoodle me and bein' kidoodled themselves. Forty dollars for them rotten pearls, and all sorts of fixin's out of Sellers! *And I haven't done with them yet."*

It had seemed to Ratcliffe, on board the *Juan,* that Carquinez was the spider of the web of this business. It seemed to him now that the spider was Satan.

wonder was there any wreck ne treasure story a myth. The ese rogues being incited to dreams ne, so that they might be plundered s of paint and cans of turpentine and a dollars, appealed to him immensely; he emembered Thelusson and Skelton; he remembered Jude's yarn about fruit steamers being held up; he remembered Carquinez and Sellers, and he had just seen Cleary. Of a sudden, Satan's ocean-wide activities appeared before him in nightmare contrast with their microscopic results. Great steamers stopped for a bunch of bananas, yachts lying idle to careen the *Sarah,* ships sailing from Havana to hunt for buried treasure—but in reality to supply the wandering *Sarah* with cans of turpentine and a few dollars. Was there any treasure, or was the whole thing a Tyler fake, invented by pap and handed to his family as an heirloom? He could not resist the question.

"That chart you showed us," said he; "is there anything really in it?" Satan took him at once.

"The chart's all right," said he, "for them that can read it. If you mean is it *genuine,* I reckon it is—for them that can read it. But, honest truth, I'm not botherin' much about it. The chances are so big, as I told you before, against treasure huntin'. And, even if we strike it, what's the use of barrels of gold to a chap like me? If you ask me, I'm botherin' more about the kid than huntin' or money."

"You mean?"

"Jude. Suppose I was to get a bash on the head from one of them chaps, or drop to the smallpox, same as I pretended to Sellers? What'd become of the kid?"

The sound of the "kid," frying fish for supper, came mixed with the question.

"I know," said Ratcliffe. "That's a problem that must often occur to you, I should think."

"You've seen the sort of crowd Havana's made of," went on Satan. "It's hard to tell which is worse; the Yanks or the Spaniards. And there's not a seaport that's not the same; and when I think of me lyin' dead and her driftin' loose, it gets my goat. It'd be different, if she was a boy."

"Besides that," said the other, "she can't go on always, as she is now."

"How'd you mean?"

"Well, dressed as she is now. She'll grow up."

"Sure," said Satan.

"She'll have to dress differently, some day."

"Meanin' skirts?'"

"Yes."

Satan laughed a hollow laugh. The idea seemed so futile that he did not dwell upon it, or seemed not to. "Have you any female relations yourself, by any chance?" asked he.

"Lots," replied Ratcliffe, calling up in memory his cousins and aunts, females of the highest upper middle-class respectability, and vaguely wondering what they would think of Jude could they see her.

"The bother is," said Satan, "she don't take to womenfolk; always was against them; and that Thelusson woman put the cap on the business, kissin' her and handin' out slop talk. Well, I don't know. I reckon she'll have to go on bein' what she is, till somethin' happens; but it would have been a lot handier, if she'd been born a boy." He turned and went below.

The sun had sunk beyond Palm Island, and a violet dusk, forerunner of the dark, was spreading through the sky; over beyond the *Natchez,* the sea, for a moment, became hard looking as a floor of beryl, then vague.

Ratcliffe, lingering for a moment, watching this transformation scene, found himself thinking of Jude and her problem. The Tylers had taken an extraordinarily firm hold upon him; he knew them more intimately than he knew his own relations, or fancied so. It seemed to him that he had known them for years.

When this cruise was over and he packed up his traps and left them, he would probably never see them again. Jude and Satan would go their way and he would go his way. And what would happen to Jude? Suppose Satan were to die, get knocked on the head or "fall to the smallpox?" The thought hurt him almost as much as it hurt Satan; for Jude had, somehow or another, captured his mind and touched his heart, and her youth and absolute irresponsibility, before the major facts of life, had infected him in the most extraordinary manner.

Over there on the island, engaged in the serious matter of provisioning the *Sarah,* they had been carrying on like children. He had not thought of it then; now, reflecting sanely, it rose before him together with the rest of this strange cruise, and, for a moment, the whole business seemed mad, absolutely mad. The supersane figure of Skel-

ton rose up before him; and, beyond Skelton, Oxford; the calm, sane English country, where the Tylers would have been impossible; the hard, bourgeois conventions of the upper-upper middle classes, those uncles, cousins, and aunts to whom class was as holy as Sunday, and to whom Jude would be absolutely invisible as she was.

He was engaged in these reflections, when a voice broke the stillness of the evening, a half-tired, half-cantankerous voice, the voice of an overworked housekeeper who has been frying fish while others have been idling.

"*Ain't* you comin' to help me?" inquired the voice.

CHAPTER XIV.

HANTS AND OTHER THINGS.

Down below, at supper, the injured housekeeper was still in evidence, and rose to a charge that the fish was overfried. Satan was the accuser.

The defendant, "het up" and flushed, replied in the language of the sea: "Go'n fry your head! Clackin' on deck and leavin' me to do the work—the pair of you! It's all men's good for."

"Why, I thought you was a man!" said Satan. "You cut and carry on like a man. Scratch you, and your tongue goes both ends like a woman. Start you on a job, and you sit down to it before it's haff done. *I* saw you lazin' on the beach, and now look where we are; there's a sack of stuff not brought off, and how are we to bring it, with Cleary messin' round?"

"It wasn't my fault," said Jude. Then she checked herself, and her eyes met Ratcliffe's.

"It was my fault," said he. "I got tired."

Jude looked at him. This defense of her, trifling though it was, seemed to make a new relationship between them; it seemed to her that Ratcliffe had suddenly become different. She could not tell what the difference was, or how it had come about in the least, or why she half resented his shielding her, even in this small matter. Then her eyes fell away, and rested on the table before her.

"It wasn't," said she. "It was my fault; I was foolin' when I ought to have been workin'; and now the stuff is lyin' there ——" She choked, and then to the horror of Satan she pushed her plate away and broke into tears, hiding h
folded arms. Then, before t
ones could speak, she rose and
of the cabin.

"Lands sake!" cried Satan. "Wh
her? Cryin'! She's never done that b
—and all over that rotten sack. Why, le
lay there, cuss the thing!"

He went on with his supper, in an irritable manner.

"She's overtired, maybe," said Ratcliffe. "Wait, and I'll fetch her back."

He left the cabin and came on deck. The moon had not risen yet, and the riding light, which had been run up before supper, showed yellow against the stars. Not a sign of Jude. He went forward. There she was, huddled up in the bows.

"Jude!"

The bundle sniffed.

"Come on down to supper. Satan's not angry."

"Who the"—sniff—"cares whether he's angry or not. You lea' me alone."

"But what are you crying about?"

"*Ain't* cryin'."

"Well, what are you lying on the deck for?"

" 'Cos I choose."

"Come on down and help to clear the things away."

"Clear them yourself."

He bent down and tried to take her arm; she shook him off, rose suddenly like a released spring, ran to the side, where the dinghy was moored, and got over the rail. He looked over; she was in the boat unfastening the painter.

"Where on earth are you going?"

"Ashore." She pushed off.

Ratcliffe came down to the cabin.

"She's gone ashore."

"She's gone for that sack," said Satan unconcernedly; "reckons to get it off before moonrise, I expect."

"But it's too heavy for one."

"She'll do it; you've put her monkey up, makin' her confess it was her fault. She's never done that before, in all her born life. She's just natural proud, and she'd as soon cut her tongue out as give in she was in the wrong. You've made her do more'n I've ever made her do, and how you've done it, search me!"

"You aren't gettin' on with your supper," said Satan, after a pause.

"Oh, I've had enough. I was wondering

ooots for going through that

got them all right; they were in ghy. She didn't bring them aboard 're worryin' a lot about the kid."

Well, maybe. She's the jolliest kid I ver struck, and I don't want any harm to come to her; the pluckiest, too; there's not many people would go off alone in the dark like that, in a place like this."

"Lord bless your soul," said Satan, "that's nothin', no more than walkin' down the street to Jude. Do you think sailin' these seas is all fair-weather work? Why, we've been rubbin' our noses in destruction since she was born. She don't know what fear is."

"I could tell that from her face."

"It's her face that's troublin' me," said Satan. "Parse me the water pitcher, will you? She's begun to take after mother; a few months ago she was the homeliest little pup ever littered. But she's beginnin' to pick up in looks. And if she takes after her mother's side in looks and ways—— Lord save us."

"Was your mother good looking?"

"Well," said Satan, "I don't know what you call good looks. Pap said she was a nacheral calamity; that was after she'd bolted with the Baptis' man. It wasn't the looks so much as the somethin' about her that'd make a blind man rubber after her, if she passed him in the street. That's what pap said. He never said no prayers; but, when he was talkin' of Jude, I've heard him say time and again, 'Thank the Lord she don't take after her mother.' And now it's comin' out, same as the ace of spades a chap has hid up his sleeve. And what's comin' after, Lord only knows."

"How do you mean?"

"Well, I scarcely know myself, but pap said those sort of women couldn't help bein' nacheral calamities; attractin' chaps and turnin' the world upside down. He said a man, once they'd got the clutch on him, was no more use than a hupnotized fowl, whatever that is. You've heard what Jude said about skirts? Well, I'm thinkin' that's all baby talk; an' it's my 'pinion, when she gets her nacheral sailing orders, she'll be into skirts some day, same as a duck takes to water, and hupnotizing chaps, same as her mother before her."

"I wouldn't be surprised," said Ratcliffe. "But I don't think she'll be a natural calamity. I think, from what I have seen of her, that she has a fine character, honest as the day, good as gold."

"Maybe," said Satan. "But you never know what a woman is, seems to me, till she's been rubbed against a man; those were pap's words, and he'd got a head piece on him. Well, I reckon time will tell."

They went on deck. The moon had not risen yet, and the island lay like a humped shadow in the starlight. To seaward, the anchor light of the *Natchez* showed a yellow point, and from the beach came the lullaby of little waves falling on the sand.

"Now, if it wasn't these days," said Satan, "I'd be in two minds about putting out straight now, rather than lyin' all night by that chap Cleary."

"What do you mean by these days?"

"Well, in the old throat-cuttin' days, I reckon Cleary would have gone through us, sunk the old *Sarah*, and taken me aboard his hooker, with a gun at my head, to make me show him the way to the wreck. But things is different now. Chaps are afraid of the law; Cark's mortally afraid of the law, so's Cleary."

"What time do you start to-morrow?"

"After sunup, if the wind holds."

"It will be a joke, if we find Carquinez at the reef. What will he say, do you think?"

"Cark? Oh, he'll not mind; there ain't no shame in Cark. He'll have broke his contrac' by not goin' to Havana. He'll stand proved to the eyes as a damn cheat. He won't mind. The contrac' not bein' regular, the law can't have him."

"I expect Cleary will go for him."

"Maybe," said Satan. "Then we'll have some fun. There's Jude."

Something like a swimming water rat was breaking the star shimmer on the sea. It was the dinghy. Jude was sculling it from behind, noiselessly. It came alongside to starboard, like a ghost, and with it came Jude's voice calling for the tackle. Then the sack came aboard, and after it Jude.

"Well, you've done it smart," said Satan, "and no mistake; now, off down with you and have your supper. We've got to start bright and early in the morning."

Jude said nothing. Her anger and irritability seemed to have departed. She kicked off her boots, hitched up her trousers, and started down below.

"She never keeps a grudge up," said Satan.

Away in the middle of the night Ratcliffe

was awakened by a stifled scream, the voice of Satan promptly following.

"Wake up, what ails you?"

"For the land's sake, where am I?"

"In your hammock. What're you dreamin' of?"

"Gee-owsts."

"Hants, you mean."

"Black faces they had; and they was chasin' me round and round them trees."

"That's what comes of stuffin' yourself, and goin' to bed on top of it; get off your back and on to your side. Wakin' a body up like that! What was they like?"

"The hants?"

"Yep."

"I can't be talkin' for fear of wakin' him up."

"He's asleep. I hear him snorin'. What was they like?"

"They'd black faces, and tails like cows, an' I'd ruther not be talkin' of them."

"Wonder what it means dreamin' of them things?"

"Nuthin' good. Bad weather most like."

"Glass is steady."

"Well, maybe we'll bust on a reef or somethin'."

"Oh, shet your head!"

"Shet yours. I'm wantin' to get asleep."

Silence.

Ratcliffe could hear the water outside tickling the ribs of the old *Sarah;* a bigger swell was running, and she rose to it with balloonlike buoyancy; a score of little voices, from the trickle and slap of the sea against the timbers to the clank of the rudder chain, marked her movements.

The idea of the ghosts chasing Jude round the dream tree reminded him of how he had chased her round the real tree and kissed her. Kissed her out of irritation. Something in his half-asleep state told him he had been a fool to do that. It was all done in play, just as a little boy might kiss a little girl—but he was not a little boy. What had prompted him?

Then, as he lay dissolving into slumber, the groaning timbers of the *Sarah* said something that sounded like "Nacheral Calamity." And then, the door of sleep flung wide, he was walking on a blazing beach with Cleary.

The *Natchez* and the *Juan* were at anchor, out on the blue stream sea. A great wreck was hove up on the sands; and, when they reached it, Cleary tapped on the timbers and said something about a Nacheral Calamity. At the words, a porthole opened, and Jude's fresh young face appeared, laughing, framed by the timbers of the wreck. It seemed to him the most delightful vision. Then it popped in, and the porthole closed, and Carquinez came riding up on a horse, saying he was going to burst the wreck open with dynamite, to get at the treasure.

TO BE CONCLUDED IN THE NEXT ISSUE.

The Zamboanga Wild Man

By J. Frank Davis

Author of "Statutes Made and Provided," "The Manhandler," Etc.

When Ed Chittim went after Eddsfield's colored vote, he started more than he thought for. Incidentally, the inner steering committee of Eddsfield's Republican machine find Christopher Bowles to have a surprisingly firm grasp of the gentle art of getting what he wants

A BALLYHOO artist with a voice like a high-pitched foghorn danced excitedly on the announcement platform in front of a pit show, repeatedly striking with a little rattan cane the sanguinary scene in oils that stretched above his head. It portrayed the capture, by no less than a dozen sailors in United States uniform, of a gigantic black savage, in a place where waves dashed upon a rocky beach and palm trees of a green that never yet was seen on land or sea grew miraculously out of sand dunes.

"The Zam-bo-anga Wild Man!" the barker shouted. "The Zam-bo-anga Wild Man! He's chained. He's safe. But wild as ever. Lissun, people! Right now, right here, good people, he eats raw meat! This is where he is! This is where you see him! Ten cents. The Zam-bo-anga Wild Man!"

It was the third and biggest day of the popular Bridgton Fair, and the tens of thousands that had come from all the surrounding counties for fifty miles around almost literally covered the big fair grounds. Spielers and openers were letting their voices go with no thought for to-morrow's hoarseness, for this was the day when the harvest came in.

"The girls from the hay-rem!" came an echoing yell to the right of the wild man's pit, while a thumping of tom-toms and tootling of reed instruments gave evidence that behind those canvas walls was Oriental dancing. "From the sultan's hay-rem. The *old* sultan. They put him in prison and let him take *only* twelve of his wives, and here, ladies and gentlemen—— They *dance* for you. From the sultan's hay-rem!"

The crowd in that part of the midway swayed toward the girl show tent, but the roaring voice of the other barker held them. He was dancing up and down and seemed suddenly to have gone quite mad.

"Look!" he screamed. "Right here, right here! Oh, *look!*"

A young man was hastening around the high platform above the crowd's heads which gave view into the pit. Held ostentatiously before him was a chunk of raw meat, five or six pounds at least.

"They're going to feed him now!" the madman yelled. "Raw meat! He eats raw meat! The Zam-bo-anga Wild Man! You'll have to hurry! You'll have to hurry!"

Coincident with this frenzied announcement, half a dozen shillabers went through the form of buying tickets and ascended the steps, and a few seconds later they were plainly seen to be pleasurably excited at what they saw in the pit below them. At the farther side of the platform the young man with the raw meat could be observed preparing to pass it down to a point out of the crowd's sight. Mob psychology worked itself out according to accepted formula. There was a surge of the crowd toward the ticket seller, and a moment later the platform for spectators was crowded on all four sides.

Toward the latter end of the rush there ascended the steps a well-dressed, prosperous-looking man in the middle thirties, who paused as he surrendered his ticket at the top of the flight to the boss of the show, a stout, competent, red-faced person whose neck folded down over where his collar would have been if he had not discarded it in favor of a damp handkerchief.

"Hello, Kane!" the well-dressed man said, low-voiced and a shade patronizingly. "What kind of a fake are you putting over on them this year?"

"'Lo, Chittim," replied the proprietor without cordiality, and reached past him for the next man's ticket, ignoring the question. Perhaps Mr. Chittim had not really expected to be answered. He did not pause, but

passed along and crowded himself in with the others, now all gazing fixedly into the pit.

It might be a subject for debate whether the half-naked black man with a woolly wig, draped in a moth-eaten leopard skin, his features grotesquely limned with bright pigments, who crouched with chained ankles on the grass that formed the floor of the well was dangerously wild. But it was apparent to all that he did eat raw meat, albeit he did so far from ravenously. Whatever may have been his habit in Samboanga, it could not be contradicted that in Bridgton his manner of partaking food indicated repletion and a certain boredom. His eyes, however, as he gnawed unenthusiastically at the edge of the chunk of beef, never left the young man who had passed it to him and the pitchfork in the young man's hands that still projected threateningly down into the pit. His expression showed undisguised fear, and resentment.

As the platform filled to the limit of its capacity, and the mass before it thinned at the shrieks of an announcer two or three pits to the left, who was urgently arousing the curiosity of the public as to what a "pig child" might be, the barker for the wild man moved a few steps to where the proprietor was passing back his handful of tickets to the girl at the ticket stand, and addressed him out of the corner of his mouth:

"They're falling the best I ever see, and *liking* it. That's a pretty rotten idea I had about their seeing him fed every show, I guess. Did you fix it up with him?"

"Like thunder I fixed it up with him!" the red-faced man growled. "Any time a nigger runs it over me to double his pay in the middle of his day's work you can come and tell me, and I'll present you an interest in my movie house. I told him he'd work till night, and then he could quit and be darned to him—I can get another nigger before morning. And the agreement was five dollars per. Where did he ever get a chance to make five dollars a day before?"

"But look at the way they're coming," anxiously urged the barker, whose receipts for his day's professional semblance of insanity were on a percentage basis. "If he *should* quit, like he says——"

"He'll not quit," the proprietor said positively. "Not as long as Mooney sticks around with the pitchfork. Darn it, Levine!" The explosion was mild and not at all excited. "There's more to this than running a few fair concessions every fall. Those niggers in my ward know my bargains are good, and they've got to understand that their bargains have got to be good, too. Liph'let is going to work till sundown in this show, and he's going to work the way he's ordered to. You talk yourself to death and get 'em in."

It was not in the management's scheme to encourage the spectators to stand too long in the way of more spectators. Within a very few minutes after the assembling of the crowd, at a signal from Mr. Mooney of the pitchfork, the wild man squatted back in a corner and apparently prepared for slumber. Those on the platform above him decided to leave the show as suddenly and unanimously as they had decided to spend their dimes to see it. Mr. Mooney slipped down the stairs and around to the little back entrance to the pit to retrieve his chunk of meat for use at the next performance. Mr. Chittim, acquaintance of the proprietor, who had been one of the last to arrive, was the last to depart.

He was edging along the pit rail, waiting for all the crowd to have passed down the steps and looking idly off across the masses of people before the other shows, when he heard himself eagerly hailed:

"Mistuh Chittim! Oh, Mistuh Chittim, suh!"

He turned and stared with amazement down into the painted face of the bloodthirsty savage, lifted toward him imploringly.

"You knows me, Mistuh Chittim. I'm Liph'let Wheeler. I used to do you' front lawn befo' you got a chauffeur that does it. Mistuh Chittim, I wants you to see Mistuh Kane about me. I got to get out o' here. I jes' natchully cain't stand 'at raw meat no mo'."

"Got to get out," Mr. Chittum repeated vaguely.

"Either I got to get out," Eliphalet declared, with great positiveness, "or he's got to 'limolate that meat. It wa'n't in the contrac', Mistuh Chittim."

"You mean he's making you eat—— That's absurd, Wheeler. You don't have to stay here, do you?"

"I don't has to stay here! I don't has to *stay* here!" The colored man's voice raised hysterically at the thought of it. "Didn' you see 'at Mistuh Mooney with 'at pitchfohk?

Ef'n I don't eat it w'en he says eat it, he *pokes* me, Mistuh Chittim. Yassuh. An' Mistuh Kane, he comes to see me befo' the las' show, and he says I keep on eatin', or I get poked *good*. Lissen, Mistuh Chittim. Cain't you get me out?"

"Why don't you beat it?"

"These ain't no fake chains, Mistuh Chittim. These hankkuffs on my ankles is borrowed f'om Mistuh Glenney, down to the police station, what is on a vacation so he don't need 'em." Eliphalet cast an apprehensive look over his shoulder, anticipating the opening of the little door and the entrance of Mr. Mooney. "Please go see Mistuh Kane and get me tuhned loose, suh. They'll be another show startin' d'rec'ly."

"Nonsense! You talk as if you were a real prisoner and couldn't do anything about it. All you've got to do is to speak up to Mooney, just natural, when the crowd is here——" Chittim smiled at the thought of what would happen to the management if he did.

"But I cain't do 'at," protested Eliphalet earnestly. "When all those w'ite folks is here I gotta act *wile*, isn't I? What kind of wile man you expect is goin' to speak up natchul, w'en he's expected to click his teeths an' shake his chain an' ro'. I don't min' doin' all them things, suh. It's 'at meat I want you to see Mistuh Kane about."

Mr. Chittim did not sympathize with Eliphalet's histrionic pride. "If you aren't willing to do anything for yourself, I don't see how——"

"Lissen, Mistuh Chittim." The negro's voice dropped to a still more confidential note. "Las' fall, w'en you was runnin' foh the nom'nation foh the common council, you'd 'a' got it, wouldn' you, ef'n you could 'a' had the cullud vote?"

Chittim showed interest.

"Mebbe you'll be fixin' to run again nex' fall, suh. Who runs the cullud vote in the Ninth Ward?"

Mr. Chittim, too, lowered his voice.

"Milo Kane, of course."

"An' who's his fust lootenant?"

"Why—— I guess I've heard you are."

"You go to Mistuh Kane an' get me loose, or else get me fixed so I don't have to eat no mo' meat, or else have him pay me enough to make it wo'th while never to be able to eat no meat no mo'. Any o' them things suits me. You do this, please suh, and nex' fall I'll see 'at all the cullud folks remembers it."

There was a rattle at the back of the pit as Mr. Mooney opened the little door, and at the same moment the bulk of Mr. Kane appeared at the head of the steps.

"See here, Kane!" called Chittim. "See here a minute. This won't do, you know."

"What won't do?"

"You can't keep this man a prisoner against his will. He says he doesn't want to eat any more raw meat."

"Who called on you to butt in?" the proprietor demanded truculently.

"He's a friend of mine." Mr. Chittim made the assertion clearly, for Eliphalet to remember. "I'm not going to stand for his being abused."

"You ain't going to stand for——"

"If you don't treat him right, I'm going to hunt up the chief of police and bring him over here."

At the worst, such interference would mean the summary close of the show; at the best, a delay that would cost at least one performance. Mr. Kane swallowed his anger and addressed the wild man directly:

"Can't you see, Liph'let, that this show's going twice as well as it did, since we put in the meat."

"Yassuh," agreed the negro. "Yassuh. It's sho' goin' good, Mistuh Kane. But it's like I told you, suh. I don't *want* to eat no mo' meat. Ef'n I does, it ain't no mo' 'n fair an' square 'at I gets paid sump'n. Ef'n I gotta keep on ontwell I can't never stan' to *look* at meat no mo'——"

Mr. Kane yielded exasperatedly to circumstances. "All right," he said. "You get seven an' a half instead of five."

"Nossuh. Five dollahs extra. Or I'll tell the folks w'en they come foh the nex' show 'at I ain't goin' to eat no meat 'cause I'm on——" A phrase from somewhere popped into his head and seemed to fit admirably. " 'Cause I'm on a honger strike," he said.

"Sounds like an ultimatum," Chittim remarked.

"Yassuh," Eliphalet exclaimed eagerly. " 'At's just what it is, Mistuh Kane. Five dollars mo' a day is my nultimatus."

"For the love of Mike, what's spraggin' the wheels?" demanded the impatient voice of Mr. Levine. "Look at that mob driftin' with nobody to stop 'em. Let's go! Let's *go!*"

Mr. Kane was of a school which wasted no time debating after defeat proclaimed itself to be more profitable than victory. "You

get the extra five," he surrendered shortly, turned on his heel, and gave the signal to his barker. With a piercing yell, that lithe individual began dancing up and down, slapping with his rattan cane the striking representation of the cannibal's capture above his head:

"The Zam-bo-anga Wild Man! He's chained. He's safe. But wild as ever. Lissun, people! Right now, right here, good people, he eats raw meat! He eats——"

Mr. Chittim came to the top of the stairs, where stood Milo Kane again in his accustomed place. "Thank you for bein' an interferin' meddler," Mr. Kane growled, as he passed. "I'll bear it in mind."

"Not at all; not at all," Mr. Chittim retorted pleasantly. "I'll stand ready to do as much again, any time."

He was smiling amiably to himself as he strolled up the midway. By a very narrow margin he had lost the Republican nomination for councilman in his ward the preceding fall. This year, with that negro vote of over two hundred he could win triumphantly. He congratulated himself that when he visited a county fair he always made it his business to see all the midway shows.

All unconscious that the very foundations of their political hold on the city were trembling from a cause so trifling as a Ninth Ward wild man's antipathy to a surfeit of uncooked beef, the inner steering committee of the Eddsfield Republican machine sat in Web Judson's office up at the top of the Merchants' Trust Building, one afternoon a fortnight after the Bridgton Fair, and complacently discussed the state of the municipality and the things that needed to be done and to be left undone for its good and the incidental good of the party organization.

Webster C. Judson, whose official title was treasurer of the Republican City Committee, but whose political enemies always referred to him as "boss," presided informally from his revolving chair, swung around with its back to his roll-top desk to face his three associates. They were Merrill Hart, the banker who, like Judson, never held office but controlled many a man who did; Mayor Orson Kendall, youngest man who had ever filled the executive chair of Eddsfield, whose backbone, tact, and genius for politics had but recently won him a place in the inner council; and State Senator Lawrence Neal.

Things were running very well at the moment with the Eddsfield machine. Inside the organization was no insurrection to be put down; outside the breastworks was no threat of attack to be worried about; the city was getting a good, businesslike administration and for the most part appreciated it; the matters that had come up for discussion that afternoon were the veriest routine of municipal and party policy.

Mr. Judson, who had one of the baldest heads extant, was wont to use it unconsciously as a barometer of his feelings. When things displeased him he rubbed it violently; when he was gratified he went through the motion of parting his hair with the palms of both hands. During this little meeting the imaginary hair had been stroked a number of times and never once had been tousled.

"'Potty' Bowles was in to see me during office hours this forenoon with a few small requests," Mayor Kendall remarked, when they were nearly ready to break up. His smile as he told them this was immediately reflected on the faces of the others, for they were all familiar with the habit of making small requests that characterized the alderman from the Fourth Ward, a scandalously wealthy and highly dignified gentleman with clipped white whiskers and much impressiveness of manner. Mr. Bowles' name was Christopher. Nobody had ever called him Potty to his face, and he would have been grievously shocked if he had been aware that some of his colleagues thus spoke of him behind his back. The name referred irreverently to his figure.

"A fifty-thousand-dollar fire station, two miles macadamizing of Norman Avenue, resurfacing of six other streets, some street lights, and some eight or ten new sewers," Judson said.

"Doesn't want a thing for the Fourth, does he?" Senator Neal said. "I suppose some of the sewers and lights ought to be taken care of."

"Yes. I told him I would do what I could to have the joint committees on sewers and street lights fix up as many of them as possible. And I encouraged him a little as to two or three of the resurfaced streets. But, of course, what he is asking loudest for is the fire station."

"He ought to have it at that," Judson admitted. "But it can't be done this fiscal year. We promised to lower the tax rate, and you can't eat your cake and have it, too."

Hart, whose bank represented a lot of big taxpayers, nodded approval.

"The trouble is, he isn't planning to run for reelection and wants the money for the new station appropriated during his term," Judson said. "Says he promised his constituents to get the station and thinks we ought to do it. It is his idea we can shave the sixty thousand off somewhere else."

"He isn't getting rambunctious about it, is he?" Hart asked the mayor.

"Not rambunctious," Kendall replied, "but a trifle insistent. He remarked this morning that he wanted to put this thing through with the organization's support, but that he believed, with or without our support, he could swing a majority of the aldermen and probably of the council for it."

"But he wouldn't start anything—not if he's handled right," declared Hart. "By and large he is a strong believer in party organization."

"What could he do if he did take a notion to get rambunctious?" asked Neal. "A lot of the boys are under obligations to him of one sort and another."

"He couldn't beat us, of course," Judson said seriously, "but he could raise merry Cain. Merrill is right; he won't upset anything if he is handled smoothly, and we want to be glad of it. If he ever took a notion to cut loose a real scrap, we would find some of the aldermen and councilmen sticking along with him that would put a pretty little crimp into our reputation for harmony. But that isn't a thing to worry about. He can be eased along."

A few minutes later, when the three visitors had risen to depart, Hart thought of a very minor matter that he had forgotten to bring up.

"Wait a minute," he said. "Did either of you hear any talk of some sort of a disagreement between Milo Kane and his colored brethren, in the Ninth?"

"It's Ed Chittim," Judson told him. "He is getting ready I suppose, to make another stab for the council, and is prying the darkies loose from Milo."

"I thought Kane had them sewed up so nobody could touch them," Hart said. "Where did Chittim get his influence?"

"It started, I hear, with a row between Milo and some negro that was working for him at the Washington County fair, at Bridgton. Kane was running one of his shows there. Chittim happened to hear about it, or something, and edged in as the champion of the black race. Fine little neighborhood scrap they're having, with the odds, as the gossip reaches me, in favor of the dark vote departing from Milo and adhering to Chittim."

"Nothing we need to concern ourselves about, is it?" Neal asked.

"I don't see how," Judson replied. "The present Ninth Ward councilmen are regular enough, but they're a set of rather weak sisters. Chittim is just as good a machine man as any of them. That means there's no harm done, whatever happens. They fight it out, and the winner suits us, whoever he is. As I see it, it is up to us to keep our hands strictly off."

"Milo Kane is a roughneck, and Ed Chittim is a conceited pup whose father happens to have money," Senator Neal commented, laughing. "So far as I am concerned, unless it would be bad for the general situation, I wouldn't mind seeing them pull a fight like the Kilkenny cats and both get clawed to pieces."

"It can't have any effect outside the Ninth —or any in the Ninth that we need to worry about," Judson assured him.

"Then why are we still here?" demanded the senator. "I've got time for nine holes before dark, if I hurry."

Mr. Judson's information to the effect that the colored vote heretofore controlled by Milo Kane showed signs of transferring its allegiance was, like most political information that came to Mr. Judson, authoritative. What he had no information at all about, however, was that Milo Kane, that very evening, was to form an alliance with Jim Gosling, and if he had known it, not being gifted with second sight and powers of divination, he could not have appreciated where that alliance was due to lead.

Jim Gosling was the business agent in Eddsfield of the Steamfitters' Union. He was also Mrs. Milo Kane's second cousin. Having decided that unless Ed Chittim could be induced to cease his pernicious interference with the colored vote he would find himself slipping at primary time, and, being unwilling to slip, Mr. Kane devised an ingenious scheme to accomplish Chittim's coercion. Having made arrangement by telephone for a late call, he left his garish moving-picture house as soon as the second run had started, and forgathered with Gosling in Gosling's old-gold plush parlor.

"This guy has had the political bee ever since he built a house in the ward," he said, in summing up the statement of his problem. "He's nuts about it, and with the money he's got—— Well, the idea is that some pressure has to be put on to make him quit. And the only place any pressure can come from that the son of a gun will pay any attention to is his father. And that's where you come in."

Mr. Gosling licked his cigar where it was burning unevenly, replaced it carefully in his mouth, and waited without oral or facial expression for Kane to elucidate.

"The steamfitters are just about in the middle of their work on the new Chittim-Ormsby department store, ain't they?"

Mr. Gasling admitted this statement approximated the truth.

"And if they quit it would practically put all work on the building on the blink until they were ready to start in again, wouldn't it?"

"Why would they quit?" asked Mr. Gosling.

"Jurisdictional stuff. I don't need to tell *you*. A row over jurisdiction between you and the plumbers."

Mr. Gosling reflected deeply. Eddsfield steamfitters were well organized and most employers were paying the union scale. There hadn't been a strike or a threat of a strike in their trade for more than a year. Mr. Gosling had for some time been thinking that perhaps members of his craft might wonder why he was drawing his salary as business agent if he didn't do something shortly to earn it. Also he had an old feud with the agent of the Plumbers' Union, who had not backed him up as much as he thought he ought to be backed up in a long-past difficulty.

He showed no enthusiasm, however, but asked a practical question:

"Where do I come in?"

Mr. Kane was prepared for it.

"You strike the job. You can talk your gang into thinking it's the thing to do; there's never a time when they and the plumbers ain't conflicting more or less on whose jurisdiction different kinds of work comes under. There ain't anything the contractors can do, because it isn't a matter of pay or hours. Pretty soon old Bill Chittim begins to r'ar up and try to find out for himself what needs to be done to get the work to going again; they've planned on the time for opening the new store, and it'll mean a barrel of loss if there's any delay. Old Bill sends for you. You get the men some little concession that'll satisfy 'em—there's always things of that sort you can think up, and Chittim'll force the contractors to do it—and make your own arrangements for your personal influence in getting the union to call the thing off."

Mr. Gosling, who had recently missed the income that had accrued to him in former times from just such arrangements, nodded understanding.

"And just as a sort of side line," Mr. Kane concluded, "you make it one of the confidential conditions of the settlement that old Bill gets his son to forget those political ambitions of his, this year."

"I don't know old man Chittim," the business agent said thoughtfully. "Is he reasonable?"

"He's a practical business man," Kane assured him. "Too good a business man to let the matter of a thousand or so stand in the way of getting that store finished on time. Well, there's the idea, Jim, all worked out. Are you on?"

"I might talk it over a little with the boys," Mr. Gosling agreed cautiously.

The steamfitters engaged on the new six-story Chittim-Ormsby department store building, dissatisfied over the manner in which the plumbers were doing work that by a strict interpretation of the union rules came under the steamfitters' jurisdiction and enraged by the truculence with which the plumbers' business agent received their demand for a cessation of such practices—Mr. Gosling having seen to it that the demand was so worded as to develop truculence—went out on strike. As work on the floors and interior walls could not proceed until the steamfitting was completed, several other trades promptly had to cease their operations. To all intents and purposes, progress on the building stopped.

Business Agent Gosling waited complacently for Mr. Chittim to send for him, but Mr. Chittim did not send. He was at first inclined to hold the contractors responsible. By the time he became convinced that the contractors were quite helpless, he had become so enraged that he didn't want to send for anybody. It was in his heart—and loudly upon his speech—to fight any and all unions to the limit.

The Security Trust Company sympathized

with him in this, because the Security Trust Company was financing the erection of the new department store, and with a prospect that the establishment might not get opened in time for the Christmas season there was a money angle to the situation which the bankers found very irksome. After a series of conferences with Mr. Chittim, his partner, and the helpless building contractors, the directors of the Security Trust, although most of them theretofore had been liberal and reasonably unbiased in their attitude toward trade unions, became violent advocates of the "open shop."

Right then and there the reactions from the small personal affairs of Eliphalet Wheeler, inconspicuous citizen of the Ninth Ward, became very seriously the concern of those who directed the Eddsfield political machine. For Alderman Christopher Bowles, rotund, impressive, always heretofore amenable to the reasonings of his party leaders and associates, but naturally stubborn, was a director of the Security Trust.

"It's a fine mess!" Web Judson exclaimed, when a hurriedly summoned meeting of the inner steering committee got under way in his office, one forenoon. He rubbed his head circularly and with an absent-minded violence that made him wince. "Bowles has got to be stopped quick, or there's the devil to pay, and there can't one of us go near him to try to pull him off, because he hasn't been near one of us to tell us he is doing it. Has anybody any idea how many members he has tied up to his scheme?"

"He told Merton he was already sure of three votes in the Aldermen besides his own, and seven or eight in the Council," Senator Neal r ported. Alderman Merton of the Seventh had brought Neal the news, at just about the time the others had been hearing it elsewhere. "He said the conservative business interests of the city—that means the Security Trust and their connections—were bringing pressure to bear, and that within a day or two at least one of the daily papers would be out flat-footed demanding the passage of his resolution."

"That will be Sid Waters," Judson commented. "He has had it in for labor ever since that run-in he had with the Typographical Union, nearly five years ago. They beat him, and ought to. He was dead wrong. That means he'll never get over it. If he ever breaks loose and some of the aldermen and councilmen, with old Potty in the lead, begin to back him up——"

The mayor completed the sentence that Judson left up in the air:

"We've got a fight going that smashes the town wide open, with some of our friends on one side and some on the other."

"And the Democrats sitting on the side lines hollering , 'Go it, man; go it, bear,' and perhaps winning next election because of the split," Merrill Hart said bitterly. "Did Merton see the resolution, Neal?"

"Bowles had a draft of it. It proposes to put the city council on record for the 'open shop,' and provides that the city shall not employ union labor as such in any of its work."

Judson groaned.

"Not a serious industrial dispute in this city for more than three years—not since the street railroad strike," he said. "And now this starts a wide-open, free for all that the Lord only knows when it will end or how."

"What is Jim Gosling driving at?" Hart asked. "Do you know anything about this Chittim-Ormsby strike?"

"Not a thing, except that if Gosling is in it, he is probably after something for Gosling. There are at least twenty union business agents in this town, and exactly three of them are grafters. And one of the crooks has to start this ruction and get old man Bowles all haired up. The old cuss must be plumb on the warpath or he would have come to us. Why didn't he?"

"Merton asked him that," Neal said. "Asked him if he had consulted with any of the leaders. He said he hadn't. Told Merton he had been consulting with the leaders all the year about a fire station that was an absolute necessity in his ward and other improvements that are almost as badly needed, and all he got was pleasant words."

"There's one satisfaction, of course," Merrill Hart said, although his tone did not indicate that it really gave him pleasure. "He can't get it through the council, and I don't think there is a chance in the board. Most of the Democrats will vote against him."

"That will do us Republicans a lot of good in the fall," cried Judson. "That resolution won't pass the city council, but that isn't all of it. It mustn't be *introduced* in the city council. Bowles has got to be pulled off."

"No use in going to him," Hart said.

"No. The first place to go is to Jim

Gosling. Let's find out exactly what he wants. I'll do that. And in the meantime, Merrill, you go see the president and some of the directors of the Security Trust, not as a politician but as a fellow banker and all that sort of thing. I don't know whether they can handle Bowles now that he is fairly on a rampage, but if they can't nobody can. What they want is for that Chittim-Ormsby store to get finished. If we could get that done for them, they ought to be glad to pull in their horns and try to put the soft pedal on Potty."

"And old Bill Chittim?" Senator Neal asked.

"Let's leave him alone for the present," Judson advised, after considering it. "If the bank can handle Bowles, it can probably handle him."

Hart rose and reached for his hat. "I'll get in touch with them right away."

"And I'll go after Gosling." Mr. Judson's nose wrinkled with dislike of his errand. "Maybe you think I don't hate to ask that darned crook for an interview. I'd work it to make him ask me, if we had time, but, thunder! we haven't got a minute to spare. If we can't get Bowles stopped before Sid Waters' papers get ready to cut loose on the thing, we'll never get him stopped at all. He might get at it to-day."

They assembled again immediately after lunch.

"Gosling showed his cards without hesitation or embarrassment," Judson reported. "Told me, grinning, it was always a comfort to talk business with a man that could understand plain English and didn't mind talking it." The party leader's mouth moved as though there was a bad taste on his tongue. "And I had to grin back and let the cussed crook get away with accepting me as a member of his own class. Well, the principal thing he wants is about a thousand dollars for Gosling, just as we suspected. He said two thousand, and I think he would take five hundred; he's really a piker. There are also a few trifling changes in the contract with his union, to satisfy the members; there oughtn't to be much difficulty in arranging those. And, to do a favor for Milo Kane, over in the Ninth Ward, who is some relative of his, he makes it a condition that old man Chittim pull his boy Ed out of the race for the council over there. Ed, as we heard some time ago, has been gathering in Kane's colored vote."

"The president of the Security Trust and Bill Chittim are waiting for me over in my bank, now, with Bowles somewhere within reach," Hart said. "They principally want the building to be finished, of course—but they're awful mad. You fellers either stay here until I get back, or be here again in an hour."

In considerably less than an hour Hart returned. His face did not indicate elation.

"It is a long story," he said, "and no need, now, to hit anything but the high spots of it. Bill Chittim is the maddest, ugliest, most unreasonable man in seven States. He won't concede a thing. He will not sweeten Jim Gosling—I didn't mention Gosling's name, of course—two thousand dollars, or five hundred dollars, or ten cents. He won't even ask his boy to get out of that council fight. We got hold of the building contractors, however, and they will make those concessions that Gosling wants to satisfy the men that the walkout was of some advantage to them. So much for settling the strike."

He made a wry face.

"Bowles didn't want to do a thing, either. He's got this open-shop resolution in his head, he thinks he can put it through, and at first he wouldn't listen to anything else. But the Security Trust wants the building to go up, and as a favor to them he finally promised, if the strike is stopped immediately, to give up the resolution idea, *provided*——"

"Don't try to break it easy," the mayor said.

"Provided he gets, this year, at least one mile macadamizing of Norman Avenue, the resurfacing of six other streets he has mentioned before, a bunch of sewers, a collection of street lights, *and* a fire station to cost not less than fifty thousand dollars."

"All right," snapped Judson. "If he has to have it, he has to have it. Rule Number One in politics is when you have to eat dirt, roll it up in small pellets, eat it quick, and try to forget the taste as soon as possible. First, as to the strike. We'll give Gosling his graft out of the party war chest. I'll see him this afternoon and beat him down to the lowest figure I can get. I'll tell him Ed Chittim won't get out of the fight, but that we'll see Chittim is licked. He'll take my word for it. We'll have him get his steamfitters together to-night, advise them of the concessions he has secured from the contractors, jolly them along as to the jurisdictional row with the plumbers, and have

them on the job in the morning. You stick around, Merrill, so as to be ready to report to the Security Trust people as soon as I'm sure we have it fixed up."

"Throwing the Ninth against Chittim isn't going to be easy," Neal remarked.

"We'll go after that colored vote ourselves," the party leader announced. "I wish I knew how to do it right away and get it cleaned up. I got a little idea as to a possible way to get at them when I was talking to Gosling. This negro that Kane had a row with, that started the whole trouble, is a sort of leader over there among his own people. A power in his church, officer in the lodges; all that sort of thing. His name is Wheeler. Eliphalet Wheeler."

" 'Liph'let Wheeler!" Mayor Kandall sat up straight and echoed the name with surprised emphasis. "Is he a big, very dark man, forty to forty-five years old, who does yard work?"

"I don't know how big he is, but I gathered he is not especially young, and that he mows lawns summers and takes care of furnaces winters."

"He does my lawn every two weeks," the mayor said. "He'll be on the job at my house to-morrow morning."

"So will you, Orson," Senator Neal assured him, with sudden whimsical positiveness. "Never mind how late you are at city hall to-morrow, you will first be on the job at your house until you get results!"

Mayor Kendall, reading a newspaper in the shade of his piazza, the next morning, was cordial in passing the time of day with the colored man whose lawn mower clicked industriously past the porch corner, and Eliphalet, thankful for the excuse to rest, did not have to be unduly encouraged to gossip amiably.

"What's this little difficulty you people are having with Mr. Kane, over there in the Ninth?" the mayor asked idly, after a bit. "I heard some talk that all you colored people were going to be for Mr. Chittim, next fall."

"I di'n' heah much about that, suh," Eliphalet said vaguely. "Some says one thing and some says another."

"Oh, I'm not trying to pry into your business," laughed the mayor. "But I'd really like to know, 'Liph'let. Just so as to keep posted. And from what I hear there isn't anybody knows any more about the real inside of politics over there in your ward than you do."

"Yassuh," Eliphalet agreed, much flattered. "I aims to know sump'n erbout it." His eyes betrayed a lively interest as Kendall went deliberately into his pocket and produced two one-dollar bills, which he smoothed and held tentatively between a thumb and forefinger.

"Yassuh," said Eliphalet. "Well, suh. This Mistuh Chittim he's sho' goin' aftuh the cullud vote powerful hahd. And they is respondin'. I'll say that, Mistuh Mayoh. He's a right pleasant man, is Mistuh Chittim. Calls all the cullud folks 'mistuh' an' 'missis,' and wants to see they get all their rights, an' so fo'th an' so on. Yassuh. He's fixin' to staht a club foh us, with pool tables. I'll say Mistuh Chittim is right popular with the Ninth—at the present endurin' moment."

Kendall saw that Eliphalet shrewdly intended him to get the significance of the qualifying phrase.

"But later?" he asked. "Along toward election time?"

"Yassuh," Eliphalet said. "I wouldn' be surprise', suh, if erlong to'ds election time a committee f'om our people was to wait on Mistuh Milo Kane to discuss with him the ramifications of the politcal campaign. Ef'n he's reasonable—an' I'll say that erlong jes' befo' election Mistuh Kane almos' always *is* reasonable——"

The mayor passed over the two dollars.

"What's the matter with Mr. Chittim?" he asked. "Why is it the colored folks won't stick to him?"

"Thanky' suh," said Eliphalet. "Lots of 'em thinks they will. Mistuh Kane thinks so, too. It's worryin' him right smaht. But I reckon it's this away, suh. 'At Mistuh Chittim he ain't got no *authority*. I don't expec' 'at Mistuh Chittim could talk real rough, nemmine how much he need to say what he's got to say. Now, Mistuh Kane w'en——"

His voice held a note of earnest admiration.

" 'At Mistuh Kane, w'en he gets a li'l' excited, he is sho' hahd-*boiled*. Yassuh. W'en a man's boss, he ought to know how to *be* boss, way I figures it. Language! My, my, but 'at Mistuh Kane does know how to give orders."

Another tale of Eddsfield politics will appear in an early issue.

A Concession in Marimba

By John Lawrence Ward

Here is a story to make the business man forget worry, entirely. It will cheer up anybody, for that matter. The "three musketeers" of the great Bannister Paint Company—the dynamic Bannister himself, the soothing MacPhail, and the kind-hearted Herring—are as amusing as they are real. Also is James Westerhout real, in his own sweet way. An added historical value is lent to this tale, in the portrayal of certain customs of preprohibitionary days.

CHAPTER I.

ON Wednesday morning in May, 1913, the three chief executives of the Bannister Paint Company were closeted in the office of Mr. Herring, first vice president and general manager. Mr. Bannister, president and dictator, and Mr. MacPhail, second vice president and financial genius of the organization, were the other two officials present at this intense and gratifying conference. They had been definitely assured by counsel the day before that they did not have to go to jail, and they were sloughing the strain under which they had labored for several months, somewhat after the swashbuckling manner of small boys, who by sheer luck had narrowly escaped a well-merited visit to the woodshed.

A year or so previous these three, aided and abetted by one Hamilton Stewart, legal bulwark of the company, had gained indisputable control of the paint and pigment industry of the United States. All desirable competitors had been gathered into the fold, and the cadavers of the undesirables "spurlos versenkt."

Stewart, one of the two best corporation lawyers at large, had drawn up the papers for the new venture. He considered the result his masterpiece and attorney-general proof. But he reckoned without that old wheeze anent the tautening of the G string. The death rattle of one of the expiring concerns was heard in high places. The attorney general's G string snapped and its angry vibrations shook the Bannister Paint Company all the way down to its cellar drainer. Like the wise lawyer he was, Stewart refrained from attempting to defend his skullduggery and the attorney general never got a chance to learn just how iniquitous the scheme was. He was a busy man, and when Stewart and his clients capitulated without a fight, thereby saving the government a huge prosecuting expense, he merely ordered the Bannister Paint Company to divorce itself forthwith from its subsidiary companies, reprimanded the delinquents, and overlooked the jail sentences.

Fully cognizant of their good fortune in being still entitled to wear their hair at any desired length, they had gathered together this morning to discuss ways and means to rid the B. P. Co. of its entangling alliances. This was a difficult thing to do—profitably; but they had about agreed that a five-for-one stock issue would recompense them for the loss of the profits they might have made, and numerous sleepless nights, when the telephone rang. Mr. Herring answered.

It was Miss Rice, Herring's secretary, calling from the outer office: "Mr. Herring, it is five minutes of ten. At ten you have an appointment made yesterday with Mr. James Westerhout on private business. The gentleman is here now. Will you see him at ten?"

Herring frowned into the transmitter and hesitated.

"Who's that?" asked Bannister crossly.

"A chap who has been calling here for several days. He refuses to discuss his business with any one but an official. Not knowing you were going to call this meeting, I agreed to see him this morning at ten. I don't know him and Miss Rice can't classify him, which is a novelty in itself. But she used the word 'gentleman.'"

"One of these smart New York pups pullin' a new approach gag on you, Ed," sneered Bannister. "Well, as long as you made a definite appointment have him in, find out what he wants quick, and give him the gate. Mac and me will wait here."

"Send Mr. Westerhout in," ordered Herring. MacPhail withdrew to a near-by filing cabinet and Bannister strode to a window, clasped his hands behind his back, lit a fresh stogie, and set up a first-rate smoke screen.

The man who was ushered into the office a few minutes later by a deferential page was, indeed, as the capable Miss Rice acknowledged, hard to classify either as to age, nationality, or station in life. He might have been any age from twenty-five to forty; any nationality, excluding the black and yellow tribes; anything from a street faker to the newest Latin baritone. He possessed a big clever nose, a crooked, rather thin-lipped mouth, and his gray eyes, accentuated by long, black lashes, presented a striking contrast to his swarthy sunburned skin and straight, black hair. He carried his big, rangy form with a dignity and poise that was compelling.

His habiliments were as complex and puzzling as his physical characteristics—heavy pigskin shoes, a loose Norfolk suit of rough but excellent material, and a finely woven Panama hat with a narrow, twisted, green silk band. He carried a battered and travel-stained, black walrus-hide satchel.

Herring stood up. "I am Mr. Herring," he said politely. "What can I do for you?"

The visitor removed his gorgeous Panama and immediately looked ten years younger.

"How do you do, Mr. Herring?" he said, and his soft, drawling intonation established two points—that he was gently bred and that some State east of the Mississippi and south of the Potomac claimed him as a native son. "It's mighty good of you to grant me this interview, but I see that you are engaged. Probably if I should call again—perfectly satisfactory to me——"

"No intrusion at all, sir," assured Herring.

The young man—thirty years would be a shrewd guess at his age after a closer scrutiny—seated himself and placed the disreputable bag close to his feet. He seemed to think well of that satchel.

"Mr. Herring," he said, "I'll be as brief as possible. I believe I've stumbled on something that is worth money to your company, and to myself, of course."

"Chemist?" queried Herring.

"No, sir—engineer."

"Mining?"

"No again," laughed Westerhout. "Miscellaneous, I reckon you would call it. I am, or rather, I was until a month ago, with the Colterman Construction Company."

"Just a moment," interrupted Herring again. "Colterman? Isn't that the powder crowd?"

There came another interruption, or rather, an eruption from the impatient figure at the window.

"Here!" shouted Bannister, striding over to Herring's desk and easing his bulk into a chair, "I'd like to make a few remarks. This here interview could be closed a lot sooner, Ed, if you didn't ask so dam' many questions."

Thornton Bannister's eccentricities of manner and speech were as well known to the business world as his tremendous ability and his good looks. Fifty-seven years of age, he was considered one of the most imposing personalities in the city. His almost perfectly proportioned head, crowned by a crop of crisp white hair, had the features of a Roman senator enhanced by a close-clipped mustache that failed to conceal the firm, well-shaped mouth. His skin had the hard, bright, pinkish glow of the constant golfer and cold-water bather. His keen blue eyes were slightly myopic, causing him to carry his head a bit forward and giving him a fierce, searching expression that was decidedly disconcerting. A ruthless, irascible, likable old buccaneer, he had many friends and admirers, and as he himself quaintly expressed it, "great hordes of enemies."

"My name is Bannister?" he advised the visitor gruffly. "What did you say yours was? Huh? Say it again. Westerhout? Darn hard name to say. Glad to meetcha, anyhow. Go ahead with your yarn. Here, Mac!" he bellowed as the long-nosed MacPhail attempted a silent exit. "You come back here and sit down."

Obeying the gentle suggestion, MacPhail sat and crossed his angular knees, thereby disclosing to public view a pair of thick, white woolen socks wrinkling unrestrainedly over the tops of tipless vici kid shoes with elastic side walls—the kind that are pulled on with the assistance of straps fore and aft. MacPhail didn't go in for dress much.

Bannister fumbled in his breast pocket and produced a handful of long, cheap stogies.

"Smoke?" he asked.

Westerhout shook his head negatively.

"Perhaps a cigarette," suggested Herring, offering his box of Egyptians.

"A homespun one if you don't mind," said the young man, noticeably put at his ease by these amenities. He produced a sack of string tobacco and a packet of flimsies and proceeded with commendable dexterity to roll a cigarette with one hand.

Herring smiled appreciatively. "Good enough! Haven't seen that trick for quite a while, eh, T. B.?"

"Not since the last time I went to the movies," snorted the unimpressionable T. B. "Been South, haven't you?"

"Yes, sir, South America. I arrived in New York last week. As I said a minute ago, I was with Colterman. They do all construction work for the General Powder Company. Just at present they are finishing up in Marimba."

"What is Marimba and where is it, may I ask?" queried Herring.

"Marimba is a small island off the coast of Venezuela. It is an independent republic; wealthy and orderly; and a particularly good feeling exists between it and the United States."

"Sure enough!" exclaimed T. B. "I remember now. Marimba. Dye woods, native pottery, hemp, and coconuts. One of the best harbors in the world. Great natural breakwater. A. B. C. countries had a devil of a row over it years ago. Little while back England and Germany almost locked horns over it, and our worthy president suddenly came out with a little notice to both parties that they would have to find another excuse for a war because Mr. Monroe's little joker was not only alive and kickin', but had grown a full set of whiskers. I remember distinctly."

"Yes, so do I now," said Herring. "It was one of those incidents where the first citizen takes an unaccountably belligerent attitude on a matter of minor importance."

"The president knew something," affirmed Westerhout. "Colterman is building a railroad from the only town and seaport, also called Marimba, back into the mountains to the nitrate fields."

"Whew!" whistled T. B. "Nitrate? In Marimba? What d'ye think of that, Ed?"

There was a minute's silence as they digested this significant bit of news. Then T. B. said, "This is all very interestin', but where do you come in? And us—huh?"

Westerhout leaned back in his chair and puffed thoughtfully at his cigarette. Then he said, "Gentlemen, I know absolutely nothing about the paint business. I'm no chemist, and I believe that modern paint production is almost, if not altogether, a matter of chemistry, is it not?"

"That is correct," agreed Herring. "Nearly all of our colors are produced by following out processes laid down by our laboratory men."

"Why?"

"Innumerable reasons," answered Herring. "Manufactured colors are cheaper than high-grade earth colors. We get a more standard product; that is to say, one lot of a given color will almost perfectly match any other lot, something not always possible with earth colors even when the raw stuff is taken from the same mine. Then we get a much finer quality. White and yellow are about the only earth colors we use, and then only in the cheapest grades of paint."

"Nevertheless, none of your—er—artificially manufactured colors have the endurance and unchanging qualities of good earth colors," argued the engineer.

"No, I can't honestly say they have," assented Herring. "But, my dear fellow, earth colors—good earth colors—are few and far between. The best of them are found in the out-of-the-way places of the world and are devilish expensive—and hard to get. Colors we have to buy we pay well for, I assure you."

"Oh, then you don't own the mines?"

"I should say not. The good mines of the world are either owned or controlled by our European neighbors. We own two small ocher mines in this country."

"Yeah," said Bannister contemptuously, "mediocre mines."

"Would you be interested in a mine or deposit or whatever you call it, that would supply you with every known color under the sun, in unlimited quantities, at the lowest possible production cost? Would you buy it?"

"Would we buy it!" exclaimed Herring. "We would strain every effort and spend every cent we possess or could borrow to buy it—if such a deposit existed."

"If such a deposit existed?" repeated Westerhout. "What do you mean?"

"I mean to say that you have just mentioned a geological impossibility."

"No, I haven't either," said Westerhout bluntly. "There is such a deposit, and I've seen it. A deposit with every color on the chart in it. And it doesn't lay in the bowels of the earth either. It lays right smack on the surface and can be shoveled up easier than iron ore on the Mesaba Range. And there is five miles square of it, the Lord knows how deep. And it doesn't matter how much of it you cart away because the next day there will be that much more there. The geysers see to that. And last but not least, I own it—or as good as own it."

CHAPTER II.

T. B. held up his hand for attention. "I'd like to make a few remarks. I've often heard this here West Indian cane rum had a bite all its own. In the past several of my good friends have confided to me that an occasional pink rabbit or purple elephant distracted them, particularly after a bout with old John B. But curse me if this ain't the first time I ever met up with a wholesaler of alcoholic colors." Bannister's hearty laugh robbed this observation of offense. MacPhail's horribly distorted countenance was prima-facie evidence that he was indulging in mirth.

"Pardon, Mr. Westerhout," chuckled Herring, "but you must know that your statement is—ah—startling to say the least. Where is this painter's paradise, may I ask?"

"In Marimba."

"So! We come back to Marimba."

"Exactly. Any of you gentlemen ever been in Marimba? No? Well, it is one of the jewels of the world. This little map I have here will help a lot. See—it is shaped exactly like a pear with a curved stem. That stem is the immense natural breakwater known as St. Dominique's Arm, which forms the harbor. Here where the stem joins the pear is the town of Marimba, straggling for several miles along the finest, whitest beach in the world.

"Back of the town are the groves and jungles. From there on the elevation steadily increases, up through the foothills to the great mountain range where the nitrate fields lie. Here in the foothills, just a few miles back from the new railroad is what the natives call 'Valle del Fuego,' the Valley of Fire. This is a valley of active mud geysers about five miles square.

"This mud plays an important part in the lives of the Marimbans. They build their houses with it, throw up all their beautiful pottery from it—judging from their complexions I suspect they eat it. Here is a group of photographs that will give you an idea of that valley. I've wondered why some keen promoter hasn't grabbed it up for a health resort. Ideal climate—wonderful scenery—hot mud baths you know—all that sort of thing. But it remained a mere brickyard for Marimbans until I helped put the railroad through.

"Now, Mr. Bannister and gentlemen: if you have ever seen or heard of Marimba pottery, you know about its remarkable decoration; the bold intense color laid on seemingly without any preconceived design. Experts on ceramics declare that it is a secret process closely guarded by the natives. They are wrong. It is the peculiar qualities of the mud itself which produce these wonderful colors, and they only become apparent on dehydration.

"Why, their houses and buildings are tinted exactly like their pottery! The town of Marimba is one riot of color. Looks like all the paint in the world had been dumped over it regardless. A Marimba sunrise makes an Italian sunset look as insipid as lavender and old lace.

"I didn't realize the possibilities in that mud lake at first. When I did I went to Señor Luis Mercedes who, though he holds no governmental portfolio, is the moving finger in Marimba. He is about thirty years old, highly educated, and as fine a chap as you'll ever meet. Although I was in Marimba but a short while, we were very good friends; so, naturally, I figured I could get a lease to work that valley reasonably cheap, provided the General Powder Company hadn't beat me to it.

"Well, I put it up to Mercedes, not telling him, of course, what I expected to sift out of that mud, and asked him if I could have the concession and for how much. He gave me the laugh, and stated that the mud lake was no good to any one but the Marimbans; that he wouldn't have the nerve to sting an old friend; and, besides, it would be a blooming shame to sell the ancient and honored brickyard of the guileless natives. I finally convinced him that I was very much

in earnest, so we got together with President Blas, and in a remarkably short time I received my concession signed, sealed, and delivered.

"I don't mind telling you I got it for almost a song; in fact, I couldn't conceal the figure I paid for it, anyhow, as it is plainly embodied in the contract that I'll have to show you later in case we do business. Luis, actually believing I didn't know what I was doing and influenced by his personal regard for me, asked a purely nominal price; but his price has nothing to do with my price, which will be decided on the value of my concession to you folks. I paid the Republic of Miramba for it with a draft on the Great Gulf Bank of New Orleans for four thousand dollars. The concession gives me—or my assigns—the sole right to dabble in that mud till the crack of doom. There are but two conditions.

"The first is, that the Marimbans still enjoy their old privilege of using what mud they need for building and pottery-making purposes. This, in fact, was my suggestion. It helped me considerably and cost me nothing as the geysers are constantly belching up a new supply of mud. The second condition is the customary tax on the value of benefits derived. To show you how little Luis thought of my bargain he assessed the ridiculously low tax of one per cent of the net value of each year's production. It's a joke! I collected some samples of the earth from different parts of the valley, came to New York, made some inquiries about the paint business, decided that your company was the proper one to approach, and—well, here we are."

"Um. So," grunted T. B., looking over the tops of his glasses at the photographs. "You think, then, that this trick mud of yours has got paint in it, hey?"

"Think it? I know it. It must be almost all coloring matter. And, furthermore, as you can see by the photographs it doesn't have to be be mined. It's right there on top of the earth ready to be scooped up into your mills—that is, if you would set up mills down there. I imagine the tariff schedules would influence that detail somewhat. Labor is plentiful and dirt cheap in Marimba; and here as you can see on this map is the new railroad—easy enough to throw a spur up to the Valley of Fire—and here are your ship docks. The overhead would almost represent the irreducible minimum."

Westerhout opened the satchel, took out a small canvas bag and a fisherman's wallet. He extracted a sheaf of papers from the wallet and dumped the contents of the bag on the desk blotter. "That's my concession and that's my specimen."

MacPhail reached for the papers and T. B. picked up the specimen, each following his natural bent.

The chunk of earth that Bannister slowly turned over in his hands resembled nothing so much as an irregular block of fancy ice cream. Its bold intense tints did not blend but were sharply defined. Red, blue, and yellow predominated, but there were also streaks of brown, green, and white, and two small splotches of purple and black. These three cagy business men examined it casually enough, but, nevertheless, they were interested. For one whole hour they discussed Marimba mud with the enthusiastic engineer.

"See here," said T. B. when he finally suddenly remembered his wrecked conference. "We are wastin' a lot of valuable time on somethin' we don't know nothin' about. We'll just turn this sample over to our chemical department and have 'em analyze it. Then, when we get a report from them, Mr. Westerhout, we can talk business to you."

"Yes, of course," agreed Westerhout, rising. "When do you suppose you will have that report?"

"How 'bout that, Ed?" asked T. B. "Suppose Steiner could give us that report by to-morrow?"

"I think so."

"I wish you could let me know something to-morrow," said Westerhout. "The fact is, I'm leaving for the other side Friday night, and I'd like to hear the verdict before I go."

"Goin' travelin' again? You have a tough time, don't you?" observed T. B. sarcastically.

Westerhout smiled. "Oh, I've got to go over. Whether or not it will turn out to be a pleasure trip depends on what you tell me to-morrow."

"Say now, look here!" shouted T. B. jovially. "Don't you go gittin' all swelled up over this thing. It might turn out to be a bloomer, and I'd have to read the death warrant to you. Hope you have a good trip. Wish I was goin' m'self. What are you goin' over on?"

"The *Muriatic* of the Five Star Line."

"Well, stop in about four-thirty to-morrow afternoon."

"Very good, sir. I'm staying at the Hinton in case you would want to get in touch with me. I want to thank you gentlemen for your extreme courtesy——"

"That's all right," interrupted Bannister brusquely. "Did you say you belong in New Orleans?"

"Oh, no. I'm from Louisville originally."

"Then you're a University of Kentucky man?"

"I was, but I didn't finish. My father met with business reverses and I had to go to work."

"Um. I see."

Westerhout shook hands all around, picked up his bag, replaced his big Panama, and turned to go.

"Here!" bawled T. B. "You forgot your papers."

"Oh, no," said Westerhout naïvely, "I am leaving them purposely. You'll probably want your attorneys to look them over to see if they are properly drawn and binding, won't you?"

"Yeah, that's so," grunted T. B., somewhat stumped. "We'll take good care of 'em. Good morning."

Nothing was said for a few moments after Westerhout's departure until Herring observed, "Rather likable chap, isn't he?"

"I think so," agreed MacPhail.

"Yeah! He's all right," said the old man grudgingly. "Different from these smart, pestiferous New York pups. But when it comes to business"—he waved a hand disgustedly—"he's one fat turkey. Imagine payin' money for that mud hole without knowin' a blasted thing about whether it was any good or not; and tellin' us all about it; and leavin' that concession with us. One—fat—turkey! Say, Mac, put them papers in your private safe. Ed, ring for a messenger and send this mud down to the laboratories. Tell Steiner to find out what makes it so pretty. Ask him to find out if it's any good for makin' paint. We'll just pigeonhole this here scheme until we hear from him. Now let's get back to this stock-issue thing."

CHAPTER III.

At four o'clock that afternoon the main office of the Bannister Paint Company was treated to its second distinguished and picturesque visitor that day, in the person of Doctor Emil Steiner, chief chemist of the company.

Doctor Steiner was a huge man, well paunched, with tousled red hair and ragged pointed beard. His eyes were small, pale blue, and protruded like a crab's. In the laboratory, attired in his great enveloping work apron he was an imposing figure of brains and brawn. In his too small, rusty, ill-kept street clothes, with a Weber and Fieldian derby perched on his flaming bush of hair, he was merely ludicrous, and as he stalked through the general offices he occasioned many a covert smile. But he was Steiner, nevertheless—the great Steiner—and he was respectfully greeted by all.

Unannounced, he strode into T. B.'s office, made a funny little bow that had for its starting place his equator, stood at attention, and spoke.

"I myself, Steiner, haff bring to you de analysis."

Bannister swung his chair around in goggle-eyed amazement.

"Well, by gad!" he exclaimed. "Steiner! Look here, I ain't in so much of a hurry for that dope that I have to have twenty-five-thousand-dollar beauties like you runnin' errands. Who d'ye think we are? The Bank of England? Couldn't you send a messenger with it? Here—have a cigar. Don't fire up that filthy pipe. Hey, Ed—Mac—come here, both of you! Look who we have with us! Well, Emil, what you got on your mind, hey?"

Steiner carefully deposited his property derby under his chair, produced a folded paper from his coat-tail pocket, cleared his throat loudly, and proceeded:

"I haff made most careful analysis of de specimen of eart' which you send to my laboratories, and I find de most gombligated and pecooliar gondition what I ever see myself. Nefer haff I see such pee-utiful color. Even when I see and feel dat it iss clay body, which iss bad for baint, I am conwince' dat I hold in my hand fery rich eart' for our pizness. Yes. But when I make de test—where iss my so pee-utiful colors? What you say, up de spout! Very fonny thing. I dink when I first see it dat I can get all kind baint what iss from it—de finest of oombers, Siennas, fermillion, indigoes, yellows, whites, even burples und binks——"

"Burples and binks my eye!" screeched the exasperated T. B. "Is the dam' stuff any good? Answer me that."

Steiner sighed heavily. He eyed his three inquisitors slowly and reproachfully.

"It iss dis verdampt Yankee hustle und right-away monkey pizness," he stated coldly, "what makes you pay Germans big brices to tell you dings you ought to know yourselfs."

"Oh, come now, Emil," said the diplomatic Herring. "Excuse us, won't you? Mr. Bannister was a bit abrupt. He is—we all are—extremely anxious to know the result of your test. Mr. Bannister didn't mean to be offensive——"

"The hell I didn't!" shouted the irate T. B. "Ed, you keep your——"

"Have a bit of patience, will ye, Thornton," put in MacPhail mildly. "Leave the man tell his story in his own fashion."

Bannister subsided, growling.

"Now, me dear Steiner," drawled MacPhail, "won't ye tell us if the stuff is any good or no?"

"Gendlemen," said the mollified Steiner, "de eart' is goot—fery goot. While it iss drue dat it iss fery low in baint value, and dat de cost of reduction would be brohibitive, it iss de most valuable eart' I have ever see, myself." He ruffled his papers portentiously. "All my test sheets show dat it runs fery high in golt."

This calmly delivered, astonishing statement did not cause the slightest flutter, for the reason that Steiner's audience did not grasp it at all.

"Golt?" growled T. B. "What d'ye mean golt?"

"Golt—golt!" shouted Steiner. "Golt watch und chain—golt dollars—pure raw golt! Can't you understand blain English?"

"Do you mean, Steiner," asked Herring in a puzzled tone, "that the specimen we sent you is gold-bearing earth?"

"Golt, dass iss," asserted Emil.

"Well, what of that?" asked MacPhail wonderingly

"Hokum. Rats," snorted T. B.

"Just a minute, Thornton, please," remonstrated Herring. "And do you mean, Emil, that the sample contains enough gold to make the place it came from worth mining?"

"De richest golt-bearing eart' I efer see. De richest in de world. Where did it gome from?"

"Never mind that now. How much gold is——"

"Don't be an ass, Ed," snapped T. B. "Gold my eye! What's that old stuffed shirt know about gold?"

"Golt, dass iss."

"But, Thornton, you don't grasp this at all."

"The hell I don't! I guess I——"

"For the land's sake, will ye be quiet!" essayed MacPhail.

"Golt."

"Dam' it all——"

"Golt."

"Quiet!" thundered MacPhail.

The undignified racket ceased.

"For the love of Heaven!" MacPhail ejaculated disgustedly. "Have ye lost your wits?" He tiptoed across the office and closed the transom. "Now, then, Emil, what's all this pother about gold?"

"For yourselfs you shall see," grunted Emil, digging into the magic coat tail once more. From a small wallet he extracted a folded piece of tissue paper—an own brother to the powders the family doctor used to shake on our youthful tongues. Carefully he laid it on the desk and unfolded it, disclosing a tiny quantity of bright, glittering yellow specks.

"Golt," he reiterated stolidly.

Bannister guffawed loudly and rudely.

"You laugh," said Steiner, "because you do not understand—no."

"Oh, be gad!" chortled T. B. "Is that all there is? There ain't enough gold there, if it is gold which I doubt like the devil, to fill a gnat's tooth."

"All!" exclaimed Steiner angrily. "You send me ten pounds of eart' from which I extract exactly one pennyweight ten grains of de finest golt, und you say, 'iss dat all?' Gott in Himmel!"

"A minute, Thornton," interrupted MacPhail, reaching for pad and pencil. "If ten pounds of earth contain one pennyweight ten grains, a ton would yield approximately two hunnerd times that or—say between fourteen and fifteen ounces. Gold—fine gold—is worth twenty dollars the ounce, so twenty times fourteen would make—oh my soul!" he stuttered as the tremendous total hit him in the eye, "almost three hundred dollars the ton!"

"Ja!" snorted Steiner derisively. "De best mines known in de world broduce around one hundred dollars to de ton, and he says, 'iss dat all?'"

"And," murmured MacPhail, closing his eyes dreamily, "that young man has a deposit of it five miles square and the Lord knows how deep! Millions of tons at three hunnerd dollars the ton. My soul!"

"And the geysers replenish the supply every day," added Herring. "Emil, are you sure that what you have there isn't iron pyrites?"

"Bositively!" said Emil. "Besides chemist, also I am geologist and metallurgist. Before I gome to dese United States I am for seven years on de West Coast of Africa making gomprehensive survey of de golt resources of dose country for de Imberial German government, yes. Even in Madagascar, where it is verboten by de crazy native law, either to hunt for golt, mine it, or take it out of de country, I haff been. Und in South America und Honduras, yes."

T. B. had been uncommonly quiet for several minutes. His nimble mind had been frantically knocking on the doors of long unused brain cells, endeavoring to call forth some forgotten bit of gold lore with which to confound the erudite Emil. The mountain labored and brought forth a mouse. T. B. halted the verbal traffic with a majestic sweep of his hand.

"Whoever heard of gold being found in mud like that, huh? I thought gold was either found in the sand at the bottom of creeks, where it had been washed down from the original lode, or scattered through hard rock called quartz or somethin' like that; and the quartz had to be blasted out of the earth like coal and crushed in big, expensive mills and the gold separated from it. Am I right or ain't I?"

"Mostly you are right," agreed Emil. "But who can say about Mother Nature? Maybe if you tell me where dis ore gome from I could exblain."

At a nod from Bannister, Herring briefly retailed the high lights of the morning's interview, and submitted the photographs of the Valley of Fire for Steiner's edification.

"Hah! So!" Steiner chuckled. "Now I am absolutely bositive! Of course. What you tell me, und dese pictures, make everyding so clear what puzzle me before. Now I see dat my so pee-utiful colors are not baint —no. Dis eart' is what is called in South American golt-broducing countries, 'porphyry,' a sure indication of golt! Hah! How simple! Dis porphyry is ground up in de bowels of de eart' and brought to de surface by de kind geysers. Dere can be no doubt, gendlemen, dis young man has discovered de greatest golt deposit in de world, und de cheapest to work."

"And don't know it," added T. B. grimly. "All he saw was Emil's 'burples and binks.' This here calls for a lot of deep-sea thinking."

He walked over to his "thinking post" by the window, and the other men conversed in subdued but excited tones.

"Ed," said T. B., after about ten minutes concentration on the problem, "I've got a scheme all figured out. You grab a taxi and hustle over to the Hotel Hinton. Frame up some yarn that will force him to give you some more of this mud. Then beat it down to the laboratories. Mac and me and Steiner will be waitin' for you. Steiner will make another test, and if this second lot of dirt that you're goin' to get pans out like the first then I'll spring my scheme."

Steiner arose and spoke with considerable irony. "Gendlemen, T. B. dinks dat Steiner's knowledge of golt iss not to be relied on, so I wish to make suggestion. Many times in de past I haff been of assistance to Mr. Scoville, who used to be assayer in de subtreasury. He iss now connect' with Whitefield & Mackay, mining engineers; und if you so wish I will telephone him to gome to de laboratories und giff us also his opinion."

His three superiors vociferously proclaimed their faith in Emil's ability, but agreed that a verification by an authority like Scoville was to be desired in a matter of such moment. In response to Steiner's call, Scoville, whose office was near by, joined them in the corridor of the Bannister Building. With the exception of Herring, who set off for the Hotel Hinton in a taxi, they piled in T. B.'s limousine and were swiftly driven to the laboratories. Herring joined them an hour later. He handed one bag to Steiner, and one to the mystified Scoville, who immediately set about their individual tasks. It was agreed that the two experts were to conduct their experiments separately.

"I played in luck," whispered Herring to Bannister and MacPhail. "Westerhout sent back word for me to come up to his room. I merely told him we had unfortunately mislaid his specimen and requested another. He was shaving at the time. He indicated the larger of two steamer trunks and told me to help myself. The trunk was packed with canvas bags, so I brought away two of my own choosing. I'm pretty sure I did nothing to arouse his suspicions."

Herring's eyes glowed reminiscently.

"What's on your mind?" asked T. B. sharply.

"Oh, nothing much. Just thinking of something I saw in his room."

"What was it?"

"The picture of a girl."

"Gettin' balmy in your old age, Ed?"

"Hardly that. The photograph was signed by 'Gilly, London.' Suspect that's the reason for our young friend's hurried departure from our hospitable shores. I don't blame him. If she is anything like her portrait she is worth a trip to London or Kow Loon, or the moon for that matter. It doesn't seem right," he ruminated, "that any one man should know a girl like that, and own the greatest gold mine in the world, too."

"Oh, we'll let him keep the girl," said T. B. enigmatically.

CHAPTER IV.

Steiner emerged from his scientific duel covered with honors. True, his canvas sack assayed but two hundred dollars' worth of dust per ton against Mr. Scoville's three hundred and forty-odd, but Scoville's emphatic corroboration of Emil's discovery pleased the big chemist more than all the gold in the Witwatersrand. Scoville had not been told what element to look for in making his tests, and his startled ejaculation, when he realized what his queer-looking chunk of mud had netted him, convinced the doubting trio that the big German had made no error in his previous analysis.

After Scoville's departure James Westerhout and his concession were considered from every angle. To his everlasting credit let it be said that Herring advocated telling Westerhout the simple truth. His suggestion was, that the company make a deal with the engineer, whereby they would finance the operation and share fifty-fifty in the profits.

"Ed, you talk like a child," T. B. sneered. "What d'ye suppose that bird will do when you tell him what he's got? Ask a paint concern to finance an El Dorado? I should say not. He will go down in the Street and be a multimillionaire before sundown tomorrow night."

"All right then, Thornton, let us finesse a bit and tell him that his earth does contain color, and make him an attractive offer for his concession."

"What d'ye call an attractive offer?"

"Oh—say—a hundred thousand or so. I don't know. Imagine we'll have to show him some real money."

"A hundred thousand dollars?" squealed T. B. "Start him off with a hundred thousand or even fifty, and he will smell a mouse proper. Not on your life—also nix—and no."

"Why not tell him then," suggested MacPhail, "that while his earth has color in it, it's not so good. Poor quality and difficult to work, and so on. Tell him we could only afford to pay him—now, maybe ten or fifteen thousand for his lease. How's that strike ye?"

T. B. killed MacPhail's idea right off. "Nope. That lays us open to an argument. He would go gallopin' off to some other paint company, or some firm of chemists and they would discover the goodies and we would be out of the barrel."

At the end of three hours' acrimonious discussion T. B. arose abruptly and said, "Boys, I got it all figured out. My scheme may sound crude but it will work. We'll just tell Mr. Easterhouse that his mud ain't worth three whoops in Hades, and while he's groggy from the blow we'll poke a good size check at him for his scrap of paper. That will rush him off his feet. He'll be so glad to get back his ante and the draw money for his busted flush that he'll sell out quick and get out of the game."

Herring strenuously opposed this policy, not that he thought it particularly reprehensible to attempt to acquire a gold mine for nothing, but because his excellent brain told him the scheme was faulty. MacPhail voted with Bannister, however, and Herring fell into line like the good subordinate that he was.

Despite the fact that the executive session had lasted far into the night, Bannister, MacPhail, Herring, and Steiner arrived at the general office at eight o'clock the next morning. After a hurried glance through the morning's mail, Herring betook himself off to the Hotel Hinton. His part in the furtherance of the agreed-upon plan was to keep a sharp watch on Mr. Westerhout's every movement during the day. A cheap, thankless rôle to be sure, but a very necessary one.

MacPhail was joined a few minutes after entering his office by Hamilton Stewart, whose pronounced resemblance to a startled walrus was almost mirth provoking. A clerk brought in from MacPhail's private safe in

the vaults, a sheaf of crisp documents fastened in a cover of heavy blue linen paper, lavishly spattered with red and blue wax seals and laced with ribbons of the same colors. It was Mr. Westerhout's concession.

The walrus perused this important property carefully and finally nodded approval. And then—like his famous prototype who took the little innocent oysters a-walking, so that he and his wood-working friend could devour them—he and MacPhail talked of many things; ships and sealing wax, of cabbages—probably a scurrilous reference to Mr. Westerhout's head—and kings. (Most likely they meant President Blas.) There was mention of a new business concern that Mr. Stewart would help organize; name of same would be the West Indian Chemical and Development Securities Corporation. Mr. MacPhail made many suggestions, and the walrus would nod approval or grunt dissent. It would seem from MacPhail's questions and Mr. Stewart's assurances that the W. I. C. and D. S. Corporation's comprehensive charter would allow that company to engage in any business under the sun, except that of striking off coin of the realm and printing treasury notes.

Doctor Steiner was furnished with letters of introduction to various personages, severely enjoined by T. B. not to let the cat out of the bag and dispatched to Washington to gather all possible information regarding Marimba.

Bannister then retired to his own private office and closed the door.

"All right, John," he said to his secretary, which meant "get out."

"If I want you I'll ring. And—pay attention to this—I'm not to be disturbed by anything or anybody except Mr. Herring or Mr. MacPhail until I give you the all-clear signal—see?"

In T. B.'s office was a private two-trunk telephone system that could be operated independent of the company's general switchboard. T. B. seated himself before this, adjusted the headpiece and awkwardly opened up the connections.

First on trunk number one he called long-distance operator, and asked to be put through to the second assistant director of the Pan-American Union at Washington, D. C. During the necessary wait, he plugged in on trunk number two and asked for the Second Street National Bank. Properly connected, he talked with the cashier.

"Say, Frank, I got a little deal on—want you to gimme a lift. On the strict Q. T., see? Want you to get in touch with the Great Gulf Bank at New Orleans—on the long-distance phone. Hang the expense. Find out if they got, or ever had, a depositor name of James Ousterhout—no wait a minute—that ain't right—lemme see now—James Westerhout. Ain't that a devil of a name, Frank? Find out how long they've had him on the books, what's his balance, the date, size, and name of payee of any big checks or drafts against the account recently. What? Now, Frank, don't start arguin' or readin' me any rules—listen, you get me that information right away. Tell 'em who it's for; they'll give up all right. G'by."

He next called Chief of Police Maher. After some rough joshing he requested Maher to wire the chief of police at Louisville, Kentucky, for the dossier of one James Westerhout, who was forced to quit the State university because of his father's business reverses. He also asked Maher to have one of his own plain-clothes men ascertain if Mr. Westerhout had engaged passage for London via the good ship *Muriatic* of the Five Star Line, which was scheduled to depart at six o'clock Friday evening.

By the time T. B. had finished with Maher, the connection with Washington had been established and a few minutes' conversation with the second assistant director of the Pan-American Union put him in possession of all the information desired from that quarter for the time being, namely: that the president of Marimba was Señor Don Enrigue Vicente Cipriano Phillipe Blas, and that this thoroughly christened potentate's unofficial but powerful adviser and confidant was a gifted youth entitled Luis Mercedes.

He gained the attention of the long-distance operator once more and put in a call for the manager of the personnel division of the Colterman Construction Company, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. While waiting for a response to this call, he got the Western Union on the other trunk and dictated the following cablegram:

LUIS MERCEDES, Marimba.

Cable me immediately my expense full details regarding concession granted James Westerhout covering privileges in Marimba. Pan-American Union Washington will vouch for my responsibility by wire. Kindly treat this communication confidentially.

THORNTON BANNISTER,
New York, U. S. A.

Long-distance operator rang him up and advised that the party at the Colterman Company was out to lunch. Thus reminded of the time of day, T. B. called the café downstairs and ordered onion soup au gratin, a two-inch steak, four baked potatoes, and coffee sent up to his office. As he was finishing up this light refection Herring entered, looking fagged.

"Hullo," greeted T. B. "What's doin'?"

"Never again will I question a bill from our protective agency for trailing a man," said Herring. "Playing detective is a tiresome job. Our friend went sight-seeing this morning, lunched at the Hinton from one until two, then went to his room to take a nap, so the clerk said. He left orders for the girl to ring his bell at three-thirty. As he is safe in bed I called it a day. Where's Mac and what have you been doing?"

"Mac and Ham Stewart ain't come back from lunch yet. They been battlin' like blood relations all morning over the new charter. Steiner is in Washington by this time, and I been sittin' here recitin' Gunga Din. What the devil do you think I been doin'? Wait till I answer this phone: 'Hullo! . . . How's that? . . . Do I still want Philadelphia? Sure I do. . . . Hullo! . . . Colterman? Say! This is Bannister Paint Company, N'York. Mr. Bannister talkin'. Listen! We're thinkin' about takin' on one of your old employees. . . . Yes, name's James—James——'"

"'Westerhout,' prompted Herring.

"'James Westerhout. What d'ye know about him? Huh? You will what? . . . Oh, look him up in the files! I see. . . . All right, telephone me soon as you find out. . . . All right, g'by!'"

He hung up the headgear, leaned back in his chair, lit his after-luncheon stogie, and puffed contentedly. "So, Ed, he ain't called on nobody else, hey?"

"No. He doesn't seem to be acquainted in New York. Just ambled around looking the town over."

"Lemme see," mused T. B., frowning at his watch, "he's due here at four-thirty, ain't he? It's three o'clock now. Time I was hearin' from some of those people I been working on all day."

MacPhail and Stewart came in, and the next half hour was spent in anxiously eying the miniature switchboard. It looked for a while as if Mr. Westerhout would arrive before the stage had been properly set for him, and the four conspirators grew distinctly nervous as the precious minutes passed and T. B.'s various inquiries remained unanswered.

But at three-thirty the returns started to come in with a rush, and as each successive message came over the wires, Bannister's grin widened. At four o'clock he gave a little yelp of elation.

"Every district heard from but one, boys, and every little detail checks up. The chief of police at Louisville wires Maher that the Westerhouts were a fine old family. This boy's father went broke in the tobacco business and died shortly after the crash. The Louisville police even got a good description of the kid from one of the 'perfessors' at the university. Maher further says that one of his plain-clothes men saw the passenger list of the *Muriatic* and Westerhout's name is on it. Got stateroom S. D. 11-A. So much for that.

"The cashier of the Great Gulf Bank at New Orleans tells Frank Williams of the Second Street National, that they honored a draft against Westerhout's account for four thousand dollars, six weeks ago. Says it wiped the account out. Colterman's employment manager tells me that Westerhout signed up with them last November and has been detailed in Marimba until a month ago, when he quit 'em. Now, just as soon as we hear from this Looey person we'll have all the information we need to close this here deal. Nothin' up the sleeve, no whiskers to deceive. Huh? What say, Ed? Sure I believed him; but there is nothin' like checkin' these yarns up."

He was interrupted by a knocking at the door. It was a boy bearing the familar yellow envelope.

"It's from Looey!" shouted T. B. excitedly. "Talk about last-minute pardons." He snatched the envelope from the boy and ripped it open with his forefinger. "Oh, my Gawd!" he yelled in dismay as he waved four closely typed, still damp sheets in the air. "I told that ginney to wire me full details, and he took me at my word. Wonder what this message cost!" He skimmed rapidly through the cablegram and the scowl on his face gave way to a complacent grin. "But it's all right. This here's good readin'. Ed, we are all set for Mr. What's-his-name now. Go to it! Mac, you and Ham stay in here with me where we can hear without

bein' seen. Ed is to see him alone accordin' to plan."

"Have you made out the check, Mac?" asked Herring.

"Here's the check," snapped T. B. "My own personal check. You pay him with that."

"Why not the company's check?"

"Ed!" exclaimed the old man impatiently. "What's the stockholders of the Bannister Paint Company got to do with this deal? Nothin'. The West Indian Chemical and Development Securities Corporation consists of—or will when it's properly incorporated—me, you, Mac, Ham, and Emil.

"Me, you, and Mac split the stock three ways. Ham gets a block of stock from each of us for his services and Emil gets the same for discoverin' the stuff. Until the new company gets goin' I'll pay the bills and you'll all refund to me later. See? Well, watch your step in the next few minutes. Better beat it to your own office now; I hear your phone ringin'."

CHAPTER V.

Herring greeted Westerhout in a manner that was subtly calculated to convey the hint that they were about to indulge in a strictly business talk. He nodded toward a chair and rearranged some papers on his desk in a preoccupied manner.

"Well, Mr. Herring, what's the good news?" asked Westerhout. His tone was casual enough, but his eyes betrayed his acute interest. Herring lifted from his desk drawer a sheet of paper covered with Steiner's meticulous writing and handed it to Westerhout.

"This," he said gravely, "is Doctor Steiner's report on your specimen. Doctor Steiner is our chief chemist, and there is no better in the land. When we first showed him your earth he was intensely interested. In fact, he was as confident of its color value as you were. But"—here Herring sighed convincingly—"repeated tests failed to disclose any pigments that would make your deposit interesting to us. Doctor Steiner was greatly disappointed and also puzzled. In his opinion, it is merely freak earth."

Westerhout fingered the report listlessly for a few minutes, and then asked slowly, like a man trying to assimilate an idea that was a little too abstruse for his mentality, "Then you mean that my mud is no good—that all that wonderful coloring can't be isolated and used to make paint?"

"That's about it, I'm afraid," answered Herring regretfully. "Merely freak earth. Doctor Steiner was so amazed at the result of his test that he had one of his most competent assistants check him up. But it was no use. I'm sorry. We are all sorry. I know that this is a big disappointment to you, but don't forget, my dear fellow, that it is also a big disappointment to us. Had your sample proven all we anticipated it would have made your deposit of immense value to the Bannister Paint Company. But as it is——" Herring shrugged his shoulders helplessly.

Westerhout sat silent for some little time. Then he reached for his hat and stood up. Herring watched him speculatively. The success of the Bannister Paint Company's coup depended considerably on Westerhout doing a certain amount of talking, thereby enabling Herring to imperceptibly lead up to the strategic point. But the young man did not seem disposed to do any talking. He was accepting the collapse of his bubble as impassively as a seasoned poker player discards a pat hand that he surmises isn't good enough.

"Mr. Herring," he said, "there's no use taking up any more of your time by entering into a discussion of your man's report. In words of one syllable, the mud is of no use to you. That settles it, I reckon. I'll just trouble you for my papers and be on my way."

This wouldn't do at all. The last thing Herring wanted to do was to let that precious concession get out of his hands. Westerhout's attitude put Herring at a disadvantage. He had an offer to make, and it had to be made mighty diplomatically. A crude, blunt proposal would arouse Westerhout's suspicions that all was not aromatic in Manhattan.

"Just a minute. Sit down. Sit down," Herring said hastily. He extracted a cigarette from his case, lit it leisurely, and inhaled a few puffs. Then he resumed in a kindly, chatty way. "I've a little proposition to submit to you, Mr. Westerhout, that might take the edge off your disappointment. I will say that you take your medicine gamely. I'm frank to admit that I wouldn't be half as good a sport under the circumstances. However, we, that is, Mr. Bannister, Mr. MacPhail, and myself, after we

were thoroughly convinced by our chemical department that your earth was worthless to us, from the color standpoint, had quite a discussion regarding you and your concession. I might say in passing that our Mr. Bannister was favorably impressed by you—personally. Ahem! Now, please don't think I am prying, but am I correct in assuming that you have expended most of your capital on this little venture?"

"You are," said Westerhout frankly.

"Um," mused Herring and gazed sympathetically at the wall. "Too bad. Too bad. Let me see—I believe you said you paid four thousand dollars for your lease? Of course, that doesn't represent your entire expense. Naturally not."

"I figure I am out about six thousand on the whole deal," offered Westerhout.

Herring meditated some more. He was a fairish actor, that man. Suddenly, as if he had just arrived at a momentous decision he slapped his palm on the desk and fixed Westerhout with compelling eyes.

"Will you accept ten thousand dollars for your concession?" he demanded abruptly.

"Why should you offer ten thousand dollars for a worthless mudhole?" blurted the perplexed Westerhout.

"Looking into the mouth of the gift horse?" countered Herring stiffly. "I think I've remarked that you made quite an impression on our Mr. Bannister. We are not an eleemosynary institution, as the well-worn saying has it, but doesn't it strike you that the Bannister Paint Company can do more with that worthless valley than yourself? You have sunk six thousand dollars—and a job—in an unfortunate investment. I offer you ten thousand for your rights. You replenish your bank account and add four thousand to it. Doesn't that appeal to you? Ten thousand dollars is quite a sum. Quite a sum. In view of the fact that some of our officials advocated offering you only enough to reimburse you, I think that Mr. Bannister's personal offer of ten thousand dollars is decidedly generous. You don't think so?"

"Ten thousand dollars means nothing to me," said Westerhout. "I thought I had something worth fifty times that amount. I'm obliged to Mr. Bannister for his charitable offer——"

"Not charitable."

"Oh, yes, it is! I'm not an utter fool. I'll take those papers and photographs, if you please."

Herring was almost in a panic. On his own initiative he put a question—a dangerous question—a question that brought dark, angry suspicion to Westerhout's eyes—but a question, nevertheless, that might give the Bannister Paint Company another chance at that concession. "Will you allow me to keep these papers and photographs until tomorrow—until I can confer again with my associates?"

"What's the use?" asked Westerhout coldly.

"I don't know," answered Herring candidly. "But will you?"

Edward Herring was general manager of a huge industry for but one reason. He was capable. There was no doubt about that. His winning personality had served the company in good stead at many an apparent impasse. His ingenuousness had disarmed many a suspicious adversary. As he had foreseen, T. B.'s plan had blown up. His string of instructions had run out. It was now up to him. There remained nothing for him to do but to attempt to save the dike by sticking in his own powerful and adroit finger, so he went into action. He pulled out all the stops, and for a solid half hour he worked on Mr. Westerhout as *Marc* worked on the Roman mob. He made the talk of his life, but when he had finished he still possessed the check, and Westerhout the concession.

"No," said the engineer stubbornly to Herring's last appeal. "I'm sorry. There is no use wasting each other's time. Our ideas are too far apart. We can't do business."

"Then you are going to throw away ten thousand dollars?" asked Herring tartly.

"Not exactly," answered Westerhout, rising once more. "With all due respect to your man, Steiner, I still believe my earth contains paint. It might be that some of the English or German companies will perceive greater possibilities in my samples than you folks do. I don't know. I wouldn't be giving myself a fair shake by selling out so cheaply without getting another opinion; and as long as I'm going across, anyhow, I might just as well consult somebody on the other side. Besides, there is no hurry."

"I am positive, Mr. Westerhout, that any paint company or chemist will render the same opinion that our Doctor Steiner did. And then what?"

"In that case I still have a good bet left. I'll try the General Powder Company. There

might be some element in my mud lake that would interest them. Being on the ground in Marimba I imagine they would be good people to talk to."

"Well, I'm sorry," said Herring briefly. He also stood up and handed back the concession and the photographs. Then he made one more cast. "What will you sell out for?"

Westerhout considered this for a few moments, seemed about to speak, then shook his head.

"What's the use?" he asked good-naturedly enough. "I don't want to make myself appear ridiculous. Let's let her go as she stands."

"Very well."

They shook hands, and Westerhout went out.

Immediately the door connecting Herring's office with T. B.'s was flung violently open and the old man stalked out, followed by Stewart and MacPhail. The walrus was grunting as if in pain. MacPhail pulled at his long nose absently. T. B. jammed his hands in his trousers pockets, teetered back and forth on the balls of his feet, and glared ferociously at Herring.

"Well, Ed?" he snarled expectantly.

"Well, yourself," retorted Herring briskly. "You heard the conversation, I think."

T. B. fairly crackled with rage. "You made a hell of a mess out of it, didn't you?"

For the first time in all his long years of association with the company, Herring lost his temper.

"I made a mess of it," he shouted, leaping to his feet, "because I was unable to put over your decrepit, swindling scheme; a scheme that I bitterly opposed, a scheme that I was forced to accept much against my better judgment, a scheme——"

"Forced!" bawled T. B. "Shouldn't let yourself be forced. Got a mind of your own, ain't you? If you knew the scheme was bad why didn't you hold out against it? What d'ye draw your salary for? What are you general manager for?"

"I'm general manager for a senile old ass," yelled Herring. This rather neat one gave Herring all the honors and left T. B. groggy and weaving like a distressed elephant. Before he could think up a sizzling retort, MacPhail stepped into the breach and with a few well-chosen words reduced the high temperature to normal once more.

"Ed'ard's right," he stated positively. " 'Twas a poor idea, and that's all there is to it. Instead of sitting here yammering at one another we had better be mending our fences, if that's any use. Indeed, I'm thinking our bird has flown forever, taking with him his billion-dollar piece of paper. Dear, dear! Ye'll mind he mentioned submitting his samples to foreign companies, or as a last resort to the General Powder?" MacPhail wagged his head glumly.

"What are we goin' to do?" demanded the temporarily abashed Bannister. "What you got on your mind, Ed?"

"I refuse to have anything more to do with the matter."

"Now, dog-gone it, Ed," complained the old man, "you wouldn't die away on us like that, would you?"

"What do you expect me to do? I'm no wizard. The man has gone—forever as Mac said. We bungled this thing—awfully! There isn't a thing we can do. You heard the conversation. He wouldn't talk. He wouldn't scare. He wouldn't dicker. I tell you we've lost out."

"Dam' if we have," blustered T. B. "Ed, if you think for a holy minute I'm goin' to let that pig-headed valentine gyp me out of that mine, you're wrong. We've a moral right in this here thing that entitles us to consideration, and I mean——"

"Great Scott! A moral right!" exclaimed Herring scathingly. "Don't be a hypocrite."

"Who's a hypocrite? Listen to me. Who discovered this gold mine, hey? We did, didn't we? He didn't. He's tryin' to sell us a paint mine? Paint my eye! How much does he expect to collect on a paint mine? You take it from me, that caricature of a bullfighter has got a price fixed in his head at which he'll sell out and it's up to us to find out what that price is."

"You'll recollect," interposed MacPhail, "that he said he had been expecting fifty times more nor Ed'ard offered him."

"Sure he did," said T. B., who was fast regaining his customary aggressiveness. "There you are, Ed, see? It might be fifty times ten thousand or it might be less. There's a good clew. One thing I'm positive of. He's got a price somewhere between ten thousand and five hundred thousand, and we got to find out what it is."

"And Ed'ard can do that little thing better nor anybody here," finished the wily Scot. "I was just thinking, considering the time o' day, that the young man would not be taking his samples to any other concern this after-

noon. He has most likely gone to his hotel for dinner. 'Twould be a grand stroke if Ed-'ard would go over to the Hinton and establish himself as Mr. Westerhout's host for the evening. 'Twould keep the lad out of mischief, ye' understand, and give Ed'ard a chance to reopen negotiations. At least he might get a line on asking prices for gold mines."

"There you are," beamed T. B. "Now we're talking sense. Mac, you can vote yourself a raise in salary on that one. How about it, Ed? Will you do it?"

Herring succumbed to the pleadings of Bannister and Stewart and the blandishments of MacPhail. "Very good," he said taking over the proffered leadership a bit unctiously. "I'm no quitter. I'll do all I can."

"Good boy!" said T. B. "Show him the time of his life. Remember the old Persian adage, 'In Weeny Whereisit.' A little laughing water won't hurt none. Make him talk. When efficient modern business methods fail, we got to use old-time, knock-'em-down, and drag-'em-out tactics. You're the boy can handle him if anybody can. You're the most agreeable man I know when you ain't the most disagreeable. Listen! I'm goin' to take Mac and Ham up to the club, and we'll wait up for you to hear the good news. Now do the best you can, Ed."

"That's all I can do. I'm not very sanguine about the outcome, however. Mr. Westerhout doesn't impress me as a person given to loose or frivolous conversation."

CHAPTER VI.

Herring hustled over to the Hinton and, as he passed through the lobby, he caught a glimpse of Westerhout in the bar. This was excellent luck and made it unnecessary for Herring to alibi his presence in the hotel. He entered the bar and, affecting not to see Westerhout, ordered a cocktail. He drank leisurely, lit a fresh cigarette, and gazed idly around the room. Pretending to catch sight of the engineer for the first time, he hailed him genially. Westerhout nodded perfunctorily. Herring offered a proposition based on the precedent established by that sterling American, the Governor of North Carolina, which was accepted.

It was plain to Herring that the other was more keenly disheartened than his attitude of the afternoon had indicated. Herring's invitation to dine was accepted rather reluctantly, but Herring despaired not. He was a most charming host and his good humor proved infectious. He seduously avoided any reference to Marimba or the thing that loomed the biggest in their secret minds, but chatted lightly about inconsequential matters. It was Westerhout himself who reopened the subject. Completely lifted out of the slough of despair by Herring's amiability—and a proper appreciation of the excellence of the sparkling Burgundy—he attempted an awkward apology for his erstwhile unsociability.

"Sorry I'm not the sportsman you gave me credit for to-day," he said. "I'll be honest and admit that was a stiff jolt you handed me. A man is all out of luck who is cursed with an imaginative optimistic mind. The shocks to his enthusiasm are too great when his bubbles burst. The only chap who dodges the awful wallops of life is the hard-boiled pessimist. He never has a dream. Therefore, he's never hurt. Me—I've been living in a fool's paradise and the bump was jarring. Very. I thought that my troubles were over; that at last I had within reach enough money to—er—straighten things out," he finished lamely.

"All your troubles financial ones?" asked Herring with just the proper amount of blended curiosity and sympathy.

"Every last one of them! And so are most any one else's. Don't ever believe that sickening cant about money not being everything. It comes mighty near being everything. The relation of money to life is so close that the two are well-nigh one. It's about time somebody was coming to the front in defense of money. Its traducers are legion and I notice they are mostly folks who haven't got any. Wealth means progressive civilization. Civilization means education and education means the appreciation of all that's beautiful and humane and decent in life, and that appreciation brings us right close up to the Heavenly Gates, doesn't it?

"Money is the accepted token of energy and industry, and life's harsh conditions, which most of us look upon as almost unsurmountable barriers between us and the money we covet, impress me as being laid down by a wise Providence to prevent the accumulated, tangible evidence of the world's energy from falling into the wrong hands. It is only by our ability to climb or break down these barriers that we prove we are entitled to possess money, and I must say

that I have rarely met or heard of any man of wealth, who hasn't beaten a barrier of some sort to get it, unless his ancestors did. I begrudge no man his money. He has it and keeps it because he is smarter than I am. If I get some of it away from him I am smarter than he, therefore, I'm entitled to it. What?"

"A rather cold-blooded philosophy," said Herring, secretly amused at the young man's diatribe, "but strictly in keeping with the spirit of the times. I can imagine your comments coming from a millionaire rather than from an admittedly poor man, however."

"I'm poor only because I haven't the brains that would entitle me to my share of the world's wealth. When I beat my own particular barrier I will have my money and, believe me, I will have earned it."

Herring laughed heartily. "Westerhout, you are a capitalist without any capital."

"Something like that," grinned Westerhout sheepishly. "Anyhow, I'm strong for money. I need it. Not for myself—please don't get the impression from my windy oration that I want a pile of money just to see what I can buy." He lit a fresh cigarette and helped himself to another drink. "Yes, sir, money is a wonderful thing. It eliminates the worries of the living, and sometimes"—he paused a moment and then went on slowly, thoughtfully—"sometimes I've wondered if it wouldn't bring peace to an uneasy soul who had passed over."

Herring wisely refrained from speaking. This sphinx would gabble if only the right button was pushed, and it seemed that the button that summoned the waiter was the right one.

Westerhout resumed:

"You recollect me speaking of my father last evening? And about my having to quit college when he went broke? Well, let me tell you about dad. He was the finest, squarest old dad that ever lived. He was in the tobacco business. All our folks were planters for generations back. The business was there just like the money—I reckon we Westerhouts always had plenty of money. But money was a secondary consideration to dad. It merely provided him with the funds to live as he would live. And, believe me, he did live.

"Dad's profession was that of host. He lived to entertain and delight his family and friends. One day a party of big business men called on him. They were consolidating the leaf-tobacco business. They blue-skyed poor old dad, and he went in with them. Worse yet, he took all his friends in with him. Anything that old Poultney Westerhout went into, they figured, was bound to be all right.

"When the big blow-off came dad was cleaned completely. Not that he had invested his entire fortune—as I said before, he was a wealthy man—but he refunded to his friends all they had lost, from his personal purse, with the exception of about two hundred thousand dollars. The only reason he didn't pay that account was because his money ran out before he got to it. Then he sat down in his old easy-chair by the fireplace and died. I reckon it was the kindest thing the Almighty could have done for him."

Westerhout paused in reflective silence.

"There was a girl," he presently went on quietly. "Funny thing, isn't it? There's always a girl who gets hurt, isn't there?

"You recollect seeing that picture on my dresser? Well, her father is the man who didn't get the two hundred thousand. He was dad's best friend. That's funny, too! We always pay the comparative stranger and stick our best friends, don't we? Well, it was hard on her. And on me, too, in a way. You see, we were sort of—you understand—ever since we were kids. Of course, that was broken off. One couldn't expect a girl to marry the chap whose dad had bankrupted her dad, and made a pauper out of her. And I know that dad, wherever he is, worries about that two hundred thousand he owes Tom Allenby's daughter.

"I thought sure I had finally struck it rich and could square things with Rose. So you can see, sir, that I have a little justification for my low spirits. However, I hope—I sincerely beg your pardon, sir," he stammered as he caught the queer expression on Herring's face.

"For what?" asked Herring gravely.

"Why—why—for intruding my personal affairs into your little party. A mighty poor way to repay your hospitality. I reckon I've tampered with that bottle too much."

"My boy, your little confidence doesn't require an apology. It would be useless for me to offer any empty words of sympathy, so I won't try. But there is one thought I would like to reflect to you, and I'm sure will not be offended. Can't you and the young lady waive the matter of the two hundred thou-

sand dollars—make it a sort of 'suspense account' as it were—and furnish your little romance with a popular ending? You have many, many years before you in which to gather fame and fortune, but precious few in which to enjoy the only two really God-given gifts to mankind—youth and love." This time Mr. Herring's sigh was genuine. It was not altogether his fault that he was a lonely, fussy money machine. Once he had youth and the girl, but no money. When he had the money the girl was dead and his youth was buried in a safe-deposit box. Westerhout's little personal sketch had stirred him deeper than was comfortable. Hang it all, he wished he had resisted his associates' importunings and washed his hands of the whole rotten mess, as he had intended. Engineering a shrewd business deal was one thing, and trying to crook—yes, that's exactly what it was, no more, no less—crook this likable youngster out of his mine was another.

And that wonderful—that exquisite girl in the picture! Smashing these two young lives. That's what he was trying to do, egged on by the despicable old rascal, T. B., and that long-nosed miser, MacPhail, and tricky Ham Stewart! A fine crowd of respectable business men. He had anticipated a long battle of wits with Westerhout, with the chances all against himself for getting any information that would enable them to make a satisfactory deal all around, and here Westerhout lays down his hand with a simplicity that is almost pitiful! Two hundred thousand dollars! A mere two hundred thousand dollars. Almost four hundred million in bullion had been taken out of the Comstock Lode alone!

Emerging from his golden daze, Herring beckoned to the waiter and ordered another bottle of Burgundy. Then he remembered he had asked a question just before he oriented himself back to days of basques and balloon sleeves, wire collar shapers and mustache cups, and that his companion was answering it.

"So you see it's impossible, Mr. Herring," Westerhout was saying. "Rose is living in England with her mother's people. They are blessed with plenty of this world's goods and they treat Rose like one of their own. It would be worse than unfair for me to let her sacrifice herself."

Herring's thoughts, which were behaving rather loosely, this particular evening, switched back to the sentimental, and it is a debatable question to what extremes of generosity his innate decency and a rather larger than usual amount of Burgundy would have led him, had not Westerhout, rightly surmising that he had done entirely too much talking, shut up like a clam.

Shortly after, they left the hotel and took in the last two acts of a G. and M. show. After which they made a hurried round of the more notable grape arbors. Conversation, becoming somewhat difficult, because of Westerhout's resumption of his former taciturnity, they decided to call it a day. Herring dropped the engineer at the Hinton, but not before the young man had promised to call at the Bannister Paint Company's office the next morning at eleven o'clock and bring his concession with him.

Oddly enough—and it irritated Herring that he should think of it—as he sank back on the taxi cushions, T. B.'s vulgar characterization of Westerhout flashed through his mind. One—fat—turkey! Herring arrived at the Static Club at one-thirty in the morning, and was swiftly lifted up to T. B.'s suite. A hotly contested battle broke up instanter when Herring entered. He was decorously tipsy. With ponderous dignity he related the events and conversations of the evening.

"Two hundred thousand dollars!" groaned Bannister when Herring had finished. "Ain't that awful? Almost a quarter of a million. When you talk to him to-morrow, Ed, see if you can't shade that figger a whole lot. That's too much money."

"Listen to me, Thornton Bannister," commanded Herring sternly. "I fulfilled my promise to the letter. I not only ascertained the amount I think this young man is willing to take for his concession, I checked up your information from Louisville. Now, I am through. Get that? I'll have nothing further to do with swindling this young man out of his mine except, of course"—he hastened to add—"furnishing my third of the money. Nothing further than that." The beautiful bubbles in his head reflected to him visions of Poultney Westerhout and his manly son James; Tom Allenby and his lovely daughter Rose. His heart expanded a trifle more. "Furthermore it's two hundred thousand, no less, or—or"—here he was forced to descend to the vernacular for the proper phrase—"or I spill the beans."

MacPhail discerned signs of a battle on the premises. "Thornton," he said, "let's not

fumble this matter again. By grand good luck, coupled with Ed'ard's ability, we have once more got this concession within reach. Ed'ard says two hundred thousand will buy the lease. Very well. We'll buy it. That's a trifle over sixty-five thousand apiece. I'm satisfied to pay my share. So is Ed'ard. All agreed?"

Herring blinked at them sardonically and asked, "How are you going to reconcile your offer of ten thousand yesterday with your offer of two hundred thousand to-day?"

"I can dope that out all right," snapped T. B. angrily.

"That's good. You'll have it to do," stated Herring flatly. He arose and steered an erratic course toward the door. "I'm going home. Also I am going on the wagon. I'm tired of getting stewed in the interests of the Bannister Paint Company."

CHAPTER VII.

"As long as I got to handle this here deal m'self," announced T. B. importantly as he eyed his colleagues the next morning, "I'm goin' to interduce some original ideas."

"It's all in your hands, Thornton," assured MacPhail hastily. "Nobody cares how you handle it as long as you secure possession ye' understand."

"Well, then, Mac, you rustle up the two hundred thousand in cash right away—hear me? I got a theory that cash money is always a potent argument, 'specially when you show it to the young and unsophisticated. Bring it to Ed's office. I'll see Westerhout in there. You fellers can stay here in my office and listen to a real guy swing a deal."

At eleven o'clock the stage was once more set for the spoliation of Mr. Westerhout. T. B. sat at his ease before Herring's desk, the top of which was pulled down, puffing serenely on the everpresent stogie. Herring, MacPhail, Stewart, and Steiner, who had returned from Washington, crouched silently before the little hidden panel in T. B.'s office, that allowed them to see and hear all that went on in the other room.

There is a limit to the time in which the human emotions can be held in suspense. Therefore, at eleven-thirty the watchers began to breathe eighteen to the minute once more and become aware of aches in various joints. At twelve noon, Bannister snapped his head around and yelled for Ed to do something.

A call to the Hotel Hinton elicited the information that Mr. Westerhout had checked out at nine-thirty and his luggage had been conveyed to the Five Star pier at Hoboken. The clerk added, however, that Mr. Westerhout had been noticed by an observant page in the bar as late as ten-thirty carrying on an animated discussion with Frank of the morning shift.

In deference to the sensibilities of our readers we will not attempt to depict the ensuing scene. At the expiration of ten minutes they decided it was safe to allow the old man to arise from the leather office couch to which he had been pinioned by the stalwart Ham Stewart to prevent an apoplexy or a murder.

Once more the reliable old wheel horse, MacPhail, brought his common sense to bear on the debacle. At his suggestion the company's private detective agency was loosed after their man, and Chief Maher, who never overlooked a heavy subscriber to legitimate election expenses like T. B., promised to go into action with some of his best pussyfooters. All to no avail, however. At four p. m. Westerhout could still be listed, dramatically speaking, as the missing papers. At that time one of the two men detailed to watch the Five Star pier telephoned that, while Mr. Westerhout's luggage had been put aboard the *Muriatic*, the gentleman himself had not put in an appearance.

"Here, Ed," said T. B., "there's only one thing left to do. The *Muriatic* sails at six. Westerhout might slip on board while those sleuths was tryin' to get their penny back from the slot machine. Put on your hat and gloves, grasp your cane firmly in your left hand, and beat it for that wharf. Sit on a coil of rope till he shows up. Then nail him, and fetch him back here if you have to slug him. If you fail, the Hudson River will be kinder to you than I will."

The door opened and a page announced in clear, ringing tones, "Mister Watcherhouse."

Mr. James Westerhout advanced into the room, removed his super-Panama from his sleek black head and deposited his disreputable satchel at his feet. It was a trying situation. Herring managed to ease the tension by introducing the engineer to Lewis and Steiner.

"Sorry I couldn't keep my appointment with you this morning, Mr. Herring," said Westerhout, and his speech not only betrayed

his Southern ancestry, it also bore olfactory evidence that he had been regaling himself with the enervating properties of the Southland's sweetest flower. To be absolutely honest, Mr. Westerhout was just about submerged to the Plimsoll mark.

"I met up with an old friend of mine who offered me a job on a railroad proposition in Chinese Burma. Thought I'd never get away from him." He seemed to think this brief, curtly delivered explanation was sufficient apology to atone for the horrible hours he had allowed them to stew through.

Old T. B., after his first attack of pop-eyed astonishment, had rapidly regained his wits. He sized up the situation and decided that Fate had slipped him a pair of good cards with which to bolster up a poor enough hand. The extremely limited time and the engineer's condition made a line of attack possible that would have been ineffectual that morning.

"Oh, that's all right," he said. With a pudgy hand he pooh-poohed away the idea that Westerhout's dereliction was in any way a matter of import. "Lemme see now—ah—what kind of an agreement did you and Mr. Herrin' come to last night about this here thing?"

"None whatever, sir. Mr. Herring merely asked me to stop in and bring my papers with me. I can't see any reason why we should reopen the matter. That's one reason why I didn't make any especial effort to get around this morning. I knew I'd have time later to stop in and say good-by to you all."

"Um! Got that concession with you?"

Westerhout produced it. T. B. handed the concession to MacPhail and Stewart and asked them if that was the correct document. They scrutinized it carefully and said that it was, beyond a doubt. The old man leaned back in his chair, ran his fingers through his crisp white hair, and drew noisily on his disintegrating stogie. He eyed Westerhout like a pensive old eagle.

"I think me and you can do some business," he opined confidentially. Westerhout said nothing. He seemed able to say nothing whenever the mood struck him. T. B.'s eyes snapped. "What'll you take for it?"

Still Westerhout remained silent. T. B. took a fresh grip on his temper and repeated the question sharply, adding, "Will you take fifty thousand dollars for it?"

"Oh, my Lord," moaned Herring in MacPhail's ear. "Crude—coarse—raw! Mac, the old man's going to ruin us again." Desperately they scanned the engineer's face, trying to anticipate his answer. Despairingly they noticed his jaw stiffen and a hard, disagreeable look creep into his peculiar eyes. Desolately they saw him reach for his hat and his bag.

"No."

Right here is where Thornton Bannister displayed the metal of his make-up. Calmly he gazed at his watch and said, "Young man, your time is worth money to you. So's ours to us. In two minutes we are gonna settle it one way or another. I don't care which. When buyer and seller agree on price then business is done. You are the seller, we are the buyers. There's some Latin mumbo-jumbo that covers the case of the buyer, but the seller must also beware occasionally. As buyers we have the privilege of trying to buy as cheaply as possible. So I ain't goin' to enter into no wordy argument about yesterday's price and to-day's price. I got a proposition to make to you and you 'takes it or you leaves it' as the feller says. I'll give you two hundred thousand dollars—cash—for your concession. Cash—right now. And that's every dam' cent I will give you. Two hundred thousand dollars. That's final. Now you go ahead and make a few remarks."

He climaxed this little gem of suave business procedure by slamming back the roll-top of Herring's desk and showing Westerhout a close-up of two hundred thousand dollars in large red-gold bills.

Events hung on dead center for a few seconds while they paid reverend ocular homage to the god, whose puny, short-lived beneficence is summarily terminated at that moment when he has decided the last great question that lies within his jurisdiction for his millions of devoted worshipers, to wit: Shall the casket be adorned with nickel-plated handles or solid silver? Rather a fourth-rate deity when one comes to think about it.

Westerhout lifted a packet of notes, riffled it, and carelessly threw it back on the pile. He, also, made a pretense of consulting his watch, and then he spoke.

"You've bought something. It's like this, Mr. Bannister, I don't particularly care a hang what the difference in your two offers means. If through my ignorance of correct business ethics I had sold for a trifling amount something worth two hundred thou-

sand dollars, that would have been my hard luck. For all I know, my land may be worth two billion dollars. As I told you, I don't know the first thing about the paint business." He paused, and Herring shivered guiltily. This young man was shooting wildly but close to the mark.

"We're gamblin'—just gamblin'," asserted T. B. Westerhout wagged his head doubtfully.

"Maybe so. I don't know. Anyhow, the amount you have mentioned just happens to be close enough to the one I have in mind. So I guess that settles it. I might see the day when I will regret this deal, but I reckon I can gamble a little, too. Now, gentlemen, just what do I have to do to transfer this lease? I'm totally ignorant of such matters."

"Git a notary," replied T. B., hopping around like a Zuni snake dancer. "Mac, git a notary. Here, Ham, you 'tend to this."

The conveying of the concession from Mr. Westerhout to Thornton Bannister, from whom it was subsequently to be transferred to the West Indian Chemical and Development Securities Corporation, was surprisingly simple. The forehanded walrus had prepared a proper deed which Westerhout stated looked all right to him. So everybody signed on the dotted line. Everybody looked very grave and important, and Westerhout handed the beribboned concession to Mr. Bannister without a word or smile. T. B. motioned to the stack of bills. Westerhout opened his satchel and slowly stuffed the money in it. He retrieved his hat and walked to the door. With his hand on the knob, he turned, and they saw that he was smiling his old whimsical, charming smile.

"Oh, pshaw!" he exclaimed, dropping the plethoric bag and walking back to the motionless group with both hands extended. "Oh, pshaw! What's the use? You're right, Mr. Bannister. Business is business. I came mighty near going off in a huff, like a kid."

Pretty nice chap, he was.

They shook hands all around, slapped him on the back and wished him good luck and bon voyage and slyly ragged him about Mrs. Westerhout to be and sent him off to Hoboken in Bannister's limousine.

"Well," demanded T. B., holding the prize aloft, "am I there or ain't I?"

They joined hands in a circle around him and, after solemnly assuring him that he was there, played ring-a-round-a-rosy until MacPhail's rheumatism rose up and smote him hip, thigh, and collar bone. They shook hands some more, and embraced each other like a pack of Frenchmen. T. B. opened a window and leaning far out, so that he wouldn't disturb the clerks in the outer office yelled hilariously into the ether. This done, he came to earth again.

"Boys, this here is a great and auspicious occasion," explained T. B. "But there's one other little thing I got to attend to, quick, and I don't mind sayin' it's the worst ever, but it's got to be done." He walked over to the little switchboard and signaled central.

"Hullo!! Gimme North Port, six three. . . . Yeah. . . . That's right. . . . Hullo! . . . 'Sthat North Port six three? . . . Huh? . . . Yeah. . . . Who are you? . . What's that? . . . Frons what? . . . Oh, Frans Swat! . . . That's your name, hey? . . . You must be a new one. . . . Well, Mr. Swat, is Miz Bannister home? . . . Yeah, ma*dame*, if you like, but you better not let her hear you cussin' in the house. Tell her to git on the phone." He held his hand over the transmitter and whispered hoarsely to the amused listeners. "This is gonna be good. When I ease this one to ma*dame* she's gonna hit the roof, but, "Oh, hullo, hullo! 'Sthat you, m'dear? . . . I say, is that you, m'dear? . . . Huh? . . . Doggone it, Libby, can't you talk no plainer? . . . Yeah. That's better. Say, look! You gotta call that cruise off. . . Why? 'Cause I need the boat. . . . Can't help it, I gotta use that boat right away. . . . Oh, hang the guests! Can't you find some other way to amuse 'em? Hire Barnum & Bailey's circus and pull it on the front lawn. Anything—I'll stand for it. I tell you, Libby, I gotta have the boat. Say! You know that nice little blue electric. . . . Listen! . . . Say, Lib, gimme a chance to make a few remarks, will you? . . . All right—all right—but—but—I gotta have that boat. You chase one of the shuffers down to Seventy-second Street and tell Captain Dowd to git in touch with me right away. I'll explain when I see you. . . . Good girl! You stop in and grab that electric to-morrow and have 'em send me the bill. . . . What's that? . . . Nope! Not to-night. Gotta important meetin' on. . . . G'by."

T. B. hung up hastily and mopped his

forehead. "The scheme's this, boys. The *Cygnet* is layin' off Seventy-second Street, coaled and provisioned for a month's cruise. Me and you, Ed, and Emil here, will just naturally requisition that ark and beat it for the Spanish Main. Mac will stay home and sit on the lid of the paint pot and run things. Ed, you wire this Looey guy that we are on our way. We'll go down there and take possession and tell 'em all where they head in. Boys, here's to our concession in Marimba. Long may it concede."

CHAPTER VIII.

A week later the *Cygnet* dropped anchor in the magnificent harbor of Marimba. The trip down had been uneventful, and it is doubtful whether or not any one of the Argonauts enjoyed it. They were too thoroughly innoculated with gold fever to relax. Most of the time was spent in discussing the details of their new venture. But two of their conversations are worth chronicling. One afternoon Herring and Steiner were deep in the science of practical mining. T. B. had been silent an unconscionable long time, but his snorts and grimaces patently revealed the fact that he was struggling with the germ of an idea.

"It iss to be hoped," Steiner was droning in his stilted monotone, "dat dere will be available a stream of fresh water, or bossibly several streams, as salt or brackish water iss no goot for washing golt—no. But it iss mountainous country, so, of course——"

"Now, there's a dam' funny thing," burst out Bannister apropos of nothing. "It just goes to show how little we know about the other feller. Remember, Ed, what young thingummy said about this here Looey person bein' short-sighted on this particular deal? It strikes me that Looey was a pretty slick customer when he stuck that one per cent rake-off clause in that concession.

"Just think, if we take ten millions a year in bullion out of that mud, we got to turn back one hundred thousand dollars to the Marimban government. Ain't that awful? Why, they'll be buildin' battleships and everything with our money. Ed, we'll have to do some thinkin' about that and see if we can't get that clause struck out. That one per cent is too much."

"Good Lord, Thornton," said Herring impatiently, "you are the limit. Lazarus would have fared badly under your table. What's one per cent amount to? Now, if you want to do some real worrying concentrate your Shylockian mind on Condition Number One of the concession."

"What about Condition Number One?" mumbled T. B. uneasily.

"Condition Number One specifically states," answered Herring maliciously, "that the natives can carry away, for building and pottery-making purposes, all of our precious mud they require—careful, Thornton, a blood pressure in these latitudes is dangerous. Just to ease your mind I will tell you that I've given Condition Number One a lot of thought, and I'm inclined to believe that by properly approaching Señor Mercedes we can interpolate the clause, 'after the earth has been washed,' into that lease."

The fourth morning out T. B. retaliated by throwing a scare into his general manager that spoiled the best part of that estimable gentleman's day. Herring was awakened at daybreak by a thunderous rapping on his stateroom door.

"Who's there? What's the matter?" he called, considerably startled.

"It's me, Ed. Lemme in," came T. B.'s voice.

Herring admitted him. Bannister was clad in his pajamas and his eyes were big with apprehension. He seated himself on Herring's trunk, nervously lit his stogie, and groaned.

"For Heaven's sake, what's wrong?" insisted Herring anxiously.

"Oh, my Gawd, Ed!" said the old man dejectedly. "I've just had the most horrible thought ever! You know, I was layin' in my bed thinkin' this dam' thing over, and all of a sudden it crossed my mind."

"Why don't you have your horrible thoughts at some reasonable hour?" snapped Herring very much peeved.

"I just got thinkin'," went on T. B. unheeding, "about what Emil said about Madagascar."

"Well? What did Emil say about Madagascar, and what has Madagascar got to do with us?"

"Why, you know what he said, Ed! He said it was against the law to hunt for gold, mine it, or ship it from the country. Now wouldn't it be hell if they had some kind of a law like that in Marimba? And I'll bet you that's the answer. I know I'm right. Here we are, the owners of the greatest gold mine in the world and can't work it!"

"Nonsense," asserted Herring confidently, although T. B.'s thought sent him cold. "I don't believe it. We can find out soon enough, anyhow."

"Yeah. Sure we can," wailed T. B. "When we get to Marimba and they slip the bad news to us. By that time I'll be talking to m'self."

"We can find out in a few hours' time."

"How?"

"Just send a wireless to your friend, the second assistant director of the Pan-American Union at Washington. You should have an answer——"

But Bannister was on his way. He routed out the wireless operator and dictated his message. Immediately after breakfast he ensconced himself in an easy-chair by the very threshold of the wireless cabin, and there he stayed until the answer was received at noon. He read it over carefully and walked aft to where Herring and Steiner were playing a desultory game of pinochle.

"It's all right, Ed," he grunted, his eyes twinkling, "we're a pair of old women. No such law in Marimba."

The *Cygnet* slipped into the shelter of St. Dominique's Arm at four o'clock in the afternoon. Bannister ordered the captain to lay offshore about a half mile, and he and his two partners were rowed ashore in the ship's boat and landed at the Powder Company's new pier. A big, noisy chain-driven motor car of European make lumbered up, and a brisk, distinguished-looking young man descended from the capacious tonneau and greeted them in English without a trace of accent.

"Mr. Bannister? Fine. I'm Luis Mercedes. I'm delighted to meet you, sir, and you also, Mr. Herring and Mr. Steiner. This is great. We have all been looking forward to this visit with a great deal of pleasure, ever since we received your message stating you were coming." There was no mistaking the sincere cordiality of his welcome. He bowed them into the ornate machine and they swung off toward the town.

"Now, gentlemen," Mercedes rattled on, "I know that it is business that brings you to Marimba, but before we talk business, let us 'visit a little' as you say in the States. President Blas has commanded me to offer you the hospitality of his house. He gave orders to prepare dinner immediately your yacht was reported by the lightkeeper on the point, and dispatched me to meet you. You will like him. And you will tell us what is going on in the States? Then after dinner maybe—if you like—we will talk business, eh?" He beamed on them with great friendliness, but while they gratefully accepted the invitation to dinner, they sidestepped the suggestion to use the president's house as a hotel during their stay.

"And how did you leave my good friend, Westerhout?" asked Mercedes.

T. B. nudged Herring jubilantly. "We didn't leave him; he left us," he chuckled. "A day or so before we left New York he sailed for England."

"Ah—to be sure," said Mercedes, his eyes alight, "of course—that would be to see the adorable Rose."

"Who's Rose?" rumbled T. B.

"The girl in the picture," explained Herring. "She is indeed adorable, Mr. Mercedes. Of course, I have only her portrait to judge by. So Mr. Westerhout is your friend; and you are acquainted with his sweetheart also?"

"He is more than my friend. Once in Paris he delivered me from an ugly predicament. Saved both my life and my reputation. I am very much interested in him. I was so pleased to see him engage in worthy endeavor with the Colterman Company, for when I knew him in Europe it impressed me that his selection of companions was most ill advised—the sporting element, you know.

"But he did not remain with Colterman very long. I was disappointed. Some wild scheme he got in his head. I did my best to dissuade him from buying that worthless lease on the Valley of Fire, but no! I am afraid Jim is a very poor business man."

Bannister grinned and winked surreptitiously at Herring. "He may be a poor business man, but he went to Europe with a fine big bundle of our good money in his clothes, nevertheless."

"Ah, indeed!" exclaimed Mercedes, his face brightening. "That is fine. I am glad. So you eventually bought his concession? May I ask what you hope to find in the valley that will be useful to you? Paint? Ah, indeed! Paint." He ruminated about this for a minute and then said, "Well, perhaps Jim is a better business man than I think he is."

They rattled into a really beautiful courtyard and the little brown chauffeur accomplished a spectacular stop. "This is our modest executive mansion," announced Mer-

cedes. "Please consider it and every person in it completely at your service."

The three New Yorkers were treated like visiting moguls. They did not meet President Blas until just before dinner was served. He was a slim, mahogany-tinted aristocrat with white hair and mustachios. The dinner was excellent and the service as punctilious and efficient as that to be enjoyed in any famous restaurant. There were no other guests. President Blas spoke very little English, but the admirable Luis, acting as interpreter, kept the conversation moving as swiftly and smoothly as a ventriloquist.

The little business talk after dinner was eminently satisfactory to the officials of the Bannister Paint Company. A few words from President Blas and Señor Mercedes assured them that Westerhout's concession was as sound as a first trust on Windsor Castle. They received full permission to begin operations whenever they saw fit; in fact, the progressive Marimbans were as enthusiastic about the new industry that was coming to their shores as a Mid-Western Chamber of Commerce would be over a proposed motor-car factory.

Bannister, the artful old fox, emphasized the impression that they were searching for raw paint. He figured to get firmly entrenched in the "Valle del Fuego" before springing the great discovery. The pleasant visit terminated about ten o'clock. Señor Luis accompanied them to the pier head, and insisted on having the official automobile ready and waiting at daybreak to convey them to the hills.

The next morning they had the pleasure of witnessing for the first time the remarkable phenomenon described to them by Westerhout. They were rowed away from the *Cygnet* in the still moments just before daybreak. In the faint light of the false dawn Marimba glowed like an opal against dark-green velvet. And then—the huge sun leaped over the horizon and the opal burst into dazzling flames. Herring and Steiner were entranced, but a hoarse croak from the stern of the boat distracted their attention from the strange illusion.

"My Gawd, Ed," T. B. groaned, "ain't that awful? Think of all the gold in them walls."

"Yes, that's so," laughed Herring. He essayed a mild joke. "Looks like the natives have gold-bricked themselves all these years."

"Now, dog-gone it, Ed," sputtered T. B. wrathfully, "what d'ye mean by makin' a crack like that? I don't like that word 'gold brick.' It's too dam' ominous."

Mercedes was waiting in his circus wagon and shortly they were high-balling along a hard-packed, white-stone road toward the distant hills. Despite the ever-ascending switchback they coasted into the Valley of Fire within an hour. They spent several hours surveying their new acquisition, and the practical Emil, with heavy nonchalance, called attention to the abundance of roaring powerful mountain streams. Samples of earth were taken from a dozen different spots in the valley and they returned to Marimba at noon.

They lunched with the American consul, who, notwithstanding his long detail in the tropics, persisted in "eating dinner on the tick of twelve," as he put it. The balance of the afternoon was spent in getting acquainted with the resident engineer of the General Powder Company and his staff. A friendly coöperative feeling between the powder company and the infant West Indian Chemical and Development Securities Corporation would be a valuable asset to the latter.

An elaborate dinner was served aboard the *Cygnet* that evening in honor of President Blas and Señor Mercedes. The entire white colony was invited and all the important natives. Anybody was welcome who wore shoes.

"A good time was had by all," grunted T. B. as he waved the last departing visitor over the side at midnight. "Now, for Heaven's sake let's get to work."

A small storeroom just abaft the galley had been converted, under Emil's exacting eye, into a makeshift laboratory, and it was to this room that the three swiftly repaired with their dozen or so bags of earth specimens. Only one other soul aboard was allowed to put as much as a toe over that sacred threshold. That person was Ito, the steward.

T. B. and Herring made themselves comfortable in easy-chairs. Steiner slipped on his work apron and set to work.

CHAPTER IX.

It was the sixth night. Down in the little laboratory the same pantomime was being enacted as on the previous nights.

An electric fan hummed from side to side and the sound of the timid little waves slap-

slapping the hull came in through the open ports. Occasionally a strain of music, muted and mellowed by distance, was wafted from the beach. At regular intervals Ito pussy-footed in, replaced Steiner's empty seidel with a full one, dripping with condensation; placed a tall, slim, frost-rimed glass at T. B.'s elbow, and like a little white gnome, vanished as noiselessly as he came.

Since the three men—Bannister, Herring, and Doctor Steiner—had entered the Inner Temple at dusk, not a word had been uttered. Steiner, stripped to his undershirt and trousers, worked at his testing. Bannister sat upright in his chair—silent, immovable, his strong Roman face expressionless, save for the fierce questioning light of the eyes that watched Emil's every move. Herring lolled cross-legged in his comfortable chair, smoking countless cigarettes, inwardly restless, and marveling at T. B.'s stoicism and Steiner's energy.

Herring wondered how much of the stuff Steiner had rifled—tons, he imagined. The big German had tried every experiment known to practical miners, metallurgists, and chemical analysts. Bags and bags of earth, brought down by the sailors from the geysers, had passed through Steiner's hands. Herring had watched him dexterously twirl an old-fashioned "pan" until his own arms ached.

Herring glanced through the port, shoreward. All was quiet, dark, excepting the white strip of moonlit beach. It must be late, he thought. A pert little breeze blew in from nowhere; the ground swell became more noticeable. Somewhere on board a bell sounded, muffled and sweet. Seven bells—half past eleven. Steiner straightened up and drew his arm over his perspiring forehead. He sighed heavily.

"If you so desire," he said, "I another vitriol test will make, but it iss useless. Dere iss no golt—no."

Herring cleared his throat nervously.

"Dere iss someding wrong, my fr'en's," Emil droned on dully. "De eart' which I test in New York—blenty golt. But dis? Dis notting but what you call freak eart'. It has all de signs for bot' baint und golt—but dere iss no golt—no. Just blain mut. Verdampt mut! Peeg mut!"

He wiped his great freckled hands on his trousers and fished for his pipe. His poppy, crablike eyes blazed, and in a louder voice he went on. "Dese eart' samples," kicking at the bags, "was select' by me—Steiner—from t'ousand different blace. Dere can be no chance for error. Dere iss no golt. I—Steiner—haf been made a tam'fool, and you, gendlemens, have been geswindled."

Herring leaned over and pressed the electric switch that called into service the other bulbs in the room. There was no longer need for secrecy, and a semidark room. He glanced at T. B. Bannister got up from his chair stiffly and walked over to the telephone box hanging in one corner and plugged in a button marked "Captain."

"Mike?" he shouted into the transmitter. "That you, Mike? How soon can you point this hooker for home? No sooner than that? What! Steam? All right. Helluva boat—sure—yes—'course I'll have to stand for it. Next boat I get, be gad, will have a gas engine in it that I can crank up and go when I blasted please, and I won't be pestered and harassed by any dam' dressed up dude of a mick with forty dollars' worth of gold on his chest, posin' on the bridge—what? Quit? Yeah, quit and be hanged to you, you junglin' jackanapes. Hey—wait a minute—hey, Mike, listen——"

He banged the receiver into place and turned on Emil.

"Emil, as a chemist you're a bear. As a gold digger you're fromage debris. Shut up! Let me talk. Have this mess cleaned up by some of the hands and then go jump off the stern and call it a day. You, Ed, write a note to that monkey on a stick Looey, tellin' him we send our worst regrets to his most excellent excellency and all that sort of thing, y'understand, but we got to beat it N'York pronto. Tell him we was called back by wireless. Have a couple of sailors row ashore with the note and tell 'em to skip right back. We'll pick 'em up. I'm goin' upstairs. Where's that blasted Chinee?"

The note dispatched, Herring sought the old man. He found him aft, reclining in the shadows under the awning, a fresh stogie going under a full head of steam, and jiggling the remains of a swizzle. Herring dropped into a chair alongside, and T. B. sent in another riot call for Ito.

The two men sat in silence until the clanging of the engine-room bells intimated to them that they were about to depart from beautiful, false Marimba. Captain Mike, who had reconsidered his resignation, circled in as far as he dared, picked up the boat containing the two returning messengers,

spun around on his tail, and set his course straight for the breakwater light.

It was low tide and Mike was taking no chances with the big yacht. He skirted the lighthouse on the point as closely as a taxi guerrilla skims a corner lamp-post, slid into open water, and gave the bells for full speed ahead.

The wind had risen and clouds began to obscure the big, cheesy moon. The fast *Cygnet* plowed through the increasing swells with a great swirl and hissing. A small native sloop bobbed into the yacht's boiling wake. The blue-white, low-hung stars winked out in the velvet blackness and the moon disappeared in a nasty-looking cloud bank. Out of the darkness ahead came the hoarse bellow of a big ship. The *Cygnet* answered carefully, and a few minutes later a great white passenger liner studded with lights, swished by on the port side so close that they could wave a greeting to the officers on her bridge.

"I got it all figured out, Ed," said Bannister, after a bit, "and it's cunnin' enough. We are beautifully burned—and we got to like it. He tried to sell us a paint mine and let us gold brick ourselves. If he was sittin' on the front steps when we get home, we couldn't do a thing with him: not a thing. We'll have to mark this deal a loser and go back to makin' paint or somethin' we know about."

"Right-o," acquiesced Herring. "We haven't a legal leg to stand on. He didn't look like a crook, either," he added thoughtfully. "I rather took a fancy to him. He seemed so—ah—different, you know, from those smart New York pups."

T. B. glared suspiciously through the darkness at his general manager, but Herring was gazing pensively out at the racing black sea.

"Um," grunted T. B. "Um. Well, I'll say he was a better business man than that poor sucker Looey thought. It makes me laugh. Looey and his one per cent. One—fat—turkey. Well, as ole Ham Stewart says, 'Cavity empty'—that's us. Thankee, Ito: mix up a couple more."

Herring arose.

"Where you goin', Ed?" queried Bannister

"Misery loves company," quoth Herring lightly. "I'm going to break the bad news to MacPhail via wireless."

"Not at all—not at all! Sit down," ordered the old man grimly. "When that dollar-skinn' ole buzzard hears that he's paid sixty-five thousand scudi for a third interest in a gold brick, he's goin' to flop over in a faint, and I want to be there to catch him."

"I feel rather faint myself when I think of it," admitted Herring.

"Forget it, Ed," advised T. B. cheerily. "We three ain't goin' to lose that two hundred thousand—that is, not all of it. Only a small part maybe."

"We won't. Who then?"

"The stockholders of the Bannister Paint Company."

"But what have the stockholders"—Herring broke off in sheer astonishment. "You distinctly said that this deal did not concern the stockholders of the Bannister Paint Company whatsoever."

"That's what I said last week."

"But how——"

"Listen, Ed," said the old man testily, "actin' in our official capacity, we, the executives of the Bannister Paint Company, bought a paint mine—you get that?—a paint mine for two hundred thousand dollars. Why did we buy it, huh? Because we felt sure we was serving the best interests of the company and the stockholders by doin' it. Now, then, we have personally inspected our purchase and, while we can't make as glowin' a report to said stockholders as we would like, you understand, we hope in time—in time, I said very distinctly, you will notice—to demonstrate the wisdom of our expenditure. We should worry about the stockholders. When we cut an extra juicy melon, they are all right there with their feet under the table! So they'll have to learn to swaller a seed or two without complainin' of the stummick ache."

"Big Jim" Westerhout and "Kentucky Rose" Allenby were ordering dinner in a corner of the huge dining room of the Savoy in London. Even in this gorgeous assembly the lady maintained a high visibility. Just as fact is often too theatric to make convincing fiction so Rose Allenby's coloration was suspiciously brilliant.

Women looked at her and admitted that she was perfect—that is, perfectly made up. They looked again and became furious, for outside of the few toilet accessories necessary to any well-groomed woman, she was superbly indifferent to the financial success

of drug stores. Men looked at her because in her great blue eyes lurked the elusive come hither that has enabled hosts of her homlier sisters to play the very deuce with the world and its history.

Two waiters hovered about their table and discreetly in the middle distance, the maître d'hôtel himself, no less, watched eagerly that such discriminating guests were properly served.

"Whatever possessed you to select this big, noisy crowded place?" asked Rose. "And on your first night with me, too!"

"Oh, I like it," said Mr. Westerhout, gazing complacently around the room.

He looked very nice indeed in his elegant evening clothes. Not handsome at all. But the close-cropped, waving black hair just turning white at the temples, the tiny guards-man mustache, and the severe black-rimmed, ribboned glasses gave him rather an air.

"This is the breath of life to me after my seven months of exile. I'll leave the wild places to the wild men. Me—I'm a city rat. I like to be surrounded by well-dressed men, beautiful women——"

"Were there no Spanish beauties in Marimba?" murmured his companion.

"No. They all wore luxuriant mustaches and smoked big black perfectos. There is only one woman——"

"Now, Jimmy boy, don't spoof your little playmate. Just the same, you left me for seven—whole—months." He caressed her with a glance.

"Lonely, Rose?"

"Horribly. Why did it take so long?"

"That was what a crook would call establishing an alibi. Believe me, Rose, the six months I spent in that sizzling hell hole entitled me to all I got out of the deal. But you must admit that two hundred thousand dollars for six months' work is rather good. What? No—I'm wrong. One hundred and ninety-five thousand is the correct net. The shop cost of this plant was five thousand. Four thousand that I paid Luis for the lease and——"

"But my dear! Why did you have to pay Luis anything at all for his old land? He should have been glad to give it to you for nothing."

"Ah! Paying real money for that concession was a master touch. Besides, it was a protection to Luis in case that old hellion in New York decided to make things unpleasant for him in a roundabout way through Washington. Luis, being entirely innocent, had to be protected, don't you see? That reminds me, I must do a bit of shopping tomorrow. Want to pick up some nice little trinket for Luis. He's a good kid. Really, I owe it all to Luis. It was the vivid description of his bally old island he bored me with, the last time I saw him in Paris, that gave me the idea."

Rose's eyes sudddenly darkened with apprehension. "Jim, are you sure there is no danger this time?" she asked anxiously.

Jim grinned. "Tightest little scheme I ever put over."

She sighed and then reminded him that there still remained a thousand dollars unaccounted for.

"Oh, yes. A filthy old tramp took me from Marimba to Honduras. I hunted up old Pierre O'Malley. He knows more about gold than any man living. But he's so crooked he would pick his own pocket. He set me back one thousand dollars for furnishing the dust and salting my twenty bags of sample mud. I'll admit he made a good job of it."

The arrival of the cocktails caused Westerhout to smile reminiscently. "I had the devil's own time keeping my head with that scientific white-lighter Herring that night," he said. Then he scowled and became silent.

"What's wrong, Jim?"

"Oh, nothing much. There was just one thing about this job that makes me sore and a bit ashamed. Because those New Yorkers made a queer play that I hadn't foreseen, I was forced to drag out the old family skeleton and rattle it a bit. I'm sorry, Rose, but I had to do it."

She patted his hand comfortingly, and after a bit Westerhout shook off his momentary abstraction and they raised their glasses.

"Rose, you display all the symptoms of having a toast concealed about your person. If so, out with it."

"I have, Jimmy, boy, so get set. Here's to dear, funny old New York where the sucker grows wild. I wonder will we ever go back!"

Spring Tonic

By Henry Herbert Knibbs

Author of "The Ridin' Kid from Powder River," "A Horse Deal in Hardpan," Etc.

Frail humanity's persistent thirst is not generally regarded as particularly praiseworthy. Still there is no getting away from the fact that chronic dryness finally led this indolent pair of "homesteaders" to justify their existence more emphatically than they had been in the habit of doing

HE ain't right in his head," observed "Guber" Larkins, who was homesteading over on Malibu Flats.

"Who ain't?" queried his companion in indolence, "Jawbone" Sims, who was also homesteading on Malibu Flats, when he wasn't loafing with Guber in Las Flores.

"That dressed-up gent that just rode by on the sorrel gelding with the white nose."

"His nose looked red, to me," said Jawbone, "same's the rest of his face."

"I was referrin' to the hoss, not the Dude Wrangler."

"Well," sighed Jawbone, "I'd sure like to be crazy like him. Here you an' me's been homesteadin' on the Malibu for two years, and what we got to show for it? Debts! The gov'ment bet us a hundred an' sixty acres apiece, ag'inst four years of hard labor that when we got through we couldn't stay, and not starve to death. I figure the gov'ment's got us beat."

"What's that got to do with bein' crazy?"

"Nothin', 'cept it proves we ain't the right kind of crazy. Now take that Dude Wrangler. Two years ago he comes here with a suit case and a little go-to-hell mustache, and one of them typewritin' machines. Now, he owns that eighty over on the south slope—paid for it in cash, so Tompkins says. And he rides the best saddle hoss that ever shook a hoof down this a way. And that silver-mounted saddle of hisn never cost less'n three hundred, an' he always has cigars and liquor over to his shack, to say nothin' of eatin' three squares a day. If he ain't right in his head, I sure wish they was somethin' the matter with mine."

"He shaved off that mustache," observed Guber, who could think of nothing else to say, just then.

"Or mebby he chewed it off, wranglin' some of them yarns he writes, and gits paid for."

"Yes!" snorted Guber. "He gits paid for settin' down and tick-tackin' on a writin' machine, which ain't a man's job, nohow."

"What do you call a man's job, Gube? Settin' on your overalls and spittin' tobacco juice at a knot hole?"

"I'm restin'," asserted Guber. "An' I got comp'ny."

"I'm from Missouri," observed Jawbone.

"Yes. An' all you fetched with you was the shakin' fever an' your clothes."

"I got the fever yet," said Jawbone. "But le' me tell you somethin'. When I'm settin' still I'm *thinkin'*. It's clost to two years, now, that I been doin' the thinkin' for both of us."

"And you've thunk us into debt so far that nary one of us could git credit for enough thread to sew on a buttin."

"What's the use sewin' on buttins when you got nails?" queried Jawbone.

"What's the use of wearin' any clothes at all, when you got a hide?" countered Guber.

"What's the use of anything?" queried Jawbone.

"Nothin'," asserted Guber.

"Well, that's what we're doin', ain't it?" Jawbone's tone was aggressively argumentative.

"I'm thinkin'," stated Jawbone, as Guber failed to respond to the question.

"Mustang Liniment is good for that," said Guber. "Only if you rub it on too strong, the hair is like to slip."

Jawbone sat forward suddenly, as a bright idea caromed off his head. "Kin you shake?" he asked with some animation.

"Shake? I don't see nothin' to shake for."

"Shucks! I don't mean that kind of shakin'. I mean, kin you shake like you had the malary, same as me?"

Guber gazed sadly at his loose-jointed companion. "I knowed the heat would git you, some day. Is everything gittin' blacklike,

and kind of pinwheels dancin' on your eyes?"

"Pinwheels nothin'! I got a idea."

"I knowed they was somethin' wrong with you."

Jawbone ignored the slur. "Let's go round back of the store where nobody kin see us, an' I'll learn you how to shake *right*." Jawbone rose, stretched, yawned, and ambled round the corner. Guber hesitated, shook his head, and, stooping, picked up a fair-sized fragment of rock. He "hefted" it, and trailed after his companion, stepping as though he expected Jawbone to suddenly froth at the mouth, and begin to howl and bite.

"What you doin' with that rock?" asked Jawbone, as Guber peered round a big packing case at him.

"Thought mebby somebody might stub his foot on it," explained Guber.

"Well, nobody's goin' to. Now you watch me clost." And Jawbone simulated an attack of chills and fever with such realism that Guber all but began to shake in sheer sympathy. "How'd you like that?" queried Jawbone triumphantly.

"Ain't you got a chill?"

"Chill nothin'! I'm jest learnin' you how. Jest kind of let yourself go slack, and then start to shiverin' like it was cold, an' you had nothin' on but a apron made of hay, like that lady we seen doin' the walla-walla dance in the picture show last Christmas."

"I ain't no prairie vamp. You go ahead and shake all you want to. And when you git through I reckon you better go see the 'doc.'"

"That's jest what I aim to do. You recollec' that tonic he give me, last time I was took bad?"

"You mean that there bitter-tastin' stuff that set you to whoopin' all over the flat, after you drank the whole of it to onct?"

"That's her. The doc said three doses every day, after meals, and in a week I'd be a well man. I figured one dose after three meals was jest as good—and, anyhow, I didn't want to wait that long to git well. But you try shakin', like I showed you—and then we kin git two bottles instid of one. Kain't you feel a chill comin'?"

"I sure kin!"

"Then, you go ahead and practice shakin'."

A half hour later two sorry-looking objects presented themselves at the local doctor's office, which was adjacent to the livery stable as a matter of convenience and economy. Old Doc Longbotham made no distinctions in his practice—horses or humans alike suffered his tender ministrations. Tincture of buckthorn, epsom salts, and turpentine were his stock remedies. Occasionally he ventured into the realm of ergot, sweet spirits of nitre and capsicum, administered in proportion to the constitution of the individual or the animal. Each case he undertook, he immediately pronounced fatal, and if the patient survived, he reaped additional glory and occasional reward, because of his unblushing diagnosis of anything from ring bone to whooping cough.

Doc Longbotham had a habit of sitting solidly in his armchair, which faced the street window, and allowing his patient to stand behind him while appealing for medicinal aid. When the patient had described all his or her symptoms, Doc Longbotham would nod gravely—toward the window, rise ponderously and proceed to his desk, write a prescription, hand it to the patient, and nodding a brusque adieu, would return to his armchair, and amuse himself by computing the possibilities of his ever receiving pay for such service. This applied to ordinary afflictions. If the case called for surgical aid, and he had time, he consulted the sheepskin-bound authorities in his bookcase, arranged his implements and set to work. His methods were direct and often effective.

As instigator of the plot, Jawbone Sims preceded Guber Larkins into the doctor's sanctum-odorifororum. Doc Longbotham maintained his impassive attitude of cogitation, merely indicating his knowledge of their presence behind him by a slight nod—toward the window. Jawbone began to shake, and Guber, whose half hour of practice behind the store had almost scared him into thinking that he really had malaria, also shook. Guber's teeth chattered as he gave a pretty fair imitation of a man afflicted with St. Vitus's Dance. Jawbone was doing an act that would have made a high-salaried shimmy dancer moan with envy. Still the doc sat imperturbably in his armchair, his back toward them, gazing out of the window. Presently he half turned his head. "If you fellas want to shoot craps, why don't you go out in the box stall? It's empty."

"We're sick," chattered Jawbone.

"We got a chill," stammered Guber.

"Malaria!" stated the doctor ponderously, still without rising.

Guber ceased shaking. Jawbone dug him in the ribs as a hint to keep up the action. The dig was abrupt and sharp. "I'm gittin' tired of shakin'," said Guber, scowling at his compatriot.

"He ain't had it as long as me," explained Jawbone, still shivering determinedly, although the sweat was dappling his lean face.

Doc Longbotham rose and faced the chattering twain. "Put out your tongue," he commanded Jawbone.

"I kain't, doc. I might b-b-bite it."

"I'll fix *that*. Here, put this in your mouth," and Doc Longbotham inserted a generous wad of absorbent cotton between Jawbone's chattering teeth. "Huh! I thought so." And he waved Jawbone aside and approached Guber. Guber had a mild attack of conscience, which, together with his dread of anything medicinal, set him to shivering in earnest. Without invitation, Guber put out his tongue. The doctor nodded and took hold of Guber's wrist, pulling out a fat gold watch as he did so.

Guber gazed appealingly at Jawbone. "He's timin' you to s-s-see how l-l-long you got to live," stated Jawbone.

Doc Longbotham shook his head gravely. "Heart action fast and weak; temperature above normal, slight symptoms of deranged liver and a tendency to sclerosis."

"My Gawd!" gasped Guber; "have I got anything else?"

"Nothing serious. A little knee sprung, and kind of low in the withers. I guess we can pull you through. But it *might* have been serious. I'm glad you stopped in. I'll give you a prescription. Follow the directions on the label and in a week you'll be a well man."

"How about me?" queried Jawbone, who had forgotten to shake, for the time being.

"Exercise," stated the doc tersely. "Take plenty of exercise outdoors. A hot bath once a week wouldn't hurt you any, either. Don't eat so much pork, and drink plenty of good, pure water."

"I kain't sleep, nights," complained Jawbone.

"Sleep in the daytime."

Jawbone could find no immediate excuse to offset this suggestion. "I'm feelin' mighty low," he asserted as Doc Longbotham wrote a prescription for the more fortunate Guber. "And I'm feelin' weak in my j'ints."

"I'll give you a little tonic for that," said the doctor.

"Thanks, doc. I sure need somethin'."

Doc Longbotham waved them out. "Come back in a week and let me know how you feel."

"Supposin' we git took worse, afore then?" suggested Jawbone, turning in the doorway.

"You won't," stated the doctor significantly.

Shortly before Guber and Jawbone entered the drug store the proprietor answered the telephone. "It's Doc Longbotham," came over the wire. "I just sent Guber and Jawbone over with two prescriptions. No. Nothing's the matter with them, except they're dry. Just fill those prescriptions, twenty-five per cent cinchona and seventy-five per cent alcohol, with a little cardamon to disguise the taste. If they don't pay you, I will. The show that they put up when they came in to see me was worth the money. Good-by."

Jawbone Sims, whose knee action resembled that of a Siwash Indian carrying a heavy pack downhill, approached the counter shaking intermittently. Guber followed, imitating his guide, philosopher, and friend, with considerable accuracy. Jawbone presented the prescriptions. "Malary," he said. "Me an' Guber is took bad."

The druggist glanced at the slips. "It'll cost you a dollar and a half apiece."

"Would you let a dollar and four bits stand between you and a dyin' man?" queried Jawbone sadly.

"Not if I thought he was worth it," said the druggist.

Jawbone gazed at Guber. Guber slowly drew a defunct watch from his jeans. "We kin give security. I reckon this here watch is worth a couple of bottles of—tonic. That watch was owned onct by Bob Ingersoll. There's his name on her, to prove it." Guber slowly handed the watch to the druggist as though he were parting with the family jewels.

"All right, Guber. I'll fill these prescriptions. And any time you find it convenient to——"

"Jawbone'll pay you, mebby next week. He's a-engineerin' this deal."

"Deal? I thought you were sick."

"Well, he was took first, and I ketched it from him. The shakin' fever, so Doc Longbotham said. He said if we hadn't come to him jest when we did, we might 'a' died."

"Too bad," said the druggist gravely.

"What's too bad?" queried Jawbone, somewhat fiercely. His nerve was giving way under the forced ordeal of pretending he had chills and fever, and trying to maintain intelligible conversation with the druggist.

"Why, it's too bad you didn't see Doc Longbotham sooner," said the druggist soothingly. And he stepped to the prescription desk. Jawbone heard something gurgle, and he winked at Guber. Guber grinned faintly.

"I'll just charge this to you," said the druggist, as he came from behind the desk and handed the two bottles of tonic to Guber.

"Charge it to him," said Guber, indicating Jawbone Sims. "He started shakin' first."

"And you needn't to wrap them up," said Jawbone. "We ain't proud."

"All right. But remember, the dose is one tablespoonful before each meal. If you take more than that at a time I'll not answer for the consequences."

"How much does one of them bottles hold?" queried Guber.

"Oh, about twenty tablespoonfuls."

Guber sighed. "It'll take more'n a week to eat twenty meals," he reflected mournfully.

Jawbone slipped his bottle into his inside coat pocket. Guber was not wearing a coat, so he stuck his bottle into the hip pocket of his overalls. Together they limped weakly from the drug store; but swiftly they turned the corner and marched to the back of the building. Two hearts with but a single thought, they drew out the bottles, uncorked them, and tilted them skyward. Simultaneously they ceased, gazed at each other, blinked tearfully, albeit seraphic smiles beamed beneath their tears.

"The pure quill!" exclaimed Guber.

"Mine's kind of bitter. Feel like I was kicked in the stummick by a mule with a pillow on his foot," asserted Jawbone.

Guber held the bottle out at arm's length and gazed fondly at it. "A tablespoonful before each meal. Accordin' to that I got about three meals comin'. What does your gauge show, Jawbone?"

"Tide's is fallin' outside, but she's risin' inside. I reckon we better hitch up and mosey along home. We got more room out there."

"Room for what?"

"For shakin', you long-eared ranch hound." Jawbone took another draft of tonic. Then he wiped his mouth on his sleeve, and grinned. "Say, I figure I got to do a pow'ful lots of eatin' to ketch up with this here tonic."

"I aim to make mine last a spell. What's the use of gettin' excited all in one place?"

"That's right! Let's go hitch up."

About eight o'clock, that evening, a wabble-wheeled buckboard, bearing Doc Longbotham's two patients, stopped at the crossroads where a weathered signpost, leaning wearily to one side as though tired of trying to point in four directions at once, directed the chance wayfarer to Malibu Flats, Las Flores, Pettingill, and Sandy Gulch. "What you stoppin' for?" queried Guber, as Jawbone tightened the reins needlessly.

"I'm thinkin'," asserted Jawbone.

"Ain't you about tired of thinkin'?"

"Kind of. But you set still and le' me think."

Guber reached back and drew his tonic from his hip pocket. "All right. Go ahead. I kin wait."

Jawbone's gaze slanted toward the upturned bottle. He leaned forward, wrapped the reins round the whipstock, and felt in his inside coat pocket. "I hate to keep anybody waitin'," he said, and he took a generous dose of the tonic. He replaced the bottle, unwrapped the reins, and spoke to the horse. The horse failed to respond with any show of animation.

"He's thinkin', too," giggled Guber.

"Let's think ag'in," suggested Jawbone.

"I'm willin', as long as she holds out," concurred Guber.

"I feel like I'm goin' to sing," asserted Jawbone after another draft of the tonic.

"I kin hear music," said Guber, leaning forward.

"It's the angels. You recollec' what doc said this afternoon: 'Knee action fast and weak, temper dog-gone ornery, a strange liver and ten to one you shuffle off in less'n a week.'"

"Shut up! Kain't you listen. There! Did you hear that?"

"It sure sounds like somebody singin'. Let's mosey along and git closter."

Jawbone prodded the horse with the whipstock. Presently they saw a light shining from the doorway of a cabin on the mesa. And seemingly from that doorway came the song which had startled them at the crossroads.

"The Dude Wrangler," said Guber, pointing toward the house.

"Playin' a phonygraff. Wonder if he gits paid for playin' that, too?"

"Some folks says he keeps mighty good cigars and liquor handy," remarked Guber.

"Sounds like he was stranglin' that woman," said Jawbone, as the prima donna of the phonograph ascended the scale four steps at a time. "Git along, Monte!"

"Let's stop by and say we thought somebody was sufferin' an' we come to see if they needed the doc or anything."

"Let's take a little tonic, first," suggested Jawbone.

"All right. You treatin'?" queried Guber craftily.

"You got your own nursin' bottle, ain't you? Well, if you kain't work it, I kin show you how." And Jawbone half rose and reached playfully for his friend's tonic.

"Whope!" cried Guber. "You guggle your own——"

The horse, a well-disciplined animal when it came to the matter of stopping, set his forefeet. All "whopes" were alike to him. Jawbone, caught on the thin edge of a precarious balance, shot out of the buckboard and landed face down, upon the horse's back. This evolution was something new. It shocked that astonished animal's sense of propriety. He left there on the jump, with Jawbone clinging desperately to his neck and Guber clinging desperately to the seat of the buckboard. Jawbone wrapped his long legs around the horse's belly and hung on, the hame rings punching him in the chest at every jump. Guber's bottle of tonic flew out of his hand and lay far behind in the road, gurgling peacefully, as the tonic slowly filtered to the roots of a wayside cactus.

"Stop him!" yelled Guber.

"Stop him yourself!" shouted Jawbone.

Guber clawed about for the reins, but the reins were overboard and tossing on the waves of night that swished past like spray from the forefoot of a destroyer.

"Whoa!" yelled Guber as the front wheel of the buckboard struck a half-buried rock and their frail craft careened and lurched.

But "Whoa" now seemed an utterly alien word to the frightened steed, whose one immediate desire was to rid himself of the lank weight that clung to him like an octupus and swore like a seal hunter. Guber, who realized dimly that their wild journey would end suddenly, set his teeth and clung to his perch.

Down the lane; leading from the Dude Wrangler's house to the open gate of his line fence, streamed a shimmering ray of mellow light. With something synonymous with "Any port in a storm," Jawbone reached forward and yanked at the starboard rein. Answering the helm nobly, the flying buckboard rounded through the gateway, leaped the shallow ditch running along the edge of the fence, and hove to directly in front of the Dude Wrangler's open door, just as the prima donna of the phonograph reached the ultimate range of her high register. To the light accompaniment of violins and cello, Jawbone descended from the bridge, felt of himself, spat out a mouthful of horse hair, and turned to meet the Dude Wrangler's astonished gaze.

The Dude Wrangler blinked at the lank, nocturnal apparition that was rubbing its chest with a sort of speculative tenderness.

"What's the main idea, folks?" he queried hospitably.

"It's Jawbone's fault!" stated Guber, jerking his foot free and climbing down, with a section of the sun-dried, leather dashboard round his ankle.

The Dude Wrangler became aware of a faint odor, slightly medicinal and more than slightly alcoholic, seeming to emanate from the person of Jawbone Sims. The horse, freed from its unaccustomed burden, dozed peacefully in the lamplight. His ancient legs, badly knee sprung, looked as though they might collapse any minute.

"You had better come in and let your horse rest," suggested the Dude Wrangler. "Perhaps you had better unhitch him. He seems about to kneel, and he can't kneel comfortably in the fills."

"He *oughta* kneel down!" growled Guber, "after the ride he give us. He liked to ruined me."

"He done ruined *me*," stated Jawbone weakly. "I'm bleedin' to death."

"Bleeding to death! Did you get hurt?" The Dude Wrangler inspected Jawbone's person closely.

"Reckon somethin' busted inside. Feel like I'm bleedin' to death infernally."

"Hhm!" The Dude Wrangler repressed a thoughtful smile. "Come in and we'll investigate," he suggested.

Jawbone groaned and doubled up, his hands on his chest, and his knees sagging dejectedly. "Pore ole Jawbone," said Guber tremulously, as he assisted his compatriot into the house.

Jawbone glanced wildly round. "I feel like I'm goin' to sink," he muttered thickly.

"Better git him outside!" said Guber, who misinterpreted Jawbone's enunciation. "He needs lots of room when he's sick."

" 'Tain't that," asserted Jawbone. "I'm gettin' weak from losin' blood."

"Take off your coat," commanded the Dude.

Jawbone divested himself of his coat with sundry groans and flinchings. "I kin feel the p'ints of my ribs stickin' into me," he complained.

The Dude Wrangler took Jawbone's coat, and was about to lay it across a chair, when he hesitated, smelled of it, and carefully drew the broken half of a bottle from the inside pocket. Jawbone's melancholy gaze dwelt on the neck of the bottle still corked, but corked unavailingly.

"Now let's look at your ribs," said the Dude Wrangler.

Jawbone unbuttoned his shirt. "Ouch! You tetched one of them busted ribs."

"Sit still, till I pick the glass out of your chest," said the Dude Wrangler. "Your ribs are not broken, and you're not bleeding much. Just a few bits of glass sticking in your hide."

"It's the tonic," explained Guber, as he leaned forward and watched the Dude Wrangler pick the little pieces of broken glass from Jawbone's lean anatomy.

"Tonic?"

"Uh-uh! Jawbone was took sick with the shakin' fever, down to Las Flores; and Doc Longbotham writ us a perscription for some tonic. Jawbone busted his."

"I see."

"An' I lost mine, when Monte Peeler got scared, back there, and lit out, with Jawbone ridin' him."

"Monte Peeler?"

"Yep. That's our hoss. He's a good hoss —mostly. But somethin' got into him back there near the signpost. He stopped sudden, and Jawbone makes a dive for his neck, and gits it. I kinda forgit, after that, except I could see somethin' was goin' to happen when we lit."

"It must have been a wild and stormy ride," said the Dude, as he turned to get water and some peroxide and bandages.

"And we done lost our life preservers," hinted Guber, who was becoming thirsty.

"Too bad. But I'll fix you up in a minute." The Dude Wrangler was some little time in finding the peroxide. Finally he came from the bedroom with a bottle and bandages.

"Just hold this while I wash these cuts," he said and handed the peroxide to Jawbone. Jawbone's eyes brightened. He raised the bottle, gazed at it, and, drawing the cork, he took a generous drink.

"Don't——" began the Dude Wrangler.

"My Gawd, I'm pizened!" spluttered Jawbone.

"That's medicine—that ain't tonic, you ole fool!" comforted Guber. "Do you think everything in a bottle is to drink?"

"It won't harm him," said the Dude, grinning. "When it hits that tonic he's been taking, it may make him a little sick."

"I could stand it, if I had somethin' to kind of cheer me up," suggested Jawbone. "Ain't you got a little Squirrel whisky?"

"Hardly. But I can give you a little Old Crow."

"Old Crow?"

"Don't give him no Old Crow," said Guber. "We don't want to fly. We jest want to hop around a little."

"I don't think a hop apiece would hurt you any," said the Dude.

Jawbone seemed to be recovering rapidly, despite the peroxide. Guber also seemed less melancholy.

"Sure beats that there tonic," asserted Guber as he smacked his lips, and gazed at the Old Crow label affectionately.

"And night ridin'," added Jawbone, whose lean frame straightened under the warm glow of the liquor.

With the soothing of their shattered nerves came the realization that their introduction to their host had been slightly informal. They remedied this by giving their names and their neighboring habitat. " 'Course, we knowed you," concluded Jawbone, who was spokesman. "But we never knowed you personal. We always figured you was kind of stuck up, an' eddicated, like."

"Not guilty," said the Dude Wrangler, grinning. "And now that you are safe in port, suppose you tell me how things are going over on your homestead. I am interested in homesteading."

"Well," said Jawbone slowly, "things is kind of goin' backward. Me an' Guber owes most everybody in the valley, but we ain't kickin' at that. They's nothin' stuck up about us. We're willin' to be friendly" —and Jawbone eyed the Old Crow bottle—

"and use folks white. We believe in treatin' as you would be treated."

"Have a cigar. How would you like to hear a little music."

"Thanks. But I figure we heard enough music for one evenin'. It was that there music that started Guber to listenin', and you see what come of it. Say, what you got on your laig, Gube?"

Guber glanced down at his foot. "Huh! Looks mighty like a piece of that ole dashboard. Never knowed I was wearin' it." And Guber yanked the piece of cracked leather from his ankle and shied it through the doorway. Unfortunately it struck Monte Peeler on the flank, and it struck edgeways. Monte, suddenly wakened from slumber and, no doubt, fearing a recurrence of Jawbone's incomprehensible descent upon his back, snorted, shied, and finding himself free from immediate surveillance, swooped round and started for the gateway. Realizing that running would get him home sooner than trotting, he ran. Guber and Jawbone were among the "also rans" as they returned to the house, informing the Dude Wrangler that Monte's singular behavior was entirely unprecedented in the bucolic annals of the countryside. Heretofore, they intimated, it had required considerable cranking to get Monte started.

"I hope your friend Monte will arrive home safely," said the Dude Wrangler. "He seems to have taken the right direction."

"He ain't no friend of mine!" asserted Jawbone. "He done left me stranded in my hour of need."

"Oh, he took the right *direction*, all right," said Guber sadly. "The worst is, he's done tooken the buckboard. That wagon is worth money."

"Suppose we just forget our troubles, for the time being, and have something to eat. I haven't had a bite since noon."

"We ain't, neither," chirped Guber affably.

"Then come on in and make yourselves comfortable while I broil a steak—or, perhaps, you prefer yours fried?"

"Fried, br'iled, or barbecued—we ain't partic'lar."

"All right. Broiled steak, fried onions, creamed potatoes, hot biscuits and coffee. How's that?"

"Sounds like back home," said Jawbone.

"And then we can arrange some kind of a shakedown in the stable, and you boys can get a good sleep. You'll excuse me?"

Jawbone nodded. Guber relaxed and gazed about the room. The Dude Wrangler sure had a nifty hang-out. The cabin was built of rough boards, not ceiled nor plastered, but it was exceedingly neat and attractive. There were shelves of books on either side of the cozy stone fireplace, copies of Remington and Russell pictures on the walls. Several good Navaho blankets, a few Indian baskets, a rawhide reata, a rifle, silver-mounted bits and spurs, a pair of binoculars, and a mountain-lion skin decorated the homelike living room. In one corner, under a window, was the "typewritin' machine," on a heavy table, and round about the machine were scattered sheets of manuscript, notes and various handbooks. Guber glanced at Jawbone, and Jawbone nodded. "I sure would like to be crazy, like him," he remarked, shaking his head. "His kind of crazy is worth money."

Meanwhile the Dude Wrangler, his sleeves rolled up and a cook's apron over his whipcords, prepared supper, smiling almost continuously. The story that he had been working on had gone stale, until the most startling, yet opportune arrival of the two homesteaders. And their arrival had given a fillip to his imagination that promised to carry him over the exigency of a kind of stalemate in his story. Now, he thought, he had the wherewithal to paint in the local color and characterization he needed. He determined to make the most of this happy opportunity, without letting it become obvious that he was doing so. Some kind providence had sent the irresponsible twain to his wikiup. Sufficient for the day was the glory thereof. Let him who wore garters think as much evil as he pleased. Jawbone and Guber were but the victims of a slight overdose of tonic—and, cogitated the Dude Wrangler—"long may it wave."

"Don't let the Old Crow suffer for want of companionship," called the Dude Wrangler, from the kitchen.

"We was thinkin' of that—if you don't mind," said Guber.

"Help yourselves! And try the cigars."

"Thanks! We're doin' fine."

Presently Guber and Jawbone drew up to a meal that they both needed and appreciated. The tonic, together with Jawbone's recent exercise in the outdoor air, and Guber's reaction from the tension of their wild dash for nowhere, had left them sadly in need of substantial nourishment. All went

merry as a marriage bell, until, about an hour later, after the Dude Wrangler had mentally jotted down about a hundred dollars' worth of colloquialisms interwoven with much unconscious humor, Jawbone advertised his retirement to forgetfulness by a decidedly audible snore. Guber was still awake, but he blinked hard, and occasionally yawned to the full extent of the law.

The Dude Wrangler, alert, smiling, vigorous, gestured toward Jawbone's lank length. Guber rose. "Come an' git it!" cried Guber. Jawbone winked awake and stared round the cabin.

"That'll always fetch him," stated Guber.

Escorted by their host, the two well-fed and drowsy argonauts packed blankets to the stable and retired.

"Don't pay any attention to me, if you happen to wake up and hear my typewriter going," said the Dude Wrangler. "I may work all night."

"We're jest two pore ole toilers of the sill," stated Jawbone sentimentally.

"Soilers of the till," corrected Guber drowsily.

The Duke Wrangler bade them good night and marched straightway to a session with the typewriting machine. He lit a cigarette and sat back, rounding up his ideas. While Guber's high soprano snore, accompanied by Jawbone's deliberate and leisurely bass shook the shingles of the stable, the Dude Wrangler's typewriter clicked steadily. The dove of peace sat on the ridgepole and all was serene along the mesa road. A half moon loafed in a cloudless night sky, and the stars blinked lazily. The soft glow of lamplight streamed from the open door of the cabin, spread and thinned, and was lost in the far shadows. The Dude Wrangler forgot time, his guests, himself, everything, save that he was riding a hot race to make his fingers keep pace with the fresh ideas that swarmed round him like noonday flies. He finally happened to glance at his watch. It was half past three!

Presently, as though in a dream, he heard what he thought were the rhythmic beats of a horse's hoofs out on the road. Then the sound ceased. The typewriter rattled along. Guber and Jawbone snored. But the sorrel gelding, in the stall across from them, grew restless.

A shadow among the shadows drifted along the lane fence, toward the cabin. Again the sorrel gelding stamped and pawed. The shadow drew nearer the open doorway. The typewriter ceased clicking, and the shadow straightened and was still.

The Dude Wrangler rose, stepped to the kitchen for a drink of water, and returned to his work. As the typewriter clicked again the shadow moved forward slowly.

Though absorbed in his work, the Dude Wrangler felt a peculiar desire to turn and glance toward the doorway. He fought off this desire once or twice, yet, at last, he turned—and stared at the figure of a man in rowdy and overalls, his hat brim low over his eyes, and a decidedly real and effective gun in his hand. Slowly the Dude Wrangler differentiated this person from the persons of either Guber or Jawbone. And without being conscious of it, the Dude Wrangler as slowly raised his hands above his head and sat staring at the gentleman behind the gun.

"Anybody else in here?" queried the man.

"No. What do you want?"

"You set still. I'll git what I want, if it's here." And the man advanced into the room. "Now stand up—and turn your back!"

The Dude Wrangler wanted to argue the point, but thought better of it.

"Put your hands behind you—and don't try no monkey business."

The Dude Wrangler did as he was told. The man whipped a handkerchief from his own neck and tied the Dude Wrangler's hands. "Now you kin show me where you keep it," stated the man, poking the other in the back with his gun.

"Keep what?"

"Your cash, young feller!"

"In the bank," said the Dude Wrangler.

"You're a liar," stated the man, without heat.

"Sometimes," concurred the Dude Wrangler.

"Cut that out! Come acrost, and come quick!"

"There's a little money in the drawer of that table, and my watch is right where you can see it. Help yourself."

The man stepped over and gathered in the watch, opened the table drawer, and found a few dollars scattered among the papers. He turned to the Dude Wrangler. "Where's the rest of it? I'm in a hurry!"

"You've got it all," said the Dude Wrangler, raising his voice.

"Don't git excited. Huh!" The man

had noticed the bottle of whisky on the shelf above the fireplace.

"I hope it chokes you!" said the Dude Wrangler, in feigned anger.

The man tilted the bottle, took a long swallow and set it down. Out in the stable the sorrel gelding twitched its ears and pawed. Guber muttered drowsily. The man in the cabin turned his head. Then he relaxed as he heard the continued pawing of the horse. Without saying a word he began to ransack the furniture of the room. He rummaged among the papers on the table. "Just leave those papers alone!" said the Dude Wrangler irritably. "That's my work, and you'll disarrange it."

"You shet up! I'm runnin' this show."

Guber raised on his elbow and listened. He thought he had heard the sound of voices. He nudged Jawbone, who awoke in the middle of a half-uttered snore. "Somebody's talkin', over there," whispered Guber. "Listen!"

"And you tell me where you keep your dough, or I'll blow a hole in you that you kin jump through," growled the man with the gun.

"You haven't got the nerve," said the Dude Wrangler.

Guber touched Jawbone's arm. "Somethin's wrong, over there," he whispered.

"Somebody's quarrelin', sure!" muttered Jawbone.

"Let's go see," suggested Guber.

Jawbone yawned and stretched. "I'm feelin' drier'n a scorched lizard. A leetle of that Old Crow——"

"S-ssh! Let's see what we're up ag'inst, first." Together they rose and peered through a crack in the stable door. They caught a glimpse of a man's back, and beyond him the Dude Wrangler, standing with his hands tied behind him.

"Somebody's robbin' him!" whispered Guber.

"And they'll git that bottle of Ole Crow sure!"

"We might git shot up, savin' it," suggested Guber.

"Mebby we could sneak up and jump him from behind. You scared?"

"Scared nothin'. I'm shiverin' account of this here ground bein' cold on my feet."

Guber and Jawbone quietly unlatched the stable door and padded across the yard, stepping wide of the pathway of lamplight. They paused on either side of the door and listened. They could hear some one stepping about the room. Presently came the Dude Wrangler's voice. "I wish you would take what you want and let me finish my work. You haven't the first instinct of a gentleman."

"You're lucky to be livin'," growled the holdup. And he backed toward the doorway.

Guber glanced at Jawbone, and Jawbone blinked and nodded. Guber crouched and half tensed his hands. Jawbone drew back one long, lean arm and clenched his fist. The shadow in the doorway came nearer, paused, filled the doorway—and Guber, trembling with excitement and fear launched himself like a monkey from a treetop and landed on the holdup's unsuspecting back. Jawbone swung a haymaker that arrived just in time to knock Guber woozy: but the shock of the blow, added to Guber's fierce leap, felled both holdup and Guber. Jawbone followed up this advantage by using his natural strength, and went into the mêlée impartially, swinging right and left. He knocked the gun from the holdup's hand and barked his own knuckles. That made him mad, and he jumped high and landed with both feet in the small of the outlaw's back; jumped again and accidentally kicked Guber in the face, and almost dislocated his own great toe: swore vividly as he launched a pile driver at the outlaw's chest, knocked him from his knees to the floor again, and finally, heated by the lust of battle, he desisted from long-range tactics and clinched. With a strangle hold on the outlaw's neck, Jawbone freed one arm and brushed the hair from his eyes.

"Git a rope!" he said, "and we'll hang the cuss."

But Guber was more interested in nursing a bloody nose than in procuring a rope, so Jawbone merely tightened his strangle hold and gazed at Guber, who seemed to be in a kind of waking trance. "What's ailin' you!" growled Jawbone presently. "You think I'm goin' to set here all night and nu'ss this here chicken thief?"

"What'n hell'd you kick me in the face for?" inquired Guber.

"Why didn't you keep your face out of the way, when I was busy?" countered Jawbone.

"Better let him go," suggested the Dude Wrangler. "You're choking him to death."

"I think he'll be good, now," grinned the Dude Wrangler.

"I'll tie him up, first. Kin you git me a rope?"

"I can, if Guber will untie my hands."

Guber shook a drop of blood from his nose and muttered profanely. Meanwhile Jawbone slowly relaxed his grip on the outlaw's neck, and then loosed the Dude Wrangler. They bound the hands and feet of the holdup, and hoisted him to a chair. The Dude Wrangler procured three tumblers from the kitchen and filled them to the brim. "We all need it," he said and tilted his tumbler.

Dawn blushed across the eastern hills and filtered into the cabin. They were discussing ways and means of disposing of the outlaw, as there was but one saddle horse handy, when Guber paused and stepped to the doorway. "Com'ere!" he cried, and gestured to the others. Just outside the ranch fence a lean horse grazed placidly, and attached to the horse was an ancient buckboard. It was Monte Peeler, who had evidently changed his mind, some time during his flight for home, and had turned and grazed back along the highway.

"Your funeral percession is headin' this way," Guber informed the holdup.

"I'll ride along with you to town," suggested the Dude Wrangler. "I may be needed as a witness."

After disposing of the holdup man, and retailing the mighty battle to an interested audience of citizens, the Dude Wrangler invited Jawbone and Guber to dine with him at the local hotel. After dinner, the Dude Wrangler excused himself and stepped over to the bank.

Still later in the afternoon Jawbone and Guber, who had exhausted all the glory to be gotten out of the incident for the time being, joined the Dude Wrangler by appointment, at the crossroads. He drew two new crisp bills from his pocket.

"With my regards," he said, smiling.

"What's this fur?" queried Guber, who had never possessed a one-hundred-dollar bill in his life.

"Merely a little token of my sincere regard. You have been of more assistance to me than I can ever pay you for. All I ask is that you will always stop at my cabin when driving my way. So long, and good luck! I'm going back to finish that story."

"Don't you never sleep?" queried Jawbone politely.

"Sometimes; but not when the mill is grinding."

The Dude Wrangler touched the sorrel with his spurs and loped up the road. Jawbone and Guber sat in the buckboard, staring after him and the little puffs of dust that rolled behind his easy flight. Guber gazed down at the new bill in his hand. Jawbone gazed at the bill in his. Then they gazed at each other.

"I reckon we don't need no more tonic, right away," said Jawbone, grinning.

"It liked to ruin us," said Guber, feeling of his nose tenderly.

"Ruined nothin'! Didn't Doc Longbotham say we was to take a dose of that tonic before each meal, three times a day? Well, we done took most of that tonic—and now we got a grubstake so's we kin eat for most a year without sweatin' a hair. Ain't you never satisfied?"

Guber tucked his bill in his pocket. Jawbone did likewise with his. Then he picked up the reins. "Git along, Monte. We got to git home and feed the chickens."

Guber sat hunched up on the seat, nodding to the jolting of the buckboard. Presently he touched Jawbone's arm. "Whope!" said Jawbone, bracing his feet. "What's wrong, now?"

"Nothin'; only I was sayin' yesterday mornin' that that Dude Wrangler wa'n't right in his head. I reckon it's us."

"Mebby so," concurred Jawbone speculatively. "And that there Dude Wrangler is sure some gent! I ain't sayin' I am crazy about them ridin' pants he wears, which is jest nacherally chokin' his legs to death at the knee, or that fancy silk handkerchief he wears around his neck, or like a that. But I reckon I kin git used to 'em. Do you recollec' how he told that holdup to fan it and let him finish his writin' job, and him with his hands tied and a gun p'intin' his way?"

"Uh-huh."

"Well, there's somethin' more to a fella what can talk up like that, than his clothes. If he ain't right in his head, I sure wish they was somethin' wrong with mine."

"You needn't to worry about that," said Guber pointedly.

Jawbone turned and glared at Guber a moment. Then:

"Git along, Monte," said Jawbone.

Another typical Knibb's story, "Mountain Horse" will appear in an early issue.

The Vamping of an Avatar

By Clarence L. Cullen

Author of "A Tale of the Early Village," "Butch and the Great Bernice," Etc.

If any one tells you that you look like Lord Byron, it might be just as well to forget it. And if Doris, deadliest vamp of screendom, had not had something to her head besides looks, perhaps even Mr. Cullen could not have made this the merry tale it is

DORIS DUANE had a corpulent chance, I think not, to try to vamp the part of the Countess Guiccioli. Doris, our justly celebrated screen smearer of happy homes, would vamp the part of St. Cecilia or Susan B. Anthony, if you gave her a slight running start. But, as to this present instance, no chance whatever!

The boss himself, you see, had done the Childe Harold story into film form. You know what a world-wide knock-out and money-maker it was, and still is under the screen title of "The Loves of Lord Byron." Having had the name of Byron wished on him, at the font, by somebody who little suspected that he'd develop into the heap-big movie mogul now known to the world in general as "Byron J. Bingley presents——" the boss had always been a little hipped on the subject of his hot-sketch namesake, so that long before he followed his hunch that the Lord Byron story would build into a screen winner, he had Hawkshaw'd over the whole Byron trail, from Harrow to the finish in Hellas. The script he turned in—most of it scribbled on the backs of envelopes—was an awful affair to unscramble, as I, then and now chief executioner of the Bingley scenario department, found when I tackled it. But the story and the color and the atmosphere of the Byron picture, as you saw it, all came from the backs of those old envelopes nevertheless.

The three of us in swimming gear—the boss and the present prattler and Doris—were lolling on the Waikiki sand, the Bingley No. 1 outfit being at work on a Hawaiian picture, at the time, when Mr. Bingley first mentioned the Byron production-to-be to Doris.

"Vex not your vitriolic little vampire heart," was his way of beginning on her, "at what I am now going to tell you, which, tersely, is as follows: You're off the vamp stuff for the next Bingley picture, and perhaps off it altogether, from then on."

Doris, placidly poking at those little gobs of side hair that they pull below their bathing caps, murmured something about his taking the bread out of her mouth, seeing that she was a vamp or nothing. But the boss never hears anybody when he's listening to himself.

"I've been wanting, anyhow, to switch your work from vamping to straight stuff, and now's the time," he went on. "Film fans everywhere are registering fatigue, under these vamp volleyings without end. It is becoming increasingly difficult to convince them that a millionaire wholesale hardware merchant, fifty-six years of age and jowled like Butch the Bite, with a handsome, human wife and four lovely half-grown daughters living happily at home with him in his Moorish-mission palace in Brookline, on the edge of Boston, is going to bound headlong for the bums' bread line, by reason of the fact that some phooie-phooie little vamp with purple hair and puff-adder eyes is whistling for him and gloating over his roo-in. So I'm going to use you for the straight stuff, and your next part starts you off on the higher and nobler life."

Doris, making a Sis Hopkins face, stuck her tongue out at him. It takes a pretty woman to make a success of sticking her tongue out at anybody, and it takes a woman of considerable importance, in her chosen field, to get away with sticking out her tongue at B. J. Bingley when he's talking business in a sepulchral tone. Doris slipped by with it hands down. Emphatically the nicest all-round woman that ever moved vampirishly over a motion-picture meadow, Doris could get away with murder, even when the boss was in his explosivest T N T directing humor.

"There being neither vamp nor viper in this Byron piece," B. J. went on, "I have cast you to characterize a human being for once. You can do that by performing your prettiest in the part of the Countess Guiccioli."

The boss, gazing seaward while he rumbled, did not catch the start that Doris gave. But I saw it. It was not a screen start, but a start sure enough.

"Your recondite researches along unfamiliar literary lanes," B. J. went on, "must long ago have informed you that the Countess Guiccioli, a lovely young Italian lady, with Titian tresses like your own and with an excess-baggage elderly husband, was Lord Byron's leading little playmate, during his lit-up life in Venice, and the one great consuming love of his caloric career—barring seven or eight hundred others whose names I am too fatigued to rattle off, in alphabetical order, just at this moment."

"I know something of that redhead," said Doris, registering her well-known stubborn show-me expression, "and, from all accounts, she was considerable of a mush."

The boss held up the familiar pudgy and rightly feared staying hand that generally stays 'em instantly. Not so, this time, however.

"Considerable of a mush," repeated Doris clinchingly. "If she had not been that, she would have held Byron, instead of permitting him to slip through her fingers; instead of allowing him to run off to Ravenna, or some such quiet retreat, where the retreating was good."

The boss, open-mouthed to find Doris apparently quite at home as to the Byron-Guiccioli business, nevertheless strove to pin her.

"You overlook the fact that the lady had a husband," was the pin he selected.

"But she needn't have," said Doris, looking fierce. "I suppose there were gondoliers in Venice, at that time, as there are to-day, who were handy with a knife; and she could have found one, if she had had the gumption to look for him."

Again the boss held up the dreaded staying hand, and, for the second time, it failed to stay.

"Mush," went on Doris, "was no name for your Countess Guiccioli! She had, for a little while at least, the most accomplished and the best-looking man in Europe at her feet, and she permitted him to escape. I don't say that he was exactly easy to hold, but he could have been held; any man can be held by a woman who knows how. Far though it be from a respectable working gel to risk her hard-wrung savings, on a sinful gambling chance, I am here to wager two to one, at least, that if this Guiccioli simpleton had had one-tenth as much brains as she had good looks, she would have held Byron in Venice to the end of his days, eating out of her hand, rolling over and playing dead, and barking pretty for bonbons!"

"So *that*," said the boss to Doris, beaming downward upon her as if from the peak of Mt. Shasta, "is your conception of the part of the Countess Guiccioli, is it? And the old vamp habit is so unconquerable within you that, as the Countess Guiccioli, you are going to vamp Lord Byron in this piece—that it?"

Doris ducked by pretending to be busy with her cap. I think the agreeable altitudinous smile of B. J. had warned her that presently she would be slipping.

"Far be it from me to affirm, at this distance of time, nearly a hundred years after his death, that Byron couldn't have been vamped," went on Mr. Bingley, now manifestly enjoying himself. "But I believe history will sustain me when I aver, posiphatically and abstitively, that he never was. Permit me to press that a peg or two, as follows: if, under the peril of a heavy penalty, I should be required, on a second's notice, to name the one Prominent Party in all recorded history who never came within a million lunar leagues of being victimized by a vamp, I'd have the moniker of that Renowned Immune on the tip of my tongue; said moniker being none other than that of Lord George Gordon Noël Byron, of Scotland, England, Italy, Greece, and way points north, south, and west in the Near East."

Doris tossed her head slightly, but it wasn't a convincing toss.

"The vital and verified reason why Georgie Byron never was vamped, nor ever stood in the remotest danger of being vamped, was that, being himself the handiest little he-vamp in the entire history of the human race, he successfully played the beat-'em-to-it system," went on the boss. "If any lady-vamp ever succeeded in putting the bee on George, the Byron bibliography is silent on the subject, and it's a pretty chatty bibliography at that."

Doris, a picture in her California, or one-

small-piece bathing suit, that once having seen you'd hate to forget, scrambled from the sand for a final plunge in the Waikiki surf, the boss and I following her. But it takes more than a pounding procession of Pacific rollers to change the current of B. J.'s cogitations when his concentrating plant is working on full time.

"And so," he said to Doris, as we walked dripping to the bungalow to dress, "instead of whirling the Guiccioli rôle around in a vortex of vertiginous vampology, you're going to redeem yourself in the world's opinion, besides tickling me almost to death, by playing the countess' part strictly straight."

"Meaning," sulked Doris, "that I'm to make her smug and sad and sweet."

"Scratch the smug from that, and you've got her," came the boss right back at Doris. "If you don't believe now that the Guiccioli girl was both sad and sweet, you'll believe it when you study, for a second or so, a painting that I'm going to show you, as soon as we get up to San Francisco."

Doris, who had been humming preoccupiedly as she swung toward the bathing bungalow with us, dropped the humming, slackened her gait, and shot from her dark eyes, at B. J., a look that was sprinkled all over with interrogation points. But the boss never sees any of these things, unless he's directing a picture, when he sees far, far too much.

"It's a painting," he went on, "that I, incurable Byron bug that I always have been and always will be, would give practically all that I own to possess, and it portrays the first meeting of Byron and the Guiccioli. If you, when you see the painting, succeed in making nothing but considerable of a mush of the countess' countenance, you'll be casting contumely and suchlike upon your own comely visage, for you look enough like the Countess Guiccioli, in that work of art, to be her twin at least, if not herself, and if——"

"Where in San Francisco is this painting?" Doris, halting suddenly in the royal-palm path, asked him.

"It's on view at the exhibition gallery of a rapacious dealer in paintings, who, for a year or more, has repelled all my efforts to purchase the picture at his own price, because he claims it's not for sale," replied Mr. Bingley.

"I see," said Doris. With which she passed into her side of the bathing bungalow.

"Now, how the deuce," the boss mused aloud as we dressed, "d'you suppose Doris happened to be so pat as to the Byron-Guiccioli episode?"

Being engaged with that same bit of how-come wondering, I had to pass.

"In case I forget it, remind me, when we get to San Francisco, to take her to see that painting, will you?" he asked me.

I told him I would. But, having noticed the expression on her face—as the boss had not—while he was speaking of the painting, I figured that Doris herself would attend to that bit of reminding, which was precisely the way it worked out on the very day we reached San Francisco.

II.

"There's no price on it, as I've so often told you, Mr. Bingley. It's only on view here. Makes business. People flock here to see it. But it's not for sale—er—uh—well, just yet."

"What d'you mean—'just yet?'" demanded the boss instantly. The dealer, glancing dubiously at Doris and me, standing alongside the boss before the painting, shrugged. "Oh, don't be afraid of these folks—they're my people, blab-proof and umpumpable," said B. J., catching the dealer's meaning.

"Well, I'll say this—there's a likelihood the picture may be offered at a price, sooner or later," said the dealer. "Our dealings with clients, of course, are confidential; but seeing that I am not permitted to divulge the name of the owner of this picture, no harm can be done by my saying that the painting probably will be for sale when the owner, whose affairs are understood to be going from bad to worse, comes the complete smash he's expected to come."

"Smash?" inquired Mr. Bingley. A skilled bunkologist, the boss made that one word so positively wheedling that the dealer fell for its insidious incitation to further revelations.

"Smash," he repeated. "Man's already dropped the bulk of a big inherited fortune by gambling, on a great scale, at games he doesn't understand. Tried only last year to corner the apple crop of all Oregon and Washington, and got a frightful mauling at that. Not a business man at all, really. But

he thinks he is. And so the wise ones are trimming him to a T-bone."

"T-bone, eh?—the poor suet head!" put in B. J. in his ingratiating tell-me-some-more tone, and it worked again. I noticed, by the way, that Doris was listening to the picture dealer with, for her, profound attentiveness.

"Now it's oil," went on the dealer, grinning. "Oil options, you know. I'm a bit sorry for this young man, I don't mind saying. Splendid fellow. A wild 'un, but one with the makings—one that'll settle down. But wasn't educated for business. Educated for diplomacy, in fact. He was secretary of the embassy at Rome, by the way, when he got hold of this Byron picture."

"'Zat so?—must be class to the lad," commented B. J. in his coaxy, I'm-im-mensely-interested tone.

"Class no end, but not sufficient balance—needs toe weights," prattled on the boss-bunked dealer. "He brought some magnificent paintings from Europe—all moderns, and mostly Italian, like this one. I've sold all but this one, for his account. Hangs on to this one, in my private opinion, on account of some sentimental association or other. Confidentially, I'll say I've had its value appraised by experts. The average of their figures would make my selling price at least fifteen thousand."

Doris, I noticed, had turned her back upon our little group, and, raising her nose veil, was dabbing at her eyes. The dealer, at the end of his chatter, glancing in her direction, suddenly stared hard, then pursed up his lips, as if to give a whistle. It was one of those fog-darkened San Francisco days, so that the light in the exhibition gallery was of the dim-cathedral sort, except in the alcove, where the small globes had been switched on around the Byron-Guiccioli painting. So this, apparently, was the first view the dealer had had of Doris' face, for she had not raised her veil until now.

"By George, that *is* queer!" exclaimed the dealer, almost in a whisper, continuing to stare at Doris' profile.

"What's queer?" inquired B. J.

"Why, don't tell me you haven't noticed it, Mr. Bingley—the astonishing resemblance of this lady with you to the Countess Guiccioli, in this Byron painting!"

"Oh, that!" the boss pressed on the pooh-pooh pedal. "Well, I suppose I must have noticed it, or I wouldn't have chosen Miss Duane to enact the part of the Countess Guiccioli in the Byron production I'm about to make."

"But you don't know—that isn't all!" the picture man broke out in the sotto voce which obviously he kept down to that with difficulty, in his excitement.

"Shoot, son—what isn't all?" demanded Mr. Bingley.

"Why, I mean that the startling resemblance of this lady—Miss Duane, did you say?—I mean that her amazing resemblance to the countess, in this painting, isn't all!" the dealer sort of gurgled, in his effort to keep his voice from reaching Doris. "That, in itself, is enough, but what I'm thinking about is its connection—for it must have some connection, seeing that the lady has just now been shedding tears about something—with the fact that the owner of this Byron picture looks enough like the Lord Byron in the painting before you, and, in all the portraits of Byron that I've ever seen, to have been Byron himself!"

The boss, suddenly taut as a ramrod, grabbed the picture dealer by the lapels of his coat.

"Out with that hombre's name and address, Mister Man!" he hoarsely whispered into the dealer's ear. "I need him! I've got to have him!"

"I can't reveal his name, Mr. Bingley," gasped the picture man, struggling ineffectually to release his coat from the boss' tight clutch. "He's a private gentleman and my client, and it's the ethics of this business not to——"

"You listen to me!" B. J. stormed huskily into his captive's ear. "It's not his painting I'm after now—I'll get that later, I hope—but it's *him* I need, and must have, and am going to have—get that? *Going to have!*—if it takes habeas corpus proceedings, a writ of replevin, and an act of Congress!"

The boss, hard as a hammer thrower, for all his fifty years, and burly as a cinnamon bear, seemed, in his eager earnestness, to envelop and infold his fragile, pasty-faced captive till the picture dealer appeared practically to dissolve from view.

"For more than a year," B. J. went on stage-whispering in the lapel-gripped man's ear, "I've had high-priced scouts on the lookout, in every quarter of the civilized world, for a man that looks like Lord Byron, for this Byron production of mine. And every

last scout of them, after working hard on this job, has reported to me that there ain't any such antelope as a Byron *doppelganger.* Now you tell me that you've got a bird in the bush that's Byron's double, and so you've got to come through with this Byron birdikin, son—I tell you I'm going to have him or bust!"

"But, Mr. Bingley, the gentleman is not an actor, he's not a public character at all, and my relationship to him, of a confidential sort, is such——"

"Or bust! I'll say it again! Money's no object at all—it's a case of must! This Byron picture is going to be the big-time, Big-Bertha, big-Bing production of my whole crowded young life, and I've been groaning on my pillow, for months on end, for the need of a Byron that really *looks* like the Luciferian divvle. I've got the Countess Guiccioli all ready-made for him —now you hand me over this Byron of yours, and you'll be treated white!"

"Ab-so-lute-ly, Mr. Bingley, I cannot, without his permission, reveal the gentleman's name," said the dealer, with a click of the teeth that sounded final to me.

"Then get his permission—get it pronto!" hissed the boss into the dealer's ear. "If he's broke, or going broke, he'll be in a listening humor, and if he looks half as much like Byron as you say he does, he can simply write his own ticket on my pay roll!"

"But I don't know where he is," protested the dealer. "I haven't laid eyes on him, in half a year. He's oil-crazy, I tell you, and he spends all his time galloping around in the wake of oil booms here, there, and the other place—Oklahoma to-day, Texas to-morrow, Louisiana the next day. Nobody here, in San Francisco, ever knows where he is."

The boss, putting the muffler on a groan, released his death clutch on the dealer's coat and mopped the perspiration from his anguished face with a shaking hand, just as Doris, outwardly tranquilized again, and with her veil down, rejoined the group before the painting, thereby putting the extinguisher on this talk.

"I'd be ashamed to confess to anybody that believed in me, how far I'd go to become the possessor of that painting," the boss, a quick recoverer, remarked, by way of easing the situation, when we were all lined up again before the picture.

I'll say it was a canvas to cause anybody's mouth to water—particularly anybody familiar with the Byron-Guiccioli story. A large painting, perhaps eight by ten feet, it pinned upon the imagination, with a certain poignancy, the incident of Byron's first meeting with the young Italian countess. In the splendid cream-and-gold reception room of the Venetian palace, four-seated figures, whom you imagine to have been kept waiting for the appearance of the habitually unpunctual poet, gaze, in attitudes and out of eyes clearly expressive of their various points of view with regard to this renowned visitor, at the door through which Byron is being ushered by the obsequiously bending lackey.

Byron, pausing in the doorway to make his entrance bow to the company—a Byron all in black, from small clothes to tailed coat of jet-shining satin, save for the white expanse of ruffled shirt; the very glass of the form of his day, but inconceivably remote from a fop; carefully keeping the club foot slightly back of the good one, as was his sorely sensitive custom—Byron, with his often-described air of the lounging Lucifer, nevertheless, has wide eyes for but one of the seated figures, and you hear the rogue thinking under his fine-looking head of hair: "This one in pink'll be the young Countess Guiccioli, I suppose—and I wonder what's going to happen now!"

"I'd like to know," said the boss, as if to himself, as we stood before the painting, "why I, that's been a fairly respectable goop all of my life, have, nevertheless, always been so strong for that dam' rascal?" pointing to the figure of Byron.

"Because they foolishly named you Byron," Doris pronounced, out of hand. "All Byron-named males, as well as all males who imagine they resemble Byron, feel that way about the dam' rascal, whether they admit it or not. And a good many of them go to the dogs trying to pattern themselves upon him. I know whereof I speak."

When Doris said she knew whereof she spoke, that always settled it. So we came away from there, the boss reserving, for a future occasion, another herculean effort to wring from the picture dealer the name of the owner of the painting who was Byron's double. Besides, B. J., I think, was positive that Doris knew something about that gentleman, and he entertained the wistful hope that he'd be able to wheedle the information out of her. That, in fact, is exactly what

he tried to do as soon as we got into the taxi to return to the hotel.

"Look a here, young feller," he said to her in his best bunkoese, reaching over and patting and stroking her gloved hand softly, "I ain't inquisitive or intrusive or anything like that or those, now am Uh? Tell me that I ain't!"

Doris, gently removing his patting hand, refused to commit herself.

"Far, far, indeed, be it from me to hint that you must have heard what that picture man and I were hissing about," B. J. went on, now stroking the loose end of her fur neckpiece, for lack of something else to stroke, "but you weren't more than ten feet away from us, and——"

"Listen, B. J.," she halted the boss instantly. "I know what you are going to ask me. Well, I am not going to reply. I am not going to answer a single question on that subject—now or ever. You've been good to me, B. J. I'll never be able to tell you how I appreciate your goodness to me. But on that subject I simply cannot—I will not answer——"

Tears. A sudden gush of tears from an absolutely noncrying woman; which made twice within the hour that we'd seen Doris weeping.

We left Doris at the hotel—she was going to remain in San Francisco for a few days, visiting around with friends, she told us—and took the afternoon train for Los Angeles.

III.

Lord Byron stepped out of the sport car, which he was driving, and walked into the administration building, on the Bingley movie lot, just four forenoons later. I say Lord Byron. You'd have said he was Byron. Anybody with one-eighth of an eye in his head would have said he was Byron. Byron as to absolutely everything, barring the club foot.

B. J. was on location, back in the foothills, and wouldn't return till mid-afternoon. And here was Byron, in a good-looking shepherd's-plaid suit, and bareheaded, with his Byronic hair breeze-tossed around his Byronic dome—here was Byron stepping out of a sport car, and walking briskly into the administration building, at eleven o'clock in the morning! He was coming through the main door, when I made the hall. And the closer he came the more Byrony he was! When I faced him in the hall he looked me over with a slight smile about his Byronic or Byronesque lips—the selfsame smile, I was positive, of the Byron who, joshing the perfervid Moore in Venice a hundred years ago, broke out: "Damn it, Tom, don't be poetical!"

"I wonder if you could tell me," he asked me a bit hesitatingly, "where I might find Miss Duane?"

Then I knew, of course, that he was the picture dealer's Byron double, which was a bright bit of ratiocination on my part, you'll be reflecting. I told him that Miss Duane was in San Francisco, but that she was expected to return to Los Angeles within the week. Then I concluded to try for the target suddenly and smack-dab.

"In fact," I added, "Miss Duane is bound to be back on the lot very soon, for we're starting next week on the new picture; the Lord Byron picture, you know, in which she does the part of the Countess Guiccioli."

Great little shot, that. I hate to boast, but it sank right into the mathematical middle of the bull's-eye.

"Byron picture—Guiccioli—you don't mean it!" he broke out, staring at my face as if to ascertain whether I was trying, because he was so startlingly like Byron, to put something over on him.

"Yes," said I, deciding to risk another bet, "Mr. Bingley is expecting great things of this Byron production. He's preparing to make it a really big, important film feature. He's badly disappointed, though, because, in all the world, he has been unable to find a man who really resembles Byron."

He had made a marvelously quick recovery from my first revelation about the picture and Miss Duane's part in it, and the flush had disappeared almost as quickly as it showed. In other words, my second shot not only had missed the target altogether, but it had been a hopeless dud.

"Sorry not to find Miss Duane here," he said. "It's rather important—decidedly important, in fact—that I should see her. And I ought to be on my way to Texas now."

Oil, of course. But I was frightfully busy under the hair trying to think of some way to hold him till the boss returned.

"I wish," he continued, "then, you'd be good enough to give Miss Duane a message from me when she returns." When I told him the pleasure'd be mine, he went on: "I'm a sort of—er—uh—well, business

agent for Miss Duane, as to some of her investments. Name's Duncan; Malcolm Duncan. She has the deed—at least I hope she has kept it—to a six-hundred-acre tract, in Texas, that's cheek-by-jowl with another tract on which two two-thousand-barrel gushers have come in within the past week. Drilling operations have been going on for months on this tract of Miss Duane's, and there's reason to expect a big strike any day. The tract will make Miss Duane a very wealthy woman."

Some business man, as the picture dealer had said!—intrusting a message of that importance to a man he'd never seen before, instead of writing or telegraphing to the lady, about the matter. Most likely, though, the message really wasn't of the least importance, seeing that this avatar of Byron plainly was a fanatical oil hound, as the picture dealer had said. I told him I would give Miss Duane the message when she returned. But how am I going to hold him! —that was the refrain that rattled through my mind, like the clickety-click of a flat wheel under your sleeping car, on a nervous night.

"It'll be a very great favor if you tell Miss Duane that from me," said this man whom the Bingley outfit needed as it never had needed man or woman before. He was going. In another half minute he'd be gone. So I held on to the hand which he gave me to shake.

"Look here, Mr. Duncan," I blurted desperately, "you've got me up a tree that I wouldn't be up, if Mr. Bingley, my chief, were here. I tell you I hate to take the responsibility of permitting you to leave this building. But the only thing I can do is beg of you, for the love of Mike, to be reasonable, and stay a while!"

He studied my chart with a puzzled smile and permitted me to rave on.

"Mr. Duncan," was my rave number two, "if Byron J. Bingley, the head of this moving-picture concern, knew at this moment that you were in this building, and, far worse, that you were about to leave this building, without having seen him, the Eastern papers would have a spread-head story to-morrow, about another violent earthquake in or near Los Angeles. That's how he'd take it; after which, he'd probably relapse into a state of coma, from which it would be impossible to revive him. I ask you, do you want him to die a death like that?"

He tried, still smiling puzzledly, to regain possession of his hand, but it couldn't be done.

"One day last week," I wheezed on, fighting for time, or an inspiration, or any old thing, "when Mr. Bingley and I and Miss Duane stood before a painting, in San Francisco, of the first meeting between Lord Byron and the Countess Guiccioli—a painting the beauty of which, let me say, brought tears to the eyes of Miss Duane, a woman of the nonweeping kind——"

"Tears?" he cut in on me.

"She was so overcome," I started to reply, "that, for a long time, she couldn't speak, and——"

He got his hand away from me this time with a determined wrench, and turned for the hall door, I following him.

"There'll be no need—I'm greatly obliged, nevertheless—for you to give that message from me to Miss Duane," said he over his shoulder—and he was going—going—going! "I'll run up to San Francisco—it's the businesslike thing to do, after all—and see her myself. What hotel is she staying at in San Francisco?"

He was starting down the steps, and his sport car's engine, that hadn't been stopped, was purring a requiem of hope at me! Now or never it was brass tacks or nothing!

"Mr. Duncan," said I, step for step with him, down the path to the car, "you force me to do the utmost I know how, to save myself from being scalped by B. J. Bingley when he returns. So here goes! There is simply no sum of money, within human reason, that Mr. Bingley would not willingly pay you, if for a few brief weeks here, on this lot, you would consent to enact the part of Lord Byron to Miss Duane's Countess Guiccioli——"

He was just stepping into his car, when I got this far, and both of his hands flew up in the never-againest gesture that I ever saw in my life that's been full of never agains.

"No, no—damnation, no!" he shot at me, and he was no longer the smiling but the scowling Byron. "I should say not! Nothing like it! I'm dam' well fed up on that idiotic Byron business, for all time——"

Thr-r-r-rrb! went his motor, as he shot the gas into her. I'll say that sport car had some pick-up! And he was gone!

B. J. returned at four in the afternoon. And I told him.

After stamping on a perfectly new and

expensive straw hat, that had rolled off his desk and was in his path as he pounced back and forth in his office like a newly caged jaguar, and after biting nearly half a box of cigars squarely in two, and forgetting to light any of them, and throwing their frazzled remains, one by one, out of the window, he suddenly decided to start instantly for San Francisco, for the purpose of capturing one Malcolm Duncan by fair means or foul.

"Most likely he'll have seen Miss Duane and started for Texas, by the time you get there, chief," I, taking my life in my hands, said to him.

He saw it, and he didn't go to San Francisco. But if you think life was any joke on that movie meadow for those that had to live it alongside of B. J. Bingley, for the next couple of days, you've got a whole torchlight parade of thinks still to come. But three days later something happened to pierce the deadliness. Mrs. Bingley, shortly before the luncheon hour, called up from the Bingley home in Los Angeles, asking him to drive home for luncheon that day. The boss and I were working hard together on the Byron script, and he asked me to go with him, that we might talk certain scenes over, on the way.

"Mrs. Bingley hinted over the phone about some 'surprise,'" said the boss as we sped for Los Angeles.

Mrs. Bingley, repressedly and elatedly mysterious, met us at the front door and, without a word, conducted us down the hall to the entrance to the Bingley reception room. Then, and then only, did Mrs. Bingley speak.

"The men brought it here, and hung it, this morning, soon after you left the house," she said to B. J.

Superbly hung, on the wall of the reception room which we faced from the doorway, was the hankered-for painting of the first meeting between Lord Byron and the Countess Guiccioli.

IV.

"No thankings, please, old thing—I never could stand thankings. And you're as welcome to it as the marigolds of May—welcomer, I'll say!"

Doris, as nice to look at as a dew-spangled gardenia, wafted away, with both hands, the boss' outpourings of gratitude for the picture. This was three days later, and she had come straight to the movie lot from the San Francisco train.

"But the marigolds of May," broke out B. J., "don't buy fifteen-thousand-dollar paintings, and I simply can't permit you to slip me a gift that must have set you back at least——"

"Didn't pay a penny for it," Doris interrupted him, making believe to tuck in some hairpins that weren't protruding under her picture hat. "I got it by—uh—er——" Her words trailed off into a little subdued laugh that had a touch of melancholy in it. "Well," she added then, "by vampology."

"Nix!" incredulously returned the boss, "Cleopatra herself, if she tried to vamp that picture dealer, would have had the job of her young——"

There was no melancholy, but mirth that was meant, in Doris' laugh this time.

"You know it wasn't the picture dealer, B. J.," she said. "And, equally well, you know it was the picture's owner."

The boss has a noble way of coming clean when cornered.

"I suppose I do know that, Doris," said he. "I suppose I've had a sedate shadowy suspicion or so, for some time past, that the owner of that picture, Mr. Malcolm Duncan, might still be more or less subject to your vampology—no doubt for excellent family reasons."

Doris laughed quietly at the boss' victorious air in mentioning that name.

"He told me," said she, "that he had dropped in here, about that oil matter, before coming to San Francisco."

B. J. waited. He's the finished little waiter, when he has a hunch that there's more coming.

"As to that oil matter," went on Doris, "isn't it the wonderfully lucky thing? Puts poor Dunk squarely on his feet once more. Makes him a rich man again; both of us, for that matter. San Francisco papers were full of it yesterday. The oil came in—'came in,' I believe, is the correct technical term—on Dunk's—our—Texas tract, on the very day he was here. I've got the deed for the tract all safe. Three thousand barrels a day at least!"

The boss and I had been too busy preparing for the Byron production, to read the papers for a week. We were too busy now honing for a certain maybe-maybe lucky break, in connection with the Byron produc-

tion, that you may guess at for a brief space, to think much about oil, glad as we were about this particular Texas coming-in for Doris' sake.

"As for the painting, B. J.," Doris went on, gazing a little pensively at the vanity bag in her lap, "it was a jinx for both of us from the day we posed for it, and I can only pray that it won't jinx you, old thing."

"It'll have a job trying to jinx me—my only jinx is myself," sagely observed the boss. "Well? 'Posed for it,' I think you were saying, Doris."

"Yes, we posed for it," she went on, the slight touch of melancholy reappearing. "It was when Dunk was secretary at Rome. We'd been married only a year, when, at carnival time, we went one night to a fancy-dress affair, Dunk as Byron and I as the Guiccioli. Dunk, of course, knew all about his remarkable resemblance to Byron, but up to this time the thing hadn't struck in to any serious extent. People always had been telling him, since his adolescence, about this resemblance, but he hadn't been poisoned by it up to then. He had often told me that he had lov—that he had cared for me, on sight, because of my own resemblance to the Countess Guiccioli, whom I'd never heard of till he gave me the story about her."

"So *that's* how this trillion-to-one-shot came about?" mumbled B. J. "The Byron atavar searches the world for a Guiccioli, finds her in you—'and so they were married.' Well?"

"The Italian artist, at that masked ball, almost had a stroke, when he saw Dunk and I unmask," Doris went on. "He besought us, instantly, to pose for the Byron-Guiccioli painting—a picture, he almost sobbed, that he'd been hungering to paint all his life. So we posed for the picture; posed for it in the white-and-gold reception room—it's really much shabbier than it looks in the painting—of the palazzo, on the Grand Canal, in which the countess lived in Venice, with her blind-playing old husband. The painting made a furor and took the prize of Rome. Then Dunk bought it. And from then on the jinx began working on us in three perfectly dovetailing eight-hour shifts."

"Eight-hour shifts," parroted the boss, to keep the narrative moving.

"Poor Dunk, under the adulation of fool women," went on Doris, "developed a case of Byronitis that made still more of a fool of him than they possibly could be. He went Lord-Byroning over Europe. You told me that the original Lord Byron was vamp-proof. Not so my unfortunate husband—Byron's atavar, as you call him! They vamped Dunk out of his diplomatic career, out of his health for a long while, and out of hundreds of thousands; to say nothing of cheating him out of Doris his suffering spouse; for, after standing more than a year of this—and I'll say that Rome's a lonesome town, for an American woman whose husband only drops in at home once in every couple of weeks, for a few suit cases of fresh linen—yours truly came back to the United States without leaving any forwarding address, and went into the movies through the kindly offices of a nice old thing named Bingley."

"Named Bingley," echoed the boss, waiting for the finish, that he might make a pounce that even then he was rehearsing.

"Well, that's all," said Doris. "Dunk found me two years ago—that's when he gave me this lucky deed to the oil tract—and he registered great anguish when I refused to start housekeeping with him right away again. But I had to put him on a probation of two years. I wanted to make dead sure and give him plenty of time to live down his Byron bug. Well, the two years are up. I am glad they are up. Dunk is back to himself. He's my man and I always was for him through the very worst!"

The boss, gazing reflectively at the reddish hair on the backs of his pudgy hands, said nothing for a long time. Then he walked over to where Doris stood by the window.

"My girl," he said, "up to just now, when I surrendered myself to a short spell of sure-enough thinking, I meant to have your Dunk for the Byron picture or know the reason why. But now I pass. I'm glad you and your husband are together again. I'll be dogged if I'd stand for anything that might have the remotest chance of summoning back that jinx!"

"But that, old thing, is to be the final test," said Doris. "Dunk is going to do Byron in your picture. I vamped him into consenting only yesterday. If he comes through the ordeal of being Byron for two months, then I'll *know* he's cured!"

If you don't think Dunk stood the test to Doris' satisfaction, I'll take you over to dinner at their home in Hollywood, some evening, and show you where you're wrong.

The Devil's Chaplain

By George Bronson-Howard

Author of "Yorke Norroy, Diplomatic Agent," "From Dusk to Daylight," Etc.

SYNOPSIS OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS.

Milliken and Billiken, belonging to "The Crime Trust," an organization headed by a man known as "The Devil's Chaplain," go to lonely St. Kilda's Island, on the Maryland coast, to help "Septimus Six," anacharist and chemical genius, escape from Pryble Prison. Young Alan Allenby, who loves Guilda, Six's daughter, who has disappeared, sees Billiken kill a man, and, after Six is released by bribed guards, the crooks kidnap Alan and escape in a speed boat. Meanwhile, in New York, Guilda has eluded her Crime Trust guards long enough to communicate with Yorke Norroy, secret agent. Ulric Ulm, of Norroy's staff, follows Guilda into an apparently vacant business building near Broadway, and is made a prisoner in headquarters of the Crime Trust.

(A Four-Part Story—Part II.)

CHAPTER X.

ULRIC ULM IS OVERHEARD.

IT had been midnight when Alan Allenby, following the example of Milliken, had stretched himself out on one of the cushioned lockers of the *Sea Snake*, and slept. It was assuredly midnight when he awoke, for he heard the solemn chiming of a church bell in its tower, and all around him was in moonlit shadow. But how came a church bell to be chiming so near the *Sea Snake?* It was some time before Alan raised himself on his elbow to investigate. He was in a curious lethargy; content to lie and wonder. His hand strayed to his arm, where he felt a dull ache.

Surely this was no cushioned locker on which he lay. Even in the dark he could see that it was a full-sized bed. Some one had thoughtfully removed his Mackinaw, his jersey, his sea boots, his riding breeches. Yes, even his shirt and underclothing. He was in pajamas, soft, silken pajamas, silk of a caressing softness, yet richly thick withal. His brain persisted in believing that to lie there, unthinkingly, was by far the better thing to do.

Alan had only once to find his feet, unsteadily, then to stagger across the room, to find his body in complete agreement with his brain. He felt sick. He saw things through a haze. He got back to his bed somehow, determined to stay there.

The brief return to action served to clear his brain, however. Plainly, the while he had slept aboard the *Sea Snake*, he had been drugged. That lump on his arm represented a hypodermic injection. It must have been a most potent drug, morphia, probably. During the drug's effect, he had been carried from the *Sea Snake* to some conveyance that brought him here—wherever "here" was.

Gradually, the darkness grew less impenetrable to his wide-open eyes. He distinguished a sloping ceiling, for one thing; so steep that it was quite impossible there should be anything above it except the gabled roof. The one window in sight was a diamond-paned dormer, with an in-swinging shutter. This lozenge-shaped window being open, moonlight flooded the room. There was a tall Renaissance chair, richly carved, directly beneath the dormer. In fact, the room seemed crowded with just such objects of art. Had Alan known it, it was more like an art dealer's showroom than a bedchamber.

Presently, his eyes ever more alert with each succeeding second, Alan noted four parallel bars outlined in shadow upon the floor. Raising himself upon his elbow again, and craning his neck, he saw the sinister suggestion repeated in fact. Four thick serviceable iron bars denied further investigation of the open window. Alan lay and pondered. Again he essayed rising. Reaching the window, he mounted the Renaissance chair, and peered out. What he saw amazed him!

Hitherto he had ignored the sounds that seemed to reach his ear: the deep, low rumbling of a city that never is quite asleep. Now he saw, apparently from a building of

some height, a metropolis of magic, mist and moonlight. Down below twinkled the lights of scudding surface cars. Elevated trains thundered along. By day New York may be ugly enough, but seen first from such a spot, in the midnight moonlight, it is a phantom city, indeed.

As he stood there, agape, his ear was taken by a nearer sound—a tapping. He who tapped had no intention of being ignored. Some one was tapping against iron bars very like his own. Perhaps it was another prisoner like himself.

"Who's there?" he whispered cautiously.

"You don't know me," came the answer in the same sort of carefully lowered voice, "but I heard them bring you in an hour or so ago. We're both prisoners here, it seems. I heard your name from some one speaking in the hall outside my door. It's Allenby, isn't it? Mine is Ulm, Ulric Ulm. Are you in the service?"

"What service?"

"Evidently, you're not. How did you get here? And why? Who are you?"

Alan answered the last question and repeated his request for information about "the service."

"The Federal service, I meant, of course. But I *know* you aren't, from the way you first answered. You got into all this through an accident, didn't you?"

By craning his head sideways and putting part of his face through the bars, Alan caught a glimpse of his interlocutor's face and liked it. Ulric, with his fair hair and boyish features, seemed little older than himself. So Alan began to tell of his adventure up to the time he had dropped off to sleep aboard the *Sea Snake*.

"When I woke up, a few moments ago, I found myself here in bed," he concluded ruefully.

Ulm followed up Alan's experience with a detailed description of his own; beginning with his precipitate pursuit of the mysterious young lady, at the behest of Mr. Yorke Norroy, to whom he referred as the "chief," as well as by name.

When he, in his turn, had concluded his tale, Alan, who had been a living interrogation point, through at least half of it, finally burst out with his first question. He could not have told you why he asked it, but somehow, suspicion had become surety before Ulm was half through.

"Describe the girl you followed."

Unconsciously, Ulric began to parrot the words of Yorke Norroy that had come over the office telephone. He got no further than the first item of her attire.

"A lace jabot, you say? Did she have big brown eyes? And crispy, wavy hair; a sort of gilt bronze?" Excitedly, Alan added other details. It was a lover's description, yet sufficiently accurate for Ulric to verify it.

"You know her then?" he asked.

"*Know* her," was Alan's eager answer. "Why that's Guilda Six. Is *she here?*"

Apparently Ulric was still gloomy.

"She led me into this confounded mess, didn't she? Who *are* these people! *What* are they? And what do they mean to do with us?"

As to the others, Alan acknowledged his complete ignorance. As to himself——

"Professor Six will see that *I* come to no harm," he said confidently. "And I'll do my very best for you. It wasn't your fault, and it certainly was no fault of mine, that either of us came to be mixed up in this affair. That fellow, Milliken, didn't seem a bad sort. I'll get him interested in you. I like him, rather. But the other. That Billiken! God! Just one punch at him and I'll die happy. Oh, what a brute!"

"It was my own stupidity that landed me here," said Ulm, continuing in the same self-reproachful, gloomy tone. "It wasn't in your case. But if I'd had the sense to telephone my suspicions—or something. But, no! I wanted to do it all single-handed."

He paused to indulge in profane depreciation of his own intellectual limitations. In the silence that followed, both heard the stealthy lowering of a near-by window.

"Somebody," stated Ulm, in the same gloomy sort of tone he had used throughout their colloquy, "has been listening to every word we've said."

Alan, whom Ulm had profoundly depressed, imitated the other's sullen silence. All was still again, except for the distant roar from the night-lit city. So the sound of waves from a far-off beach is brought to the ears of those in some peaceful backwater. This place, even more forsaken by night than by day, seemed all the quieter for the murmur of this remote activity.

"You'll find plenty of books in there, if you care to read. The finest, too, in editions de luxe—if it's anything like the one I'm in," was Ulm's comment. "And candles,

too, if you want to read. If there aren't any, I guess I could pass some over to you. I'm tired of standing up here, myself. I was tapping for an hour, I guess, before you heard me. See you later."

With which he disappeared, leaving Alan to the contemplation of Byrd's coach yard below, the fairy city beyond, and the full moon, silver-bright, above.

CHAPTER XI.

THE LABORATORY.

In a lower room of the next building, once a prosperous "uptown" hotel, the listener whom Ulm heard, was scowling away at a great rate, as he closed the window. Everything about the man, except purplish-black watch cord and two folds of dark purple ascot tie that matched it, was of black and cut clericwise. The waistcoat was as high as might be and met the tie barely below the clerical collar buttoned at the back. The tie was without a pin and was pressed and folded flat in such a way as to suggest the crimson worn by cardinals and other princes of the church. His face was a mask. He had long ago ceased to have any outward individuality of his own. There was, there always had been, something of the ascetic about this man's appearance; just as there had been, and always would be, something of the ascetic in his nature.

This man's face had a sort of general resemblance to that of some great bird; due, chiefly, to his beak of a nose, big but thin nostriled. Thin were the lips beneath it. His eyes were birdlike, too, and dark. A shock of iron-gray hair did not belie the "chaplain's" priestly habit. It accentuated it; a fact he had discovered years before; when adopting this garb, temporarily, as a disguise, he had found it heightened the illusion he wished to perfect. Since then he had worn it almost constantly. His name, so far as any one knew it, was Thomas Trego, which he claimed to inherit from aristocratic Cornish ancestors; but the contrast of his habit with his sinister business had soon won for him the name "The Devil's Chaplain," by which he was almost always addressed wherever his real nature was known. In time it had been shortened to "The Chaplain."

On leaving and locking up the room where he had listened, and passing down a narrow corridor, massive silver candlestick held high, you would have sworn there approached you some one of blameless life and character on his way to his evening orisons. But when he was near enough for his fierce face to loom up, his eyes reflecting the candle's fire, you would have shrunk, breathless, back to the wall, and waited for him to pass.

At the corridor's end, or what seemed the end of it, Trego held the candle close and pressed a part of the ornamental woodwork, the center of a carven rose. At his touch, what seemed like a solid piece of cabinetwork slid back on nicely greased grooves, quite soundlessly.

With the money his iniquitous practices had won for him and those who preyed under his supervision, he had bought this block of abandoned Broadway businesses. Before he employed it for his own ends, however, he had seen to it that the buildings should be connected in a way to leave no trace thereof. Like all who operate under the shadow of the law, he continually foresaw the day when detection should threaten him.

But the Chaplain was too astute a criminal to leave the matter of "get-aways" to chance. At least two of these exits were known only to himself and to Milliken, boss of the entire job, and the only one of all those in the Chaplain's employ, outside his general factotum, Kendrick Kewpick, who had Trego's entire confidence. Although he disliked the somewhat sentimental Milliken, almost to the point of detestation, the value of loyalty and good faith is as priceless in iniquity as elsewhere. And by some twist of fate, Milliken's nature was warped in only one particular—a contempt for all law.

The woodwork on one side having slid back, there remained a space of a few feet where solid masonry had been. Pressing his thumb to what looked like a nail, Trego operated another slide on the far side. He stepped out into an entirely different sort of hallway, closing both sliding doors behind him. Making his way along this hall, he stopped at a door where he listened, then knocked. The door remained closed. He knocked again. A loud expression of annoyance was heard from within, followed by a demand that the one outside either remain there or admit himself. Acting on this latter admonition, Trego entered.

He knew the room well, even better than he knew most of those in the block; for he had fitted up this one himself, and for its present occupant, Professor Six, who now sat

watching a pair of Bunsen burners. He seemed from his eager expression to be conducting some investigation exceedingly satisfactory to himself. It might have been judged as equally distasteful to Trego, his olfactory nerves not being subdued to the service of science. For, indeed, the odor was fairly sickening. It was a bare enough room, save for certain paraphernalia of chemical research. Long, flat tables were crowded with delicately balanced instruments, shelves were massed with tall jars containing multicolored liquids; squat glass receptacles held the same chemicals in less soluble form. Crucibles and retorts were everywhere. Over each table an adjustable droplight was suspended.

It was a room to delight no one, save as ardent an investigator as Septimus Six. There was not a chair; only the benches that went with the tables. There was neither bric-a-brac nor mural decoration: the walls held charts, tables of weights and measures, and the like. A small, brass-fitted experimental furnace was alight in one corner. Its light gave the room a weird glow. It needed only the stuffed alligator and a skeleton and a skull or two, to convert it into the cave of the alchemist bent over an alembic, the retreat of the medieval magic worker.

As far as looks went, Septimus Six, ancient of aspect, and wearing smock, rubber cap, mask and gloves, suited the picture exactly. He turned from his experiment, whatever it was, to eye an unknown intruder most unfavorably. Seeing who his visitor was, however, he pulled off mask and gloves, and advanced with both hands outstretched.

"My dear Doctor Trego," he said, in hearty greeting. It was evident he admired, almost revered, this man. "I can never thank you enough for this laboratory. It is magnificant. My escape, too," he added hastily.

"That, professor," answered Trego with an air of great stateliness, "was no more than I promised when you were arrested. I had arranged to have you pardoned, but the meddlesome activities of certain of the Federal people prevented that. So I took the next best course."

"And my daughter?" asked the old man eagerly, "you have had word of her?"

Trego shook his head sadly. "Not yet, sir. Not any word that I should care to credit. No, sir."

Septimus Six eyed him keenly. "Apparently, then, Trego, you have had word of *some* sort? Whether or not you credit it, is another matter. What is it?"

"I should prefer to say nothing, yet. I must be more certain of my information. You have waited this long. A little longer wait can do you no harm. Other matters claim our immediate attention: mercenary matters. Let us get rid of them. You saw the amount of money paid over to those guards. That was the smallest item of the cost of your escape. This laboratory, fitted up according to your instructions, cost a pretty penny, too——"

"I can imagine so," agreed the professor, eying his surroundings with affectionate admiration. "I never saw one better equipped; not a private one. But why exceed my instructions? There are enough alkaloids here to poison all America?"

"That, sir," responded the Chaplain with dignity, "means a return to these mercenary matters which I dislike to discuss so exceedingly. In order to reimburse the organization for what has been already spent to free you and fit you up, as well as to provide funds for future 'direct action' we look to you to provide us with an article that will be readily marketable. You will remember, once before, we spoke of synthetic drugs. You began working on one, a sadly needed one, when you were unfortunately apprehended. At the time, you told me how certain you were that you were on the right track. 'A matter of a month or more,' you said, and I would have perfected it.' Am I right?"

Six agreed gravely.

"But," he added, "that same unfortunate apprehension broke up the work of a year, scattered my notes, disposed of all preparatory examinations and analyses; in fact, dispersed everything. To get back to where I was then will require a mort more of time."

"But you are still certain of a final successful conclusion?" asked Trego, forgetting his pose and speaking eagerly.

Six seemed as one mortally offended; he was like a child at whom the bitterest sort of insult has been hurled by one in authority.

"I suppose my former *failures,*" said he, placing the most withering emphasis on the word, "have merited that?"

"No, no, professor," returned Trego, overjoyed but careful not to display it. "No, no! I didn't mean that——"

But from his tone, a listener might have gathered he meant just that! Trego, a master at drawing out his man, had found this semisuspicion of Six's failing abilities the sort of goad with which to drive this particular ox. He continued so salutary a treatment.

"Then what *did* you mean?" demanded Six resentfully.

"Why, that, perhaps, the unfortunate affair of the past few months might have unsettled you, so to speak. That the hand might have lost some of the cunning, the brain some of the——"

"That will do, Doctor Trego: that will do," said Six in a sort of quiet fury.

Like others of us who have a failing we dimly suspect, one we are urgently desirous of disbelieving, Septimus Six, every now and again, had a vague inner reminder that all was not well with his mental processes. But he was like most monomaniacs. As his brain had not failed him in the one attribute he valued—his eager proficiency in chemical research—he was always able to scout this suspicion to his entire satisfaction. It was his daughter, during her stay at St. Kilda's, who had awakened these unpleasant suspicions. Almost she had persuaded him that, because of his secondary mania—his passion for justice—he had been no more than a wretched tool of criminal interests as selfish as those capitalistic ones he had made such sacrifices to combat.

We must repeat that "almost." Guilda had done no more than prepare the soil and make it fertile for the seeds of suspicion another was to sow. Because she thus endangered his plans, Trego had seen to it that she was carried off and kept securely, where she could do no further harm—under his very eye.

He had only just become aware, through listening at the window, of her attempt to warn Norroy. Trego rightly regarded the secret agent as his most dangerous foe. It was because of what had passed between Ulm and Allenby that he lied so barefacedly about Guilda to her father. Otherwise he might have held out some hopes of their reunion. Now he saw any such meeting as fatal to his plans.

"You will find that neither my hand nor my brain has suffered through my incarceration," said Six, in his usual slow precise syllables. He spoke, however, with an intensity that brought the blood to the surface, so that every vein in his face seemed distended, and color crept even into the loose sacks under his old but undimmed eyes. "I shall require several months as I have said. And I wish you to see to it that I have young Allenby as my assistant. Since he is to be immured anyhow, I may as well have his invaluable assistance. He has shown an almost unique interest in, and apprehension of, some of my most difficult problems. Moreover, I have promised that no harm shall come to him, and I shall feel surer my promise is kept, if he is under my eye. Either that or he must be set free, if he will give his word of honor to remain away from St. Kilda's for six months. In the latter case, money must be provided him for his upkeep elsewhere. See to this, Trego, and I promise you the formula for the required synthetic before three months have passed. It is here, all here."

Trego nodded agreement to his demands, all the while watching him intently. As though to dispel any lingering doubts the Chaplain might have as to his ability, the old man added in the same slow, wrathful tones.

"What I will give you will be the finished product to sell to the public; to produce which means months of careful work and much worry. But the one essential is already here. I have it all here." And he tapped his forehead. "The other will follow shortly. Do not doubt it, when I say so."

"I am delighted to hear it, professor. Things are going from bad to worse with me. Because of my devotion to the Cause, as in your own case, I have practically impoverished myself. Whatever funds the brotherhood had were exhausted long ago. Everything that has been done recently has come out of my own private pocket. The war has turned men's minds away from the Cause."

Septimus Six turned to his Bunsen burners, extinguished them, and crossed the room to take down a finely graduated pair of Chinese chemist's scales, most delicate measurers of small weights in the world. From the shelves he selected several huge jars and began apportioning their contents according to some method he had in mind.

"You shall have the sinews of war sooner than you expect," he flung out, his tone a somber sort of dismissal. For with that he became silently absorbed in his work.

The Chaplain watched him for a while; then tiptoed softly out. On the other side of the door, a smile lengthened the line of his lips until his thin mouth was like a purplish slit that ran from ear to ear.

"Millions," he whispered; "millions."

CHAPTER XII.

THE OPIUM DEN.

It was perhaps an hour after he had spoken with his fellow prisoner that the door to Alan Allenby's room opened. It was Milliken who entered, bearing before him one of those many-branched candelabra used in synagogues and in Hebrew home worship; also for their decorative effect in Gentile houses. Like the articles upon which its waxen candles cast their glow, it was of a splendor worthy of one of the richest of either of the latter-mentioned places, being of sterling silver, richly chased with symbolic figures. Like everything else in that place, it was part of the rich spoils of some daring and unpunished robbery which had, at some time or the other, had a very special place on the front pages of New York newspapers.

By the light of the starlike tips of its ten waxen tapers, Alan began to realize the unprecedented richness of his surroundings. The Gobelin tapestries, hanging loosely like old-time arras, represented Arthurian legends as dim as their devices, and were of that splendid sort catalogued as "museum pieces." On a mantel above the fireplace were many bits of Satsuma and Chinese cloisonné, for the most part "water pieces," portraying cranes and suchlike fowl, all of the purest white, and with misty backgrounds of aquamarine sea and sky.

On the top of a tall Swiss cabinet stood a candlestick so beautiful that one with any love of art gave an instinctive gasp at first sight of it. Of purest white jade, it held what seemed to be a candle, but was really wrought of the same quality of green jade. Flanking it on either side, stood others of the same workmanship and material, one candle red as the reddest coral, the other jasmine yellow; the three alone worth more than many times their weight in gold.

The loot in this room was the choicest rifling of many shops; its presence here was due to the fact that every piece was catalogued, had a history, and was readily identified. They must be shipped far from the places from which they had been illegally procured, by the Chaplain's coadjutors, to the places where they had been originally bought. There, thanks to Trego's methodical organization, they would begin their careers all over again; the Satsuma, for instance, in Kobe; the Chinese cloisonné in Canton; those candlesticks in Hongkong or Shanghai; the Gobelins in France. Many were the places where the Chaplain had agents. Year by year, he had steadily built up a market for the masterpieces of the master mechanics of crime.

Milliken said nothing, immediately after his entrance, allowing the magnificence of Alan's surroundings to sink in. That young man blinked like some astounded young owl. His glance finally returned to himself, to note that this magnificence extended to himself, the pajamas of a soft and silky sheen, with mother-of-pearl buttons fastened to heavy silk frogs, a great circle of the same silken cord outlined over his heart, and within it, a multicolored silken monogram.

Milliken, noting the glance, laughed.

"Those pajamas you've got on were made for young 'Monty' Kane," he chuckled. "I remember we used them to wrap up some of the Kane crystal in, when we took the Kane joint on Madison Avenue. Monty and the old man were off duck shooting, down the Chesapeake, at the time. You'll see some swell junk worn by the boys, around this drum, you betcha; stuff they couldn't wear outside."

He took down a garment from a near-by hook.

"Here's a Circassian lamb's-wool dressing gown from some other such party and a pair of Juliets that go with it," he chuckled. "Expect they came from that customhouse trick 'Poke' Marshall put over the other day. With them believing he came from some millionaire's house, fellow who'd paid fifty thousand duty on some bales and boxes lying there, they let him cart off the lot. Poke's customhouse 'lookout' tipped him off to it, that day, and that night we had the stuff here. Come along with me."

Milliken picked up his heavy silver candelabrum. The lighted tips of the ten tiny waxen tapers twinkled like so many stars in the darkness of the bare and chilly corridor outside.

"We have to use lamps and candles because it'd be rich asking the electric company or the gas people to juice a block of vacant

buildings, wouldn't it? Only the chief would have thought of a trick like this; using Broadway for central headquarters. Who'd ever think of looking here?"

As he chuckled over it, Milliken continued to traverse corridors that did not belie the assumption that the block was deserted. As has been said, he, like the Chaplain, knew every exit, having built them all. So, leading the way, he slid back the panel that led into the former hotel. Here the rooms were of a size best suited to a certain necessitated usage of the Chaplain and his horde.

Before an oaken doorway in the exact center of the hall, Milliken paused to rap with his knuckles after a prescribed code. A certain sweetish, sickish odor assailed Alan's nostrils, slightly nauseating him. When the same signal was repeated from within, followed by the sliding of bolts and the slipping of chains, Milliken extinguished his waxen tapers, and used one of a number of keys, on his chain, to open a corridor cupboard near by.

Alan was amazed to see, standing in orderly rows, on its numerous long shelves, every variety of candlestick from single squat bedroom candleholders of brass to tall, stately candlesticks of silver, and even some of many branches, such as Milliken now placed under a certain number. For above each was pasted a number. In some cases the space beneath it was vacant.

"The fellows come here from all over the block," was Milliken's elucidation, "and take candles, although some of them carry pocket flashes and finders—they have to use them so much in the way of business"—here he leered impudently at Alan—"still, as they have candles to light their rooms, anyhow, they generally bring them along. You never know when a battery is going to give out in one of those other contraptions. Here's the only one I carry."

He had locked the cupboard door, and they now stood in utter darkness, which Milliken mitigated somewhat, as he spoke, by taking out the same watch with the illuminated dial that he had used when he knelt beside the body of Isaac Hamp. By its light, he found and opened the room door. Such a sweep of cold air caught him from behind that it slammed to, precipitating the pair of them into a great, dimly lighted chamber. They were immediately greeted by a number of disgruntled, discontented voices, some downright damning them.

"What're trying to do: put out my lamp?" asked some one near by, earnest in profane protest. "Letting a draft through here, like that."

"Less of it, less of it, 'High Pocket,' " said some one else in a leisurely, languid sort of way.

The voice was that of him who seemed to have the room in charge. He was shut off from the rest of the room by an Oriental gold-embroidered screen, and he sat at a rosewood secretaire of the First Empire school, the light from a shaded green student's lamp lighting up his little alcove, near the door. Here were several bookshelves crowded with reading matter, as well as many day books, ledgers and the like.

The room itself, or series of rooms, rather, had something of the attraction of an exotic stage set. In bunks, three tiers high, along the walls, lay men and a few women with opium layouts before them. When they smoked in pairs, they used the couches crowded against the walled-up windows fitted with whirling ventilators. Men and women alike, in the cases where they had not laid aside their street clothes, were well, sometimes too well, dressed. Alan could see only those quite close to him, for the light, that filtered down through the filigree of overhead lanterns of Oriental shape, was exceedingly dim. The only additional light was the green-shaded student's lamp, by which the man at the door was casting up accounts, when they entered. Incidentally it lighted up the accountant's swarthy Eurasiatic face.

This person, who used his English mother's name of Chard, had for paternal parent a Chinese, dwelling in Limehouse Causeway, who, with his son, had been implicated in a certain celebrated scandal. Involving, as it did, the death of one of their customers, a young actress, the stare of Scotland Yard had been concentrated upon the traffickers in illicit drugs, and Chard's father had been chased back to China. The younger Chard had chosen America instead, where his knowledge of unwholesome alkaloids, and the like, had gained him a place in the Chaplain's entourage. He, and he only, outside the Chaplain and Kewpick, had access to the hidden hoards of habit-forming drugs. He looked up at Milliken with beady, twinkling eyes. Except for their jet color and slight obliquity, and his somewhat saffron countenance, he was as European in appear-

ance, and dress, as possible. He imported his clothes from an English tailor.

"You've been away, haven't you, Mill?" he inquired. "Haven't seen your smiling countenance in ages? Nor that of your merry little pal?"

"He's no pal of mine, if you mean that loathsome little lizard of a Billiken," returned the big man. "I'm off him, for life. Left me, with a twisted ankle, for the common enemy to hurl into the hoose-gow or do as they liked with, generally. I'd much more likely been lynched than locked up, and that for croaking a man Billiken did for himself, so help me God! The rotten little sewer rat! Unless the chief puts the screws to him, I'll never go out on the heel with him again, and that I swear. Told the chief so, too."

"Between you and me, I never could go the little lad, myself," responded the Eurasian, in a whisper. "I never feel quite easy in my mind, while he's in here, 'pon honor I don't. Better lie on your side and try to forget him. What's it to be to-night, Mill? The stem or the spear?"

"Why, I'm sorta showing this new chum around, Willy, I donno's my time's my own or not," returned Milliken doubtfully. "Orders from on high is to give him the double-o and an earful at one and the same time. Come to think of it, though, why not lie on my side, while I wise him up, hey? Nothing like bein' full of the poppy to stimulate conversation. I'm never there with the jab unless I'm on a trip: you know that. Don't seem to get the same satisfaction somehow; and if you take too much it gets you logey. However, while I'm here, you may as well fill up my traveling kit."

He unbuttoned the heavy silk frogs of his expensive camel's-hair dressing gown, which somewhat resembled a military overcoat. From the pocket of a soft sleeping suit of expensive French flannel, Milliken extracted a heavily monogrammed cigarette case. Or, at least, it had been intended for a cigarette case, one of those huge affairs intended to hold at least fifty.

"Part of the loot we got from that English lord who came over here to sell the famous family necklace. We got it first," grinned Milliken, seeing that Alan admired the case. Its interior had been rearranged, one side for several shining syringes and sharp platinum needles. The other side held some six or seven cut-glass phials, marked in gold letters: "2 grains" or "5 grains," as the case might be, each holding a diminished number of white tablets.

"Fill 'em up," directed Milliken. "In case of emergencies. Never know when I'll get a hurry call."

Turning to the wall, Chard slid back panels and opened a wall safe by a dexterous whirl or two. Alan was too astounded by its contents to be horrified, this time. Enough hypnotics and anodynes were within to put the entire population of Manhattan to sleep forever.

Chard filled the vials from various huge jars holding tablets; staring at Alan's unusual expression, as he handed back the case.

Milliken followed the look.

"Oh, you may as well get used to all this, youngster," he said, his voice pitying. "You'll be using the stuff, yourself, before you're many hours older."

"Never," Alan almost shouted. "Never!"

His violence caused some commotion. Habituées of opium converse in lowered voices; maintain always, when indulging, an atmosphere of utter calm. Looks of actual dislike were directed at the little group at the door.

"I'll bend this stem over somebody's nut, if they throw a scare like that into me again," stated a reddish-haired, vulpine-faced little man known to his intimates as "Simon the Ferret," infuriated at awakening from what was evidently a most satisfactory dream. "I thought the common enemy was on our trail."

But Chard still continued to stare at Alan. The Eurasian's surprise was such that for some little while he found no words to give it utterance.

"I thought, old thing," he said, finally, his tone even lower than usual. "I thought the chief wouldn't permit anybody in this part of the drum, especially, if he didn't use the stuff, one way or another."

He came closer and surveyed Alan's eyes. Assuring himself from the appearance of their pupils, as an expert can always do, that he was not one of those referred to, his surprise became almost comic. He surveyed Alan as if he had suddenly discovered, in him, traits peculiar to some utterly eccentric character.

"Yes, yes, the chief doesn't, Willy, he doesn't," agreed Milliken hurriedly, even,

Alan thought, in some alarm. "But that's all right, Willy; say nothing to nobody. Give you an earful, later. If one of the alcoves is vacant, I can smoke, myself, and at the same time wise up this young fella so he doesn't make any more breaks like that."

Still surveying Alan with the same air of surprise, the Eurasian led them through three rooms connected by archways of more or less Moorish design; the former "royal suite" of the old hotel. All three were crowded by the users of opium, solitary in the bunks, and sometimes somnolent, or conversing eagerly on the couches between "pills." They threaded their way in and out among these couches, to the extreme end of the last room. Here three alcoves, shut off by a door half hidden by flimsy curtains of bamboo and beads, insured some measure of privacy, the nearest smokers being some distance away.

Chard had pressed a button, before leaving his desk, and a Chinese boy, appearing from somewhere, had followed them and now busied himself preparing the lacquered tray he had brought with him. It was finished off in red lacquer, a little brass filigreed lamp, and a long pipe of bamboo-colored black and heavily weighted, concomitant parts of the layout.

"Evlyting all ploper now, master," he informed Chard, when he had lit the lamp and so adjusted the wick that the flame was at once steady and its tip rose no higher than the top of the enameled glass shade. "All wantchee is hop. Toey no got." He held up an empty horn jar. Chard handed him the gayly ornamented can he had picked from a pigeonhole on leaving his desk, and the Chinese filled the little jar with the sirupy mass.

Meanwhile, Milliken had crawled into the alcove, to lie with his head supported by a mass of pillows arranged at one end, silently directing Alan to do likewise.

Alan hesitated; but the look on Milliken's face, at once exasperated and afraid, acted as an accelerator, and he climbed in awkwardly. The tray placed between them, the Chinese "boy" went his silent way. Chard remained for a few moments to chat with Milliken, in a patois that was Greek to Alan. Worse! He knew a little Greek. Then, Alan was left to watch Milliken, as he twirled the opium on his *yen-hok*, kneaded it against the clay bowl, and made "pills" of it, each of which he silently converted into smoke.

CHAPTER XIII.

MILLIKEN EXPLAINS.

Again, Alan became uneasy. The shadow of something sinister, that had oppressed him ever since Milliken's arrival, now brought about a shudder that Alan could not control.

"For God's sake; what is it?" he demanded. "Break the bad news, whatever it is. The way you look at me sends the cold shivers up my spine."

"Why," was Milliken's hesitant reply, "I'm sorta studyin' around like, trying to make up my mind just how to break it to you, that's all. For it's no cinch's been handed me, lemme tell you that, young feller. Still things are so much better than what *might* have happened to you." He broke off suddenly to ask, head on elbow: "Do you know I hadda talk my head off even to get you *that?*"

"*What?* And to whom?" demanded Alan.

"To the chief; that's to who. 'Looka here, Chaplain,' I says to him, 'I owe this fella something for what he did for me, and me with a game leg and waitin' to be invited to play the principal part in a necktie party. If it hadn't been for him helping me,' I said, 'he'd 'a' gone on, lyin' there in that barn, until somebody untied him. Which wouldn't have been long,' I said. 'Not after pulling off that signal stunt. Which brings it all back to that dirty, little dog of a Billiken,' I said, 'with apologies to the dog, because if I had one like Billiken, I'd do what those guys would have done to me if they'd caught me. And Billiken knew it. Knew they'd hang me, I mean. Billiken's the one to punish, take my word for that, sir.' 'He'll be punished, have no fear of that,' says the Chaplain. 'We can't have people murdered for no reason. It'll give us a bad name. And more than that, it'll hang more men than the one that perpetrates it,' says he. 'Oh, I'll look after Master Billiken, don't you have any fear about that!' And I don't, neither. He'll get it good and hot and plenty, the rat!"

Milliken paused chuckling to reheat one of the bits of chocolate-colored stuff, to roll it into conical shape, then to affix it to the little hole in the clay bowl.

"Then the Chaplain goes on to say, not exactly in so many words, but something like this. 'This young fella you're standin' up for so strong, knows enough to hang us

all. He knows about the escape of Professor Six, he knows the two guards who turned the trick for us, he knows about Hamp's croaking, and all about our place on the Long Island shore and——' "

"But I don't know about any place on any Long Island shore," Alan burst out as he concluded. Milliken gave assent.

"I told him that. I explained I gave you a H. M. C. injection, while you were asleep, and that we got you ashore and into the closed car and brought you here, all without you waking up. I even undressed you," added Milliken, with some pride in his light-fingeredness. "Shows you how well I know my profession. But, no matter, the chief says you knew enough, too damn' much, for you to be running around loose for many a long time yet.

"Says he to me: 'Professor Six has got something up his sleeve that will make millions for us. After a year or two, there won't be one of us who'll have to worry whether he ever turns another trick or not.' And when I just gaped at him, he said: 'We've done pretty well, as it is, in the past five years or so, haven't we? You've never had any reason to regret working under my orders, have you?' I told him, no, not by any manner of means. 'No, I should say not,' says he, 'I've done the planning that's made the share of every one of you many times the amount you'd ever been able to make for yourselves, keeping the lot of you out of stir, meanwhile. Whenever I've said a thing was, it was, wasn't it? Well, I say now that what Six has up his sleeve means millions; a comfortable living for everybody in the organization and a fortune for a few —including yourself.'

"For I may as well tell you, young Alan, that I'm the tiptop master sawyer, so to speak, of all the pro's: peter men, box men, heavy men, porch climbers, yeggs, or as the sucker writers say, 'cracksmen.' I've pulled off the most mysterious touches ever known, and never so much as bent the butt of a cannon over a butler's bean."

He concluded this interpolation by another pull at the bamboo pipe.

"To go back to the Chaplain; his argument was: 'Are we going to throw away fortunes for a few of us and a living income for all, on account of a boy none of us ever heard of until Six escaped?' Which," Milliken for the moment concluded, "you must admit, young fella, is pretty good argument."

"Yes," agreed Alan dully. "It is. But did I want to have anything to do with your old schemes? Why didn't you let me alone that afternoon?"

"Wouldn't you have gone on to wherever you were going, and said, 'what a strange-looking boat that was out there on the north beach?' And before we had connected with old Six, wouldn't there've been a pack of hellhounds down on us? That's why. Let spilled milk lay, kid. To go on with what the Chaplain had to say. He didn't have the men to spare to keep you a prisoner. And as you wouldn't be likely to join us, only two courses remained."

Alan asked, in a low voice, if "killing him" was one of those courses. Unwillingly, Milliken admitted that it was.

"Or—something pretty near as bad. Not exactly killing *you!* But it would kill the *you* I'm talking to, now, deader'n Pompey's goose. Whoever *he* was? 'Scholac Joe' Moran used always to be saying it. Just like——"

Disregarding further detailed account of the mental activities of Scholar Joe, Alan, his voice faltering, demanded more exact definition.

Milliken squirmed in his place and avoided Alan's eyes. Nor would he answer at all, even after some study.

"It's a tough job the Chaplain's given me," he bewailed. "My nature is not to hurt a fly, as they say, when they want to describe somebody soft-hearted. Although what that's got to do with not killing such filthy little scavengers as flies, I don't know. Ever see a fly under a microscope?" he asked eagerly, seizing loquaciously upon any excuse to avoid exact explanation. "Well, if they were man size, you'd prefer meeting a nice, kindly, soft-hearted young Bengal tiger any day."

"Oh, my God, man!" cried the now wholly alarmed Alan. "What is it—for God's sake what is it?"

Again Milliken went through the lengthy process of converting a "pill" into clouds of odorous vapor. At the third demand, he eyed Alan coaxingly:

"Tell you what. Just lie here with me, to-night, and smoke a few. The same the next day, and the next. Then you won't ever need to know what you've escaped. Think of that! It's not so awful as you seem to think, you know. Try one! You'll see."

"No," returned Alan faintly, pushing away pipe and proffered "pill." "What do you take me for? Smoke opium! You must be mad!"

"He said you'd say that."

Alan saw that Milliken was sincere enough. Not only had he formed an odd sort of an attachment to the boy, but there was within him an absolute antagonism to injuring any one else. Owing to unfortunate early environment, he had been at odds with the law since his youth. But he salved his conscience with a sort of milk-and-water socialism, and worked himself up with the wrongdoing of the capitalistic society on which he preyed. Like many another of his craft, he was philanthropic to poor people. Far from taking from them, he followed the Robin Hood tradition. Even with rich victims, he would fly sooner than fire a gun. It was this peculiar trait that was responsible for the Chaplain linking him up with Billiken: one automatically corrected what the Chaplain called the defects of the other.

"So," continued Milliken, "when I've finished these few pills I've cooked up for myself, I'll have to take you to him—to the chief, I mean. I'd have let you go on the way here, if I could have, kid, and 'a' took chances on your keeping your word of honor. Now you're in, you couldn't break out with Lame Hamilton's Little Giant jimmy and the Carbon King's candles! Every lock's controlled with a central electric system, a regular time-lock affair, in a way. Every one who wants to go out has to notify the man on dial shift to throw off the control on the doors you want to leave by, and you have to have your own door keys beside. But you only short-circuit yourself if you try to use them without notifying the dial man, first. That's what the button's for alongside each lock, and each man has his own Morse code name."

Alan forgot his fears for the moment in an ecstasy of angry invective.

"And, anyway," he concluded, "I won't use this filthy opium stuff. I'd rather be a fool and die."

He finished in a sort of frenzy.

"You're liable to get your wish, boy," said Milliken sadly. "You see the Chaplain doesn't look at things, like me and you. It isn't as though he was like Billiken, either, killing people because he likes it. The Chaplain sees it like this: here's a young chap who's like a stick caught in a big cog wheel. Even if it's the best gold-headed ebony walking stick in the world, it's not worth smashing up my big machine for."

"Who in God's name is this *'Chaplain'* you talk so much about? A pretty chaplain! And his machine? What is it you're all after? Can't you explain? Maybe if I understood——"

Alan broke off with a shudder. He was not sure he wanted to understand. After all, if they wanted to kill him, let them do it. It was better than——

It was then he remembered Guilda Six.

"The professor's daughter. She's here, isn't she?" he asked eagerly. He, himself, his fate, everything else, was momentarily forgotten.

"Yes, *she's* here all right," muttered Milliken, choking off the remainder of his sentence; Alan sensed, with sickening fear, that it had been "poor girl." "She's *here,* right enough."

"But with her and her father both here, this Chaplain of yours wouldn't dare harm *me*. Doesn't he depend on the professor to do whatever it is that you say means millions to you? And Six said he'd see I was none the worse off, except for my imprisonment."

"If old Septimus can't help his own daughter, how can he help you?" demanded Milliken. "If you knew the sight I'm trying to spare you seeing, you'd realize how much better it'd be to do what I want you to. About who the Chaplain is? About ten years ago, he started this organization, and now he's like the commanding general of an army. Agents from Frisco to Shanghai and Hongkong, from Calcutta clean around back to Berlin, Paris, and London, and then back to New York again. He engineers big 'touches' on banks and goldsmiths and jewelers; he's his own 'fence,' organized his own system for selling the loot. Not one of this gang ever did time; not one of the regulars, I mean. Even in cases of the 'nuts,' like the professor, you see how he 'springs' 'em, no matter what it costs. Some big-brained bean he's got, believe me!"

"But men like the professor?" asked Alan weakly, a sharp pang stabbing at his vitals. "He's wrong-headed, but he's sincere. How can he ally himself with your 'chaplain?'"

"You might say the same about me, in a way," Milliken answered. "A first-class 'box man, like myself, is just as far removed from Billiken as a doctor from a day laborer.

Think I'd 'a' gone in with the Chaplain, if I'd ever thought I'd be sent on 'touches' with a filthy little murderer? When *I* joined up, I'd an idea it was an organization of professionals like myself, professional gentlemen, so to speak. And the Chaplain *kept* me thinking that, till he had me *hooked!* He could do pretty much what he pleased with me, then. Same way with the old pro. *He* thinks the Chaplain's the head of one of some sort of brotherhood. Revolutionary society! Sort of higher branch of the I. W. W., one of the 'direct-action' gangs. And so the Chaplain is: stands 'way up in 'The Black Cat' bunch, controls the situation in Chicago altogether. Got another hang-out there, like this, but not so large and entirely for revolutionaries. What his game is with them I don't know. There's a bunch of them in the house at the far corner, who haven't the slightest idea there's any one in any of these other houses. Yes, sir."

He emphasized his statement by a somewhat owlish wagging of the head.

"Just imagine it, if you can, and then think what it means to fight the Chaplain," he continued, in accents that carried conviction to Alan, incredible as the entire affair sounded. "In this organization are people who don't even know what those in the next house are doing. So it oughtn't to be hard to keep Professor Six next door to his daughter, and neither of 'em need ever know the other's around. It's fairly staggering when you come to think what an enormous organization it all is.

"And all the while, do you know what the Chaplain's doing? Got a home over in Brooklyn, on one of those quiet, shady streets, and people think he's a sort of parson. In order to have a legitimate excuse for traveling what d'you think he's got for a legitimate job? You'd never guess!" Milliken asserted with a sudden, uproarious burst of laughter.

It was this that caused some of the smokers nearest the alcoves to raise their heads in annoyance. Milliken, conscious of his remissness, dropped his voice to the lowest whisper.

"He's a lecturer, that's what he is, and a Chautauqua one at *that!* Talks on efficiency and organization! And, by God! he's the one to tell them about it, all right, all right."

As he talked, Milliken had mechanically gone about the business of preparing more "pills," those he had made on first lying down having been consumed in intervals of his lengthy discourse. "He owes everything to—that!" was his comment as he touched the little pile of pills with the point of his cooking needle. "When I smoke those we'll have to trot along to the Chaplain's room.

"Screw the top on that *toey*, so I won't absent-mindedly start cooking some more I ain't entitled to when on duty, so to speak. For I could go on cooking and talking and smoking for hours and hours, I guess. That's the fatal fascination of the stuff, as you'll find out before you're many days older."

"What did you mean by saying the Chaplain owed everything to—to—that?" asked Alan in a still small voice.

"Didn't you hear Willy Chard? Notice his look, when he saw how surprised you were at the joint, and everything?"

Alan recalled something of it.

"Well, don't you remember what he *said?*" Alan pondered.

"It was something about not permitting people here who didn't use it," he stated, "wasn't it?"

Milliken nodded.

"You see, kid, when you get the habit for the stuff, you've *got* to have it. Nowadays, about the only way you can get the stuff is through what you people call 'the underworld.' Well, the second thing the Chaplain started was to control smoking opium, just like Joe Leiter cornered wheat. He organized a sort of receiving station, in Chi; for Canuck smuggled stuff. Another was in Frisco. That was for hop. New Orleans was another; Mexican border, Cuba, Central and South American stuff. The biggest of all was right here in New York, a clearing house for what came in all which a ways.

"Then he made a big deal with Waldemar's wholesale house to have part of his gum made into morphine. He set some chinks up, right on Seventh Avenue, in a regular wholesale Chinese sweetmeat business, so they could use the upper floors for making smoking opium out of what came from the gum that was made into a sort of imitation sirup, in the cellars underneath. It would take my time from now till next week to tell you how many dodges he had for controlling the traffic. The money we'd made, from other things, all got invested in it—the organization wasn't so big then. Soon we were on our way to being wealthy—every one of us. But it did something better than

that for *him*. Think, now—what is the one thing that always lands crooks in the can—hey?"

Presuming, correctly, that he meant the reason for criminals eventually reaching prison, Alan attempted to consider calmly. But even had his mental condition been clearer, his ignorance precluded any sort of correct solution of the problem. So he shook his head again.

"Why, it's 'turning pink,' 'turning copper,' of course. Anybody ought to know that," said Milliken somewhat excitedly. "Judas Priest! What a time to tell a kid anything, who can't tell one wise crack from another! I mean one man informing the police against another one, state's evidence. Many do it for money, revenge, any one of a million things. There's always one louse to every five or six regular guys, ain't there? Well, seeing as how a habit for the stuff is the one strongest thing in the world—for the guy that uses it ain't really alive except when he's got enough of the stuff in him—the Chaplain figured that controlling it the way he did, he'd be able to keep anybody from getting it, anybody at all. Especially a crook who's pinched and has to have it smuggled in to him. 'If any one blows the gaff,' the Chaplain tells everybody, 'he'll never get another pinch of it, so long as he lives.'

"He calls us all together, in the different places where he had his depots, and he puts up this hypothetical case, as he calls it, of the crook who's pinched. 'Of course,' he says, 'so long as I do all that's possible to get him out again, and get his stuff into him, I expect absolute silence, except to the lawyer I send him. It will be absolutely impossible to buy it, except through agents of mine, who'll have their supplies cut off, if they sell to anybody on the black list. And though he might be able to get a little here and there, through the screws, at a big price, there's only one way to get it regularly; and that's through the chinks, the doctors, and the other people whom I supply. And I'll soon prove to *them* that's the only way *they* can get it, by putting one or two of them on the black list, every now and then, for disobeying some order of mine—anything to teach them a lesson. Watch me.'"

Milliken paused, shaking his head in wondering and somewhat fearful admiration of the master machinations of this latter-day magician.

"And the chief does, too," he went on. "Had 'em crawling at his feet, in a few days, or, if they didn't use it themselves, in a few weeks later. Then, after warning them to mind their step, or the next time would be for life, he'd take them off the black list. Well, before long, he'd managed to have it pretty well known, all through the organization, that, no matter where anybody went, if he used the stuff, he had better be on the good side of the Chaplain, or it was 'blooey' for him. So what's the sense of turning state's evidence to save yourself to be tortured? And, as the Chaplain never took anybody into his confidence who *didn't* use it, see for yourself! What chance was he taking of anybody snitching! That's where he's got everybody, who ever organized grafting on a large scale, beat into a batter. Now, take myself——"

"The chief's compliments, sir, and he would wish for you to bring the young man with you, if you *please*," said a low voice, almost at Alan's ear, but the man was addressing Milliken. He, too, was a Chinese, but of a different type from the "boys;" a Chinese with an Oxford accent, and dressed as might be expected of one who had such speech; in the quietly, unobtrusively well-tailored garments of an English gentleman.

He had come up so silently that even Milliken had not heard him. Still smiling pleasantly, he took off again on his silent way, shod in silence as were his humble compatriots, but in Occidental composition soles instead of Oriental felt ones.

"That settles it, kid," said Milliken pityingly. "And remember, you'd better not tell the Chaplain you'd rather be dead, than use the stuff. D——it, I'd give half what I've got in the bank—and it runs into six figures, lemme tell you that—to get you out of this. And if this next half hour was over, too, or if I was only far away from here and didn't have to know about it, I believe I'd give half of the rest. Judas Priest!" he protested with all the semblance of profanity. "Come on, kid, come on. Don't keep him waiting, for the love of God!"

CHAPTER XIV.

BILLIKEN AND ULM.

Milliken had not boasted idly, when he told Alan he could walk from one end of the block to another, under cover. Alan shivered, despite warm pajamas, woolly dressing

gown, house shoes and bed socks lined with lamb's wool. One dark, deserted passage followed another, on all of which the dust lay decades thick. Twice, Milliken had recourse to the sliding panels that admitted knowledgable folk from one house to another.

The Chaplain held his peculiarly private "justiciary," as he often named it and always with a frozen smile, in one of the upper stories of what had been an Oriental bazaar, in the precise center of the block. His room was high up under the leads, with tiny dormer windows, too high for any one within to look out of them, set in a mansard façade. Here was where he maintained his idea of law and order among his "horde."

When it became necessary in his opinion, that the welfare of all depended upon the disciplining of one, that one was conducted to this room, where the Chaplain dispensed what it suited him to call justice. Except the high-backed Jacobean chair in which the Chaplain sat, and its accompanying carved table, there was no other furniture; not even another chair. Two iron rings hung suspended, by stout straps, from the peak of the overhead gable. They were not unlike those seen in gymnasiums, so it was some time before Alan suspected their sinister purpose.

When he entered, following Milliken's elaborate series of knuckled signals, he hardly dared look at the grim chieftain on whom his fate depended, this modern revival of the grimmest of medieval robber barons. When he did raise his eyes, they encountered, not the Chaplain's but his henchman's, Kendrick Kewpick's. Here was one as huge as the Chaplain was otherwise. Together, this pair represented the zenith and the nadir of human size, if one excepts monstrosities. He supplied the missing size and strength to his chief's ferocity. Kewpick was an atavism. He should have been about in viking days to serve as captain of the Varangians for the sorely harassed Emperor Constantine.

Wherever, one saw Thomas Trego, supposititious Chautauqua lecturer, one saw Kendrick Kewpick, bodyguard. Accompanying the Chaplain's cruel, fleshless face, the countenance of some pre-Renaissance cleric, Italianate, cunning, ruthless, for all its asceticism, was the rubicund countenance of Kewpick. To the Chaplain's five feet six of lean weight was opposed the six feet four of his huge companion's bone and sinew, outwardly sheathed in avoirdupois and covered with that almost obsolete type of long-tailed frock known as "Prince Albert." Kewpick wore with it the hard-boiled shirt, string tie, broad-brimmed, black felt of the Western "statesman" of long ago.

Continuing to avoid any appraisal of the meditating man in the tall Jacobean chair, Alan noted Billiken standing between two black-visaged, besweatered fellows, of the type seen about racing stables and prize-ring training quarters. Their bulging athletic torsos were of a quite unnecessary bigness, Alan thought. Their jailbird, hangdog countenances were the first he had seen in the "Devil's House," as he was already privately calling it, who confirmed his previous ideas of criminals. Billiken made a good third in such a company.

Quite a different-looking Billiken from the bully Alan had been compelled to obey. High up under the city leads, the frozen hail, that rattled, reminded Alan of the oiled paper window of the barn where he lay bound while this little villain, cowering and cowardlike now, chanted his evil triumph at his lamed companion.

Strangely enough, that same Milliken, who still had his limp to remind *him* of this happening, seemed to show less exultation over the moon-faced mechanician's downfall than the otherwise abused Alan.

"Michael!"

The Chaplain spoke to the green-sweatered one.

"The 'cat,' Michael."

Billiken wilted. The Chaplain, rising, seemed to grow and grow in Alan's eyes like the smoke-clad jinni wavering up and out of the bottle that Solomon sealed. Suddenly, Billiken was actually on his knees before him.

Isadore, the other besweatered one, yanked him up, his look one of sheer evil; a look shared by Michael, as he fetched, from a near-by nail, such a whip as is technically known as the "cat-o'-nine-tails." It was to the ordinary "cat" of its kind what some folk-tale grimalkin is to the average puss. Its stock, of rhinoceros horn, was as long as a man's forearm. The hide of the same single-horned mammal furnished the "tails," each tip twisted to a point with the strongest steel wire.

"Now, my little friend," said the Chaplain slowly, even enjoyably, for his tones were those of extreme unction. "This," he stated,

eyes twinkling, "hurts me more than it will hurt you."

Trego continuing his slow, methodical preparations, opened up cuffs of fine lawn, removing amethyst cuff links that matched his one ring. This was removed from his outstretched hand by Kewpick, who pocketed the other jewelry, silently, with the air of one accustomed to it. Trego extended the other hand for the whip. As Michael handed it over, Billiken, on his knees again, literally wallowed, emitting a long and dismal wail. The Chaplain disregarded it.

"Up with him," he directed, pointing, and now Alan saw the utility of the two rings suspended from the gable rafters. These had what gymnasium rings had not, a smaller set of straps dangling from the rings themselves.

"I won't! You can't! You shan't!" Billiken shrieked suddenly. His jailbird besweatered companions shrank from him as he spoke, appalled.

"You *won't?*" Again the figure of the Chaplain seemed to go through the same astonishing metempsychosis Alan had seen before. For all his slender, insignificant figure, he seemed to tower over the three hangdog wretches.

"*I shan't!*"

"You say *shan't* to *me, you dog?*"

Billiken hid his face as the brilliant, birdlike eyes blazed at him, the incandescent eyes of some night-hunting bird of prey. Billiken had fallen prostrate, his former wail ending, abruptly, in a choked cry of fear.

The moon-faced mechanician seemed a bullying little monster no longer; only a whining little child.

"*Come* on, *can't* you?"

Near to whimpering themselves, Mike and his companion plucked up sufficient false courage thus to adjure their prisoner. With sudden accesses of terrified strength, they dragged him up, strapping his hands to the rings. Their hangdog faces showed intense relief, once they were able to withdraw entirely from within the whip's orbit.

No one looked on during the punishment. The two guards were too acutely reminded of what they had managed to escape. Kewpick, though lacking the congenitally kindly feelings that caused Milliken to turn away, was a creature of bodily enjoyments, with a dislike for anything physically disagreeable. Alan was sheerly shocked: that was all.

The lash whistled and fell. A long-drawn squeal followed, the squeal of a pig upon whom a heavy gate has fallen, of a rat with a ferret's teeth in the nape of his neck. There was nothing human in it at all. Alan stole one look at the Chaplain, and was sorry he had looked. He began trembling and shaking all over. Trego's eyes were as big and as bright as moon agates, his thin lips lay flat against his four and twenty perfectly white teeth, for his mouth was a slit from ear to ear, a wide slit this time.

Alan held his breath until it seemed his heart beat no longer.

"There," said the Chaplain and flung the whip away. "Kill for enjoyment, will you, you dog? I'll cut you into little pieces, next time."

But Billiken just hung there, hung and did not hear. Kewpick came closer, holding him upright while the others unstrapped his wrists.

"Take him away," he said in a low tone. "When Doctor B. is through with the girl, I'll have him look this fellow over."

Mastering himself with an effort, Alan forced himself to meet the Chaplain's stare. But he met it dully. He had experienced about all the emotion he was capable of. For the time being, anyhow.

"Young man," the Chaplain was saying, "I can give no more than half an hour to the settling of your case. You will get absolute justice here. Any argument you have will be listened to attentively. But remember the motto of this organization is: 'The greatest good to the greatest number.' May I remind you that one many thousand times greater than any of the law men said: 'It is right that one should suffer for the sake of many.' Only *he* said 'die,' not 'suffer.' And you need have no fear of dying."

Alan was too amazed and angry, this time, to remember to be afraid. His retort was neither very brilliant nor very wise. But it was at least the act of a brave man.

"Isn't something said somewhere in the same Book about the Devil quoting Holy Writ?" he asked, his eyes steady. When he heard Milliken gasp, he thought his past conduct must have seemed very craven, indeed, if his present answer seemed so surprising. Kewpick smiled:

"Good man," he said approvingly.

But Trego only smiled leniently, as one might at a child, and went on, disregarding Alan. Evidently, he had given Alan's affair

some thought, for he spoke promptly, briskly, and to the point; as though discussing a cut and dried matter of business.

"I suppose, Milliken," he said, almost lightly, "it is unnecessary to ask you if this young ass refuses to take the pleasant and easy course you suggested?"

Milliken acknowledged somewhat glumly that this was so. Trego motioned to Kewpick who went out whistling noiselessly as was his wont.

"Have you given him any idea of the alternatives?"

"I hadn't quite got to that, chief, when you sent for me."

The Chaplain surveyed him with a certain sort of amused, yet more or less tolerant contempt.

"Milliken, my lad, if it wasn't so hard to find a capable as well as honest partner for a swindle, as I've said to you many times before, your mawkish sentimentality would compel me to buy you out of the combination. Here we are, on the verge of millions, positively, millions. Here's one youngster, of no particular utility to any one, not even to himself, and you're letting him and his absurd prejudices stand in the way of those millions. Yet I venture to believe you think me hard, positively cruel, because I insist on the course I outlined."

Milliken cleared his throat hesitantly.

"Well, chief——"

"Pshaw, man, you need say nothing. Your face tells its tale. How you ever became a crook is one of the great unsolved mysteries. If ever a man was intended for carpet slippers and the evening paper, a middle-class fireside, and pushing a baby carriage, you're it. You even turned away when I was giving that little beast of a Billiken the merest modicum of what he deserved. Even the law would have hung him out of hand, not once but many times, if he had to answer for all he's done; your nice respectable law! I gave him a few cuts with the cat and you blenched. Stand aside, you human jackass!"

Such was the power of the man that his contempt, while it whipped the red blood into every pore of Milliken's flushed face, held sufficient menace in it for one, twice his size and no coward at that, to retire to the upper reaches of the room.

"Now, young Allenby," said the Chaplain sharply, "we'll settle your case out of hand. It will be settled just as you choose. You did not mean to meddle in our affairs. But hear me! Better go into that room again, to-night, and every day hereafter, and smoke with Milliken. Do that and you will be permitted to assist Professor Six in his experiments and see his daughter, maybe every day. Before you refuse, remember this: that daughter lies in the house next door to him, and he cannot help her, *because he does not know she is there.* You are the only one who can. You don't believe me?"

Trego's eyes began to take on that same incandescence they had had in his dealings with Billiken.

"Continue in your present course, young idiot, and let me show you what will happen to you. Let me show you what has happened to a brave young man who talked too freely a few hours ago. Kewpick!"

Evidently the henchman had been listening at the adjoining room's door. Now, half guiding, half holding up Ulric Ulm, the huge frock-coated figure advanced toward them.

"Observe your fellow prisoner," directed Trego, his eyes saturnine.

Ulm's head was bound up with an intricate series of bandages. His eyes regarded Alan without seeming to see him. Tugging at Kewpick, who permitted it, Ulm now attempted to walk after some vision that seemed to have gone its way serenely through one of the walls.

"Oh!" escaped from Alan instinctively, his arms suddenly taut at his sides.

It did not appear to seem impossible to Ulm that he should be able to follow the one who had walked through the wall. Twice he brought his head in contact with the plaster, until Milliken cried out in sudden pity.

Coming up, silently, behind Alan, the Chaplain tapped his shoulder. "Speak to your friend," he urged. "Remind him of your sweet converse through the bars of your cells."

Ulm seemed to have reached, more or less permanently, the shores of some otherwise unseen world. Certainly he could not see Alan, nor even Kewpick, though he was aware that some sort of guidance was necessary, and accepted a certain amount of it from some apparently invisible person at his elbow. That he saw Kewpick himself was doubtful.

"Take him by the arm, shake him, remind him of the girl he followed here. Tell him who *you* are. Do everything you can to

make him remember you. Never mind about the conversation. Just try to get *him* to remember *you*."

Alan stood forlornly regarding what, only an hour or so before, had been that brisk, well-groomed, young person, Ulric Ulm, secret agent of the department of state. All alertness, all eagerness, all life had gone from the eyes. The mouth sagged piteously, the face itself seemed to droop. Identification was assisted only by the somewhat noticeable necktie he had worn, a spotted foulard.

"Proceed, young friend! Shake him, recall yourself to him, I urgently ask you to."

The Chaplain's tones exceeded themselves in unctuousness. He seemed to be thoroughly enjoying himself, mentally, in the same way as he had, physically, when attending to the "disciplining" of Master Billiken. Out of the tail of his eye, Alan found some solace, in his wretchedness, by noting that Milliken, also, was thoroughly miserable. The Chaplain noted it, too, and brought those blazing searchlights of his to bear upon him.

"Help your friend, jackass, since he seems to be stricken with paralysis, so suddenly and unexpectedly. Shake up *his* friend for him."

Milliken set his teeth and spoke.

"Aw, what's the use, chief. Anybody can see the poor guy's screwy. Go on through with the program. It ain't the pleasantest thing on earth to watch."

A sort of cold malevolent fury seemed to brighten Trego's already blazing eyes.

"Were I one of those foolish fellows who misuse their power for the sake of personal satisfaction, I'd half flay you alive, jackass," he said, his teeth snapping together as if he violently regretted the fact that this was so. "See to it, my fine fellow, that you never slip up on anything official. If ever you do, you'll get worse than Billiken got. If you knew how my hand just itches for that 'cat,' you'd be a wee bit more careful what you say."

"No, chief," returned Milliken, making his second reach for his temporarily lost manhood, and regaining it for good; that evening, anyhow. He made no more effort to conceal his personal dislike than had Trego. "No, chief, I wouldn't, and I'll tell you why. I don't have to. You just handed it out when you said you never let your personal feelings get the better of you. You put the organization's interest first. I'll say that for you. Which is why the gang hold together the way they do. The people that run the law could learn a little something from you, all right, all right."

"Are you through, my dear Mr. Milliken, all through? Then, with your permission, we will proceed with the remainder of the reasons why your friend, Mr. Allenby, should obey? Are *you* quite sure, Mr. Allenby, that *your* friend is completely *non compos mentis*——"

His venom is impossible to reproduce: especially since it accompanied phrases couched in terms of almost impeccable politeness. Not meeting Trego's eye, Alan nodded in the same forlorn way he had been surveying Ulm.

"Well, then, observe closely. Item one: bandages. Item two: their position, encircling that broad and lofty forehead, suppositiously the outward indication of the enormous intellect within; the one that led him, lamblike, into our hands. Item three: obviously the same intellect now irreparably lost. Item four: how did this happen? You shall observe it happen to another. Follow me."

Signing to Kewpick that he had no further immediate use for this particular human object lesson, the latter had Ulm led away by one door, while the Chaplain opened another, beckoning to Alan to follow him.

CHAPTER XV.

ALAN DECIDES NOT TO DIE.

The adjoining room was almost as bare as Trego's own. In the semidarkness which shrouded most of it, attention was immediately accelerated toward a box of batteries providing the power for a small shaded ray that poured downward. The pool of radiance that resulted from the ray, bathed the face of an unconscious girl, stretched out on an operating table.

Advancing unconsciously, oppressed by that sinister shadow he was unable to understand, Alan was near enough to touch the table when, suddenly galvanized, he sprang forward and bent over the unconscious body, his eyes so big and bulging it seemed they would burst from their place. For the face of the girl on the operating table was that of Guilda Six.

"Oh, my God!" he choked and fell to his knees beside her, chafing her limp, cold, dangling hand. His own was unceremoniously plucked away from this occupation,

and the girl's crossed over her breast by a hard-faced though handsome woman, for all her face was obviously enameled; one who wore some sort of parody of a nurse's costume; the sort seen on Red Cross nurses in moving-picture melodramas.

"Please do not meddle with patients about to be operated on, young man," said this person harshly. "Everything about her has been sterilized. Keep your germ-factory hands to yourself."

She left him kneeling there, however, and crossed to a folding table set up alongside the room's third occupant; a man in a surgeon's smock. Alan strained dazed eyes, watching her, as she donned rubber gloves and lit a candle. By its light, Alan saw her begin removing various surgical instruments from the sterilizer, the opening of whose door clouded the room with white-hot steam.

Alan was on his feet again. He nerved himself to face any further horrors for the sake of this helpless girl; he stood and stared a long time—for a moment may seem an interminable time at such a crisis as this—at Guilda's pale, young face. Abruptly he bent over and kissed her, in open defiance of the hard enameled-faced nurse. He had no further fear of any one. As far as his own fate was concerned, he became suddenly the possessor of a curious coolness. For the worst that could happen was about to come to pass.

Trego's thin lips clung to his gums as he grinned as Alan thought the Cheshire Cat must have grinned—a wide-slitted show of four and twenty perfect and perfectly white teeth. He turned to the silent surgeon with the white smock belted about him.

"Doctor B.," the Chaplain addressed him. "Explain about your specialty; artificial *amnesia*."

In a droning voice, and in the dry technicalities in which he chiefly dealt, the one addressed began a long, dull monologue untranslatable into ordinary English by any one except an instructor in surgery. Even the ordinary practicing physician would have been out of his depth.

The Chaplain interrupted him.

"That will do, doctor. Nurse Selina, be good enough to explain, avoiding technicalities."

Nurse Selina, the erstwhile "dragon" of the now unconscious girl, had the sort of speech ill-bred Americans imitate from English actors on the American stage.

"My dear Doctor Trego! Fancy *me* explaining! With Doctor B. about, who has performed more amnesia operations that any one on earth!"

Trego cut her short.

"In ordinary English, please," he commanded sharply.

"Well, then, if you like," Nurse Selina said sulkily. "It causes complete forgetfulness. Is that English ordinary enough?"

"Supposing this girl intimately acquainted with this boy, here. Would she be able to recognize him after the operation? Simply say yes or no!"

"No, then."

"Her father?"

She shook her head.

"Describe her mental condition after the operation, avoiding technicalities and artificial locutions as before."

The so-called Nurse Selina gave Alan the benefit of the smoldering-enraged eyes she dared not turn upon Trego.

"Like a new-born baby's," she said surlily. "Except for a few matters of daily routine. Some remember nothing at all, and go about in a daze, for the rest of their lives, like that young man Mr. Kewpick just took in to see you. He may remain like that forever. It depends on the individual operation."

Alan's eyes followed the direction of hers and saw, at the instrument table, the doctor engaged in a minor operation. He, himself, was its subject, the hypodermic that had been on the tray the sole instrument. Laying it down, the surgeon rubbed his arm with a bit of alcoholized cotton, and stood quite motionless, for a moment or even more, during which the room remained under a cloud of oppressive silence. But it did not seem to oppress him. Gradually, the trembling of his hands—which Alan had noticed, panic-stricken, immediately after recognizing Guilda—seemed to subside.

He turned, no whit embarrassed by the concentrated gaze of the others, and said in the calmest manner possible:

"It takes more and more of the stuff every time I operate," he explained, smiling serenely. His eyes closed for a moment, as if trying to shut out something their owner wished to forget. It was plain he had no heart in what Alan supposed him about to do.

"It's rather dreadful, this, when you come down to it," he said, in a dreary sort of voice.

"This girl, she's a downright good sort! I don't like it, Chaplain, with her father here —and her sweetheart looking on. On my honor I don't like it."

Trego laughed grimly.

"Your what?" he demanded, his voice drowning the choked and muffled noise of Alan's sudden mad and desperate rebellion. If only there had been the slightest hope of getting the girl out of this house of horhors! But what *was* the chance? None whatever!

Milliken had not meant to serve the Chaplain's ends as well as he had. But his own horror of certain of Trego's methods, his own genuine fear of the awful expedients to which this saturnine chieftain resorted to gain his ends, had done their work well. As the Chaplain had known they would.

It was only with those like Billiken, fit kin to the brute beasts, that Trego ever found it necessary to use physical violences. So sure was he of his psychical domination over Alan, that he had not troubled to keep an armed guard within call. To be sure, in face of a furious enraged man who has nothing to lose but life, and something infinitely precious to save by dying—even were it no more than his honor—the Chaplain knew well enough Kewpick and himself might easily go down before two well-aimed stabs with one of the surgeon's knives. In the fine frenzy of his love for Guilda Six, danger simply did not exist for Alan.

But, granted a lucky blow would floor each of them, what then? Trego knew Alan had heard from Milliken of the electrical device that controlled every exit. Alan did not even know in what house he stood. What chance for escape, an unconscious girl on his hands?

Nevertheless, Alan, somewhat grimly, had made up his mind. If the Chaplain refused to consider his plea that the girl he loved be spared, then as certainly as God lived, he, Alan Allenby, would seize upon the longest, sharpest scalpel and with it find the Chaplain's heart, at last! It was well worth dying for, that! His sense of impotence left him. His tones, when he addressed Trego, took on a certain imperativeness.

"You wouldn't do that; rob her of her memory, ruin her life. I can't believe you mean enough to do that? Even *you* couldn't be so cruel."

The Chaplain turned, considering him. And Alan remembered what Milliken had said: that Trego was always willing to listen to an argument. He surveyed Alan silently for some time, before answering him. Kewpick yawned and betook himself to the instrument tray, where he spoke with the woman in low whispers. Milliken watched anxiously; the surgeon not at all. His eyes were half closed, as he sat on the anæsthetist's chair at the head of the operating table.

"This girl," the Chaplain stated to Alan, "was given a certain amount of liberty. I allowed her to ride about the streets of New York with Nurse Selina here, gave her what was practically freedom; all on her word she would attempt no escape. How does she use this liberty? She slips out by a side door while her duenna waits, and informs my most persistent enemy of—what do you think? My attempt to rescue her own father from prison. I did not know this until an hour or so ago, while listening to what Ulm told you through the bars. As there is always some one following her, Ulm fell into our hands. But Ulm's case is disposed of, as hers must be, for I cannot keep a girl here who requires the services of one of my most useful people to watch her, every instant of the day, and who thereby robs me of that person's services."

Suddenly Alan interrupted him, inspired. After all, the essential thing was to save Guilda. He forgot his heroic resolve. His death would not save her. He spoke eagerly, outlining his plan.

"But if *I* assist Professor Six. Won't that make up for the services of the one who watches her?"

Trego looked grimly at Milliken, who had never hated him so much as at that moment. For the Chaplain had predicted, with absolute assurance, that thus would Alan fall into the trap laid for him so elaborately. However, he gave no outward sign of jubilation. Instead he shook his head, smiling.

"Why not?" demanded Alan, a tremor in his voice as he drew nearer, at one time, both the instrument tray and the Chaplain. After all, if die he must, he was, to use his own phrase going to take this smiling ugly devil "to hell with him to carry his grip."

"Why" returned Trego thoughtfully "it should be obvious to you that whoever watches you cancels the worth of your services."

And now Alan trembled more than ever for he realized from Trego's thoughtful tone

that the chances were he would be able to make some sort of compromise by which the girl he loved would be allowed to retain her reason.

"Milliken" he said as something heard during his long spell of listening to that person came back to him crystal clear "was this the alternative you were afraid to tell me? Will they really do this thing to her; will they?"

Milliken cleared his throat.

"Just what they've done to Ulm," he returned.

Alan turned to the Chaplain.

"I give my solemn word of honor, my oath before God, that I'll stay here, work with the professor, make no move to escape. Only don't just do this thing to her. Isn't that enough?"

"No!"

Alan's eager eyes became suddenly tragic, his limbs tense. Suddenly Kendrick Kewpick saw that they had gone far enough with this boy. Detaching himself from his post in the upper reaches of the room, and placing himself between the boy and the instrument tray, Kewpick broke into the negotiations.

"None of that," he said gruffly, and Alan knew his intention was known to the big man. "What good would it do you to kill any one of us. Now, see here, this is the way it is: the only way it can be in this organization. We want you here, without the need of any one watching, with the same feeling of security we feel about the others, should we by any chance be tripped up by the Federal officers some day. Not only must you take oath to all the things you've already said, but you're to become a voluntary prisoner, under oath not to escape, or to reveal anything about us, to any one at any time——"

"I'll do that," cried Alan eagerly, forgetting his rage at Kewpick's intervention. "I'll do whatever you say."

"Then," the huge Prince-Alberted Kewpick continued, with the same brusque gruffness, "the same thing happens to this girl that happened to Ulm, unless you not only take the oath but comply with the first rule of the organization, the one rule more than any other that has held it together. This girl here is the only person we ever allowed in the house who didn't use the stuff. And she betrayed us. No one else ever did."

"But her father," argued Alan, weakening. He felt like a drowning man going down for the last time. "He doesn't—isn't——"

"That's different; he's a fanatic, half simple about the wrongs of humanity. Besides, he's the man who will make the millions for us. You are just a raw boy. If you don't make up your mind to do what the others do, your oath is worth nothing."

Alan's high resolve left him a prey to despair again.

"If I do? What then?" he choked out finally.

"Why, in a few years, you'll have a snug fortune and your girl here, too. She and her father and you can all three live abroad. When the statute of limitations expires, you can come back to this country. And you'll do nothing except assist old Six; you won't be required to do anything criminal."

Again the Chaplain took a hand. "Well?" he demanded harshly.

Alan was through with hesitation; he did no more than look at the unconscious girl.

"Yes," he said simply. "I'll do it."

"Good! Milliken shall look after you for the first few weeks or so."

Alan shivered: he knew why he would need no guard after that.

"Oh, pshaw!" Kewpick burst out disgustedly, "you're like a child. There's nothing so horrible about it, when a man's assured of his supply. There's enough of it here to last the bunch for years and, even if there wasn't, what Six is making would make everything all right for you. Can't you guess what it is?"

Alan had begun to, even before he was asked. It was staggering, it was all so simple. If Six was after The Synthetic Alan suspected, the millions were certain, sure. And there would be enough for all.

"You mean——" he faltered, using the phrase all people do when they half suspect a truth.

"That before two months are out," the Chaplain himself answered, rubbing his fleshless hands, and smiling for the first time with what for him was pure pleasure, *"old Six will have handed me the formula for synthetic morphine."*

CHAPTER XVI.

THE LOOTING OF THE HALL OF RECORDS.

It was a month or so after Ulric Ulm vanished utterly from the ken of Mr. Yorke Norroy, or, indeed, of any other of his acquaintances that Canby Kernahan, star re-

porter of the New York *Argus*, had another piece of that so-called bull luck that his enemies claimed was the sole reason for his promotion over the heads and upon the shoulders of "better men." The business that took him to detective headquarters need not detain us. It was evidently not one of particularly pressing importance; otherwise, at that hour, Canby Kernahan would have been scurrying officeward to get his story written before the forms closed. In other words, it was close upon midnight, in the early spring of the year 1919, when the pleasant converse Kernahan was holding with the chief was suddenly terminated by a hurry cry for help from the hall of records.

As it was a building the burglarizing of which might mean the extensive and intensive blackmailing of many politicians high in the service of the chief's party, that dignitary himself decided to investigate. Especially as it was only just around the corner from D. H. Q. Canby Kernahan accompanied him.

It was eleven-twenty when Kernahan went in. It was eleven-thirty when he came out. "Burst out" or "exploded forth" might be a better form of description. He could not have come faster if he had been propelled from a Krupp cannon. Nor straighter through the twanging of a bowstring. At eleven-thirty-one, he was saying through the saloon telephone across the street:

"I've got a whale, Bill. Exclusive? For the first edition, anyhow. Hold a column on the first page for me. Keep the forms open, whatever you do."

From this method of address, it will not be easy to adduce that the reporter was speaking to his employer. But he was. It was the night editor who was being addressed, and his only answer was a sort of bewildered compliance. Which shows that the word of a star reporter is worth any man's bond.

"Five dollars if you make the *Argus* office in five minutes," said Kernahan to the nighthawk outside the saloon.

Now it will be apparent, even to those entirely outside the world of journalism, that when reporters—even star reporters notoriously reckless in the matter of expense accounts—pay five dollars to be driven five blocks, taking chances of never arriving anywhere except at an undertaker's, they have "*some*" story.

Canby Kernahan had. He again demanded and received the promised place on the front page. On hearing what was in the wind, the night editor seized foot rule and tweezers and ruthlessly attacked the form, a mass of leaden type held together in a frame; plucking forth what had hitherto seemed a priceless half column of explanation concerning the misappropriation of 'steen millions by certain purveyors for our armies overseas. This, despite the blackest of scowls from the most morose of foremen.

Having found a mere murder story to throw out on the State news page, the tweezers went to work plucking out sufficient type to make the misappropriated money story fit in.

In the city room below, at Canby Kernahan's elbow, stood a watchful boy scout, one hand shading his eyes in the true Baden-Powell manner. When the star reporter had got as much as six lines committed to paper, this youthful patriot snatched the sheet and gave evidences of proficiency in the fleeing of a faithful scout carrying news of the enemy. Another watchful boy took his place; flying in his turn.

Thus it came about that the earliest edition of the *Argus*, the one that percolates into every hamlet on the Erie, contained a copy of what Canby Kernahan, and no other reporter on any other paper, had seen in connection with the hall of record's robbery.

Which was to this effect.

At some hour succeeding that one when the night watchman visited that particular part of the building on his hourly rounds, an unbidden entrance had been effected, for the purpose of a bit of grand larceny as daring in execution as it was mysterious in motivation. The watchman remembered that, while he sat at his post on the opposite side of the building, he had heard an odd sort of rumbling, which he had inconsequentially identified as the result of some unusually heavy commercial traffic along Lafayette Street, the uptown route for heavy drays.

It was not until his next half-hour trip that he saw a light burning in the office of the bureau of narcotic drug addiction; a light that had not burned there when he came by before. Yet no one had entered the building, on his side. Nor had any one remained overtime. As for any one coming in while he was on his trips, had he not securely double and triple-locked the two street doors?

Instantly, he phoned three other watch-

men, who covered the adjacent civic buildings through which one might gain access to this office. Each was assured none had been in the building save themselves. The first watchman bade them join him after notifying P. H. Q. Consequently, Kernahan got to the narcotic addiction office about the same time as the others; the "front office" being only a few furlongs away.

Two features of the violated room instantly attracted his eye. One was a huge hole in the center of the room, one that looked like the work of some giant auger. The other was the open safe; if it could be called such. A series of steel compartments were set into the wall; to which access was gained by sliding steel panels, all of which were supposed to be locked and interlocked by a huge safe combination.

These steel compartments had contained the cards of some twenty thousand registered drug addicts, residents of New York City. On each card was pasted a person's photograph while the blanks, filled in, in the addict's own handwriting, gave corroborative information. The original of each card was carried by the addict himself. These others could be consulted by no one except the commissioner of drug addiction. Secrecy having been promised the holders of these cards, the commissioner had ordered these steel compartments built according to her own specifications. The commissioner, a woman, alone knew the combination and also held the keys that opened each separate compartment. When she had quitted her office that afternoon, she asserted over the telephone there had been twenty thousand cards there. Now every compartment was empty. Not a single card remained.

Neither the chief of detectives nor the star reporter were looking for motives, just then. They examined the hole in the floor.

"I'm a lightweight: lower me down," suggested Canby Kernahan.

The watchman went for rope; which, when brought, was fastened under Kernahan's armpits. The chief shoved the black rubber butt of a Remington into one of the reporter's hands, an electric torch into the other. He was lowered slowly into the black void, the beam from his torch falling on the corrugated sides of torn wood, cement, and plaster.

The room was on the ground floor. Below was the basement, then the cellar. When Kernahan's feet touched the asphalt pavement of the former, their owner was in no exalted state of courage. But a star reporter will do almost anything to get an exclusive story, so the feet scuffled along in the wake of the beam of light.

It was not long before he was back beneath the hole, calling upon the chief to come down by way of the stairs.

"I haven't time to look into it any further," said Canby Kernahan. "I want this to get into our first edition. They must have had some kind of a gigantic burrowing machine. Look at that hole through the basement wall. It leads to the cellar of one of those ramshackle houses across the street. See how round and perfect the hole is?

"Then they must have set this machine up on some sort of a tripod, just under this ceiling, and set it to work burrowing upward. I believe I've heard of such a machine being used by the Germans for mining and countermining. A sort of a gigantic torpedo, fitted at one end with a huge auger, and with a man inside of it to drive it.

"I'm going straight across to get the number of that old house this burrow must inevitably lead to," he concluded. "I look to you to phone me any further facts you pick up for the second edition."

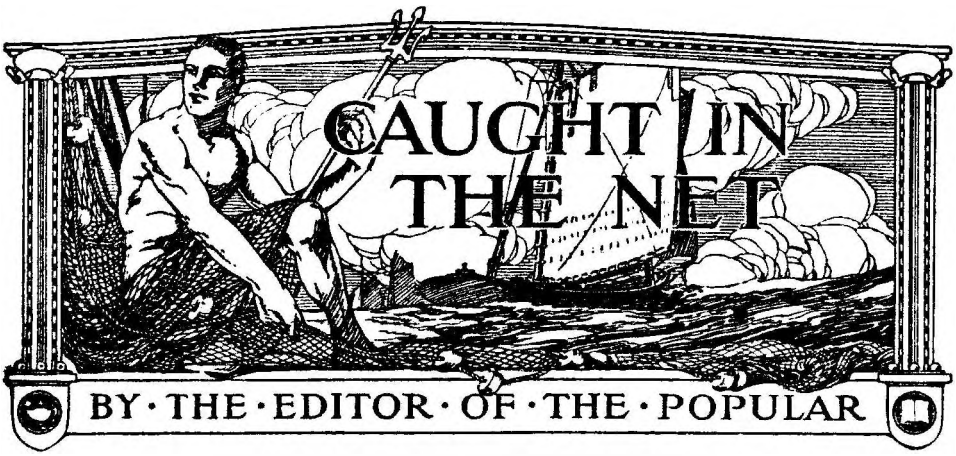
But there were no further facts. Kernahan's conclusions about the house opposite, and the burrowing machine, were both verified, but Kernahan had already said so anyway; adding in his story that the chief, himself, had crawled through the tunnel and found that it ended in the cellar of the house opposite.

So that the story Canby Kernahan wrote, and Yorke Norroy read, contained virtually all the information that was to be had at that hour; including the fact that, pinned to a wooden drawer within one of the steel compartments, was this cryptic message in the cramped handwriting of an elderly man:

What are you going to do about this, Mr. Y. N.?

There was no signature. It needed none for Mr. Norroy to know who had written it. But he was the only one who did. And even he did not know his name; nor even that some folks called him "The Devil's Chaplain."

TO BE CONTINUED.



PRACTICAL AMERICANISM

THERE are 6,000,000 people in this country, who cannot read or write English. There are 7,000,000 whose knowledge of the language, and of American customs and regulations, is so limited that their only medium of illumination is their own tongue.

There is a note of apprehension in these statistics, as revealed by the latest census, for they constitute a difficult problem, which must be solved wisely and with complete fairness to both sides—to both the foreign population, and the American people. With this problem the foreign language information service, of the American Red Cross, is now dealing. Formerly a part of the committee on public information, this foreign language information service is now a bureau under thedepartment of civilian relief of the Red Cross.

Realizing that assimilation is the result not of coercion, but of a real desire, through affection and admiration, to become a part of the country, the Red Cross conducts this service according to the law of reciprocity. Its purpose is twofold; to inform aliens of their rights and privileges as guaranteed by our constitution and our laws and of their own obligations and responsibilities toward these rights and privileges; and to enlighten the American public upon the progress and activities of the 17,000,000 foreign born among us.

Fifteen foreign-language sections, covering eighteen foreign-language groups, have been established. Daily releases from fifty-eight government departments form the basis of information. Special information is secured, when necessary, through personal investigation.

From this material the bureau dispatches daily news, covering government activities for aliens, to 850 foreign-language papers; and two releases a month to each of the 67,000 foreign-language organizations, for the instruction of their members. Special cases are given individual attention. Lectures are given and pamphlets issued, in several languages, in which are set forth the manifold ways in which the government can serve them. The magnitude of the work of this bureau is best shown by the following fact: Four thousand individual problems are solved each month; 92,000 pamphlets, containing necessary information in Russian, Ukrainian, Hungarian, and Polish have been sent out; 80 American newspapers are furnished monthly editorials; a monthly news service about the alien, his nature, his dreams and his work, reaches 2,100 American papers; authentic data for articles is sent to 9,000 periodicals.

This peace-time activity of the Red Cross deserves special appreciation, because of the example it affords and the good it achieves in a situation which is become a threatening one, in the present world restlessness. This is putting into practice true Americanism.

THE TELEPHONE DIFFICULTIES

COINCIDENT with the complaints of poor telephone service, there have been, for some time, complaints of a telephone shortage, all over the country. In statements made a short time ago, by representatives of the telephone companies, it was stated that there were then 250,000 unfilled orders for installation of telephones, throughout the United States. When these are installed, as many more new orders, it is expected, will

be waiting to be filled, and it was thought that the telephone shortage is likely to last from two and a half to three years. Many people who are seeking the installation of telephones, now envy those who have telephones to use. Though the service may not be all they would like, yet, according to the representatives of the companies, the telephones, despite this, are being installed faster than ever before.

There are about 12,000,000 telephones in use throughout the United States, of which the American Telephone and Telegraph Company, originally known as the Bell Telephone Company, and its associated companies, control over 11,000,000. Statistics made public, recently, showed that, in New York City, there were then on file 65,000 applicants for telephones in residences, apartment houses, offices, and factories. The number of applications in other places were: Chicago, 7,500; Minneapolis and St. Paul, 1,600; Indianapolis, 3,000; Boston, 19,000; Denver, 4,000; Oklahoma City, 2,000; St. Louis, 1,800; Connecticut, 2,500; Atlanta, 2,850; Birmingham, 1,500; Mobile, 1,000, and Springfield, Illinois, 400.

It was explained, on behalf of the American Telephone and Telegraph Company, that great manufacturing plants have changed their products, virtually overnight. The manufacture of arms, ammunition, and war materials has been stopped, and the manufacture of plows, dynamos, steel, textile, and other products manufactured in times of peace, is under way. In bringing this change about, great confusion resulted, it was stated; aggravated by storms and snows of unusual severity, severe floods and tornadoes, epidemics of influenza and other diseases, and a host of other troubles which affected the telephone system. As a result, among the immediate necessities in the telephone system, new central offices, new switchboard relays and distributing boards, new conduits, cables, manholes, pole lines and equipments of every kind were needed. Construction of this kind is going on all over the country.

There is a general belief that a more rapid system of construction will come; also better and more efficient service. As to the poor service, manufacturers and others, inclined to be charitable, agree that it was caused by the difficulty of securing efficient operators during the war, and that the service will improve faster than most people, who have chafed so long over the poor service, think. They also expect that more speedy methods of construction will be discovered, which will relieve the telephone shortage more quickly.

LIAISON IS LOST

EX-SOLDIERS will be sorry to hear of the demise of an old army acquaintance—*liaison*. Three years ago, this French word was well on its way toward membership, in good standing, in the English language. It was used as often in general conversation as "morale," "seventy-fives," and "Pershing." Perhaps, *liaison* will survive in the dictionaries, but it has been discharged the service of the United States army. The officers who rule over the army service schools, at Fort Leavenworth, have decided that American terminology is good enough for the American soldier, and have forbidden the use of the French word in the schools' courses of study. The "liaison officer" has lost his war-time glory and become a plain "information officer." These same scientific warriors also have decided that the value of the principles of fighting, taught at Leavenworth, before 1917, was proved in the field, in France, and that we have little or no need to borrow tactical doctrines from foreign armies. So, no prospective rookie need fear that he will miss initiation into the high mysteries of "squads east!" and kitchen police.

PEACE

THE heart of the world is sick. There is weariness after great effort, jumpy nerves after strain, disillusionment from an experience that burned away vital force. So men turn from the recent past, because it is bad. But they cannot turn to the future, for that menaces with insecurity and catastrophic change. If the past is a foul pool, the future is a stormy sea, and the generation that fought a world war is too tired to welcome a greater struggle. So men, everywhere, are using the moment at hand for whatever surface value it can yield. In human relationship there is much "bad

blood." Industrial dealings are embittered, and in spots—such as West Virginia—grow murderous.

Not one of our troubles can be cured in this climate. Machine guns will never adjust the delicate mathematical balance between the groups of manual workers and the groups of technical men and supervisory grades. The fundamental brain work needed, to find wise administrators for a key industry, will not be stimulated by shooting down a coal operator, in the dark, nor by beating up a miner at the hands of company-owned deputy sheriffs.

What we would plead for is not a "religious revival" to blur the sharp edges of the wage scale. It is not to submerge overwork, congestion, and the cost of living in a flood of good will. We would not have one detail of suffering and injustice omitted, in presenting the people's case. Teacher and farmer and railway man, architect, foreman, and manager—all are telling their story. But why not come forward in humor and good humor, and make a clean fight? We can deal with each item in the world's complaint, better, by cool challenge, than in black anger. We need a change of heart, because there is darkness within. No mass repentance will avail. The individual must begin.

On the last day of May, Sir Auckland Geddes said:

"In Europe we know that an age is dying. A realization of the aimlessness of life lived to labor and to die, having achieved nothing but avoidance of starvation, and the birth of children also doomed to the weary treadmill, has seized the minds of millions. The next years are going to be the most glorious or the most disastrous in the history of the world."

In the presence of a change so stupendous, bickering is unworthy. If the times are bad, and the outer world seething in unrest, there is the more need for a center of peace, in the human heart. He who remained quiet and courageous under the guns can hold himself friendly in the present days.

LABOR'S PRODUCTIVITY INCREASING

THE alarming decrease in labor efficiency and production, accompanying increasingly high wages of mechanics, during the last four or five years, is now believed, by a number of large manufacturers, to be disappearing in various industries, by slow degrees. Such an industrial condition as has been existing during this period, is more or less unnatural, and, it is believed by many, cannot last much longer. Workers, whose apparent aim, for some time, was to produce as little as possible, at the highest wages ever paid before, are in some cases producing more and taking a little of the pride in their work that spurred mechanics many years ago.

Reports received recently by the industrial bureau of the Merchants' Association in one of our largest manufacturing cities, from forty-nine manufacturers, representing forty industries, in reply to letters sent to them by the bureau, showed that in the majority of cases labor efficiency was increasing. Although production per man, per hour, had not reached normal, the general report of the association says it has been improving since last September, especially since the year 1920 began. A spirit of optimism regarding the productivity of labor, it was also stated, was prevalent among a good many manufacturers. Among a number of reasons given for an increase in productivity, the report of the bureau stated, was the number of applicants, and the change from time to piece work.

Of the forty-nine manufacturers, this report said, twenty-three say that the efficiency of their employees has increased noticeably, since September, 1919; five say that, though they have no measurable increase, a better spirit exists among the employees; seventeen say they have observed no change, and three say they have noticed a decrease.

Later, Elbert H. Gary, chairman of the board of the United States Steel Corporation, in an official statement he made shortly before he sailed for Europe, for a period of rest, spoke very optimistically of the gain in productive activity. He said that not in six years has the future of the United States appeared as bright as now, and labor was showing more efficiency, per man.

He recognized, however, he said, for many months, the dangers in the general situation, but was more optimistic as to the future of the country than he had been at any time during the past six years.

CROPS AND THE PUBLIC

IN view of persistent past reports of shortage of farm-hand labor—though they have been to some extent verified—it is comforting to learn that the crop situation is, by no means, as bad as it lately seemed that it might be. Recent reports, from the country at large, show gratifying improvements. At present the outlook is for 800,000,000 total wheat production—500,000,000 winter wheat, and 300,000,000 spring wheat. Most localities in the corn belt likewise report an increased acreage of corn, with a somewhat better crop condition than for the corresponding period last year; and prospects are good for normal yields of other cereal crops, except rye.

Especially favorable reports come from the spring wheat area of the Northwest. Crops in spite of backward weather conditions, seem to be nearly as far advanced as in normal years. The outlook is for a yield, per acre, that will more than compensate for decreased acreage due to labor shortage. Contributing to this, moisture and other conditions are especially favorable in Montana, where there is promise of a yield that will go far toward making up the serious losses suffered there from drought during the last three years. In North Dakota, too, particularly good weather conditions prevail. In this State alone this season's corn acreage is estimated at thirty-five per cent over last season's, coming within a few thousand acres of the record 700,000 of 1914. North Dakota, incidentally, is one of the few sections of the country which has not suffered a serious shortage of farm labor during the spring planting. While thousands of farms are being abandoned in other States, more farmers are coming into North Dakota than are leaving it. Farmers there are paying from sixty dollars to eighty dollars, or in some cases even one hundred dollars per month, and board, for farm hands.

There remains, however, the problem of getting these crops to the public. It is to be remembered that, for the moving of them, there is a serious coal and car shortage. At the great terminals, in elevators, and in the farmers' bins, great quantities of last year's crops are being held for this reason alone. The United States department of agriculture is recommending farmers to store as much as possible of this year's grain crop on their farms—though, to make this possible, an increase in loans to them, to tide them over until they can receive returns from their crops, should, if possible, be facilitated. It is also to be noted that, since the removement of Federal restrictions, including the fixed price of wheat, there is nothing in the way of a return to speculation, in wheats and other grains, except the force of public disapproval and the existence of some doubt in the minds of dealers as to whether it can be made profitable to them. It is to be hoped that public disapproval can find some way to make itself effectively felt. Both farmer and consumer would undoubtedly be much better off, if the marketing and transportation systems were under such unified control as would assure ready and certain movement of crops, according to the needs of producer and consumer.

POPULAR TOPICS

FOR the first time in three years the big ledger in which Uncle Sam keeps his accounts shows a balance on the credit side. When the fiscal year ended, on June 30, there was a surplus of $291,221,647. The public debt was reduced by $1,185,184,692, leaving an aggregate debt of some twenty-four billions. During this same fiscal year, Uncle Sam's nieces and nephews paid him a total Federal tax of $5,410,284,875. It cost the government fifty-five cents for every hundred dollars collected.

STILL another use has been found for the caterpillar tractor. After making good, in the vastly different fields of agriculture and war it now is to be employed for exploration in the frozen North. By its use Lauge Koch, a Danish scientist, expects to be able to reach the northernmost end of Greenland.

AMERICANS spend a hundred million dollars a year for chewing gum—three times the amount we spend for school and textbooks. Last year two billion packages of gum were sold—close to one hundred sticks for each person in the country—and the demand exceeded the supply. We make ninety-nine percent of the world's chewing gum, and consume ninety per cent of it. But the foreign demand is growing rapidly.

SÉNOR MEXICO is sitting up in bed. He seems on the way to recovery from the effects of his long revolutionary spree, and is beginning to think things over, in a serious way. Next will come the footing of the doctor's bill. One sizable item of that account will be forty-eight million dollars, for the rehabilitation of our southern neighbor's railroads.

BEFORE you again throw an empty spool in the wastebasket, give it a respectful glance. The manufacture of spools is an important industry, in the State of Maine, where eight hundred million a year are made. They sell for almost a million dollars. Complicated and expensive machines, operated by skilled workers, turn them out at the rate of a spool a second.

NAVIGATION of the air increases by leaps and bounds. During England's first year of civilian flying, 38,954 airplane flights were made, with but a single fatal accident. Seven hundred and thirty-four thousand miles were flown, and 70,000 passengers and 734,000 pounds of goods carried. The dirigible balloon also is being developed rapidly. German interests are said to be building a transatlantic ship, of this type, which will carry sixty passengers.

EUROPE is getting back toward pre-war conditions steadily. Belgium has gone to work with a will, and her coal production has increased, until it is now 90.9 per cent of what it was before 1914. Her telephone service has been reëstablished, 282, out of 283 central stations, now being in operation, and 80 per cent of the old subscribers are again using the telephone. France is doing well in agriculture, and her industries are being speeded up. For the first half of this year, her exports were valued at 4,688,000,000 francs, as against 1,700,000,000, for the same period in 1919. Even Germany has increased her exports greatly.

ALL the good news isn't from Europe. Judge Gary says that in the last month or so labor, in the plants of the Steel Corporation, has been more efficient than at any time during the last five years. Mr. Samuel Gompers suggests that, by increased operating efficiency, it may eventually be possible to take from the shoulders of the public the burden of the recent railroad wage increase. But what makes us think that the millennium really is at hand, is a report that the employees of a Pennsylvania traction company refused to take advantage of a wage increase, until the company's finances were in better shape.

THREE mental conditions, the National Safety Council has discovered, are the direct causes of many accidents. They are: A widely prevalent taint of epilepsy, that causes the victim momentarily to lose consciousness; the operation of "habit chains," which sometimes occupy the human nervous machinery to the exclusion of conscious control; and that queer mental twist that causes its victim to do the very thing that he is most afraid of doing, such as leaping in front of a speeding car, or jumping from the roof of a high building.

Say That Again, Please

By Roy W. Hinds

Author of "Substantial Evidence," "That's Catching 'Em," Etc.

Cameron Finlock is reminded of "Birdie" Kilgore. As a salesman, Birdie could beat the world, if he only had something to sell

MY friend, Cameron Finlock, who long ago gave up his evil ways, and, with the proceeds thereof, opened a cut-rate tobacco store, which accounts for me meeting him, spake thus:

"We all know that the world is getting better. The great moral doctrines, propounded by the genius who devised burglar alarms, are bearing fruit. When he said, 'Build a steel fort around what you got—and then wire the fort!' he give us a valuable lesson in economics. Yes, the world is growing better—at least it's safer. The banks have burglar alarms, the latest safes are almost safe, police forces are getting bigger and clumsier, factories are making nonjimmyable windows and unpickable locks, engravers are turning out unraisable checks, and I can remember when we had nonrefillable bottles.

"But there ain't been no device created yet for guarding a citizen's credulity. The confidence man's toes ain't been trod on, yet, by the march of progress. As long as some men have ears and others a plausible set of vocal cords, the confidence man will be pouring out a system of pleasing phraseology, and the man with the gullible ears will be exposing his exchequer to the rigors of the climate."

I suggested that the vanishing saloon had robbed the confidence man of a drawing card.

"Well," said Mr. Finlock, "liquor helped him, in spots, and hurt him, in spots—about an even break, I guess. That puts me in mind of 'Birdie' Kilgore——"

Whereupon, Cameron Finlock unfolded his tale to me, as follows:

Believe me, fellow—so opened Mr. Finlock—this Birdie Kilgore was as fast a high and lofty confidence man as ever spotted a carpetbag at the Grand Central Station. He come by that name of Birdie, because he talked in soft carols, and, at the proper time, could divest himself of a soothful cluster of modulated chirps and melodious twitterings that flung the stranger gayly off his guard.

He could take a bunch of raw material, such as syllables and adverbs and phrases, shuffle 'em up in his throat, and deal out a line of chatter that'd make a tinkling brook in a sylvan dell hold its tongue. And his voice wasn't all there was to him. He had intelligence, aided and abetted by an education. He could discuss astronomy or alfalfa, finance or furrows, music or mud, fencing or fishing. It didn't make no difference to Birdie.

But, as I said, his winning suit was in the inflections of speech. Why, Birdie could repeat the multiplication table, and it sounded like stringed music from far across the moonlit waters; he could read an extract from the last annual report of the geological survey, and you'd swear you was listening to an old plantation melody in the original setting. He who listened was lost.

And Birdie was soothing to the eye, too, though there was nothing foppy about him.

But Birdie Kilgore had his drawbacks, one of which is now unconstitutional. Yes, Birdie drank. If he took just enough, it unloosened his subcellars and attics of conversation. But he was apt to get too much.

In that case his tongue flopped around with both wings broke. It banged against the side of his mouth, and stumbled over his wisdom teeth, and couldn't get up again.

And Birdie didn't drink by any system. He drank to make the time go faster, and he drank to make it go slower. While waiting for a train, he'd take a few drinks, then miss the train. The only day of the year that Birdie wouldn't get drunk was the thirtieth of February. I don't mean, by that, that he was keyed up all the time. Truth is, he was sober more than he was otherwise. But, if

the mood come on him, no amount of money could hold him. For that reason, other confidence men didn't team up with him, except for work that could be pulled off with a snap.

One time, Birdie Kilgore met up with a man that was catalogued in the city directory of Salina, Kansas, as Ashman Sparks. Mr. Sparks had ten thousand dollars, and Birdie knew it. Both of 'em wanted it.

Now, Ashman Sparks wasn't a man to fall for the rush act. He was solemn and wise, and looked you straight in the eye, and talked slow, and wore a big watch chain. Ashman Sparks had sense enough to know that there was one or two dangerous characters outside of the Tombs. He didn't think Birdie was dangerous. He liked him, and trusted him, especially while Birdie was talking; but he didn't trust him ten thousand dollars' worth.

Mr. Sparks was a middle-aged bachelor, who made his money selling farm machinery in the West. He sold out his business, and come to New York to look around, before he stepped into something else. He didn't think he could cut much of a dash in Wall Street, with that amount of money, so he didn't go down there for business purposes. Truth is, he was busier seeing the city than he was in looking for a likely investment.

Birdie met him in the lobby of the Sturtevant Hotel, where Mr. Sparks was stopping. In a couple of days he learned all about Mr. Sparks. Birdie was supposed to be a real-estate agent, and you can bet the taxicab fare from Times Square to Salina, Kansas, that Birdie had credentials and passports and depositions to prove it. That was another thing he was strong on. He could pose as anything in the world but a prohibitionist, and prove it. Birdie also found that Mr. Ashman Sparks was willing to take down a few profits himself, even by squeezing somebody. He called it business. His sentiments made it easier for Birdie.

In those days a man could have a tang of bourbon on his breath, without attracting an admiring crowd. You ordered your drinks, instead of pleading for 'em, and you got what you wanted, without explaining that you knew the man on the night trick.

Well, Birdie Kilgore and Ashman Sparks skimmed around town a good bit. They drank together and ate together, but Birdie never got to the point where he exceeded his guzzling limitations. In their travels Birdie decided that Mr. Sparks wasn't a man who'd buy Grant's Tomb the very first time he laid eyes on it. He didn't try to sell him the Atlantic fleet, which happened to be parked in the North River at the time, and neither did he try to load him down with bargains like the Brooklyn Bridge and the Woolworth Building and the big-game hunting concession at the Bronx Zoo.

Birdie played upon Mr. Sparks with his marvelous voice, and there wasn't any doubt that the gentleman from Salina was walking steadily, though a bit slowly, into a trap. He liked Birdie, and was getting to like him better, every hour. In four or five days, he got so he hunted him up; and when a chump gets to that point, it's time to begin playing for keeps.

It was on the fifth day, I think, that the grand idea come to Birdie Kilgore. He talked softly, to Mr. Sparks, while the idea come out of its shell and shook itself. He kept on talking, sweet and low, and directly he decided that the idea was a winner.

He made an excuse that he had to tend to some business, and got away for an hour or so. In that time, he hunted up a young confidence man, who we called "Irrelevant" Jones, because one time he made a useless crack, just as he was about to close a twenty-five-thousand-dollar deal, and that remark, which had nothing to do with the deal, broke up the smooth current of the conversation and resulted in the victim taking second thought. The second thought cost Mr. Jones twenty-five thousand dollars and a black eye.

But Irrelevant Jones was a little wiser now. Into his ear Birdie Kilgore made whisperings. Mr. Jones nodded his head understandingly.

"I'll be there," he said, "at ten in the morning."

Birdie Kilgore went back to Ashman Sparks. It was then about one o'clock in the afternoon. Before lunch, Birdie and Mr. Sparks took a couple of drinks. Pretty soon they took a couple more, and missed lunch. About that time, Birdie must have got a suspicion that the country eventually was going dry, because he started in to get his share before that catastrophe come about. He kept thinking about his scheme to acquire Mr. Sparks' ten thousand dollars, and he got enthusiastic. It's always fatal to get enthusiastic in a saloon.

He talked a stream at Ashman Sparks, and

the delegate from Kansas cocked his head to one side and hung onto the sweetly flowing words like an aërial performer hangs onto his trapeze. He swung gracefully from word to word, and flew, like a happy swallow, from one sentence to another, and hung by his toes on Birdie's system of dulcet vowels. The English language, that afternoon, sounded as if it was written by Lohengrin, instead of Noah Webster.

Up to a certain point, Birdie talked in the indicative mood. They stepped lightly from saloon to saloon, and, pretty soon, Birdie gazed upon the wonders of New York, with only one eye burning. Then Birdie's memory left him, and his parts of speech began to quarrel among themselves. He swears that he don't remember a thing that happened after four o'clock in the afternoon.

Howsoever, Birdie Kilgore come to, about midnight, in a hotel room. He was fully undressed, except for his hat, coat, vest, trousers, shoes, socks, underclothes, shirt, collar, tie, and his watch and chain. The lights was burning brightly, but he was alone. He sat up on the edge of the bed, and thought things over. He first thought he ought to have a few drinks, but finally compromised on one. A bell boy brought it to him, and from him Birdie learned that he was brought there by a tall man with an Adam's apple and a big watch chain. The man seemed very friendly to him, the bell boy said. That satisfied Birdie. He hadn't queered himself with Ashman Sparks, anyway, and his deal, the next day, could go through according to program.

Birdie took a superhuman grip on himself, and laid off the drinks. He didn't go home, because he was afraid he'd wander into a saloon, if he went outside. He stayed in the hotel room, and entertained himself by sleeping and occasionally playing the tinkling chimes, with a pitcher of ice water. In the morning he was sober. He got shaved and brushed up, and, about nine o'clock, he showed up at the saloon where him and Mr. Sparks hung out a good bit.

Ashman Sparks didn't get there until ten o'clock, and two seconds later a breezy young man come in. It was Irrelevant Jones.

"Good morning!" said Mr. Sparks to Birdie. "You're looking right chipper, and we're both on time. How——" Just then Irrelevant Jones rushes between 'em, and grabbed Birdie by the hand.

"I've been looking all over town for you!" Jones exclaims. "I've got a big piece of news——"

"Now, just a minute," Birdie intervenes. "Here, Mr. Sparks, meet a friend of mine—Freddy Wright, a newspaper reporter. Freddy is the star reporter of the *Evening Vesuvius*." Then the three withdrew to a semiprivate booth, where drinks was duly served. All the time, "Freddy Wright" fidgeted, as if he was about to explode with some great piece of news.

"You can talk in front of Mr. Sparks, Freddy," says Birdie Kilgore.

"I've just come from the city hall," says Freddy Wright.

His voice trembled, and it was plain that he was suppressing quite a bunch of emotion.

"What's happened, down there?" Birdie asks.

"Well," says Freddy, drawing a deep breath, "the Polo Grounds ordinance is going to be jammed through the council tomorrow!"

Birdie Kilgore jumped up, and then gripped himself.

"Are you sure about that?" he inquires. He set down again.

"I got it straight," Freddy asserts; "from the mayor himself! You know how my paper stands with him—and you know I get the dope from the mayor's office, before any other reporter."

"Oh, sure," Birdie agrees, "I know all about that—but I didn't expect it till next month some time."

"Well," Freddy repeats, "she goes through to-morrow—rain or shine. The mayor has got the votes in his office—he knows just who will vote for it, and who won't; and the ordinance has got a big majority."

Birdie meditated.

"It's caught me in a bad fix," he says finally, "but I'll raise something somehow." And then he adds: "I'll *have* to raise it!"

"And don't forget," Freddy Wright reminded him, "of the chances I've taken to get this dope. It'd cost me my job, if the city editor ever finds out I had that information. I'm not going to say a word about it, at the office. You can swing your deal, this afternoon, and then we don't care how many people know it. But don't forget me!"

"I certainly won't forget you," Birdie promises. "You'll be taken care of. But I'm just studying how——"

Birdie turned to Ashman Sparks.

"You see, Mr. Sparks," says he, "Freddy is a reporter who's on the inside at the city hall, and a lot of other places. He gives me some valuable tips. This Polo Grounds ordinance, so far as the citizens think, is a joke. And here it is, almost ready to go through!"

"I see," says Mr. Sparks.

Birdie wheeled on Freddy Wright.

"Let's take a ride up there, and look things over!" he urges.

"I can't do that," Freddy declares. "I've wasted too much time off my beat, now. There's going to be a street-car wreck in Brooklyn, at twelve o'clock, and I've got to cover that, and get over to Jersey City to cover a fire that's going to break out at one-twenty. Then I've got to go over to Bedloe's Island, and get an interview on immigration, from the Statue of Liberty."

"You're positive about the Polo Grounds ordinance, are you?" Birdie asks.

"Ab-so-lute-ly positive! I'll give you the name of every man that's going to vote for it. I'll——"

"You needn't do that. I know how accurate you are, Freddy. And I'm the only real-estate man, in the city, who knows the facts, or has any suspicion about the status of the ordinance, eh?"

"Ab-so-lute-ly!"

Then Freddy Wright disappeared. Birdie turned to Ashman Sparks.

"Let's you and me take a ride," he suggests.

"Well, now," says Mr. Sparks, "if this is business——"

"It is business, and mighty important business," says Birdie, "and I want somebody to talk it over with. Come along—I need you."

Birdie Kilgore done a lot of thinking and frowning, and mighty little talking, during their taxicab ride to the Polo Grounds. Ashman Sparks done a lot of wondering.

After Birdie dismissed the driver, he led Mr. Sparks out onto the viaduct that spans the deep cut between the two heights of New York. From the viaduct, they got a wide view of the neighborhood—the Polo Grounds, the transportation lines, and the rows of apartment houses on all sides. For a couple of minutes Birdie done a lot of looking.

Finally he says: "The city is going to compel the baseball teams to move their grounds."

"That so?" queries Mr. Sparks.

"Yes," Birdie goes on. "This whole stretch of open land, as far as you can see, both ways, is going to be made available for building."

"Well," says Ashman Sparks, "there's a sight of land there."

"Yes, indeed!" Birdie agrees. "And do you see that strip of property just outside the ball grounds—right over there, with that shed at one end of it? Well, that strip runs down to that shelf of rock. There's room, on that property, for two apartment houses. And what do you think I can buy it for?"

"I haven't no idea."

"Twelve thousand dollars!" says Birdie Kilgore.

"Well," he asks Mr. Sparks, "why don't you buy it?"

"Because," Birdie answers, in a sorrowful voice, "I haven't got but two thousand dollars."

Whereupon, Ashman Sparks wrapped himself in a pall of deafening silence.

"I'm caught short," Birdie hurries on. "All my money is tied up in that Long Island deal I was telling you about, the other day. Yes, sir—I'm caught short!

"There's a chance for the biggest and quickest turnover of big money that ever I run up against. Twelve thousand dollars buys it, and when the news gets out that the Polo Grounds has got to be vacated by the ball teams, and that this tract is opened up for building—and that news will be printed to-morrow—that piece of land, that I could buy for twelve thousand, can be sold to-morrow night for fifty thousand!"

"That's a sight of money," Ashman Sparks agrees, and there come a funny look in his eye. "What do you aim to do?"

"I'll tell you what I'm going to do," says Birdie grimly. "I'm going to borrow ten thousand dollars. I've got things fixed so I can get hold of that property, to-day, and I'm going to make a clean-up. I don't know, just now, where I can get the ten thousand—but I'll get it!"

Again Ashman Sparks made a noise like a forsaken desert. Directly Birdie Kilgore turned to him.

"Mr. Sparks," he demands, "have you got ten thousand dollars?"

"Yes," says Mr. Sparks.

Birdie's voice grew solemn and impressive—the best selling tones he could strike.

"Why don't you let me have it—until to-morrow night?" he asks. "Or, better than

that, for you—I'll cut you in on half of the deal. I'll put my two thousand and my information with your ten thousand, and we'll split. If we don't want to sell to-morrow, we'll hold the property, and every day we hold it means that its value goes up by leaps and bounds. But we can sell it, to-morrow, if we want to, if you insist—at an enormous profit. It's just like putting twelve thousand dollars in the bank, and getting paid thirty-eight thousand dollars interest on it, the next day. We'll go half and half on the deal, Mr. Sparks. That's fair enough, isn't it?"

Ashman Sparks meditated. His eyes turned out toward the strip of property.

"Yes," he agrees, "that's fair enough—and I got the ten thousand in the bank."

"Why don't you turn it over to me—and let me go put this deal through, right now?"

"Well," says Mr. Sparks, "I sort of got another deal on. You see, I've more than half pledged myself to buy the Sheep Meadow in Central Park."

"What!" demands Birdie, when he got his voice back. "You're going to buy the Sheep Meadow in Central Park! Ho, ho! my friend! It's lucky I found out about that! The Sheep Meadow, eh? Do you know what you've run up against? You've met a confidence man, somewhere! He's going to sell you the Sheep Meadow? Well, you'll have a hard time proving title to it. It's been sold a hundred times, in the last year, and hasn't changed hands yet.

"Don't you know that the Sheep Meadow can't be sold? It's part of the park, owned by the city. It's lucky you told me about this. You haven't paid any money down, I hope?"

"I hadn't got that far," says Mr. Sparks.

"You're lucky. Do you realize that I've just saved you from the clutches of a sharper?"

"Is that so?" says Ashman Sparks. He turned a grateful look on Birdie.

"Yes," Mr. Kilgore continues, softly and coaxingly. "But, of course, you're going to forget all about the Sheep Meadow, and turn your attention to something on the square. There isn't any doubt, Mr. Sparks, as to my information on this deal. The ball teams will be forced away from here, and this property will be opened up for building—and that's going to happen to-morrow. It certainly is lucky that you told me about that Sheep Meadow deal!"

"Yes," Mr. Sparks agrees, "it was. This morning, I had a mind to get my money out of the bank, and turn it over to that fellow; and, maybe, I'd done it, if that reporter hadn't come along with his inside information about this baseball grounds."

Birdie smiled.

"Everything happened just right," says he. "I saved your money, and now we'll make a fortune. You're going into this deal with me, aren't you? And you're going to forget all about the Sheep Meadow?"

"Yes," says Mr. Sparks solemnly, "I'm going to forget all about the Sheep Meadow—and a lucky man I call myself!" He turned a stern look on Birdie. "The Sheep Meadow—the—why, dam'tall, man! You're the fellow that sold me the Sheep Meadow!"

For the first time in his life, Birdie Kilgore was stricken completely dumb. All he could do was waggle his head back and forth. He tugged at his collar, and twisted his neck, and his eyes bugged out. Directly, he got a squeak or two out of his throat.

"I sold—I sold——"

"Yes," asserts Ashman Sparks, of Salina, Kansas, "you sold me the Sheep Meadow, yesterday afternoon. You was drunker'n a goat, but you was a good salesman. I ain't going into the rigmarole you give me. It was clever—I'll admit that; and I believed you."

He looked at Birdie closely. Birdie was all crumpled up against the railing of the viaduct.

"Don't you recollect you and me being up in Central Park, late yesterday afternoon?" Mr. Sparks demands.

"No—no, I—I——"

"Well, we was. And after you sold me the Sheep Meadow, you went all to pieces, and I lugged you to the nearest hotel. You been talking so fast, ever since then, that, for the last few minutes, I had an idea you might be playing some sort of a joke on me, and I let you rattle on. But now"—and Ashman Sparks looked real savage—"I've found out you're nothing but a dam' sharper! You better clear out—and keep away from me!"

Birdie Kilgore rode downtown, alone, on a street car.

Another story by Mr. Hinds, "Breaking and Entering," will appear soon.

The Daffodil Enigma

By Edgar Wallace

Author of "The Million-Dollar Story," "The Green Rust," Etc.

(A Four-Part Story—Part IV.)

CHAPTER XXX.

WHO KILLED MRS. RIDER?

THE matron of the nursing home received Tarling. Odette, she said, had regained her normal calm, but would require a few days' rest. She suggested she should be sent to the country.

"I hope you're not going to ask her a lot of questions, Mr. Tarling?" said the matron, "because she really isn't fit to stand any further strain."

"There's only one question I'm going to ask," said Tarling grimly.

He found the girl in a prettily furnished room, and she held out her hand to him, in greeting. He stooped and kissed her, and without further ado, produced the shoe from his pocket.

"Odette, dear," he said gently, "is this yours?"

She looked at it, and nodded.

"Are you sure it is yours?"

"I'm perfectly certain it's mine," she smiled. "It's an old slipper I used to wear. Why do you ask?"

"Where did you see it last?"

The girl closed her eyes and shivered.

"In mother's room," she said. She turned her head to the cushion of the chair and wept, and Tarling soothed her. "It was a shoe that mother liked, because it fitted her. We both took the same size——"

Her voice broke again, and Tarling hastened to change the conversation.

More and more he was becoming converted to Ling Chu's theory. He could not apply to that theory the facts which had come into his possession. On his way back from the nursing home to police headquarters, he reviewed the Hertford crime.

Somebody had come into the house barefooted, with bleeding feet, and, having committed the murder, had looked about for shoes. The old slippers had been the only kind which the murderer could wear, and he, or she, had put them on and had gone out again, after making the circuit of the house. Why had this mysterious person tried to get into the house again, and for whom, or what, were they searching? If Ling Chu was correct, obviously the murderer could not be Milburgh. If he could believe the evidence of his senses, the man with the small feet had been he who had shrieked defiance, in the darkness, and had hurled the vitriol at his feet. He put his views before his subordinate, and found Whiteside willing to agree with him.

"But, it does not follow," said Whiteside, "that the barefooted person, who was apparently in Mrs. Rider's house, committed the murder. Milburgh did that, right enough, don't worry! There is less doubt that he committed the Daffodil murder."

Tarling swung round in his chair; he was sitting on the opposite side of the big table that the two men used in common.

"I think I know who committed the Daffodil murder," he said steadily. "I have been working things out, and I have a theory, which you would probably describe as fantastic."

"What is it?" asked Whiteside. But the other shook his head. Whiteside leaned back in his chair, and for a moment cogitated.

"The case from the very beginning, Tarling, is full of contradictions," he said. "Thornton Lyne was a rich man. By the way, you're a rich man, too, now, Tarling, and I must treat you with respect."

Tarling smiled. "Go on."

"Lyne falls in love with a pretty girl, in his employ," continued Whiteside. "Used to having his way when he lifted his finger, all women that on earth do dwell must bow their necks to the yoke. He is repulsed by the

girl, and, in his humiliation, immediately conceives for her a hatred beyond the understanding of any sane mortal."

"So far your account doesn't challenge contradiction," said Tarling, with a little twinkle in his eye.

"That is item number one," continued Whiteside. "Item number two is Mr. Milburgh, an oleaginous gentleman, who has been robbing the firm for years and has been living in style, in the country, on his ill-earned gains. From what he hears, or knows, he gathers that the jig is up. He is in despair, when he realizes that Thornton Lyne is desperately in love with his stepdaughter. What is more likely than that he should use his stepdaughter, in order to influence Thornton Lyne to take the favorable view of his delinquencies?"

"Or what is more likely," interrupted Tarling, "than that he would put the blame, for the robberies, upon the girl, and trust to her paying a price to Thornton Lyne to escape punishment?"

"Right again. I'll accept that possibility," said Whiteside. "Milburgh's plan is to get a private interview, under exceptionally favorable circumstances, with Thornton Lyne. He wires to that gentleman to meet him at Miss Rider's flat, relying upon the magic of the name."

"And Thornton Lyne comes in list slippers," said Tarling sarcastically. "That doesn't wash, Whiteside."

"No, it doesn't," admitted the other. "But I'm getting at the broad aspects of the case. Lyne comes. He is met by Milburgh, who plays his trump card of confession, and endeavors to switch the young man on to the solution which Milburgh had prepared. Lyne refuses, there is a row, and in desperation Milburgh shoots Thornton Lyne."

Tarling shook his head. He mused a while; then:

"It's queer," he said.

The door opened and a police officer came in.

"Here are the particulars you want," he said, and handed Whiteside a typewritten sheet of paper.

"What is this?" said Whiteside, when the man had gone. "Oh, here is our old friend, Sam Stay. A police description." He read on: "Height, five foot four; sallow complexion—wearing a gray suit and undercloth-ing bearing the markings of the county asylum—hullo!"

"What is it?" said Tarling.

"This is remarkable," said Whiteside, and read:

"When the patient escaped, he had bare feet. He takes a very small size in shoes, probably four or five. A kitchen knife is missing, and the patient may be armed. Bootmakers should be warned——"

"Bare feet!" Tarling rose to the table with a frown on his face. "Sam Stay hated Odette Rider."

The two men exchanged glances.

"Now, do you see who killed Mrs. Rider?" asked Tarling. "She was killed by one who saw Odette Rider go into the house, and did not see her come out; who went in after her to avenge, as he thought, his dead patron. He killed this unhappy woman. The initials on the knife, M. C. A., stand for Middlesex County Asylum, and he brought the knife with him—and discovered his mistake. Then, having searched for a pair of shoes to cover his bleeding feet, and having failed to get into the house, by any other way, made a circuit of the building, looking for Odette Rider, and seeking an entrance at every window."

Whiteside looked at him in astonishment.

"It's a pity you've got money," he said admiringly. "When you retire from this business, there'll be a great detective lost!"

CHAPTER XXXI.

SAM STAY TURNS UP.

"I have seen you somewhere before, ain't I?"

The stout clergyman in the immaculate white collar beamed benevolently at the questioner and shook his head with a gentle smile.

"No, my dear friend, I do not think I have ever seen you before."

It was a little man, shabbily dressed, and looking ill. His face was drawn and lined; he had not shaved, for days, and the thin, black stubble of hair gave him a sinister look. The clergyman had just walked out of Temple Gardens, and was at the end of Villiers Street, leading up to the Strand, when he was accosted. He was a happy-looking clergyman, and something of a student, too, if the stout and serious volume under his arm had any significance.

"I've seen you before," said the little man, in so fierce a tone that the other stopped as he was starting away. "I tell

you I've dreamed about you. I've seen you dancing with four black devils, with no clothes on, and you were all fat and ugly."

The clergyman took a pace back, in alarm.

"Now, my good man," he said severely, "you ought not to talk that kind of nonsense. My name is the Reverend Josiah Jennings."

"Your name is Milburgh," said the other. "*He* used to talk about you! That lovely man!" He clutched the clergyman's sleeve and Milburgh's face went a shade paler. There was a concentrated fury in the grip on his arm, and a strange wildness in the man's speech. "Do you know where he is? In a beautiful vault, built like an 'ouse, in Highgate Cemetery. There's two little doors that open like the door of a church, and you go down some steps to it."

"Who are you?" asked Milburgh.

"Don't you know me?" The little man peered at him. "You've heard him talk about Sam Stay. Why, I worked for two days in your stores, I did. And you—you've only got what *he's* given you. Every penny you earned, he gave you, did Mr. Lyne. He was a friend to the poor, even to a hook like me."

"Now, don't talk nonsense!" said Milburgh under his breath. "And listen, my man; if anybody asks you whether you have seen Mr. Milburgh, you haven't, you understand?"

"Oh, I understand," said the man. "But I knew you! There's nobody connected with him, that I don't remember. He lifted me up out of the gutter, he did. He's my idea of Gawd!"

They had reached a quiet corner of the gardens, and Milburgh motioned the man to sit beside him, on a garden seat. For the first time, that day, he experienced a sense of confidence in the wisdom of his choice of disguise. The sight of a clergyman speaking with a seedy-looking man might excite comment, but not suspicion.

"They took me away to a place in the country," said Sam Stay, "but you know I wasn't mad, Mr. Milburgh. *He* wouldn't have had a fellow hanging round him who was mad, would he? You're a clergyman, now, eh?" He nodded his head wisely, then asked, with a sudden eagerness: "Did you preach over him when they buried him in that little vault in 'Ighgate? I've seen it. There's two little doors that open like church doors."

Mr. Milburgh remembered, now. Sam Stay had been removed to a lunatic asylum. It was not a pleasant experience, talking with an escaped lunatic. It might, however, be a profitable one. What could he make out of this, he wondered?

"I'm going to settle with that girl——" Sam Stay suddenly closed his lips tightly, and looked with a cunning little smile at Milburgh. "I didn't say anything, did I?" he asked, with a queer little chuckle. "I didn't say anything that would give me away, did I?"

"No, my friend," said Mr. Milburgh, still in the character of the benevolent pastor. "To what girl do you refer?"

"There's only one girl," said Stay between his teeth. "And I'll settle with her!"

"So you hate Miss Rider, do you?" asked Milburgh.

The little fellow's face purpled, his eyes starting from his head, his two hands twisted convulsively.

"I thought I'd finished her last night," he began, and stopped. "Listen," Sam went on. "Have you ever loved anybody?"

"Yes, I think I have," said Milburgh, after a pause. "Why?"

"Well, you know how I feel, don't you?" said Sam Stay huskily. "You know how I want to get the better of this party who brought him down. She lured him on—lured him on! Oh, my God!" He buried his face in his hands and swayed from side to side.

Mr. Milburgh looked round. No one was in sight.

Odette would be the principal witness against him, and this man hated her. He had small cause for loving her. She was the one witness that the crown could produce, now that he had destroyed the documentary evidence of his crime. What case would they have against him, if they stood him in the dock at the Old Bailey, if Odette Rider were not forthcoming, to testify against him?

He had called up Lyne's store, that morning, on the telephone, to discover whether there had been any inquiries for him, and had heard, from his chief assistant, that a number of articles of clothing had been ordered to be sent to a London nursing home, for Miss Rider's use. He had wondered what had caused her collapse and concluded that it was the result of the strain to which the girl had been subjected, in that remark-

able interview, which she and he had had with Tarling at Hertford on the night before.

"Suppose you met Miss Rider?" he said. "What could you do?"

Sam Stay showed his teeth in a grin.

"Well, anyway, you're not likely to meet her for some time. She is in a nursing home," said Milburgh, "at 304 Cavendish Place."

"Three hundred and four Cavendish Place," repeated Sam. "That's near Regent Street, isn't it?"

"I don't know where it is," said Mr. Milburgh. He rose to his feet, and he saw the man was shaking, from head to foot, like a man in the grip of ague.

"Three hundred and four Cavendish Place," Stay repeated, and without another word turned his back on Mr. Milburgh, and slunk away.

That worthy gentleman looked after him and shook his head, and then rising, turned and walked in the other direction. It was just as easy to take a ticket for the Continent, at Waterloo Station, as it was at Charing Cross. In many ways it was safer.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE DIARY OF THORNTON LYNE.

Tarling should have been sleeping. Every bone and sinew in him ached for rest. His head was sunk over a table, in his flat. Lyne's diary stood in two piles, on the table; the bigger pile that which he had read, the lesser being those which Tarling had yet to examine. The pile on the left grew, and the pile on the right became smaller, until there was only one book—a diary newer than the others, which had been fastened by two brass locks, but had been opened by the Scotland Yard experts.

Tarling took up this volume, and turned the leaves. As he had expected, it was the current diary—that on which Thornton Lyne had been engaged at the time of his murder.

He did not anticipate that the last volume would yield any more promising return than had the others, for his study. Nevertheless, he read it carefully. There was the story, told in temperate language and with surprising mildness, of Odette Rider's rejection of Thornton Lyne's advance. It was a curiously uninteresting record, until he came to a date following the release of Sam Stay from gaol, and here Thornton Lyne enlarged upon the subject of his "humiliation." The entry ran:

> Stay is out of prison. It is pathetic to see how this man adores me. I almost wish sometimes that I could keep him out of jail; but if I did so, and converted him into a dull, respectable person, I should miss these delicious experiences which his worship affords. I talked to him of Odette. A strange matter to discuss with a lout, but he was so wonderful a listener! I exaggerated; the temptation was great. How he loathed her by the time I was through! He actually put forward a plan to "spoil her looks," as he put it. He had been working in the same prison gang as a man who was undergoing a term of penal servitude for "doing in" his girl that way. Vitriol was used, and Sam suggested that he should do the work. I was horrified, but it gave me an idea. He says he can give me a key that will open any door. Suppose I went—in the dark? And I could leave a clew behind. What clew? Here is a thought. Suppose I left something unmistakably Chinese? Tarling had evidently been friendly with the girl. Something Chinese might place him under suspicion.

Tarling sat, with his chin on his hand, for half an hour. He was piecing together the puzzle which Thornton Lyne had made so much more simple. The mystery was clearing up. Thornton Lyne had gone to that flat, not in response to the telegram, but with the object of compromising and possibly ruining the girl. He had gone with the little slip of paper inscribed with Chinese characters, intending to leave the *Hong* in a conspicuous place, that somebody else might be blamed for his infamy.

Milburgh had been in the flat for another purpose. The two men had met; there had been a quarrel; and Milburgh had fired the fatal shot. That part of the story solved the mystery of Thornton Lyne's list slippers and his Chinese characters; his very presence there was cleared up. He thought of Sam Stay's offer——

It came, in a flash, to Tarling that the man who had thrown the bottle of vitriol at him, who had said he had kept it for years, was Sam Stay. Stay, with his scheme for blasting the woman who, he believed, had humiliated his beloved patron.

And now for Milburgh, the last link in the chain.

Tarling had arranged for the superintendent in charge of the Cannon Row Police Station to notify him, if any news came through. The inspector's message did not arrive, and Tarling went down through Whitehall to hear the latest intelligence, at first hand. That was to be precious little.

As he was talking, there arrived on the scene an agitated driver, the proprietor of a taxi-cab which had been lost. An ordinary case such as come the way of the London police almost every day. The cabman had taken a man and a woman to one of the West End theaters, and had been engaged to wait during the evening and pick them up when the performance was through. After setting down his fares, he had gone to a small eating house, for a bit of supper. When he came out the cab had disappeared.

"I know who done it," he said vehemently, "and if I had him here, I'd——"

"How do you know?"

"He looked in at the coffee shop, while I was eating my bit of food."

"What did he look like?" asked the station inspector.

"He was a man with a white face," said the victim. "I could pick him out of a thousand. And what's more, he had a brand-new pair of boots on."

Tarling had strolled away from the officer's desk while this conversation was in progress, but now he returned.

"Did he speak at all?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," said the cabman. "I happened to ask him if he was looking for anybody, and he said no, and then went on to talk a lot of rubbish about a man who had been the best friend any poor chap could have had. My seat happened to be nearest the door; that's how I got into conversation with him. I thought he was off his nut."

"Yes, yes, go on!" said Tarling impatiently. "What happened then?"

"Well, he went out," said the cabman, "and presently I heard a cab cranked up. I thought it was one of the other drivers. The eating house is a place which cabmen use, and I didn't take very much notice, until I came out and found my cab gone and the old devil I'd left in charge in a public house drinking beer, with the money this fellow had given him."

"Sounds like your man, sir," said the inspector, looking at Tarling.

"That's Sam Stay all right," he said, "but it's news to me that he could drive a taxi."

The inspector nodded.

"Oh, I know Sam Stay, all right, sir. We've had him in here, two or three times. He used to be a taxi driver."

"Well, he can't go far," said Tarling. "You'll circulate the description of the cab, I suppose."

Tarling was going back to Hertford that night, and had informed Ling Chu of his intention. He left Cannon Row Police Station, and walked across the road to Scotland Yard, to confer with Whiteside, who had promised to meet him. Whiteside was not in, when Tarling called, and the sergeant on duty, in the little office by the main door, hurried forward.

"This came for you, two hours ago, sir," he said. "We thought you were in Hertford."

"This" was a letter addressed in pencil, and Mr. Milburgh had made no attempt to disguise his handwriting. Tarling tore open the envelope and read the contents:

DEAR MR. TARLING: I have just read in the *Evening Press*, with the deepest sorrow and despair, the news that my dearly beloved wife, Catherine Rider, has been foully murdered. How terrible to think that, a few hours ago, I was conversing with her assassin, as I believe Sam Stay to be, and had inadvertently given him information as to where Miss Rider was to be found! I beg of you that you will lose no time in saving her from the hands of this cruel madman, who seems to have only one idea, and that to avenge the death of the late Mr. Thornton Lyne. When this reaches you, I shall be beyond the power of human vengeance, for I have determined to end a life which has held so much sorrow and disappointment. M.

He was satisfied that Mr. Milburgh would not commit suicide, and the information was superfluous that Sam Stay had murdered Mrs. Rider. It was the knowledge that this vengeful lunatic knew where Odette Rider was staying, which made Tarling sweat.

"Where is Mr. Whiteside?" he asked.

"He has gone to Cambours Restaurant, to meet somebody, sir," said the sergeant.

The somebody was one of Milburgh's satellites at Lyne's store. Tarling must see him without delay. The inspector had control of all the official arrangements, connected with the case, and it would be necessary to consult him, before he could place detectives to watch the nursing home in Cavendish Place.

He found a cab and drove to Cambours, which was in Soho, and was fortunate enough to discover Whiteside in the act of leaving.

"I didn't get much from that fellow," Whiteside began, when Tarling handed him the letter.

The Scotland Yard man read it through, without comment, and handed it back.

"What do you think of the threat against Odette?"

"There may be something in it," nodded Whiteside. "Certainly we cannot take risks. Has anything been heard of Stay?"

Tarling told the story of the stolen taxicab.

"We'll have him," said Whiteside confidently. "He'll have no pals, and without pals, in the motor business, it is practically impossible to get a car away." He got into Tarling's cab and a few minutes later they were at the nursing home. The matron came to them, a sedate, motherly lady.

"I'm sorry to disturb you, at this hour of the night," said Tarling, sensing her disapproval. "But information has come to me this evening which renders it necessary that Miss Rider should be guarded."

"Guarded?" said the matron in surprise. "I don't quite understand you, Mr. Tarling. I had come down to give you rather a blowing up, about Miss Rider. You know she is absolutely unfit to go out. I thought I made that clear to you when you were here this morning?"

"Go out?" said the puzzled Tarling. "What do you mean?"

It was the matron's turn to be surprised.

"But you sent for her, half an hour ago," she said.

"I sent for her?" said Tarling, turning pale. "Tell me, please, what has happened?"

"About half an hour ago," said the matron, "a cabman came to the door and told me that he had been sent by the authorities to fetch Miss Rider at once. She was wanted in connection with her mother's murder."

Something in Tarling's face betrayed his emotion. "What was the man like, who called?" he asked.

"A very ordinary-looking man, rather undersized and ill looking."

"You have no idea which way they went?"

"No," replied the matron. "I very much objected to Miss Rider going at all; but when I gave her the message, which apparently had come from you, she insisted upon going."

Tarling groaned. Without any further words he turned and left the waiting room, followed by Whiteside. He gave directions to the cab driver and followed Whiteside into the cab.

"I'm going back to my flat to pick up Ling Chu," he said. "I can't afford to lose any help he may be able to give us."

Whiteside was pardonably piqued.

"I don't know if your Ling Chu will be able to do very much, in the way of trailing a taxicab through London."

On their arrival at the Bond Street flat, Tarling opened the door and went upstairs, followed by the other. The flat was in darkness—an extraordinary circumstance; for it was an understood thing that Ling Chu should not leave the house while his master was out. And Ling Chu had undoubtedly left. The first thing Tarling saw, when he turned on the light, was a strip of rice paper on which the ink was scarcely dry.

If you return before I, learn that I go to find the little-little woman.

"Then he knows she's gone!" cried Tarling. "Thank God for that! I wonder——"

He stopped. He thought he had heard a low moan. "Sounds like somebody groaning," he said. "Listen!" He bent his head and waited, and presently it came again.

In two strides, Tarling was at the door of Ling Chu's sleeping place, but it was locked. He stooped to the keyhole, and listened, and again heard the moan. With a thrust of his shoulder he had broken the door open and had dashed in.

The sight that met his eyes was a remarkable one. There was a man lying on the bed, stripped to the waist. His hands and his legs were bound, and a white cloth covered his face. But what Tarling saw, before all else, was that across the center of the broad chest were four little red lines, which Tarling recognized. They were "persuaders," by which native Chinese policemen secretly extract confessions from unwilling criminals—light cuts with a sharp knife on the surface of the skin, and after——

He looked around for the "torture bottle," but it was not in sight.

"Who is this?" he asked, and lifted the cloth from the man's face.

It was Milburgh.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

LING CHU—TORTURER.

Much had happened to Mr. Milburgh, between the time of his discovery lying bound and the moment he left Sam Stay. He had read of the murder, and had been shocked, and, in his way, grieved.

It was not to save Odette Rider that he sent his note to Scotland Yard, but rather to avenge himself upon the man who had killed the only woman in the world who had touched his warped nature. Nor had he any intention of committing suicide. He had the passports which he had secured a year before, in readiness for such a step, and was ready at a moment's notice to leave the country, in his disguise of a country clergyman. He had been standing at a bookstall, in Waterloo Station, purchasing literature to while away the hours of the journey, when he felt a hand laid on his arm and experienced a curious sinking sensation. He turned to look into a brown mask of a face he had seen before.

"Well, my man," he asked, with a smile, "what can I do for you?"

"You will come with me, Mr. Milburgh," said Ling Chu. "It will be better for you, if you do not make any trouble."

Milburgh's lips quivered with fear, and his face was a pasty gray.

"I will go," he said.

Ling Chu walked by his side, and they passed out of Waterloo Station. The journey, by bus, to Bond Street remained in Milburgh's memory, like a horrible dream. No word was spoken, until they reached the sitting room of Tarling's flat. Milburgh expected to see the detective. But there was no sign of Tarling.

"Now, my friend, what do you want?" he asked. "It is true I am Mr. Milburgh, but when you say that I have committed murder you are telling a wicked lie." He had gained some courage, because he had expected, in the first place, to be taken immediately to Scotland Yard and placed in custody.

Ling Chu, turning suddenly upon Milburgh, gripped him by the wrist, half turning as he did so. Before Milburgh knew what was happening, he was lying on the floor, face downward, with Ling Chu's knee in the small of his back. He felt something like a wire loop slipped about his wrists, and suffered an excruciating pain, as the Chinaman tightened the connecting link of the native handcuff.

"Get up," said Ling Chu sternly, and, exerting a surprising strength, lifted the man to his feet. Ling Chu gripped the man by one hand, and, opening the door with the other, pushed him into a room, which was barely furnished. Against the wall there was an iron bed, and on to this the man was pushed, collapsing in a heap.

The Chinese thief catcher first fastened and threaded a length of silk rope through one of the rails of the bed, and into the slack of this he lifted Milburgh's head, so that he could not struggle, except at the risk of being strangled. Ling Chu turned him over, unfastened the handcuffs, and methodically bound first one wrist, and then the other, to the side of the bed.

"What are you going to do?" asked Milburgh, but the Chinaman made no reply.

He produced, from a belt beneath his blouse, a wicked-looking knife, and the manager opened his mouth to shout. He was beside himself, with terror, but any cause for fear had yet to come. The Chinaman stopped the cry, by dropping a pillow on the man's face, and began deliberately to cut the clothing on the upper part of his body.

"If you cry out," he said calmly, "the people will think it is I who am singing! Chinamen have no music in their voices, and sometimes when I have sung my native songs, people have come up to discover who was suffering."

He had lifted the pillow from Milburgh's face, and now that pallid man was following every movement of the Chinaman, with a fearful eye. Presently Milburgh was stripped to the waist, and Ling Chu regarded his handiwork complacently.

He went to a cupboard, in the wall, and took out a small brown bottle, which he placed on a table by the side of the bed. Then he himself sat upon the edge of the bed, and spoke. His English was almost perfect, though now and again he hesitated.

"You do not know the Chinese people? You have not been or lived in China? When I say lived, I do not mean staying for a week at a good hotel, in one of the coast towns. Your Mr. Lyne lived in China, in that way. It was not a successful residence."

"I know nothing about Mr. Lyne," interrupted Milburgh, sensing that Ling Chu, in some way, associated him with Thornton Lyne's misadventures.

"Good!" said Ling Chu, tapping the flat blade of his knife upon his palm. "If you had lived in China—in the real China—you might have a dim idea of our people and their characteristics. It is said that the Chinaman does not fear death or pain; which is a slight exaggeration. Because I have known criminals who feared both."

His thin lips curved for a second, in the ghost of a smile, as though at some amusing recollection. Then he grew serious again.

"From the Western standpoint, we are a primitive people. From our own point of view, we are rigidly honorable. Also—and this I would emphasize"—he did, in fact, emphasize his words, to the terror of Mr. Milburgh, with the point of his knife upon the other's broad chest, though so lightly was the knife held that Milburgh felt nothing but the slightest tingle—"we do not set the same value upon the rights of the individual, as do you people in the West. For example"—he explained carefully—"we are not tender with our prisoners, if we think, that by applying a little pressure to them, we can assist the process of justice."

"What do you mean?" asked Milburgh, a grisly thought dawning upon his mind.

"In Britain—and in America, too, I understand—though the Americans are much more enlightened on this subject—when you arrest a member of a gang, you are content with cross-examining him, and giving him full scope for the exercise of his inventive power. You ask him questions, and go on asking and asking, and you do not know whether he is lying or telling the truth."

Mr. Milburgh began to breathe heavily.

"Has that idea sunk into your mind?" asked Ling Chu.

"I don't know what you mean," said Mr. Milburgh, in a quavering voice. "All I know is that you are committing a most terrible——"

Ling Chu stopped him with a gesture.

"I am perfectly well aware of what I am doing," he said. "A week or so ago, Mr. Thornton Lyne, your employer, was found dead in Hyde Park. He was dressed in his shirt and trousers, and about his body, in an endeavor to stanch the wound, somebody had wrapped a silk nightdress. He was killed in the flat of a small lady, whose name I cannot pronounce, but you will know her."

Milburgh's eyes never left the Chinaman's, and he nodded.

"He was killed by you," said Ling Chu slowly, "because he had discovered that you had been robbing him, and you were in fear that he would hand you over to the police."

"That's a lie," roared Milburgh. "It's a lie. I tell you it's a lie!"

Ling Chu put his hand inside his blouse, and Milburgh watched him fascinated, but he produced nothing more deadly than a silver cigarette case, which he opened. He selected a cigarette and lit it. Then he rose and went to the cupboard, and took out a larger bottle, and placed it beside the other.

"It is in the interests of all parties," he said in his slow, halting way, "that the truth should be known, both for the sake of my honorable master, Lieh Jen, the Hunter, and his honorable Little Lady."

He took up his knife and bent over the terror-stricken man.

"For God's sake don't, don't," half screamed Milburgh.

"This will not hurt you," said Ling Chu, and drew four straight lines across the other's breast. The keen razor edge seemed scarcely to touch the flesh, yet, where the knife had passed, was a thin red mark like a scratch. The Chinaman laid down the knife and took up the smaller bottle.

"In this," he said, "is a vegetable extract. It is what you would call capsicum, but it is not quite like your pepper, because it is distilled from a native root. In this bottle," he picked up the larger, "is a Chinese oil which immediately relieves the pain which capsicum causes."

"What are you going to do?" asked Milburgh, struggling. "You fiend!"

"With a little brush, I will paint capsicum on these places." He touched Milburgh's chest with his long white fingers. "Little by little, millimeter by millimeter, my brush will move, and you will experience such pain as you have never experienced before. Sometimes, it drives men mad."

He took out the cork, and dipped a little camel's-hair brush in the mixture, withdrawing it moist with fluid. When the stout man opened his mouth to yell, he thrust a silk handkerchief, which he drew with lightning speed from his pocket, into the open mouth.

"Wait, wait!" gasped the muffled voice of Milburgh. "I have something to tell you—something that your master should know."

"That is very good," said Ling Chu coolly, and pulled out the handkerchief. "You shall tell me the truth. You shall confess the truth that you killed Thornton Lyne."

"I swear I did not kill him! I swear it!" raved the prisoner. "Wait, wait!" he whimpered, as the other picked up the handkerchief. "Do you know what has happened to Miss Rider?"

The Chinaman checked his movement.

Brokenly, gaspingly, breathlessly, Milburgh told the story of his meeting with Sam Stay. In his distress and mental anguish, he reproduced faithfully, not only every word, but every intonation, and the Chinaman listened, with half-closed eyes. Then, when Milburgh had finished, he put down his bottle and thrust in the cork.

"My master would wish that the little woman should escape danger," he said. "To-night he does not return, so I must go myself to the hospital. You can wait. I will go first to the hospital and afterward, if all is well, I will return for you."

He took a clean white towel from the dressing table, and laid it over his victim's face. Upon the towel, he sprinkled the contents of a third bottle which he took from the cupboard, and Milburgh remembered no more, until he looked up into the puzzled face of Tarling, an hour later.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE ARREST.

Tarling stooped down and released the cords which bound Milburgh to the couch. The stout man was white and shaking, and had to be lifted into a sitting position. Whiteside picked up the clothes, which Ling Chu had so systematically stripped from the man's body, and placed them on the bed, by Milburgh's side. Then, Tarling beckoned the other into the outer room.

"What does it all mean?" asked Whiteside.

Tarling looked back to the drooping figure by the side of the bed. "He's a little bigger than I," he said, "but I think some of my clothes will fit him." He made a hasty search of his wardrobe, and came back with an armful of clothes. "Come, Milburgh," he said, "rouse yourself, and dress."

Without a word, Milburgh took the clothes in his arms, and they left him to dress. They heard his heavy footfall, and presently the door opened, and he came weakly into the sitting room, and dropped into a chair.

"Do you feel well enough to go out now?" asked Whiteside.

"Go out?" said Milburgh, looking up in alarm. "Where am I to go?"

"To Cannon Row Police Station," said the practical Whiteside. "I have a warrant for your arrest, Milburgh, on a charge of willful murder, arson, forgery, and embezzlement."

"Willful murder!" Milburgh's voice was high and squeaky, and his shaking hands went to his mouth. "You cannot charge me with willful murder! No, no, no! I swear to you I am innocent!"

"Where did you see Thornton Lyne last?" asked Tarling, and the man made a great effort to compose himself.

"I saw him last alive in his office," he began.

"When did you see Thornton Lyne last?" asked Tarling, again. "Alive or dead?"

Milburgh did not reply. Presently Whiteside dropped his hand to the man's shoulder, and looked across at Tarling. "Come along," he said briskly. "It is my duty, as a police officer, to warn you that anything you now say will be taken down and used as evidence against you, at your trial."

"Wait!" said Milburgh. He looked round. "Can I have a glass of water?" he begged, licking his dry lips.

Tarling brought the refreshment, which the man drank eagerly. The water seemed to revive something of his old arrogant spirit, for he got up from his chair, jerked at the collar of his ill-fitting coat—it was an old shooting coat of Tarling's—and smiled, for the first time.

"I think, gentlemen," he said, with something of his old airiness, "you will have a difficulty in proving that I am concerned in the murder of Thornton Lyne. You will have as great a difficulty in proving that I had anything to do with the burning down of Solomon's office. And most difficult of all will be your attempt to prove that I was, in any way, concerned in robbing the firm of Thornton Lyne. The lady who robbed that firm has already made a confession, as you, Mr. Tarling, are well aware."

"I know of no confession," said Tarling steadily.

"The confession was burned," he said, "and burned by you, Mr. Tarling. And, now, I think your bluff has gone on long enough."

"My bluff?" said Tarling, in his turn astonished. "What do you mean by bluff?"

"I am referring to the warrant which you suggest has been issued for my arrest," said Milburgh.

"That's no bluff." It was Whiteside who spoke, and he produced from his pocket a folded sheet of paper, which he opened and displayed under the eyes of the man. "And in case of accidents——" said Whiteside, and

deftly slipped a pair of handcuffs upon the man's wrists.

Milburgh collapsed. To Tarling, it was amazing that the man had maintained this show of bravado to the last, though, in his heart, he knew that the crown had a very poor case against Milburgh, if the charge of embezzlement and arson were proceeded with. It was on the murder alone, that a conviction could be secured; and this, Milburgh evidently realized; for he made no attempt in the remarkable statement, which followed, to do more than hint that he had been guilty of robbing the firm. He sat huddled up in his chair, his manacled hands clasped on the table before him. Then with a jerk he suddenly sat upright.

"If you'll take off these things, gentlemen," he said, jangling the connecting chain of the handcuffs, "I will tell you something, which may set your mind at rest on the question of Thornton Lyne's death."

Whiteside looked at his superior questioningly, and Tarling nodded. A few seconds later the handcuffs had been removed, and Mr. Milburgh was soothing his chafed wrists.

The psychologist who attempted to analyze the condition of mind in which Tarling found himself, would be faced with a difficult task. He had come to the flat, beside himself with anxiety, at the disappearance of Odette Rider. He had intended dashing into his rooms and out again, though what he intended doing thereafter he had no idea. The knowledge that Ling Chu was on the track of the kidnaper had served as an opiate to his jagged nerves; otherwise he could not have stayed and listened to the statement Milburgh was preparing to make.

"Before you start," he said, "tell me this: what information did you give to Ling Chu which led him to leave you?"

"I told him about Miss Rider," said Milburgh, "and I advanced a theory—it was only a theory—as to what had happened to her."

"I see," said Tarling. "Now tell your story, and tell it quickly, my friend, and try to keep to the truth. Who murdered Thornton Lyne?"

Milburgh twisted his head slowly toward him, and smiled.

"If you could explain how the body was taken from Odette Rider's flat," he said, "and left in Hyde Park, I could answer you immediately. For, to this minute, I believe that Thornton Lyne was killed by Odette Rider."

Tarling drew a long breath.

"That is a lie," he said.

Mr. Milburgh was in no way put out.

"Very well," he said. "Now, perhaps you will be kind enough to listen to my story."

CHAPTER XXXV.

MILBURGH'S STORY.

"I do not intend describing all the events which preceded the death of the late Thornton Lyne," said Mr. Milburgh. "Mr. Lyne was, I admit, under the impression that I had robbed the firm of very considerable sums of money—a suspicion which I, in turn, had long suspected, and had confirmed by a little conversation which I overheard on the first day I had the pleasure of seeing you, Mr. Tarling.

"Of course, gentlemen, I do not, for one moment, admit that I robbed the firm, or that I was guilty of any criminal acts. I admit there were certain irregularities, certain carelessnesses, for which I was morally responsible; and beyond that I admit nothing. It is sufficient that Mr. Lyne suspected me, and that he was prepared to employ a detective, in order to trace my defalcations, as he termed them. It is true that I lived expensively, that I own two houses, one in Camden Town, and one at Hertford; but then, I had speculated on the Stock Exchange, and speculated very wisely.

"But I am a sensitive man, gentlemen, and the knowledge that I was responsible for certain irregularities preyed upon my mind. Matters had come to a crisis. I knew somebody had been robbing the house, and I had an idea that possibly I would be suspected, and that those who were dear to me"—his voice shook for a moment, broke, and he grew husky—"those who were dear to me," he repeated, "would be visited with my sins of omission.

"Miss Odette Rider had been dismissed from the firm of Lyne's stores, in consequence of her having rejected the undesirable advances of the late Mr. Lyne. Mr. Lyne turned the whole weight of his rage against this girl, and that gave me an idea.

"The night after the interview—or it may have been the same night—I refer to the interview which Mr. Tarling had with the late Thornton Lyne—I was working late at the office. I was, in fact, clearing up Mr. Lyne's desk. I had occasion to leave the office, and, on my return, found the place

in darkness. I reconnected the light, and then discovered, on the desk, a particularly murderous-looking revolver. In the statement I made to you, sir," he turned to Tarling, "I said that that pistol had not been found by me; I regret to confess to you that I was telling an untruth. I did find the pistol; I put it in my pocket, and I took it home. It is probable that, with that pistol, Mr. Lyne was fatally shot."

Tarling nodded.

"I hadn't the slightest doubt about that, Milburgh. You also had another automatic pistol, purchased subsequent to the murder from John Wadhams of Holborn Circus."

Mr. Milburgh bowed his head.

"That is perfectly true, sir," he said. "I have such a weapon. I live a very lonely kind of life, and——"

"You need not explain. I merely tell you," said Tarling, "that I know where you got the pistol with which you shot at me, on the night I brought Odette Rider back from Ashford."

Mr. Milburgh closed his eyes, and there was resignation written largely on his face —the resignation of an ill-used and falsely accused man.

"I think it would be better not to discuss controversial subjects," he said. "If you will allow me, I will keep to the facts. To resume: I took the revolver home. You will understand that I was in a condition of mind bordering upon a nervous breakdown. I felt my responsibilities very keenly, and I felt that, if Mr. Lyne would not accept my protestations of innocence, there was nothing left for me but to quit this world. Miss Rider had been dismissed, and I was on the point of ruin. Her mother would be involved in the crash. Those were the thoughts which ran through my mind, as I sat in my humble dining room in Camden Town. Then the idea flashed upon me. I wondered whether Odette Rider loved her mother sufficiently well to make the great sacrifice, to take full responsibility for the irregularities which had occurred in the accounts' department of Lyne's Stores, and clear away to the Continent, until the matter blew over. I intended seeing her the next day, but I was still doubtful as to whether she would fall in with my views. Young people nowadays," he said sententiously, "are terribly selfish.

"As it happened, I just caught her as she was leaving for Hertford, and I put the situation before her. The poor girl was naturally shocked, but she readily fell in with my suggestion, and signed the confession which you, Mr. Tarling, so thoughtfully burned."

Whiteside looked at Tarling.

"I knew nothing of this," he said a little reproachfully.

"Go on," said Tarling. "I will explain that afterward."

"I had previously wired the girl's mother that she would not be home that night. I also wired to Mr. Lyne, asking him to meet me at Miss Rider's flat. I took the liberty of fixing Miss Rider's name to the invitation, thinking that that would induce him to come. I had sent Miss Rider off in a hurry. I begged that she would not go near the flat, and I promised that I myself would go there, pack the necessary articles for the journey, and take them down in a taxi to Charing Cross."

"I see," said Tarling. "So it was you who packed the bag?"

"Half packed it," corrected Mr. Milburgh. "It was only when I was packing the bag that I realized it was impossible for me to get down to the station in time. I had made arrangements with Miss Rider that, if I did not turn up, I would telephone to her a quarter of an hour before the train left. She was to await me in the lounge of a near-by hotel. I had hoped to get to her at least an hour before the train left. When I looked at my watch, and realized that it was impossible to get down, I left the bag as it was, half packed, and went outside, to the tube station, and telephoned.

"I went out the back way. It is really the simplest thing in the world to get into Miss Rider's basement flat, by way of the mews behind. All the tenants have keys to the back door, so that they can bring their bicycles in and out, or get in their coals."

"I know that," said Tarling. "Go on."

"The business of packing the bag takes my narrative along a little further than I intended it to go. Having said good-by to Miss Rider, I passed the rest of the evening perfecting my plans. I intended to plead with Mr. Lyne. I intended to offer him the record of years of loyal service to his sainted father; and if the confession was not accepted, and if he still persisted in his revengeful plan, then, Mr. Tarling, I intended shooting myself before his eyes."

He said this with rare dramatic effect;

but Tarling was unimpressed, and Whiteside looked up from his notes with a twinkle in his eye.

"Your hobby seems to be preparing for suicide, and changing your mind," he said.

"I am sorry to hear you speak so flippantly on a solemn subject," said Milburgh. "As I say, I waited a little too long; but I was anxious for complete darkness to fall, before I made my way to the flat. When I did so, I found her bag with no difficulty—it was in the dining room on a shelf; and placing the case upon her bed, I proceeded, as best I could, for I am not very familiar with the articles of feminine toilet, to put together such things as I knew she would require on the journey.

"I was thus engaged when, as I say, it occurred to me that I had mistaken the time of the train, and, looking at my watch, I saw, to my consternation, that I should not be able to get down to the station in time. Happily, I had arranged to call her up, as I have already told you."

"Did you have the revolver?" asked Tarling.

"In my overcoat pocket," replied Milburgh immediately.

"Had you your overcoat on?"

"No, I had not. I had hung it up on a hook, at the foot of the bed, near the alcove which I believe Miss Rider used as a wardrobe."

"And when you went out to telephone, had you your overcoat?"

"No, that I am perfectly certain about," said Milburgh readily. "I remember thinking, later, how foolish it was to bring an overcoat out and not use it."

"Go on," said Tarling.

"Well, I reached the station, called up the hotel, and to my surprise and annoyance Miss Rider did not answer. I asked the porter, who answered my phone call, whether he had seen a young lady dressed in so-and-so, waiting in the lounge, and he replied, 'no.' Therefore, you will agree that it is possible that Miss Rider was not either at the station or at the hotel, and there was a distinct possibility that she had doubled back."

"We want the facts," interrupted Whiteside. "We have enough theories. Tell us what happened? We will draw our own conclusions."

"Very good, sir," replied Milburgh. "By the time I had telephoned, it was half past nine o'clock. You will remember that I had wired to Mr. Lyne to meet me at the flat at eleven. Obviously, there was no reason why I should go back to the flat, until a few minutes before Mr. Lyne was due, to let him in. You asked me just now, sir," he turned to Tarling, "whether I had my overcoat on, and I can state most emphatically that I had not. I was going back to the flat with the intention of collecting my overcoat, when I saw a number of people walking about the mews behind the block. I had no desire to attract attention, so I stood waiting until these people, who were employees of a motor-car company, which had a garage behind the flat, had dispersed.

"Now, waiting at the corner of a mews on a cold spring night is a cold business, and, seeing that it would be some time before the mews would be clear, I went back to the main street, and strolled along until I came to a picture palace. I am partial to cinematograph displays, and I thought the pictures would afford a pleasant attraction. I forget the name of the film——"

Milburgh was silent for a moment.

"I am coming now to the most extraordinary fact," he said, "and I would ask you to bear in mind every detail I give you. When I got back to the mews, I found it deserted. Standing outside the door, leading to the storerooms and cellars, was a two-seater car. There was nobody inside or in attendance and I looked at it curiously, not realizing at the moment that it was Mr. Thornton Lyne's. What did interest me, was the fact that the back gate, which I had left locked, was open. So, too, was the door leading to what I would call the underground room, through which one had to pass to reach Odette's flat by the back way.

"I opened the door of the flat, and even before I saw into the room, my nose was assailed by a smell of burning powder. The first sight which met my gaze was a man lying on the floor. He was on his face, but I turned him over, and to my horror, it was Mr. Thornton Lyne. He was unconscious and bleeding from a wound in the chest," said Mr. Milburgh, "and at the moment, I thought he was dead. My first thought was that he had been shot down by Odette Rider, who for some reason had returned. The room, however, was empty, and a curious circumstance was that the window leading out to the area of the flat was wide open."

"It was protected with heavy bars," said

Tarling. "So nobody could have escaped that way."

"I examined the wound," Milburgh went on, nodding his agreement with Tarling's description, "and knew that it was fatal. I do not think, however, that Mr. Thornton Lyne was dead at this time. My next thought was to stanch the wound, and I pulled open a drawer and took out the first thing which came to my hand, which was a nightdress. I had to find a pad, and employed two of Odette's handkerchiefs, for the purpose. First of all, I stripped him of his coat and his vest, a task of some difficulty, then I fixed him up as best I could. I believe he was dead even before the bandaging was completed.

"The moment I saw the case was hopeless, and had a second to think, I was seized with a blind panic. I snatched my overcoat from the peg, and ran out of the room; through the back way, into the mews, and reached Camden Town that night, a mental and physical wreck."

"Did you leave the lights burning?" asked Tarling.

Mr. Milburgh thought for a moment.

"Yes," he said, "I left the lights burning."

"And you left the body in the flat?"

"That I swear," replied Milburgh.

"And the revolver—when you got home, was it in your pocket?"

Mr. Milburgh shook his head.

"Why did you not notify the police?"

"Because I was afraid," admitted Mr. Milburgh.

"There was nobody in the room?"

"Nobody, so far as I could see. I tell you the window was open. You say it is barred—that is true, but a very thin person could slip between those bars. A woman perhaps——"

"Impossible," said Tarling shortly. "The bars have been very carefully measured, and nothing bigger than a rabbit could get through. And you have no idea who carried the body away?"

"None whatever," replied Milburgh firmly.

Tarling had opened his mouth to say something, when a telephone bell shrilled, and he picked up the instrument from the table on which it stood.

It was a strange voice that greeted him, a voice husky and loud, as though it were unused to telephoning.

"Tarling the name?" shouted the voice quickly.

"That is my name," said Tarling.

"She's a friend of yours, ain't she?" asked the voice.

There was a chuckle. A cold shiver ran down Tarling's spine; for, though he had never met the man, instinct told him that he was speaking to Sam Stay.

"You'll find her to-morrow," screamed the voice, "what's left of her. The woman who lured him on—what's left of her——"

There was a click, and the receiver was hung up.

Tarling was working the telephone hook like a madman. "What exchange was that?" he asked, and the operator after a moment supplied the information that it was Hampstead.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

AT HIGHGATE CEMETERY.

Odette Rider sat back in a corner of the smooth-running taxicab. Her eyes were closed, for the inevitable reaction had come. The car sped through interminably long streets—in what direction she neither knew nor cared. Remember that she did not even know where the nursing home was situated. It might have been on the edge of London for all she was aware. Once, as the car was crossing Bond Street, from Cavendish Square, she saw people turn and look at the cab and a policeman pointed and shouted something. She was too preoccupied to worry her head as to the cause.

She appreciated in a dim, vague way the skill of the taxi driver, who seemed to be able to grope his way through and around any obstruction of traffic; and it was not until she found the cab traversing a country road that she had any suspicion that all was not well. Even then her doubts were allayed by her recognition of certain landmarks which told her she was on the Hertford Road.

"Of course," she thought. "I should be wanted at Hertford, rather than in London," and she settled herself down again.

Suddenly the cab stopped, backed down a side lane, and turned in the direction from whence they had come. When he had got his car's head right, Sam Stay shut off his engine, descended from his seat, and opened the door.

"Come on out of that!" he said sharply.

"Why—what——" began the bewildered

girl. But before she could go much further the man dived in, gripped her by the wrist, and pulled her out with such violence that she fell.

"You don't know me, eh?" he snarled, gripping her shoulders so savagely that she could have cried out in pain.

"I know you," she gasped. "You are the man who tried to get into my flat!"

He grinned.

"And I know you!" he laughed harshly. "You're the devil that lured him on! The best man in the world—he's in the little vault in Highgate Cemetery. The door is just like a church. And that's where you'll be to-night, damn you! Down there, I'm going to take you. And leave you with him, because he wanted you!"

He was gripping her by both wrists, glaring down into her face, and there was something so wolfish, so inhuman, in the madman's staring eyes that her mouth went dry, and, when she tried to scream, no sound came. Then she lurched forward toward him, and he caught her under the arms and dragged her to her feet.

"Fainted, eh?" he chuckled. "Don't you wish you might never come round, eh?"

He dropped her on the grass by the side of the road, took a luggage strap from the front of the cab, and bound her hands. Then, he picked up the scarf she had been wearing, and tied it around her mouth. With an extraordinary display of strength, he lifted her without effort and put her back into the corner of the seat. He slammed the door, mounted again to his place, and sent the car at top speed in the direction of London. They were on the outskirts of Hampstead when he saw a sign over a tobacconist's shop, and stopped the car, a little way beyond, at the darkest part of the road.

He hurried back to the tobacconist's, where the telephone sign had been. At the back of his fuddled brain, lingered an idea that there was somebody who would be hurt. That cruel-looking devil who was cross-examining him when he fell into a fit—Tarling. Yes, that was the name, Tarling. It happened to be a new telephone directory, and by chance Tarling's name, although a new subscriber, had been included. In a few seconds he was talking to the detective.

He hung up the receiver and came out of the little booth. The shopman, who had heard his harsh voice, looked at him suspiciously; but Sam Stay was indifferent to the suspicion of men. He half ran, half walked back to where his cab was standing, leaped into the seat, and again drove the machine forward.

To Highgate Cemetery! That was the idea. The gates would be closed, but he could do something. Perhaps he would kill her first and then get her over the wall afterward. It would be a grand revenge, if he could get her into the cemetery alive, and thrust her, the living, down among the dead, through those little doors, which opened like church doors, to the cold, dank vault below.

But Highgate Cemetery was closed. The gloomy iron gates barred all entrance and the walls were high. It was a baffling place, because houses almost entirely surrounded it; and he was half an hour seeking a suitable spot, before he finally pulled up before a place where the wall did not seem so difficult. There was nobody about, and little fear of interruption on the part of the girl. He had looked into the cab and had seen nothing save a huddled figure on the floor. He ran the car onto the sidewalk, then slipped down into the narrow space between car and wall, and jerked open the door.

"Come on!" he cried exultantly. He reached out his fingers—and then something shot from the car, something lithe and supple, something that gripped the little man by the throat and hurled him back against the wall.

Stay struggled with the strength of lunacy, but Ling Chu held him in a grip of steel.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

LING CHU RETURNS.

Tarling dropped the telephone receiver on its hook, and had sunk into a chair. His face was white—whiter than the prisoner's who sat opposite him, and he seemed to have gone old all of a sudden.

"What is it?" asked Whiteside quietly. "Who was the man?"

"Stay," said Tarling. "He has Odette! It's awful!"

Whiteside, thoughtful, preoccupied, and Milburgh, his face twitching with fear, watched the scene curiously.

"I'm beaten," said Tarling—and at that moment the telephone bell rang again.

He lifted the receiver and bent over the table, and Whiteside saw his eyes open in

wide amazement. It was Odette's voice that greeted him.

"It's I—Odette!"

"Odette! Are you safe? Thank God for that! Thank God for that! Where are you?"

"I am at a tobacconist's shop in——"

There was a pause while she was evidently asking somebody the name of the street, and presently she came back with the information.

"But, this is wonderful!" said Tarling. "I'll be with you immediately. Whiteside, get a cab, will you? How did you get away?"

"It's rather a long story," came Odette's answer. "Your Chinese friend saved me. That dreadful man stopped the cab near a tobacconist's shop to telephone. There, Ling Chu appeared by magic. I think he must have been lying on top of the cab, because I heard him come down by the side. He helped me out and stood me in a dark doorway, taking my place. Please don't ask me any more. I am so tired."

A half an hour later, Tarling was with the girl and heard the story of the outrage. Odette Rider had recovered something of her calm, and, before the detective had returned her to the nursing home, she had told him the story of her adventure, explaining that after Ling Chu had taken her from the cab and taken her place, Stay had come back from the tobacconist's shop and driven his cab away again.

No news had been received of Ling Chu when Tarling returned to his flat. Whiteside was waiting and told him that he had put Milburgh into the cells and that he would be charged the following day.

"I can't understand what has happened to Ling Chu. He should be back by now," said Tarling.

It was half past one in the morning, and a telephone inquiry to Scotland Yard had produced no information.

"It is possible, of course," Tarling went on, "that Stay took the cab on to Hertford. The man has developed into a dangerous lunatic."

"All criminals are more or less mad," said the philosophical Whiteside. He drummed his fingers on the table thoughtfully.

"What do you think of Milburgh's story?" he asked, and Tarling shrugged his shoulders.

"It is most difficult to form a judgment," he said. "The man spoke as though he were telling the truth, and something within me convinces me that he was not lying. And yet, the whole thing is incredible."

"Of course, Milburgh has had time to make up a pretty good story," warned Whiteside. "He is a fairly shrewd man, this Milburgh, and it was hardly likely that he would tell us a yarn which was beyond the range of belief."

"That is true," agreed the other, "nevertheless, I am satisfied he told almost the whole of the truth."

"Then, who killed Thornton Lyne?"

Tarling rose with a gesture of despair.

"You are apparently as far from the solution of that mystery as I am, and yet I have formed a theory which may sound fantastic and——"

There was a light step upon the stair, and Tarling crossed the room and opened the door. Ling Chu came in, his calm inscrutable self, and but for the fact that his forehead and his right hand were heavily bandaged, carrying no evidence of his tragic experience.

"Hello, Ling Chu," said Tarling in English, "you're hurt."

"Not badly," said Ling Chu. "Will the master be good enough to give me a cigarette? I lost all mine in the struggle."

"Where is Sam Stay?"

Ling Chu lit the cigarette before he answered, blew out the match, and placed it carefully in the ash tray on the center of the table.

"The man is sleeping on the Terrace of Night," said Ling Chu simply.

"Dead?" said the startled Tarling.

The Chinaman nodded.

"Did you kill him?"

Again Ling Chu paused, and puffed a cloud of cigarette smoke into the air.

"He was dying for many days, so the doctor at the big hospital told me. I hit his head once or twice, but not very hard. He cut me a little with a knife but it was nothing."

"Sam Stay is dead, eh?" said Tarling thoughtfully. "Well, that removes a source of danger to Miss Rider, Ling Chu."

The Chinaman smiled.

"It removes many things, master, because before this man died, his head became good."

"You mean he was sane?"

"He was sane, master," said Ling Chu,

"and he wished to speak to paper. So the big doctor at the hospital sent for a judge, or one who sits in judgment."

"A magistrate?"

"Yes, a magistrate," said Ling Chu, nodding, "a little old man who lives very near the hospital, and he came complaining because it was so late an hour. Also there came a man who wrote very rapidly in a book, and when the man had died, he wrote more rapidly on a machine, and gave me these papers to bring to you, detaining others for himself and for the judge who spoke to the man."

He fumbled in his blouse and brought out a roll of paper covered with typewriting.

Tarling took the document and saw that it consisted of several pages. Then he looked up at Ling Chu.

"First, tell me, Ling Chu," he said, "what happened? You may sit."

Ling Chu, with a jerky little bow pulled a chair from the wall and sat at a respectful distance from the table and Tarling, noting the rapid consumption of his cigarette, passed him the box.

"You must know, master, that against your wish and knowledge, I took the large-faced man and put him to the question. These things are not done in this country, but I thought it best that the truth should be told. Therefore, I prepared to give him the torture, when he told me that the small-small girl was in danger. So I left him, not thinking that your excellency would return until the morning, and I went to the big house, where the small-small girl was kept and, as I came to the corner of the street, I saw her get into a quick-quick car.

"It was moving off, long before I came to it, and I had to run, because it was very fast. But I held on behind, and, presently, when it stopped at this street to cross, I scrambled up the back and lay flat upon the top of the cab. I think people saw me do this, and shouted to the driver, but he did not hear. Thus I lay for a long time, and the car drove out into the country, and, after a while, came back, but, before it came back, it stopped, and I saw the man talking to the small-small woman in angry tones. I thought he was going to hurt her, and I waited ready to jump upon him, but the lady went into the realms of sleep and he lifted her back into the car.

"Then he came back to the town, and again he stopped to go into a shop. I think it was to telephone, for there was one of those blue signs which you can see outside a shop where the telephone may be used by the common people. While he had gone in, I got down and lifted the small-small woman out, taking the straps from her hands, and placing her in a doorway. Then I took her place. We drove for a long time, till he stopped by a high wall, and then, master, there was a fight," said Ling Chu simply.

"It took me a long time to overcome him, and then I had to carry him. We came to a policeman, who took us in another car to a hospital, where my wounds were dressed. Then they came to me and told me the man was dying and wished to see somebody because he had that in his heart, for which he desired ease.

"So he talked, master, and the man wrote for an hour, and then he passed to his fathers, that little white-faced man."

He finished abruptly, as was his custom. Tarling took the papers up and opened them, glanced through page after page, Whiteside sitting patiently by without interrupting.

When Tarling had finished the documents, he looked across the table.

"Thornton Lyne was killed by Sam Stay," he said, and Whiteside stared at him.

"I have suspected it for some time. But there were one or two links in the evidence which were missing, and which I was unable to supply. Let me read you the statement of Sam Stay."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE STATEMENT OF SAM STAY.

"My name is Sam Stay. I was born at Maidstone in the County of Kent. My age is twenty-nine years. I left school at the age of eleven, and got mixed up with a bad set and, at the age of thirteen, I was convicted for stealing from a shop, and was sent to Borstal Institute for four years.

"On my release from Borstal I went to London, and a year later was convicted of housebreaking, receiving a sentence of twelve months' imprisonment, with hard labor. On my release from prison, I was taken up by a society who taught me motor driving, and I secured a license in another name, as a taxicab driver, and, for twelve months, drove a cab on the streets. At the end of that period, I was convicted for stealing passengers' baggage, and was sent to prison for eighteen months.

"It was after my release from this term of imprisonment that I first met Mr. Thornton Lyne. I met him in the following manner. I had been given a letter from the Prisoners' Aid Society, and went to Mr. Thornton Lyne to get a job. He took a great interest in me, and from the very first was the best friend I had ever had. His kindness was wonderful, and I think there never was a man, in the world, with such a beautiful nature as his.

"He assisted me many times, and, although I went back to prison, he never deserted me, but helped me as a friend, and was never disgusted when I got into trouble.

"I was released from jail in the spring of this year, and was met at the prison gates by Mr. Thornton Lyne in a beautiful motor car. He treated me as though I were a prince, and took me home to his grand house and gave me food and beautiful wine.

"He told me that he had been very much upset by a young lady whom he had looked after. This young lady worked for him, and he had given her work when she was starving. He said that she had been spreading lies about him, and that she was a bad girl. I had never seen this person, whose name was Odette Rider, but I felt full of hatred toward her, and the more he spoke about the girl, the more determined I was to have revenge on her.

"When he told me that she was very beautiful, I remembered, in the same gang as me at Wandsworth Gaol, there had been a man named Selser. That is the name, as far as I can remember. He was serving a term for throwing vitriol in the face of his girl. She had let him down and had married another man, while he was serving a term of imprisonment. I believe she was very beautiful. When Selser got out, he laid in wait for her, and threw vitriol in her face, and he has often told me that he didn't regret it.

"So that when Mr. Lyne told me that the girl was beautiful, this idea struck me that I would have revenge upon her. I was living in Lambeth at the house of an old ex-convict, who practically took nobody but crooks as lodgers. It cost more than ordinary lodgings, but it was worth it, because if the police made any inquiries, the landlord or his wife would always give wrong information. I went to this place, because I intended committing a burglary at Muswell Hill, with a man who was released from gaol two or three days before me, who knew the crib and asked me, when we were at work one day, if I would go in with him on the job. I thought there might be a chance of getting away with the stuff, if I could get somebody to swear that I hadn't left the house that night.

"I told the landlord I had a job on the fourteenth, and gave him one pound. I saw Mr. Lyne on the fourteenth, at his house, and put the idea up to him. I showed him the vitriol which I had bought in the Waterloo Road, and he said he would not hear of my doing it. I thought he only said that because he did not want to be mixed up in the case. He asked me to leave the girl to him, and he would settle with her.

"I left his house about nine o'clock at night, telling him I was going back to my lodgings. But, really, I went to the block of flats, in the Edgware Road, where this girl Rider lived. I knew the flat because I had been there, the night before, at Mr. Lyne's suggestion, to plant some jewelery which had been taken from the store. His idea was that he would pinch her for theft. I had not been able to get into the house, owing to the presence there of a detective named Tarling, but I had had a very good look round and I knew the way in, without coming through the front door, where a porter was always on duty.

"I had no difficulty, either, in getting into the building or into the flat. I thought it best to go in early, because the girl might be out at the theater, and I should have a chance of concealing myself, before her return. When I got into the flat I found it was in darkness. This suited my purpose very well. I went from one room to another. At last I came to the bedroom. I made an inspection of the room, looking about for a likely place where I could hide.

"At the foot of the bed was an alcove, covered by a curtain, where several dresses and a dressing gown were hanging, and I found that I could easily get in there behind the clothes and nobody would be the wiser. There were two clothes hooks outside the curtain, and just inside the alcove, and I mention these because of something which happened later.

"While I was prying around, I heard a key turn in the lock, and switched off the lights. I had just time to get into the alcove when the door opened, and a man named Milburgh appeared. He turned on the lights, as he came into the room, and

shut the door after him. He looked around, as though he was thinking about something, and then, taking off his coat, he hung it on one of the hooks near the alcove. I held my breath, fearing that he would look inside, but he did not.

"He walked about the room as though he was looking for something, and again I was afraid that I should be discovered after all; but, by and by, he went out, and came back with a small suit case. It was after he had gone, that I saw poking out of the pocket of the overcoat which had been hung on the hook, the butt of a pistol. I didn't quite know what to make of it, but thinking that it was better in my pocket than in his, if I were discovered, I lifted it out of the pocket, and slipped it into my own.

"After a while he came back, as I say, and started packing the bag on the bed. After a while he looked at his watch and said something to himself, turned out the lights, and hurried out. I waited and waited for him to come back, but nothing happened, and knowing that I would have plenty of time, if he came back again, I had a look at the pistol I had. It was an automatic and it was loaded. I had never worked with a gun, in my life, but I thought I might as well take this, as I intended committing a crime which might land me in jug for the term of my natural life. I thought I might as well be hung, as go to penal servitude.

"Then, I put out the lights, and sat down by the window, waiting for Miss Rider's return. I lit a cigarette and opened the window to let out the smell of the smoke. I took out the bottle of vitriol, removed the cork, and placed it on a stool near by me. It was a wide-mouthed bottle, because this man in gaol had told me that the only way to throw it was from a bottle where all the stuff could come out at once.

"I don't know how long I waited in the dark, but, about eleven o'clock, as far as I can judge, I heard the outer door click very gently, and a soft foot in the hall. I knew it wasn't Milburgh, because he was a heavy man. This person moved like a cat. In fact, I did not hear the door of the bedroom open. I waited, with the vitriol on the stool by my side, for the light to be switched on, but nothing happened. I don't know what made me do it, but I walked toward the person who had come into the room.

"Then, before I knew what had happened, somebody had gripped me. I was half strangled by an arm which had been thrown round my neck, and I thought it was Milburgh who had detected me the first time and had come back to pinch me. I tried to push him away, but he struck me on the jaw.

"I was getting frightened, for I thought the noise would rouse the people, and the police would come, and I must have lost my head. Before I knew what had happened, I had pulled the gun out of my pocket and had fired point-blank. I heard a sound like a thud of a body falling. The pistol was still in my hand, and my first act was to get rid of it. I felt a basket, on legs, in the darkness. It was full of cotton and wool and stuff, and I pushed the pistol down to the bottom, and then groped across the room and switched on the lights.

"As I did so, I heard the key turn in the lock again. I gave one glance at the body, which had fallen on its face, and then I dived for the alcove.

"The man who came in was Milburgh. His back was to me. As he turned the body over, I could not see its face. I saw him take something out of the drawer, and bind it round the chest, and I saw him strip off the coat and vest, but not until he had gone out and I came from the recess did I realize that the man I had killed was dear Mr. Lyne.

"I think I must have gone raving mad with grief. I don't know what I did. All I thought of was that there must be some chance, and he wasn't dead at all, and he must be got away to a hospital. We had discussed the plan of going into the flat, and he had told me how he would bring his car to the back. I rushed out of the flat, going through the back way. Sure enough there the car was waiting, and nobody was about.

"I came back to the bedroom and lifted him in my arms and carried him back to the car, propping him up in the seat. Then I went back and got his coat and vest, and threw them onto the seat by him. I found his boots were also in the car, and, then, for the first time, I noticed that he had slippers on his feet.

"I have been a taxi driver, so I know how to handle a car, and in a few minutes I was going along the Edgware Road on my way to St. Georges' Hospital. I turned in through the park, because I didn't want people to see me, and it was when I had

got into a part where nobody was about that I stopped the car to have another look at him. I realized he was dead.

"I sat in that car with him, for the best part of two hours, crying as I never have cried; then, after a while, I roused myself and carried him out and laid him on the sidewalk, some distance from the car. I had enough sense to know that, if he were found dead in my company, it would go very badly with me. But I hated leaving him and, after I had folded his arms, I sat by him for another hour or two.

"He seemed so cold and lonely that it made my heart bleed to leave him at all. In the early light of morning, I saw a bed of daffodils growing close by, and I plucked a few and laid them on his breast, because I loved him."

Tarling finished reading and looked at his assistant.

"That is the end of the Daffodil Mystery," he said. "A fairly simple explanation, Whiteside. Incidentally, it acquits our friend Milburgh, who looks like escaping conviction altogether."

A week later two people were walking slowly along the downs, overlooking the sea. They had walked for a mile in complete silence; then suddenly Odette Rider said:

"I get very easily tired. Let us sit down."

Tarling obediently sunk by her side.

"I read in the newspapers, this morning, Mr. Tarling," she said, "that you have sold Lyne's store."

"That's true," said Tarling. "There are very many reasons why I do not want to go into the business or stay in London."

She did not look at him, but played with the blades of grass she had plucked.

"Are you going abroad?" she asked.

"We are," said Tarling.

"We?" She looked at him in surprise. "Who are we?"

"I am referring to myself and a girl to whom I made violent love at Hertford," said Tarling, and she dropped her eyes.

"I think you were sorry for me," she said, "and you were rather led into your wild declaration of—of——"

"Love?" suggested Tarling.

"That's the word," she replied with a little smile. "You were led to say what you did, because of my hopeless plight."

"I was led to say what I did," said Tarling, "because I loved you."

"Where are you—we—going?" she asked awkwardly.

"To South America," said Tarling, "for a few months. Then, afterward, to my well-beloved China for the cool season."

"Why to South America?" asked the girl.

"Because," said Tarling, "I was reading an article on horticulture in this morning's paper, and I learned that daffodils do not grow in the Argentine."

THE END.

A NEW FINANCIAL RATING

DURING a week's theatrical engagement in Philadelphia last season Guy Standing, the English actor, patronized a picturesque little restaurant where the food was fine and the prices reasonable. In fact, the prices were so surprisingly fair that Standing, in sheer gratitude, formed the habit of giving unusually large tips to his waiter.

One morning a new servitor stood at his elbow.

"Where's Joe?" queried the actor.

"Well, to tell the truth," replied the new man, after showing signs of embarrassment, "Joe ain't available this morning."

"Not available!" exclaimed Standing. "What do you mean?"

"I mean, Mr. Standing, he ain't available for you. You see, sir, Joe and I flung the dice last night, and I cleaned up. In fact, sir, I was so lucky that, on the last throw, I won you for the rest of your stay here."

Smilin' Chaupo

By Buck Connor

Author of "Hey, Rube!" "One-Glove Wilson," Etc.

It is a good thing for fiery youth to have the friendship of an older head. If it hadn't been for shrewd old Cripple Creek Dan, things would have broken pretty badly for that clean-cut young Indian of the wild West show, Chaupo

WHAT makes that Injun boy so kinda filiallike t'w'rd me? Well, I don't know's as how they's much reason for it. But sech as they is, I reckon, dates back sev'ral years now—back to the time when the lad first joins out with Buffalo Bill's Wild West.

Yuh see, the time I'm speakin' 'bout, I was standin' outside the cook house—just got through eatin' my beans—when I sees the "gilly wagon" drive up to the edge uh the sidewalk, an' stop. A youngster, with a big John B. toppin' his mop uh black hair, an' dressed cow-punch fashion, with one leg tucked down inside a boot, hopped outa the wagon, an' hustled to the back end to jerk a stock saddle an' suit case to the ground.

When the lad got his things on the groun', he turned to ask the driver somethin'. But, shucks, he'd whipped up an' was turnin' the next corner, 'fore you could say "scat!" Beatin' it for the hosstop, I guess. That left the lad standin' there, restin' on one leg, scratchin' his head, an' t'other hand rammed in his pants pocket, ponderin' what place he'd light out for.

Finally, he slings his saddle across his broad shoulders an' picks up his suit case, then heads straight for me. "A new hand for the puncher string," says I to m'self, an' gets out my makin's, to roll a smoke.

"How?" he grunted, an' let the whole sheebang drop to the ground—sweatin' an' puffin' like a nigger at 'lection.

I jest nodded at him, an' let 'er go at that.

"Where puts them saddle?" he asks. "Me here to ride for thems show."

Me bein' the hombre what was paid to jerk the ribbons over the stagecoach mules, wasn't there to hand out information—no more'n I had to. But I did unlimber enough to tell him that his saddle went to the bronk tent, an' his suit case to the dressin' room, an' points 'em both out to him. He nods his thanks to me, an' starts pickin' up his traps, grinnin' all the time.

"Had chow yet?" I asks him, seein' as how they was dishin' it out, inside the tent.

"No," he tells me, slowlike, an' grins once more at the prospect uh chuck.

"Well, by golly, you'd best put that outfit here, by the side wall, an' hustle in there 'fore the meal flag comes down, er you'll get nary a bite till supper-time," I tells him right off. When we got his things set outa the way, at the side uh the entrance, where other folks wouldn't be trampin' all over 'em, I takes him inside an' tells the man at the door that he was a new hand, an' showed him where the puncher string got their hash at the performers' table, an' walked over there with him.

"What d'yuh say yer name was?" I asks, slidin' over close to him, so's I could hear.

"Out there them calls me Chaupo. Chaupo-Eagle-Man my name," an' he grins once more. I knowed Chaupo meant "Shorty."

"Well, Chaupo," I says, "my name's Dan—Dan Harris, er just Cripple Creek Dan, aroun' this outfit. I'm right glad to meet yuh," an' I hands him my paw to wiggle. Chaupo grabs my hand, same as a drownin' man does a straw, an' pumps away at it fer some time, an' said we'd try an' be friends. Uh course, that kinda uh powwowin' seemed to me, what most folks call mutual.

When I see him first, I just couldn't quite read his brand. But when he squats at the table an' takes off his hat I lamps the shape uh his head an' the high cheek bones. Right then an' there I tabs him Injun. An edycated one, too—an' marks him from the Sioux tribe uh varmints.

"We go now?" says Chaupo, when he'd swallowed his last drop uh coffee.

"Sure'n shootin'," says I, an' we ups an' went outside to where his things was piled. Yuh know, 'tain't often you'll find Cripple Creek Dan a-helpin' these here young sprouts! But, by cracky, I just couldn't keep from grabbin' hold uh that grip, an' givin' him a lift to the dressin' room. I was a-goin' that a way myself.

Outa the tail uh my eye I was watchin' him. Just a mere boy, he was, a-walkin' alongside uh me, with his big Stetson settin' on his head at a don't-give-a-whoop angle. When we gits close to the dressin' room, I steps ahead to lift up the side wall, so's he could git under without droppin' his load. That youngster didn't fergit his raisin', 'cause he said: "Thank you," an' grins 'cause I was aimin' to be nice to him. When he tossed his saddle to the groun', he hauls out a big bandanna an' mops his face, while the rest uh the folks in the tent looks our way, sorta sizin' up the new one.

"Well, now, son," says I to him, "I s'pect you'd best be reportin' to your boss. That is if you're to ride with the puncher gang." My tippin' him off that a way was just to point him out on the right trail to start with.

He grins again, an' digs into his coat pocket, an' whips out a letter an' passes it on to me. I gits out my specks an' reads it, an' sees it's just a note from Buffalo Bill, a-tellin' him what to bring on to the show with him. I nods an' hands it back.

"Me's got them," says Chaupo, proudlike. "Saddle, chaps, gun." He kinda feels at a little bulge I sees in his waistband, where a six-shooter was.

While we was standin' there, the lad kept lookin' aroun' the dressin' room, at the other hands. Sorta sizin' 'em up, I figgered. Purty soon the side wall, on 'tother side of the tent, was jerked up, an' "Dode" Snell, the chief of the cowboys, started to bawlin' an order at his gang.

"Shake a leg, fellers," says he, "we've got to rope out that bunch uh bronks, an' get 'em hackamore'd, 'fore we start rehearsin'." An' he picked up his lariat an' started fixin' the coils.

From where we was standin' I couldn't see Dode's face, but I could tell him by his talk. Yuh see the sun had kinda swung aroun' to his back, an' the dang dirty, mud-stained canvas didn't let in too much light, nohow. So it made it hard peepin' fer my ole eyes. An' I don't suppose Chaupo could see him a bit more'n I could, 'cause I sees him squintin' at the man. So I says, says I: "Son, that's yer boss. Better go an' tell who you are," an' walks over there with him.

The sun an' shade uh the canvas, what kept us from seein' Dode, musta helped him see us a-comin' tow'rd him. He stopped talkin' an' his rope slipped outa his hand, as he saw Chaupo. But by that time we was in close talkin' distance.

"Dode," says I, pointin' to the lad, "this is a new hand fer you." I turned in time to see the dangest look come over that boy's face you ever saw. Right then an' there, Dan Harris figgered them birds had crossed trails before.

'Fore I knowed it, Chaupo makes a lightnin'like grab to where I'd seen his gun, while I steps back outa firin' line. Then the lad sorta ketches hisself, an' slowly lets the thumb of his gun hand slip into his waistband—same as you've seen most rangemen do when they're talkin'. Fer a minute or two, it was like a bombshell hittin' a mule camp. There was the darndest shufflin' uh feet that carried most uh them punchers to safe distance, yuh ever saw; but nary a human cheeped a word. They all stood as quiet as ole busted bronks.

Dode, he never moves. 'Spect it's a good thing he didn't. He just stood there an' kinda glared at the lad, same as a trapped wolf. I reckon he didn't have his gun on him, er he mighta rung the lad's bell for him. But still yuh can't always tell. A pusson might stand an' glare his fool head off, like a she-bear, an' not have the guts to unlimber his shootin' iron. Least that's the way I've been seein' things aroun' these outfits.

Then I sees Chaupo's face sorta grin, slowlike, an' it wasn't the kind of a grin I'd been admirin', either. No, sirree! It was a halfway make-believe smile, that had the fury uh hell wrapped up in a few wrinkles. Anyway, it was somethin' that sure made Dode Snell realize he was facin' a gent he'd met before—an' it was an Injun what hadn't forgot that meetin', either.

"When you get shaped out, take that Sharkey hoss for your'n, an' be in the arena when they starts to millin'," Dode stammers, an' walks off with the gang, not sayin' another word.

I've seen some dang bang-up showdowns in my time, but I'll swear if I ever

sees sech a clean one as that. Right then I sees how the cards are layin', an' I sees who done most uh the dealin', too. 'Cause I ain't been aroun' Buffalo Bill's outfit so dang long that my name's on a couple uh the center poles, fer nuthin'.

Most uh the time Chaupo'd stroll over to my trunk in the dressin' room, an' squat down fer a smoke an' powwow. An' I used to study the lad. He was a fair sort, if yuh ask me, an', like any boy you'd throw in with, he never had a whole lot to say, an' was dang careful who he'd say it to. Why, it wasn't no time at all, till most every one aroun' the show was likin' him. Yessir, even to the girls that rode as cowgirls. They was all tryin' to shine up to him. But that's when he shows hisself mighty sensible about things. He'd speak to 'em, er cinch up a saddle fer 'em, but that would let him out. No, sirree, he wasn't built to stand 'round gossipin' with 'em. He liked 'em, though, that's sure—an' if any one had insulted 'em, they'd just about have to kill the kid.

Later on that season, when we was playin' a string uh cow towns out West—Colorado, I think it was—Dode Snell ups and writes the lad's name on the bullitin board, an' right after it he puts "High-Tower." That all means Chaupo was to ride that man-killer fer the afternoon show.

Now, ridin' High-Tower was all right, but it wasn't all right to slate the lad for it. He didn't hire out to ride that hoss. An' it wasn't that he wouldn't take a chance at him, either. But Bill Cody was payin' another puncher fifty dollars extra a month to do the settin' uh that bronk. Most any other hand in the puncher string woulda refused to take on that locoed brain storm. They'd just packed up their chaps an' saddle an' went back home where they come from.

But Chaupo didn't pack his saddle. An' he didn't go back home, neither. That fool lad rode that hoss! He rode him as slick as a whistle, an' when he was gettin' near the back end uh the place, somethin' happened what makes me bust my sides laughin'. Yuh see, Dode was holdin' the hoss—jugglin' him so the lad couldn't hardly get his stirrup—an' when the hoss does get off, he hops his own saddle animal an' hurries back there to pick him up. High-Tower had his Irish up, an' just as Dode reaches out to get the halter shank, Tower ups an' lunges in the air, over Dode an' his saddle hoss—knockin' both of 'em in the dust—an' Chaupo reaches up an' grabs the wire what holds the back curtain, an' lets Tower slip out from under him. Gosh, but that sure tickled me!

Uh course, that made a big hit. Them range folks just about wrecked the seats. An' when Buffalo Bill told the lad to ride in an' make a bow, they sure handed him a loud noise. They knew just the kinda job the boy had finished, 'cause they'd savvied that kinda uh doin's, from kids up to man size.

Well, this puttin' of Chaupo up agin' a proposition like High-Tower is only one uh sev'ral rough deals that Dode puts over on him, from time to time, or of'ener. An' the more I sees, the more I cogitates.

One day, after most uh the people has ducked into the cook house, an' things was gettin' kinda clear 'round the back end, I sees the lad a-comin' over from supper. I ups an' winks at him. He comes over, an' we climbs into the coach.

"Son," says I, when we seated an' smokin', "what in the all-fired hell makes Dode romp on yuh so?"

He give me a funny, quick look, and then jest hung his head without answering me. Chaupo was Injun, an' I savvies them folks a heap. So I jest went on smokin' my cigarette, waitin' till the spirit moved him to say somethin'. Yuh know, there is some of 'em, uh course, what powwows a heap in councils, but that's a dang sight dif'rent from blabbin' their fool heads off, aroun' the show.

"Dan," says he, after a spell, "Dode him know me long time. Him does me bad medicine, long while back."

"Um-huh!" says I, encouragin'like, an' crosses my legs to listen to the yarn.

"Long time—two years mebby you calls them—two summer's grass, me ridin' for T Cross Cattle Companys, back home at Rainbow. Dode Snell him work for 'nuther cowsman in Nebraska. Long way south. One time me rides to see cows, way down by range where Dode him works. Me see one cow tracks—like when cow died, you know."

"Yep, I savvies, son," says I, readin' the signs just as he was pointin' 'em out. "Go on!"

"Them Sioux—my peoples—teaches young mans no kill beef, far away like thems. Drive him close home to kills." Then the lad shut up like a clam.

"Was that where you fust runs against his wire?" I asks.

"What you talk, Dan?" an' his big black eyes liked to bored a hole in mine. "Me no understand!"

"Was that when you first sees this here Dode man," I tries to explain.

"You bet yer life!" an' he grins to hisself, satisfiedlike.

"Um-huh!"

"You bet we meets," Chaupo unloosens his tongue enough to tell me. "Me sees when follow them tracks, to bushes, some hair in sand. I'm digs in ground and finds two year-old hides. Thems hide branded T Cross."

"Dang scoundrel!" says I, rememberin' a little deal like that I'd messed in.

"Me, I'ms dig hide out, and takes him back to my boss man, in home camps. Him gives me long gun—Winchesters—and tells me go camps down there, and look see what happen. You know, close to thems cows."

"Sure!" says I. "That's the most natural thing to do!"

"I make them camp on Long Fork Creek. Me turn pack horse loose and send him home. I'ms ride horse, but keeps him close to them camp. One time I walks to where cows eat grass by creek. No got horse by me. Hides him plenty. Pretty quicks I see man come from south. I don't knows him."

"Aw-haw!"

"Him don't ride in herd, same as huntin' for strays. Him rides up on small hills. But him no sees me. Him no sees horse. You bet! Then him pulls gun from him saddle boot and gets ready to shoot them cow."

"What then?" says I, gettin' durn interested.

"Me, I'm pulls gun, too. I sees that man over them sights. When he gets ready to shoot them cow, I pulls trigger with my gun. Them mans drop gun—hims arm hurted. Then him rides like devil, to Nebraska. But him sees me standing with gun ready to shoot him some more. You bet!"

"So that's the why an' wherefore uh this grudge? Huh?" I says, seein' the cards as they was bein' dealt out.

"Thems Dode him knows me heap. Betcher life!" an' the lad grins some more to hisself.

"Now, son," says I, "you'd best be dang careful how you go duckin' aroun' this here show at nighttime! Yuh never can tell when a bird like Dode Snell will drop yer meat house fer yuh!" says I. I looks across to the back curtain, an' sees it was time we was linin' up fer the night show.

"Hop down, son, I've got to rattle my hocks, an' get them jackasses ready fer the arena." An' he does so, without waitin'.

When the bugle sounded fer all hands to "mount up," I was busy hitchin' up my mules, just as ole Bill Cody comes driftin' by on his way to the arena. He stops, same as he does many a time, an' chats about things him an' me knows about the show.

"Dan," says the ole man, after a while, "what do you-all make outa this here grudge Snell has against that Injun lad?"

"I doan know much about it," I pretended like. "But there seems to be somethin' wrong, from the way he's handin' out the worst jobs he can find fer him!"

"Uh-huh!" was all Buffalo Bill says, an' walks away, ponderin' the thing over. I sees right off that Colonel Cody wasn't asleep by a long shot.

It was gettin' late in the season when we plays Waycross, Georgah—yes, it was Waycross, 'cause I'll never fergit it as long as I lives. The air was kinda crisp that mornin', just the kind that'd make a pusson want to sleep longer'n usual—'specially, if we was tired from the night before. It was so chilly that I hustles down to the stock car, where my hard tails was loaded. An' them durn mules was standin' there shiverin' like the dickens. But I was kinda careful with 'em an' got 'em out an' hooked up without gettin' my head kicked off.

I rec'lect I didn't see Chaupo. 'Course that wasn't at all unusual. He mighta been in one uh the cars untiein' hosses, er some other job that falls to a puncher aroun' the Buffalo Bill show. But 'long 'bout breakfast time, after I'd got the mules put in the hosstop, an' the mess flag was flutterin' from the cook house, I sees him a-ploddin' across that wet lot, with his yeller slicker danglin' on his arm. I was jest headin' fer eats m'self, so I waits till he comes up.

"Howdy, son," says I. "How's things stackin' up?"

He cheeps nary a word—kinda felt like a slacker, I guess. So we walks to our places at the table, an' had our cakes an' strolled over to the dressin' room. Jest about the time we settin' down on my trunk, an' rollin' ourselves a smoke, Dode spots him.

"Hey, fellers!" he shouts so's all hands

could hear. "There's our sleepin' beauty. He's jest gettin' on the lot! What'd'yuh know about that?" Which all goes to show how he was keepin' a watch on the lad.

Chaupo havin' a sense uh humor, in his Injun hide, kinda grins, tolerantlike, but says nuthin', while the whole gang looked his way an' smiled.

"Now," says Snell, spoutin' off again, "I 'lects myself judge uh this Kangaroo Court what's goin' to try this here said beauty sleeper."

Guess, you don't just understan' what Kangaroo Court means, in a cow camp or bunk house? Well, Kangaroo Court is just a piece of hoss play that most cow hands indulge their good spirits in, whenever some one uh their brand has violated one uh their unwritten laws.

Anyhow, as I was sayin', this here Dode Snell organizes his court, an' 'lects a big row-boned cow-puncher as shuriff, to bring Chaupo-Eagle-Man before him.

Now, instead of appointin' some one uh the cowboys, to plead the kid's case, as is always done in Kangaroo Courts, he ups an' sentences him hisself to forty wallops, with a pair uh leather bat-winged chaps, to be delivered to the boy while he was held over a bale uh hay. Then, without orderin' anuther cowboy to deliver the wallops, as is always the case, he deliberately appoints hisself the punisher, an' gets right busy.

Dode started in with a light swing, but when he gets to twenty, he starts bearin' down hard with them leather leggings.

Say, let me tell yuh, that Injun kid showed more real gameness than any one I knows of. Them licks was hurtin'—an' if it was my put in, I'd have stepped in an' stopped the whole proceedings. When thirty was counted off the kid had stopped kickin' his protest, an' lay as still as a mouse. Nerve? Whew! I say it was dangest piece uh grit I've seen in a long time!

There Dode stood swingin' that pair uh heavy chaps, over his head, to land on that boy with a pop like my whiplash crackin'. Dode was smilin' an' puttin' all his power in them swings, too, while a bunch uh town yaps stood near the side wall, an' laughed at what they thought was fun. When forty! sounded, Snell throws them chaps aside, an' gets out his bandanna to mop his forehead. One uh the hands takes Chaupo by the shoulder to raise him to his feet. But the kid was out—he didn't no more savvy what was goin' on around him than if he wasn't there.

Some one uh the gang handed Chaupo a jolt uh liquor that helped a whole lot toward straightenin' him out, so's he could ride his bronk that afternoon. But he stayed in his berth uh the sleepin' car the next mornin', an' asked for the doctor, too. An' he didn't leave that bed, for nigh on two weeks. I used to see him, night an' mornin', when I'd take things to him.

One day, I guess, he'd been millin' over an' over in his mind, that dirty trick Dode had done him when I happens in on the heels of his thoughts, with some little knickknacks I got uptown.

"Dan," says he to me.

I looked down at the kid, an' I sees, for the first time, in all my life, an Injun with tears streamin' down his cheeks.

"Me handle gun better'n anybody on show, Dan!"

"Tut-tut, son," says I, tryin' to ease him off that trail. "Here's some stuff I wrangled for yuh uptown."

But Chaupo broke down an' bawled like a weanin' calf. That's a dang dangerous sign now, I'm tellin' yuh! It sure is! There's a whole passel uh men what cries, that'll kill quicker'n a flash. Least that's been my observation, while knockin' about.

The Bill show made Richmond, Virginia—the closin' date—on a Sunday. Which meant we wouldn't give no performance till Monday. That was the same day Chaupo gets outa his berth, an' ambles to the lot in the afternoon. When he walks into the dressin' room, I was busy gettin' things in shape, for the last day—the day when all uh the troupers'd hear the show band playin' "Home, Sweet Home" to the last rattlin' racket uh fallin' seat plank, when the season'd close. I was a-settin' on my trunk when he touches me on the shoulder.

"Why, hello there, son!" I says, an' moves over to give him a seat. "How yuh feelin'?" The lad tells me as how he's kinda weak, an' flops down alongside uh me, then fumbles in his pocket for the key to his suit case.

I, uh course, jest went on fixin' up my things, an' didn't pay no more 'tenshun to what he was about, till I looks up an' ketches him a-slippin' a mess uh slugs into his gun. Now, that didn't look a bit good to ole Dan. No, sirree! But I never says a word. It was his gun an' not mine.

Directly, I sees, outa the tail uh my eye, that he's got anuther gun a-layin' alongside uh him. He proceeds to load that un, too. That was the stunt what opens my eyes a heap to what was on the lad's mind.

"Dan," says Chaupo, "me take your bucket?"

"Certainly, son—help yerself," an' I went on 'bout 'tendin' to the things in my trunk.

Now, when I sees the kid walkin' on to the tent, to the water sprinkler, to git hisself a bucket uh water, I do some mighty fast thinkin', I'm tellin' yuh! He's gone no more'n two-three minits, but when he bobs back into the dressin' room, I has my plans, such as they is, all made. While watchin' the kid pile his coat an' hat on top uh them guns uh his and then start washin' his hands, I decides to sidle outside to the coach and git my own little six gun. It strikes me as how mebbe I'd better be ready and preparedlike, myself. Uh course, I don't let on to the kid what I'm doin'.

'Long 'bout the time the feed man blowed his whistle to throw grain to the hosses, we hears a bunch uh fellers comin' toward the dressin' room. When they'd pulled back a strip uh side wall, an' walked in, we saw it was Dode Snell an' his gang uh punchers. Most uh the boys welcomed Chaupo back to the lot, an' then went on 'bout their business.

Then Chaupo uncovers his guns. He ups an' sticks one in his waistband, an' takes the other in his right hand. Without nary a word to me, he walks over to where Dode was stoopin' over his opened trunk.

"Dode," says he, "you fight me!" An' his voice was slowlike—which counts a whole lot. When Dode turned aroun', he chucks one uh the guns at Dode's feet, an' says, still mighty slowlike: "Take them gun!"

"Why—er—what—ah, what's wrong, Eagle-Man?" stammers out Dode.

"Pick up them gun, er me shoot!" The hammer uh the lad's gun verified his talk as it went to a full cock.

Do you know, Dode acted jest like most men uh his caliber. When he sees, plumb truthful, that he's run to cover, with no way of escapin', he took his only chance, an' jumps fer the gun. When he raised to fire, Chaupo's pistol belched a puff uh smoke, an' Dode crumpled in a heap.

That gun firin' set up the dangest screamin' yuh ever heard. The womenfolks, what dresses on t'other side uh the partition, had bin listenin' to the argyment, an' they shouted bloody murder. That was what rouses Buffalo Bill from his snooze he was takin', in his private tent.

I jest stepped over an' took Chaupo by the arm, an' got his gun. Then I told him to go an' set down. While a couple uh Dode's punchers stepped in an' picked up their fallen chief, an' gits the other gun. By that time Buffalo Bill is a-tearin' into the tent.

"What's wrong, Dan?" says he. "Had a killin'?"

"I hopes not," I grins, fer somethin' tells me that Dode wasn't mortal bad hit—nuthin' more'n by one uh them there thick pieces uh waddin', made uh felt, what's used in shells.

But Dode, lyin' there, is still scared plumb white. He had fallen more 'cause his knees had given out, more'n any other reason. Then I steps over an' slips a dozen words in ole Bill's good ear.

"Be careful with me, boys," says Dode to 'em that's pickin' him up. "I'm done for!"

"You sure are aroun' this show!" ole Bill busts right out. "I've seen more uh your dang houndin' this Injun than yuh think I did! An'," Bill goes on, "I knows how yuh dang nigh pounded that lad to death with them chaps, too."

Uh course, I seen right off jest how the land was layin' with ole Buffalo Bill himself, so I walks over to see Chaupo who was cryin' at what the Injun hate in him had done.

"It's all right, son," says I to him, at the same time layin' my hand on his shoulder. "He'll live. He never had a whole lot uh chances uh doin' nuthin' else."

"How, Dan?" he asks, an' the tears was blindin' his eyes.

"How so?" I says. "Well, I reckon I fergits to tell yuh that I saw yer play when yuh was foolin' with them shootin' irons, an' I unloads 'em to put a mess uh blanks in their place."

Well, sir, the way that youngster looked at me through them tears of hisn was a caution. When he took the shot at Dode, the lad was meanin' jest what was in his Injun heart, but since he'd seen that hombre fall 'fore his gun, he was kinda sorry, I reckon.

I shows him the blanks that was left in the guns, an' the lad's eyes dried right up, an' a slow, broad grin comes over his face—'cause Chaupo savvied that ole Dan sorta had a tail hold on some things 'round Buffalo Bill's show.

The Heathen Chinee

By H. Harvey Huffman

Sam Lung, of Arizona, is one of that rare sort that walk right into your heart, and stay there. You will be thankful to have met him

"ALL light," said Sam Lung to a patched-overalled miner, as he set out a small sack of flour. "You ketchum money, you pay me some time."

Sam Lung was the proprietor of a little grocery store, "up the cañon," in El Cobre. El Cobre is a mining town set in the mountains of Arizona. The main part of the town lies in a flat, at the mouth of a big cañon which comes down through the high, rugged mountains, through which tumbles a little mountain stream, dignified by the name of the Eagle River. Here are located the stores, the bank, the offices of the mining companies, and the residences of the more prosperous citizens of the town. From here the town straggles along up the cañon into a district peopled by Mexicans and the families of the foreign miners. This district is commonly called "up the cañon." Here, the houses are perched one above another, on the mountainside, among them Sam Lung's place.

Sam Lung's stock of groceries was very small. For the better grades of groceries were beyond the purchasing power of Sam's customers. Sam Lung ran a semimonthly credit system, in conformity with the semimonthly pay day at the mines. It was this credit system that covered Sam's charities, but which also gave him some uneasy moments at times, when he found it necessary to pay for new supplies. For Sam Lung could not withstand any appeal for groceries. His sympathy seemed boundless, and his faith in the ultimate honesty of his fellow men seemed endless. His usual answer, to even the most doubtful-appearing applicant, was:

"All light. You ketchum money, you pay me some time."

As a consequence, Sam Lung had many bad accounts on his books. But these he dismissed from his mind with:

"They velly poor. No can pay now."

Occasionally, however, some old account, which would have been wiped off of the books of a white merchant, as a total loss, would be paid. Sam Lung took these incidents as a justification of his business methods. Sam Lung came seeking his fortune in the United States when a young man, leaving a wife and infant son behind him in the home village in China. Although he regularly sent money for the support of his family, he had never been able, through the years, to get together sufficient funds to spare for a trip home, to see his wife and "little boy." Sam could always find time to talk about his son. A sure opening for the salesmen who called at Sam's store, was to inquire as to the news contained in the last letter from the "little boy."

One day, Sam received a letter from him asking for an additional hundred dollars, to pay the expenses of a wedding feast. For the "boy" was shortly to take as a wife a young girl of a neighboring village.

This letter came at an unfortunate time for Sam Lung. Due to a drop in the price of copper, a number of Sam's customers had been laid off by the mining companies. And Sam's collections had been very small. Such an appeal from the "little boy" could not be denied, though. For his marriage would mark his transition from boyhood to manhood, and Sam Lung's heart glowed with pride of his son. Closing his store, he went to the bank; and, entering the cashier's office, asked for a loan of one hundred dollars.

"My little boy. He man now. Ketchum wife," he said. "I send him money for mally. Lots eat. Lots ficlacka. Big time," he said.

"Certainly, Sam, I'll lend you a hundred dollars." And the cashier picked up a blank promissory note and began filling the spaces. "But you'd have plenty of money, yourself, Sam, if you didn't sell so many groceries to people who never pay you. You ought to be more careful."

"All light. My little boy he never be hungly. I no like see other people little boy

be hungly. Mebbe so, some day pay me. Lots people ketchum velly bad luck now," replied Sam Lung.

After securing the hundred dollars, he purchased a Hongkong draft for the amount. Whereupon he returned to his store to find waiting for him a Mexican woman, whose husband had been killed in a mine accident several months before, leaving her with four small children.

"Señor Sam," she said, "there is no food in the house for my niños. I have been sick and could not go to wash for the Americanos this past week. Let me have a little flour and some frijoles, and next week I will work and pay you."

"All light," said Sam. "Mebbe so next week you ketchem money."

And he set to work wrapping up a few pounds of flour and a few pounds of beans. Not even forgetting the four pieces of cheap candy for the customary "pelon" for the children.

II.

Old Timothy Sullivan was out of grub.

Timothy was an ancient prospector who, with gold pan and pick, had spent a lifetime following the lure of placer gold, from the snow-covered peaks of Alaska to the sunburned ranges of the Southwest. Now, feeling the burden of the years that had passed over his head, he avoided the Northern cold, and confined his operations to the sunny mountains of Arizona. He had made a number of rich strikes of placer gold, during his years of wandering, but, with a confirmed prospector's heedlessness of the future, he had spent his gold right-royally. His worldly possessions consisted of Jerry, a bed roll, gold pan, pick, shovel, ax, coffeepot, long-handled frying pan, and a battered rifle. Jerry was a burro of many years, and much wisdom of the ways of prospectors, especially of Timothy Sullivan. For Timothy had owned Jerry's mother; and Jerry, as a colt, and later as a grown burro, had plodded over many trails with Timothy.

It was never necessary to hobble Jerry, when they made camp at night, for Timothy had always followed the prospector's custom of feeding his burro a flapjack each morning. So, each morning, by the time the fire was burning well, Jerry would be certain to be standing near at hand.

One morning Timothy noted that his supply of flour and bacon was very low. So he packed his belongings on Jerry, and set out for El Cobre in search of a new grubstake. His last supply of flour and bacon he had secured a couple months before, after much persuasion, from a saloon keeper, in El Cobre, who had finally agreed to take a chance on Timothy's luck and the half interest in any find that he might make. But luck seemed to have deserted Timothy, during the past months, for his search of cañon after cañon had revealed no signs of "color."

When Timothy reached El Cobre, he first sought out the cabin of Tom Dorsett, an old-time friend of his, who lived midway between the town of El Cobre and the "up-the-cañon" district. Dorsett had become too old for the hard underground work in the mines, and was now employed as a watchman at the powder magazine at one of the mines. His wages, in this job, were small, but they sufficed for his simple necessities; and enabled him to extend the hospitality of his cabin to Timothy Sullivan, on the occasions of his infrequent visits to town. Dorsett was away at work, when Sullivan arrived; but knowing his welcome to be certain, Timothy put his bed roll inside the cabin door and drove Jerry into the little corral back of the house. Then, after setting out a bucket of water for the burro, and tossing him a handful of alfalfa hay, he set out for town.

When he reached the saloon of his erstwhile backer, he began a recital of his past two months of bad luck. His explanation was soon cut short by the saloon man saying, "There ain't no use tellin' me all that. Either you struck somethin', or you didn't. And that's all there is to it."

"But I need more grub," protested Timothy. "And I know they's gold out there, in some o' them cañons, 'cause the Indians used to bring it in. And I'll sure strike it yit, 'cause I'm goin' to pan all uv 'em."

"Yeh. I've heard that old yarn lots of times. I staked you for the last two months, and now I'm through, for a while. Here, take a drink. It'll chirk you up so you can go and talk somebody else out of some grub, like you done me."

Timothy next wended his way down the street to the El Cobre Grocery Company's store, where he entered and perfunctorily asked the manager for a supply of groceries on credit. He had tried there many times before. Still, there might be a chance that some new plea might prevail. But this time,

like all the others, the manager refused to consider Timothy as a credit customer. So Timothy went out and up the street, buttonholing every acquaintance he met, without avail. Shortly before nightfall, he returned discouraged to Dorsett's cabin. Here he found Dorsett busily engaged in cooking supper.

"How're ye, Tim," Dorsett greeted him. "Did ye make yore big strike yit?"

"No," replied Timothy. "And it don't look like I'm a-goin' to. I panned about half o' them cañons out there, the past two months, with nary a color. Now I'm out o' grub, and I can't find a soul who'll give me a new grubstake."

"The mines laid off so many men account o' the price o' copper goin' down, that they ain't nobody got much money. I wisht I wuz makin' enough money to be able to stake ye, myself. But I'm jist about gittin' along on the pay I'm gittin' now, Tim."

After supper Dorsett and Sullivan lighted their pipes and, seating themselves in front of the cabin, watched the sunlight disappearing from the peaks towering above them. They reminisced of prospecting trips and gold finds of their younger days. While, back of the cabin, Jerry entertained himself by joining in a chorus of braying with the neighboring burros. When bedtime came Timothy spread his bed roll down on the ground, in front of the little cabin, for Timothy did not like to sleep indoors, except when the weather was too inclement for comfort outside. Timothy always said that the four walls of a house reminded him of the four walls of a coffin, and that he would "git in one soon enough."

The next morning, while they were eating breakfast, Dorsett said, "Tim, why don't ye try Sam Lung, that Chinaman that runs a grocery store, up the cañon. He's never been knowed to turn down anybody that asks fer grub. When the mines lays off anybody, that feller down to the El Cobre Grocery Company won't sell to 'em 'cept fer cash. But Sam Lung he carries 'em till they git a job ag'in. All ye got to do is to tell him what ye need, and he'll let ye have it."

An hour later found Timothy Sullivan in Sam Lung's store. Explaining his hope of finding the lost Indian gold mine, he proffered request for a sack of flour, a side of bacon, coffee, and other supplies sufficient to last him for another month in the mountains.

"All light," said Sam Lung. "You ketchum money, you pay me some time."

"If I ketchum that placer mine, I'll do more'n jist pay ye fer this here grub. I'll make ye my pardner," promised Timothy.

Loading the groceries on the faithful Jerry, Timothy set out over the trail into the mountains. A few days later he arrived just before sundown, in a little cañon in the mountainside, down which flowed a tiny stream of water. Finding a grassy bench of ground, above the bed of the stream, he made his camp for the night. No prospector ever locates his camp in the bed of a cañon, for there is the ever-present danger of a cloudburst in the mountains above, when the water comes down the cañon bed in a torrent that sweeps everything before it.

The next morning Timothy busied himself in cooking breakfast. Jerry, as usual, was standing close by, waiting for his customary flapjack. One flapjack had just been cooked, when Timothy spied a peculiar-appearing piece of rock, a little distance away. Setting the long-handled frying pan to one side, he got up and walked over to pick up the rock. Jerry, now becoming impatient, approached the frying pan and began nosing it, just as Timothy turned around.

"Jerry! Ye scoundrel. Out o' that," he yelled, and throwing the rock, he hit Jerry in the ribs. One of his kicking hoofs hit the frying pan, and sent it and the flapjack flying down into the creek bed. "Now, durn ye, Jerry. Ye'll have to eat that there flapjack, sand'n all," said Timothy, as he scrambled down the bank, to recover his frying pan.

Picking up the flapjack, he commenced to brush the sand off of it, when his eye was caught by the glitter of some specks of yellow among the grains of sand. A closer look showed them to be particles of "flour gold." Timothy hurriedly climbed the bank to where his gold pan lay. Clambering back down to the creek bed with the pan, and scooping up a double handful of sand, he carried it over to the water, and began to wash the sand out. After working for a few minutes, he had all the sand washed away, leaving a little collection of flakes of fine gold in the bottom of the pan.

"Glory be," he exclaimed, as he noted the number of the particles of gold. "I've struck it rich."

Gone was the thought of breakfast. The coffeepot boiled over; then the fire went

out, and Jerry, having finished his flapjack, amiled away to some near-by bushes and began to eat the leaves and tender ends of the twigs. All the while, Timothy was feverishly washing out pan after pan of the gold-bearing sand.

After working in this manner for a couple of hours, he paused to take stock of his surroundings. The bed of sand, in which he was working, extended some distance up and down the cañon. On the upper side it ended near the foot of a little gully, which came down into the cañon. He now walked toward the upper end of the sand bar, stopping now and then to try a pan of the sand. These seemed to get richer and richer in gold, until he reached the mouth of the gully. Here he tried a pan of the dirt from the bottom of the gully, and found it also to contain the precious golden flakes.

"They must be a pocket er a ledge up above here, where all this here gold comes frum," he mused.

Returning to his camp, he secured his pick, then went back and began to pick samples of the dirt, along the bed of the gully. He began now to find larger particles of gold, until he had reached a point about fifty yards above the cañon bed. Here, he found where the washing of the gully had exposed a ledge of iron-stained, honey-combed quartz. Breaking off a piece of the rock, he saw that the pits and holes in the quartz were streaked and speckled with "wire" and "flake" gold.

"Holy mither o' Moses!" he cried. "This here must be that old Indian mine sure. Looks like one rich seam! Won't them fellers down in El Cobre, who wouldn't give me a grubstake, be sick."

Breaking off another piece of the quartz, Timothy examined it carefully. "This here rock will run all o' five hundred dollars a ton," he estimated. "I'm a rich man ag'in. And to think that it was a slant-eyed chink who grubstaked me fer this trip. Well, under the law and the custom, he's me pardner. I'll show 'em."

Timothy set to work building a location monument. After piling up stones to the height required, by law, for a location monument for mining claim, he went back to his camp and filled out a location notice in the names of Timothy Sullivan and Sam Lung, and placed it in an empty tobacco can underneath the top stone.

By this time the sun was dropping down to the peaks in the west, and Timothy remembered that he had eaten neither breakfast nor dinner. So he built up his fire again, and proceeded to cook supper. This time he fried an extra large flapjack, and, after allowing it to cool, called Jerry.

"Come 'ere, ye rascal. Ye git a fine, big un fer supper, this night."

During the following days Timothy busied himself in digging the required eight-foot location hole, near the ledge. He next paced off the lines of his claim, along the trend of the ledge; and, at each end, set up two other monuments, and posted notices claiming an additional fifteen hundred feet, in each direction, "to keep off neighbors," thereby locating three claims, for Sam Lung and himself, along the direction in which the ledge ran.

This job done, he set to work to pan out as much of the placer gold as possible, during the remaining days that his food supply would last. So diligently did he work, that on the day he set out for El Cobre, his buckskin "poke" contained nearly sixty ounces of flake gold and tiny nuggets. On the day he departed for town, he broke off a number of specimens of the gold impregnated quartz, from the ledge, and packed them up, to take in for assaying.

On his arrival at El Cobre, he went direct to Sam Lung's store. Entering; he caught an empty pan off of the wall, and setting it on the counter, preceeded to empty the buckskin poke into it, before the astonished eyes of Sam Lung.

"Look, pardner! I've struck it rich. I found the old Indian mine. There's all uv a thousand dollars there, and that ain't begun to scratch it. There's lots o' placer ground, and, beside, we got three claims on a ledge o' this stuff," he said, emptying the sack of quartz specimens on the counter. "Here's the copies uv the location notices in yore name and mine. Yore my pardner like I tole ye."

"All light," said Sam Lung. "That velly nice. I ketchum lots of money, I go home to China, and see my little boy."

He turned toward the doorway and saw, coming in, the same Mexican washwoman whom he had supplied a few weeks before. Again, as before, he patiently listened to a tale of misfortune, and an appeal for groceries, on credit, his eyes inscrutably lowered. Then:

"All light," said Sam Lung, as he began weighing out some flour. "You ketchum money, you pay me some time."

A Chat With You

ONCE in a while, we comment on writing as a business, and its practice as an art. Since the foundation of the POPULAR as a magazine devoted to the best and most vital in current American fiction, the interest in the subject has steadily grown. All the great universities and many of the colleges offer some sort of a course for the man who thinks he has it in him to write, and wants to learn how. This is good work; but we cannot help thinking that the best way of teaching a man to write has yet to be discovered. Perhaps it never will be discovered. Perhaps it is not teachable at all. But still, we have hopes.

THE ordinary method, so far as we understand it, is first to acquaint the student with several good models, and then to invite him to try something himself. The trouble with this is that the man is trying to learn from the outside. He is more likely to learn the tricks and mannerisms of a good style than to grasp its real purpose and mechanism. And, besides, it is much easier to imitate the bad things than the good. As an effort in the opposite direction, Herbert Spencer once wrote a sort of essay, entitled "The Philosophy of Style." At his best and breeziest, Herbert is not light reading. We think this particular sample of his work might have delighted the author of "First Principles of Euclid," but for the ordinary chap, who turns to the sporting page and the cartoons in the morning paper, it could scarcely be called stimulating. In spite of that, however, if you care to concentrate and dig into it, you will find that it contains the why and wherefore of everything the great writer does when he takes his pen, or typewriter, in hand.

THE serious objection to this is that knowing how a thing is done, and doing it, are two different matters. We all know how the tightrope performer works. Just one foot before the other, and keep your balance. A cinch, till you try it. Or try reading a book on swimming, and then—if you are not a swimmer—try putting the directions into effect. Somehow, it doesn't work. The feet sink down and the head goes up, or else the head sinks down and the feet go up. And yet the majority of children, perhaps, may be taught to swim by the simple process of dropping them overboard. Some of the modern swimming masters employ this method.

THE individual thrown overboard is going to keep afloat because he has to. If people waited to write till they had to—till something within them demanded expression, till some story simply insisted on being told—there would probably be a higher standard of writing. To ask a boy to write out a rehash of some other person's thoughts, as a way of teaching him style, is really a sort of a mockery. For the style is nothing but the outward reflection of the thought itself. And, furthermore, the ideas that really move us and get hold of us are not those we receive, ready-made, from others, but those we think we discover for ourselves. Good writing is just the result of good thinking and keen, unforced observation. Not

until a man becomes interested himself is he able to interest others. But when he has a real enthusiasm, a real interest, a real something to say, the writing will generally take care of itself. The best way to learn to use English is to try to use it to say forcefully, emphatically, clearly, and at the same time inoffensively, something that you mean and feel and are earnestly desirous of having others understand and receive.

IF you are ambitious to be a writer, get your good story first, and then try to write it so that every one who reads it will get the point. But first have your story.

As an example of good workmanship in story telling, we call attention to "The Count of Ten," a full book-length novel, which appears complete in the issue of the POPULAR out on the news stands two weeks from to-day. The author—his name is William Winter—is new to the pages of this magazine. This is his first long novel. We are sure that it is going to get across, for, in reading it, we had that comfortable feeling that the author knew and was interested in what he was talking about, that he was not just making up a story in his mind, but, rather, that a story had seized hold of him and was insisting on being told.

It is the tale, first, of a typical American family of the better class; second, of a typical American business; third, of a man who finds that his only apparent career is in the prize ring.

We have read plenty of novels of the squared circle. We published one of the best of them—"The Abysmal Brute," by Jack London. "The Count of Ten" is like nothing we have ever read. Many who read it will recognize some of the characters and incidents. No one can read it without a fascinated interest and without recognition of its fidelity to life. A splendid story, by a new writer. Later on "The Count of Ten" will appear between cloth covers, and sell at two dollars. You are getting it, together with the best fiction magazine published, for twenty-five cents.

CONSIDERING the number of short stories written and published, the number of unusual and memorable ones to appear does not run very high. The next number of this magazine, however, will contain short stories, every one of which is far above the ordinary run of *good* short stories.

"The Black Grippe," the imaginative scientific story by Edgar Wallace, has in it a succession of strange thrills and a few moments of breathless suspense. Lawrence Perry's fine tale, "The Coach at Old Magenta," is sure to be hailed as the great football story of the season. "The Scent of Justice" is a remarkable story of the California woods by Laird Stevens. "They Shall Not Pass" is an up-to-date story of the ring by Henry C. Vance. "Oh, Say, Can You See?" is a genuinely funny story by John Lawrence Ward.

IN addition to these things, there is the second half and conclusion of H. de Vere Stacpoole's colorful tale of the Caribbees, "Picaroons," and another big installment of that bizarre and enthralling tale of mystery, "The Devil's Chaplain."

All of these stories were written because the authors had a story to tell. They were written for the matter rather than for the style. And yet, if you are interested in literary style and in English—not as a dead set of rules, but as a living and vital means of expression—we cordially invite you to compare the next issue of the POPULAR with any other magazine on the news stands. And to be sure of getting the POPULAR it would be well to order your copy now.

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